

The Workers' Republic no.20



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REVOLUTION

WORKERS' REPUBLIC No. 20, Winter 1967/68. ALL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PUBLICATION SHOULD be sent to the business manager, R. Matganna, c/o I.W.G., 107 Goldhawk Road, London, W.12. The Workers' Republic is published by the Irish Workers' Group; signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of WORKERS' REPUBLIC or the I.W.G. These are expressed in Editorials. EDITORS: Sean Matganna; Sean Morrissey; Gery Lawless.

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Cover based on a 1930s book jacket.

NOTE: We apologise to readers for the fact that unexpected difficulties beyond our control prevented the appearance of No. 20 on schedule.

EDITORIAL

Towards an Irish OCTOBER

((This Preamble was adopted at the 1967 Annual General Meeting of the Irish Workers' Group. It sums up the basic principles and politics of the organisation.))

A). The name of the organisation is the Irish Workers' Group. It is a revolutionary socialist organisation which aims to mobilise the Irish section of the international working class to overthrow the existing Irish bourgeois states, destroy all remaining Imperialist organs of political and economic control, and establish an All-Ireland Socialist Workers' Republic.

B). WORLD CAPITALISM

World capitalism long ago - from at least the beginning of this century of Imperialism - became a barrier holding back the potentialities of human culture. The objective prerequisites of world socialism have long been attained, and are in fact over-ripe. The compounded contradictions of the system have led to a succession of world wars, catastrophic slumps and periodic recessions, colonial massacres, and fascist barbarism. It cannot organise the available resources of humanity rationally: even in its relatively expansive periods it has meant irrationality and waste, coupled with absolute poverty and starvation for the majority of mankind. In all its phases it is a regime of grinding - and increasing - exploitation of the workers and colonial peoples. The basic contradiction between the gigantic and growing social productive resources now in existence and their subordination to the archaic capitalist system, bound by private ownership and the profit mainspring, continues to fester, threatening to replace the present time-marking economic tempo with slump, the present vast wastage on arms production with the use of those arms, the present local and colonial wars with new world wars. The Imperialist distortion of world economy, control of the world market, continues to retard the less developed areas of the world, making serious industrialisation and development difficult to the point of impossibility. Reactionary capitalism now stands astride the path of development of mankind. And today the gangrenous stage of a system overripe for replacement threatens humanity not only with a continuation of the barbarity of our epoch - but even with nuclear destruction. Human civilisation - indeed human life - can only be assured by the proletariat, the only class capable of replacing capitalism with a higher system, free from the present deadly contradictions.

The very irrationality of capitalism, which is concretely manifested in crises, wars and wage and other struggles imposed on the workers, rouses and prepares the working class for this task. It creates the conditions for the education into socialist awareness and for the replacement by a Marxist consciousness of that bourgeois ideology which is essential to the continuation of the capitalist system. The proletariat throughout the world will end exploitation and create socialist order out of capitalist chaos. It will destroy the rule of capital, make war impossible and abolish state frontiers. It will change the entire world into one co-operative community, make a reality of the brotherhood and friendship of all peoples. Only the victory of the proletariat can open a forward road for humanity: and that final victory will be the beginning of the real history of liberated mankind.

C). PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

We orientate ourselves on the programme of a world struggle for socialism: we are proletarian internationalists. The struggle for the Workers' Republic in Ireland is part of a global struggle by the world's workers for socialism. Capitalism is not national, but an organic world system, and our battle for socialism is necessarily part of a world struggle, the proletariat a world revolutionary class. The workers of Ireland have more in common with the workers

of every other country than with the capitalists of Ireland. We declare our active revolutionary solidarity with all those forces struggling against capitalism and imperialism the world over. We declare our solidarity with the workers in the deformed and degenerated workers' states in their struggle to overthrow the privileged parasitic bureaucracy, establish democracy and re-organise the economy under their own control. At the same time we defend unconditionally against Imperialism these states, where the rule of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism has been overthrown, believing that any victory for imperialism would be totally reactionary. Only the revolt of the working class in Russia, China, Jugoslavia, etc., can offer any progressive alternative to the present regimes there.

D). CAPITALISM IN IRELAND

Ireland's place in the world capitalist system has always been a unique one - that of a backyard affixed to and controlled by England. Her economic growth is enmeshed in a combined 'development' with England. Dominated and exploited by her stronger neighbour, Ireland graphically illustrates all the negative aspects of capitalism. Even when it was progressive on a world scale, in Ireland capitalism meant foreign domination and oppression of the people, despoilation, economic exploitation, deliberate retardation, depopulation of whole areas, a permanent wasting disease of human resources - and finally partition with its internal tariffs and economic stagnation. The short economic boom of the late 1950s had already fizzled out in the early 1960s. Now the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement means a new economic Act of Union, a new, open, recognition of total economic dependence on Britain, only this time as part of a move towards west European federation. Ireland cannot achieve economic freedom under capitalism. Economic freedom will only become real under socialism, through socialist international co-operation. Irish capitalism is a stunted growth, joined at the spine to Britain, presided over by a feeble, split bourgeoisie utterly incapable now as in the past of organising even a minimal economic life for the people of Ireland, and equally incapable of realising economic autonomy. The Irish bourgeoisie long ago played out the meagre progressive role allotted it by circumstances on the stage of Irish history.

The one serious progressive act of Imperialism and Irish capitalism has been the creation of an Irish proletariat capable of putting an end to capitalism's futile existence, and capable, as part of the world revolutionary class, of realising the age-old dream of the people of Ireland for freedom. The best traditions of the old, bourgeois, republicanism have passed to the socialist working class, the only class in Ireland today capable of transforming society and the subordinate relationship with Great Britain - the only unconditionally revolutionary class. The only genuine liberation of Ireland will be from the inexorable - uncontrolled - pressures of international capitalism. All the essential goals of all the past defeated and deflected struggles of the Irish people over the centuries against oppression and for freedom of development and freedom from exploitation, can now only be realised in a Republic of the working people, as part of the Socialist United States of Europe and the World.

The I.W.G. stands against the divided Irish bourgeoisie, Green, Orange and Green-White-and-Orange alike, and for the revolutionary unity of the workers of all Ireland in a struggle for state power. The Irish working class has no common interest with any section of the Irish bourgeoisie. As for the petit bourgeoisie, any revolutionary role for the small farmers against the bourgeoisie is entirely conditional on the rise of the urban and rural proletariat to leadership of that class, and above all on its separation from the big capitalist farmers. A proletarian/worker-farmer alliance is in turn only conceivable as an incidental in a working class movement fighting for its own class aims.

We stand for the revolutionary combat against Imperialism and national oppression in every form, whether that of garrison Imperialism, neo-colonialism or the glaring economic domination of the small nations by the super-powers which is inevitable where the capitalist world market remains as the sole regulator of relationships. But we denounce those who, in the name of "Republicanism" and "Anti-Imperialism" attempt to subordinate the working class to any section of the bourgeoisie and who counterpose a defunct petit bourgeois national narrow-mindedness to the socialist struggle of the workers for power. National unity will be achieved, if not by the coming together of the Irish capitalist class under the auspices of the British Imperialist state and the capitalist drive towards West European Federation, then as an incidental in the proletarian revolution. The possibility of any other revolutionary reunification is long since passed. The only revolutionary republicanism is the Internationalist Socialist republicanism of the proletariat.

E). 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 machinery 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 warders 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, and 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 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 workers' councils, without standing army or permanent bureaucracy, needing repression initially only 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 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 rational economy planned in the interests of the self-controlling working masses will be possible.

F). THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

In Ireland today the proletariat is the locus of all real progress. But the present condition of the labour movement prevents it from playing the role - which it alone can play - of revolutionary reorganiser of society. The existing Labour organisations are under bourgeois domination in varying degrees: in particular the domination of bourgeois ideology and the bourgeois state. The Trade Union bureaucracy is a petit bourgeois outgrowth from the working class and a major agency for bourgeois influence on it. The Labour Parties, despite their worker origins and membership and their vague socialism, function as a limb of the capitalist system, aiding in the control of the working class. They reject class struggle and categories, particularly in relation to the state, which they insist on seeing as neutral. Refusing to understand that socialism is only possible as the result of a proletarian victory against the bourgeoisie, these organisations have sidetracked the workers for decades. They ape the capitalists even to the extent of reproducing the regional divisions of the bourgeois-Imperialist partition! In that they make tentative steps towards reunification, echoing timidly the growing cordiality of the capitalists, it only shows once more that they remain true to themselves - or rather, to the bourgeoisie. The various Irish stalinist grouplets, here as elsewhere, have sunk to the level of social-democrats, preaching parliamentarianism north and south of the border. In the South they combine these tendencies with a straightforward petit bourgeois nationalism. They too echo the bourgeois-Imperialist divisions, with Orange "Communism" in the North and Green (Catholic) "Communism" in the South.

In this form the crisis of proletarian leadership which afflicts the world labour movement presents itself in Ireland. This crisis manifests itself absolutely in times of decisive clashes in the defeat of the class. It manifests itself relatively at other times in a loss of effectiveness in struggles on wages and conditions. In Ireland the disastrous effects of the feebleness of Labour leadership first asserted themselves in the abstention of Labour from fighting for a Workers' Republic during and after the War of Independence - and this feebleness has manifested itself in big things and small ever since. Today it expresses itself in a sharp growing together of the trade union bureaucracy and the state, and in the utter failure of the Labour Parties and unions to fight in earnest the attempts of the bourgeoisie to unload their problems onto the working class.

The continued existence of world capitalism to its present over-ripe stage is the direct result of this crisis of leadership. Time after time in the past decades, in country after country, in tune to the convulsions of what could have been capitalism's death agony, the workers have moved against capitalism. Each time the conservative apparatus of the labour organisations, political parties and trade unions have held the class back, demoralised it, derailed it, deflected its blows from the weakest points in the enemy's defences: in every decisive clash the workers have been misled to bloody defeat.

The Communist Parties were founded after World War I to oppose the renegade Social-Democratic apparatus which had become the hangman of

the European revolution. But the results of the Social-Democratic betrayal of the post-war revolutionary upsurge were to mean the isolation and degeneration of the one victorious workers' revolution and within a decade, under the influence of the burgeoning Stalin dictatorship in Russia, the new Communist Parties began to play the same sort of role, ever-more openly, ever-more treacherously - and far more effectively for, after all, they carried the banner of the October Revolution. Despite their successive acts of renegacy it has requires a whole historic period, the experience of the Hungarian Revolution and the break-up of the Stalinist monolith to present again the opportunity for the solution of the crisis of proletarian leadership in the building of a new mass workers' international and of new national sections of this international revolutionary party.

Capitalism, the most dynamic and adaptable system in human history, has survived despite the murderous crises by which it has been wracked throughout most of this century. If circumstances permit it to pay the necessary price in an ever-increasing toll of proletarian blood and degradation, there are no insoluble crises for capitalism. The bourgeoisie will not fall automatically into history's abyss. It is a highly conscious force, struggling for its positions, capable of defeating the proletariat time after time and even of dragging it down into nuclear war: the victory of the proletariat depends on conscious preparation, on its ability to struggle effectively and successfully to deliberately take control of society out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. (And this consciousness is the necessary prelude to the scientific control of nature which is the pre-requisite for socialism). In immediate practical terms it depends on our ability to construct a world revolutionary organisation, with strong national sections, as a solution to the crisis of leadership. The I.W.G. will play its part in resolving this crisis.

G). TRADITIONS

The I.W.G. bases itself on the political and organisational positions of the first four, Leninist-Trotskyist, Congresses of the Communist International and on the Transitional Programme of the Founding Congress of the World Party of the Socialist Revolution (Fourth International). These Congresses, representing the highest peaks of consciousness attained by the Marxist movement of the world, summed up and codified the global experience of the proletarian struggle, and in particular the experience of the October Revolution.

The Programme of world revolution elaborated at these Congresses remains the only basis and guideline for serious socialist activity. The Congresses of the early Comintern, flushed with all the optimism of the great October Revolution, were followed after only 19 years by the founding congress of the Fourth International. The founding of the Third International had been the signal for a return to the revolutionary Marxism of Marx and Engels, cleansed of Social-Democratic perversion. And in 1938 the rearguard of Bolshevism, sobered, temporarily isolated, hardened by the experience of battle against the new stalinist corruption and tempered in the tragic defeats of the working class at this period, re-proclaimed once more the politics of unfalsified Bolshevism. The true vanguard in a time of reaction, they held determinedly to the theoretical conquests of the

working class - embodied in the documents we here endorse.

Despite the organisational disarray which isolation, ideological erosion and the blows of hostile forces have wreaked on the Fourth International, there exists no other stream of genuine Marxism, of working class revolutionary socialism, except Trotskyism. The Programme of the Fourth International is the present-day Bolshevism. Every other tendency, from Stalinism to Social-Democracy, is patently dead for accomplishing the historic tasks of the working class.

H). THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

World history shows that the proletariat cannot take power, in certain conditions cannot even defend itself, without a serious revolutionary organisation. The working class must generate a revolutionary leadership, tempered in struggle, a proletarian 'column of steel': the Bolshevik-type combat party. The I.W.G. is the nucleus of such a party. Basing itself on the scientific world outlook of Marxism which it fuses with the labour movement in a dialectical unity, it aspires to enrol the most active and class conscious militants. As a whole it aspires to become the collective leadership of the class as a whole.

Basing ourselves on the concrete struggles of our class, we bring to these struggles the Transitional Programme of slogans and demands which pose ever-more sharply the question of state power and control and thus serve as a bridge to the Workers' Republic - attempting systematically, on the basis of concrete issues, to mobilise the masses against the very basis of the bourgeois regime. We do not attempt to bind the movement in advance to any particular tactics or forms of struggle: nor do we reject any tactics or forms of struggle in advance. Unlike both the physical-forcists-on-principle and the legalists-on-principle, for us the issue between armed struggle and the various forms of patient legal activity in the different fields of work is decided at each step by a concrete analysis. Our task is to lead and fuse the different fields of the class struggle in a conscious strategy to win state power. This task demands a permanently mobilised, disciplined organisation of active militants (however small in number) capable of responding to events with revolutionary seriousness, capable of bringing its collective weight and experience to bear on a given point of the struggle. The existence of this revolutionary socialist combat party is a pre-condition of working class ripeness for power. The building of this party begins with a merciless struggle against all bourgeois ideology and forms of organisation, so that it may strive to give full consciousness and comprehension of its situation to the broad labour movement and establish workers' power and socialism as the aim of that movement.

The form of organisation of the Group is Democratic Centralism, a flexible fusion of both, adaptable in changing conditions to give the best combination of centralism in action and democracy in decision, in a variety of possible conditions. Each member is a cell of the organism and there are no dead cells. Only where a minimum of activity is a condition of membership can there be both a serious approach to activity and full conscious and deliberative democracy. Democratic Centralism means, in a word: "Without inner democracy -

no revolutionary education. Without discipline - no revolutionary action. Full freedom in discussion, complete unity in action."

