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Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation

Russia-
Revolution
and Counter-revolution

1917-23
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The next issue of Revolutionary Perspectives will be mainly
devoted to an analysis of the Spanish Civil War and events
in Spain today.
Russia Revolution and Counter-revolution 1917-23

As one of the central experiences in the history of the workers' movement, the Russian Revolution claims our attention as the one instance in the twentieth century where the working class has taken political power, and seen this as part of the unfolding of the world proletarian revolution. Because of this its experience provides much information and lessons - even in a negative sense - on a multitude of subjects ranging from the role of the communist party to the question of the economics of the transition period, which can be studied with benefit by the emerging communist groups within the working class, faced with the approach of the second revolutionary wave of the twentieth century. Even though the revolution today will be no simple re-run of the Russian Revolution due to the changes undergone by capitalism since 1917.

The world war, which broke out in August 1914 between the Entente and Central Powers signified that capitalism could only continue its existence by plunging humanity into a cycle of wars and crises, to which the assassin's bullet at Sarajevo was the curtain raiser. Bourgeois society had reached the end of its progressive period of expansion, and henceforth only two forms of social movement were possible: on the one hand a counter-revolutionary restructuring of a national capital through an offensive against the working class and as a prelude to renewed imperialist competition; or, in all its richness and limitations (since in real life these are reverse sides of a coin) a proletarian movement, seeking towards the destruction of capital and the international community of associated producers.

The imperialist slaughter revealed the necessity for the overthrow of capital and the building of socialism. It was towards this realisation that the bitter class movement against the war was struggling. The workers' resistance to the war - the strikes for peace in Berlin; the struggles on the Clyde in 1915 and 1918; the food riots and strikes in Turin in 1917-18; and the Russian movement itself - all were fragmented strivings towards an international alliance of the class against capital. In this struggle were created organs which foreshadowed the future workers' dictatorship; the workers' committees in Britain, the workers' councils in Germany, soviets and factory
committees in Russia, and the factory councils in Italy. These organs are tremendously significant, for without the overthrow of the capitalist state attempts to transform the capitalist economy are doomed to failure. Additionally, all these movements expressed, to a greater or lesser degree, an anti-war consciousness and the desire for a new, socialist order.

The class movement found its complement in the coming together of small political groupings, (mainly from the left-wing of the pre-war Second International), who tried to deepen the movement, and draw it on to new heights. Among these were the International Communists (I.K.D.) in Germany, who were the first to adopt the name "communist" since the Communist League of 1847. Kühle, Borchardt and others in the I.K.D. called for a break with Social Democracy, the formation of a new International, and civil war. They were echoed by the Dutch "Tribunist" group (Gorter, Pannekoek etc.), and by the majority of the Bolshevik Party, and they came together as the "left" of the anti-war conferences organized at Zimmerwald and Kienthal. If nothing else marked these organizations as proletarian and communist, it was their call for the imperialist war to be transformed into a civil war:

"Universal propaganda, extending to the Army and the field of military operations, for the socialist revolution, and for the necessity of turning one's weapons not against one's brothers, the hired slaves of other countries, but against the reactionary and bourgeois governments of all countries."

(Lenin, qu. in E.H. Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.1p77)

The Bolsheviks, as often in their history, showed their ability to alter their wrong conceptions, and become the vehicle for the expression of the class' aims. It was the class movement itself in 1917 that convinced Lenin, who in turn convinced the Party, that it was no longer a question of a bourgeois revolution, but of a proletarian revolution in Russia as the first step of a world revolution. A whole series of myths has grown up around the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks, and we will be dealing with many examples of these in the text which follows. But for us it is self-evident that an international class movement against the horrors of the imperialist war, which leads in one area to the overthrow of bourgeois power, and brings a revolutionary party, such as were the Bolsheviks in 1917, to power, is a proletarian movement— not a bourgeois or a "peasant" one.

The "participation" of the peasantry in the Revolution does not alter its class character. Their influence was entirely negative: desertion from the front causing the downfall of the Tsarist Army. The peasantry formed no lasting political organs, and where they did act it was in a counter-revolutionary way, as we'll show. Even given the fact of its huge peasant majority, Russia in 1917 was not feudal; the
market economy and wage labour prevailed in the countryside, and Russia was the fifth or sixth industrial power in terms of gross output. In any case, as communists we take our stand on the international economy, not on a national one as it temporarily presents itself to an isolated part of the world proletariat.

