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THE ECONOMICS OF DÉTENTE

'SOVIET IMPERIALISM'

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MANDEL ON SPAIN

MEMOIRS OF A CHINESE TROTSKYIST

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Editorial

TOWARDS THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION

Throughout the nineteen-sixties, the ruling classes of the American continent were perpetually being shaken by events taking place in a very small corner of 'their' continent—Cuba. We should recall this fact when attempting to assess the importance of the political processes now unfolding in Portugal for the European continent as a whole. For just as the Cuban revolution, because it expressed and summarized the struggle of the oppressed throughout Latin America, had an impact far transcending its own borders, so the great political struggles that are clearly on the agenda in Portugal can be expected to reverberate throughout the European continent.

The immediate root of the military coup of 25 April which swept away the dictatorial apparatus of the Salazar regime, carefully constructed over the course of forty years, was a virtual consensus among the Portuguese bourgeoisie that the course of last-ditch resistance to the African liberation movements, to which the old regime was irretrievably committed, was a disastrous one. Such a course constituted a major obstacle to the continued integration of Portugal into the European economy, involved ever-growing burdens of finance and manpower on the fragile Portuguese economy, and seemed in fact to be jeopardizing, rather than reinforcing, the economic hold of Portuguese imperialism on the 'overseas territories'.

The deeper causes are to be sought in the recent pattern of growth of the Portuguese economy—centring around the development of European-oriented export industries and the establishment of branch operations by European multi-national firms in Portugal—and the development of a new economic strategy for the domination of the colonies, based on a greater readiness to collaborate with foreign imperialist interests. Nor could 25 April have occurred without the mass struggle of resistance to the Portuguese dictatorship, both at home and above all in the colonies, which made it impossible for the bourgeoisie to continue with the strategy of the Salazarist regime and at the same time impossible for the old regime to change its course.

After an unsuccessful attempt at liberalization within the framework of the old regime, during the first two years of the Caetano Government (1968-70), the bourgeoisie realized that the only hope for change was through a break with the Salazarist apparatus. What was lacking was a force that could execute this break without placing the bourgeoisie at the mercy of the mass movement. The rise of discontent among junior career officers in the armed forces, its crystallization into the Movement of the Armed Forces, and the emergence of a popular, top military man, Spinola, who shared the views of the dominant bourgeois circles and was prepared to speak out on their behalf, filled this need. Thus was born 25 April.

But if 25 April was conceived as a strategic manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie, it in turn gave birth to a sweeping mobilization of the Portuguese masses, determined to destroy every vestige of the old regime and assert their own demands for material improvement in their living standards. The masses refused to accept the role of passive spectator in which they had been cast by Spinola and his bourgeois backers. They came into the streets and, linking hands with rank-and-file soldiers and sailors, compelled the military junta to go far further than they wished in the dismantling of the Salazarist machine.

All the repressive apparatus of the old regime—the PIDE/DGS (political police), the riot police and the Republican Guard (fascist militia)—were swept away.

Young fraedom fighters receive training in military school in liberated zone in Guinea *(Photo: T.Ogawa)*.

Their members still sit in prison, awaiting the future political events which will determine their fate. In almost every company, every Government department and every organ of the mass media, workers demanded the dismissal of senior officials and managers closely associated with the old regime and its repressive policies. In place of dictatorial Government control, measures of workers' control were demanded. This process, coupled with the political ferment in the armed forces and the bonds being built between the mass movement and the military ranks, means that bourgeois rule in Portugal today hangs by a finer thread than in any other country in capitalist Europe. The main force now keeping this thread intact is the Portuguese Communist Party.

The problem which has always plagued the Portuguese bourgeoisie has been how to break with Salazarism without touching off a mass movement that would threaten the very existence of capitalist class rule. Reliance on the army as the executor of the bourgeoisie's political programme was the first answer. But the explosive eruption of the mass movement, coupled with the deep-going political ferment inside the armed forces, rapidly rendered this solution inadequate. There was only one alternative—to incorporate into the Government those political forces who could exercise influence over the mass movement and deflect it from a collision course with the bourgeoisie's political plans.

Thus the decision was made to incorporate the Socialist and Communist Parties into the provisional Government. The presence of the Socialist Party was valuable, since it brought into the Government men who had been among the most popular leaders of the democratic opposition (Raul Rego, Mario Soares). But the presence of the Communist Party was indispensable. It brought to the Government more than a few prominent individuals, more than the prestige of association with the anti-Salazarist struggle: it brought the support of a political apparatus—indeed, after the destruction of the Salazarist ANP, of *the only political apparatus in the country*.

As the weight of the Communist Party in Portuguese political life is so much greater than that of the social-democrats, so is its treachery that much more dangerous. Today in Portugal the CP has become the main opponent of further development of the mass movement. It supports a Government that can lay no claim to 'representative' status, even in bourgeois-democratic terms, but is simply a political front for the junta of senior military officers. It participates in a Government in which almost all the key posts are in the hands of either military men or barefaced representatives of the big Portuguese monopolies. Today the Portuguese Communist Party has given the Stalinist strategy of the 'anti-monopoly alliance' a new twist—they are trying to carry it out in alliance with the monopolies themselves!

With regard to the mass struggle the Communist Party now has a simple message: call it off. Since their entry into the Government they have systematically opposed all forms of mass activity. They have supported the Government's decision to fix a minimum wage of only 3,000 escudos a month (less than £12 a week—and even this does not apply to domestic servants and farm labourers), rather than the 6,000 demanded by the trade unions. Workers who have tried to fight for better wages and conditions have been denounced as 'tools of fascism'. With respect to the clearly evasive manoeuvres of the Government's colonial policy (one immediate objective of which is to keep the Cape Verde islands safe for NATO), the Communist Party has no criticisms to make. It openly supports the negotiations, and has denounced those who call for mass action in solidarity with the liberation movements as 'leftist and irresponsible'.

What does the CP offer as the way forward? 'The unity of the people and the army'. By this they do not mean the incorporation of the military rank-and-file into the mass movement, but the subordination of the mass movement to the political needs of the military junta. The experience of Chile has already revealed what this line will amount to in practice. In the name of 'unity with the army', all political work within the armed forces will be progressively liquidated in order to maintain 'unity' with the generals and professional officers. The way will thus be paved for the fulfilment of the bourgeoisie's most imperative need at the present time—the restoration of 'order and discipline' in the armed forces as the first step to reconstituting the 'unity' of the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state.

What of the future? The present situation is not one in which to mince words. Portugal is teetering on the edge of an immense economic, political and social crisis. The growth of the Portuguese economy in recent years has been closely tied to its economic integration into capitalist Europe—a Europe that is now experiencing almost universal economic crisis. Despite the rapid growth of Portuguese industry and exports to Europe, Portugal has a very serious negative visible trade balance, due to her almost total dependence on the more advanced European countries for both capital goods and important items of middle-class consumption. To some extent this balance is compensated for by foreign investment and the exploitation of the colonies. But more important are the remittances from Portuguese immigrant workers in Western Europe (which alone cover the trade deficit) and the earnings of the tourist trade. Thus, when Portuguese workers are sacked and sent home as a consequence of the deepening crisis of the European capitalist economies, they will not merely swell the ranks of the unemployed in Portugal (joining the 200,000 soldiers who will enter the workforce if the colonial wars end), but will choke off the country's most important single source of foreign exchange. Nor will depression abroad and political turmoil at home do anything to stimulate tourism.

The combination of mass unemployment, economic stagnation, the drying up of key items of middle-class consumption due to import shortages, and a corresponding acceleration of inflation, will reproduce all the elements of the situation which Chile faced in late 1973 in an even sharper fashion. For the Portuguese bourgeoisie, the need to maintain the position of Portuguese exports in an increasingly competitive European environment and to step up the flow of foreign investment capital will become questions of life and death. But these objectives can only be attained if the living standards of the masses are kept down and 'discipline and order' restored in industry.

The conclusion is only too evident: the treachery of the Portuguese Communist Party is not merely paving the way for a restoration of conservative capitalist Government. It is preparing another bloodbath on the lines of Chile. There is only one way out of the impending crisis for Portugal. It is not the road of class collaboration, compromise and 'restraint' urged on the masses by the Communist Party. The only solution is proletarian revolution: the total destruction of bourgeois rule, and the creation of a workers' and peasants' Portugal, on the foundations of which a planned economy can be built with all the necessary means at its disposal to tackle the immense economic problems of the country. This solution can be placed on the agenda concretely by a determined struggle

in the coming period for the creation of independent organs of workers', peasants' and rank-and-file soldiers' power, and around such key transitional demands as: immediate, total and unconditional military and political withdrawal from the colonies; the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly and an end to collaboration with the bourgeois 'government of National Union' by parties claiming to represent the working class, as first steps to the formation of a workers' and peasants' government and the dissolution of the Junta; the election of workers' control committees in the factories and offices and of committees of soldiers and sailors claiming full democratic political rights; a radical agrarian reform, to cement the worker-peasant alliance; a sliding scale of wages; the complete abolition of censorship and complete freedom of association, freedom of the press, freedom to strike and to demonstrate; immediate repeal of the fascist penal code; a thorough purge of all collaborators with the fascist regime from the armed forces and state apparatus; unconditional amnesty for deserters; immediate abolition of all fascist institutions and their replacement by democratically elected bodies; public, and material, support for the anti-fascist struggle in Spain.

It is this simple fact that throws into the sharpest relief the 'crisis of leadership' from which the mass movement is now so painfully suffering. In the present situation in Portugal, this phrase is not just an epochal formula: it is a concrete and precise diagnosis of the central problem facing the mass movement. The resolution of this problem will not be easy. There are many signs that the mass movement, despite a certain relaxation at present, will rapidly resume its upwards course. There is every reason to believe that this can produce a decisive outflanking of the Government and their reformist and Stalinist allies, on several fronts. But there can be no leaping over the central practical task of forging, in the crucible of the mass upheaval, a revolutionary party that can lead the struggle for proletarian power.

In this process—which is not merely difficult but also desperately urgent—the forces presently grouped in the International Communist League (LCI—Portuguese sympathizing section of the Fourth International) will have a key role to play. Working together with other forces of the revolutionary left, they must provide the nucleus around which the revolutionary party can be built.

The Bolsheviks managed to forge an instrument capable of seizing power in a space of months, between April and November of 1917. But they started out with much greater advantages: numbers, trained cadre, political experience, and the guiding genius of Lenin. Against this we can set only one thing: the experience and material assistance of the international revolutionary movement. It is little enough, but it could be a decisive factor. Revolutionaries everywhere have an obligation to support the revolutionary left in Portugal and assist their struggle for a *workers' and peasants' Portugal, foundation stone of the United Socialist States of Europe.*

IN DEFENCE OF LENINISM

A leading member of the Fourth International, Livio Maitan, replies to views expressed by the Marxist philosopher Lucio Colletti in a mass-circulation Italian weekly following the Chilean coup.

WHICH ROAD?

LUCIO COLLETTI

'Our business is to help get everything possible done to make sure there is a "last" chance for a peaceful development of the revolution, to help by the presentation of our programme, by making clear its national character, its absolute accord with the interests and demands of a vast majority of the population. Russia is a country of the petty bourgeoisie, by far the greater part of the population belonging to this class. Its vacillations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are inevitable, and only when it joins the proletariat is the victory of the revolution, of the cause of peace, freedom, and land for the working people assured easily, peacefully, quickly, and smoothly.'[1]

Not Bernstein but Lenin. And Lenin not in 1894 but on 26-7 September 1917. 'Under no circumstances can the party of the proletariat set itself the aim of "introducing" socialism in a country of small peasants so long as the overwhelming majority of the population has not come to realize the need for a socialist revolution. We are not Blanquists, we do not stand for the seizure of power by a minority. We are Marxists.'[2]

Thus whatever liberal or infantile-leftist literature may say, the problem of revolution for Marxism is not that of a choice between peaceful road and violent road. The problem is how to proceed to genuine and deep transformations with the consent of the majority, i.e. of the broad mass of the population. No self-respecting Marxist —neither Lenin, nor Trotsky, nor Luxemburg—has seen even the dictatorship of the proletariat itself as the 'quickest way', a pure act of military force, the antithesis of democracy, the power of a minority or a substitute for the consent of the people. The alternative legality/violence is an old blind alley. The 'violence' which matters is the transformation of real structures; the 'legality' which counts is the consent of the majority. Both things are indispensable. For just as the structures cannot be transformed without the participation of the broad masses (what is involved is after all the installation of new social relations), so there can be no socialism without political struggle, without freedom of the press and the right to strike, without opposition and genuine elections.

The Popular Unity's undertaking was not simply a reedition of the old popular fronts. It is therefore an error to apply to Allende the criticisms which are valid against Léon Blum. The limit of the old popular front was not that it maintained the framework of political democracy. It was that, within this framework and behind the facade of anti-fascism, the real structures remained unscathed. In the case of the Popular Unity, on the other hand, what was involved was precisely an attempt to combine a profound (albeit gradual) transformation of those structures with a mass political democracy. The objection is made that the attempt failed partly—indeed above all—because the 'framework of legality' had become too constraining, even debilitating. What was necessary was to arm the people (even if it was only 40% of them), to disarm the troops, to suppress the opposition newspapers and radio stations, to gag the rest of society. On Sunday morning at the barber's, everything is easier. But perhaps the real relations of force were not precisely those which certain friends imagine.

Yet the problem is a different one. What makes the dictatorship of the proletariat impracticable today, in the form and manner in which it was originally conceived of (and which, it should be said, was never as the dictatorship of a party or a simple minority governing through a police State, without strikes, without freedom of expression, without open opposition or political struggle), is the course of capitalist development. Neither, it is true, was the dictatorship of the proletariat seen by Marx or Lenin as avoiding the problem of consent and of democracy exercized. However, it presupposed for them the schema or model of a society in which a full capitalist development had homogenized and simplified to the maximum the social structure and stratification, reducing nine tenths of the population to workers and technicians in industry (including even agriculture)—a situation which only exists in the United States today—and at the same time isolating a tiny minority as a counter-revolutionary pole. This is why they thought the very dictatorship itself would be the

[1] The first sentence of this quotation can be found in Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 26, 'The Tasks of the Revolution', p. 60, the remaining two sentences on the preceding page. [*International*].

[2] The first sentence of this quotation can be found in Lenin, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Moscow 1967, Vol. 2, 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution', 10 April 1917, p. 37; the rest of the passage quoted can be found in the same volume, p. 20, in 'The Dual Power', 9 April 1917. [*International*].

highest form of democracy: the overwhelming majority—90% it was claimed—would expropriate a handful of exploiters. The October Revolution itself presupposed this model. Socialism was impossible in Russia; the dictatorship of the proletariat was impossible. But in the meantime the position was being held, even if only through a dictatorship of the party, until the revolution took place in Germany, where the economy and war planning had shown, according to Lenin, the actuality and correctness of Marx's model.

However, in reality things turned out differently. The societies of today—not only those which are relatively less developed, but also those where capitalist concentration and centralization have reached the highest degree—show a wide spectrum of social strata, with diverse and at times directly competing interests: peasants (various levels of these), petty and medium bourgeoisie, professional layers, sub-proletariat, industrial proletariat, etc. And here the operation becomes more complex. That homogeneous social composition, that uniformity or immediate identity of interests among nine tenths of the population which the theory foresaw at the height of capitalist development has hitherto been realized only at the other extreme: in other words, in backward countries with an overwhelming preponderance of poor peasants. Here, in the absence of great modern, centralized masses of producers, and hence in the absence of the conditions for effective democracy, restricted political elites (for the most part military ones) or charismatic leaders have been able to introduce sweeping measures of rationalization—from wholesale nationalization to all the other experiments in profane form which have been seen.

It does not appear that conditions in Chile were of this kind. Let us leave aside the possible tactical errors which nobody can evaluate seriously from here (though it is certain that, even if one was attempting a peaceful transition and even if one had an absolute majority behind one, one ought to be able to prepare some defences). Let us also leave aside the economic isolation imposed by imperialism, and the conservative role of the Christian Democrats (there as here)—indisputable as these things were. Would events have taken a different course if an appeal to the people had been made a few months earlier through a plebiscite? The possible tactical errors constitute the unrepeatable aspect of the Chilean experience. But what remains, what the left must set itself the task of discussing at all costs—rejecting with contempt the too easy advice of *Tass*—is the economic situation in the three years of Popular Unity government. Here all the problems of even a relatively little-articulated social stratification leap to the eye and give an idea of the complexity of the situation. The lorry-drivers who strike for months on end represent small and medium property which fears nationalization more than death; they make one understand how the 'demand for communism' in the modern world does not always have precisely the same force as it has in our heads. The peasants who, after the distribution of the land, refuse cooperative working on a Kolkhoz model and slaughter their animals are another reality. Finally, the workers of El Teniente who, with a month-long strike, fight to keep their wages higher than those of other workers, make us understand that it is not always enough to evoke 'class consciousness' in order to obtain it.

What this tragic experience teaches us, in my opinion, is not the impossibility of socialism nor that Allende was doomed inevitably to fall. It teaches us that in Chile the conditions (for both internal and international reasons) were horrifyingly difficult, more difficult than they already are always and in themselves. That the road to socialism imposes a complex political plan, problems of unification and alliance between differentiated social forces and, therefore, a difficult choice of common objectives, with a correct evaluation of the weight of such forces as will be discarded at each stage. Above all, it teaches us that the left must rack its brains, that there are many things which have to be rethought from the beginning, in order to make socialism also into a society which works.

THE WRONG ROAD

LIVIO MAITAN

Events of decisive importance like those in Chile necessarily lead revolutionary militants and intellectuals who consider themselves Marxists to reflect upon them critically. But the impact of so tragic an experience can cause them to evolve in two diametrically opposed directions: towards a greater understanding of the method of the revolutionary break, or towards more or less consciously disguised revisionist positions.

Regrettably, it is the second path which has been taken by Lucio Colletti, despite the fact that, on the theoretical level, he has for many years made a significant contribution to the struggle against reformist and Stalinist deformations of Marxism. The article he wrote on Chile for *l'Espresso* might, in fact, easily have been signed by Enrico Berlinguer—or at least by someone like Romano Ledda.[1] The mystifying quotations, the attribution to revolutionary Marxism of arbitrary schemas, the distortions

[1] Lucio Colletti is the most important contemporary Italian Marxist philosopher, author of *From Rousseau to Lenin* (NLB 1972) and *Marxism and Hegel* (NLB 1973). A member of the Italian Communist Party from 1950, he left it in 1964. In 1966-67 he was editor of the independent Marxist monthly *La Sinistra*. After the publication of Livio Maitan's book *Party, Army and Masses in the Chinese Crisis* in 1969, Colletti spoke with Maitan at a number of public meetings, defending Maitan's critical and Marxist analysis of the Cultural Revolution against the apologetic attitude to the Chinese bureaucracy which predominates on the Italian far left. He is also the author of an extremely useful article 'The Question of Stalin' (NLR No. 61, reproduced in pamphlet form and available from Red Books).

Enrico Berlinguer is General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Romano Ledda a Party intellectual who as editor of its theoretical journal *Critica Marxista* from 1963 to 1966 pursued a relatively 'open' policy.

in his analysis, the vacuous appeal to the new as a cover for the offer of old, defective goods: all these classic ingredients of countless revisionist operations are present in Colletti's three cursory columns, which end with an invitation to the left to 'rack its brains' and to 'rethink many things from the beginning, in order to make socialism also into a society which works'.

For his own part, Lucio Colletti has certainly not done much racking of his brains. He begins, in fact, with a quotation from Lenin (from 26-7 September 1917), in which the Bolshevik leader articulated the possibility of 'making sure there is a "last" chance for a peaceful development of the revolution'. It is worth recalling to the forgetful that the same quotation—and for the same purpose—was disinterred by the Khruschevites at the time of the Twentieth Congress, in an attempt to give an 'orthodox' cover to their neo-reformist theorizations on the peaceful road to socialism. But what the Khruschevites pretended to forget was the little detail that Lenin's hypothesis was one of a 'peaceful' coming to power *in the framework of the revolutionary democracy represented by the Soviets*—not organs of the bourgeois State but the expression of an alternative workers' and peasants' power. A little detail indeed! For Colletti to clutch in his turn at this particular life-belt is really pitiful; what is more, he forgets that even in that limited form the hypothesis was not translated into reality (nor has anything of the kind occurred in other revolutionary crises). Perhaps the reference to a text—and one dragged in by the hair—counts for more in this case than concrete historical experience?

Colletti says correctly that the Chilean Popular Unity was not a re-edition of the old popular fronts. But he does not grasp the essential aspects of the difference when he says that 'the limit of the old popular front was not that it maintained the framework of political democracy. It was that, within this framework and behind the facade of anti-fascism, the real structures remained unscathed. In the case of the Popular Unity, on the other hand, what was involved was precisely an attempt to combine a profound (albeit gradual) transformation of those structures with a mass political democracy.' Before embarking on this theme, Colletti had already carried out the classic operation of revisionists—both old and new—which consists in obliterating the crucial moment, the qualitative leap of the proletariat's seizure of power. Moreover, to say that 'the "violence" which matters is the transformation of real structures; the "legality" which counts is the consent of the majority' is precisely to avoid the problem—in reality unavoidable—of the break, of revolutionary violence, and to substitute for the concept of revolution which is essential in Marx and Lenin the concept of 'transformation' which is typical of every gradualist conception. Progressing further in mystification, Colletti forgets that the fundamental 'limit' of the French popular front which he recalls was the fact that it did not even raise the perspective of breaking the framework of the system; the fact that it consisted, in reality, of a coalition of the workers' parties with the then majority party of the bourgeoisie. As far as this last aspect is concerned, the difference with respect to the Chilean experience is manifest; for after a certain point, as the dynamic of the class struggle sharpened, the Popular Unity based itself ever more exclusively on the working-class parties and came up against the opposition of the entire bourgeoisie. But precisely because of its reformist conception—which Allende pursued with a consistency which, given the way in which he fell, we could even define as heroic—the Popular Unity never challenged either the fundamental mechanism of capitalist accumulation nor the traditional political structures nor the State apparatus in its essential articulations. Therefore—given that it was operating in a highly explosive context and could not escape a powerful pressure from below—it revealed its own contradictions all the more dramatically. It objectively stimulated an impetuous mobilization of the masses, but without giving them the necessary outlet, without organizing or structuring the movement, without ensuring that they had the indispensable instruments of defense. It was driven to take measures which disrupted the pre-existing economic balance, but it was not capable of providing the bourgeoisie—with whom it nevertheless wished to keep a dialogue going—with the guarantees which the latter demanded. Thus it could not avoid a situation of persistent conflict and a tendency to paralysis. Yet—given its premises—it could not and would not construct an alternative mechanism of accumulation.

In such a context, a head-on collision was inevitable. The bourgeoisie was driven to one by the logic of its defence of its vital interests. And it made this choice not because Allende's mass base was narrowing, but for the diametrically opposite reason. Certainly, Allende was finding it increasingly difficult to keep control of ever greater sectors of the proletariat who, far from moving to the right, were breaking in practice with the reformist approach (Colletti is wrong in his evaluation of the El Teniente strike which, after an initial confused phase, was only participated in by a clear minority of the miners). The truth is that the bourgeois leaders had come to realize that they could not win the game by progressively eroding the base of the Popular Unity régime (as, for a whole period, they had thought they would be able to do). The March elections were in this sense the alarm bell: today we know from statements made by spokesmen for the Junta that it was precisely after the elections that the military chiefs began to plan for the coup. The mobilizations which, from the end of June on, led to the occupation of hundreds of factories and to the first steps in arming the workers did the rest. Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie showed itself to be far more aware than the reformist bureaucracy (and than certain Marxist intellectuals) of the inevitability of a head-on clash, when an explosive social and political situation of such a kind is created, and of the need for a break, a qualitative leap. For this reason, when the inevitable outcome was reached, the bourgeoisie had made its preparations (utilizing the army as its irreplaceable instrument), whereas the working class was either unprepared or at best only marginally prepared.

This is the lesson of Chile, and it is a crime to try to obscure it with evasive arguments, with incorrect analyses, with mystifying 'historical' references. It is still worse if, as Colletti does, one puts forward nothing in its place except a generic pessimism or an implicit support for the basic positions of the strategy of the Communist parties. And it is still worse again if one attributes to Marx and to Lenin the idea that the dictatorship of the proletariat 'presupposed the schema or model of a society in which a full capitalist development had homogenized and simplified to the maximum the social structure and stratification, reducing nine tenths of the population to workers and technicians in industry'. Colletti has spent a decade or two in minute study of the texts: how is it possible for him now to confound the revolutionary spirit of the historical analysis and the political project of Marx and Lenin with the evolutionist pedantry of Kautsky?

PIERRE ROUSSET

THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY

A Revolutionary Party?

The history of the Vietnamese Communist Party cannot be understood simply in terms of the favourable objective conditions that the development of Vietnamese communism has enjoyed.* These have obviously played a role, but other Asian or colonial countries—for example, Indonesia—have had just as favourable conditions and yet the revolutionary process has been aborted. Moreover, other factors have had a negative effect on the Vietnamese revolution (limited population and geographical area, etc.). Above all, imperialist policy has done much to purge the Vietnamese revolution of what might have resulted from its specifically national characteristics. In China, imperialism was unable to intervene directly, on the morrow of World War Two, to prevent or postpone the victory of the Chinese Communist Party. In Cuba, the American strategists did not understand what was happening until it was too late. But in Vietnam, no such historical 'breach' existed for any length of time. On three occasions the Vietnamese Communist Party was on the verge of taking power over the whole of the national territory, under analogous conditions: in 1945, 1954 and 1964. On all three occasions, imperialism reacted—in 1945 by sending in the Anglo-French expeditionary corps, in 1954 through the mechanism of peaceful coexistence (the Geneva Agreement), in 1964 by initiating the US assault. Even the Russian revolution did not have to face such a military onslaught (though it did have to suffer even greater isolation). *Never has a revolution had to develop under such apparently unequal conditions: the Vietnamese people against all-powerful America!* The basis for the success of the Vietnamese revolution is certainly to be sought in the nature of the political parties involved and the politics that the Vietnamese Communist Party has developed. To understand the specific character of the Vietnamese Communist Party, we must take a look at the conditions which constitute the context of the Vietnamese revolution—conditions which profoundly differ from those of the developed capitalist countries.

The Nature of the Revolutionary Crisis

In the advanced capitalist countries, revolutionary crises—in which the question of power is posed in the most concrete way and a dual power situation opposes bourgeoisie and proletariat in practice—have so far proved to be of very brief duration. A few months at the most, whether in

Russia, Germany, France or even Spain. In Vietnam, however, dual power has existed almost uninterruptedly for thirty years. For socio-economic conditions are radically different there.

The society in which the revolutionary process began to develop was marked by the super-imposition of French colonization on a traditional Asiatic society. The result was a deep and continuing social disequilibrium. The metropolitan country brutally imposed its economic interests. Production was diverted away from the internal market and economic development and towards the export of raw materials and the world market. As far as possible, Vietnam's unity was broken. Inter-regional exchanges between South, Centre and North decreased and were replaced by direct relations with France. Investment was tightly controlled by French capital. The French presence was maintained by the Army, the Administration and the Church. Compulsory sales of alcohol and opium did the rest.