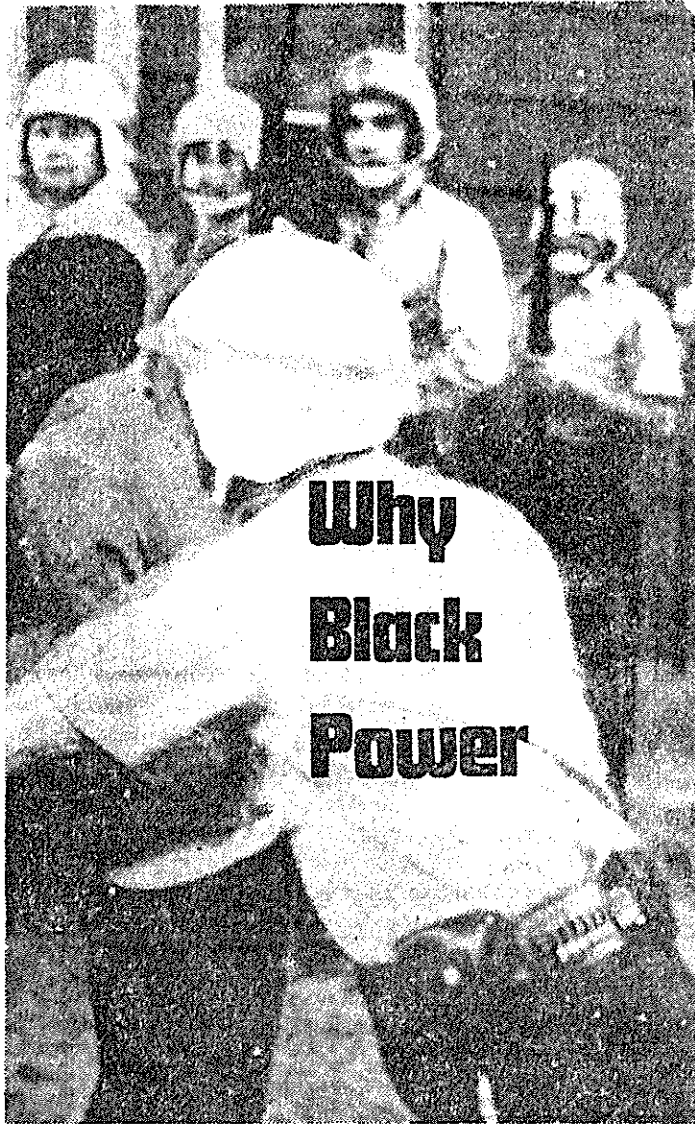
I). BUILD THE IRISH WORKERS' GROUP!

The Irish Workers' Group calls upon the best and most serious elements of the Irish working class to join it in the battle for socialism. To trade union militants we say - only the elimination of capitalism offers any long-term stable advances in wages and conditions. To socialists we say - the only viable socialism is the Marxist programme of class struggle and workers' power. To Republican activists we say - the only conceivable Republic that is other than a mockery of all the past struggles is the Workers' Republic.

The road of the Irish Workers' Group will not be an easy road. It is the dangerous road of Luxembourg, Liebknecht, Connolly, Mellows and Leon Trotsky. It is the road of not only the victorious Bolsheviks of 1917 but also of the unbroken Trotskyists of Vorkhuta, bound together as they were by the common Programme on which we also stand. We know of no other road to socialism. We offer no smooth, mythological "peaceful transition to socialism", by permission of or in alliance with the capitalists - but a programme of harsh struggle. For us there can be no peaceful coexistence with Imperialism and capitalism or with their agents and supporters within the labour movement: there is only irreconcilable conflict. The I.W.G. "uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task - the abolition of capitalism's domination. Its aim - socialism. Its method - the proletarian revolution." Its rules are those codified by Trotsky for the Fourth International: "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's programme on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives - these are the rules of the Fourth International."

We will recruit not those for whom socialism is a nice idea, a wish, a dream or a vague aspiration - but those for whom the struggle for socialism becomes the main content of existence. We want not the spare evenings of dilettantes - but the active, dedicated lives of revolutionaries. The Irish Workers' Group will recruit the most active, most devoted, most self-sacrificing of the new revolutionary generation, and weld them into a force that will lead the working class finally to take full control of their own lives and of their own destiny. The Programme of Lenin and Trotsky will enable the organisation to attract people of the essential quality for accomplishing this task.

Our confidence in the future of that Programme is as unshakeable as is our determination to build the Irish Workers' Group into an organisation capable of fighting for it effectively.



The negro arrived on the American continent in chains. From the beginning he was both an integral part of American class society and at the same time forcibly alienated from it as a chattel slave. After the Civil War of 1861-65, which formally ended the period of slavery, there followed a brief liberation drive, Reconstruction, which subsided leaving in the saddle a modified version of slavery in the form of sharecropping. About one quarter of the ex-slaves were able to acquire their own small farms. For a while small farmers, black and white, were driven together in self defence against the plantation owners. They formed the Southern Populist Movement. But faced with the economic might of the big farmers they were soon split amongst themselves. Facing them was the strength of the new combination of big plantation owners, southern capitalists and certain northern financial interests then expanding into southern railroads, mining and timber. This bloc initiated a violent race-hate campaign to isolate the semi-freed negroes. The symbol of this white terror became the nightmare riders of the Ku Klux Klan. The negro people were progressively disenfranchised, stripped of all legal rights and permanently denied access to adequate education. One result of this division of the poor negroes and the poor whites, workers and small farmers alike, has been that wages in the South have traditionally been about half the level of the rest of the country, trade union organisation has been prevented, and crushing poverty has been the lot of black and white on the land.

by Phil Semp

Up to the outbreak of World War One, 90% of negroes continued to stagnate in the South. The war-time demand for unskilled labour called forth a mass migration northwards, and four hundred thousand negroes served in the army. Yet the end of the Imperialist slaughter, bringing in its wake depression, threw the negro workers out of the jobs which had brought them north. The troops coming home found that there was to be none of Wilson's freedom and certainly no democracy for black Americans. But they were now less ready to be submissive. A wave of lynchings and a revival of the KKK was the result of this first stirring of negro resistance to their situation of being doubly oppressed second class citizens. The twenties saw the first negro "separatist" movement led by Garvey, which folded in the boom of the later twenties with a revival of industry.

NEGROES AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

"Labour with a white skin can never be free where in the black it is branded" observed Karl Marx. Up to the 1930s organised labour in the USA was not interested in winning other than the 'legitimate' fruits of business unionism for itself, and was content that

the brand on the negroes, as the most oppressed section of the working class, should stay as it was. The Labour movement was infinitesimally small, confined to the craft unions of the AFL. The Socialist movement too was tainted either by down-right white suprematism, as the right wing of the old Socialist Party was - or by sectarian indifference. This expressed itself in denying the especially oppressed status of the negro, insisting on seeing the condition of the negroes as only one other aspect of the Capital-Labour relationship which could only be alleviated by the coming of the socialist millenium. Practically it meant a refusal to fight on a limited programme for the elementary rights of the negroes here and now. Consequently it was incapable of reaching the negro worker - and was not concerned to reach him. The first departure from this attitude was made by the early CPUSA, which broke the old traditions of passivity on this question. The CP in the 20s, and particularly in the 1930s, campaigned vigorously on the negro question, setting up waves of activity in many areas beyond its own direct control.

The CP advocated an alliance of the Labour movement and the negro workers - on general class goals and also specifically for the basic rights of the negro people. This new departure was the fruit of the Bolshevik sensitivity on the question of oppressed nationalities. In 1932 the CPUSA nominated a negro for Vice President.

With the drive towards organisation of the unskilled in the CIO, the CP, despite its increasingly apparent stalinist degeneration, continued to play a progressive role by helping the negro workers gain a place in the new unions. Though by no means enough, this held out the possibility of working class unity in a period of a great upsurge of the class, including sections of the negroes. But the CIO was hardly born before it became bureaucratized under the pressure of the capitalist state. The CP reinforced this brake on the drive forward by helping to subordinate the unions to the Democratic Party. There is no doubt that the possibility existed of an independent Trade Union political party which, had the highly influential CP not sold out, would have expressed also the interests of the negro workers in unity with the white workers. Thus as the whole working class was checked, the negroes were also checked. On the outbreak of the World War the Stalinists proceeded to undo what they had done on the negro front, by insisting on subordinating the movements they led to the war needs of the ruling class - to the extent of dissolving the CPUSA as a party, and energetically breaking strikes.

The subordination of the CIO to the Democratic Party, together with the prosperity of the post war boom, has led to a slowing down and even to the erosion of the negroes' former gains. They have continued as the most oppressed section of the working class, and there has been a loss of confidence, in contrast to the thirties, in the organised Labour movement. It still today seems hardly better than the old 'lily-white job trusts' of the AFL. This is the precondition for the form that the current revolt of the negro people, - a simultaneous revolt against their class position and their oppression as negroes - has taken.

THE NEGRO TODAY

There are 21 million American negroes - 11% of the population of the USA. On average they earn per family a little over half the income of the white population. Per capita, when family size is taken into account, the negroes are even worse off. The worst hit are the negro youth, 60% of whom belong to families living below the official poverty line. The living standards of the negro workers are actually declining. As TIME Magazine stated: "While the income of the middle class negro rises, that of the great mass of the negroes is actually declining." In addition: "The number of negroes on the public welfare role is increasing, and one third of the nation's spending on public

education and housing (or an estimated \$ 3.5 billion in all) goes to the negroes..."

Similarly on the job front the middle class negroes (proportionally a very small section) have had their lot improved, whereas that of the workers has deteriorated. The unemployment rate for negroes is now at the 8% level (3.7% for whites). Twenty per cent of negro youth are unemployed, and the jobless rate is over 25% for many of the ghettos. As many unskilled jobs are eliminated by mechanisation and automation, the negro workers, without skill and kept semi-literate, are becoming more desperate.

Negroes are outnumbered 30 to 1 at the universities. Negro schools tend to have less modern equipment and good teachers. Overcrowding is becoming worse - a class of 50 or more is not uncommon. Four out of five children attend all white or all black schools (in the South it is nine out of ten), and segregation is actually increasing in the "enlightened" North as the ghettos grow, heedless of the politicians' platitudes. In spite of the Civil Rights Act, Congress has in case after case turned a blind eye to non-compliance with de-segregation orders.

The housing situation is the most chronic aspect of the negro worker's plight. In recent years there has been the State Health, Education, Welfare scheme (HEW). Yet urban renewal has meant negro removal - replacing shacks with virtual ghettos for middle-class negroes - and forcing negro workers to move to even worse slums. As TIME said: "The ghettos are spreading."

Is it any wonder then, in face of this history and these continuing and worsening conditions, against a background of capitalist boom and indifferent Trade Union movement, that the mass of negro workers should feel totally alienated, should take on a forced group consciousness and self-identity, and that the form of the initial negro revolutionary consciousness should be a Black nationalism?

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

The movement of the negro masses, which led this summer to something resembling civil war in many US cities, first began to take shape as a civil rights movement: a movement to remove the immediate and obvious signs of oppression - segregation in public transport, eating places, and public institutions. It demanded equality within the system. The movement centred on the South initially, where the most blatant discrimination existed, and soon spread to the Northern ghettos. It took the forms of marches, sit-ins and freedom rides and reached its high point in the Selma to Montgomery mass march. The leadership in this first stage of self-awareness fell to the articulate middle class elements - teachers, students, preachers and negro businessmen in organisations such as National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), and Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In face of the racism and violence of American capitalism they preached non-violence to the negroes. This movement gained such force that the Johnson administration took over its programme entirely and pushed its demands through Congress as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The purpose was to head off the pressure of the masses by paper laws and formal equality. It only served to deepen the struggle by demonstrating to the masses that formal equality, itself incomplete and hedged with all kinds of provisos, is totally inadequate for their needs. But it did take a lot of wind out of the sails of the middle class elements who are themselves largely integrated. Their mass base fell off rapidly as their programme, now law, proved irrelevant to the actual needs of their followers. The old organisations became more and more a brake on the movement. In face of growing racialist provocation their 'non-violence' meant in fact preaching negro submission, and objectively seemed to endorse the crushing of the upsurge by the state forces.

THE GHETTOS EXPLODE 1964 - 1967

The early part of 1964 had seen a new high in the level of awareness in the negro workers' struggles. Hundreds of thousands had been drawn into school boycotts and militant action to change the conditions in jobs, housing and schools. The position in the ghettos was thus becoming more explosive every day as the Summer heat made the rat-infested slums more unbearable than usual. The spark exploded the powder on July 18th 1964. A 15-year old negro, James Powell, was killed by an off-duty police officer. The Harlem masses proceeded to make clear that routine provocation such as this, which they had put up with for years, would no longer be tolerated. Riots broke out, and the police escalated the conflict which they had initiated: - the Tactical Police Force, a specially trained elite police, swept through Harlem beating and terrorising everyone in their path. The cops harangued the demonstrators in racialist terms, adding fuel to the flames.

The subsequent outbreaks in the Northern cities, which saw Watts in flame in 1965, several ghetto rebellions in '66, and more than thirty cities aflame in '67, have followed strikingly similar patterns. They have not been race riots in the sense of negroes moving against whites as such. They have usually been provoked by police in the course of 'normal' brutalities in an effort to crush a movement which is exceeding the bounds considered safe for bourgeois society. For instance, in the summer of 1966 in Grenada Miss. "local police wantonly assaulted a peaceable platoon of negro pickets; sherrifs' deputies broke up a civil rights fund raising dance with tear gas" and when desegregation orders were issued for two High Schools in September '66, and white racists beat up negro students, "Grenada policemer stood by and grinned." So state troopers were sent in and "next day a number of troopers studiously read newspapers a block away while white rowdies broke windows of four cars carrying negro youngsters to the school.." (TIME 23.9.66) When National Guardsmen have been called in it has been to shoot and arrest negroes, while the racist cops and local hooligans go free.

INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION

With the snowballing of the movement, the civil rights leaders of the old sort have vacillated, acted as a brake, and in the flare-ups have often sided with the state repressive forces. At the very beginning, in Harlem '64, a Unity Council sprang up in response to the mass direct action: not to aid it but to help control it and "restore peace in the community". Martin Luther King condemned the negro workers for hitting back at their tormentors, and supported the police violence that followed. These leaders, incapable of leading the masses at whose head they stand, were in a blind alley.

But in face of the urgent drive of the negro workers for independent action against the bourgeois state and the bourgeois parties, sections of the established movement have tentatively and empirically arrived at the necessity for independent politics and independent defensive measures against the terror, official and unofficial. Things have moved a long way since Robert Williams was forced to flee the country in 1961 to escape 'kidnapping' charges, trumped up in face of the first attempt to organise negro defense squads against the KKK in North Carolina. In 1964 the Deacons for Defense and Justice were formed, openly employing guns and shortwave radios in its defensive measures for CORE workers in Louisiana. Since then open negro defense and retaliation has become the rule rather than the exception.

Politically the movement has moved from seeing the possibilities as being pressure on the established parties, to open proclamation of the slogan of Black Power. For example as late as 1964 SNCC worked to support a negro body called the Mississippi Freedom

Democratic Party at the Democratic Convention. Here was the germ of independent political action, and of course the Democratic Party would not brook such an organization, tending as it logically did to outgrow the limits of Democratic Party politics. The experience helped radicalise SNCC, or sections of it. In 1965/66 sections of SNCC formed the Black Panther Party to agitate amongst farmers and sharecroppers for independent political action on roads, schools and other limited issues.

BLACK POWER

Thus by 1966 sections of SNCC and CORE, initially non-violent Democratic-orientated bodies, had evolved to the point of advocating "Black Power as a means of solving the problems of the negroes. This became more prominent with the election of Stokely Carmichael as SNCC Chairman and of Floyd McKissick as Chairman of CORE.