The Russian revolution was proletarian at its moment of triumph in October 1917, but it is also necessary to explain why it was unambiguously counterrevolutionary by 1921, though in the intervening period Russia existed as a defensible proletarian outpost in a hostile capitalist world. The conception of Russia as a proletarian 'outpost' from 1917-21 means that we recognise that in three main areas the general thrust of the Soviet regime was towards communism. We talk of the general thrust, since many errors were made, indeed many reactionary policies were pursued, (enough for all Utopians to wash their hands of the whole affair), but still the movement pursued a policy generally positive. The three areas are; the issue of the State and the proletarian dictatorship, the field of economic policy, and the question of the international extension of the revolution. Two themes should never be lost sight of in what follows. Firstly it was the failure of the European Revolution that was decisive in turning the movement in Russia towards counterrevolution, and secondly that the idea of socialism in a single country is an absurdity.

THE STATE.

It had been a central point of Marxist theory since the Paris Commune of 1871, that the working-class, on seizing power, would have to destroy root and branch the bourgeois state apparatus, to prepare for the building of socialism. This aspect of Marx's thought had been forgotten during the half-century of peaceful capitalist development which followed. Brought to the fore again by Pannekoek in his controversy with Kautsky on the mass strikes which broke out in Europe prior to World War One, the Marxist theory of the state was re-stated in all its clarity and vigour by Lenin in his State and Revolution. Under the impact of events, the class' actions and Bolshevik propaganda, the old state machine was smashed in Russia in 1917-18. The Tsarist Army disintegrated, the police force shattered, the old civil service and judiciary disbanded. Finally, the abortive Russian equivalent of a parliament, the Constituent Assembly, was dissolved when it began to voice the counter-revolutionary aspirations of the peasant majority. All power, in theory and in fact, now lay with the Soviets of Workers' Deputies (and their offshoots the Red Guards and Council of People's Commissars) which had spread over the whole of Russia since March 1917.
Now, all sorts of formalistic quibblers will deny that the overthrow of the bourgeois state in Russia led to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and assert that it led to the 'power of the party', or the 'dictatorship of Lenin' or some such profundity. Again, we emphasise that in what follows we are not looking for some mystically pure proletarian democracy that never has or will exist; in all class movements, the most advanced and conscious elements 'take the lead' as long as the mass of the class has confidence in them. The ritualised minute of formal democracy are the last thing you look for in a situation of revolution and civil war. Proletarian democracy is not simply formal, but is one of content, and we judge a movement not simply by how it takes decisions, but also by what these decisions are. But for the satisfaction of incorrigible formalists, let us examine the actual record of proletarian democracy in Russia.

Far from being a gang of putschists, as they are so often portrayed, the Bolsheviks quite clearly only acted when the level of consciousness of the workers' movement in Russia reached a revolutionary level. In the "July Days" the Bolsheviks could have seized power when pushed in that direction by the Petrograd workers who had taken to the streets in protest against Kerensky's new offensive in Galicia. However, realising that they had no mandate from the class, and that an isolated coup would have been crushed, the Bolsheviks acted instead to calm the movement (see E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik revolution Vol.1 p.101), and suffered along with the class in the subsequent repression. All had, however, changed by October; elections to the factory committees showed that a majority had swung behind the Bolshevik demands, and the elections to the second Congress of Soviets revealed that the overwhelming majority of the Russian working class, were behind the demands of the Bolsheviks for an end to the war and the overthrow of the provisional government.

Even the form of the seizure of power is a far cry from the usual melodramatic presentation. The Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) which overthrew the Provisional Government was an offshoot of the Petrograd Soviet (it had actually been set up by the Mensheviks!), and under the direction of that organ which now had a Bolshevik majority. This Soviet had carried a resolution endorsing the view of the Bolshevik Party that the time was ripe for insurrection, and the seizure of power was itself endorsed by the Congress of Soviets. The same was true of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, which was endorsed by the Executive of Soviets and the Soviet Congress and was far from a Bolshevik 'fiat'. At this time, i.e. early 1918, it is meaningless to try to make distinctions between party, class and soviets. The question is of the direction of policy and the determination of the class to see it through. When a majority of the class has created state organs in which a party which has won the class' support has a clear majority, then it is formalistic to demand "who is in power?"
Certainly the Bolsheviks saw the party as having a vanguard role, as a sort of ideological compass for the class. As the Party programme of 1918 put it,

"It is natural moreover, that the aim of this party should be to bring about the proletarian revolution. To this end the proletarian party must be absolutely uncompromising. Its function is to hurl the bourgeoisie from power and crush the resistance of the exploiters. The party must reveal the absolute conflict of interest between the exploiters and exploited."