Colonization destroyed the ancient equilibrium of Vietnamese society. All elements involved in the running of the country before the arrival of the French were either decimated and removed from the administration after the 'Scholars' Revolt', or discredited in the eyes of the population. But colonization proved incapable of establishing a new equilibrium. The new, extremely weak, Vietnamese bourgeoisie, the new adminstration, the new notables, the Court at Hue—all these were patently foreign creations. Once Vietnam's organic economic development was arrested, its social development too suffered a deep rupture that the French bourgeoisie neither could—nor wanted to—overcome. This phenomenon—common to all under-developed countries—took on exemplary proportions in Vietnam. Unlike the British, the French never attempted to strengthen the authority of upper layers of the indigenous population, so that it could base its power upon them. According to Le Chau,[1] the national bourgeoisie controlled only 5% of private capital and that mainly in the low-profit agricultural sector. As a result, it never played more than a marginal role either politically or economically—a fact which gave considerable room for manoeuvre to the Vietnamese communists. Having broken Vietnam's organic development, the French bourgeoisie could never make use of the instrument which, at home, had repeatedly allowed it to take advantage of the errors and hesitations of the workers' movement to put an end to dangerous, pre-revolutionary situations: i.e. the presence of a 'national' bourgeoisie, supported by a political apparatus formed over a long period and having considerable economic power at its disposal. This is the first factor which explains why dual power has existed over such a long period in Indochina.

The second factor relates to the Vietnamese social structure. The chronic instability of the French colony provided the necessary condition for a protracted period of dual power: no 'national' force succeeded in winning acceptance by the population. The sufficient conditions were provided by the coming together of three elements. First, a part of the intelligentsia—mobilized against colonialism by the Scholars' Revolt and awakened to Marxist ideas through contact with the West and the young Soviet Republic. Second, a proletariat, few in numbers but already highly concentrated and beginning to become organized, which still preserved many links with the peasantry. Third, a peasant mass, pauperized and proletarianized, suffering from the reverberations of the 1929 world crisis. The coming together of these three elements made it possible to solve both the problem of the leadership of the revolution—the emergence of a communist vanguard—and that of the military survival of revolutionary dual power over a prolonged period. One must never forget that in Vietnam the social weight of the peasantry was immense. How could a revolution be made without the participation of 95% of the population (two thirds of which are landless peasants)? The view of the Vietnamese communists was to be that the solution of the national question means first and foremost a solution of the agrarian question. *A people's war means above all a peasant war under the political leadership of the proletariat.*

Vietnam is not just an under-developed country, but an 'extremely backward country' (Giap) even compared with other under-developed countries. The Vietnamese communists have discovered how to make a strength out of this weakness. Vu Can explains this when he describes the conditions which made possible the second—anti-American—Resistance: 'The South Vietnamese countryside, where some ten million peasants live in a more or less natural economy, is hardly subject at all to the power of the towns. The Saigon regime has never managed to exercise any really tight control over it, in particular because the legacy of the first Resistance has been considerable there and the memory of popular democratic power has not been erased. Economic as much as political factors explain the Saigon administration's vulnerability in the rural communes, which are the weakest link of the system.'[2] By contrast, revolutionary war will find the bases there of a 'resistance economy' for a protracted war, by basing itself on the autarky of the countryside.

Tradition and Revolution

The Vietnamese Communist Party's task was to comprehend this situation and find a way of taking the leadership of the struggles. For its understanding of the nature and strategic role of revolutionary war, the Party could draw on two experiences: that of the Chinese Red Army—some years ahead of the future Viet Minh—and the previous struggles of the Vietnamese people. Ho Chi Minh is a symbol of these experiences. A short time before the launching of the Viet Minh he spent eight months in China, in the Communist Eighth Route Army. In addition, his family had participated in the Scholars' Revolt, through which the Vietnamese for years opposed French colonization.

Although the experience of the Chinese Communists was certainly rich in lessons for the Vietnamese Party, it is nevertheless important to understand the fact that, in an attempt to link tradition and revolution, they drew just as much upon the history of the Vietnamese people. For the Vietnamese tradition is profoundly marked by experiences of popular armed struggle. The following quotations, taken from reports made by French administrators between 1885 and 1895,[3] bear witness to this. Here is what the Nam-Dinh Resident wrote on 20 December 1885, after a tour of his province: 'The leaders of the rebellion disseminate a certain propaganda in the areas they occupy. . . . The rank-and-file soldiers of this army are provided by all the villages of the region indiscriminately, which the leaders hold in a state of terror. If a French column arrives, the band, organized for the main purpose of spreading trouble across the country and keeping our soldiers on the move,

[1] Le Chau, *Le Vietnam socialiste: une économie de transition*, Maspéro 1966, pp. 35-41.

[2] Vu Can, 'Du FNL au GRP', *Etudes Vietnamiennes* No 23, p. 43.

[3] See C. Fourniau, 'Les traditions et la lutte nationale au Vietnam: l'Insurrection des lettrés', in *Tradition et révolution au Vietnam*, pp. 94-5.

hardly resists at all—just a little for appearance's sake. The known leaders and their henchmen disappear, leaving the bulk of the army and the lesser leaders, who are simply the peasants that we meet every day. We are faced with a kind of latent organization, which, in the presence of our troops, simply melts away into nothing and merges with the rest of the population. But this army only melts away and remains invisible as long as our troops are active on a permanent basis.' What we see here is the principle of the People's Army.

This army develops as the war intensifies. Here is what a French Resident wrote five years later: 'Very numerous and well armed with rapid-firing guns, guided and given information by Vietnamese deserters whose contact with us has led them to lose their salutary fear of the European, these bands are now bold enough to ambush our columns—and not without success, alas! . . . The bands which, at this time, infest the borders of our Delta provinces are stronger than ever, more cohesive than before and capable of orderly manoeuvres. They have grown from numerous little bands who previously operated in isolation; from malcontents who do not like the changes our occupation has brought about and have been unable to adapt to it; and from people oppressed by an unfair taxation system, which has been made still more heavy and odious by all kinds of abuses for which it serves as a pretext. These bands seem to follow common aims and a common leadership; in my view, this is proved by the relations which exist between them, by the support they give each other and by the extent of their field of operations, which is no longer as in the past restricted to a single district from which they seldom ventured out, but which now spreads over several provinces. They no longer live by plundering but are taking on the appearance of regular troops. Their leaders allege that the French are responsible for all the ills of the country. . . . The Bang-Y pirates did not massacre all the prisoners, wounded or not, as is the custom. Instead, they beheaded the native NCOs, cut the *Pho Quan* (superior officer) to pieces, but gave the ordinary soldiers food and sent them back, since they did not consider them responsible. Maybe we can still call this piracy, but if we do not put a stop to it, it will soon be a rebellion. What makes it worse is that these bandits are as well armed as we are, are numerically superior to our soldiers, are supported by the local inhabitants and are fighting on a terrain which they know intimately—with the peculiar mobility of Asiatic troops who live off the land and are not burdened by baggage trains.'

The Scholars' Revolt had its own intrinsic limits. Looking back to the past and led by representatives of the old ruling classes, it was not historically capable of breaking the political and military war machine of colonialism. Nonetheless, the movement did provide many tactical and strategic lessons. What was necessary was to reinterpret these lessons in the light of Marxism, link them to an analysis of imperialism and discover how to weld together tradition and revolution, the struggles for national independence and for social liberation.

It is here that the protracted, repeated nature of revolutionary crises in countries like Vietnam, and the armed dual power which can exist for long periods in such countries in view of their peasant character, play a fundamental role. We have seen that the Vietnamese Communist Party was not born fully armed with its pure theory. There were still ambiguities about the nature of the coming revolution. The strategy of revolutionary war was not yet worked out. From 1936 to 1939, the Vietnamese Party, to say the least, put on ice the two motor slogans of the coming revolution: national independence and radical agrarian reform. It then had to raise the former afresh before it could launch the armed struggle. But the time-scale within which the Vietnamese Communists work is not the same as for European revolutionary organizations—still confused or with little implantation—when a revolutionary situation breaks out. The dynamic of permanent revolution that national or democratic struggles contain in countries like Vietnam can bring the whole of its weight to bear—if only the organization which leads the revolutionary process knows how to analyse its lessons in function of the historical interests of the proletariat. The 'empirical' character of the Vietnamese Communist Party lies in the fact that its political thinking has progressed—through a series of readjustments, rediscoveries, self-criticisms—in response to the concrete problems which have come up in the course of the class struggle, rather than as the result of any reappraisal of the theoretical debate which shook the world communist movement at the time of the Stalinization of the Bolshevik Party.

The agrarian question is exemplary in this respect. Dominating the whole of the revolutionary process, it imposes its law on revolutionaries. At the outset, the Vietnamese Party benefited from the lessons of the Russian revolution and the analysis made of the Vietnamese situation. As a result its first objective was: The land to those who work it. The Party's history led it to develop, over a long period, the opportunist perspective of a 'flexible agrarian reform'. But we have seen, with Giap, how the needs created by the revolutionary war itself imposed a return to the line of a radical agrarian reform. This took place in 1953. Without that turn, Dien Bien Phu could not have happened. No advance was possible along the road of national liberation if the class struggle continued to be under-estimated. The power of the big landowners had to be destroyed.

But matters did not rest there. 'The land to those who work it' was still in the historical framework of the bourgeois revolution. In the epoch of decadent imperialism, however, a revolution cannot remain at this stage without regressing. 'The agrarian reform carried out between 1953 and 1956 abolished the feudal relations of production by overthrowing the class of big landowners. . . . Its consequences, however, although in the right direction, were limited. Agricultural production reached a ceiling, because of the small size of the plots. Property, petty individual peasant production and the layer of rich peasants who employ labour were left intact. Favourable conditions were created for a free development of petty commodity production, which opens up the road to the spontaneous development of capitalism in the countryside. And in fact, around 1957 differentiations between the various peasant strata began to come to the surface. Numerous poor and small peasants, as a result of sickness, floods or drought, were forced to sell the land, house or livestock they had received through the agrarian reform to rich peasants, who started once again to make usurious loans. Urban traders speculated in agricultural products, disorganizing the market at the expense of the working masses. To go forward, a more advanced mode of production—agricultural cooperation in other words—had to be introduced. Otherwise the peasants would have faced pauperization and a return to the past with all the misery and suffering that that meant.'[4] Agriculture thus embarked on the socialist phase of its development.

We should note that in the sphere of agricultural production too, the Vietnamese Communists based them-

[4] Nguyen Xuan Lai, 'L'agriculture nord-vietnamienne', *Partisans* No 40, January-February 1968, p.40.

selves on tradition, invoking the aid of the ancient organization of the village community to launch the policy of peasant mutual aid, which was a prelude to collectivization.

A similar progress in the thinking of the Vietnamese Communists, when faced by the problems of their revolutionary practice, can be seen in every sphere, including that of the conception of People's War. 'When the hostilities spread to the whole country, our Party launched the slogan: *Wage a war of total, popular resistance.* This is the fundamental content of People's War. This content has been more and more enriched and concretized in practice during the years of resistance, especially after the launching of the guerrilla war and from the time when the peasant question was accorded its due place in the national question.'[9]

We can clearly see the conditions under which the Vietnamese Communist Party has hammered out its analyses and the course it has followed in doing so. On several occasions, to be sure, this has meant that the Party has been slow to find solutions where it has been confronted with new tasks. But the important thing is that it has reacted to such new tasks and, little by little, opened its eyes to strategic truths that Stalinism had vainly sought to bury.

Moreover, there was nothing inevitable or predetermined about such an evolution. A reformist party does not allow its hand to be forced by history. A party is not revolutionary and reformist in turns. It can degenerate, but the opposite is unfortunately not possible. The Vietnamese Communist Party has been able to correct its course. The French Communist Party could never do that.

Political Continuity

Political continuity is extremely important for any revolutionary organization. If its best cadres are scattered, if its orientation is abruptly changed from top to bottom several times, if a split takes place in the organization, it may take months or even years to renew the broken political and organizational threads. Hence the importance of the fact that *the Vietnamese Communist Party has been characterized by exceptional continuity.* At least three factors bear witness to this.

In the first place, the Party's leading personnel has obviously undergone important changes. Certain key figures have disappeared —like Tran Phu, second General Secretary of the Party, who died in 1931 after being tortured during the repression following the Nhge-Tinh Soviets. But these changes did not affect the existence of a stable nucleus of leading cadres, which has dominated the whole history of Vietnamese Communism. This was formed, around Ho Chi Minh, during the first years of struggle, and included Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Hoang Quoc Vet, Truong Chinh and others. This group was not a monolithic body, since differences did exist and can be clearly seen at every difficult stage in the Party's growth. But it was a leadership team with shared responsibilities, which suffered neither from a 'personality cult' nor from purges of the Stalin type. Its presence has certainly played no small part in the evolution of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Secondly, after a period of zigzags, the Party from 1939 onwards experienced a real continuity of orientation. Continuity does not mean identity; we have seen how important later stages—such as that of 1953—were in the definition of the Party's policies. But these transformations appear more as corrections and a continued progression than as ruptures and reversals of policy. This political unity has doubtless been greatly strengthened by the fact that, throughout its long history, the Vietnamese Communist Party has been faced by the problem of revolutionary war.

Finally, it is true that the Vietnamese Communist Party has experienced a number of organizational transformations. From 1930 to 1945 (except for a short period when it bore the name Vietnamese Communist Party) it was called the Indochinese Communist Party. The Vietnamese militants demonstrated in this way their fidelity to the policies of the Comintern, which based its organizational structures on those of French colonization and attached little importance to the Vietnamese national question. However, after 1941, the Indochinese Communist Party stimulated the creation of the Viet Minh, a specifically Vietnamese organization to which the Communists committed all their forces. Officially dissolved from 1945 to 1953, the Party maintained itself in a voluntary 'clandestinity' for the sake of its frontist politics. From 1953 to the present day, under the name of Workers' Party of Vietnam (*Lao Dong*), its authority has been extended to all Vietnamese Communists, despite the partition of the country after 1954. In 1962, however, it decided to establish the People's Revolutionary Party (in effect, the Communist Party of South Vietnam), in order to adapt its structures to the complex relations and different rhythms of the revolutionary process in the North and South of the country. *Nevertheless, in spite of this tortuous history, the organizational unity of the Communist Party has been fundamentally maintained.* This is true at least since 1939: in other words after the 1931 repression, which terribly weakened the Party, and after the split which shook the Saigon organization following the break with the Trotskyists. In fact, since that time, it does not seem to have passed through any period of extreme weakness nor any important split, in spite of the political upheavals it has experienced—in 1956-7, for example. Today the Communist Party benefits from the activity of thousands of cadres, educated by years of revolutionary struggles, and from the support of a population likewise formed by thirty years of war.

The present uniqueness of the Vietnamese Communist Party soon appears if it is compared to other parties: to the Soviet Party, with the whole of the Bolshevik old guard decimated by Stalin; to the Chinese Communist Party, after the Cultural Revolution and the successive purges it has undergone from Liu Shao Chi to Lin Piao; to the new Cuban Communist Party which in a sense was brought to power before it was really formed; to the international revolutionary Marxist vanguard, now being reborn after the blows dealt it by imperialism and Stalinism, which has such great difficulty in binding the threads of its present and its past together again. This unique continuity of the Vietnamese Party is a very precious quality.

Keystone of the International Situation

We have seen how the Vietnamese Communist Party has proved its international stature and its theoretical originality. This demonstration has certainly been made progressively, 'empirically'—though it would be wrong to forget the legacy of the Third International, without which the whole process of development can hardly be understood. Such empiricism was, of course, a fertile breeding-ground for national deviations. Yet the Indochinese revolution would not have attained such depth,

[9] Vo Nguyen Giap, *Guerre du peuple, armée du peuple*, Maspéro 1967, p. 91.

had the Vietnamese Communist Party in fact succumbed to such deviations. The Palestinian resistance is there to give us a new, and tragic, negative proof of this.

The international situation of the Vietnamese revolution probably has been—and remains—the most profound factor for progressive evolution of the Vietnamese Communists. It has brought them directly up against the international forces of revolution and counter-revolution, with all the lessons that such an experience involves. This also explains the contagion of the Vietnamese revolution. As Giap reminded the Chinese,[6] it has served as a pole of orientation, allowing the forces of colonial revolution a breathing-space while the latter was marking time and allowing the forces of proletarian revolution in the developed capitalist countries and of political revolution in the bureaucratized workers' states to be recomposed. It has prevented imperialism from taking advantage of temporary successes to go onto the counter-offensive. 'Cutting edge of the world revolutionary upsurge, highest point of the common struggle of the working masses', as Le Duan describes it,[7] the Vietnamese revolution has become exemplary. Giap explains this as early as 1964, i.e. before the beginning of the local war and of escalation: 'South Vietnam is the *shock-troop* of the national liberation movement of our time (*Giap's italics*). . . . The international significance of our Southern compatriots' war of liberation is that they have shown how a small and weak people can fight and defeat the American imperialists, giving another proof of the universality of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism as far as the national democratic revolution in the colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal countries is concerned, and *helping to extirpate the noxious influence of modern revisionism in the national liberation movement.*'[8] (*Giap's italics*).

It is in Vietnam that the revolution has been being made for the last thirty years. It is in Vietnam that imperialism's strategic weakness has been brought into the full light of day. But the effects of the Vietnamese revolution are not restricted to preventing the stabilization of imperialist power. As a living and constant refutation of peaceful coexistence, that revolution also undermines the power of the workers' bureaucracies. It has become one of the major elements in the crisis of Stalinism, favouring the emergence throughout the world of a revolutionary generation which, thanks to it, has learnt to 'strategically scorn' imperialism, and which recognizes itself in the Vietnamese struggle. So much is this the case, the Vietnamese Communists are today once again brought face to face with those whom they have often denounced—as if in passing and without ever giving any real explanation—the Trotskyists. As consistent revolutionary Marxists, the latter alone, apart from a number of isolated individuals, have always made the defence of the Vietnamese revolution a permanent objective of their activity. In the United States, they offered their organizational abilities, their sense for mass work, their determination, to an anti-war movement which was a prey to electoralist and spontaneist influences. They participated in the Russell Tribunal. In France, they played an important role in launching the National Vietnam Committee, and subsequently the Indochina Solidarity Front, offering all forces which claimed to be socialist a united front in defence of the Indochinese people. The interest which the representatives of the Indochinese fighters have shown in the development of this support activity is the best answer which can be given to the lies of the Stalinists.

But even if the struggle of the Indochinese peoples is at the same time both the product of the post-war revolutionary wave and one of the main elements furthering its development, it remains nonetheless dependent on the extremely uneven development of the world revolution.

'Create two, three, many Vietnams, that is our slogan', Che wrote to the Tricontinental Conference, shortly before paying with his life for putting his revolutionary convictions into practice. The Pueblo Affair showed the correctness of his perspective:[9] imperialism would not have been able to open a new revolutionary front without considerably loosening its grip on Indochina. But the same conditions for the growth of a new revolution did not exist anywhere else. The revolution in the colonial world still lacked leadership, while in the developed countries and bureaucratized workers' states the damage wrought by the betrayals of reformist leaderships after the war was only just beginning to be repaired. If a new revolutionary generation has been born, for the most part it remains extremely confused, and revolutionary Marxists are still too few in number. The Indochinese fighters remain 'tragically alone' (Che) and the very fact of the US war of destruction makes more than one militant in the world hesitate when faced by the sacrifices which revolution imposes.

The Vietnamese Communist Party belongs to that generation of communist parties which, before and after the Second World War, broke in practice with the Soviet bureaucracy's international policies. In Greece, Yugoslavia, China and Vietnam, they existed uneasily in the contradiction between their membership of the Stalinized Comintern and their involvement in the class struggle of their countries. They chose the road of revolution. *Of all these parties, the Vietnamese has travelled furthest in the direction of a rediscovery of the principles of Marxism.* But it represents an exception today, for the time when such developments were possible in parties linked to the Kremlin has passed. Moreover, because the advances made by the Vietnamese Communist Party have not been accompanied by any reappraisal of the conflict between the Left Opposition in the USSR and Stalinism on the rise, theoretical clarification has not reached the stage of a precise understanding of the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy. But the international situation in which the Vietnamese revolution finds itself has contradictory effects on its political vanguard: on the one hand, given the international policies of the USSR and China, it encourages Vietnamese communism to become increasingly independent; on the other hand, the isolation in which the latter remains plunged, the absence of a sufficiently strong, consistent revolutionary Marxist pole in the international arena, makes it that much harder for it to overcome its ideological limitations.

The Vietnamese Communist Party has developed its own orientation. It has given more than adequate proof

[6] Giap, article published in the *Journal de l'Armée*, December 1971.

[7] Le Duan, 'La révolution vietnamienne à la lumière du marxisme-léninisme', *Partisans* No 40, January-February 1968, p. 13.

[8] Giap, *Le peuple du Sud-Vietnam vaincra*, Hanoi 1965, pp. 67-8.

[9] On 23 January 1968, North Korean naval forces captured a US spy ship, the *Pueblo*, fitted with ultra-modern equipment. The Korean government stated that it intended to put the crew on trial. According to good imperialist 'logic', the American government should have reacted very sharply. But nothing happened. The necessary forces to lead a reprisal operation (fighters and bombers, fresh troops, etc.) were not available in sufficient numbers. Even in the USA itself, the number of troops stationed there for defence of the national territory was less than the minimum deemed necessary for security. Everything was in Vietnam. The same applies today for aeroplanes, pilots, technicians, etc. (See Burchett, *Why the Vietcong will win*, chapter 16).

of its exceptional abilities to lead the revolutionary struggle for the seizure of power. This struggle has still not ended today; nevertheless, the experience gathered since 1945 makes it possible for us to try and tackle the question of the future, after victory. To begin with, we must seek to clarify the root of the political debate: the question of Stalinism.

The question of Stalinism

To understand the present orientation of the Vietnamese leadership, we must take into account *not just the difficulties created by the objective situation, but also subjective weaknesses, of which probably the most important is its failure to understand the nature, causes and history of Stalinism*. Ho Chi Minh lived in the USSR at the time of the conflict between the Left Opposition and rising Stalinism. He does not seem to have taken part in the debates, appearing to those protagonists who met him as an 'empiricist'.[10] Here too, the Party seems to be formed in the image of its master. This weakness is probably shown most emphatically when we consider the problem of *bureaucratization*. The Vietnamese have come up against this problem from two angles: on the international level, through confrontation with the politics of peaceful coexistence; domestically, through the permanent presence of tendencies to bureaucratization.

The Struggle against Bureaucracy

This was the case as early as 1945: 'Before the August revolution, our Party existed illegally and worked underground. But since then, it has become a ruling party . . . [which] has encouraged certain of them [cadres and party members] to lapse into bureaucratism and authoritarianism, to become detached from the masses.'[11] In October 1945, Ho Chi Minh addressed a document to 'the popular committees in North, South and Central Vietnam, to all province, district and commune committees'.[12] He denounced the errors committed by some cadres, listing them as follows: 1. violation of legality; 2. abuse of power; 3. moral corruption; 4. favouritism; 5. factional spirit; 6. arrogance—concluding with a bald 'I hope you will improve'. In 1947, he takes up these charges again in three documents: 'Letter to the comrades of Bac Bo', 'Letter to the Trung Bo comrades' and the pamphlet 'Improve our style of work'.

The 'errors' in the implementation of the agrarian reform in 1956 illustrate the scope of the problem on the morrow of the victory over the French. Le Chau describes this period in detail and the wave of criticism and self-criticism that developed. One instance of such criticism, formulated by a 'congressman well-known in North Vietnamese political circles, Maître Nguyen Manh-Tuong' is particularly significant: 'If the revolution brought us light and hapiness, why do some people worry about it and indeed suffer because of it? These people are not enemies of the revolution. After the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, after the Berlin and Poznan insurrections and those of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, we can clearly see how these problems arise, because the revolution suffers from a serious illness, "isolation from the people", and is not sufficiently democratic. It is more and more deeply entrenched in bureaucratism and authoritarianism; it is imprisoned in a narrow attitude of authoritarian—and sometimes even dictatorial—*leadership*.'[13]

Further evidence of tendential bureaucratization of the state was, paradoxically, provided in 1965 precisely by the democratization imposed by the renewed bombing of the North. In this respect, Nguyen Xua Lai's remark is very symbolic: 'The new orientation imposed by the war implies a whole range of socio-economic measures, and notably improved management of the cooperatives; more specifically, it implies the introduction of *democratic* and *collective management*, and of a *more democratic, fair* and rational division of tasks and retributive system—a development which serves as a powerful weapon against bureaucratization'. But the waging of a revolutionary war could not in itself resolve the problem. Of course, it favoured a broad democratization *at the base* (shown in the way the People's Army functioned), but it also implied a maximum centralization at the highest levels of decision, leaving little scope for the establishment of a broad, participatory structure for the whole of the State's population from base to summit. Here is what the Party History Commission wrote for the year 1968: 'The Central Committee estimated, however, that the results obtained were still inadequate and did not correspond to the strategic intention of the Party at the present stage. Our success was limited by numerous failures and inadequacies, such as the tendency to make use of the state of war to encroach upon or weaken the collective economy, to steal public property, or to indulge in speculation and profiteering. Some cadres and party members were still guilty of bureaucratism and authoritarianism, still violated the people's democratic rights and even, to some extent, socialist legality. . . . Since 1968 the Party has set itself the task of strengthening its leadership in the economic sphere, of struggling against inefficient management, and of instilling in the masses awareness that they are the collective master of the country.'[14]

Confronted for a long time with the problem of bureaucratization, the Vietnamese leaders have tried to respond to it. Their documents are strewn with notes of this kind: 'To carry out this general line, our Party advocates on the one hand, *a strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat against the enemies of the people*, repression of counter-revolutionaries and the maintenance of law and order and security; on the other hand *the development of democracy among the people*, the realization of the people's democratic rights, the establishment and gradual perfection of socialist legislation and the creation of conditions allowing the people to participate effectively in the running of the State.'[15]

The importance given to this problem appears clearly in Giap's writings on the organization of the revolutionary army: 'In the building of our army, our Party has always made democratic centralism its organizing principle; it has thus attempted to give the army an effective internal democracy, while maintaining at the same time the strictest —though freely agreed to—discipline. Quite unlike the armies of every sort of exploiting class, ours has, since its foundation, practised *a regime of internal democracy*. . . . During the years of the Resistance, the so-called system of "the three great democracies" has taken shape and led to good results. Political democracy . . . Military democracy

[10] See Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh*, Editions du Seuil, and C. Rageau, *Ho Chi Minh*, Editions universitaires.

[11] *Brève histoire du PTV*, Hanoi 1970, p. 58.

[12] Ho Chi Minh, *Ecrits (1920-69)*, Hanoi 1971, p. 57.

[13] Le Chau, op. cit., pp. 141-7.

[14] *Brève histoire du PTV*, op. cit., pp. 128-9.

[15] Truong Chinh, *Sur la voie tracée par Karl Marx*, Hanoi 1969, p. 50.