And what is "Black Power"? If one thinks of society in terms of classes, it only provokes further questions. It is necessarily vague and amorphous. It is certain that a state power which answered the aspirations of the masses of negro workers who adopt this slogan would be workers' power. But there is the problem - because workers power in the USA will not be the power of only the black workers. It would have to be the power of the whole American working class, black and white. But the fact that the negro-American workers raise it as Black Power only sums up the contradictions in the situation; the split in the working class along racial lines, with the black workers forming the most exploited and downtrodden section.

The contradiction is summed up in the recent events in Detroit. This Northern city with a very high percentage of negro workers was within a short space of time this summer the scene of militant industrial action on the part of the auto workers (predominantly white) and of pitched battles between state troopers and the negro masses. Two movements of the same class, parallel, objectively aspects of the same struggle but separate and divided - reflecting the experiences immediately of two segregated sections of the working class. This is part of the pay-off for the lost opportunity of the 1930s, and for the continuing division in the working class. The white workers were fighting for money and better conditions, while the black were fighting an essentially political struggle - a spontaneous struggle with confused perspectives, but one which nonetheless challenges the premises of the system. Another contrast is that the negro workers largely appreciate that the struggle in Vietnam is part of their struggle, (and they are daily extending this recognition to workers' and peasants' liberation movements throughout the world, including, in the context of the Middle East war, the Arab Revolution); while the New York dockers recently demonstrated in support of Johnson's Vietnam War. What has happened is that the segregation and the vastly different experiences of the segments of the US working class, have led to a marked unevenness of development, with the black workers far in advance.

The fact of being so far in advance both in struggle and partly in consciousness has in turn warped the conscious perspectives of the negro masses. They do not yet see that only workers' power is the solution, the only possible realisation of their demand for Black Power - they do not see it because it is so much in contradiction to the immediately perceptible potential of the white workers, who seem to the negro workers to be part and parcel of the oppressive white society. And so they pick up that which white capitalist society has for centuries made into a stigma - their colour - and brandish it proudly, as a badge and a banner, a rallying cry to the especially oppressed. Leaders of the black power movement, such as Carmichael, are not unconscious of the situation. For example Carmichael said in an interview with a Mexican magazine: "We believe that a revolutionary consciousness can develop in the white working class only when the United States begins to lose its profits, profits

which it gets from the entire Third World... Then and only then will the white working class develop a revolutionary consciousness, because once their sources of profits in the Third World are curtailed, the rulers of the American capitalist system will stop sharing what they used to share with the white workers. This means that today only the black people are struggling. Certainly it would please us if the white working class joined in this struggle. Whether or not this happens, however, does not change the present situation. Because we blacks will fight until we win. And when the white working class decides to join the struggle we will welcome them. In the meantime, and until then, we will continue in the vanguard..." Not all the leaders share this appreciation of the issues, and it would be possible to quote examples of a wide variety of petit bourgeois confusion on the part of some of them. The deliberate scabbing of Brown and MacKissick in the recent New York teachers' strike stands out here, showing that the struggles of white and black workers are not only separate as in Detroit, but sometimes even clash. It would be wrong, however, to evaluate even this sort of thing normatively: in this preliminary stage of the negro awakening the lines are still indistinct. Repugnant as this incident is, it can only be seen as an expression of the deep gulf which ^{divides} the white and black movements.

Viewed from afar in Britain and Ireland, it is easy to forget the peculiarities of American history which have generated this latest movement of the negroes. It is all too easy to slip into simplistic schemas, reminiscent of the old pre-communist left in the American Socialist Party, and deny the special needs in face of especial oppression of the US negro workers. Some ultra-left sectarians, and a few plain sectarians, denounce any support for the current negro freedom movement. They tell us that because negroes are workers there must be no talk of the special oppression they suffer through being black workers: 'Unity, immediate "working class unity" must be the watchword', they proclaim. It is a good watchword - and it is the one under which the power of the black workers, in alliance with the rest of the working class, will finally become a reality. But that will be a working class unity in struggle. To insist on immediate unity, without reckoning the relative levels of opposition to the system of the two sectors of American workers, is to preach the subordination of the most oppressed workers to the upper, aristocratic layers of the working class - and thereby submission to the system. Yet this is what the abstract socialists, amongst them the ultra-left Socialist Labour League, with their left-sounding denunciations of the Black Power movement, are advocating in practice.

We too believe that only class unity irrespective of colour can definitively answer the needs of the negro workers - but, as above, unity in struggle, not passivity. That unity will come, as the masses of the white US workers rouse themselves (perhaps following the example of the black workers) and again return to the road from which the whole working class was deflected in the 1930s, the road of independent class politics against the capitalist system.

In the present concrete situation, the Black Power slogan has a sort of algebraic meaning, underneath which the politically advanced American workers are rallying. The progress of the struggle will clarify the concrete meaning of the slogan as Workers' Power - because that is its only conceivable content. Only the victory of Socialism in the USA can really solve the problems of the US negroes. Neither the tangible problems in jobs, education, housing, etc. (just to clear the Harlem slums would cost around \$6 billion!) nor the negroes' aspirations for self-determination, can find a solution under capitalism. The latter, if the negro masses under socialism thought it desirable, would be dealt with by the establishment of autonomous negro states, in the spirit of that Nationalities policy of the Bolsheviks which first spurred the pioneer CPUSA agitators on the negro question. But the victory of socialism in the USA presupposes the prior unity of black and white workers against the system. The first

(Contd. p.40)

CAPITALISM IN AGRICULTURE

by Paddy Healy

Despite the increase in industrialisation which has taken place in recent years, agriculture still remains the most important sector of the Irish economy. This is not alone due to the large volume of agricultural exports but also due to their nature as primary products for whose production relatively little imports are necessary. For this reason agricultural exports are much more profitable than industrial exports.

However, the Irish economy does not gain full benefit from its agricultural produce, due to its subservience to British Imperialism. This subservience manifests itself in many ways. The most obvious example is the fact that the vast bulk of Irish cattle are exported on the hoof to Britain where they are slaughtered and processed. This cannot be done on a large scale in Ireland since Britain only imports limited quotas of carcass beef. Thus the development of a large meat industry in Ireland is effectively stunted. Also, due to the imperialist nature of the capitalist world, backward agricultural countries are forced to sell their products at prices fixed by the advanced capitalist countries. Even though vast sections of the world's population are hungry the fact is that those who need food can't afford to buy it. Hence the only market for agricultural goods is the advanced capitalist countries which enjoy a vast over-supply. This allows them to fix their own prices. For example, the British government fixes maximum prices for agricultural goods, subsidises its own small agricultural sector to enable farmers to produce at these prices and in this way forces agricultural countries such as Ireland to sell their goods at these prices on the British market. Hence the Irish Government is compelled to subsidise agricultural exports. Thus the British capitalists provide themselves with a healthy well-fed working class partly at the expense of the Irish farmer and the Irish working class.

It is only in this context that the slump in cattle prices last year and the steady decline and expected crash this year can be properly understood. While, due to the above factors, cattle prices in Ireland are always depressed, in recent years the situation has been aggravated for a number of reasons. Due to the boom in the British economy with consequent increase in demand, Irish cattle and beef exports reached their highest point ever. At the same time, under pressure from Britain, a campaign was initiated to eradicate tuberculosis from Irish cattle. The slaughter of animals which did not pass the test significantly reduced Irish cattle numbers. Export requirements at that time necessitated the rebuilding of Irish herds. To this end the government introduced the calved heifer subsidy scheme. A grant of £15 per head was paid to farmers for each newly calving heifer. Thus cattle numbers were quickly restored and indeed significantly increased. However, the Government did not foresee the new developments that were to take place. The British economy encountered difficulties and demand was reduced. The Common Market countries adopted a common external tariff of 40% on all agricultural goods. This made it impossible for any outside country to export cattle or beef to that area. Irish, British and Danish supplies were diverted from Europe to the British market which became over-supplied. Consequently cattle prices in Ireland slumped drastically last year particularly during the summer months. This was the main cause of the NFA agitation which was led by the cattle ranchers. However, as always,

the small farmers suffered the greatest hardship. They were forced to sell their calves and yearlings 'for a song' to the big farmers.

This year the situation was almost as bad. The efforts of the British government to increase home cattle production, in order to improve their balance of payments position, have begun to bear fruit. Also, following the advice of Charles Haughey, many well-off farmers held on to their fat cattle last year in anticipation of an improvement in prices this year. Consequently, during the summer months, Irish cattle came on the already flooded British market in larger numbers than ever before. The price of beef fell by 40/= per cwt. with a resulting drop in cattle prices in Ireland, bringing further hardship to small farmers.

Later in the year, however, cattle prices increased somewhat due to the fact that the number of animals in the country began to decline. Due to the bad prices they received in the last two years farmers had begun to get out of cattle. This is an example of the normal merry-go-round situation that exists in Irish agriculture. If in one year the price of a certain commodity is relatively good, many farmers begin to produce it the following year and to abandon production of less lucrative commodities. Very often due to overproduction in relation to existing markets, the price of this commodity falls, whereupon farmers begin to produce something else. Thus severe blows are regularly dealt to the standard of living of small farmers who may be relying on the sale of a few calves, a litter of bonhams or a flock of turkeys, in order to recover the feeding and the labour they have expended in production. It is clear that the only remedy for this is planned production in a socialist economy.

The future prospects of Irish farming are poor. Even if Ireland gains access to the Common Market on Britain's coat-tails, the improvement would be slight. Denmark and Iceland would also have gained access and as France, Germany and Italy have substantial agricultural sectors the market would still be heavily over-supplied. Indeed France has given indications that even if Britain is admitted, Ireland, Denmark and Iceland may be kept out in order to protect France's large agricultural sector.

The stunting of Irish agriculture is a result of the ridiculous irrationalities of the capitalist system of production. Capitalism is capable of producing, but being unable to distribute, it cannot fully utilise the productive forces it has developed. Even though great masses of the world's population live at starvation level, Irish and indeed world agriculture cannot be fully developed due to the distortions arising from capitalism and imperialism - capitalism's highest form. The agricultural industry like every other industry under capitalism is at the mercy of recurrent slumps which cause grave hardship to small farmers. Big farmers like wealthy capitalists, unless the slump is of disastrous proportions, can comfortably weather these crises due to the wealth they have built up by exploiting farm labourers directly and small farmers indirectly.

The only remedy for this tragic situation is the smashing of world capitalism and the setting up of a socialist system under which the full productive capacity of the world's agricultural resources can be utilised and developed. Only in this way can the hungry millions be freed from their slavery and given the opportunity to develop their full faculties as human beings.

((EDITORS' NOTE: This article was written before the foot and mouth plague, and therefore does not take this into account. We include it because it outlines the general situation in normal conditions, which will certainly return.))

ICE AGE & THAW

((Last of three articles on the arts of Bolshevism and of Stalinism, by Rachel Lever))

THE TRANSITION

The statements and discussions of the CPSU in the early twenties left no doubt that artists must be left free to work, develop and experiment both in the matter of form, and regarding their relationship with propaganda or direct political commitment. Before the Stalinist bureaucracy could lay down in 1932 that both the style and content of a work of art in any medium must follow certain rules, a period of time had to elapse, in which the transition could be made from Bolshevism to Stalinism.

It was during this period that RAPP (Association of Proletarian Artists & Writers) came into its own. It was supposedly independent and unofficial, but in effect functioned under the guardianship of the Stalin faction, and through economic boycott and strangulation, systematic political and social ostracism, it wielded enough power to bludgeon and bully and suffocate most artistic endeavour in the late 1920s.

Its main task was not to lay down formal rules for literature and art - the writers were not yet compliant enough for that. What it did insist on was the principle that art must serve propaganda, and this reached a climax in 1930 at an international Congress it sponsored at Kharkov, with delegates from 22 countries.

RAPP owed its success to the fact that it managed to take into itself many genuine, if mistaken, communists who wanted to show their devotion to the Revolution as actively in the arts as in other spheres of life. Many of the campaigns were directed at writers outside the Party, and RAPP's early slogans, like "The Living Man" and "Tearing down The Masks" appeared harmless enough. They still insisted on the artists' right to tell the whole truth in objective and human characterisations, they had respect for psychological truth, and never advocated over-simplification.

Literary ability, however, was way down its table of virtues. Membership depended on ability to "organise the psyche of the toiling masses in the direction of the ultimate tasks of the proletariat" - which meant organising the writers in the direction of the tasks set by the Russian bureaucracy. Presiding over this process was Leopold Averbach, whose own style was once likened to that of "a business-college sophomore studying to be a publicity writer for a scenic railroad". Victor Serge described him around 1930: "He was a young Soviet careerist possessed of an extraordinary talent for the bureaucratic calling. Less than thirty, he had the hairless head of the young senior official, the verbal fluency of a congress demagogue, and the dominating false-sincere eyes of the manipulator of meetings."

"THE SEIZURE OF POWER IN LITERATURE"

A good deal had been accomplished by 1930, when such slogans as "The Five-Year Plan in Poetry" and "Creative Duty to the Socialist Fatherland" found mute acceptance at the Kharkov Congress. There, RAPP members spoke of 'the art job', 'poetic shock troops', 'turning out of literary commodities' and 'the seizure of power in literature'. Heedless of Marx's opposition to that division of labour in the arts which reduced an artist to being solely a painter, writer, sculptor, etc., Tretyakov blithely outlined his plan - and was applauded!

"We foresee the operation of literary workshops where the functions are divided... That is, the workshops will contain specialists of an extra-literary order, having valuable material at their disposal (voyages, investigations, biographies, adventures etc); alongside them fixators will be at work gathering necessary material, happenings, notes, documents. The mounting of the received materials in this or that sequence, the working up of the language in dependence upon the public for which the book is being written - this is the job of the literary formulators. ... We can't wait forever while the professional writer tosses in his bed and gives birth to something known and useful to him alone. We assume that book production can be planned in advance like the production of textiles or steel."

Victor Serge remembered a similar RAPP meeting "...we heard a report from Averbach on the spirit of the proletariat, the collective farm and bolshevism in literature. Lunacharsky, frozen in a stance of weary boredom, kept passing me ironical little notes."

The purpose of these activities was to bring to heel the many bourgeois and fellow-travelling writers who had remained in Russia, and those writers and artists who had returned to seek private patronage after the N.E.P. They were destined to be the mainstay of the future regime in the arts, being far easier to control than those who had joined the Party and had worked with the Bolsheviks. Among them were some fine and independent writers, like Boris Pilniak, who ^{had} to be picked out and humiliated before he could be useful to the bureaucracy. Others had been bourgeois hacks and, having learned their lesson from the example of Pilniak, were just as willing to be Stalinist hacks. When they were thoroughly broken in, they could be brought in to replace Marxists, as literary scabs. The Bolshevik historian Pokrovsky, for example, was denounced and in his place two bourgeois historians, Tarle and Vipper, were rehabilitated and recalled to carry out the important task of glorifying Russian despots of the past.

Despite all the bullying by RAPP, and the increasingly oppressive atmosphere, there was still a certain amount of latitude for intellectuals and, considering the coming ice-age, comparative freedom. Other small societies existed which could shelter the individual artist from the fury of RAPP; many managed to avoid RAPP by reason of their reputation - Mayakovsky stayed away from it until shortly before his suicide; and despite a spate of 'Five Year Plan' novels and plays, there was no Absolute Decree on style.

By 1932 it was judged that RAPP had completed its useful work, and as a reward it was summarily dismissed. All other writers' organisations were abolished, and the Central Committee assumed direct control through the single Union of Soviet Writers. At the same time, "Socialist Realism" was declared to be the official style of all Soviet writers, painters, film-makers, musicians etc.