(Bukharin & Preobrazhensky ABC of Communism p.135).

Nowhere in the Bolshevik writings of this time is there any babble about the historical birthright of the party or the class only being able to achieve a trade union consciousness. Instead, there is a total emphasis on mass democracy, mass ratification and participation of the class in all actions and decisions of the class wide organs of the proletarian state. Soon after October Lenin said,

"Comrade workers! Remember that you yourselves now administer the state. Nobody will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take all the affairs of the state into your own hands. Your Soviets are henceforth the organs of state power, organs of decision."


Clearly, especially once the civil war broke out, all was not quite perfect with proletarian democracy; a tendency developed for the Council of Commissars (Sovnarkom) to become autonomous of the Executive Committees of the Soviets, and the Soviet Congresses themselves. Emergency measures were only ratified post factum, or not at all, and by the end of the civil war the disintegration of the class prevented any come back. But in 1918 the Soviets were still annulling decrees of Sovnarkom, and in October 1919 the setting up of revolutionary committees independent of local soviets was attacked by the Soviet Congress. Even in the abominable material and political conditions of the civil war, deformed proletarian democracy still operated. If this was true in the Soviets, it was also true in the factories as well.

In no other area has anti-Bolshevik paranoia been so dominant and pernicious as in the question of the factory committee movement and its relations with the Bolsheviks. It is axiomatic that the proletariat, as a collective producer class, must hold power over the productive process in the period of revolutionary transformation, but is rampant confusionism to say that this guarantees the workers power over society as a whole; the most advanced forms of workers' control can be combined with the domination of capital. Political organs, appropriate to this task have to be created, such as were the
Soviets in Russia, and these linked up with the industrial organs. It is still more asinine confusionism to say that this proletarian power over production can be guaranteed, be asserted in an autonomous federalist, factory by factory basis. Such Proudhonist conceptions can only fragment the proletariat.

Stepping from the writings of the anarcho-syndicalist Maximoff (see his Sydicalists in the Russian Revolution), who advocated federalist factory committees, which would be the only organs of the proletarian state, a whole train of his residual legates have raised a 'hue and cry' over the factory committees, and equated their centralisation and integration into the dictatorship of the proletariat after October 1917 as their 'suppression'. Realising that they cannot draw a line between the Soviets and the Bolsheviks, these pulp writers retreat to the eternal terra firma of ouvrierists, the factory floor. Lamenting the fact that the Soviets were concerned with what they consider secondary matters, ouvrierists take refuge approvingly in the nuts and bolts of the factory committees,

"Whereas the Soviets were primarily concerned with political issues, e.g. the structure of government and the question of the continuation of the war, the factory committees initially dealt solely with the problems of continuing production within the factories." (P. Rachleff, "Soviets and Factory Committees" in Radical America p.93-4 Vol.8 No.6),

and the stage is set for the melodrama of their suppression by the Bolsheviks.

But no such 'split' can be made between the Bolsheviks and the factory committees, either before or after October 1917. From an early date, Bolshevik workers were in a majority among the delegates to the factory committees, and fought there against the non-political federalist conceptions of the anarcho-syndicalist minority whose confusionism is echoed by todays 'libertarians'. Just prior to October, a congress of the factory-shop committees carried a significant resolution which stated,

"In accordance with the slogan proclaimed by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolshevik), workers' control on a national scale, in order to bring results, must extend to all capitalist concerns, and not be organised accidentally, without system; it must be well planned, and not separate from the industrial life of the country as a whole."