. . . Economic democracy . . . It is on the basis of the realization of the democratic regime that our army applies the *strictest—but freely consented to—discipline*. . . . The realization of internal democracy and strengthening of freely agreed discipline involve a whole process of struggle against deviations which have shown themselves through two diametrically opposed tendencies. The first dwelt excessively on discipline, while neglecting democracy. . . . The second—"dispersalism"—did not take the strengthening of discipline into account. . . . These two wrong tendencies are both manifestations of non-proletarian ideologies. The first reflects the influence of bourgeois ideology in the running of the army; the second reflects the influence of peasant and petty-bourgeois ideology favouring dispersal, in other words of the layers from which the bulk of the cadres and soldiers of our army have come. This is why the fundamental problem for the correct implementation of a democratic regime and the strengthening of a strict discipline freely consented to, consists in ceaselessly educating the army in proletarian ideology, in order to eliminate all non-proletarian ideology existing among our troops."[16] This concern for internal democracy and freely consented to discipline in the army appears equally clearly in the speeches quoted by Burchett in *Why the Vietcong will win*.

Fight for Soviet Democracy

But simply to underline the dangers of bureaucratization does not suffice to secure oneself against it. We must study the *means adopted to struggle for socialist democracy*. Truong Chinh's book, quoted above, deserves closer study. *"We are firmly convinced that in a socialist system, no matter when or where, any imprecise ideas on the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, any slackness or weakening by whatever means of this dictatorship, will lead inevitably to an attempt by counter-revolutionaries to raise their heads and to the degeneration of socialism.* History has given us three successive forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat: the Paris Commune, the Russian Soviets and People's Democracy in a number of Asian and East European countries. The dictatorship of the proletariat takes on the form of people's democracy in our country. . . . If the dictatorship of the proletariat is born and develops under different forms, it is because of the concrete historical conditions, the level of economic development, the relationship of forces between the classes, the national peculiarities and the traditions of development of the regime in each country and also, partly, because of the political conjuncture and the relationship of forces in the world as a whole."[17]

The functioning of the Vietnamese state does indeed differ greatly both from the schema described by Lenin in *State and Revolution* and from the soviet system organized during the first years of the Russian revolution by the Bolshevik Party. North Vietnam is a *bureaucratically deformed workers' state*. Even if the one-party theory is not explicitly developed, in practice the leading State functions are the preserve of a single party.[18] Moreover, obviously it is not the mass of workers who are grouped together inside the Party, but only a vanguard minority. There is no separation of Party and State, even if there is formally a systematic differentiation of Party and State responsibilities. Similarly, although democratic centralism is universally proclaimed to be the operative principle governing—through all the various modalities of its application—the functioning of the State, the Army and the Party, there is nevertheless no suggestion that the right of tendency is recognized in the latter. Above all, there exists no soviet system, with workers' councils making up the backbone of the State from top to bottom.

The point here is not to reproach the Vietnamese Communist Party for not having been able to establish the socialist democracy of our dreams. Nothing is more difficult, and certainly the extremely hard conditions in which the Vietnamese revolution has had to be made have not helped at all. The USSR of Lenin and Trotsky was a bureaucratically deformed workers' state in 1920. But the problem is not so much the extent to which soviet democracy has been actually realized as the aims that the Vietnamese leaders set themselves in this field. The disturbing part of Truong Chinh's analysis, which contents itself with identifying the 'three forms' that the dictatorship of the proletariat has assumed, is that nowhere does it make the establishment of a soviet system of power a *goal*, as the Bolshevik Party did prior to Stalinization.

Our attachment as Trotskyists to socialist democracy of a soviet type is neither the consequence of a dogmatic attachment to 'ideal norms' created by great ancestors nor the fruit of utopian dreams. Soviet democracy is the best way to struggle against bureaucratization, because it alone realizes permanent control by the masses and the base over the functionaries and the cadres. Soviet democracy is the best guarantee of the elaboration of a realistic economic development plan. For only it can determine what *rhythms* are acceptable to the workers. The 1956 'errors' are a proof *a contrario* of this. Finally, soviet democracy is the best means simultaneously to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat by the continual raising of the ideological level of the masses and to begin the withering away of the state as the population increasingly takes charge of its own tasks; in other words, simultaneously to strengthen the ability of the transitional workers' state to guard against any counter-revolution and to prepare the transcending of that state in the framework of a socialist society.

Whatever the rhythms, delays, difficulties in implementation, this remains one of the key problems, whose resolution during the transitional period guarantees the onward march to socialism. Like the use of Stalino-Maoist terminology, *the apparent 'under-estimation' of the role of soviet democracy implies a failure to understand the nature and roots of Stalinism or, therefore, how to struggle against inevitable tendencies towards bureaucratization.* This is confirmed by the Vietnamese Communist Party's attitude to the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. Radio Hanoi supported it. Only once, and unobtrusively, but it did support it. It is unlikely that this was simply an 'opportunist' statement for Kremlin consumption. Silence would have been enough had condemnation been impossible. In fact, the Vietnamese reaction was of a similar kind to that of the Cubans. Czechoslovakia was taking the Yugoslav road, and of all the countries of the 'socialist camp', it is Yugoslavia which has most openly abandoned support for the revolutions of the third world. A military intervention was a small price to pay for halting this process. But, of course, what this view fails to understand is that Brezhnev is not to the left of Dubcek; that Soviet intervention served the cause of Stalinism, but in no way that of socialism!

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[16] Giap, *Guerre du peuple . . .*, op. cit., pp. 122-6.

[17] Truong Chinh, op. cit., pp. 78-9.

[18] Symbolic in this respect are the documents collected in *Guerre du peuple . . .*, op. cit., which put the Party leadership and the government of the DRV on the same level and very clearly accord pre-eminence to the former.

Children in Hanoi bomb shelter during a bombing raid (*Photo: Tariq Ali*).

The International Dimension

The Vietnamese Communist Party understands clearly the existence of a rightist and opportunist current inside the 'international communist movement'. An article in *Nhan Dan* can be cited to confirm this, if confirmation is needed.[19] In summer 1971, a conference of so-called 'non-aligned' countries was held in Georgetown. The PRG and the GRUNK won a diplomatic victory by obtaining admission with full rights. On this occasion, *Nhan Dan* (17 August 1972) published an article on the situation of 'third world peoples' taking charge of 'their own destinies' and opposing all attempts by US imperialism to regulate international problems with other countries, without taking into account their interests and aspirations [i.e. those of the 'third world']. This article says that the Georgetown conference, 'a victory for the revolutionary tendency . . . unequivocally expresses a new tendency of the period: one whereby small countries rise up to take charge of their own destinies, despite the diabolical plots of imperialism and despite *manifestations of rightism and unprincipled compromises*. The successes of the national liberation movement and the Georgetown conference are real setbacks for the Nixon Doctrine. They also constitute *a severe rebuke to those who move away from the great, invincible revolutionary thoughts of the epoch; those who become wretchedly bogged down in the darkness and mire of the road to compromise*' [italics in the original] Further on, it is written that 'Those who persevere in the revolution and who remain faithful to Marxism-Leninism have been able successively to demonstrate the weakness and failure of opportunist attempts of all colours, including those of forces which for a long time laid down the law.' Further on again, with respect to the 'Nixon Doctrine': 'This strategy makes use of the balance of forces between the big powers and the divisions between the socialist countries as a shield, the better to dam up, forcibly and without impediment, the national liberation movements.' And in conclusion: 'A country's revolution *is an integral part of the world revolution* and national revolutions push each other forward and support each other. *The victory of a revolution in one country is not the end but the beginning of a long struggle leading to world communism*. Socialism and communism are thousands and thousands of times better than feudalism and capitalism, proletarian internationalism cannot be compared to bourgeois nationalism *or* to national egoism [italics added—PR], so great are the distances between them. The revolution is a road of flowers and perfume. Opportunism is a stinking cesspit'.

The Vietnamese leaders have not adopted the simplistic Maoist analysis of a return to capitalism in the USSR. This theory cannot explain the nature of the help the latter has given Vietnam. But neither have they adopted our analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy. It is probable that they hope—although we must be particularly prudent here in analysis and exegesis of texts—once the opportunism of the present leaderships is defeated, for a regeneration of the world communist movement. It is likely that, in this respect, one of the key passages of Ho Chi Minh's testament is more than simply tactical: '*On the subject of the world communist movement.*—Having dedicated my whole life to the service of the revolution, the more I swell with pride to see the international communist and workers' movement grow, the more I grieve at the present misunderstanding between our brother parties! I hope that our Party will work with all its strength and contribute effectively to the re-establishment of unity between the fraternal parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, in accordance with the dictates of reason and of the heart. I am fully convinced that the fraternal parties and fraternal countries will surely reunite once more.'[20]

Numerous factors allow us to understand this orientation of the Vietnamese Communist Party: the repulsive nature of the 'model' presented by the state system of the USSR; the heritage of the formation received within the Third International; the very existence of bureaucratic deformations of the North Vietnamese transitional workers' state, which have marked the consciousness of the party and state cadres; the international situation of the Indochinese revolution, at the same time dependent on, and in conflict with, the 'socialist camp'. Still more complex factors, linked to Vietnam's history, to the development before colonization of an 'Asiatic mode of production' and a Confucian philosophical thought, are perhaps also involved, if only to the extent that these philosophical traditions offered a *moral* interpretation of the struggle against bureaucratization. Nguyen Khac Vien noted, in a very interesting article, the relationships woven between traditional Confucianism and Vietnamese Marxism. If Confucianism prepared the way for the development of Marxism 'by centring man's thoughts on political and social problems', it also coloured it with moralism. 'One can easily recognize', wrote Nguyen Khac Vien, 'Confucian moralism in these texts [Ho Chi Minh's]. . . . They are not lessons in morality, in the sense understood in a college or *lycée*. Rather, they are directives for "rectification" campaigns. . . . Criticism and self-criticism, beginning from the given political situation, often lead to very profound moral analyses. . . . One can even say that in Vietnam (and China) Confucianism often prevails over Marxism. In Confucian territory, morality often tends to supplant the idea of historical development. Marxism being at the same time "explanation and edification", the latter function often tends to predominate. Within the great family of Communist Parties, the Vietnamese Party (like the Chinese) certainly contributes a more pronounced moralizing note than parties which operate in countries where the bourgeoisie has already exercised ideological leadership for a long time.'[21] (Note that Nguyen Khac Vien adds that 'Here [in countries with a long bourgeois tradition] it is bourgeois amoralism which sometimes influences Marxist militants, who therefore have a tendency to neglect problems of individual morality.')

If the factors influencing the ideological and programmatic development of the Vietnamese Communist Party are numerous, the same is true of those which will shape the future of the Vietnamese revolution.

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[19] Quoted in *Le Courrier du Vietnam* No 4, (new series), September 1972.

[20] Ho Chi Minh, op. cit., p. 372.

[21] Nguyen Khac Vien, 'Confucianisme et marxisme au Vietnam', in *Tradition et révolution au Vietnam*, pp. 55-6.

By way of a provisional conclusion

> 'In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis, not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the development of the international socialist revolution.' Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, 'Basic Postulates'.

The difficulties of a socialist revolution do not come to an end with the overthrow of the bourgeois state. The degeneration of the USSR, and the evolution of China and Cuba after the revolutionary seizure of power, have proved that the dangers of bureaucratic deformation of workers' states, flowing from the delay of the revolution in the developed countries, were not just the fruit of fertile Trotskyist imaginations. The objective factors favouring such a development are in fact considerable, especially in the ex-colonial and semi-colonial countries. The survival, throughout the transition period, of scarcity, of a mode of distribution inherited from capitalism and of forms of delegation of power linked to the too-weak ideological (and social) development of the proletariat, are powerful factors leading to a 'separation of the Party and State apparatus from the masses', prelude to a deeper bureaucratization.

Vietnam has experienced, and will experience on the morrow of the seizure of power, a particularly difficult situation. The tasks of reconstruction will be huge in a country which, less than any other, given its geographical smallness, can hope for an autarkic development. The tendencies to bureaucratization will find fertile ground in these objective conditions, just as their development will be favoured by the programmatic limitations of the current orientation of the Vietnamese Communist Party. But it would be false and politically dangerous to draw from this the conclusion of an inevitable bureaucratization.

Today the continuation of the revolutionary struggle is the main factor opposing these tendencies. For this struggle prevents the *crystallization* of a privileged bureaucratic caste, escaping from the masses' control and tending to determine state policy in function of its own interests. The history of the Indochinese revolution is itself an *a posteriori* demonstration of this. Had North Vietnam experienced such a bureaucratic degeneration, it would never have become involved, as it is today, at the side of the Southern masses. In 1959-60, the Vietnamese Workers' Party would not have made the turn to relaunching the armed struggle. In 1965, after the beginning of the US escalation which challenged the very existence of the North Vietnamese workers' state, it would have quickly abandoned aid to the South, on the grounds of the unfavourable relationship of forces. For, let us repeat, it is not true that the North Vietnamese state or the Vietnamese Communist Party were *compelled* to take up the struggle again.

The alternative was not one of either enduring the US escalation without reacting, or re-engaging in the revolutionary struggle. *By placing itself within the sphere of Soviet influence—and at the price of abandoning the Southern masses—North Vietnam could certainly have obtained, at this time, both a consistent political and military 'cover' by the USSR and a halting of the US escalation.* And it is not every bureaucrat who understands that the best defence of the workers' states is the extension of the revolution! If a crystallized bureaucratic caste had existed in 1960 in North Vietnam, it would have given its allegiance to Moscow and submitted to the political imperatives of peaceful co-existence. The struggle in the South would have been resumed *against* the Vietnamese Workers' Party, and the unity of Vietnam would have been broken as surely as that of the Communist Party.

And tomorrow? Tomorrow, once victory is won over the whole of the national territory, the Vietnamese people will have a lot of cards in their favour. In the first place, a theory and an experience of economic and social development which does not reproduce Stalinist 'simplifications'. In the second place, extremely advanced social achievements, which have not merely revolutionized the agrarian structure and the condition of the working class, but allow solutions to be found for the problems of female inequality and the oppression of ethnic minorities. But most important of all, it will have a population and a party educated and forged by the fire of thirty years uninterrupted revolutionary struggle, both political and military.

Two examples allow us to understand what such a situation implies. First, the 1956 crisis mentioned earlier is very revealing. The region which experienced the widest opposition movements was Nghe An, with a very strong revolutionary tradition going back to the 1930 'soviets'. Moreover, of all the countries of the 'socialist' camp, it was Vietnam where the wave of criticism and self-criticism seems to have been deepest. In the second place, the history of the years 1957-60 in South Vietnam is also rich in lessons. The attitude of the communist cadres towards the uprising of the Kor tribes shows both the extremely developed sense of discipline of the members of the Vietnamese Communist Party and their ability to take responsibility when they think that the future of the revolution is at stake.

The fifteen years of revolutionary warfare of the second Indochinese war have qualitatively increased this political capital. To understand the factors which will determine the future of the Vietnamese revolution after the seizure of power, we must recognize how, *in the course of such a struggle, a population and its militants become conscious of their rights and their duties, their strength and their responsibility.*

This process has been all the more powerful in Vietnam because the duration and intensity of struggle have been without comparison with what took place in China or Cuba and because the revolution has already spread beyond the Vietnamese frontiers to Cambodia and Laos. Only the physical exhaustion of the Vietnamese people could threaten this major gain of the revolution; and the science of people's war seems to exclude this possibility today, despite the scale of the attempt at genocide perpetrated by the USA.

But that is perhaps not the most important consideration. Much depends on the future evolution of the international situation: whether a new revolutionary front is opened in the world, which would loosen imperialism's grip; whether the Asian revolution experiences new developments and the dependence of Vietnam on the bureaucratized workers' states is lessened; whether the forces of world revolution are strengthened and the Vietnamese revolution can be supported by a more consistent revolutionary Marxist left. Certainly, if the Vietnamese revolution remains isolated, too far in advance of the world revolution, the tendencies to bureaucratization will sooner or later become irreversible. Moreover, this day would come all the quicker insofar as the Vietnamese Communists have a poor understanding of the question of

socialist democracy. But although it is not so probable, because of the crisis of leadership of the revolutionary movement, that a qualitative leap forward of the world revolution will take place *in the immediate future*, nothing on the other hand shows that we are about to enter a phase of prolonged stagnation of struggle. Imperialism's inability to stabilize its power in the 'under-developed' countries in a lasting way, the worsening crisis of the Stalinist movement throughout the world, the new rise of workers' struggles in Western Europe—all these clearly show that we are on the eve of a new intensification of the class struggle on an international scale. Indochina will remain for some time an 'advanced detachment of the world proletariat'; but, beyond the immediate effects of the policy of peaceful coexistence carried out by Russia and China, it is upon this new intensification of struggle that the Vietnamese must be able to count.

Trotskyist militants are neither neutral nor passive in this situation. Solidarity actions now being carried out tend to create the best international conditions not only for victory against imperialism, but also for the future development of the Indochinese workers' states. The *practical* criticism that we make of the Soviet and Chinese leaderships' policy of peaceful coexistence helps, not just to loosen the vice of *present* diplomatic pressures, but also to weaken the pressure that international Stalinism will exercise tomorrow upon the Indochinese peoples.

Moreover, by our actions we do not merely act on the *objective* framework in which the Vietnamese and Indochinese revolutions develop, thus fulfilling the first of our international duties, to the extent that our forces allow. We also give a practical demonstration of the programmatic orientations that we think important. The development of support activity as a mass activity allows us both to demonstrate what our political conception of *internationalism* is—thus making it possible to show that the only choice is not between an international centralism within the fold of China or the USSR and some kind of 'left polycentrism'—and to deepen our concrete critique of *Stalinism*. We can also, through our activity in workers' struggles throughout the world, begin to show in concrete terms what we mean by our conception of *workers' democracy*, while at the same time preparing the extension of the world revolution. In this way we try to lead the debate on the differences of orientation which divide us from the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party from simple ideological discussion to a *practical* confrontation of experiences.

It is because we hold the Indochinese revolutionaries in very high esteem, because we are conscious of the special role that the Indochinese and Vietnamese revolutions have played and will play in the world, because we are conscious of the urgent internationalist duties which commit every anti-imperialist militant to the defence of these revolutions, because we recognize the weight that the international situation brings to bear—and will continue to bring to bear—on their victory and their future, because we are deeply convinced that their victory will also be ours and that their difficulties are also ours, that we call for the strengthening of political and militant solidarity with the Indochinese revolution until final victory!

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* This article was originally published as the final three chapters of Pierre Rousset's book *Le parti communiste vietnamienne*, Maspéro 1973. Completed in November 1972, the book was thus written prior to the 'ceasefire' agreements and the rundown of direct US military intervention in Vietnam. Subsequently, Rousset's analysis has provoked a far-ranging discussion within the Fourth International, notably in *International Socialist Review*, July/August 1973 and April 1974.

Peter Deakin

ECONOMIC CAUSES & CONSEQUENCES OF DÉTENTE

The rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the United States, tenaciously pursued by Brezhnev and Nixon and defined by them, with notable exaggeration, as a 'new era of collaboration' in international relations, has numerous, complex causes. The main ones are political in nature, to be set against the new rise of revolutionary forces since 1967-8. The principal leaders of the strongest imperialist power and of the Soviet bureaucracy have been working towards the formation of a kind of counter-revolutionary 'united front', whose aim is to maintain the world *status quo*. Of course, the two partners continue to have divergent interests. The different socio-economic character of the two countries leads them to take up different positions on the international arena: for instance, the USSR gives aid—however inadequate—to North Vietnam and the Provisional Government of South Vietnam, while the United States gives massive backing to the Thieu régime. Furthermore, neither of the two powers intends to give up the struggle for world supremacy—and hence for the enlargement of their respective spheres of influence whenever the opportunity arises. Nevertheless, as we have said, both partners consider it more opportune in the present period to allow 'what unites them rather than what divides them' to prevail.

Apart from these political considerations, however, there are—on both sides—powerful economic interests which impel the USA and the USSR towards each other. For the United States, the first object is to increase its own exports, not so much of agricultural produce as of machinery and 'technologically rich' products. In the second place, the Soviet Union could, in the long term, offer a possible alternative solution to the energy crisis which, for both political and economic reasons, is looming ever larger. Moreover, there is the prospect of a long-term positive trade balance with the Soviet Union (even in the short term, the United States had a surplus in her trade with Russia in 1972 and this will almost certainly be repeated both in the 1973 figures and in 1974). This last point is exceptionally important in view of the relation between the American balance of payments and the position of the dollar.

It would be wrong, however, to exaggerate the short-term importance of trade with the Soviet Union for the American economy. In 1972, trade between the two countries totalled around six hundred million dollars—i.e. slightly more than 2% of Soviet and much less of US foreign trade. It is doubtful whether the figure for 1973 will exceed one thousand million dollars. What is more, most of this trade is made up of Soviet cereal purchases. These, despite the bad functioning of Russian agriculture, cannot remain as the stable basis of Soviet imports. Rather, Soviet purchases from the United States will tend to shift from agricultural goods to machinery and manufactured goods. At the same time, while these purchases are likely to remain at around the one thousand million dollar level, the purchasing power of the Soviet Union—as we shall see—is limited, due to the difficulty it has in finding an outlet for its own products on the United States market. The longer-term perspectives for Soviet trade are determined by a number of factors which will gradually become clearer as we examine the situation of the Soviet economy and its foreign trade. Such an examination is also needed in order to establish what economic drives and interests have contributed on the Soviet side to the rapprochement with the United States.

The Soviet Economic Crisis

The Soviet economy is clearly in a situation of grave crisis (see *Quatrième Internationale* No. 9). The figures

for 1973, published at the December meeting of the Supreme Soviet, might appear to contradict this judgement. However, although the good harvest in 1973 and an immense effort of mobilization have brought back under control a situation which was becoming catastrophic, the targets fixed by the five-year plan are still far from being reached. Even if the targets for 1974 are attained, the shortfall will still remain very considerable. This means that the basic problems of the Soviet economy remain unsolved, and that it will only need a new failure in the field of agriculture to precipitate a crisis all the elements for which still exist. Moreover, the Soviet bureaucrats are quite aware of this, to the point where it seems that at least a section of them is ready to brave the political risks of a return to the economic reforms.

Among the symptoms of the crisis have been the disastrous harvest in 1972, the decreasing rhythm of development of industrial production (especially of consumer goods), and the inadequate rise in the productivity of labour. The first consequence has been a serious investment crisis, marked by an increase in unfinished industrial construction, by phenomena of an inflationary type (which, it should be said, take different forms than in a capitalist economy) and by an increasing technological backwardness.

In the second place, the Soviet bureaucracy is proving incapable of reversing the traditional priority accorded to the production of means of production over that of consumer goods; the power structures of Soviet society seem to push forward 'naturally' the continuing growth in the production of the former.

Finally, the targets set by the plan for scientific research are systematically underfulfilled. This leads to a growing technological gap between the Soviet Union and the advanced capitalist countries, despite the fact that the enormous Soviet investments in the sectors of research and education ought to give the USSR a considerable lead in this field. Even in the space sector, where Russia once seemed to be leading the way (although this is now being questioned), today American supremacy is incontestable.

The Soviet economic crisis is substantially different from that of the capitalist countries. To begin with, the Soviet economy is separated from the world capitalist economy (we shall see later by what mechanisms) and is only influenced by its cycles to a negligible extent. Leaving aside its own specificity, the Soviet crisis is one of underproduction and not of over-production; thus it is more analogous to (but not identical with) the crises of pre-capitalist societies. All the phenomena associated with the crisis appear in different forms than in a capitalist society. For example, as already pointed out, this is the case with inflation. As was noted at a recent seminar on 'Banking, Money and Credit in Eastern Europe' (Brussels January 1973): This phenomenon (inflation) appears in different and less acute forms in these countries and its causes are not the same. In the vertically controlled economies, the aspect of inflation that is most striking is the fact that prices do not rise continually. To be sure, there is a moderate and camouflaged rise in prices, but, in reality, inflation in Eastern Europe is characterized by a chronic shortage of goods, by queues and by the accumulation of purchasing power. This form of inflation does not seem to present such a problem as that which the Western governments have to sole.' (p. 39 of the report)

We can say that the underlying causes of the crisis flow from the fundamental contradiction of a transitional economy, namely that between the principle of planning and the law of value. Of course, owing to the profound bureaucratic degeneration of Soviet society, the economic crisis becomes especially serious and acute, because the law of value finds expression not only in the residue of private production or the black market, but in the agents of planning themselves—the bureaucrats—by means of individual incentives, thus shaping planning itself.

Concretely, the bureaucratic management of the enterprise, through the system of individual incentives, is interested in obtaining from the centre supplies in excess of its real needs, so as to realize with the greatest ease and without undue effort the targets laid down by the plan (and thus to pocket the bonuses tied to production). The central bureaucracy, for its part, is well aware of this situation and assigns to the enterprises targets in excess of their paper possibilities, hoping that the management will have recourse to their existing illegal reserves. The result is a continual dissipation of resources that is concretized in periodic crises of investment.

On the other hand, the bureaucrats are not interested in a continual process of technological innovation, since such a process would make more difficult the fulfilment of the quantitative targets set by the plan. As there is no competitive market of the capitalist type, so there is no 'objective' drive to innovation which makes itself felt in the pocket and thus in the personal interests of the bureaucrats. The mechanism which is thus created is extremely rigid and makes very difficult any attempt to re-allocate resources (e.g. between heavy and light industry), although such a re-allocation would have undeniable political advantages for the bureaucracy as a whole.

At least partially aware of these problems, the bureaucracy tried some ten years ago to get out of the economic crisis by imposing the so-called economic reform. The substance of this lies in a modification of the system of personal incentives of the bureaucrats, in such a way as to make their interests functional to the rationalization of investment, to a continual process of technological innovation and, thus, to a rapid development of the economy. However, this operation, if it were to bear full fruit, would lead to a process of restoration of capitalism, for reasons that the Fourth International has repeatedly pointed out. Such a process would in its turn threaten the very roots of bureaucratic power. This is why the reform in the USSR was inaugurated with the greatest caution, in a more or less amasculated form and then finally buried, as soon as it became clear that, even in a scaled down form, it would give rise to phenomena which the central bureaucracy would not be able to control.

Today the same problems are confronting the bureaucracy as ten years ago. And the bureaucracy (or, at least, a considerable section of it) is looking for a way out through 'co-operation' with the strongest capitalist country and thus, in fact, with the world capitalist market as a whole.

Before examining whether and under what conditions the bureaucracy will be able to solve the Soviet economic crisis by taking this path, it is necessary to look briefly at the characteristics of Soviet foreign trade, which is the principal instrument for the implementation of such 'co-operation'.

Soviet Foreign Trade

Soviet foreign trade, totalling around 25 milliard roubles in 1972 (1 rouble = 1.30 dollars) constitutes a very small percentage of world trade, although it is true that in the last twenty years it has grown much faster than the national

income. (Soviet foreign trade grew by 800% between 1950 and 1973. 1950 was, of course, the height of the cold war, but even taking 1956 as the point of departure, the rise has been around 400%. And yet, in 1969/70 the USSR was 130th in a list of 185 countries in terms of per capita foreign trade: with 84 dollars per capita, it stood far behind the USA—375 dollars, Italy—445, or France—642).

Soviet foreign trade is still substantially marked by on one hand the policy of blockade of the imperialist powers and on the other the isolationist policy of Stalin. Lenin and the Bolshevik leaders had introduced the monopoly of foreign trade in the hands of the workers' state (a monopoly still in existence) not to isolate the USSR from the world market, but to prevent the pressures of the world market from favouring or provoking the restoration of capitalism. Stalin, on the contrary, following his bureaucratic and anti-Marxist myth of socialism in one country, made use of the monopoly to conduct an autarkic policy, the source of grave waste. In reality, his aim was the maintenance of bureaucratic domination, sheltered from any foreign influence. The situation began to change only after the death of Stalin, but at that time the USSR found itself faced with not only the world capitalist market, but also a system of non-capitalist states, controlled or politically influenced by the Kremlin (the 'peoples' democracies' and China). Thus, trade developed in a parallel way both with the world capitalist market and with the so-called 'socialist' countries.