RAPP had done its job, and could not be trusted any longer - it contained too many people who were genuinely striving for a 'proletarian' art, and a number of these were later denounced as 'Trotskyists'. As for Averbach - "He was still the nephew of Yagoda, the head of Security, and a good bureaucrat to boot. He delivered a number of speeches condemning his own 'cultural politics' of yesterday... And the C.C. gave him the task of managing a Communist organisation in Magnitogorsk. There Leopold Averbach initiated a sabotage-trial, acted himself as prosecutor against the technicians concerned, (and) had them condemned to death according to the rite.." (Serge).

"SOCIALIST REALISM"

Everybody praises a work of art which is true to life; conversely, art which is false and artificial is generally regarded as signalling decadence, though it can still give pleasure and entertainment. As such, however, it is usually ranked second, as art, to the work of truth and sincerity.

But 'true to life' is a very general phrase and likewise the word 'realism' needs to be defined before it can be useful. Sometimes it rests on polar opposites: Classicism contains the essence of the real, a 'universal' reality derived from a constant study of nature; 'romantic' realism generally concentrates on the particular. It either depicts this particular with exact and photographically representational likeness, or caricatures, distorts and exaggerates it, ignoring the niceties of correct detail, in order to draw attention to it. Also, a work can be termed realistic simply because of its choice of subject matter, regardless of the form it takes - this usage in particular became popular in the last century to cover subjects which had hitherto not been considered worthy of art - i.e. ordinary everyday objects, and the 'unheroic' lives of the exploited classes.

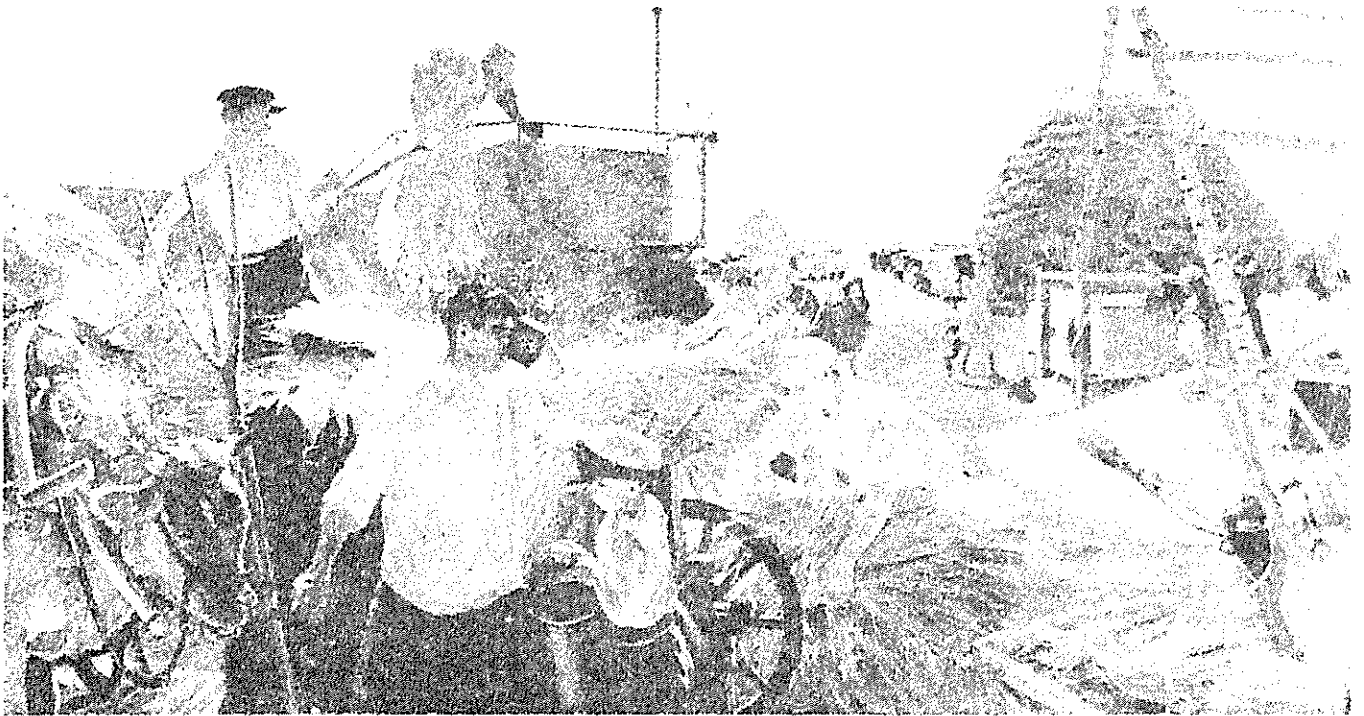
To merit praise as 'true to life' or sincere, a work of art may be realistic in any one of these ways, or in a suitable combination of them - or in none of them. But a bad combination of the contradictory elements in form or subject can lead to disaster, ie something just as false and meaningless as a piece of purely decorative art - except that the latter has no pretensions, and at least brightens up the view.

If one took the Stalinist bureaucrats at their face value, the only possible conclusion would be that they made every mistake in the book when they formulated their art of the Socialist Fatherland. Less charitable people will probably say that the bureaucracy didn't care a damn about the rules of art.

They started out from the 'social realism' of the 19th century - Balzac, Tolstoy, Zola. At the time, Marx had taken realism as the main criterion of a work of literature. Not only was it, in artistic terms, the avant garde at that time, but socially it could not be other than revolutionary. Both Marx and Engels thought that no matter where the writer stood politically, if he only faithfully portrayed the society he lived in (i.e. class society) and its relationships, his work would be revolutionary. This view was also held by the ruling class, which was horrified by the realists. Their method of minute physical and psychological investigation, the documentary approach they often adopted, led to the shedding of much of the moralising sentimentality which had hitherto coated all depictions of the 'lower' classes.

Was this what Zhdanov wanted? No, not quite. It was explained that these classics

had used realism to negate their society. Socialist Realists must use realism to affirm theirs. In practice, in order to do this, genuine realism (loosely defined as 'true to life') had to be suppressed completely, and the forms of it harnessed to a fantasy-propaganda world instead of reality; or, as another variant, a loose approximation to reality could be shown, but so generalised and so glossed up that it had nothing to do with realism either. The penetrating eye and unflinching pen of a genuine realist would surely have shown us something of the suffocating political atmosphere; it might have given a glimpse of old men rummaging through dustbins at the back of GPU men's homes, hoping to find some potato peelings; we may have been shown the wives and daughters of workers supplement their wages by selling themselves to those same GPU men, or the wife of a bureaucrat emerging from one of the special 'Luxe' shops laden with fine clothes, delicacies and perfumes, while homeless children are rounded up from the streets and treated like criminals. But Socialist (!) Realism (!) could show none of these - for it's brief was, without looking or thinking, to affirm everything around it. But not only did the truth have to be suppressed. It had to be suppressed while appearing to be shown.



So, when dealing with reality, the Socialist Realist writer or artist couldn't be too careful. Leonov's novel Road to the Ocean tells the story of a Bolshevik hero - but the presidium of the Union of Soviet Writers decided it was too individualised. History must never be just crudely reflected - but subtly fitted in with the demands of propaganda, spruced up to fit the image. Alexei Tolstoy's Civil War novel - Bread (1937) - had to alter countless historical facts so as to make Stalin the hero of the defence of Tsaritsyn. (Not that Alexei Tolstoy minded!) One had to be careful about ancient history too: Demyan Bedny's 'Epic Heroes' was denounced for treating satirically the 10th century conversion of Russia to Christianity!

What was wanted was not reality at all, but an idealised, generalised, 'typical' Soviet hero, the larger-than-life collective-farm worker that-should-have-been; the Leader, recognisable only by moustache and pipe, inflated monstrously and surrounded by all the evidence of an apotheosis. The observer's impartiality of many of the 19th century realists had been wiped out without a trace: RAPP had seen to that. The formula laid down "the ideological remoulding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism". For 'Spirit of Socialism' read a strong tinge of Romanticism - "a supreme spirit of heroic deeds and magnificent future prospects".



What then was left of the classic realism which had once been so revolutionary - and which, in Soviet conditions, would have been equally revolutionary. All that remained was the name, which was a very good - if ill fitting - cover for the figments of a hack imagination. Who, after all, could object to the idea of an art which is true and sincere, or call into question such an eminent ancestry? Also, Marx and Engels could always be dragged in by the hair and made to testify that Realism is a desirable quality - forgetting the fact that "Socialist Realism" had absolutely no connection with Realism. Meanwhile, their statements on commitment (the following two samples are Engels') could be quietly forgotten:

"The more the
author's views are concealed the better for the work of art. The realism ... may
creep out even in spite of the author's views." (Letter to Margaret Harkness, 1888)

"... I think
the bias should flow by itself from the situation and action, without particular
indications, and that the writer is not obliged to obtrude on the reader the future
historical solutions of the social conflicts pictured." (Letter to Minna Kautsky 1885)

There remained also, as a hollow shell, the forms of the 19th century realism, the surface style. This, devoid of its content, was quite irrelevant to the whole question of realism. But it was a useful way to suppress experimentation, and by keeping to the conventions which the censors could understand, kept them safe from any deviations into genuine realism which might be cunningly disguised within some new-found form.

Evidently taking it all at face value, Brecht summed up the whole question in an article (dated July 1938) intended for Das Wort (a German literary review produced in Moscow, of which he was co-editor at the time) but not published until 1954:

"As a result no doubt of essays concentrating on a particular way of realistic writing - that of the bourgeois novel - readers of Das Wort have recently expressed their concern that this review may be restricting realism in literature within too narrow boundaries. One or two articles may have laid down unduly formal criteria for realist writing, and as a result several readers came to interpret this as meaning that a book is written realistically when it is 'written in the same way as the bourgeois novels of the last century'."

After quoting Shelley, Cervantes, Swift, Grimmelhausen, Dickens, Voltaire and Hasek as realists using different forms from those of Tolstoy and Balzac, he concluded that 'realism is not a matter of form' -

"Tying a great conception like
Realism to a few names is dangerous, however famous they may be, and so is the
bundling together of a few forms to make a universally-applicable creative method,
even if those forms are useful in themselves. Literary forms have to be checked
against reality, not against aesthetics - even realist aesthetics. There are
many ways of suppressing the truth, and many ways of stating it." (Emphasis R.L.)

Some years later, he summed up in retrospect the effect of this reduction of the notion of realism to one style. It is worth quoting at length again - Brecht was one of the few genuinely creative artists whose friendship Stalinism could boast. Although sufficiently disillusioned to write in the same notebook the cryptic question "ACCESSIBLE TO THE PEOPLE OR ACCESSIBLE TO THE OFFICIAL", he still writes with the sympathy of one who believes it was all just a matter of well-intentioned mistakes:

"The principles of a realistic and socialist art were not examined but simply treated as a style to be imposed on artists of very different sorts, some of them of world-wide reputation. This led to a pernicious levelling and to the discouragement of that individual and independent sense of form without which no art is possible. The campaign against the formalism of decaying bourgeois art was turned into a campaign against the sense of form.... Without Marxist knowledge and a socialist outlook it is impossible today to understand reality or to use one's understanding to change it. For art, however, this is not a question of style, least of all today. Style only comes into the matter in so far as the style needs to be as simple as possible, as intelligible as possible; the battle for socialism cannot be won by a handful of highly educated connoisseurs, a few people who know how to understand complicated charades. But I said as simple as possible. Certain complex processes which we need to understand cannot be quite simply portrayed." (from Brecht on Theatre, trans. John Willett. Methuen.)

Another writer with no political fish to fry was Sean O'Casey, who expressed himself rather more directly in a letter to Ken Coates in 1955:

Life, he said, was complex,
".. bewildering, lively, dull, selfish, generous and so on. And what a complex
thing is one human life alone! All it has to deal with, within himself, without
from the life of others. Zhdanov - of whom you have heard, I daresay - didn't
know what he was talking about; and all who echoed him in the Daily Worker and
elsewhere, knew a damned sight less."

(Published in The Socialist Register, 1964)

THE THIRTIES

How was the "most advanced literature in the world" brought into being? How could a writer or a painter abandon his life's course and "with hands that tremble for fear of the verdict of some official", as Brecht wrote, set about his precarious task of deriving "the material for his works of art, his subject matter, images, artistic language and speech, from the life and experience of the men and women of Dnieprostroy, of Magnitostroy ... from the heroic epic of the Chelyuskin expedition, from the experience of our collective farms"; at the same time steering between the "seamy side of Soviet life" (a subject strictly forbidden) which stared him daily in the face, and the mythical master-race of the bureaucratic propagandists?

The answer is that, unless he wanted to emigrate, he had no choice. The Central Committee had the monopoly of publishing, printing, distribution, criticism: "Success was manufactured wholly by the Party offices. The chosen book, recommended to all the libraries in the land, was printed in tens of thousands of copies; the Foreign Languages Publishing House translated it into several languages, and the author, loaded with money and praise, became a 'great writer' in the space of a season, which of course deceived nobody." (Serge). Conversely, those books which accidentally got printed and were not favoured by the Writers' Union, were not even permitted a small circulation - they were sent immediately to be pulped.

Close supervision reigned long before the printing stage: "I was checked, line by line, by experts charged with the task of uncovering possible sabotage in the disposition of semicolons. I knew Nadezhda Constantinova Krupskaya was working in similar conditions on her memoirs of Lenin; a committee was reviewing her every line. Gorky was altering his own memoirs on the demand of the Central Committee.".. To Boris Pilniak "it had been suggested ... that to avoid banishment from Soviet literature, he should remodel "Forest of the Isles", that 'counter-revolutionary' tale of his, into a novel agreeable to the C.C. This body's Cultural Section had assigned him a co-author who, page by page, would ask him to suppress this and add that. The helpmate's name was Yezhov...." (Serge)

There were inducements of a different kind. Serge continues: "Then came the years of rationing, famine and black-marketeering. Authors with the right ideas received fantastic secret rations from the GPU co-operatives, including even butter, cheese and chocolate! 'Do have a little taste', a friend asked me, 'of this highly confidential Gruyere...' Doubtful writers, that is any who were lyrical, mystical or unpolitical, got mediocre official rations." This was increasingly supplemented by imprisonment, deportation and execution.

THE 1934 WRITERS' CONGRESS

After several years of such conditioning, and two years after the announcement of "Socialist" "Realism", the intellectuals were brought out and put on show in a great circus called the first Writers' Congress. During 25 sessions over two weeks, 200 speeches and reports were delivered to the 590 Russian delegates and 40 distinguished foreign guests. The main purpose of the exercise was to acclaim the 'most advanced literature in the world', and to attack and denigrate anything which looked like contending for the title.

A few voices spoke in different tones - and within three years they were silenced. Babel spoke for the "right to surprise", to experiment. Jean Richard Bloch advocated

different levels for literature - that some could be written for a very small audience, but serve society generally by being "test pilots of literature, seekers after new forms."

The bureaucracy, however, was far from wanting new forms. After all, what was good enough for their great-grandfathers was good enough for the workers, though it was to be described by Che Guevara as 'nothing more than the corpse of the bourgeois art of the nineteenth century.' But anyone who harboured such thoughts could be silent and starve, or be silent and make some kind of living working on translation of the bourgeois classics, or converting folk songs into popular poems and songs, so long as the themes were general enough. For the hacks, those Guevara called the "docile servants of official thought", it wasn't a bad life.