- showing that the class' conceptions were not so myopic as their latter-day 'defenders' make out!
The majority of the factory committee layer of workers accepted the idea that centralisation of their tasks in the interests of a co-ordinated economy was essential. In the libertarian melodrama, the Vezenkha (Council of National Economy) springs from nowhere to emasculate the class. However, the committees themselves saw that shop-floor control had to be part of a process of central control, or 'work at the top' as one document put it. To quote a useful corrective to the 'libertarians',

"The 'work at the top' which the document refers to is the VSNKh (Supreme Council of the National Economy) which shortly afterwards was set up on the initiative of the Central Council of Factory Committees itself (the evidence is their own)"


For those unconvinced, there is the reliable testimony of Carr, who shows that where the factory committee movement was strongest, i.e. in Petrograd, it was the least federalistic and anarchistic in its views. Talking of the relationship of the factory committees to the formation of the Vezenkha, he says,

"In some cases there was apparently even continuity of organisation; the Petrograd regional council of workers' control - perhaps one of the few firmly established organs of workers' control - transferred itself into the Petrograd Regional Council of National Economy."

(Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 p.80).

The 'libertarians' drag in the question of the Bolsheviks 'smashing' of workers' control on the railways; in actual fact what was smashed was control by the Menshevik dominated trade union apparatus on the railways, which was engaging in counter-revolutionary activities to force Mensheviks and SRs into the government and to pressure for the return of the Constituent Assembly. In this process a decree was issued which was supported by the majority of the railwaymen, which smashed the pseudo workers' control and arranged for the running of the railways by elected line committees, a much further step towards workers' democracy than what it replaced. (See E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 Note D: "Workers' Control on the Railways").

A final question as regards the state is that of the Red Army. In the early days of the revolution, when the tasks were defence of strikes, demonstrations, and the seizure of power itself, the military tasks of the working class could be carried out by the Red Guards or workers' militias. Here the elective principle for these charged with responsibility, and the equality of conditions generally prevailed. With the outbreak of the civil war and the need to transform these units into a Red Army to defeat the Whites and their capitalist allies, these
principles were gradually undermined, and finally went by the board. In the dire conditions prevailing at that time, no other outcome was possible, and this vital part of the proletarian state was only indirectly controlled by the working-class. (1) But while the prospect of the European Revolution still held out, better the Red Army with all its faults and dangers, than the crushing of the working class by the Whites, which only the existence of the Red Army prevented.

Despite all deformations and inadequacies, the ruling class in Russia at this period, the class which held political power, was the working class. The considerations of the organs of its state has led us logically to that of the economy itself.

**THE ECONOMY.**

One of the lessons which revolutionaries today can draw from the economic experiences of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution, is the impossibility of any "mediations" (that is, temporary class compromises and alliances, to avoid open war) with the capitalist or other classes. The first steps of the victorious proletariat must be to undermine all the economic institutions of capitalism, (e.g. the banks, private property) as well as its political organs.

A fundamental error of the Bolsheviks in the early stages of the Revolution was their unwillingness to expropriate the capitalists, and attack capitalist relations of production. Instead, they wanted the proletariat to 'administer capital', until the victory of the revolution in the west. In his pamphlet, *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*, written just before the October Revolution, Lenin outlined his proposals for industry without mentioning expropriation. Instead, workers and capitalists were to be called together "into congresses and conferences", with the aim being "control over landowners and capitalists by workers and peasants". But the attempt to mediate with the capitalists was foiled by the latters' refusal to have anything to do with the proletarian state, and their determination to paralyse it and bring it down. For example, the Bolsheviks attempted to mediate with the banks, and only after a long boycott of the regime by the latter, did troops move in to take over the private banks in Moscow. Lenin summed up this fiasco as follows,

"We wished to proceed along the path of agreement with the bankers...but they started sabotaging on an unprecedented scale, and experience compelled us to establish control by other methods."  
(Qu. in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution* Vol 2 p140).

Faced with Bolshevik reluctance to expropriate the capitalists (due to fears that this would provoke a western blockade and intervention), the class acted on their own. Realising that only expropriation would stop the destruction of the economy
by the bourgeoisie after October, the factory committees all over Russia commenced a massive wave of expropriations in response to capitalists sabotaging or abandoning their enterprises, or simply in pursuit of their immediate material aims. In the Party, the increasingly-coherent group which published the journal Kommunist, denounced the policy of mediations, and demanded that the Bolsheviks endorse the class' own movement. The Kommunist group (Bukharin, Ossinsky Preobrazhensky etc) were also the main elements in the Vozhenkha at this time, and thus nearer to the mood of the class. Continuing sabotage, capitalist blockade and the approaching Civil War launched by Entente backed troops, as well as the threat of massive German purchases of Russian industry all convinced the majority of the Bolsheviks of the validity of the class' instincts, and the expropriations were extended and legitimised in the so-called "Nationalisation Decree" of June 1918. Once again the Bolshevik Party had shown its proletarian class character, by being able to follow, and then lead to a higher level, a genuine mass movement of the class itself.