Today, only 20% of Soviet foreign trade takes place with the developed capitalist countries, 10% with the under-developed countries and 70% with the 'socialist' countries. Different principles govern trade with the 'socialist' countries and with capitalist countries; in the former case the prices adopted are not those obtaining on the world market and import-export is based on long-term contracts, the duration of which generally corresponds to that of the five-year plans. We do not have the space to tackle the much discussed problem of 'exploitation', of which numerous currents in the 'peoples' democracies' as well as the Chinese leaders accuse the USSR in relation to the Comecon countries. It is enough for us to stress that, after the Stalin period when the USSR conducted a policy of pure rapine with regard to the other countries, economic and commercial relations became subject to contradictions between the various bureaucracies. The results of these contradictions depend on the political relation of forces, which bestows an indisputable advantage on the Soviet bureaucracy and permits the principles which regulate its exchanges to depart from the 'objective' mechanisms of the world market. Amongst other things, the manufactured products which are the objects of trade, whether they originate from the Soviet Union or from other Comecon countries, are generally of a lower quality to those on the world market and would have great difficulty in finding other outlets.

The commercial ties of the USSR with the world capitalist market thus remain extremely limited, even weaker than is indicated by the figures of total foreign trade. If we examine the structure of Soviet trade with the advanced capitalist countries, a curious and contradictory feature immediately strikes us. Although the Soviet Union is the second industrial power in the world, the composition of its foreign trade is that of an under-developed country. Raw materials make up the bulk of its exports, whereas most of its imports are manufactured or semi-finished goods (above all, machinery or semi-finished goods for industrial use). The reason for this anomaly lies mainly in the poor quality of Soviet manufactured articles which, with a few exceptions, are not able to compete with those of the capitalist countries. The responsibility for this situation can no longer be attributed to the original backwardness of Soviet industry, but must be laid at the door of the Soviet bureaucracy. The poor quality of products is due to the poor quality of management of the economy. For these reasons, the Soviet Union has, up till now, been a victim of the so-called 'price scissors' between raw materials and manufactured goods, that is of the phenomenon whereby the prices of the latter rise while the prices of the former remain stagnant. (The present rise in the price of raw materials is noteworthy, but has not yet been shown to represent a long-term tendency. Anyway, the important thing is to see whether this rise is compensated by or is lower than the rise in the price of finished products.) It is well known that this 'price scissors' is one of the mechanisms whereby the exploitation of the under-developed countries by the imperialist countries has been realized.

Exploiting Russia's Natural Resources

This structural position of Soviet foreign trade constitutes one of the main obstacles to a rapid expansion of economic relations with the USA and the imperialist countries in general. In fact, whilst, as we have seen, a rapid development in Soviet manufactured exports cannot be counted on, the USSR also has a very narrow margin for the growth in its export of raw materials. The present-day level of production and the rise planned for the coming years will scarcely cover internal needs—we should not forget that the Russian economy, despite its crises, is developing very rapidly—the growing needs of the Comecon countries and the long-term contracts already signed with a number of West European countries. It is true that there seem to be enormous reserves of a series of highly important raw materials—notably petroleum, gas and timber. However, these are to be found in regions lacking any advanced infrastructure and subject to difficult climatic conditions, which means that to exploit them will require colossal investments.

This, in fact, is the road on which Soviet bureaucrats and American managers are now embarking. The United States are undertaking huge investments, that is to say, they are offering the long-term credits required for the purchase of machinery necessary for the creation of an infrastructure and for the exploitation of the deposits. In exchange, they will receive the raw materials they need, which for a whole period will serve to reimburse the credits they have granted. However, the road in question is a pretty long one: the projects now being discussed for the exploitation of natural gas and petroleum reserves will not be realized, at best, before 1980. Moreover, it is a road fraught with difficulties.

For its part, the Soviet leadership is counting on the fact that these colossal projects for the development of Russia's natural riches (to the order of several tens of thousands of millions of dollars) will serve not only to increase exports, but also to develop the country itself. It aims to ensure that the American credits will also permit the extraction of raw materials to cover the needs of the Soviet economy, that the oleoducts will pass through consumer regions, etc. For their part, the Americans object that such an imposition would render the projects 'uneconomic', i.e. more costly than possible alternatives outside the Soviet Union (Nigeria, Indonesia, Algeria). The successful conclusion of these enormous contracts risks being undermined by this sort of difficulty, which is simply the concrete expression of the contradiction between

two logics': that of the plan (of which the bureaucrats are, willy-nilly, the bearers) and that of profit and the world capitalist market. However willing they may be to strengthen links with the United States, the bureaucrats must take into account the existence of an internal opposition (i.e. internal to the bureaucracy). Since the fall of Shelest, this opposition has not dared contest the Brezhnev line openly and globally; but it is beginning to murmur against 'selling off the country's natural riches', and this makes more difficult the granting of important concessions to the Americans. On the other hand, even the multinationals most interested in business with the USSR must take account of the opposition which still exists in the United States to establishing too close a link with a power whose interests remain in many respects opposed to those of the United States.

Obstacles to Partnership -

But even if these considerable difficulties can be overcome, the situation of the USSR in relation to the world market will still remain predominantly that of a supplier of raw materials and purchaser of manufactured goods. In order to change radically the structure of Soviet foreign trade, in order for the expansion of trade with the US and the capitalist West to serve to modernize or 'rationalize' the Soviet productive apparatus, 'co-operation' would have to be established not only in the sector of raw materials, but also, and above all, in that of finished products. These past months, the Soviet bureaucrats have tirelessly wooed the numerous American businessmen who have been landing in Moscow, seeking to convince them to conclude co-production agreements in this field. Here, however, the difficulties are still greater than in the field of raw materials, and the more there is talk of products rich in added value and technology the greater they become. In fact, the more complex the product, the more the Western capitalist demands complete and effective control over the production process. The opposite is the case for the Soviet leaders: for the moment, they are prepared to receive (or rather, apply for) credits, to sign long-term supply agreements and to accept technical and even managerial consultants. However, they are not quite prepared to hand over to others or to share with them the management of the enterprise or to permit direct ownership of capital in them.

Here, too, appears that same contradiction between the Western capitalists, who are interested in enterprises exclusively oriented towards export, and the Soviet bureaucrats, who, for the reasons we have given, accept the creation of enterprises only if they serve internal development as well. Evidently, the management of the internal contribution network would remain in the hands of the state. (It is interesting to recall here that Yugoslavia, which a few years ago introduced legislation on foreign investments, making far more concessions than the Soviet bureaucracy is prepared to make (participation in share-capital, possibility of partial re-export of profits, etc.), was bitterly 'disillusioned' at the poor results obtained. The Western capitalists, particularly the Americans, preferred to invest in other countries, where the legislation on foreign investments was much more 'liberal' than in Yugoslavia.)

Conclusion

Thus, as we have seen, the penetration of American (and international) capital into the Soviet Union will come up against considerable objective difficulties, whatever the subjective intentions of Brezhnev and his group. The reasons for this difficulty lie in the social (non-capitalist) character itself of the Soviet Union. As we have already pointed out, the theoretical basis of the practical contradictions examined above lies in the struggle between the law of value, represented by international capitalism, and the law of the plan, badly but nevertheless still represented by the Soviet bureaucracy as a whole. Certain sectors of the bureaucracy at certain historical moments can, more or less consciously, stake everything on a logic of capitalist restoration. But the bureaucracy as a whole can only oppose this logic, not from any devotion to the ideals of socialism, which have been stifled by it, but because—due to its social nature—it is inevitably linked, however defectively, to the structure of the planned economy. Concretely, the great majority of bureaucrats are already becoming increasingly aware hat their own positions of power and the privileges they derive from them are necessarily linked to the planned economy and that, in the event of a passage to a 'market economy' and thus—ultimately—to the restoration of capitalism, they will not succeed in integrating themselves in the new power structure.

Does this mean perhaps that the bureaucracy, in the given historical circumstances, i.e. in the absence of a socialist and revolutionary working-class alternative, presents itself as the defender of what remains of the conquests of October (planned economy, with everything that flows from it, including, for example, the extremely 'generous' rhythms of the factories, the low rents, etc.)? Certainly not. Or, at least, only to a very limited extent. The fact is that the bureaucracy is the worst and feeblest of defenders of the planned economy, whether because it distorts planning to its own caste ends and throws the economy into crises through the waste that flows from such distortions, or because within the bureaucracy itself tendencies are continually reproduced, whose final logic is the restoration of captalism. But it is important to stress that these tendencies have quite precise limits in the dual and ambiguous nature of the bureaucracy itself.

On the political level, the present line of Brezhnev is nevertheless extremely risky. It tends, in fact, to present 'economic co-operation' with the United States as the panacea for all the ills which afflict the Soviet economy. If such a policy shows itself to be bankrupt, as we think we have shown it will, then in the medium term, the Brezhnev team might find itself confronted with an extremely menacing political crisis. The possibility has already been raised that one wing of the bureaucracy might revolt against the line. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that considerable expectations will be aroused in the masses—by the propaganda barrage we can expect to be mounted—expectations of a swift rise in the standard of living that will be sharply disappointed. Thus, if Brezhnev is brought down by a faction of the bureaucracy (which, as we said, is a medium-term probability), this will in effect be a preventive coup to forestall the explosion of a mass movement. However, it is not out of the question that we shall see events of the type of Szczecin or Gdansk, which would create a completely new situation in the Soviet Union and enable the re-construction of an opposition on a new basis. Such an opposition would differ from the present one—crushed by repression after political isolation and defeat—in that it would at last be linked to the aspirations of the masses.

Despite appearances, the old mole of revolution is still tirelessly burrowing away in the Soviet Union, even if its work is being carried out further underground than elsewhere.

Erich Farl

IS THE USSR AN IMPERIALIST COUNTRY?

Since the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the Chinese leaders have termed the USSR an imperialist country. This designation is by no means a new one. It has appeared regularly in the writings of members of tendencies which consider that the USSR is a capitalist country.[1] There is even a *certain logic* in this position. For if the USSR is really a capitalist country, and if we have been witnessing a real expansionism on its part, then this —in the epoch in which we live, termed by Marxists the epoch of imperialism, 'highest stage of capitalism'—can be nothing other than imperialism in the classical sense of the term.

The aim of this article is to examine this theory according to which the USSR is 'imperialist'. Leaving aside versions of it which have by now been forgotten, it will concentrate on views which have some influence within the revolutionary vanguard today: the position developed by Tony Cliff and the International Socialism group; the position of the Chinese Communist Party and its followers throughout the world; and the position of the French organization *Révolution!*.

Tony Cliff and 'Russian Imperialist Expansion'

The International Socialist position was developed by Tony Cliff in his *Russia: a Marxist Analysis*, which contains a chapter on 'The Imperialist Expansion of Russia'. State capitalism is therefore, in his view, an imperialist capitalism.

In discussing Cliff's views, I shall deliberately ignore certain of his arguments concerning the Russification of the Soviet republics. This aspect of a manifestation of great-Russian chauvinism already existed—and was denounced at the time by Lenin—in 1922-3, i.e. at a time when, even according to Cliff, there was not yet any question of Russian imperialism.

Cliff's overall theoretical approach to the question is somewhat individual. He begins by asserting correctly that the indiscriminate use of the term 'imperialism' to denote different forms of expansion generates confusion. He then recalls the criteria developed by Lenin in *Imperialism: Highest Stage of Capitalism* to characterize imperialism. Then he attempts to show that one of these criteria (the export of capital) does not apply to certain cases (Japan). Since, after this, he feels justified in abandoning this criterion, he considers that its non-applicabil-

[1] Erich Farl, 'The State Capitalist Genealogy' in *International*, Vol. 2, No. 1. For some typical examples see:—
(a) R. Louzon, 'L'héritage du Czar ou celui de Lénine?', *La Révolution Prolétarienne*, 1 August 1929; *Contre le Courant*, 21 September 1929, p. 11.
(b) Daniel Logan, 'L'explosion d'impérialisme bureaucratique', *Quatrième Internationale*, February 1946, pp. 5-10.
(c) Tony Cliff, *Russia: A Marxist Analysis*, International Socialism, London 1963, pp. 176-191.
(d) *Peking Review* (and other publications from People's China), *passim* since 1968.
(e) *Cahiers Révolution!* No. 3, 'Révolution et contre-révolution en URSS', Paris 1972, pp. 62-4.
(f) Milovan Djilas, 'Thèmes contemporains', *Questions Actuelles du Socialisme* No. 1, April-March 1951. (See also E. Germain's refutation, 'The Theory of State Capitalism', in *Fourth International* No. 112, September-October 1951). Djilas's article represented the official view of the Yugoslav leadership in the early fifties—a view, however, which they subsequently abandoned.

[2] Lenin, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Moscow 1967, Vol. 1, p. 745.

ity to the Soviet Union has no significance whatever, and that, in spite of that non-applicability, the USSR is indeed imperialist. In this way, as we shall see, he forgets what he himself had taken as his starting-point, i.e. that the indiscriminate use of the term imperialism leads to confusion. For to abandon the Leninist definition of imperialism leads inevitably to using the term for all cases of economic and territorial expansion.

Let us take a closer look at the arguments we have so summarily outlined. The criterion used by Lenin to distinguish imperialism from the other stages of capitalism and referred to by Cliff is the following: 'the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance.' This feature itself results, as Cliff recognizes, from the tendency of capital to go where the rate of profit is highest and, in a more general way, imperialism results from the decline of the rate of profit as the organic composition of capital (c/v) increases.

Now Japanese imperialism, Cliff asserts, which all agree in characterizing as an imperialism, does not have this feature. At the time when it was exporting vast quantities of capital to Manchuria—its only important colony prior to the Sino-Japanese war—profits were high in Japan itself. Cliff notes that Japanese investments in Manchuria went up from 97.2 million yen in 1932 to 263 million yen in 1936 and to 1,103 million yen in 1939, while average profits were extremely high: between 16 and 20% in 1936 and 1937 (see pp. 178-9). The source of Cliff's error is here plain to see. He takes as his starting-point the fact that there were high rates of profit in 1936. But the starting-point which he should have taken is 1. not an absolute rate of profit but *changes* in the rate of profit, and 2. not rates of profit in 1936 but those in 1930-31—i.e. at the moment when Japanese capital began to move into Manchuria on a large scale.

Henri Claude[1] informs us in this respect that the profits of all Japanese industrial companies taken as a whole fell from 531 million yen in 1928 to 268 million yen in 1931. It was precisely at this moment that Japanese capital began to invest massively in Manchuria. Inversely, the figures given by Cliff himself for 1936-7—a period in which the rate of profit was exceptionally high (and in which it moreover incorporated the profits from Manchuria)—show that at the moment the tendency to invest in Manchuria was declining: 378 million yen in 1936; 263 million in 1936; 348 million in 1937.

The first part of Cliff's argument thus rests on an incorrect selection of facts. However, it allows him to ignore the key criterion: the quest for a higher rate of profit.[2]

Having admitted that the USSR does not have this feature of imperialism, Cliff then develops an argument which can be summed up as follows: the aim of Russian imperialist expansion is to provide itself with the means to close the gap which separates Russia from the capitalist West; essential elements in this policy were the dismantling of factories in the satellite countries and their removal to the East; the use of 'unequal exchange' in commercial dealings with the satellite countries; and the installation in these countries of Russian enterprises. The dismantling of factories and the 'joint stock companies' now belong to the past (it should be noted that this chapter of Cliff's book was originally published in 1955). Moreover, this dismantling is not an export of capital, but rather the precise opposite!. As for the 'unequal exchange', we shall be discussing this below when we examine the views of Peking.

The Chinese Positions

Since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and in particular since Chou En-lai's speech of 23 August 1968 to an official reception offered by the Rumanian ambassador in Peking, when Chou declared that 'the clique of Soviet revisionist renegades has degenerated long since into social-imperialism and social-fascism'[3], the term 'imperialist' has been used by the Chinese leaders on numerous occasions in referring to the Soviet Union. According to the Chinese, the USSR carries out imperialist policies in two spheres: in the people's democracies and in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

The People's Democracies

The 'USSR revisionists', it is alleged, use Comecon to pillage and exploit the peoples of East Europe.[4] Czechoslovakia, for example, is a 'Soviet revisionist colony'.[5] In Mongolia too, 'the Soviet revisionists' follow a policy of colonial domination, forcing Mongolia to develop its stock-rearing and pillaging the country by demanding exorbitant prices for exports to it of Soviet industrial products.[6] Similarly, the Soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Central Asia are allegedly transformed into grain-stores or into producers of wool and cotton, while being unable to develop their local industry. Moreover, their agricultural produce is bought up at low prices, while they have to pay top prices for what is supplied to them.[7]

However, these denunciations of Soviet 'imperialism' in East Europe have become muted since the 1971 right turn in Chinese foreign policy.

Asia, Africa and Latin America

In the countries of these three continents, 'Soviet revisionist social-imperialism' is said by the Chinese to infiltrate under cover of economic and military 'aid'. 'By giving "aid", Soviet revisionism aims not only to pillage the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, but above all

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[1] Henri Claude, *De la crise économique à la guerre mondiale*, OCIA, Paris 1945, p. 8.

[2] It should be added that Cliff's entire line of argument on Russian imperialism is merely a secondary aspect of the theory of state capitalism. Indeed, according to Michael Kidron, one of the principal theorists of the IS group, imperialism is only the penultimate stage of capitalism (see Michael Kidron, 'Imperialism: Highest Stage but One', *International Socialism* 9, Summer 1962). A capitalist country may therefore have 'passed beyond' the imperialist stage.

[3] *Peking Review*, 26 August 1968, p. 9. See too the 'explanatory note' in *Peking Review*, 2 September 1968, p. 12.

[4] *Peking Review*, 2 December 1968, p. 24; 13 January 1969, p. 23.

[5] *Peking Review*, 4 November 1968, p. 44.

[6] *Peking Review*, 29 July 1969, p. 19.

[7] *Peking Review*, 25 August 1969, p. 31.

to control politically the beneficiary countries in order to establish its colonial domination as new tsars."[10] Although the Chinese leaders recognize that the USSR often only asks for a very low rate of interest (2.5%) on its loans, they consider that the 'real rate of interest is to be found in the high prices of their goods' and that what is involved is in fact a disguised system of usury.[11]

It is above all with respect to India that Soviet aid policy is criticized.[12] According to the Chinese, Russian economic 'aid' is nothing but a simple export of capital. The USSR has become India's second biggest creditor, to the tune of 10.22 thousand million rupees since 1955. Through its aid to the public sector in India, the USSR controls 30% of steel production, 35% of oil refining, 20% of electricity production, 60% of power station equipment, 85% of heavy machinery production, 75% of production of electric motors, 80% of oil prospecting and extraction and 25% of aluminium production. India will have to export increasing quantities of goods to the Soviet Union and import increasing quantities from the latter, thus becoming more and more dependent.

Critique of the Chinese Positions: a new Kautskyism?

The Chinese positions on social-imperialism differ from those of Cliff in that they do not take as their starting-point the definition of imperialism given by Lenin. Yet that definition, despite its incomplete character, remains the most scientifically correct definition of imperialism to have been put forward up to now. Let us recall it briefly, well-known as it is:—

'a) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life;

b) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital", of a financial oligarchy;

c) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance;

d) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and

e) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed.'[13]

The two first criteria are linked to the analysis of the development of the relations of production in the capitalist countries. We shall not discuss them here (but see our 'The State Capitalist Genealogy' in *International*, Vol. 2, No. 1). The last two criteria are the consequence at a world level of the functioning of the system. The kernel of the definition, which forms the crucial intermediary link between the first two and the last two criteria, is the third: the export of capital which becomes more and more important and which aims, as we said earlier, to find the possibility of making higher profits and thus of combating the tendency—inherent in capitalism—for rates of profit to decline. The Chinese hardly discuss this aspect of the problem.

In the same work in which he gives this definition (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*), Lenin criticizes Kautsky, the representative of centrism in the workers' movement. He reproaches him with considering that imperialism is simply one *policy* among others, which may equally well be replaced by another policy, i.e. a question of *choice*, rather than an organic tendency of monopoly capitalism. The Chinese positions on the USSR are, in fact, nearer to this view of Kautsky's than they are to that of Lenin, inasmuch as they make no reference whatever to what conditions imperialism (the tendency of the rate of profit to fall), and inasmuch as Soviet aid to the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America is often presented as a *means* which the USSR uses for the purpose of establishing its political domination.

There are two further arguments used by the Chinese leaders to prove that the USSR has imperialist policies:

a) arrangements like that with India, whereby the USSR buys goods manufactured in India thanks to Soviet aid, are presented by the Chinese as a measure for the subordination of the Indian economy;

b) the phenomenon—also, as we have seen, denounced by Cliff—of unequal exchange, above all in relations between the USSR and the people's democracies.

The first argument does not show that what is involved is imperialism, quite the contrary. For the arrangements under which the USSR buys products made in India are not necessarily a measure of subordination at all. Indian governments have long sought to safeguard the economic development of the country by arranging to pay for their imports in non-convertible national currency, in order to push the countries who supply them to spend the currency obtained either in India itself or in exchange for Indian products.[14] This has been the case since the fifties with the USSR, the GDR and Poland.

As for 'unequal exchange', it should be noted that this criticism is made with respect to the people's democracies, and not with respect to economic and commercial relations between the USSR and the countries of the 'third world'. This problem has often been debated in the past with respect to exchanges within COMECON. These exchanges have certain specific characteristics[15]:

—the contracts were based, from the end of the war until 1951, upon current world prices;

—from 1951 until 1956, world prices in 1949 and the first half of 1950 were taken as a basis, in order to avoid the price fluctuations provoked on the world market by the Korean War;

—in 1957 the average 1956 prices were used;

—after 1957, hard prices were used for the entire period of the various trade agreements—in other words world prices 'corrected' to eliminate the fluctuations provoked by speculation or by the conjuncture;

—after 1962 the average of world prices between 1957 and 1961 was adopted;

—a further revision of prices was made in 1965-6, and the average of world prices for the period 1960-64 was adopted.

Now, the use of world market prices inevitably introduces an inequality between the countries involved, because of the unequal degree of economic development of each. As Marx explained in *Capital*, trade allows advanced counties to sell goods at a price which is higher than their value. At the same time, this does not alter the fact that this price is lower than that at which the less developed countries could themselves produce the same goods. For the quantity of labour incorporated in the exporting country is much less than that which the less advanced country would have to put in. Thus international trade between the 'socialist'

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[10] *Peking Review*, 14 July 1969, p. 25.

[11] ibid., pp. 26-7.

[12] *Peking Review*, 24 January 1972, article 'Soviet Revisionism's Neo-colonialism in India', p. 20.

[13] Lenin, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Moscow 1967, Vol. 1, pp. 745-6.

[14] *India. A Reference Annual, 1960*, Delhi 1960, p. 339.

[15] According to D. F. Fokin, *Vnjeshnjaja Torgovlja SSSR (1946–1963)*, IMO Moscow 1964.

countries involves a continuous drain of value from the poor countries to the rich countries.[16]

Here the criticism levelled by the Chinese is based on a reality. It will remain valid as long as there is exchange of goods at world prices. However, it should be noted that the solution to this problem is hard to find in economic terms: for it would be practically impossible to carry out exchanges systematically on the basis of the costs of production in each producing country. If such were indeed the case, the producing country would very often find it more advantageous to reorient its exchanges towards the capitalist world. Let us take an example. Suppose for a moment that Britain is a workers' state exporting cars to Yugoslavia and importing in return raw materials (copper, zinc, mercury, etc.). If the costs of production were taken as the basis, Britain would have to export its cars (which we can assume for the sake of the example to cost less than the world market price, since they would contain less crystallized labour than elsewhere in the world) extremely cheaply. On the other hand, it would have to import raw materials at very high prices. Consequently, it would go elsewhere for its raw materials and would sell its cars to other countries (Scandinavia, for instance).

Thus, the problem is by no means one related solely to imperialism. The solution of such a problem in the framework of the workers' states can, therefore, only be sought in another direction: the international coordination and planning of investment, aid, interest-free loans, etc. to permit the economically less developed countries to 'catch up' with the more advanced ones.

It should furthermore be noted that there are cases in which the USSR *buys* at prices above the world market. When the USSR and Cuba signed the 1965-70 sugar agreement—in 1964—the price fixed (6 cents a pound) was below the world market price. But all forecasts suggested a decline in world market prices, and indeed for almost the entire period covered by the agreement world prices were *below* 6 cents a pound. Moreover, the price fixed for the Chinese-Cuban agreement covering the same period was based on the terms of the Russian-Cuban agreement.

Thus all the criticisms levelled by the Chinese leaders, rather than adding up to a critique based on Marxist criteria, appear instead to be merely polemics against particular political actions on the part of the USSR (e.g. the occupation of Czechoslovakia).

The position of 'Révolution!'

The position of the French group *Revolution!* is more nuanced. It flows from the group's position on the class nature of the Soviet Union. For *Révolution!*, the USSR is not (yet) a capitalist state. As early as 1927-8 power was won by a 'new exploiting class'. The latter is forced by the economic crisis to orient itself towards the restoration of classical capitalism. Thus the thesis of *Révolution!* is situated midway between the notion of a 'new class' and that of a 'new bourgeoisie'. It sees a new class which is in the process of becoming differentiated and of giving birth gradually to a new bourgeoisie. This process, however, is far from being completed. The comrades of *Révolution!* consider, therefore, that the Chinese position on 'social-imperialism' is without theoretical foundation[17] and that one will only be able to speak of imperialism when capitalism is fully developed (i.e. when the law of value dominates the entire social process of production in the Soviet Union).

Nevertheless, according to these comrades, the USSR is already inserted within 'the imperialism concert' (has been since Yalta), having entered it 'for the purpose of redefining new spheres of influence'. During the last few years, the turn 'towards an active imperialist policy' has been particularly marked.

In the positions of the *Révolution!* group, the definition of this turn 'towards' an imperialist policy is marked by a predominance of the 'political level'. In reality, what they call 'insertion within the imperialist concert' covers Russian efforts to maintain the *status quo* vis-à-vis imperialism. But this is not an imperialist policy. At most, it is a policy of complicity with imperialism, i.e. a policy characteristic of a conservative bureaucracy.

The comrades of *Révolution!* also denounce the fact that, under cover of economic aid, Russian capital competes with American capital for the economic domination of certain countries. However, they do not offer any detailed explanation of the mechanism of Soviet aid which, in most cases, does not lead to economic domination of the firms or sectors which receive it, but on the contrary to a reinforcement of national bourgeoisies and national capitalism (sometimes 'state capitalism') in the 'third world' countries to which it goes.