These were by no means all revolutionaries. Ehrenberg had written in 1919 a long poem, "Prayer for Russia", an attack on Bolshevik rule and lament for Russia's fate. Probably foremost of the hacks was Alexei Tolstoy, who hadn't even stayed behind: "I had met him in Berlin in 1922, an authentic counter-revolutionary emigré, negotiating his return to Russia and his future royalties. Highly esteemed by the educated classes under Tsarism, a discreet liberal and honest patriot, he had fled with the White forces from the Revolution... In character, manner, morals he was really a high Russian lord of the olden days, loving beautiful things, good living, polite literature, cautiously liberal opinions, the odour of power..." (Serge). Tolstoy began to write historical works on Peter the Great, and with unerring instinct, or perhaps an eye on the main chance, managed to bring out certain comparisons with his own Great Leader. Stalin was well flattered, and later Tolstoy wrote two plays glorifying Ivan the Terrible in the same way. This was also in accordance with the build-up of nationalistic propaganda. Little wonder that Tolstoy was soon acclaimed as the official Great Writer.

On this note the Thirties drew to a close. Most of the really talented writers were no longer to be seen - they had either been purged, or taken their own lives, or just quietly given up the ghost and stopped writing, lapsing into what Babel had called the 'Genre of Silence'. The tight control over literature continued, on the pretext that there was a constant danger from counter-revolutionary Trotskyists and saboteurs, until the German attack in 1941. When the real danger came the controls were relaxed, within the specified formal limits. A writer could find satisfaction in writing genuine documentary reports and stories from the Front. Thus true realism was only permitted when it did not indict the regime.

ZHDANOVISM

To counter the effects of the war-time looseness and re-establish the Party's role and its 'ideological orthodoxy', Andrei Zhdanov came back onto the scene like a ton of bricks, and initiated a period of such tight control that the Party line was carried out to the letter - with catastrophic consequences.

He started out in August 1946 with a denunciation or two. This was how it was reflected in the British Stalinist press: "Zoshchenko was condemned for 'scratching about amidst the lowest and pettiest sides of life' and not being at all concerned with the efforts and heroism of the Soviet people. Akhmatova's poems, 'mainly emphasising erotic love themes, interwoven with notes of sadness, yearning, death, mysticism and fatality,'" - Jack Beeching's description, in 1957, was of "an elderly lady writing, apparently, mainly on the themes of pussy cats and unre-
quited

love" - "could do young people nothing but harm - 'they can only sow gloom, low spirits, pessimism, the desire to escape from the vital problems of social life'." (Emile Burns, 'The Soviet Discussions', in The Modern Quarterly, Autumn 1948). Zoshchenko and Anna Akhmatova were among the few to have survived the thirties without becoming hacks, and during the war had formed a rallying point for younger writers of the new generation. They had been attacked in a half-hearted way as far back as 1943, and now that absolute obedience was once again required, their influence had to be removed. They were also to serve as an example and a warning to others.

The initial keynote, then, was optimism. Whereas before the stress had been on the socialist struggle, conflict was now reduced to a minimum. Lest Akhmatova's fate befall them, the well-trained pen-pushers responded with bright saccharine smiles. They succeeded so well that all the theatres remained half-empty, and there was no sale for their books.

To neutralise this, the critics were brought in to complain. Safronov, writing in the magazine "October", in 1948, condemned plays with "neither conflict nor character; they have only comedy-type situations." In the same journal, I. Altman said that "The main defect of our drama is the quite unjustified attempt on the part of our writers to smooth out the conflicts which manifest themselves in life, to make a play less sharp-edged, and to make the hero into a 'mouthpiece for ideas' who loses the traits of a living character."

Now it seems that the critics did their job a little too zealously, and had themselves to be reined in. An editorial article on January 28th 1949 in Pravda initiated the new campaign, against "An antipatriotic Group of Theatre Critics" which embraced "nests of bourgeois aestheticism, camouflaging an anti-patriotic, cosmopolitan, corrupt attitude toward Soviet art." They had indulged in the vile crime of raising the question of an opposition "between literature's educational role and its artistic standards". The article defined the task of Soviet literature as the glorification of the regim's achievements and successes, and went on to list the most suitable 'sources of inspiration'.

The chief emphasis now was on Patriotism, though this was hardly new. This twist in the campaign had been heralded as early as 1947 when Nusinov was attacked for having given too much credit to western influences in the development of Pushkin! Now any critic who had objected (or even mentioned) that characters pronounced didactic high-flown speeches about the Motherland, was accused of lack of patriotism. However, the new patriotism demanded a specific condemnation of the old and praise for the new in each and every work. To make their point, the Union of Writers picked out V. Sosyura's poem 'Love the Ukraine' as a dismal failure, for it had concentrated on the 'eternal Ukraine of field and sky and nature' without mentioning the power plants or telegraph poles that were a new feature of these fields. Though it had been written in 1944, long before the current campaign, it was singled out in 1951 and attacked as 'bourgeois nationalist', and both Sosyura and the translator Prokofiev had to admit their error.

As a result of the campaign against the iniquitous cosmopolitan critics (many of them Jews), a whole series of new rationalisations had to be constructed. What now was the function of the critic? What authority had he? The answer was that he must 'hold dear the fate of Soviet literature' and not be 'alien and hostile'. And presumably the converse applied - the right line of criticism was right because it

'held dear the fate of Soviet literature' and wrong line wrong because it was hostile and alien.

The "Optimism Campaign" of 1946 had led to synthetic smiles all round, and the critics' remedy had been too strong. To try and find a happy medium, a new law of dialectics was concocted, whereby there was not exactly conflict, but something faintly resembling it misunderstanding!! Henceforth, all 'conflict' within Soviet society was not between Good and Bad, or Black and White, as it had been previously, but between the Good and the Better, or the Good and the Excellent. Principally, it must be between old and new production techniques.

The next period saw a crop of plays about workbench lovers falling out over safety regulations, the wife who leaves her husband because he favours sowing a 'backward' crop, the collective farm hero who works himself to death during harvest time, disregarding doctor's advice, and the girl who, waiting for her boyfriend in the woods, thinks he must have made the date to discuss production problems. To the extent that these worthy artistic entertainments gained an audience at all, it was from dearth of choice offered to the newly literate masses avid for culture. But on the whole they showed their discrimination by ignoring the "most advanced literature in the world", and turning to the classics. Theatres showing "soviet" plays stayed half-empty, and "soviet" novels and poetry remained unopened in shops and libraries.

In yet another bid to win an audience, the bureaucracy now turned to ridiculing the products of its last campaign, pointing out the rather obvious fact that this was really not quite how everyone lived their lives. Moreover, they complained, the story of the wife leaving her husband belittled Soviet marriage, while the one about the hero of the harvest belittled Soviet medicine! In the same breath they called for a little satire and fun, but nobody by then felt in the mood - who knew what he might unwittingly be in danger of belittling?

THE "THAW"

All the zig-zags and exaggerations of the period known as Zhdanovism were a logical culmination to the attempt to dictate the content and style of a work of art. The better trained were the hacks, the more they carried out to the letter the latest instruction; finally every iota of individual creative interest had been drained out. It was exactly as Brecht once warned - "It's not the job of the Marxist-Leninist Party to organise production of poems as on a poultry farm. If it did, the poems would resemble one another like so many eggs". Soviet arts had come to a complete full stop. The masses, increasingly discriminating and having a little leisure in which to think, were every day voting no confidence in the 'works of genius' offered them from on high. The situation was changing, and the policy had to be modified accordingly.

Since about 1956, (after some years of marking time) intellectuals have been permitted a slightly longer rein. A few critical voices are heard - but only when their criticism is 'safe'. Writers and artists are no longer shot, but kept hidden away in asylums: I have recently seen the figure for these put at 600 since 1957. Scapegoats such as Daniel and Sinyavsky suffer worse, though, and it was demanded of the poet Brodsky when he was tried as a malingerer a few years ago, that he prove the usefulness of his poetry. When the upheavals of 1956 were found to have unleashed a flood of experimentation, the Bureaucracy had to stem the tide: at a gathering of writers in 1957, Khrushchev declared that "his hand would not tremble" if it came to shooting a few who had strayed too far. Art exhibitions may.

now include, occasionally, a work which attempts to break out of the bounds of 19th century academicism; but not too far - several exhibitions that have even got as far as opening their doors, have had them closed within the hour on a flimsy pretext.

Soviet arts have reflected and paralleled at every turn the economic and political basis of Russia. In every sphere of life the slight lessening of the official grip has led to a situation where the genie (of the free activity of both workers and intellectuals) has oozed out of the bottle and been pushed back, with the Bureaucracy wrestling to replace the cork. To this extent, it can be said that a certain ferment has been going on, with the bureaucracy on the defensive. But the battle to free the arts will not be won until the workers have re-taken power, and re-established the principles laid down by the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s. In 1956 some intellectuals may have imagined that the ice was about to melt; they now know that only the top layer has thawed a little, that Stalinism is not 'the reign of Stalin' but the rule of Bureaucracy, and that the ice must be broken by the proletarian sledgehammer, not merely modified by a slight, controlled change in official temperature. The Bureaucracy today has just as much monopoly control over what is published and exhibited as it ever had in the days of Zhdanov and Stalin. The fact that it may choose to exercise its power more liberally should not blind anyone to the fact that it does so only in order to secure that power.

Despite the Bureaucracy, the conquests of October 1917 have remained the mainspring of Soviet progress. The abolition of capitalist anarchy alone has allowed the tremendous development of the means of production to the present point, at which the superabundance necessary for socialism is imminent. Ironically, a similar development has occurred in the sphere of culture - and this is particularly strange, considering that creatively the past 40 or so years in Russia has been "an epoch of mediocrities, laureates and toadies", as Trotsky wrote in 1936, when only half the damage had been done. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the Russian masses are the most literate and the most receptive in the world to the best of bourgeois culture. The general education of the proletariat, which Lenin specified as an essential prerequisite for a workers' culture, is now a reality. It has come about precisely because these workers were offered only two choices - either to read the bourgeois classics, or to plough through the fifth rate imitations of them.

At the present time, by comparison with the total censorship enforced by stalinism, bourgeois culture manages to appear completely free. When the time comes, as it must come soon, that the Russian workers establish the genuine freedom of a proletarian democracy, it will be obvious at first glance that bourgeois art is weighed down by the money-bags-society only a little less than Russian art has been by the censor.

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THE MARXISM OF OCTOBER

((These notes are intended as an introduction to the article by Trotsky which follows.))

"Together with a few others this man (Lenin) had endowed an immense movement of faltering masses with a political consciousness that was supremely clear and resolute. Even when favourable social conditions are granted, such a human achievement is rare, unique, irreplaceable at the moment of its happening. Without it the minds of those who marched would have been several degrees dimmer, the chances of chaos and of defeat amidst chaos immeasurably greater, for a degree of consciousness once lost can never be measured." (Victor Serge)

50 years ago the October Revolution gave to Revolutionary Marxism the greatest possible vindication. It was a vindication of its validity both as an analysis of class society and the potential of the proletariat, and also as a guide to the concrete revolutionary activity which assured that the potential of the working class became actual in a victorious revolution. The two were entirely inseparable, and it was the contribution of Lenin to Marxism and the Revolution that he bound together the two elements - the perspective and the struggle to attain it - in the Party which he forged and in the Russian working class which it led. Mankind, afflicted with the barbarities of Imperialism's first great modern slaughter, saw lifted a corner of the curtain which veiled its potential future.

Within only three years of the outbreak of war, when the former Marxist parties had lined up behind "their own" capitalists to defend their various "Fatherlands", revolutionary Marxism seemed stone dead and buried in the quicklime of the mass graves filled with the millions of workers who had been misled to fratricidal slaughter. The programme and premises of Marxism seemed exposed as just another piece of mythology, feeble day-dreams of the long preceding mid-summer of capitalist prosperity, now dispersed in face of the harsh power politics of the new reality and the flexed power of militaristic capitalism. In face of the capitulation of the supposedly Marxist Second International, Marxism seemed to have been one more ration of dope to drug the masses from day to day only the better to line them up later behind the ruling class in its hour of need.

MARXISM LIVES !

The October Revolution changed all that utterly and finally. The victory of the Bolshevik workers demonstrated that there was another Marxism, another conception of Marxism, which its exponents took seriously. This Marxism was altogether unlike the counterfeit of the western Social-Democracies, which had increasingly been a hollow facade, ^{an} external element unrelated to the practical work of accommodating to the capitalist system. The narrow sectional interests of the labour aristocracy, the Union machine and the tame parliamentarians had dominated, - not Marxism. From the very beginning of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and indeed in laying its foundations, Lenin had waged an unrelenting war on the disease which was in 1914

to lay waste the West European movement, The Russian Marxists had seen the first open signs of the disease, and had fought the Economists, Mensheviks and all the others who had at different times tried to give the opportunist malaise firm roots in the Russian Labour movement. Lenin built a different type of Party, one with sharp consciousness and self-accounting; a Party capable of the utmost flexibility in tactics, whether in a reactionary parliament or in street fights, and capable at the same time of being utterly immoveable on issues of principle; a Party so tempered that it could carry out a complete strategic reorientation in the turmoil of the revolutionary year 1917, and go on, having accepted its new perspective of immediate workers' power in Russia, to actually lead the proletariat in the conquest of that power: a Party which subordinated to its own revolutionary goals the unions which grew up after 1905 and, while carrying on the day to day struggle, avoided having its horizons foreshortened and its goal blurred; a Party which had been built to fight to implement the Marxist programme, and which steered at every step by the revolutionary spirit of Marxism.

THE BOLSHEVIK SCHOOL

Henceforth it was this Marxism of Lenin and Trotsky which claimed the allegiance of those who wanted to fight for workers' power. The best elements in the world labour movement went to school to the Bolsheviks: It was, and still is, the best possible school. In the intervening 50 years no school or tradition has come forward which is remotely comparable with that of Lenin. There has been only one experience of conscious seizure and retention of power by the working class, and Bolshevism was the political crystallisation of that event. The experience of Bolshevism is still the decisive experience of revolutionary politics. It is still the essential school. We cannot escape the fact that workers' upsurges in many countries have been defeated and suppressed because of the absence of Bolshevism or the weakness of its representatives. Only Bolshevism has ever given political and organisational clarity to the roused proletarian masses sufficient to lead them to victory.

Today we are still facing the same tasks as those formulated by the first Congresses of the Comintern. Bolshevik politics are our guide in the battle to re-ignite the fires which flared in Petrograd 50 years ago. There can be no other guide.

But what is Bolshevism? For Stalinists it is just one other empty word. They tell us it is the same thing as the monstrous complex of rationalisations, lies and police state repression which has arisen in Russia and which claimed for its first victims all the old Bolsheviks! For certain other people cries of "Bolshevism" amount in actuality to a sectarian licence for absurdity. At the other pole stand our 'eclectic Marxists' who empty the well of their wisdom over our heads in insistently telling and retelling us that 'Bolshevik solutions' and the 'Bolshevik experience and tradition are irrelevant in our conditions'. They tell us that Bolshevism is good only for ditching.

But the younger generation of revolutionary socialists cannot afford to ditch or to ignore the Bolshevik heritage. Nor can we accept that the monstrous stalinist apparition and its ideological reflection are other than a negation of the highest points reached by working class politics. Neither shall we be satisfied with the child's rattle of the sectarians and their slanted catch-words and mechanical analogies.