Within the Bolshevik Party there was disagreement as to the content of state capitalism, the majority seeing a transfer of the control of capitalism from private individuals into the hands of the state, as being a necessary step towards communism in the period of transition. Lenin, in reply to his critics from the left, stressed his faith in the ability of state capitalism to lead Russia forward to socialism. His model was to be found in the German war economy, and he exhorted communists to,

"study the state capitalism of the Germans, to adopt it with all possible strength, not to spare dictatorial methods in order to hasten its adoption". (Qu. in Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 2 p99).

Such views were fiercely attacked by the Kommunist group who demanded that control of industry be taken from the capitalists, and placed in the hands of the workers themselves, and for the undermining of capitalist relations of production. Bukharin for example, criticised state capitalism and its exponents, by saying that they "Instead of raising the banner forward to communism, raise the banner back to capitalism". Indeed, when the Bolshevik Programme came to be written in 1919, it reflected the move to the left that had occurred with the impact of the Civil War, and here there is exceptional clarity on the reactionary content of state capitalism. Passages like the following are too often overlooked by Bolshevik-baiters,

"... in nearly all capitalist countries there took place during the war the development of state capitalism... Germany, for example, gained many successes simply because the German bourgeoisie was
so successful in the organization of state capitalism. State capitalism, uniting and organizing the bourgeoisie ..., has of course greatly weakened the working class. Under state capitalism the workers became the white slaves of the capitalist class..." (ABC of Communism Bukharin and Preobrazhensky P163,5).

Many people see the nationalisation decrees as being the logical expression of state capitalism, when in actual fact they express the rupture of the Bolsheviks, under the impact of events, from state capitalism. The early attempt by the state to control capital, was abandoned by what the class was demanding, i.e. expropriation or nationalisation. The workers and the Bolsheviks were clear that this was not nationalisation in any capitalist sense. Again, to quote their programme,

"Obviously, in the epoch of proletarian dictatorship, there is only one way of doing this(i.e., organizing production), namely by proletarian nationalisation, by which we mean the transfer of all the means of production, distribution and exchange into the hands of the proletarian state, the greatest and most powerful working class organization.

We must carefully avoid confusing the nationalisation of production under the bourgeoisie regime, with the nationalisation of production under the proletarian regime...The result of bourgeoisie nationalisation is to produce state capitalism." (ABC of Communism P312).

It is clear that at this time nationalisation was synonymous for the majority of the Bolsheviks, and for the class, not with state capitalism, but with expropriation, and this is why the class demanded it. Hopefully, this is now another ghost laid to rest.

A few words must be said on the employment of 'specialists' and labour discipline in the factories during the civil war. Employment of specialists, and the privileges they received, were criticised by the class, and by the Kommunist group, as an undermining of proletarian power in production. Given the demands of the Civil War, employment of specialist was a necessary evil; but they were controlled by the state and not vice-versa. Labour discipline in itself, provided it is carried out by the class' own organs, is no ultimate sin, but when it was combined with the introduction of one-man management, as in Russia by the latter part of the Civil War, it led to demoralisation in certain sectors of the class. But serious as these errors were, they are not definitive criteria for a rejection of the proletarian character of the Soviet bastion, and should be seen as expressions of the ebb of the revolution in Russia, faced with its continued isolation, rather than simply as causes of the class' defeat. Again, these deformations could have been corrected by a break in Russia's isolation, had such a break occurred.
The Bolshevik programme on agriculture had supported a move towards large scale cultivation at the expense of the peasants' desire for private ownership of the land. Shortly before October Lenin said,

"It is impossible to go on farming in the old way. If we continue as of old...we will be faced with inevitable ruin...It is essential to go over to joint cultivation on large model farms."

(Qu. from E.H.Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 p.39)

But in spite of such clarity, when faced with the immediate problem of maintaining power in a country where the vast majority of the population were peasants, the Bolsheviks attempted to come to a modus vivendi with them. Capitulating to the large scale seizure and division of the lands by the peasants, (though it is an error to say that the Bolsheviks gave the land to the peasants) the Bolsheviks adopted the slogans of the SR land policy, which legitimized this seizure, and felt that an alliance could be formed between the proletariat and the peasantry. This was one of the most important errors of the Bolsheviks, and cost the working class dearly.