Conclusion

In October 1939, Trotsky wrote as follows concerning the 'imperialism' of the Soviet Union:

'Can the present expansion of the Kremlin be termed imperialism? First of all we must establish what social content is included in this term. History has known the "imperialism" of the Roman state based on slave labour, the imperialism of feudal land-ownership, the imperialism of commercial and industrial capital, the imperialism of the Tsarist monarchy, etc. The driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy is indubitably the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues. This is the element of "imperialism" in the widest sense of the word which was a property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling castes, medieval estates and classes. However, in contemporary literature, at least Marxist literature, imperialism is understood to mean the *expansionist policy of finance capital* which has a very sharply defined economic content. To employ the term "imperialism" for the foreign policy of the Kremlin—without elucidating exactly what this signifies—means simply to identify the policy of the Bonapartist bureaucracy with the policy of monopolistic capitalism on the basis that both one and the other utilize military force for expansion. Such an identification, capable of sowing only confusion, is much more proper to petty-bourgeois democrats than to Marxists.'[18]

The theories of 'Russian imperialism' or 'social-imperialism' offered by the Chinese bureaucracy, or by groups like the International Socialists and *Révolution!*, attempt to provide us with an 'elucidation'. But this turns out, on analysis, to be an extremely fragile one, like every explanation based on analogies. It in no way arms us to study concretely the contradictory behaviour of the Soviet bureaucracy.

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[16] See Henri Valin, 'L'évolution du COMECON et les problèmes posés par la division internationale du travail entre Etats ouvriers bureaucratisés', *Quatrième Internationale* No. 23, November 1964.

[17] *Cahiers Révolution!* No. 3, pp. 62ff.

[18] Leon Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, New York 1965, p. 26.

Discussion

Memoirs of a Chinese Trotskyist

F. Wang

I joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1925, at Hangchow in Chekiang province. Then I went to Peking and worked in that district. In 1926 I went south to Kwangtung, where I became a political commissar in the army. At that time, the Communist military units were taking part in the Kuomintang's Northern Expedition against the war-lords. But I did not serve in the army long, because the Party wanted me to go back to Peking. At the time, Peking had not been 'liberated', but was under the rule of the Peiyong war-lord, Chang Tso-lin, and his 'white terror'. The Party considered it was more important to do revolutionary work in the reactionary area than in the Army. At that time I was a student of Peking University, so I returned to Peking where I became a leading member of the Party's university committee.

The objective situation and conditions were very favourable, and a growing number of students wanted to enter the Party. In a very short time, the university cell of the Party had a membership of more than two hundred. Then I left the university. After Li Ta-chao and other leaders of the Party were executed in the spring of 1927, I became a member of the Peking district committee of the Party. Then I went to Wuhan, where I was assigned by the Party to work for the revolutionary newspaper *Mingkuo Yak-po*. Wuhan was the seat of the 'Left Kuomintang' government of Wang Ching-wei. But in the autumn, Wang betrayed the revolution and made a compromise with Chiang Kai-shek. So all the comrades were thrown into confusion. I was soon arrested: I was perhaps the first Communist to be arrested at the time by Wang Ching-wei. I was in prison for one month.

After I was released, the Party sent me to Moscow. I studied in the Eastern University (University for Toilers of the Orient), which contained students of more than seventeen nationalities. It was here that I accepted Trotskyism. This was still in 1927. At that time the struggle between Stalinism and Trotskyism was most severe and strenuous. When I had come to Moscow, of course, I had not known the difference between the two factions. But when I was at the Eastern University, I studied the documents issued by the central committee of the CPSU. All these were cut and arranged to favour Stalinism, and yet we could read the difference. Basing our judgement on our experience in China, we concluded that the Trotskyists were right. But in the university there was no Trotskyist organization. Then, in the summer of 1928, I was transferred to Sun Yat-sen University, where we began to organize a Trotskyist tendency. At that time, almost all the students of the Eastern University were won over to Trotskyism, and in the Chinese university too Trotskyism was very influential. In the autumn of 1928 we organized a Trotskyist leading committee in the university. This had three members, of whom I was one. We began to organize clandestine work in the Soviet Union, in cooperation with some Russian comrades who were, of course, by then also organizing underground. The situation was very difficult, more difficult than that which we found later in China, because of the GPU. Our clandestine work continued for about one year, from the autumn of 1928 to the summer of 1929. During this period, I was one of the leading members of the Trotskyist tendency in the Soviet Union. I think that at that time there were more than four hundred Chinese Trotskyists, including the comrades in Sun Yat-sen University, those in military schools and some in the Lenin Institute.

Return to China

In the summer of 1929, I applied to be sent back to China. My application was accepted and I arrived in Shanghai in September of that year. At that time, it was a secret that I was a Trotskyist, so I was able to work inside the Party. Before we returned to China, we had a meeting in Moscow to discuss how we should work in China. We decided that we should work within the Party to be the best revolutionaries, so that people might know that we were not mere bourgeois intellectuals interested simply in new theories or other novelties, but genuine revolutionaries. We decided that we must prove ourselves to be real revolutionaries through our work for the Party; in that way we would win the confidence of the comrades and be listened to. We thought that we could convince them and win them to our side only in this way. A group of more than twenty Chinese Trotskyists went back to China with me, via Vladivostok, to Shanghai.

When I arrived in Shanghai in September 1929, I was received by Chou En-lai, who at that time was head of both the organizational bureau and the military council of the central committee. I was assigned to work under him, as his assistant in the organizational bureau. So I was put in charge of the Party's work in one of the five districts of Shanghai. Shanghai was the most industrialized city in China, and the work there was directly under the leadership of the central committee rather than under the Kiangsi provincial committee. The Party considered its work in Shanghai to be the most important of all. Under Chou En-lai, there were five assistants, each of whom was assigned to one district of Shanghai. I worked under Chou for about one year.

During this time, I kept secret contact with those Trotskyists who had returned to China before me because they had been expelled from the Party in Moscow. They had been expelled from the Chinese Party at the same time as Trotsky was expelled from the Bolshevik Party, since they had been waging an open struggle against the Stalinists. We, on the other hand, had organized only clandestine activity in Moscow, and they did not discover us. These comrades who had come home before me numbered between thirty and forty. One group of them had gone to Peking, another to Hong Kong, where they had become workers at the Tai-koo Dockyard. Only three of them had come to Shanghai, where they had established a

bookshop called *New World*. I kept secret contact with these three comrades from the bookshop. They organized the Chinese Trotskyists returning from Moscow, and started to publish an organ called *Our Voice* (*Wo-men-te-Hua*), the title of which was taken from Trotsky's pre-revolutionary Paris paper *Nashe Slovo*. *Our Voice* was the first Trotskyist publication in China. This was in 1929. At that time I was still working within the Party and devoting all my time to Party work. The situation was very difficult, indeed dangerous, and I was in fact once arrested during that time.

In the winter of 1929, the Moscow underground organization was betrayed and all the Trotskyists were arrested. They were put in prison or sent to Siberia. Nobody was sent back to China. As a result Sun Yat-sen University was closed down, because it was useless for the Stalinists to run the university only to educate Trotskyists. An informer testified in court that all the students of the university were Trotskyists. In this way, I too was discovered to be a Trotskyist. When my secret was discovered, I was sick in hospital. Chou En-lai came to have a talk with me and said: 'Moscow says that you are a Trotskyist, but we have worked together for a year already and you have done your work very satisfactorily. So you had better make a declaration that you will give up your positions'. I agreed to make a declaration, and the next day a messenger came to take it. In my statement, I said that I was a Trotskyist and that the resolution passed at the Sixth (1928) Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was wrong. But I said that I would abide by the discipline of the Party and accept the decisions of the majority. I said that I wanted to work in the Party and reserved the right to speak at the next congress. The messenger took the statement back and immediately the official Party organ *Red Banner* announced that I had been expelled. This was how my connection with the Communist Party ended.

Trotskyism in China

I now began to work openly for the Trotskyist tendency. At that time there were three other Trotskyist groups in China besides our group *Our Voice*. The most influential of the three was the group of eighty-one members led by Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Peng Shu-tse, which had become Trotskyist after reading documents obtained from our group. When they became Trotskyists, these comrades, all of whom had held positions of responsibility in the Communist Party, signed a declaration—written by Ch'en Tu-hsiu—which is one of the most important documents of the history of Trotskyism in China. In it, the former prominent leading members of the Party themselves criticized the Party and its policies. After putting out this statement, they began to publish an organ called *Proletariat*. When I was expelled from the Party, some members of the *Proletariat* group asked me to join it. But I considered myself at the time to be a member of *Our Voice*.

I should explain that when we were working underground in Moscow, we made a decision not to establish a separate organization of our own, but to join and strengthen the Trotskyist organization which already existed in China. But in fact differences, some political, some merely generational, quickly sprang up between the older Trotskyists from the Communist Party leadership—Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Peng Shu-tse, etc.—and the younger Trotskyists like myself. Some of the older comrades showed that they wanted to control the organization, and it was this which led the younger comrades to reject the existing group and form their own, *Our Voice*.

A third group was called *October*, founded by Liu Yen-ching. Liu was one of the twelve members who attended the founding congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. At one time general secretary of the Chinese Socialist Youth League, he went to Moscow to study at the Lenin Institute and returned to China a little before me, by way of Europe. He stayed with Trotsky for several days on Prinkipo, and together they drew up the first platform of the Left Opposition in China, which Liu brought back to China with him. When in Moscow, he had attended the meeting of Chinese Trotskyists which decided, as I have already mentioned, that we should participate in the existing organization and not set up a separate group. Liu agreed with the decision at the time, but when he returned to China he did not join the existing group, but instead collaborated with the younger comrades who were to form *Our Voice*—and this despite the fact that he was himself the oldest and most experienced of the Chinese Trotskyists (as a matter of fact, it was due to his persuasion that Ch'en Tu-hsiu himself was won over to Trotskyism). However, Liu did not actually join *Our Voice*. He was trying to form a separate group of his own, and although at one point he asked me to organize a Peking branch of *Our Voice* with him, we in fact established an autonomous group in Peking, called *October*. In addition to *Proletariat*, *Our Voice* and *October*, there was a fourth group of Chinese Trotskyists at the end of the twenties, formed by four comrades on their return to China and called *Struggle*.

Unification

We all recognized that this was a bad state of affairs, and that it was essential to create a unified Trotskyist organization in China. Trotsky urged us to unite, comparing the Chinese Trotskyists separated because of trifles to a hair split into eight. So we organized a Negotiating Council for Unification. The negotiations took a very long time. Each group expressed different opinions at every meeting of the council. It was really a waste of time, so in the end Ch'en Tu-hsiu himself walked out of the council and withdrew the *Proletariat* representative. There were, of course, many reasons why it took so long to negotiate the unification. On the one hand, the older comrades of the *Proletariat* group looked down on the younger comrades of the other groups: Peng Shu-tse in particular insisted that the question was not one of 'unification', but that all the other comrades should join *Proletariat*. On the other hand, the younger comrades of the other groups were equally prejudiced against the older comrades of *Proletariat*, holding them responsible for the defeat of the revolution and saying that they had betrayed it. These were the main obstacles to unification.

The person who demanded unification most strenuously was Trotsky himself. In his open letter, he said that although Ch'en Tu-hsiu had been an opportunist when he accepted the Stalinist policy, he had since proved himself to be a very good revolutionary by his declaration to the Chinese Communist Party. Although he was not a good theoretician, he was very experienced and a good observer. Trotsky insisted that it was a big gain for the Trotskyist tendency to have him, and urged us to unify the four organizations. This move of Trotsky's quickened the process of unification.

On 1 May 1931 the unification congress of Chinese Trotskyists was held at long last. At the congress a Central Committee was elected to lead the new organization. Ch'en Tu-hsiu was general secretary of the Central Committee, and the other members were Chung Chao-lin, Cheng

Young communist army volunteers in North China, 1937. (Photo—A.P.)

Yen-mao, Wo Tah, Lo han, Song Fong-cheng and I. Peng Shu-tse was not included, because he had always opposed the unification. The congress only elected him as a candidate member, and in fact he did not even attend the unification congress.

Repression

But now a great misfortune befell us. On 24 May all the members of the Central Committee except Ch'en Tu-hsiu were arrested. We spent the first day of our arrest in the International Settlement, under the British authorities, but on the next day we were transferred to the hands of the Kuomintang. We had just started to work under the unified leadership when this very severe blow fell. We had been informed on to the Kuomintang by a traitor who had previously been a member of the *Proletariat* group, and who, as the latter's representative on the Negotiating Council, had always tried to prevent the unification. Now, at last, Ch'en Tu-hsiu expelled him.

We were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, ranging from five to thirteen years. Chung Chao-lin got thirteen years, I got seven. There were other comrades who were arrested at the same time—comrade Lao and the youngest of all the comrades, Po Si-ao, who later quit the Party. Of the Central Committee members, Chung Chao-lin and I are the only ones who are still alive. All the others died: Cheng Yen-mao, who was a Tai-koo Dockyard worker, died in prison; Lo Han was killed in a Japanese bombing raid; Song Fong-cheng died in Peking.

Several months later, Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Peng Shu-tse organized a provisional committee to carry on the work, but this lasted only about one year. All the members of the provisional committee once again were arrested by the Kuomintang. After this, the only member left to work for the organization in Shanghai was Cheng Chi-chang, who had been one of my fellow-students at Peking University. He took charge of all the work, reorganizing those comrades who had lost contact. He was in reality the most important person in the Trotskyist movement in the period from 1932 to 1934.

In 1934, some new comrades, who had been under the leadership of Liu Yen-ching in Peking, came into the organization. At that time, Liu Yen-ching was working with two foreign comrades, Harold Isaacs (by the way, it is Liu Yen-ching who is referred to by the initials, LJC, in the preface to the current edition of Isaacs' famous book *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*) and Frank Glass. Frank had already been a Trotskyist for some time when he came to Shanghai, but Isaacs, when he arrived to start a newspaper called *People's Tribune*, had been sympathetic to Stalinism. The turning-point as far as Isaacs' political evolution was concerned came with the arrest of Ch'en Tu-hsiu. One of the Stalinists who were Isaacs' friends at the time asked him to write an article describing Ch'en Tu-hsiu as a man who had been bribed to work for the interests of Japanese imperialism. Isaacs was a very honest man and this incident made him extremely angry. It was from this moment that his political positions began to change. Under the influence of Frank Glass, he finally became sympathetic to Trotskyism. He gave his own printing press to our organization. He then went to Peking to collect material about the Chinese revolution of 1925-7. He asked Liu Yen-ching to translate this material from Chinese for him, and it was in this way that Liu came to work with Isaacs on his book *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*. It was after this, in 1934, that Liu Yen-ching came south to Shanghai with four young comrades, and they worked together with Frank Glass and Cheng Chi-chang to reorganize Trotskyist activity. But after only a few months, before they had been able to do anything serious, all of them except Cheng Chi-chang and Frank Glass were arrested. Liu and the others were sent to Nanking. I was still in prison at the time. Liu Yen-ching was transferred to a penitentiary where they asked him to recant. He did so! After he was released from the penitentiary, we considered him a traitor. He served in the Kuomintang Army in Sian, as an instructor to brainwash arrested communists. He was a really miserable fellow!

Reorganization

At the end of 1934 I was released, together with comrade Lao. We had actually served four years of our sentences, when there was an amnesty. We returned to Shanghai—I myself after a short rest at my home in the country. In Shanghai, Cheng Chi-chang introduced me to Frank Glass, who told me that he wanted to do something to help the Chinese comrades to get the work going again. I wrote to Ch'en Tu-hsiu in Nanking prison, and after some time he agreed to my proposal to start something with help from Frank Glass. We reorganized a new leading committee. Of course, this was not an elected committee, because there were only a few comrades left. We got some activists—Cheng Chi-chang, Frank Glass (whose pseudonym was Li Fu-jen), Yen Kua and Chang Cheng-tong, a worker who had been one of the organizers of the Shanghai insurrection in 1926, a very good comrade who is still in Mao's prisons—and formed the new committee. We began to publish two papers, one agitational called *Struggle* (Tou-chang), the other a theoretical journal called *Spark*. Both were published monthly. These were the only Trotskyist publications in China that really counted, because they lasted for many years, from the spring of 1935 until 1942, when a split occurred in the organization.

These two papers were printed in a very primitive fashion, because we could not find any printing house willing to produce them. So we had to set up our own printing press, so to speak, with the help of the type which Harold Isaacs had donated. Isaacs, as I have already mentioned, gave us his printing press after he changed his political positions and stopped publishing *People's Tribune*. But we could not work the machine, so we sold it—very cheaply—and kept the type. We then made frames to hold the type and used it as a kind of mimeograph. The money we got from Frank Glass was our entire source of income, and all of it went into this printing operation. Each month, Frank Glass gave us one hundred dollars, which was a quarter of his salary. He lived in the French section of Shanghai, in Sanchong Road, and of course as a foreigner he had to live more or less as he had done in his own country—much better than the ordinary Chinese lived—and this cost a lot. Thus giving us a quarter of his salary represented a heavy burden on him. But at that time there were no jobs to be had, so we had no possible source of money except Frank. We managed to write a few articles for the left press, but this was by no means continuous. All the comrades were extremely poor, and one could say that one of the characteristics of Chinese Trotskyists was tremendous poverty.

The Popular Front

By 1936 *Struggle* had a clandestine circulation of between two and three hundred. Given the harsh Kuomintang repression, we could only give the paper to people we could really trust. It was about this time, as the Communist Party was developing its policy of united front with the Kuomintang, that some differences appeared to be developing between the Party and some of the intellectuals influenced by it, notably Lu Hsün. The latter expressed doubts about the new policy, insisting that it was wrong to abandon the class position and make friends with the enemy of yesterday. A heated discussion ensued between Lu Hsün and Chou Yang, who supported the Moscow popular front policy. Lu Hsün did not reject the idea of a united front as such, but there were differences on how to enforce it. In the field of literature, these differences were reflected in two alternative slogans: Chou Yang was for a 'literature of national defence', while Lu Hsün was for a 'literature of the masses for revolutionary struggle'. We thought, wrongly as it turned out, that Lu Hsün might be won over as a result of the differences. So we sent him a copy of *Struggle*, which had printed many articles criticizing the popular front. Although, as I have described, our paper was printed in the most primitive way, Lu Hsün sent us back a letter in which he said that it was very beautifully printed and hinted that he suspected we had got money from the Japanese imperialists!

Once we had succeeded in establishing our two papers on a firm footing and had restarted the work in Shanghai, we wanted to re-establish contact with other branches of the organization. Trotskyists were active in Peking, Wangsi, Wenchow county in Chekiang, and above all in Hong Kong. It was in 1936, just at the time when Cheng Chi-chang was sending our letter to Lu Hsün, that Frank Glass and I went to Hong Kong to re-establish contact with the comrades there, to help them reorganize their activity and launch a paper. With our assistance, they began to publish a roughly printed paper called *Star*.

In Prison Again

In 1937 I was arrested once again by the Kuomintang, this time on my own. They had discovered the relationship between Glass and myself, but they did not know where I lived. It was very easy to find out where a foreigner lived, so they put a watch on Frank Glass's home and followed anybody who visited him. This was how they caught me—in May 1937. Glass then went back to the United States. But Cheng Chi-chang and the other comrades were still safe and continued to publish the papers of the organization. I was sent to a secret prison in Nanking, run by the *Chungtong*. I should explain that the Kuomintang had two departments specializing in counter-revolutionary activities—the *Chungtong* or 'bureau for statistics and investigation' under the Kuomintang central committee, which dealt with all civilian political offences; and the *Kungtong*, under the Kuomintang's military committee, which served the same purpose with respect to military offenders. These departments were organized in imitation of Hitler's methods, and specialists were in fact sent to Germany to study the scientific methods of dealing with revolutionaries in use there. I spent seven months in the *Chungtong's* prison. Although material conditions were a little better than in ordinary prisons, the brutal psychological pressure and torture were unbelievable. Every cell was solitary, just big enough for a bed and a toilet, nothing more. No reading of any kind was allowed. The only written words I saw during those eight months were those printed on a box of toothpaste. One of the reasons I have a nervous disease and my hands shake is because of the torture in that prison. They would call one from one's cell to work at any time of night or day—midnight was a favourite time. It was forbidden to ask questions. Of course, there was no trial. The only way to get out of this prison was to capitulate, give up your political views and agree to work for the Kuomintang to help suppress the revolution. Thus the only alternatives were to be spiritually destroyed or, ultimately, to be physically destroyed and die in prison. There was no fixed term for one's imprisonment, so that the only possible way out was to agree to serve the Kuomintang. One was free to do this and walk out of the prison at any time. That was how the *Chungtong's* prison was, and it was just like hell.

At the end of November 1937, when the Japanese Army approached to within a few miles of Nanking, I could hear the sound of shelling very clearly from my cell.

Every day, all day long, Japanese aeroplanes flew over the city dropping bombs. But, of course, we prisoners were not allowed to take shelter even during a raid; if the prison had been hit we would have died in our cells. It was at this time that the second united front between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party was formed and as a result all the other prisoners except me were set free, since they were all Communists. I became the only inmate in the prison. I remember that it was on the last day of November that the last remaining prison officer came to my cell and told me that he was leaving the prison. He said that I could go too. He was a very good fellow. He gave me two dollars, because I was penniless. So I walked into the city and found a friend and borrowed twenty dollars. As a war refugee, I climbed on a refugee train to Hankow. This was just a few days before the Japanese Army entered Nanking and carried out the notorious Nanking Massacre. Even on the day I was set free, the streets and alleys of the city were littered with dead and dying, victims either of the bombing raids or—as was especially the case with refugees who had come south from Shanghai—of starvation or disease. It was a very miserable scene.

As a refugee, I went to Wuchang. I arrived there at the beginning of December, and found Ch'en Tu-hsiu. He received me very warmly and asked me to live in his home. We had discussions which lasted for many days, covering every question. Ch'en had by now become spiritually dull, but still had sound political opinions. I proposed that we should try to publish a legal paper in Wuchang, but Ch'en said that this would be useless. He suggested that I should enlist in the army: One very ridiculous thing he said was that I should go into the army but should take care always to stand in a safe place. At all events, he said that it was necessary for us to take arms.

Opening in the Army

At that time there was, in fact, a very good opportunity for us to begin armed struggle. For there was a general named Hu Chi-fong, a divisional commander in Hupeh Province under Song Cha-kyui, whose brigade was commanded by Chi Sing-wang. Hu was seriously wounded in battle and sent back to Wuchang to recuperate. When I was in Wuchang, Hu Chi-fong was on the point of going back to the army, since he had recovered. During his stay in Wuchang he had read many books, and he was a man of intelligence—a man who thought for himself. So he had thought of many reasons why the army had suffered so many defeats at the hands of the Japanese imperialists. He had come to be disillusioned with the Kuomintang, to think that it had degenerated. So he wanted to find some way out of this situation. Of course, he had known the name of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, and moreover his brother was a friend of Ch'en's. So he found the latter in Wuchang and had a talk with him. He proposed that Ch'en send some of his 'disciples' to the army, in order to give the soldiers of his brigade a 'patriotic education'. Of course, he was simply a 'patriot' himself. Ch'en thought it was a very good opportunity. Hu's brigade did not directly belong to the Kuomintang, but was under the command of General Fong Yu-chang, who was a warlord independent of Chiang Kai-shek and thus not dominated by the *Kungtong*. That was why Ch'en Tu-hsiu thought it was a very good chance.

At last we decided to go with him and Hu Chi-fong accepted us. Po Si-lau and I and another comrade named Chang Fo-ti were to go there first. The brigade was the 179th Division of the army, stationed at that time on the southern bank of the Yellow River. I was to be chief of staff of this division, and Po was to be an aide. Of course, it was forbidden by the Kuomintang to have political people like us in the army, and our roles as 'chief of staff' and 'aide' were a necessary cover. We got train tickets and were to start the next day. However, on the night prior to our departure, Hu Chi-fong was suddenly dismissed at the insistence of the Kuomintang, because they had discovered his relationship with Ch'en Tu-hsiu and us. Maybe he was informed on by other commanders. In any case, we lost contact with him.

By the way, we heard the name of Hu Chi-fong again later. This time he was a commander of the Kuomintang Army in the battle for Seechau, in the course of which about half-a-million Kuomintang soldiers were captured by the People's Liberation Army. Hu, who was garrisoned at Seechau, played an important part in the Communist victory by rebelling against the Kuomintang and going over to the Red Army. When the People's Republic was established, he was appointed a member of the military commission, and continues to work under Mao Tse-tung. Therefore, I think we were right in judging that he wanted to do something and that it was possible for us to intervene. He was, of course, simple-minded, but he wanted to do something for the revolution. So I think that if we had gone with him to the army, we could have done something valuable.

Possible Allies

Ch'en Tu-hsiu had another proposal. He said that there was no longer a Trotskyist organization in China. Some organized forces did, in fact, exist—some comrades working for Trotskyism in Shanghai—but Ch'en thought there was no perspective in the current method of work. He proposed that we take another path, namely, to work together with so-called 'democratic' groups, such as the Salvation Society, the Democratic League and the Workers' and Peasants' Party—at that time generally known as the 'third party'. These groups took a seemingly neutral position between the CP and the Kuomintang. They consisted of intellectuals (some of them bourgeois) and other left-wing elements. Ch'en proposed that we should cooperate with these groups, and work among the masses influenced by them. At the time, these groups had a certain mass following, especially the Salvation Society. I did not agree with Ch'en. I thought that this would be just another form of popular front. Ch'en wanted me to be our representative at the meeting with these groups. The latter were going to have a meeting attended by representatives from each, in order to negotiate a united front. I refused. After that, I stayed with Ch'en only a short time and then left Wuchang. I first went to Hong Kong and then to Shanghai. My family was in Shanghai and my old friends, such as Chen Chi-chang and other comrades, were there too. By the way, Ch'en Tu-hsiu himself finally attended the meeting in Wuchang with the three democratic groups. But the three groups did not want to take common action with Ch'en and were soon won over by the CP. So nothing came of this initiative.

When I went to Shanghai, the comrades there asked me to join them again, and I went on to the editorial board of the paper *Struggle*. At that time the editorial board was playing the role of the organization's Central Committee. By the way, in the Chinese Trotskyist movement an elected Central Committee only existed once. This was the CC which was formed at the Founding Congress, and which was destroyed in less than a month after it was formed. After that, the leadership was always assumed by provisional committees or something of the sort. At all

events, in 1937, when I went to Shanghai, this editorial board was playing the role of the CC. On the editorial board were Peng Shu-tse, Chen Chi-chang, Chen Chao-lin, comrade Lau and I. We continued to publish *Struggle* until the signs of American intervention into the Sino-Japanese war began to appear. We worked very amicably and there were no incidents worth mentioning.

Debate on the War

In 1939 I wrote an article to discuss what kind of attitude we should take if the United States intervened in the Sino-Japanese war, i.e. whether the character of the war would change or not. My view was that if the American Army intervened in the war and became the main opponent of Japanese imperialism, then the war would change its character and become a war between Japan and the United States, with China as a junior partner on the American side. I said that we should define our attitude to the war accordingly. I did not specify how our attitude should change, I did not think the matter through. I just raised the question.