Our course must be to rework, study and learn from the original sources. We must reconquer the Marxism of October. In particular we have the writings of Lenin and Trotsky. There we must seek knowledge - not myth - of the actual events, the

history, the concrete developments. Above all, in order to be able to understand as Marxists, we must re-learn the method of the Bolsheviki. It is to contribute to the necessary re-conquest of the lost heights of Marxist consciousness that we republish, following these notes, Trotsky's CURVE OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT, as a study in the method of the Bolsheviki and the early Comintern.

MARXISM AND REALITY

Marxism is a method, dialectics, It is a 'constant' applied to nature and society fermenting and changing continuously, and is reacted back upon and enriched by concrete developments. "Dialectics is living, many-sided knowledge (with the number of sides eternally increasing), with an infinite number of shades of every approach and approximation to reality.."(Lenin). In this article Trotsky discusses the mechanics of its application to the broad dynamics and fluctuations of capitalist development. Basing himself on some ideas of Engels' he tries to schematise the interrelationships of the ebbs and flows of the economic basis of society and the various elements in the superstructure - including revolutions. Quoting Engels he explains the impossibility of grasping on the wing the milliards of facets of current reality as they develop and interact. Post facto is the time of the reckoning - the owl of Minerva flies in the evening. "And yet the explanation of political phenomena cannot be postponed, because the struggle cannot wait. Hence flows the necessity of resorting in daily political activity to explanations which are so general that through long usage they become transformed into truisms.." Here also we have the root of many distortions of revolutionary Marxism itself and of much confusion in the practical action of marxists. This is the nub of the question of Marxism as a tool for preparation of revolutionary action: the relation of marxist theory and concrete revolutionary practice. For if theory lags, becomes less concrete, its validity is weakened and the dangers become greater: this is a fundamental question of marxism as a revolutionary science.

The fact that initially scientific analyses of reality tend to become truisms and less concrete in face of changing reality and the impossibility of keeping this under direct immediate observation, raises inescapably the question of the relationship of our accepted ideas (the result of the application of marxism to past, receding, reality) to our concrete practical work in an evolving situation. In general there is no revealed truth in relation to practice in Marxism; only a method and partially codified experience, which as a tool to grapple with reality must be constantly retested. If it is not possible to have a clear and conscious analysis of immediate changes in reality then the 'commorplace truisms' avoid becoming the increasingly vulgar abstractions by the concrete practice of those who take the ideas as a guide to action. "the truth", said Lenin, "is always concrete". Where the revolutionaries fail to take these ideas according to the marxist conception as precepts for practice, we see many varieties of sectarianism, simple satisfaction with endless repetition of abstractions which are ever-more antagonistic to reality as they become ever-more ends in themselves. This starts off as frozen theoretical conservatism in face of developing reality, and a failure to evolve practice to maintain the revitalising contact with reality.

CONCRETISATION

Here the approach to reality of the revolutionaries is the decisive question. We need systematic concretisation of our generalities and rigorously consistent theoretical accounting of our practical work and experiences. Without this there can be no talk of that CONSCIOUSNESS which was the mark of the Bolsheviki. Marxism is not a self-contained entity and cannot be such. A condition of health is a mutually fructifying interaction with the class struggle. Practice is guided by theory and in turn enriches the ideas of the marxists, sharpening them on the stone of reality. Theory must guide action as the living pulsating link between the accepted theoretical codification and the living, changing, reality.

Trotsky's article was meant partly as a contribution to the discussion on the problems of the Communist International in the early twenties, and the relationship of its actions to the ebbs and flows of the tide of revolution. This period saw the end of the boiling revolutionary ferment in Western Europe amongst the working class and the beginning of temporary stabilisation of capitalism on the basis of the defeat of the workers. In this period of sharp changes in tempo and direction, a period of sharp polarisation between social democrats, congenitally sluggish, whose treachery had brought on the recent defeats, and communists whose ardour allowed little respect for objective assessment of reality and who were frankly going through an ultra-left phase - in this situation, the need was to assert, even in a dangerously schematic fashion, the lawfulness of these ebbs and flows. The general observations of Trotsky on these questions throw a great deal of valuable light on the period we have been living through in the recent evolution of capitalism, and also on the likely effects of a break, of which there are many signs already, in the upward curve.

The greatest enemy of effective revolutionary action was mechanical thinking of the left orientation and also of the right, which tended to believe in automatic capitalist stabilisation. Reporting to the Third Comintern Congress Trotsky said: "Faith in autonomism of development is the most characteristic trait of opportunism." But if belief in automatic capitalist stabilisation bred Right opportunism; the same conception of capitalism's collapse generated Left opportunism. In an article POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES Trotsky wrote on this question: "At the Third World Congress we were told that the economic crisis would endure without interruption and get worse until the proletariat seize power. This mechanistic outlook was at the bottom of the revolutionary optimism of certain "Lefts". When we explained that conjunctural ups and downs are inevitable in world economy and that it is necessary to foresee them and take them into account, tactically, these comrades imagined that we were engaged in a revision of well nigh the entire Programme and tactics of the International. In reality we were engaged only in a revision of certain prejudices... Without a prognosis it is generally impossible to arrive at a far-reaching revolutionary policy. But our prognosis cannot be mechanistic. It must be dialectical. It must take into account the interaction of objective and subjective historical forces. and this opens up the possibility of several variants - depending on how the relation of forces shapes up in living historical action".

NO BOLSHEVISM WITHOUT THE MARXIST METHOD

The need to insist on both the predominance of objective reality, and at the same time that conscious working class activity remains the key which can transform that reality - in short, the need for a materialist dialectical conception, is especially vital. Those who 'accept' the politics of Bolshevism but avoid the inconvenience of mastering the marxist method here illustrated by Trotsky, are free to develop their own peculiarities, to steer, not by marxist analysis but arbitrarily by their own subjective inclinations. The Revolutionary movement in Britain and N.I. provides us with examples of the results of the one-sidedness and distortion of elements of marxism that flows from this. Some see the content of Marxism as empty schemas to be fitted to elements in the real world after a sufficient period of contemplation; in the process they shed the whole conception of creative activity. Others impatiently ^{abandon} the objective basis of marxism and stress the activist element in the same arbitrary and subjective way, and with essentially the same method as their quietist first cousins. In both cases failure to base their activity on marxist analysis leads to futility. The state of the British 'Trotskyist' movement is convincing proof that activity after the model of the Bolsheviks is quite impossible unless one begins with and is guided by their method.

MARXISM AND STALINISM

Trotsky wrote this article also in attempt to map out a guideline for some of the work of research and codification which the resources of the Soviet state seemed to make

possible. He projected a series of detailed studies to enrich marxism. But the effects of the Soviet state on marxism were destined to be the very opposite of what Trotsky had in mind. Far from making available unprecedented resources as Trotsky had expected, the Soviet Union, in its isolation and progressive degeneration under a usurping bureaucracy, was to be the scene and source of an unparalleled degradation and prostitution of Marxism - disembodied elements of which became part of the ideology of the new elite.

Marxism, the highest expression of rationality and scientific human consciousness, became anathema to the new bureaucratic rulers whose interests stood opposed to the working class. For the stalinists marxism became a few vulgar schemas and compilations of minced texts from the various mummified books and iconised masters of Marxism, pasted together under whatever heading best suited them, and arranged to "demonstrate" whatever the current and ever-shifting needs of the selectors demanded. Only the phrases, references and dead heroes remained - and usually with their meaning reversed - to serve as a rationale for the bureaucracy which still needed to give an account of itself in the old terms.

The world Communist Parties, steering by the single, if moving, star of Bureaucratic interest, evolved a grotesque system of adaptation and readaptation to the Russian bureaucracy's empirical zig-zags - and that was the sum of their marxism. Unfortunately their marxism still passes for good coin very readily, and all the more so because opponents of Marxism find the smelly stalinist straw man so much easier to trounce.

Any attempt, such as that of the Stalinists, to utilise the outer forms of Marxism by classes or groups antagonistic to the proletariat, must result in a hollow sham. If Marxism sums up the logic of reality in projecting a perspective of social evolution upwards (there always remains the possibility of regression, of course) towards the proletarian conquest of power and the liquidation of classes - then the annexation of elements of Marxism by forces ^{whose} needs go against this must lead to emasculation, the abstraction from it of both its objective base and its characteristic insistence on human activity. Only that class capable of totally changing it, can bear to look for long at the world as it really is without the comfort of idealist distortions of one sort or another. An example of this is the Stalinist intellectuals in the High Stalin period who evolved an elaborate set of rationalisations for Russian reality to serve the allegedly thinking elements in the world CPs. This essentially hinged on a regression to a sort of pre-Marx version of conservative idealist dialectics, which depended on a mixture of distortion of Russian reality and avoidance of any concrete analysis in favour of rose-coloured glossing-up. Their motto in face of the dimly perceived horrors of stalinism became the old conservative Hegelian cry "What exists deserves to exist". They had no time for the revolutionary Marxist emphasis applied by the Trotskyists to Stalin's Russia: "What exists deserves to perish in favour of a higher order and genuine Marxists must prepare the future instead of bending the knee to what now exists".

In other cases, for example China today, we see elements of Marxism, distorted at one level into a cynical, deeply bureaucratic set of schemas for manipulating "the contradictions in the people"; and on another into semi-religious magic incantations.

Stalinism dealt, and still to a lesser extent continues to deal, serious blows at Marxist science, attempting to turn it from a guide in revolution to a handmaiden of counter revolution, and cutting it off from the mainstream of intellectual life for a whole period.

The bureaucratic dead hand alienated many who would have been won to the genuine Marxism and misled those who came looking for it at the wrong address. It deprived Marxism of the life-blood of development, fresh iconoclastic application to the problems of the workers' struggle, at the same time as it betrayed, misled and stifled that struggle.

THE LIVING LINK WITH BOLSHEVISM

Marxism, in the decades when it appeared synonymous with Stalinism, remained alive as a revolutionary world outlook only in the hands of small, bitterly persecuted, almost wholly Trotskyist minorities. They had to live and struggle with the cumulative effects of the workers' defeats and the strengthening of the anti-revolutionary groups within the labour movement. They experienced the qualitative transformation of revolutionary perspectives (in a potentially revolutionary epoch) from being the *raison d'être* of powerful mass movements to a situation of being held only by tiny propagandist groups locked in a reality of which they were aware with the sharp eyes of Bolshevism - but unable to dominate.

It is to them that we owe the possibility of reclaiming the Bolshevik heritage, uncontaminated by the Stalinist rotteness. That the essence of revolutionary Marxism has been handed on to us, even if only in the sense of determined reiteration (and sometimes, it must be admitted, even 'unintelligent' reiteration) of the ABC of Bolshevism, is a tribute to the heroism of the Trotskyists.

The relationship of revolutionary activity today to this heritage of Bolshevik ideas is organic. We cannot reconquer, reclaim the Marxism of October simply by learning formulae - but only by building a Bolshevik-type organisation. As Trotsky says here, capitalist society moves in a series of crises, interspersed with periods of stability and even of expansion. But there is no automatic victory for the working people in even the sharpest crisis. If capitalism is not consciously overthrown, it can always survive upsets. Therefore the decisive question in every crisis in the future as in the past is, as Gramsci put it "the force, permanently organised and pre-ordered over a long period which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favourable (and it is favourable only to the extent that such a force exists and is full of fighting ardour). Therefore the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing that force, rendering it ever more homogeneous, compact, conscious of itself."

The existence of this party will depend on the consciousness of the revolutionaries, and on our ability to apply with sensitivity the basic ideas of Marxism, allowing the most concrete contact and involvement with the living experience of our class. Only then can it be organised and rendered conscious in order to be able to take advantage of the ebbs and flows of capitalist society to put an end finally to capitalism. Only in the struggle to forge such a weapon of proletarian revolution can we hope to reconquer the Marxism of October, and go on to the making of new Octobers.

Sean Matganna

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THE CURVE OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT by LEON TROTSKY

In his introduction to Marx's 'The Class Struggle in France' Engels wrote:

"In judging events and groups of events in modern history one can never arrive at the ultimate economic causes. Even at the present time when highly specialised literature provides us with such rich stores of material, it is impossible even in England to follow from day to day either the trend of industry and trade on the world market, or all the changes which take place in methods of production - it is impossible to follow them in order to be able at any given moment to draw a general balance of these multiplex, interlacing and constantly changing factors. Moreover, the most important of these factors operate by and large in a masked form for a long period of time, until they finally manifest themselves suddenly and potently. No clear picture of the economic history of a given period can be obtained until this period itself has reached its completion. The picture is obtained only later on, post factum, after the material has already been collected and sifted. Statistics constitute here an indispensable auxiliary vehicle, but statistics always lag behind. In consequence, it is only too often necessary in the case of current, modern history to approach that factor which is of most decisive importance as if it were a constant; to view the economic situation, as it initially unfolds in the period under investigation as if it were constant and immutable throughout the entire period; and, on the other hand, of necessity to centre attention only on such changes in the economic situation as arise from clear and indisputable events - and which therefore are themselves as clear and indisputable as the very events. The materialistic method is therefore only too often compelled to confine itself to reducing political conflicts to the clash between the interests of those classes in society and those factions within the classes which are already given at the outset of the investigation and which have already been created by economic development; and to regard the various political parties as a more or less adequate expression of their respective classes and factions. It is self evident how great a source of error is constituted by unavoidably ignoring the simultaneously occurring changes in the economic situation, this true basis of all events under investigation."

(Our Emphasis).

These ideas which Engels formulated before his death were not further developed by anyone after him. To my recollection they are even rarely quoted - much more rarely than they should be. Still more, their meaning seems to have escaped some Marxists. The explanation for this fact is once again to be found in the causes indicated by Engels which militate against any kind of economic interpretation of current history.

It is a very difficult task, impossible to solve in its full scope, to determine those subterranean impulses which economics transmits to the politics of today;

and yet the explanation of political phenomena cannot be postponed because the struggle cannot wait. Hence flows the necessity of resorting in daily political activity to explanations which are so general that through long usage they become transformed into truisms.

As long as politics keeps flowing in one and the same forms, within one and the same banks, and at about one and the same speed, i.e., as long as the accumulation of economic quantity has not passed into a change of political quality, this type of clarifying abstraction ("the interests of the bourgeoisie", "imperialism", "fascism",) still more or less serve their task: not to interpret a political fact in all its concreteness, but to reduce it to a familiar social type, which is, of course, intrinsically of inestimable importance.

But when a serious change occurs in the situation, all the more so a sharp turn, such general explanations reveal their complete inadequacy, and become wholly transformed into empty truisms. In such cases it is invariably necessary to probe analytically much more deeply in order to determine the qualitative aspect, and if possible also to measure quantitatively the impulses of economics upon politics. These "impulses" represent the dialectic form of the "tasks" which originate in the dynamic foundation and are submitted for solution in the sphere of the superstructure.

Oscillations of the economic conjuncture (boom-depression-crisis) already signify in and of themselves periodic impulses which give rise now to quantitative, now to qualitative changes, and to new formations in the field of politics. The revenues of possessing classes, the state budget, wages, unemployment, proportions of foreign trade, etc., are intimately bound up with the economic conjuncture, and, in their turn, exert the most direct influence on politics. This alone is enough to make one understand how important and fruitful it is to follow step by step the history of political parties, state institutions, etc. in relation to the cycles of capitalist development. By this we do not at all mean to say that these cycles explain everything; this is excluded if only for the reason that cycles themselves are not fundamental but derivative economic phenomena. They unfold on the basis of the development of productive forces through the medium of market relations. But cycles explain a great deal, forming as they do through automatic pulsation an indispensable dialectic spring in the mechanics of capitalist society. The breaking points of the trade-industrial conjuncture bring us into a closer proximity with the critical knots in the web of the development of political tendencies, legislation, and all forms of ideology.