At that time Peng Shu-tse was in Hong Kong. The remaining members of the editorial board agreed with me, but when Peng returned he expressed objections. He insisted that however much the American Army might dominate its Chinese partner, the war would not change its character. Thus differences began to emerge between us. But the discussion did not deepen, and other questions overshadowed the main point I had raised. Chen Chao-lin said we should go over to a policy of revolutionary defeatism if there was American intervention in the Sino-Japanese war. Peng Shu-tse said that there would be no question of revolutionary defeatism, even if the American Army intervened, and that our attitude should be one of defence. I thought at the time that if we were really to participate in the revolution, if we were to command some armed forces and intended to carry out our revolutionary programme, then the essence of our attitude should be revolutionary defeatism. But think of this situation. If we are on the front in the war against the Japanese army and a revolutionary situation arises in the area under Chinese control, we Trotskyists fight against the Kuomintang. Then the Chinese armed forces may be crushed by the Japanese army. In this case, all 'patriots' will say that we are traitors to China. I thought that there were only two alternatives open to us: either to abandon our revolutionary programme and cooperate with the Kuomintang for victory on the front, or to continue to fight for our revolutionary programme despite possible temporary defeats for China on the front. I thought that we should take up a policy of revolutionary defeatism—but only *if we really meant it*. This could not be a question of an attitude written down on a sheet of paper. If that was all that was involved, it would have been really easy. One could always be consistent, because no facts would come into the matter. But it was clear from the situation that the question was a concrete, urgent one, for which we had to prepare ourselves.

The real choice, as I have said, was whether we should abandon our revolutionary programme or keep on our struggle despite a possible temporary defeat this might help to provoke on the front. I thought that we should certainly continue our revolutionary struggle. In the existing situation, to overthrow the Kuomintang regime was absolutely necessary if we were to maintain our revolutionary struggle for a real victory over Japanese imperialism. I thought it was wrong to aim for victory in war first and revolution only second. In essence, Comrade Chen Chao-lin agreed with me. But, of course, Lenin's position on defeatism had been formulated in the context of a reactionary war, not in a progressive war. This posed big difficulties as to how to raise and how to formulate our revolutionary slogan. The positions taken on this by Chen Chao-lin and by me were different. I thought that we should emphasize the importance of victory over Japanese imperialism but say that for the weaker, Chinese side the most powerful potential weapon was revolution, including spreading revolution to the Japanese soldiers. This represented the best way forward for the Chinese revolution. So as I saw it, my attitude was not 'revolutionary defeatism', but rather in one sense 'revolutionary victoryism'. In other words, my view was, in essence, that only revolution can achieve a real victory over imperialism.

Unfortunately, I do not think that Peng Shu-tse thought about the question very seriously. He simply said that in Lenin's opinion one should take an attitude of revolutionary defeatism to a reactionary war, but support a progressive war. He insisted these two should not be confused. Finally, the difference on the editorial board crystalized into a balance of forces of four to two. Chen Chao-lin, Chen Chi-chang and Lau agreed with me; Peng Shu-tse and Liu Chau-liang opposed us. On the editorial board therefore, we were the majority and Peng was in the minority. But some time later a meeting was held in Shanghai, attended by more than twenty comrades. At this meeting, the question was discussed and the majority was reversed. Li Fu-jen (Frank Glass) helped Peng to some extent to achieve this. At the time there was a Pacific Bureau of the Fourth International (or perhaps of the SWP—I cannot recall) which specifically dealt with the countries in the Pacific area. Frank spoke for this Pacific Bureau, and proposed a resolution about the Chinese question which was quite similar to Peng's position. He said that even if the United States intervened in the Sino-Japanese war, our attitude towards Chinese participation should not change in any way. This was the key point on which he insisted. The resolution was passed, which gave authority to Peng's point of view. Before the meeting, the majority had supported our position, but because of the authority of Li Fu-jen's resolution the majority swung over to support Peng. On the editorial board, too, the majority swung to Peng's position and Chen Chao-lin and I were put in a minority.

The Split

This did not in itself mean a split of the organization. The minority demanded to continue discussion upon the questrion in the internal bulletin, and that the discussion should be printed in *Struggle*. Peng refused this demand, saying that we could not continue discussion endlessly and that we should support the majority now that the question had been resolved at the meeting. Even in the internal bulletin, just two or three issues were allowed for us to discuss the question and then an end was put to that. We asked for more issues of the internal bulletin for the question, and proposed that our articles on this question should be printed in *Struggle* under our own names—not, of course, as an official position. Editorials would put the official line, while signed articles would only represent the positions of their authors. At all events, we insisted that the question should continue to be discussed openly in *Struggle*. We demanded that one-eighth of the space in *Struggle* should be devoted to discussion, in the form of a 'discussion column'. Peng said this was impossible. Then we decided to publish our own mimeographed paper entitled *Internationalist*. Peng said that the minority had violated dis-

cipline, but he did not expel us. He said that the organization had split and that the entire responsibility lay with the minority.

Around this time, the Japanese Army occupied the international settlement in Shanghai and the situation was becoming worse and worse. So Liu Chau-liang and other comrades dispersed. Liu left Shanghai, Peng changed his name and became a professor in a Christian university in Shanghai. The minority continued to publish *Internationalist* under the Japanese occupation, but *Struggle* ceased to appear, once Liu Chau-liang and Peng were no longer there to produce it.

On D-Day, when the Japanese Army surrendered, many comrades came back to Shanghai from inland districts—Chongking, Kwangming, etc. This was the first time they learnt that there was a difference of opinion among us, and indeed a *de facto* split. They asked both sides what the differences were, and took sides accordingly. Events had moved so fast that the Kuomintang was not able to establish a firm domination. There was an interlude of something like democracy in Shanghai, and this situation continued from August 1945 to 1949 when the Red Army arrived. Taking advantage of this situation, both groups—Peng's and mine—were growing. Students and workers were recruited—though especially students. Both groups published magazines. Peng's group published a theoretical journal *Chu-chang* (Truth) and a youth journal *Youth and Women*. We published a journal called *New Banner*, which was printed and sold at newspaper stands. (*New Banner* was banned by the Kuomintang after its sixteenth issue as a 'reactionary' paper, but we continued to publish it for four issues clandestinely, in mimeographed form.) During this period there was no attempt from either side to reunify the two groups.

But we did cooperate to some extent. For instance, Chen Chao-lin wrote two or three articles for *Truth*. Then in 1948 Peng began to organize a new party, the Revolutionary Communist Party. We organized a new party a few months later—in April 1949, only one month before the Communist Army entered Shanghai. We called it the Internationalist Communist Party. Its membership was predominantly young, so that it was something like the present *Seventies Biweekly* group in Hong Kong, though less confused. Most of the young members had previously been sympathetic to Stalinism. We had about sixty or seventy members in Shanghai, and over two hundred in the country as a whole. I cannot tell exactly how large the majority was at the time, but it might have had three hundred members in the whole country.

After Communist Victory

When the Communist army took Nanking and approached Shanghai, where we had a certain mass base, we discussed what slogan we should raise. Throughout the two groups, there was only one comrade, Yung Kua, who may be in one of Mao's prisons if he is still alive, who said that we should raise the slogan 'Welcome the Liberation Army'. His argument was that the masses wanted to welcome the liberation army, and that we should not isolate ourselves from them but should go through experiences with them. The rest of us were opposed to any such slogan. On the other hand, we also thought it important to move with the masses, so that we equally rejected any such slogan as 'Fight against the Liberation Army' or 'Do not let the Liberation Army enter'. It was necessary to warn the masses that if they relied upon the Liberation Army, they would soon be disillusioned. But the important thing was for us to encourage the masses to organize their own power, independently from the Liberation Army. Of course, at that time Shanghai was under Kuomintang domination. So what we were saying meant that we had to rely upon our own force to overthrow the Kuomintang in the city. (In 1926, when the Kuomintang Army—which was still playing a revolutionary role in unifying the country and destroying the power of the warlords—was approaching Shanghai from the South, while it was still several miles distant the Communist Party organized a workers' insurrection in the city. Thus when the army came to Shanghai, power was in the hands of the workers. This insurrection was organized by Chou En-lai and Chang Cheng-tong. Chang Cheng-tong was, of course, one of our comrades. He is in one of Mao's prisons today.)

In May 1949, the Communist Army arrived at the Yangtze River and approached Shanghai. Peng's group decided to move the leadership of their party to Hong Kong, and most cadres of the majority moved there, together with Peng himself. However, most members of the majority had no relatives with whom to stay in Hong Kong, or had jobs and families to support; they therefore could not move and remained in China, forming local councils in Kiangsu and Chekiang provinces. The majority stopped publishing their journals when the leadership moved to Hong Kong, and could not continue any coordinated activity. Most of the members lost all contact with the leadership. Thus the majority was unable to take advantage of the situation after the Communist Army entered Shanghai.

The minority, for its part, remained in Shanghai, Peking, Kwangsi and Chekiang (Hangchow), and continued to publish its paper. Just Lau and I went to Hong Kong to organize our group there. Even after the Communists took Shanghai, our organization still continued to grow. Indeed, it grew very rapidly with the CP in power. We began to publish a new clandestine journal, *Marxist Youth*. Chen Chao-lin and the other comrades told me that this new journal really caught on among the youth, who had welcomed the People's Liberation Army but began very quickly to become disillusioned, and therefore sought contact with us. Thus it was especially among the youth that our organization grew during the three years which elapsed between the Communist take-over in Shanghai and 1952, when comrades of the minority were arrested all over China. (Some young members went too far and wanted to launch armed struggle. They were arrested and shot.) Disillusion with CP rule had set in very rapidly among the youth, who had expected too much. We were in a position to make big gains. But in 1952 the Communists arrested all our comrades. I cannot understand why they had tolerated us for three years. I suppose that at first they had other enemies more important than us. At any rate, in this period they contented themselves with making such famous Chinese Trotskyists as Liu Yen-ching and the Marx scholar Li-chi write declarations denouncing the Fourth International and supporting Mao Tse-tung. That was all—and in return they gave them jobs. (Li-chi translated the Marx/Engels correspondence and Liu taught in a school.) But by the time three years had passed, they found us very dangerous, because we were growing so rapidly; so they launched an anti-Trotskyist witch-hunt. In one night, on 22-3 December 1952, throughout China all the Trotskyists were arrested. We estimate that between two and three hundred were taken, including sympathizers and relatives. A typical case was that of my own nephew. About one month after his arrest, they called my brother to the police station to take away his body. From 1952 to the time of the Cultural Revolution, there was no Trotskyist movement worth mentioning in China.

Mao and Revolution

Immediately after Mao's victory, most of the comrades were surprised and asked themselves why we had failed and Mao succeeded—something the Chinese Trotskyists had never thought possible. How to explain this simple fact was the main problem. Peng Shu-tse, Liu Chau-liang and others just did not see the fact. They insisted that nothing new had happened. At the end of 1949 they said that Mao dared not fight against the bourgeoisie or confiscate its property. They said that he would inevitably seek a compromise with the bourgeois class, make it concessions, and ultimately surrender to it. Peng and Liu closed their eyes to reality.

Chen Chao-lin, for his part, said that Mao's army was not a communist army and that its success only represented a victory for state capitalism. He said that Mao's party could not succeed; that they might expropriate the capitalists but that it would not be for socialism but for state capitalism. I myself initially wrote a pamphlet arguing that Mao's victory was that of the bureaucracy. I said that this bureaucracy was a new class, and the victory was that of a bureaucratic collectivism. But I held this position for short period only. I soon reconsidered and concluded that the new regime was a deformed workers' state.

Peng has never explicitly changed his position. But if he too now maintains that the present regime is a deformed workers' state, how does he arrive at this conclusion? He has never explained. Perhaps he attributes everything to the role of the Soviet Army? At first he refused to accept the fact of the revolution at all. Later he said that there had been a revolution but this had nothing to do with Mao's policy. It was achieved only by the Soviet Army, because the latter gave arms to Mao's troops while the imperialists did not have sufficient arms to resist Mao's advance. This may be the key to Peng's position—but he never really explains.

Formerly we simply identified Mao Tse-tung with Stalin. But in reality there is a difference. Mao is, of course, a Stalinist. But he must be seen in the context of Chinese reality, undergoing the pressures of the Chinese revolution since the twenties, making a whole series of alterations to traditional Stalinism. When, in 1934, Mao made a united front for the second time with the Kuomintang, we said he had surrendered and knelt down before Chiang Kai-shek, that he had abandoned all class struggle. But we were mistaking his tactical manoeuvres for his strategy. Mao has always been very much a tactician. At that time, he said that he would halt the agrarian revolution; but in reality he continued to push it forward. He continued his class policy. We said that Mao's party was not a class party, not a workers' party, but a petty-bourgeois peasant party which could never carry out a revolution. But this was to misjudge the real character of the Chinese Communist Party. The latter was, of course, a bureaucratized party, but it retained some positive features. First of all, the Communists lived among the masses—and from this point of view they had the advantage over us, who were almost entirely cut off from the masses. Although the masses with whom the CP lived were peasants and not workers, it did nevertheless live and struggle with them. And in China the poor peasantry was and is a revolutionary force. We Trotskyists underestimated this revolutionary force of the poor peasantry of China. We dogmatically said that we should go to the workers and direct the peasantry only through the workers. We insisted upon an indirect contact with the peasantry, saying that we could never lead the peasantry ourselves. We thought that if we went directly to the peasantry, we would degenerate into a peasant party. We acted according to our dogma. But we were wrong. If we consider this question with the advantage of hindsight, we can see that if we had had, in that reactionary period of the early thirties, some connection with the peasantry, we could have gone to the villages and carried out revolutionary work there. Like the CP we could have pushed forward the agrarian revolution, and could have led peasants' risings and armed struggles.

Our Mistakes

Thus the first point to be made concerns our misjudgement of the real character of the CP. Although it was a degenerate party, it was still a party capable of leading a revolution, because it acted amongst the masses. What is a proletarian party? It can be defined by many criteria—the proletarian social origin of the membership being only one of these. Many parties composed of workers are reformist, some even bourgeois. Therefore we cannot decide whether the party is proletarian or not by the criterion of the class composition of the membership. I think the most important criterion is the party's political programme. If the programme stands for socialist revolution, for permanent revolution and for Leninist principles of organization, then we may speak of a workers' party—even if only a few of the members are workers, and the leaders are petty-bourgeois intellectuals. The second point is that we dogmatically thought that we could lead the peasantry only through the workers, so we had to stay in the cities. We would work among the workers, and then the workers' political influence would be extended over the peasantry—that was our position. This was wrong. We should have gone to the villages, agitated among and organized the peasantry, and engaged in armed struggle. For the third point on which we were wrong was that we did not understand the importance of armed struggle. In reality, when the peasantry revolted, it always developed into an armed struggle. There could be no peaceful outcome.

In countries like China it was very difficult to build a party under the severe Kuomintang rule. We did our best and many comrades sacrificed themselves for revolution. But if we had realized earlier, especially during the war, that our attitude was a dogmatic one, we could have had many opportunities to organize really important forces. For example, I have already recounted how we missed the opportunity of gaining a foothold in the army via Ch'en Tu-shiu's prestige. But if we had persisted, we could have got a second chance and a third. However, we never sought that kind of chance. When I returned to Shanghai from Wuchang, I reported to the editorial board there about our attempt to penetrate the army. Then all the members agreed with me that we should take up arms, including Peng Shu-tse. But when discussion began to take place on the editorial board, Peng described my abortive attempt as a crime, a mistake, 'military adventurism'.

We should not and must not blame our opponents for our own failures. When Mao's policy was wrong, we must of course make the correct criticisms. We must analyse scientifically to what extent the CP was degenerate. But it is wrong to exaggerate—to exaggerate is to deceive yourself. We always said that Mao's party was a petty-bourgeois party. But, according to the theory of permanent revolution, no petty-bourgeois party can ever lead a proletarian revolution. Then there is a contradiction between the fact and the theory. The real point is that we misjudged reality.

Interview

FROM RED GUARD TO REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST

Tariq Ali talks to Yeung Cheng former Canton Red Guard leader

In what circumstances did you join the Red Guards in Canton?

1966 was an important year in China. In the period preceding June 1966, the political atmosphere in the country was very tense. We felt that there would be an explosion fairly soon. In Peking High School, students had declared themselves Red Guards under the slogan: 'To Rebel Is Justified'. In our school in Canton in the same month there were only a few of us who were rebels, though we were very active. A few dozen in a school consisting of 1,400 students. We felt suppressed and uninvolved in the country's politics. Our life was dull, routinist and pedestrian. Before the cultural revolution I was very interested in reading political texts—Marx, Lenin, Mao—and was regarded as being strange since we were not supposed to show any independent interest in politics. In school, politics meant being taught what the Party line was on this or that subject.

The June Red Guards represented a trend to think independently. Our political level was very low and we put forward no demands as such. We merely made wall-posters condemning the section of the Party in the school. I'd always hated the school headmaster who was totally useless, a fact everyone in the school was aware of. He was there because he was a Party member. He was a super-bureaucrat who ate separately not only from us students, but even from the rest of the teachers. While compelling *us* to take part in physical training, he used to stand at a distance under an umbrella. He was extremely authoritarian. In June 1966 our wallposters denounced him in rather emotional terms. We also snatched some of the rifles kept in the school and hid them. There were between 20 and 30 rifles in the school, but they were under the control of the children of PLA soldiers who also studied in the High School.

In June, in almost every school the section of the Party was overthrown by the students. For a short period the administration was elected by us. That was why Liu Shao Chi sent his work-teams to reestablish control. The work-teams claimed to support the cultural revolution, but in fact they suppressed us and warned us not to fight against the Party section. Instead, they attempted to divert our wrath towards the non-Party teachers and it was on their instructions that many ordinary teachers were insulted

and humiliated. Our spontaneity was crushed.

I was personally very angry about this and put up a wall poster condemning the intervention of the work-teams and referring to both them and the Party section as gangsters. Then the work-team organized students to attack me and denounce me for being right-wing. I argued back, but during debates I was muzzled and held physically with my arms tied behind my back. From July to October I was completely isolated in my school and students kept well away from me.

By August it was obvious that Mao wanted to overthrow Liu, but the latter was very powerful within the Party apparatus and Mao was unable to deal with him via the Party constitution. So he decided to utilize the masses outside the Party to overthrow Liu. A mass movement of students was at this time being suppressed by Liu Shao Chi's work-teams. If Mao hadn't supported the struggle of the Red Guards he would have been defeated. Thus in August, Mao announced the sixteen points of the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards were officially recognized. This action seemed to vindicate the June Red Guards as being genuine leftists and encouraged us to fight the 'capitalist roaders'.

My isolation began to decrease and students began to speak to me again, but the school was still under the control of conservative elements (sons of Red Army soldiers). From August to October the minority Red Guards began to regroup. Our main difference with the conservatives was that they supported the work-teams, but even after the teams left our school in August, the conservatives did everything possible to steer the struggle well clear of the Party bureaucracy. They did so by making scapegoats of the students who were of bourgeois origins and the latter were victimized rather brutally. Though I come from a working-class family myself, I nonetheless attacked the conservatives in very strong terms for their behaviour, which culminated in them actually killing a number of teachers and students of bourgeois origin. You must understand that this was a deliberate and conscious diversion. The period lasted from August to October 1966.

In October, I left for Peking to observe the Cultural Revolution at its base and stayed there for three days. I saw the wallposters, but not Mao, met others like myself and then returned to Canton. I travelled with hundreds of others, free of charge, in trains, ferries, trucks. It was a fantastic experience seeing the country in this manner. We really did feel liberated travelling in this fashion without any restrictions and in the company of lots of other youths, discussing quite freely things we had not thought about in the past.

When I returned I immediately set up a Red Guard HQ in our school, and we named our group 'The East Is Red Commune'. It consisted of about forty students at the start.

What did you discuss in 'The East Is Red Commune' and what actions did you initiate?

The first action we took was to destroy the files of our school because they were used to keep the students under control. The Party section, when dissatisfied with any student, opened a file on him which could be used against him in the future. For instance, such files could be utilized to prevent dissidents from reaching university and also to harm their job prospects. The files were an important weapon against us. After we had expropriated the files, I read the dossier on myself and could hardly recognize the picture it painted. We published the files, exposed them as lies and showed the Party bureaucrats to be a bunch of liars.

As a matter of interest, what was written in your file?

I cannot remember it verbatim, but the general sense was: 'This student is unstable. He is an anti-Party, right-wing element. He ought to be carefully watched. Will be dealt with when movement subsides.'

But to continue: our second action was to release the imprisoned teachers from the cowsheds where they were being held and to put an immediate stop to the victimization of other students. We organized mass meetings and encouraged teachers to participate. We also brought the Party bureaucrats before the mass meetings. We did not attack them physically, but asked them many questions about their past. They were scared and tended to confess everything.

What did you think of Mao at that time?

We adored him, especially myself. Why? Because it was Mao's initiative which had ended my isolation and liberated me. He had given us a new lease of life and you must understand that even a break with routinism represented a big step forward for us. You can imagine the impact it had on all of us. As we saw it, Mao represented us in the top circles, where he defended our actions and encouraged us. Even though I adored Mao, there were a few suspicions at the back of my mind. It was an instinctive suspicion. I could not rationalize it or explain it, but it was probably due to the critical spirit which I had developed and which later enabled me to criticize Mao. But this was rare, I repeat, rare amongst students in my school and was one reason for the failure of the Cultural Revolution.

Did you have any political discussion inside the 'Commune'?

Yes, we constantly analyzed the revolutionary situation and our own struggle. There was no theoretical discussion —we were not educated enough. We were so obsessed with ourselves that we could not even think of the Vietnamese comrades except sporadically.

How then did your struggle continue?

Our rebellion was not only confined to our school. We took it to the Canton County section of the Party. We knew that the work-teams and Party section in school had been guided by the Canton Party leadership. We joined with other local Red Guard groups to raid the Canton Party HQ. Two hundred of us carried out the action, representing all local schools. We got hold of the Party files and published what was contained in them on wall posters. The files showed us the fight taking place within the Party bureaucracy as well as the plots to suppress us, etc.

Then we went to the factories, joined the production line and ate and lived with the workers. We put up wall posters in the factory exposing the privileges of Party bureaucrats in the factories. You must know that inside the factories those small numbers of workers who had protested had been even more repressed than us. The Party section inside the factory consisted of a privileged minority compared to the rest of the workers. We linked up with the rebellious workers and called ourselves the Red Flag Faction (RFF).

Within the RFF there were many small groups—

A Canton Red Guard spreads out a Tatzepao (giant newspaper) attacking local officials for anti-Mao behavior.

workers, students, teachers, etc. There was no centralized leadership. We used publicly to burn the official publications of the Party bureaucrats to show our complete contempt and disgust and we put out our own publications attacking the Party.

In December 1966 there was a rebellion among the peasantry and some militants set up a group called: 'The Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants' RFF'. They fought against Party members in their own communes. In December, though we were in a minority, we were in control of the situation because of our anti-bureaucratic initiatives; but we were still nowhere like as strong as the conservative Red Guards, if you compared our respective strengths on an overall basis. In the universities, it is true, there were twenty revolutionary Red Guards for each conservative. But in the schools the forces were roughly 60:40 in their favour; in the working class, there were only 10,000 rebels out of a workforce numbering nearly a million; and in the peasantry, there were only a few thousand rebels out of several million peasants.

But although the conservatives were very numerous, their morale was low, they had lost the will to fight and many began to move towards us.

How did the struggle develop in 1967?

January to June 1967 constitutes the middle stage of the struggle for power between the people and the bureaucrats. By the end of 1966 the Party bureaucracy was in a state of collapse. Mao's alliance with us had put him on the left and our main target had been Liu Shao Chi. But our conflict with the bureaucracy on every level had *objectively* also put us on a collision course with Mao.

A brief digression: did you really believe that Liu was a 'capitalist roader'—an agent of imperialism?

Yes, I did. But we understood capitalism in a different way from Mao. We started from the viewpoint of being oppressed and suppressed. And for us, therefore, anyone who oppressed the masses *must* be a capitalist. Mao meant it in a different way, of course. He meant it economically, politically and culturally. There were many other bureaucrats apart from Liu who were oppressors, but Mao did not denounce them. We did.

Should we return to 1967?

Yes. In 1967 the mass movement matured rather rapidly and its morale rose. And we began to understand and appreciate problems that we had not even been in a position to think about in the preceding seventeen years. Many of us reasoned that we had been suppressed because we had no power and concluded that therefore we had to have power. Thus the storm period of January began—the 'seizure of power' period. In December 1966 the bureaucrats had used a new tactic. They abandoned the administration throughout the country, hoping to create complete chaos. This forced us to begin to run affairs ourselves. In January 1967 in Shanghai, the workers and students seized power. Within a few days the same thing happened in Canton and elsewhere.

What happened in Canton? How did you 'seize power'? What changed?

We simply got the administration of the whole of Canton under our control. The bureaucrats were smashed and fled. We occupied the Party headquarters and forced the bureaucrats to hand over authority to us and to announce on the streets and in the press that we, the RFF, held power. I was responsible for the administration of some schools. In the schools the students elected their own representatives to run them.

Did the bureaucrats announce this on the radio as well?

No, the radio stations were shut down, as Mao did not want any reports of what was going on to reach the outside world.

To continue: in factories, the workers elected their own representatives to run the factories. Similar events occurred in newspaper offices. But we were very naive. In seizing power, we had no idea of what we were doing or what its implications were. The Paris Commune, workers' democracy, soviets, meant nothing to us. The struggle had impelled us forward, but we had no real, politically sophisticated leadership to direct our advance. As a result, inside the RFF disputes arose solely on administrative questions related to the exercise of power. This will give you an idea of the low level of political consciousness.

How long did this situation last?

From early 1967 onwards, Mao began to separate himself from us. He wanted the struggle to end and started to move against us. When he visited Shanghai he attacked the comrades there for calling themselves a commune and

told them that a commune meant a structure in which the base dominated. He said that this indicated that they did not want any leadership from the Party. told them that the Party leadership was necessary and instructed them to change their name to 'revolutionary committee'. It was here that he formulated his idea of the 'tripartite alliance': in other words that revolutionary power should be organized by revolutionary cadres (i.e. the Party), military cadres (i.e. the PLA) and mass representatives (a temporary concession). The process whereby the Maoists took power back into the hands of the Party and army was set into motion. Thus the army 'joined' the Cultural Revolution in order to stabilize the situation. By the end of February there were clashes between army units and Red Guards.

What happened in Canton and what was your own experience?

After we seized power and established the commune we discovered that the Party bureaucrats were in touch with the army. Some had fled to the army and sought its protection against us. This made us conscious that we also had to fight the army. On 8 February 1967 we invaded the military area and held demonstrations there. We captured some army propaganda cars and used them to appeal to soldiers to join us. The military bureaucrats were furious. No armed soldiers joined us, but clerks, and other army workers joined.

Meanwhile in Peking a number of Party leaders were beginning to get really alarmed and were beginning to oppose Mao because of his inability to control the situation. They (under the discreet control of Chou En-lai) began to suppress the movement in Peking by using the military. This was a tremendous boost for the bureaucracy nationally and the bureaucrats began to re-emerge, link up with the army and suppress dissident groupings all over the country. In many places they used force, but not in Canton. They arrested many people, banned the RFF, established military control and seized back power. From the information which was spread on the level of gossip and common talk, we heard that Lin Piao had been opposed to these actions, but had been over-ruled. The Party leaders who organized the repression were opponents of Lin Piao. So from February 1967 the intervention of the army started and continued till they had restabilized the situation.

Were there any doubts building up at this time in relation to the role of Mao himself?

No. Mao was reported to have been hesitant on the question of using troops till September 1967, when he threw his weight behind the suppression.

When did you realize that the Cultural Revolution was over?

In September 1967. I returned to my school and discovered that the old headmaster was back. However the atmosphere was restive and nobody really settled down. I should have mentioned that in August 1967 there were arms raids all over the country and many of us stole arms. That time there was little resistance to these raids, but in April 1968 we tried again and this time the army shot back and many comrades were killed.