But capitalism is not characterised solely by the periodic recurrence of cycles - otherwise what would occur would be a complex repetition and not dynamic development. Trade-industrial cycles are of different character in different periods. The chief difference between them is determined by quantitative interrelations between the crisis and the boom period within each given cycle. If the boom restores with a surplus the destruction or constriction during the preceding crisis, then capitalist development moves upward. If the crisis, which signalizes destruction, or, at all events, contraction of productive

forces, surpasses in its intensity the corresponding boom, then we get as a result a decline in economy. Finally, if the crisis and boom approximate each other in force, then we get a temporary and stagnating equilibrium in economy. This is the scheme in the rough. We observe in history that homogeneous cycles are grouped in a series. Entire epochs of capitalist development exist when a number of cycles is characterised by sharply delineated booms and weak, short-lived crises. As a result we have a sharply rising movement of the basic curve of capitalist development. There obtain epochs of stagnation when this curve, while passing through partial cyclical oscillations, remains on approximately the same level for decades. And finally, during certain historical periods the basic curve, while passing as always through cyclical oscillations, dips downward as a whole, signalling the decline of productive forces.

It is already possible to postulate a priori that epochs of energetic capitalist development must possess features - in politics, in law, in philosophy, in poetry - sharply different from those in the epochs of stagnation or economic decline. Still more, a transition from one epoch of this kind to a different one must naturally produce the greatest convulsions in the relationships between classes and between states. At the Third World Congress of the Comintern we had to stress this point - in the struggle against the purely mechanistic conception of capitalist disintegration now in progress. If periodic replacements of "normal" booms by "normal" crises find their reflection on all spheres of social life, then a transition from an entire boom epoch to one of decline, or vice versa, engenders the greatest historical disturbances and it is not hard to show that in many cases revolutions and wars straddle the borderline between two different epochs of economic development, ie, the junction of two different segments of the capitalist curve. To analyse all of modern history from this standpoint is truly one of the most gratifying tasks of dialectical materialism.

Following the Third World Congress of the Comintern, Professor Kondratiev approached this problem - as usual, painstakingly evading the formulation of the question adopted by the Congress itself - and attempted to set up alongside of the "minor cycle", covering a period of ten years, the concept of a "major cycle", embracing approximately fifty years. According to this symmetrically styled construction, a major economic cycle consists of some five minor cycles, and furthermore, half of them have the character of boom, while the other half is that of crisis, with all the necessary transitional stages. The statistical determinations of major cycles compiled by Kondratiev should be subjected to careful and not over-credulous verification, both in respect to individual countries as well as the world market as a whole. It is already possible to refute in advance Professor Kondratiev's attempt to invest epochs labelled by him as major cycles with the self-same "rigidly lawful rhythm" that is observable in minor cycles; it is an obviously false generalisation from a formal analogy. The periodic recurrence of minor cycles is conditioned by the internal dynamics of capitalist forces, and manifests itself always and everywhere once the market comes into existence. As regards the large segments of the capitalist curve of development (50 years) which Professor Kondratiev incautiously proposes to designate also as cycles, their character and duration is determined not by the internal interplay of capitalist forces but by those

external conditions through whose channel capitalist development flows. The acquisition by capitalism of new countries and continents, the discovery of new natural resources, and, in the wake of these, such major facts of "super-structural" order as wars and revolutions determine the character and the replacement of ascending, stagnating or declining epochs of capitalist development.

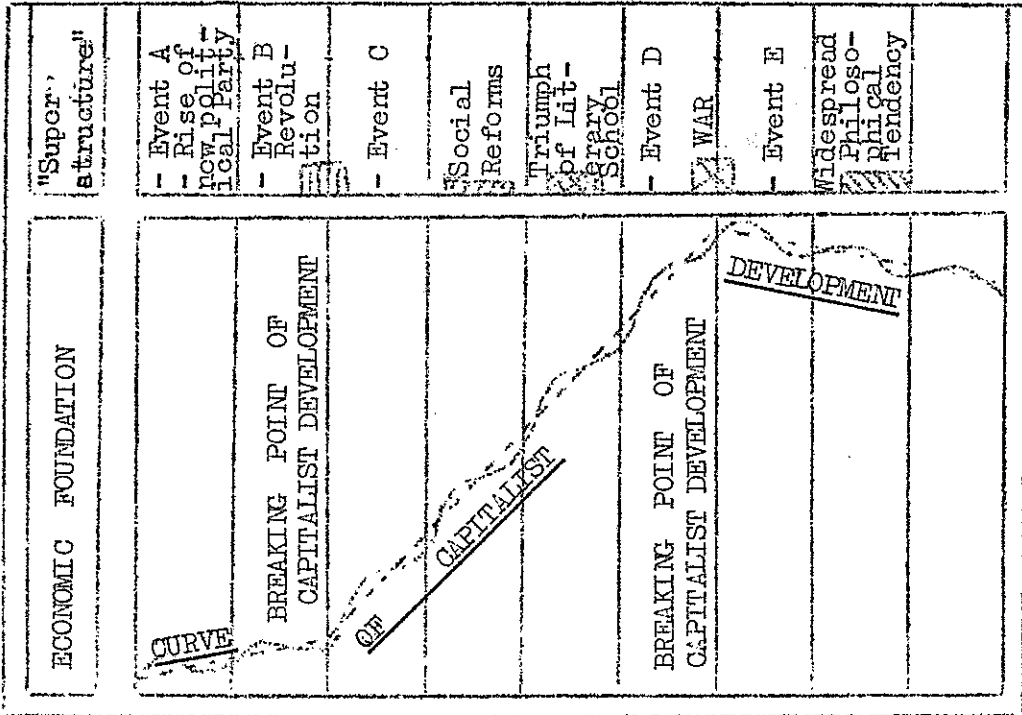
Along what path then should investigation proceed?

To establish the curve of capitalist development in its non-periodic (basic) and periodic (secondary) phases and breaking points in respect to individual countries of interest to us and in respect to the entire world market - such is the first part of the task. Once we have the fixed curve (the method of fixing it is of course a special question in itself and by no means a simple one but it pertains to the field of economic-statistical technique), we can break it down into periods, depending upon the angle of rise and decline in reference to the axis of abscissas (see the graph). In this way we obtain a pictorial scheme of economic development, i.e. the characterisation of the "true basis of all the events under investigation" (Engels).

Depending upon the concreteness and detail of our investigation, we may require a number of such schemas: one relating to agriculture, another to heavy industry, and so on. With this schema as our starting point, we must next synchronise it with political events (in the widest sense of the term) and we can then seek not only for correspondence, or to put it more cautiously, inter-relationship between definitely delineated epochs of social life and the sharply expressed segments of the curve of capitalist development but also for those direct subterranean impulses which unleash events. Along this road it is naturally not at all difficult to fall into the most vulgar schematisation; and above all, to ignore the tenacious internal conditioning and succession of ideological processes; and to become oblivious of the fact that economics is decisive only in the 'last analysis'. There has been no lack of caricature-conclusions drawn from the Marxist method! But to renounce on this account the above-indicated formulation of the question ("it smells of economism") is to demonstrate complete inability to understand the essence of Marxism which seeks for the causes of changes in social superstructure in the changes of the economic foundation, and not anywhere else.

At the risk of incurring the theoretical ire of opponents of "economism" (and partly with the intention of provoking their indignation) we present here a schematic chart which depicts arbitrarily a curve of capitalist development for a period of ninety years along the above-construed lines. The general direction of the basic curve is determined by the character of the partial conjunctural curves of which it is composed. In our schema three periods are sharply demarcated: 20 years of very gradual capitalist development (segment A - B); 40 years of energetic upswing (segment B - C); 30 years of protracted crisis and decline (segment C - D). If we introduce into this diagram the most important historical events for the corresponding period, then the pictorial juxtaposition of major political events with the variations of the curve is alone sufficient to provide the idea of the invaluable starting points for

historico-materialist investigations. The parallelism of political events and economic changes is of course very relative. As a general rule, the "super-structure" registers and reflects new formations in the economic sphere only after considerable delay. But this law must be laid bare through a concrete investigation of those complex inter-relationships of which we here present a pictorial hint.



In the report to the Third World Congress we illustrated our idea with certain historical examples drawn from the epoch of the revolution of 1848, the epoch of the first Russian revolution (1905) and the period through which we are now passing (1920-1921) We refer the reader to these examples (see "The New Course"). They do not supply anything finished but they do characterise adequately enough the extraordinary importance of the approach advanced by us - above all, for understanding the most critical leaps in history: wars and revolutions. If in this letter we utilise a purely arbitrary pictorial scheme, without attempting to take any actual period in history as a basis, we do so for the simple reason that any attempt of this sort would resemble far too much an incautious anticipation of those results flowing from a complex and painstaking investigation which has yet to be made.

At the present time it is of course still impossible to foresee to any precise degree just what sections of the field of history will be illuminated and just how much light will be cast by a materialist investigation which would proceed from a more concrete study of the capitalist curve and the inter-relationship between the latter and all the aspects of social life. Conquests which may be

attained on this road can be determined only as the result of such an investigation itself, which must be more systematic, more orderly than those historic-materialist excursions hitherto undertaken. In any case, such an approach to modern history promises to enrich the theory of historical materialism with conquests far more precious than the extremely dubious speculative juggling, with the concepts and terms of the materialist method which has, under the pens of some of our Marxists, transplanted the methods of formalism into the domain of the materialist dialectic; which has led to reducing the task to rendering definitions and classifications more precise and to splitting empty abstractions into four equally empty parts; in short, has adulterated Marxism by means of the indecently elegant mannerisms of Kantian epigones. It is a silly thing indeed endlessly to sharpen and resharpen the instrument, to chip away Marxist steel when the task is to apply the instrument in working over the raw material!

In our opinion this theme could provide the subject matter for the most fruitful work of our Marxist seminars on historical materialism. Independent investigations undertaken in this sphere would undoubtedly shed new light or, at least, throw more light on isolated historical events and entire epochs. Finally, the very habit of thinking in terms of the foregoing categories would extremely facilitate political orientation in the present epoch, which is an epoch that reveals more openly than ever before the connection between capitalist economics that has attained the peak of saturation with capitalist politics that has become completely unbridled.

I promised long ago to develop this theme for the "Vestnik Sotsialisticheskoi Akademii". Up to now I have been prevented by circumstances from keeping this promise. I am not sure that I shall be able to fulfill it in the near future. For this reason I confine myself in the meantime to this letter.

BLACK POWER - Contd. from p. 17)

.. The first necessity for this is that the white workers move into opposition. Until this unity becomes a reality then the advance guard in struggles remain the negroes.

The great positive thing about the movement around Black Power is that it has become a rallying cry for the most militant of the negroes, around which are organised defense committees to fight off the terrorist cops. By stressing self-reliance it has gained widespread support amongst the black masses tired of seeing Uncle Toms at the head of their columns. As a result the black workers, whose present stance must be seen as transitional, are the vanguard. And insofar as Black Power mobilises these workers against the system it must be supported, critically - but wholeheartedly.

Black Power cannot achieve its stated aims, and in this sense its perspectives are unrealisable under capitalism. But it can and is crashing through layers of prejudice and discriminatory practice built up over decades by capitalism in its drive to divide and rule, practices irremovable in yet more decades of peaceful campaigning. This in itself is a blow against US Imperialism. It is doing it in a revolutionary way. And that surely is no mean achievement.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE ?

The criticism which Comrade Lysaght levels at the Irish Labour Party in the last issue of Workers' Republic may or may not be valid. But of his approach and of the framework within which he works one thing is vividly clear - it must be utterly rejected. There is only one context which might make his article acceptable and justify the editors in their publication of it:- if he had criticised the Labour Party's programme not from a Social-Democratic point of view, as he has, but rather as a socialist revolutionary seeing reforms within the L.P. not as an end in themselves but merely a means of mobilising the workers against the system as such. Comrade Lysaght has become enmeshed and hopelessly caught up in the machinations of the L.P. itself. His article is narrow in outlook, myopic in perspective. He can look with affection at such fellow-travellers as Bernstein and Kautsky. But no. Revolutionary phrases are no strangers among their writings: but for Comrade Lysaght even this revolutionary vocabulary is non-existent. He exists in a world long since impotent. For him the Second International is still a living force.

Today, Marxists can admit no illusions as to the nature and functions of such Social-democratic organisations as the Labour Party. In essence, Social-democracy can only be defined as a "bourgeois agency" throwing the working class into confusion. While it is an expression of the level of the labour movement at a certain period, and while in practical work Marxists must base themselves on this fact - we will never advance from it if Marxists simply accomodate to it. In Ireland the Labour Party no longer has a progressive role to play. It can travel no road other than that of the reactionary and treacherous British Labour Party. Marxists recognise, however, that the Labour Party is still capable of attracting potential revolutionaries and many sincere workers at a rank and file level. It is towards these people that we must turn when we are in the Labour Party, to join with them in struggle against the right wing leaders and attempt to win them to a full Marxist consciousness. In the course of struggle, and in discussing everyday problems of our class, we can also raise within the Labour Party transitional slogans and demands in an effort to heighten the class-consciousness of the working class.

About the Labour Party itself, or the role which it plays in society, we have no illusions. It is a bourgeois organisation through which any revolt or dissatisfaction in the ranks of the working class is dissipated into thin air. It serves the function of a safety valve preventing the workers from coming to a greater realisation of the objective circumstances in which they exist. It twists and distorts reality and by presenting minor reforms in the capitalist system as significant and worthwhile gains for the oppressed class, proclaims its true function as the ally of the exploiting class. The real treachery of the Labour Party lies in its perpetuation of the myth that bourgeois democracy is the only reality, and in its blatant failure to pose the real and only alternative - proletarian democracy. The Labour Party has no perspective other than working within the capitalist system and is thus doomed before it starts. Any organisation which does not clearly pose the question of taking state power, smashing the present system and installing the dictatorship of the proletariat, becomes a foil for the progressive role of the working class and is condemned to a reactionary role.

In this context, Comrade Lysaght's article was remarkable not for what it said but for what it did not say. He wholly concerns himself with minor reforms and is determined that the Labour Party should lead the other two bourgeois parties in adapting and acclimatising the defunct capitalist system. He is able to welcome the demand for a "full scale national Health Service" and nods approvingly at the "proposal on a national roads policy" and on education. What comes when there is a "full scale national Health Service"? Will a "national roads policy" put an end to the class struggle? If "control of terms for leases" which is such "an obvious immediate policy" and moreover "one which must be pressed" - if such control is introduced will the proletariat wake up some bright and sunny morning to find the capitalists packed and gone? Come off it, Comrade Lysaght. What when these reforms are in effect? More reforms? And then yet more again? This would be a great game, comrade, if it were not for the fact that the capitalists are, and would be, laughing their heads off as they set off in their private planes and yachts to sunny places while the working class provides the ready cash: to receive in return a boot in the face. We are not playing games, Comrade Lysaght. Nor does the vast majority of the population see the joke. Take a closer look at your cannon fodder. Go into the factories and see the workers spending their time toiling in the most soul destroying jobs to earn for themselves the right to exist and for others the means to enjoy a life of ease and luxury. Go and talk to the small farmer with his few acres on which he struggles to wrench a pitiful few pounds. Walk along the dole queues and tell these people of your petty reforms. Tell them that you are concerning yourself with reforming the capitalist system. But do not, do not tell them that they can end this lamentable state of affairs by seizing state power and throwing out the exploiters. No, Comrade Lysaght, conveniently forget this question - and above all, do not pose the sort of 'reforms' that would question the basis of the system.