What happened in China in May 1968? As you know in France there was a big upheaval led by workers and students and we even read that there had been solidarity demonstrations in Peking. Does this mean that while Mao and the bureaucracy had ordained that the Cultural Revolution be ended, it nonetheless continued?

There certainly were demonstrations in Peking and we published some publications in Canton showing our solidarity with the French comrades. Yes, in the sense you pose it the upheaval in China was not completely over. The end was uneven. After all China is not a small country and it is not easy to issue a centralized decree to end a mass movement.

In July 1968 the army marched into the schools and factories and disbanded the Red Guards. In Kwangsi they had to lay siege outside the factories for many days before the workers surrendered. After disbanding the Red Guards they set up the Tripartite Committees, but these were just rubber stamps. The situation from now on became extremely difficult.

What happened to you? When did you leave Canton?

From November 1968 to August 1971, I was sent to work on a farm. For two years I worked in Hopei and for one year in Canton. We were all extremely dissatisfied and Mao was constantly attacked in private. We felt we had been betrayed and sentenced to a grim future. But now we discussed a lot. We tried to elaborate new theories and concepts to try and analyse what had gone wrong. I joined a group of extreme-leftists in Hopei whose group was known as 'Proletarian Union of Hunan'. They had written a number of documents criticizing Mao and the bureaucracy. It was a spontaneous development. Neither they nor I had read any writings by Trotsky, but our ideas about the bureaucracy were very similar to his. We held many discussions, but by 1971 we began to get extremely demoralized, since many of us realized the enormity of the tasks which confronted us.

Is that why you decided to leave China?

Not exactly. A number of us were forced to flee for political reasons. In the first place, our groups were discovered and many comrades began to be arrested. We were all threatened. But secondly, because I wanted to read and write, which became impossible in China as the fog of Party orthodoxy descended once again and engulfed the entire country with that special kind of ignorance which is peculiar to bureaucratized states like China. Also many of my comrades, in a state of complete despair, committed suicide in prison rather than reveal the names of others. That is why a number of us decided to leave Canton. We therefore swam across to Hong Kong.

How did you discover Trotskyism?

Essentially through the *Seventies Bi-Weekly*. It was a real revelation. There was a debate being conducted in the paper between anarchism and Trotskyism. Some comrades came under the influence of anarchism, which is hardly surprising, given their experiences in China. I read articles by old Chinese Trotskyist comrades, like comrade Wang, who explained to us, for the first time, the real history of the Chinese Communist Party and the origins of Chinese Marxism. In addition we read articles by Ernest Mandel, yourself and other comrades. That is how we discovered the Fourth International.

ERNEST MANDEL:

Morrow on Spain

Felix Morrow, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain*, New Park Publications, £1.25/75p.

Felix Morrow's *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* remains the best Marxist analysis of the Spanish revolution of 1936-7 and its tragic ending. Other works, written since and drawing upon extensive new source material, give a more detailed account of the events and struggles (social and political) which marked these dramatic years, and of those which led up to them.[1] But none are equal, leave alone superior, to Morrow in their analysis of the basic class forces at work, the inevitable clash between them and the outcome of the contest, decided by the lack of revolutionary leadership or clear political consciousness on the part of the toiling masses. Morrow explains the key episodes of revolution and counter-revolution in Spain in terms of social forces. He confirms to the hilt Trotsky's diagnosis that the strategy of the Stalinists and their various allies and hangers-on ('First win the war, then complete the revolution'), ignoring the realities of the class struggle and seeking to replace it by political manipulation, could only lead to disaster: first strangle the revolution and then lose the war.

The extensive memoir literature which has sprung up since Morrow's book was first published in 1938 has brought to light new evidence which, if anything, further strengthens Morrow's basic analysis. The key responsibility of Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy in imposing their counter-revolutionary course upon the Spanish Communist Party has been confirmed by witnesses from the top leadership of that party.[2] The grim details of the GPU's attempts to export to Spain its techniques of mass arrest, torture, murder and frame-up trials of revolutionists (slandered as being 'Franco's fifth column') are well-known today—as is its political failure. Nobody believed the Stalinist slanders. The workers were dismayed by the political terror. Franco could play on and utilize the tremendous demoralization created in the Republican ranks. When the surviving POUM leaders were finally brought to trial, they were sentenced not for being 'agents of Franco', but for the 'crime' of advocating . . . the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is interesting that even inside the Soviet Union, and in spite of the tight thought control which the bureaucracy maintains upon all fields of social science, the Komintern and Spanish CP line of the period 1935-9 is today being questioned, albeit in cautious terms.[3] This line—together with the theory and practice of 'social-fascism', which made a decisive contribution to Hitler's rise to power in Germany; the policies of forced collectivization, which created more than thirty years of continuous crisis in Soviet agriculture; and the mass purges of 1936-8, which murdered the whole surviving cadre of the Bolshevik party and the cream of the Red Army command, thereby paving the way for the military disasters of summer and autumn 1941 which brought the Soviet Union within an inch of military collapse—is one of the major crimes of Stalin upon which history has already unequivocally spoken its verdict.

The defeat of the Spanish revolution was not just a minor incident on a secondary battlefield. It was the key event which led to the second world war and the spread of fascism over the whole continent of Europe, up to the gates of Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad. Hitler's conquest of power in Germany started to tip the scales in favour of counter-revolution on that continent. It dealt a deadly blow to the largest, best organized and politically most conscious part of the European proletariat. But Hitler's victory was by no means stable, nor was his conquest of Europe inevitable. The tremendous upsurge of revolutionary militancy of the Spanish working class in 1936, supported by a wave of general strikes in France and Belgium and by a world-wide radicalization of working-class struggles which even hit the USA (with the powerful sit-down strikes leading to the emergence of the CIO), could have pulled the rug from under Hitler's feet. In summer 1936, his army was still very weak, and no match for the Red Army. A victorious Spanish revolution spreading to France would have provoked a powerful working-class echo in Italy and Germany.[4] History could have taken an entirely different course. A defeated Spanish revolution condemned the working-class upsurge in France, Belgium and elsewhere to decline and demoralization and opened the road to Hitler's conquest of Europe.

In that sense, Stalin's policy of sacrificing the Spanish revolution to his diplomatic game with the French and British imperialists cannot even be seen as a subordination of world revolution to the 'national interests' of the Soviet Union. For his betrayal of the Spanish revolution dealt a powerful blow to the immediate interests of military self-defence of the USSR as well. This policy reflected the basic conservatism of the privileged ruling stratum of Soviet society, its panic fear lest any important extension of world revolution upset the status quo of social forces internationally and nationally—a status quo which determines the political passivity of the Soviet working class and makes the bureaucracy's rule possible.

A similar hostility against any proletarian revolution, anywhere in the world, was shown by Stalin and his successors towards the Yugoslav, Chinese and Cuban revolutions. The Vietnamese communists are witnessing a repetition of this sordid spectacle at this very moment. The basic difference between Spain 1936 and the postwar developments is the change in the international balance of class forces. In the first instance, the change in the strength of the revolutionary upsurge has precisely meant that whereas it was possible for the Soviet bureaucracy to strangle the Spanish revolution, its subsequent efforts to achieve analogous results have culminated in failure. This has been due not only to the change in the balance of class forces, but also to the fact that local communist parties or independent revolutionary forces have been ready to break decisively with the Menshevik orientation of

Stalinism.

The Spanish revolution also gave the most convincing historical testimony against the spontaneist view which implied that a mass upsurge in itself would be sufficient to bring about a victorious socialist revolution, provided it be broad enough. Never before in history had one witnessed a generalized upsurge such as that of July 1936, when the Spanish workers broke the fascist army's insurrection in practically every major city of the country, and in a significant part of the countryside as well. Never before had the spontaneous taking over of factories, public service centres, big landholdings, by the toiling masses been so widespread as in these days in Spain.

Nevertheless, the revolution was not victorious. No unified and centralized power structure was set up by the toiling masses. Confronted with this key question of any revolution, the anarchist leaders, who had been educating the masses in the doctrine of immediate 'suppression' of the state, were a decisive force in preventing the revolutionary masses—many of whom were anarcho-syndicalists—from setting up their own workers' state—thereby accepting *de facto* the resurgence of a bourgeois state, complete with repressive apparatus. The fact that the same anarchist leaders first participated in this resurgence as members of a coalition government with the bourgeoisie, and then became in their turn victims of the repression which they had helped to make possible, only tends to underline the main lessons of July 1936. The anti-capitalist militancy, revolutionary drive and heroism of the masses can, under specific circumstances, go beyond anything foreseen by revolutionaries themselves. But without the actual destruction of the bourgeois state machine and its replacement by a new workers' state, no socialist revolution can be victorious. And such a new workers' state cannot be built without a centralized leadership, by spontaneous struggles alone.

Stalin's diplomatic game—largely built on illusions—was the immediate cause which led to the defeat of the Spanish revolution. The Soviet bureaucracy's interests as a parasitic social layer in society provide, in the last analysis, the material explanation for these counter-revolutionary policies. But an important mediating factor between the two was the wrong, Menshevik theory of 'revolution by stages', applied to Spain (with a special 'anti-fascist' variant) not only by the main Comintern politicians, but also by not a few of their social-democratic and centrist allies (not to speak of the 'liberal' bourgeois politicians who swallowed the theory with great enthusiasm). Spain being a backward country, the revolution on the agenda was supposed to be a bourgeois-democratic one. Thus the task was seen as being to defend bourgeois democracy, the democratic Republic, against fascism, the monarchy and the 'semi-feudal landowners'; not to carry to its logical end the workers' and peasants' struggle against exploitation and oppression, by a process of permanent revolution which would lead to workers' power and solve in passing those tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution which the peculiar history of Spanish capitalism had left unsolved.

Today, with Franco still in power thirty-odd years after the end of the civil war, the Spanish CP and the various centrist groupings are desperately clinging on to the same fundamental strategy. They are more firmly attached than ever to their disastrous conception of a 'revolution by stages'. The first stage must be the restoration of 'democracy'. In fact, the CP is even ready to abandon the concept of a democratic Republic, and to accept the restoration of the monarchy, provided democratic liberties could be restored in that way. Then will come a stage of parliamentary democracy, during which the CP and 'other democratic forces' will fight for reforms. Only when in this way the 'majority' of the Spanish people has been won over (presumably in elections), the struggle for socialism—through a new intermediary stage of an 'advanced democracy'—will be put on the agenda.

The secret hope of the CP has been that somehow the capitalists themselves would gradually 'liberalize' the senile bonapartist military dictatorship of Franco (the absence of any petty-bourgeois mass base in support of the regime makes it impossible to call it fascist anymore). That is why it has favoured Spain's entering the Common Market (the Spanish social-democrats ardently share these same hopes and illusions). As democracy granted from above has shown itself to be an utter illusion, the line shifts towards 'democracy' conquered from below, through a 'peaceful general strike', supported by all 'democratic' political forces (including the liberal monarchists). As in 1936, political manoeuvres completely replace any sober assessment of basic social forces.

It would be foolish to deny that many changes have occurred in Spanish society since the civil war of 1936-9. After many years of isolation, Spanish capitalism was in the fifties sucked into the big boom of the Western European imperialist economy. Through the tourist boom and through the massive emigration of rural and urban unemployed absorbed by the Western European economy, the home market was significantly broadened to trigger off an important industrialization process. Today, Spain has become essentially an industrialized country, in which the absolute majority of the population is living in towns and in which the industrial working class has become the numerically most important class in society.

Of course it remains significantly backward compared to imperialist countries like West Germany, Britain, France or Italy. Its industry is still unable to sustain real competition on the world market. Its exports are still overwhelmingly agricultural. Many of its southern and western regions remain sharply under-developed. The nationality question, especially among the Basques, remains an uncured cancer. Nevertheless, if presenting Spain as being on the threshold of a bourgeois-democratic revolution was already utterly wrong in 1936, it is simply ludicrous today.

After a long slumber, determined both by terrible repression—that which followed Franco's victory was as murderous as the civil war itself—and by lack of perspective or self-confidence, the Spanish working class, since the early sixties, has begun steadily to rise again. Innumerable strikes and other skirmishes have started to form a new militant vanguard in the factories, the working-class districts and the universities.

Initially, the capitalists tried consciously to limit this upsurge to immediate economic demands ('trade-unionism pure and simple'). But the very nature of the dictatorship caused this strategy to fail. The new militancy could not but take up the struggle to free political prisoners; the struggle for autonomous trade-unions; the struggle for freedom of the press, of organization and of demonstration; the struggle for self-determination of the oppressed nationalities. Thereby, economic and political demands were closely intertwined. After some ups and downs, and in spite of the state of emergency proclaimed by the dictatorship, since 1969 large strike waves have spread in the Basque country, in the Barcelona region, in Madrid, in Asturia and even in the backward areas of Galicia, linking economic demands with solidarity movements against repression.

As the weight of the working class is absolutely decisive in all these struggles, and as this class has started to fight for its own independent class interests, it is absolutely unrealistic to expect it to limit itself voluntarily 'in a first stage' to the restoration of bourgeois democracy. Workers who start to occupy factories, who are learning to take on the police and the army, will not engage in a decisive test of strength with brutal opponents just to hand over the fruits of their victories meekly to their own ex-

ploiters. It is inevitable that the coming Spanish revolution will have a proletarian, socialist character, *from the beginning*, i.e. will be determined by working-class actions and will open the possibility of the conquest of power by the proletariat.

This does not mean that democratic demands cannot play an important rôle in triggering off this revolution, nor that no intermediary period of even a few months is possible between the overthrow of the Franco regime and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It only means that the leadership of the working class will once again—as in 1936—be the decisive factor in the situation.

If an *interregnum* of bourgeois democracy emerges from the revolutionary struggle which brings down the dictatorship, this will not be because the situation is not 'ripe' for the conquest of power by the working class. It will merely reflect the fact that the mass organizations which the workers still follow (in the first place the CP) have temporarily succeeded in their efforts to bring a socialist revolution back into the channels of bourgeois democracy.

But the chances for such an *interregnum* to last would be even more limited than they were between 1931 and 1936. If anything, the industrial development which Spain has known since then has made the social contradictions in that society even more explosive than they were at that time. The misery of the unemployed, the rural poor, the victims of structural decline, would rapidly combine with the much increased objective strength of the working class to shake bourgeois society to its very foundations. The capitalist class would rapidly find out that it has not got the means to buy off the revolutionary social forces with reforms. Mass repression would quickly become once again the basic strategy of the ruling class. Having tasted the wine of organizational freedom, the working class would not submit passively to that repression, any more than it was ready to do so in 1934 or 1936.

The most likely variant in any case is that only a revolutionary general strike could overthrow the Spanish military dictatorship (whether under Franco or under Juan Carlos); that dual power would arise from that revolutionary general strike; that the question of a Federation of Iberian Workers Republics would therefore be put on the agenda through the very downfall of the dictatorship itself. Because it is conscious of that likely perspective, the Spanish bourgeoisie continues to prefer the dictatorship, lacking any realistic alternative.

A new generation of Spanish revolutionaries is being created today, in conjunction with the rise of mass worker and student struggles. This generation is assimilating the lessons of the 1936-9 civil war. It is still weak in comparison with the gigantic tasks which history has placed before it—but it is much stronger than the handful of Trotskyists who existed in Spain during the crucial weeks and months described by Felix Morrow in this book. The coming Spanish revolution will play a key rôle in the unfolding of the socialist revolution in Western Europe—a process which has started again with May '68 in France. To help the Spanish revolutionary Marxists build a strong Leninist party, a powerful Spanish section of the Fourth International, is today one of the most urgent tasks of revolutionaries the world over. The republication of this book is a timely contribution to that task.

Ernest Mandel

[1] For instance: Pierre Broué and E. Témime, *La Révolution et la Guerre d'Espagne*, Paris 1961. Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, London 1965.

[2] A former member of the Political Bureau of the Spanish Communist Party during the civil war, Jesus Hernandez, in 1953 published a stinging indictment of Stalin's and the GPU's intrusion into CP politics during the civil war, *Yo fui un ministro de Stalin* ('I was Stalin's Minister'). In order to destroy a convenient legend, it is necessary to insist upon the key rôle which Togliatti played, as the main Comintern representative in Spain, both in imposing upon the Spanish CP the right-wing line of 'revolution in stages' (see his article 'On the particularities of the Spanish revolution', reprinted in his collected essays: *Sul Movimento Operaio Internazionale*, Rome 1964) and in the actual organization of the GPU terror in Spain. Another top leader of the CP, Fernando Claudin, also confirms this analysis in his *La Crisis del Movimiento Communista*, Paris 1970 (French translation, Maspéro 1972).

[3] E.g. by K. L. Maidanik, *The Spanish Proletariat in the National-Revolutionary War*, Moscow 1960. The author admits that in July 1936 the workers had actually started to conquer power, and had far outgrown the limits of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. His book was later the subject of violent criticism in the Soviet Union.

[4] Desertions did indeed occur, not merely among the Italian troops engaged in Spain against the Republicans, but even among the selected pilots of Hitler's air force sent to help Franco, the Condor Legion (see Walter Görlitz, *Der Deutsche Generalstab*, Frankfurt, p. 442).

REVIEWS

Rosa Leviné-Meyer, *Leviné: Life of a Revolutionary*, Saxon House, £2.50/£1.25.

There have been many occasions in history when revolutionaries have been compelled to lead revolutionary uprisings which they knew were doomed in advance to defeat. Such was the case with Eugene Leviné, the Russian Bolshevik who, in 1919, was given the task of leading the young German Communist Party in Bavaria during the German Revolution. The whole debacle is recounted by Leviné's widow, Rosa Leviné-Meyer, in a book which provides a vivid portrait of the little-known revolutionary whom some described as 'the German Lenin'. The story is told partly in his own words.

The revolutionary upsurge in Germany broke out in November 1918, following the defeat of the German armies on the Western Front. The Kaiser abdicated, and Workers' and Soldiers' Councils were set up in many towns and cities of Germany. In some towns, these councils overthrew the local bourgeois governments and formed workers' governments based on soviet power. But the leadership of the German working class was in the hands of the Social Democrats, who intended to preserve German capitalism intact and set up a parliamentary democracy. The SPD government in Berlin set its face against the working class and frequently, where its efforts to undermine the councils from within failed, sent in troops to suppress them. Many hundreds of workers were killed by the troops under the command of the Social-Democrat Minister of War Gustav, Noske, in the early months of 1919.

In Bavaria, the revolution reached its climax only after the revolution in the rest of Germany had suffered severe defeats. The proclamation of the Soviet

Government in Munich, the capital of Bavaria, in April 1919 followed on the heels of a severe defeat of the workers in Berlin a month earlier, where Noske's troops conducted a massacre. Kurt Eisner, the social-democratic leader of the Munich proletariat, had just been murdered by reaction. The SPD government in Munich, under Hoffman, proved unable to push through even modest socialization measures against bourgeois resistance, and the patience of the workers could no longer tolerate the growing shortages of food and fuel. The workers of Munich were preparing to overthrow the bourgeois parliament, in which the bourgeois parties were about to capture a majority, when the Hungarian Soviet Republic was proclaimed. The representatives of the Munich workers believed that if Bavaria acted, Austria would soon follow too and embrace the Soviet system.

Levine tried to hold back this movement. He understood that a Soviet Government in Munich could not survive unless the workers throughout Germany were able to come to its aid. The political situation at the time ruled this out. Bavaria itself was not an industrial state, and the workers of Munich were surrounded by a population of small farmers to whom the Soviet Government, unlike the one in Petrograd, would be able to offer little by way of land reform. The bourgeoisie had already regained its influence over the rural population under the Hoffman government.

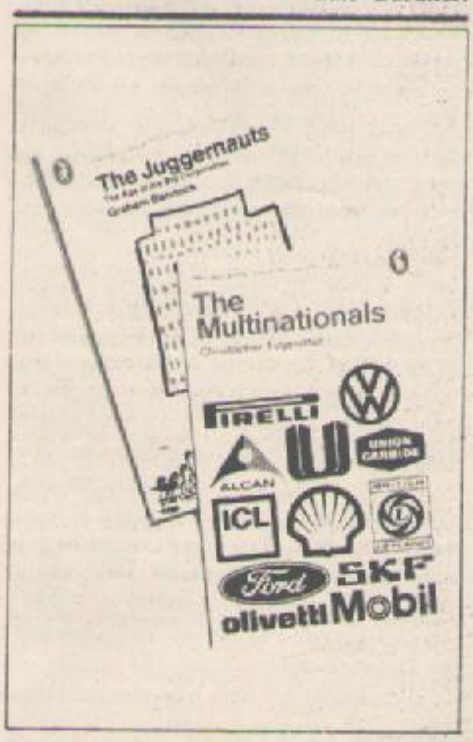
The left social democrats who took the leadership of the workers in these months advocated the Soviet system without understanding its implications. The workers, however, took them at their word. Even though workers' councils and a workers' militia had not been prepared, the workers' leaders declared a Soviet Government. Levine wrote: 'The third day of the Soviet Republic . . . in the factories the workers toil and drudge as ever before for the capitalists. In the offices sit the same royal functionaries. In the streets the old armed guardians of the capitalist world keep order. The scissors of the war profiteers and the dividend hunters still snip away.'

The communists had no choice but to take the leadership of the doomed experiment when, after five days, the Hoffman government which had retired to Bamberg launched military action against Munich. Under Levine's leadership, workers' and soldiers' councils were hastily constructed to give some foundation to the government, and a Red Army was prepared to defend the city. Levine explained his attitude to these two tasks: 'We cannot avert the catastrophe but a revolutionary leadership is responsible for the state in which the workers emerge from it . . . an honourable death and experience for the future is all we can salvage from the present situation . . . we must transform the bogus Soviet Republic into a genuine one and thus give the workers an object lesson about its real nature.'

Against those who had refused to learn the lessons from the reprisals following the defeat in Berlin, he argued: 'We must not make it easy for the counter-revolution to shed our blood. Sell your lives dearly. This is the only way of wresting concessions from the enemy and checking the White terror. It is a fallacy to believe meek surrender is a better way to avoid or reduce bloodshed.' After an armed resistance by the rapidly maturing Bavarian proletariat, the counter-revolution triumphed in Munich. The Soviet Government lasted only four weeks. At his trial, Levine's defence speech included the apt and famous words: 'We communists are all dead men on leave.' He was executed on 5 June 1919.

In the course of this fascinating book, other important problems are discussed, such as 'entrism' into the Socialist Party, ultra-leftism and bourgeois elections, and the importance of factory-cell organization. A review in the *Sunday Times* termed Eugene Levine a footnote of history. With more footnotes like him, the working class would storm the pages of history.

Carl Gardner.



Christopher Tugendhat, *The Multinationals*, Penguin 1973, 50p.

Graham Bannock, *The Juggernauts*, Penguin 1973, 65p.

'Exhibit 1: Corporate rating scale for determining a country's investment climate. *Item:* Political stability. *Range for category*: 0-12
Stable long term—12
Stable but dependent on key person—10
Internal factions but government in control—8
Strong external and/or internal pressures—4
Possibility of coup (external and internal) or other radical change—2
Instability, real possibility of coup or change—0.'

Not all the methods of calculation employed by the global capitalist corporations in devising their world strategies are as crude as the above. There is, for example, the giant US chemicals concern DuPont 'whose researchers have identified fifteen to twenty interest groups per country, ranging from small landowners to private bankers . . . (their) "latent influence" and "group cohesiveness" are expressed in figures and multiplied together, and the result is then multiplied again by another figure representing the government's receptivity to the group's influence.' A mass of information extracted from company files and libraries was made available with the publication of these two books, which have just reappeared as paperbacks.

The first certainly deserves shelf-space in the bookcase where socialists file their copies of the *Financial Times* or *The Economist*.

Tugendhat is a Tory MP, apparently driven to investigate multinational firms in defence of 'commercial realism' (?). He outlines both the history and practice of transnational capitalist organization, illustrated by several short case-histories of growth and structure. He concentrates on the US and European 'commercial theatre', unfortunately to the exclusion of their Third World operations; but despite this, he throws some light on modern imperialism at work.

$150,000,000,000 is his now out-dated estimate of the book value of the multinational firms' total investments *outside* their 'parent' countries—of which approximately 60% belongs to US-based corporations. As he says, 'The trend is clear'—the very processes of production are becoming increasingly internationalized. Different components of the same products are often manufactured continents apart prior to assembly and marketing. This creates an interdependency which potentially adds greatly to the strength of national trade unions, though lately only the disadvantages have been emphasized by the unions and the left. One strike could halt production around the world. The sectoralism of the working-class is challenged by the vast corporations. Serious attention should be given to the demands for world-wide parity in pay and conditions now surfac-

ing in the more active trade-union internationals. The massive size of the multinationals is *not always* disadvantageous to the proletariat.

Tugendhat conjures up a compelling vision of one possible aspect of capitalism to come. He raises the idea of the surging, uncontrolled Eurodollar and Eurobond markets, as sources of finance for the multinational capitalists, eventually producing a system of multinational *ownership* of the huge enterprizes, so that they cease to be US or UK based and become literally rootless. Will today's national bourgeoisies, interlinked as they are across frontiers in a hundred ways, give way to genuinely cosmopolitan capitalist interests vying for control of international industries? The chairman of a British subsidiary of a US firm advises executives to 'set aside any nationalistic attitudes and appreciate that in the last resort his loyalty must be to the shareholders'—regardless of their location or *locations*. Tugendhat's speculation has obvious parallels to Kautsky's famous theory of ultra-imperialism, demolished by Lenin in *Imperialism—the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

For Tugendhat, of course, the forseeable prospects are generally acceptable. True the big corporations can blithely deepen financial crises by moving vast sums of money between currencies. They can put thousands out of work without blinking an eyelid. But 'to win the full confidence of public opinion and of governments' (whatever happened to the shareholders?), this hitherto practical Tory urges the multinationals to adopt strangely utopian measures. Regular 'informal' exchanges of information between the corporations and the national governments over plans and problems should ease all difficulties and permit the internationalized exploitation of the working class to proceed apace (presumably telling a government in advance you are going to put thousands of workers out of jobs will somehow ease the burden). In the trade-war atmosphere of the 1970s, which will continue to intensify, such friendly, co-operative solutions are useless for the ruling classes, and only serve to mislead the working class.

Less significant and more long-winded is the companion study by Bannock. His real theme is monopoly, rather than multinationalism, and his position is far more critical of the entire trend. Offering repeated homage to Galbraith's theories of the separation of modern industrial control and ownership, this book concentrates on providing a short outline of bourgeois economic theories of industrial concentration, supplemented by much data (generally from the UK). Although unoriginal the data is of use, especially that concerning the rate and extent of monopolization. Bannock also spends time debunking 'scientific management' techniques and delights in demystifying management terminology. (E.g. FPI, short for 'filling power improvement', refers to the reduction in quantity of tobacco in cigarettes by fluffing it out more in the tube.) However, when it comes to practical solutions, he even improves on Tugendhat for utopianism. We are told the answer lies in a *drastic return to smaller-sized firms!* How exactly is this process—the reversal of history to order—to be carried out? For Marxists, such nonsense is hardly worth comment. Both books aid in understanding the forces gaining control of international capitalist production. Both, not surprisingly given their class position, ignore the Marxist contribution to economic theory which alone places their findings in proper historical and class perspective.