Comrade Lysaght counterposes reform to revolution, minimum programme to maximum programme, in the best social democratic tradition. We are not concerned with 'reform' demands which will at best patch up the system, but in "revolutionary reform" which can be a transitional bridge on the road to overthrow the system as such, mobilising the workers in a sharpening conflict with the entire system.

"...Since the final goal of socialism" Rosa Luxembourge wrote, "constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the social-democratic movement * from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labour movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle against this order, for the suppression of this order - the question 'reform or revolution?', as it is posed by Bernstein, equals for the social democrat the question 'to be or not to be?'".

Well, Comrade Lysaght, to be or not to be?

* Written in 1899, and meaning social democracy in the pre-1914 sense.

MAO'S

REVIEW

PROGRESS



Mao Tse-tung by Stuart Schram.
Pelican Original. 7/6.

This work is a thorough attempt to trace the development of the Chinese Revolution, to show its early settings, the impact of the October Revolution on China and the subsequent development and demise of the CPC. It is a useful quick outline of the subject, tracing Mao's early development and the part he played at each juncture. In the main Schram has avoided psychologising about Mao and has scrupulously studied the original writings of Mao and the CPC and indicated in what respect they have been revised. Even if Schram has gone along with some of the current myths, by his chronological documentation he certainly blows many of them sky high.

Schram amply shows the twists and turns in Chinese foreign policy. However, in spite of the tremendous scholarship that has gone into this work, he is unable to bring out the essentially empiricist character of the Chinese rejection of 'peaceful co-existence'. He sees it as a conflict of European and Asian Communism generated by personalities. On the whole the earlier, historical part is the more interesting.

The penetration of Imperialism into China and the subsequent developments over sixty years, coupled with the long history of warlordism, combined to produce a nationalism which espoused certain western democratic liberal ideas for the unification and saving of the Chinese

Nation. The two examples of this were the constitutional monarchist reform movement in 1898 of K'ang and Liang and the republican movement of Sun Yat-sen, Wang Ching-wei, and Hu Hun-min, which later became the Kuomintang (KMT).

MAO BEFORE OCTOBER

When in 1911 there were revolutionary upsurges in Wuhan and Changshu led by Sunist forces, Mao joined them. He had been at High School up til then and when the revolutionary wave subsided in 1912 he demobbed himself and went back to his books. However, contrary to popular myth, Mao was extremely ambivalent in his attitude to the workers and poor peasants at this time. He came from a merchant family and spent a considerable portion of his income on buying water, as according to tradition he considered it beneath his dignity as an intellectual to carry it into the city himself. When he left High School and the Nationalist Army he was interested in becoming a "jurist and a mandarin" at Law School. He changed his mind and having been rejected for other courses spent six months studying Russia, US, England, France and other countries. He then studied to become a teacher.

In the period of Mao's student days, 1915-21, there was a wave of radical movements and ideas mainly with a nationalist, anti-Japanese motive, but also spurred on by the October Revolution. Mao became embroiled in the student movement and organised student bodies against encroachments by the university au-

thorities. In 1917 he read the paper of Ch'en Tu-hsiu (who was soon to found the CPC) "New Youth", and thus by the end of 1917 was participating in the "New Peoples' Study Society", predominantly an organisation of intellectuals who advocated the abolition of the "three bonds" - prince/subject, father/son, husband/wife - and came out against religion, capitalism and autocracy.

1919 saw massive student demonstrations accompanied by anti-Japanese slogans. In June 1919 Mao helped to form the 'United Students Association' of Hunan which demanded the decapitation of a local pro-Japanese politician. There were mass arrests of students in Peking which led to protest strikes by both workers and merchants in Shanghai and most other large cities. This was a mass movement which remained confined entirely to the cities. Mao, at that time, was a propagandist who had imbibed a few Marxist ideas.

THE CPC IS FOUNDED.

Under the impact of the October Revolution small groups of communists grew up. Mao was converted to socialist ideas in the 1919-20 period. By 1920 there were nuclei of the CP at Shanghai and Peking. Mao organised a branch in Hunan at the end of 1920.

In the 1920-21 period Mao was organising labour unions and together with all other communists saw the proletariat as the leading force in the socialist revolution, both in colonial and advanced capitalist countries. In fact, when the first Congress of the CPC was held in July 1921 they were decidedly sectarian. They called for the ending of relations with parties and groups other than the proletariat. Naturally there is an attempt by Mao and his CPC biographers to paint him as anti-sectarian after the fact.

By the time of the 2nd. Congress in July 1922, the CPC had been taken to task for its sectarianism by the Communist International. They now adopted a resolution espousing a United Front with the Nationalists.

However, Sun Yat-sen turned down the Un-

ited Front. Maring, the CI representative, on his own initiative then steamrolled through the CPC a course whereby communists would be allowed to join the KMT on an individual basis. This amounted to a subordination to the Nationalist forces whose roots were amongst the national bourgeoisie and the better off sections of the peasantry. In spite of the fact that the majority of the CPC were opposed to this course and that it violated the Comintern's position on the independence of the proletariat and its party in backward countries, Li Ta-chao and Mao embraced with fervour the new policy which was to prove so disastrous. So now, in July 1923, Mao affirmed the merchants to be the leaders of the National revolution and that control of the labour movement should be relinquished to the KMT.

SUBORDINATION TO THE K.M.T.

In October 1923 Borodin, Stalin's representative, arrived in Canton. He undertook to make a party of the KMT with Soviet technical and military aid. When the first congress of the KMT took place in January 1924 Mao was elected an alternate member of their Central Executive Committee. Throughout 1924 he emerged himself in the peasant work of the KMT so much so that Li Li-san derided him as Hu Han-min's secretary. Mao's turn to the peasantry was thus based initially on the centrist policies of Stalin in 1924 and not, as is often made out, a profound theoretical insight into the "new role" of the peasantry!

The 1925-27 period is well known in the Marxist movement as marking the first classical tactics of Stalinism. The CPC, under the leadership of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, stuck to Bolshevik conceptions of the United Front tactic and the leadership of the proletariat in the revolution; but Stalin, through Borodin, forced on them a complete subordination to the KMT. In this period Mao bent over backwards to be more pro-peasant, pro-KMT, than Stalin himself!

As the KMT started to clamp down on CP members and murdered some of the "left" KMT officers who were gravitating toward

the CP, Ch'en proposed that the CP withdraw from the KMT. He was over-ruled by Maring, supported by Mao. In January 1926, at the second Congress of the KMT, Mao defined the peasantry as the centre of gravity of the national revolution. He lost his seat on the Central Committee of the CPC, but remained alternate member of the KMT EC, and was actually appointed Editor of the new KMT organ "The Political Weekly".

During the Northern Expedition in 1926-27, a movement to unify the country, Stalin used the CP as a means of restraining the poor peasants, who were carrying out their own confiscation of the landlords' and rich peasants' land, to placate the bourgeois and landlord officers of the KMT. In April 1927 the KMT, led by Chiang, massacred tens of thousands of the Shanghai workers who had handed the city over to him. Repressions followed in Peking and Canton. In spite of these tremendous setbacks to the revolution, the Stalinist course continued. The rest of 1927 was taken up conciliating sections of the KMT, which led to the further liquidation of communist forces, confirming the warnings and analysis of Trotsky and the Russian Left Opposition.

MAO BREAKS FINALLY WITH THE WORKERS

The origin of Mao's subsequent guerilla course is to be found in his previous orientation and the Stalinist policy in the Autumn of 1927. Under Borodin's directives Mao was sent to try to organise an armed uprising amongst the Hunanese peasantry which, three months earlier, had been vigorously restrained by the CPC including Mao, and were now disorientated and demoralised. It was an adventure, and Mao was forced into the surrounding countryside with a handful of followers. Mao then united with two bandit chiefs and, with a small army of declassed peasant elements, conducted sorties to massacre local landlords. Thus, he collected many more landless peasants along the way.

By 1931 Moscow was strongly supporting Mao, so that the Central Committee of the CPC was moved to Kiangsi from Shanghai. The working class base of the CP, already

smashed in the massacre of the worker communists, was thus now altogether relinquished. Mao was denounced by most of the CP leadership, but he continued in his guerilla course regardless. Chen Tu-hsiu became a Trotskyist, endorsing the Left Opposition's campaign against the Stalinist course in China.

By 1931 Mao had taken over large parts of Kiangsi province. This was constituted into a "Soviet" Area. However, the only reforms that were carried out were reductions in the rents and taxes the poor peasants paid the landlords. Mao was in favour of the rich peasants retaining all their own good land, as he had illusions in their propensity, together with the national bourgeoisie, to form the backbone of the national revolution, despite the fact that he adopted in words a Third Period attitude on the proletariat. In fact, he purged officers of his army at Fut'ieh when they propounded Li Li-san's policies of confiscation of the land of rich peasants and the formation of co-operatives. 2-3,000 officers and men were liquidated.

By the summer of 1934, the Japanese had succeeded in blockading the Kiangsi Soviet Republic. After a section of the Red Army had been smashed in confronting the Japanese, Mao and the rest withdrew from Kiangsi and decided to push north on the Long March. This put Mao firmly in control of the CP, which had by now become a party of declassed peasant elements.

THE NEW K.M.T. PERIOD

By the end of 1935 the CPC had reverted from a Third Period attitude to a Popular Front one. The petit, national and part of the comprador bourgeoisie and landlords were recognised as potential allies in the anti-Japanese Front. Thus by mid-1936 the Maoists were trying to reach a working agreement once again with the KMT. Mao saw the "mass pressure" of anti-Japanese feeling as quite possibly making Chiang "see his mistakes and grant the demands of the people".

In fact in February 1937 a telegram was sent to the CEC of the KMT offering concessions. Mao agreed to subordinate the

Red Army to the KMT, to give over the newly established Shensi Soviet Republic to Nanking and to halt land reforms. And in September 1937 they agreed that a complete list of CP members who joined the KMT would be handed over to the latter and that KMT members would not be recruited to the CP. Mao paid ritual homage to the proletariat, but by December 1939, after a period of intense collaboration with the KMT, he predicted a "brilliant future" for them. In January 1940 he said the leadership would continue to belong to the KMT provided it proved itself capable! At the same time the pauper's broth of Maoist theory was the old Menshevik 2-stages theory dressed up in 'new language'. The bourgeois democratic stage would be a 'new democracy' with the 'joint revolutionary dictatorship of several revolutionary classes'. (Middle picture on p.42 shows CP and KMT flags.)

However, Mao was not altogether naive or in complete agreement with Stalin. The Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army despite being formally under the control of the KMT were difficult to control from afar. They continued to recruit the spontaneously arisen anti-Japanese defense squads in the areas behind Japanese lines. And, in August 1940, after reaching an agreement with Chiang that all the Maoist forces should be evacuated North leaving the KMT in control of Central China, the New Fourth Army swept aside KMT forces as it moved north. This was the fundamental difference between the second collaboration with the KMT and the earlier subordination. Whatever was said in ritual, the Maoists had learned the lesson and maintained their own independence. This was to allow them to survive and triumph when Chiang in '46 launched an all-out drive to exterminate them.

THINKER AT WORK

During the period 1941-44, Mao emerged as the Great Teacher, Great Leader etc. Blockaded by the Japanese forces from July 1941, Mao launched the 'rectification campaign' to "proletarianise" the peasant army. The cult of Mao Tse-tung's Thought dates from this period. At the Seventh Congress in April 1945 'The Tho-

ught of Mao Tse-tung' was said to be necessary to 'guide the entire work of the Party'; and Liu Shao-chi had said that Mao was not only the greatest revolutionary and statesman in Chinese history, but also its greatest theoretician and scientist.' The political content of Mao's Thought was such that in Autumn 1944 he accepted a coalition with the KMT under their leadership, as suggested by the US Commander. The only thing that prevented this was Chiang's tactical stupidity in refusing this coalition. However, Mao still continued to have illusions in the US and Chiang in spite of the fact that the US aided Chiang to imprison and slap down some of the Maoist forces.

CIVIL WAR 1946-1949

When the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, Stalin had concluded a treaty of friendship with Chiang and agreed to hand over Manchuria to the Nationalist forces - emphasising the need to sign the agreement quickly otherwise Mao would get in first! Mao also agreed to drop his coalition request in favour of 'democratisation' of the existing Nationalist government area. He also agreed to a reduction in the size of the PLA and to abandon certain Liberated Areas. The only reason this didn't come about was because Chiang attacked the base areas before the ink was dry on the joint agreement. He enjoyed US help in transporting troops North and Soviet benevolent neutrality. Stalin put his money on Chiang, and recognised the KMT as the leader of the revolution right up to the seizure of power by the PLA!

By the middle of 1946 China was involved in full scale civil war which had been forced on the Maoists. Schram amply describes the aid given to Chiang by Moscow and Stalin's instructions all the way along the line for Mao to give over leadership to the KMT. He also adequately documents Mao's non-Marxist attitude to the petit bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and rich peasants. For instance, the land redistribution policy that was followed in the Liberated Areas only affected 10% of the population. Mao still wanted to include the 'patriotic gentry'

in the 'very broad united front'.

THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

When the PLA gained power it was a de-classed peasant army. The old state bureaucracy was taken over en masse from the KMT. So were the nationalised industries, particularly in Manchuria, which had been in KMT hands.

At the Third Plenum of the CPC in June 1950 a resolution was advanced to the effect that it was economically desirable to follow a policy of 'preserving a rich peasant economy in order to further the early restoration of production in rural areas. At the end of 1951 Liu Shao-chi saw collectivisation of agriculture as being a long way away. Meanwhile industry was still in the hands of the national bourgeoisie: many imperialist holdings were only taken over in the early 1950s.

Industry was not completely nationalised until the middle of 1955, and even then the former managers still retained (and still do to this day) a proportion of their profits, as well as drawing fat salaries.

The Korean War saw a sharpening of the hatchet and the public emergence of what can now be identified as Maoist bureaucratic measures. In February 1951 the "campaign against counter revolutionaries" was initiated, which carried the death sentence for very broadly defined offences. There were probably something like between 1 and 3 million executed. By October 1951 the 'Thought Reform Movement' was in full swing. This was potted criticism and self-criticism amongst the

intellectuals. It was preceded by a study of 'Mao Tse-tung's Thought' and used as a means of bringing into the apparatus on a large scale former KMT personnel.

1952 saw the initiation of two further campaigns - the 'three antis' and the 'five antis'. The former was aimed at party and state cadres and hit out at corruption, waste and ... bureaucracy. The latter was switched to the National bourgeoisie in typical bonapartist fashion and hit out at bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of state economic secrets and government property. What is involved here is not Red Terror, but bureaucratic necessity.

The Hundred Flowers period in 1957 in the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution, which Mao opposed, and the Red Guard movement, are all part of the same movement which, as Schram points out, had occurred at periods when Mao's policies have not been universally accepted by his comrades or sections of the population - despite the fact that in the main, Mao's policies have been enthusiastically welcomed by the mass of the peasantry. Also, as Schram points out, Mao and his entourage have kept, or tried to keep, a rigid control on the movements generated, including the recent Red Guard movement. The student youth that are being used in the present "Cultural Revolution" were considered to be the 'stainless screw' in the 'locomotive of revolution'. Naturally, it was stipulated that obedience was required from such a screw and Mao's Thought - such as it is - was to be the sole guide.

P.S.

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