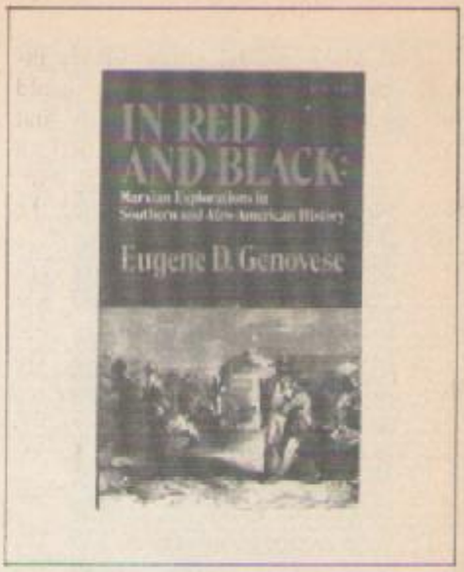
Richard Neubauer.

Eugene D. Genovese, *In Red and Black*, Vintage Books, £1.25.

The Thought and Writings of W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Seventh Son* (Vols. I and II), Vintage Books, £1.75 per volume.

Chattel slavery in the Western Hemisphere laid the financial foundations for the expansion of modern capitalism. For 200 years, the central axis of the economic development of the commercial nations of Western Europe—Britain, France, Portugal, Holland and Spain—was to take the land stolen from the American Indians and work it with labour stolen from Africa. The study of slavery in the Americas must therefore be a subject of great importance to Marxists.

The essays in Genovese's book are uneven and many Marxists will find it difficult to reconcile their views with that of the author. One of the most interesting essays is 'Class and Nationality in Black America', in which he deals scathingly with those American Socialists who saw the problem *only* in a class context and put forward the slogan 'Black and White, unite and fight'. Trotsky dealt with this in his discussions with Arne Swabeck, a leading American Trotskyist, in 1933. The American Trotskyists had opposed the Stalinist distortion of the policy of self-determination with the demand for 'social and economic equality'. Trotsky maintained that the argument that the slogan for 'self-determination' leads away from a class basis was an adaptation to the ideology of the white workers. American revolutionists, he said, should defend the right of the black people to separation, if that was what they desired.



Lenin had made the same point in his 'Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions', written for the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, when he wrote: '. . . it is necessary for the Communist Parties to render direct aid to the revolutionary movements in the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, the Negroes in America, etc.)'. Colected Works, Vol. 10, p. 235).

At times Genovese appears to go out of his way to show that the Southern slave-owners were not the bestial sadists so often depicted. Presumably he wants to bring home the fact that the evil lay in the nature of chattel slavery, which had to be opposed even under the most paternal of slave-owners. In this respect he is very critical of the writings of Marx and Engels on this subject which, he maintains, were characterized by an inadequate knowledge of the real facts of Southern society.

This view was shared by W.E.B. du Bois, perhaps the outstanding leader of Black America and certainly its greatest intellectual. In an article on 'Karl Marx and the Negro', in the March 1933 issue of *The Crisis*, he wrote: 'It was a great loss to American Negroes that the great

mind of Marx and his extraordinary insight into industrial conditions could not have been brought to bear at first hand upon the history of the American Negro between 1876 and the World War. Whatever he said and did concerning the uplift of the working class must therefore be modified as far as Negroes were concerned by the fact that he had not studied their peculiar race problem here in America. . . .' Like Genovese, Du Bois was criticizing Stalinist historians like Aptheker who wanted to apply, mechanically, what Marx and Engels wrote in the 1870's, to the problems of Black Americans today.

The two volumes of writings by Du Bois are essential reading for anyone who really wants to get to grips with the realities of the problem. In this fascinating collection is traced the development of Du Bois from his early acceptance of the ideology of the ruling class—'Wealth was the result of work and saving and the rich rightly inherited the earth. The poor, on the whole, were themselves to be blamed . . .'—to an awareness of the special situation of the American black people and finally to Marxism.

During the 1930's he repudiated the crude version of communism which the American Stalinists were trying to impose. He had become convinced, however, that there was no solution for his people under capitalism. 'Communism', he wrote, '. . . is the only way of human life. . . . I want to help bring that day.' It says much for him that he finally joined the Communist Party in his 93rd year, at the height of the McCarthy period, when the very name 'communism' was anathema in the ear of all 'right-thinking' Americans. In his long life, which is reflected in this collection of articles, is the personification of the history of the struggle of the Black Americans, and an echo of their aspirations.

Charles Van Gelderen.

Edited Michael Barratt Brown and Ken Coates, *Trade Union Register No. 3*, Spokesman Books, £1.50.

Registers of trade-union activity in Britain are not scare. Every revolutionary who holds a union card should know exactly where to look up accurate information on developments relating to his or her own, or indeed any, trade-union organization. The daily 'Labour News' column in the *Financial Times*, the monthly 'Industrial Notes' diary in *Labour Research*, the annual *TUC Report*, all record valuable details and events—the last two of these being carefully indexed and obtainable in many libraries and union offices. However, three times in the last five years (1969, 1970 and 1973), a book has been published with the title *The Trade Union Register*. Enquiring militants should understand right from the start that the title is an inaccurate one. Only a small proportion of each of these volumes is devoted to the factual recording of union developments, in the fairly useful forms of a diary of main events, the reprinting of selected trade-union documents, a number of statistical tables on the economy and a rather weird listing of 'books for trade unionists'. The remainder consists of feature articles, which combine the very personal viewpoints of individual writers with varying doses of accumulated data. The principal underlying trend of thought is the social philosophy of one political formation, the Institute of Workers' Control. The individual viewpoints, however varied, fall generally within the IWC's fairly elastic consensus. In short, not so much a trade-union register as a register of the spectrum of political views inside the Institute itself.

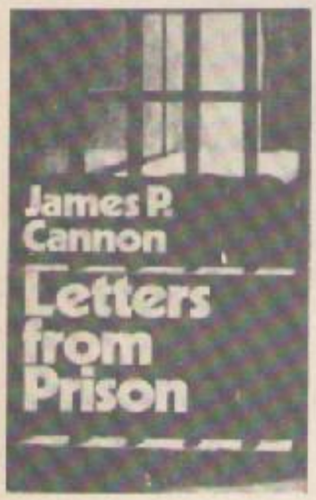
One of the main contributions to this third volume, taking up nearly forty pages, is an article by Ken Coates on 'Converting the Unions to Socialism'. Here as elsewhere, the familiar lucidity of style and literary flair in Coates' writing cannot mask his failings and omissions. A sketchy guide to the problems of British capitalism does not adequately justify its dramatic description as 'the weak link' among the capitalist powers. A colourful summary of union struggles over the Industrial Relations Act, particularly one which fails to specify such phenomena as the rôle of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, does not convince the reader that 'it is perfectly plain that the unions are well capable of defending themselves against future provocations'. There is no analysis of the deliberate manoeuvrings of the trade-union bureaucracy or of the dangers of racism to the organized labour movement. Worse, the road to achieving socialism is shrouded in grey mists. 'Democratizing' society is seen as a 'process' of expanding work-ins and factory occupations, and forcing an 'aggressive erosion of "managerial" prerogatives'. Should capitalism resist these intrusions, advice is scarce: 'that barrier will only be surmounted by political action, by a change in the law'. A single sentence is later added by way of clarification: 'an appropriate political arm for labour . . . at least at first, can only take the form of efforts to reclaim the Labour Party for socialist policies'. Little wonder then that Coates, who three years ago described Wedgwood Benn's sudden support for 'workers' control' as truly 'remarkable' and marked by 'weaknesses' ('Workers' Control versus the anti-union laws' in Spokesman Pamphlet No. 11, 1970.), avoids in this new book any criticism of Benn, Scanlon etc, retaining his venom for crude analogies between *Workers' Press* and the prosecutors in the Moscow trials. Few will select this book for bedtime reading on the strength of Coates' contribution alone.

The hotch-potch of other articles includes both good and bad material. In the latter category come two offerings by Norman Lewis on aspects of the Industrial Relations Act; in contrast to Coates, who at least debunks the 'age-old flummery' of English capitalist law, Lewis sheds tears lest, due to the anti-union laws, 'labour law in all its manifestations might have fallen in disrepute, which could be little short of tragedy'. On the other hand, an interesting article by John Hughes argues, on the basis of statistical analysis, that the unions' growth rate in recent years has been underestimated, many new members having joined despite the important factors working against unionization (decline of traditionalyy organized industries; relative increases in the employment of non-manual workers, women and part-timers, without strong union traditions; and of course increased unemployment).

Much of this material has however already been published by the Trade Union Research Unit as a pamphlet. Another contribution, oddly titled 'Women's Economic Revolution', uncritically applauds the TUC for its 'honourable part' in promoting equal pay for women workers. Although it does make some worthwhile points about job evaluation, it finally puts its faith in hopes of new state legislation against discrimination.

More useful in general than the longer contributions is the 'Round the Industries' review of developments in engineering, the docks and elswhere, where the details of recent events are less smudged by reformist interpretations and comments—though these persist. The revolutionary can certainly make some use of this social-democratic medley of a 'register'—but he can be forgiven if he skips half the book.

Richard Neubauer



James Cannon, *Letters from Prison*, Pathfinder Press, £1.45.

'My Party method: not merely to learn, think and do, myself, but to organize others to learn, think and do.'

In 1944, James Cannon, leader of the Socialists Workers' Party of the USA, was imprisoned with seventeen other Trotskyists for their opposition to the imperialist war.

They stood alone in this opposition—'In the last war there were hundreds of labour and socialist war prisoners; this time our party alone is represented'—but Cannon was not demoralized. From his cell he wrote this series of letters to his wife which were, in effect, attempts to help guide and direct the SWP, deprived as it was of its more experienced leaders.

In this collection, Cannon takes up and discusses a whole series of problems concerned with what he called 'the troublesome "organization question" . . . (which) is nothing less than the central question of our whole epoch—the question of the party'. Much of this has relevance today, not only in combating petty-bourgeois sloppiness but in building an organization which can respond to the needs of the present period, where a new mass vanguard of radicalizing workers is forming.

Cannon set the SWP, in a situation of considerable radicalization of the working class, the task of 'popularising unadulterated Marxism'. A key tool in such a task he saw correctly as the newspaper. As well as discussing in detail how to organize a sales campaign and a subscription campaign, he writes at length on the turn the newspaper had to make from a left-circle propaganda paper to 'a *combination* paper', which had to serve the needs of the growing number of new readers, the developing Trotskyists, and the educated party militants all at the same time. He stresses the need to brighten up the paper and 'make it accessible to tired workers . . . always keep in mind the new and young readers for whom the paper must be made attractive'.

Cannon also writes at length about the kind of educational programme he sees as necessary for the growing party. For him the conscious education and training of leadership 'represents the conquest of method and design over *laissez faire* in the most important question of the party, i.e. the question of leadership'. In this, his hopes and plans for a national 'Trotsky school'—a sort of revolutionary university for workers—were never fully realized. However, another of his prerequisites for the growth of the party, a flourishing, planned publishing house, has surely been realized in Pathfinder Press.

To help the party organize the ongoing faction struggle with Morrow and Goldman, Cannon refers to the lessons learnt during the crucial struggle and split with the Burnham/Shachtman opposition in 1939-40. He has some very sound advice about faction struggles and their importance: 'If they are conducted properly, new people learn faster and more firmly in factional conflicts than in any other way'. On the tactics of such struggles: 'It should be deliberate policy to remove each and every . . . minor grievance by sweeping concessions, in order to clear the way for a discussion of the political issues. . . . The concessions will cut the ground from under the opposition. The new members will be reassured'.

Unfortunately, the book is rather thin on political analysis of the period, though some time is spent on a reappraisal of one of the cornerstones of Trotskyist politics—the defence of the Soviet Union. What does come over clearly is one of the weaknesses of Cannon's thought, which has had its influence on large sections of the Trotskyist movement. This is what one could call the separation of the 'organization question', the question of building the party and the internal conditions for this task, from the external political intervention of the organization.

In these writings there always appears to be something of a gap between the problem of building the party, as a separate activity, and the political analysis and intervention of that party. This incorrect division is seen clearly in such statements as: 'To the militant worker, who has an instinct for organized struggle, strong leadership and firm discipline are the most attractive features of a party' (my emphasis). The question of whether the party has the correct politics in action in the everyday struggles of the class here seems relegated to a trivial side-issue or taken for granted.

Despite this weakness, however, the book stands as a testament of struggle to one of the greatest revolutionaries since the hey-day of the Third International. It should be read by all concerned with the serious application of revolutionary politics.

Carl Gardner.

Document- The Evolution of European Social Democracy

Theses presented to a March 1973 meeting of Political Committee delegations from the European sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International, and subsequently redrafted on the basis of the discussion which took place at the meeting.

1 Any study of present-day European social democracy must be genetic in nature, i.e. it must base itself on the historical method. This social phenomenon cannot be understood in a descriptive, purely static way at any one point in its development. On the contrary, one must begin from its origins and examine the transformations it has undergone, the direction in which these may lead in the future, the constraints on such a development and the general context of capitalism in decline, the social crisis in Europe and the new rise of mass struggles.

Social democracy has been the predominant political organization of the working class and the workers' movement in Europe for more than thirty years. Under pressure of a reformist day-to-day practice (elections plus economic strikes), of growing participation in the institutions of imperialist bourgeois democracy, and of a theoretical revision of Marxism (Bernstein) and a growing compromise with revisionism (Kautsky) which are the ideological reflections of its practice, it has become progressively transformed from a class-struggle force into a force for conciliation and class-collaboration. It thus became the main vehicle for petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideology in the workers' movement, from 4 August 1914 onwards. But, in the period following the First World War, primarily because of the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International, it was able to maintain, or re-establish, its political hegemony over the workers' movement (at one time challenged by the Communist International) in most of the countries of capitalist Europe: i.e. in all the countries of Northern Europe (with the partial exception of Finland), Britain, the Benelux countries, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. And even in the countries where communist parties gained hegemony (France, Italy and since the fifties Spain), it has maintained a solid base in the working class.

So, we are dealing with reformist parties (influenced by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideology) of the workers' movement, of the working class — or, if you like, with bourgeois or petty-bourgeois workers' parties. No other definition reflects this socio-historical reality.

2 The main strength of traditional social democracy lay in its mass organizations: local party branches (electoral wards); trade-union branches; cooperative organizations; health insurance organizations, etc. The organizational integration of part of the working class into these overlapping structures was considerable. The bureaucracies of all these institutions formed a unified apparatus (even if this was sometimes split by individual ambitions or sectoral interests) which dominated the workers' movement as a whole. This structure continued to dominate the working-class movement until the fifties in most of the European countries where social democracy had hegemony. In some cases it still predominates today.

Besides this bureaucracy constituted by the officials of the working-class movement, there were three supplementary social bases for classical social-democratic reformism:

1. the working-class aristocracy, especially in the corporatist trade unions;
2. the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, attracted to social democracy for careerist reasons;
3. social-democratic representatives, occupying a growing number of full-time posts in the bourgeois state apparatus.

Before the Second World War, there was an interaction between these different elements of the social-democratic bureaucracy, inasmuch as the number of posts accorded to social-democratic representatives depended on social-democratic electoral strength which in turn depended on the strength of social democracy's organization and press, into which the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia had penetrated *en masse*. The links between these apparatuses and a considerable section of the working class were obvious, and represented the ultimate source of their strength. This was the reason for their identification with bourgeois democracy (and organic incapacity to 'come to terms' with fascist-type regimes) — as an indispensible precondition for the development of all these interlinking components.

Increasing willingness to accept the social *status quo*; abandonment of any revolutionary strategy; reduction of the 'conquest of power' to the 'conquest of an absolute majority in Parliament, within the framework of the bourgeois state'; acceptance of the myth of the class neutrality of bourgeois parliamentary democracy; progressive abandonment of even any reformist doctrine of class struggle, in favour of defending 'general interests' — i.e. the interests of maintaining bourgeois society; acceptance first of imperialist 'national defence' and subsequently of defence of the colonial empires; the generalization of ministerial participation in coalition governments with the bourgeoisie; the inevitable acceptance of defence of the bourgeois order against workers in revolt, or even simply on strike to defend their immediate interests: all these ideological transformations in reality date back more than half a century (Noske!), and in no way contradict the sociological analyses outlined above. Social democracy can play a useful rôle in defending the bourgeois order, social-democratic representatives can gain more state posts and the social-democratic apparatus can increase its privileges only so long as the mass base — whether electoral or organizational — in the working class is not destroyed.

3 From the thirties on (following the great economic crisis of 1929-33), and above all after the Second World War, a certain number of modifications began to appear in the composition of the social-democratic apparatus and its relationship with the working class — closely linked to modifications in the functioning of capitalism in decline. The main modifications were the following:

1. A new social stratum became influential within the social-democratic apparatus, as a result of (i) a considerable extension of the state-controlled sector in the capitalist economy (especially in Austria, Britain, Italy and France), (ii) a wider and more systematic intervention in economic affairs on the part of the bourgeois state, and (iii) the increasing number of institutions set up for conciliation and class-collaboration (apart from the countries mentioned above, especially in Scandinavia, the Benelux

countries, Germany and Switzerland). *This stratum comprised full-time officials and technocrats employed in the state apparatus*, in para-state institutions and in the nationalized or 'mixed' industries. In addition, as a result of long periods in power, local councillors too became *de facto* state functionaries and can be included with this mass of technocrats, together with their whole retinue of client functionaries.

2. Within the social-democratic apparatus this group acquired a status equal to, or even more important than, that of the officials of the workers' organizations. The relative decline of certain social-democratic organizations (co-operatives, youth organizations, press) contributed to this trend. There was a real conflict of interests between the functionaries and technocrats of the bourgeois state on the one hand, and the trade-union bureaucracy on the other. The first group identifies with the bourgeois state apparatus, even when the latter resorts to confronting the reformist trade-union leaders directly. The second cannot make any such identification, when the bourgeois state and bourgeois governments come into open conflict with the trade-union movement as a whole.

3. The social-democratic state functionaries and technocrats hold their positions relatively independently of short-term electoral fluctuations. Under normal conditions, the European bourgeoisie accepts social democracy as a government party, as an integral part of its political system. Its members therefore take part normally in the highest functions of the state apparatus, the para-state institutions and the nationalized or 'mixed' concerns, irrespective of whether or not their party is in government. This fact reinforces the independence of this petty and medium bourgeois layer of the social-democratic apparatus from the trade-union apparatus and working-class base.

4. The reflection on the ideological plane of this sociological transformation is a break with traditional reformist ideology, couched in Marxist rhetoric, and the open acceptance of key ideas of bourgeois ideology in the new official programmes of many social-democratic parties: abandonment of the aim of collective appropriation of the means of prodction; acceptance of the principle of market economy; militant cold-war-type anti-communism in some cases; in others, acceptance of the suppression of democratic rights for working-class militants of the revolutionary left, etc.

4 However, although the sociological evolution of the social-democratic apparatus implies an *increasing separation* from the traditional mass base of social democracy, a *total separation* from this base completely changes the situation of these parties. In fact, a social-democratic party which has lost its working-class electoral base becomes a minor petty-bourgeois party, since social democracy is incapable of winning any broad mass base to substitute for its old working-class base. If this change does take place, the strength of the social-democratic bureaucracy, even within the state and para-state apparatus, will decline to the level of a minor political partner of the bourgeoisie.

The only concrete example of such a change in the class nature of social democracy is Saragat's Italian social-democratic Party, the result of a rightist split within social democracy. The tremendous loss of influence suffered by this party is striking enough to serve as a warning to all the other social-democratic parties, especially the old SFIO in France. *To preserve or regain a mass electoral base and a mass trade-union base* (even a minority one) *is an essential precondition if the social-democratic apparatus is to preserve or increase its posts within the bourgeois State apparatus, and if it is to fulfil the rôle of class-conciliation which its leaders, both subjectively and objectively, have set themselves.*

5 The objective basis for the rise of social-democratic reformism and revisionism in the European working-class movement was the period of imperialist 'prosperity' and of relative stability of the bourgeois order in the imperialist countries founded on that 'prosperity'. The First World War, the victory of the Russian revolution and the period of revolutionary and economic crises which followed this epoch of prosperity from 1914 on (with the exception of a brief interlude between 1923 and 1929), were unfavourable for social democracy, which was constantly the victim of a process of polarization between centrist or revolutionary tendencies developing towards the left, and rightist tendencies breaking with any practice of class struggle even of a reformist kind. The immediate post-war period, from 1944 to 1950, on the whole saw this situation continue, except in the most prosperous countries like Sweden and Switzerland.

The long period of expansion of the capitalist economy, which lasted from the 'Korean War boom' to the West German recession of 1966-7, allowed the working class to win further improvements in its standard of living, even if these were often obtained at the price of intensified exploitation (increased productivity) and remained far below the increase in the workers' basic needs. This relative stabilization of capitalism recreated a certain basis for reformist politics, but in a very different social and political context from the period before 1914, or the period between 1923 and 1929. Social democracy endeavoured to obtain these reforms solely through parliamentary channels, avoiding, stifling or even suppressing any attempt by the working class to improve its standard of living by direct strike action. In certain countries it had no hesitation in accepting legislation limiting the right to strike and imposing an incomes policy. It vigourously applied the policy of integrating social security into the overall economic policy of the bourgeois state and bourgeois governments, thereby establishing state control over part of the workers' income (deferred income). Thus even in the period of temporary resurgence of reformist programmes, the changed social composition of the social-democratic apparatus was reflected in the very type of reforms that social democracy tried to concede to the workers, within the context of defence and consolidation of bourgeois 'social peace'.

With the ending of the long period of accelerated growth, and the simultaneous sharpening of inter-imperialist competition, the amount of concessions the bourgeoisie was able to grant the working class was reduced and thus the extent of new social reforms became negligible. In some countries in Europe, even reforms granted in the past have been challenged (especially in Britain and Sweden). The bourgeoisie finds itself periodically obliged to declare open war on the standard of living, working conditions and democratic freedoms of the working class. Under these conditions, the polarization between the technocratic wing of the social-democratic apparatus and that which represents the traditional bureaucracy of the workers' organizations has inevitably been increased, and in certain cases even exacerbated.

6 The new rise in workers' struggles throughout capitalist Europe has underlined and reinforced this tendency. The more active and politicized the working

class becomes, the more critical it inevitably becomes of the extensive compromises of the social-democratic apparatus with the bourgeoisie. Moreover, the more social contradictions are heightened, the more the development of the bourgeoisie towards the 'strong State' becomes marked, the more the position of even moderate social democrats is threatened, and the more they begin once again to look with favour on mass pressure in the opposite directions. This is why, almost everywhere in Europe (sometimes, as in Britain, after a serious electoral defeat), one can see attempts by social democracy to re-establish its privileged relationship with sections of the trade-union apparatus — or with the latter as a whole. The 'Mitterand operation' in France symbolized dramatically the significance and possibilities for success of such attempts. The fact it was carried out on the initiative of a traditional bourgeois politician only serves to make the social significance even clearer. A similar operation had been carried out before in Holland and Luxemburg, each time at the cost of a split on the right whose extent was successfully limited in electoral terms — or even completely compensated for. If in some countries, such as Austria, this phenomenon of rapprochement with the unions has been slow to appear, it is because there is a certain lag in the overall evolution of these countries, with respect to the rest of capitalist Europe. Moreover, the socialist parties of these countries will be penalized for this delay by a decline on the electoral front, which in turn will be one of the factors which will lead them to readjust their political orientation.

7 One can therefore draw the conclusion that, as a general rule, social-democratic parties are still parties with a working-class electoral base, are objectively considered as such by important sections of the working class and the bourgeoisie, and are an organic part of the working-class movement. But their relationship with the working class is undergoing two important changes, by comparison with the period preceding the Second World War.

1. Their control over the trade-union organizations is weakening, or has disappeared. The autonomy of the trade-union bureaucracy from these parties is growing. In the absence of mass communist parties, and given the still pronounced weakness of the centrist and revolutionary formations, the trade-union apparatus sometimes tends to fill the gap which the disappearance of classical mass reformist formations has left and to act as spokesman for the majority of the working class, not only on the trade-union front, but also with regard to many political questions (except in the electoral arena).

2. Irrespective of the fluctuations to left or right of social-democracy's phraseology and of its electoral relations with the communist parties, the credibility of social-democracy as an instrument for carrying out the socialist transformation of society, even by parliamentary or electoral means, has undergone a qualitative decline, not only in the eyes of the working class, but even in the eyes of social-democratic voters themselves. This does not mean that the electoral influence of social-democracy has declined; it can even out-do its own historical record, as in West Germany. But it does mean that the masses who vote for social democracy do so more to vote against the bourgeois conservative parties, than to vote for a party which they consciously identify with socialism. That is why formulas like 'labour to power on a socialist programme' are in sharp conflict with the scepticism of a large section of the working class.

This phenomenon is not only due to the growing discredit attached to the social-democratic apparatus, because of its innumerable betrayals and compromises with the bourgeoisie. It also represents the beginnings of disillusionment and scepticism among increasing working-class layers as regards reformist, electoral and parliamentary illusions.

In such circumstances, revolutionary Marxists have nothing to gain by lending these illusions fresh credibility. While adopting the most appropriate electoral tactics in each concrete situation (including, in cases of confrontation between social-democratic and bourgeois parties which clearly take on the objective character of a class confrontation, the possibility of calling for a vote for these parties), they must orientate their governmental slogans more towards workers' governments arising out of extra-parliamentary struggles of the masses and the real mass organizations of the working class.

8 Practically all the important splits which have occurred in European social democracy during the last few years have been splits on the right (Italy; Holland; Luxemburg; French social-democratic groups joining forces with the 'reformers' of the centre rather than accept the electoral pact with the Communist Party). Are splits on the left ruled out at the moment, given the changed social composition of the social-democratic apparatus? Could social-democratic youth movements, which at the moment are stagnating, declining or unable to establish themselves, develop once again?

To answer this question, one has to take into account two inter-related factors: on the one hand, the reorientation of many social-democratic parties in an attempt to forge a new alliance with the trade-union apparatus and to win back a working-class electoral base; on the other hand, the appearance of a mass vanguard which is independent of the traditional parties.

Given the mass nature of youth radicalization in most of the countries of Europe, the possibility of a broad penetration of 'dissident' tendencies into social-democracy cannot be ruled out. The spectacular influx of youth into German social democracy in the last few years is a typical example of this. But, on the other hand, the breadth and level of consciousness of the most radicalized layers of youth make it impossible for social democracy and the communist parties to absorb this phenomenon as a whole. This is one of the most striking differences between this present phase of radicalization and that of the thirties or forties. In such circumstances, the emergence of left-centrist currents within social-democratic parties is less likely, except in countries where the new vanguard is far from reaching the same proportions as in the rest of Europe. The most likely eventuality is that there will be relatively little movement to the left within the social-democratic parties, which will remain at a lower ideological level than in the past, with the more radical elements being constantly drawn towards revolutionary formations and currents outside social democracy.

One must not, however, draw the conclusion that in countries in which the working-class movement is still hegemonized by social democracy, this phenomenon of new left-wing tendencies can be ignored by revolutionary Marxists. They must follow them closely and try to influence them politically and ideologically once they attain a certain strength — without, however, forgetting that their main task is to build independent revolutionary organizations, which is the only appropriate orientation in the present period.