In the early days of the revolution, the peasantry were able to pressurise the regime by refusing to trade with the towns; the towns had nothing to give in exchange. The food situation became worse and worse and the Bolsheviks resorted to mere revolutionary exhortation on a deaf peasantry. Disaster was looming.

"In January the food situation was once more anxious in Petrograd and Moscow...the country was in passive revolt against the towns."

(E.H.Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 p.55-56)

Only under the threat of mass starvation did they act, and a decree of VTsIK in May 1918 set up detachments of workers and village committees of poor peasants to seize the surplus grain of the peasants and requisition it for the urban proletariat. Unwillingness to resort to immediate requisitioning from the seizure of power led to the situation where the proletarian dictatorship was almost starved to submission.

Under the period of war communism, which began in mid-1918, when it was so necessary to maintain the Army and feed the working class, requisitioning was for grain at a fixed price. But as the situation grew more desperate all the peasants' surplus produce, apart from that necessary for his own survival, was taken on credit. These requisitionings from the peasants rose steadily, reaching 283 million puds in 1920-21. Attempts were also made to set up rural collectives, often manned by urban workers, but these failed miserably. The peasants retaliated by refusing to grow grain and murdering the Red Guard detachments sent to collect it. The importance of these events...
which should be noted by those who shed tears for the peasantry, is to show quite clearly the counter-revolutionary nature of the peasantry as a class.

In a few areas elements of the peasantry did play a more positive role where peasant leaders with charisma and political training (like Makhno in the Ukraine) led them. Here some poor peasants organised themselves into collectives and sent gifts of grain to the workers in Moscow. However, even with these political peasants the revolution ended with the seizure of land. They were hostile to Soviet power and demanded an 'autonomous' area of peasant socialism. Although the more positive elements in these movements could have been utilised in the event of a world revolution, groups like the Makhnovites were no alternative to the proletarian revolution or to Soviet power.

Some Bolsheviks had illusions about the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, believing that the 'poor' peasants could ally with the proletariat. But in a situation of unmechanised agriculture a poor peasant is simply an aspirant kulak, and an alliance of workers with them is one built on sand. Such illusions later led to the fiasco of the 'Green' International in 1922, which tried to form a parallel to the Comintern "For a common struggle against capitalism." (See E.H.Carr The Interregnum p.198-200.)

Despite these ideological blindspots, the Bolsheviks were able to respond to the pressure of events and the needs of the working class (albeit tardily) and take action against the peasantry when it was dictated by the need to protect and extend the revolution. And again this is testimony to the class character of the Bolshevik Party at this time.

Further evidence of the objective necessity for an attack on capitalism and the interlocking political and economic aspects of the revolution, can be seen in the question of distribution under war communism. As the government printed more and more money in the civil war, causing rocketing inflation, the currency eventually collapsed, and the ruble was worthless. The effect of this was the partial disappearance of the money economy, and the ending of wage payments, being replaced by a system of rationing and payment in kind. The population was divided into three categories; manual workers, other workers and thirdly members of the former bourgeoisie, the first getting more of the foodstuffs requisitioned from the peasants than the second, and the latter getting next to nothing (they could, of course, purchase food on the black market as peasants brought their secreted grain into the towns). The rationing system was further developed as the war went on into nineteen different categories, according to the needs of the worker and his family etc.

Along with this method of payment, went the abolition of rent, redistribution of the population into bourgeois housing, the provision of free transport, meals in factories etc., and free
distribution of whatever medical services were available. Although these raw methods of rationing and distribution were not communism, the abolition of the money economy was a step in the right direction, dictated by the needs of defending the revolution, and could have been a springboard towards communism had the revolution succeeded in the west. In 1920 plans were drawn up to make all economic transactions between factories merely aspects of 'bookkeeping', for the introduction of 'labour money', and various other schemes. (See E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 p.236) Here again we see revolutionary measures being forced upon the Bolsheviks by necessity, clearing up their confusions as to the content of communism and revolutionary policy.

This is repeated with foreign trade. While the Bolsheviks felt that the capitalists could sustain a proletarian outpost, the Western capitalists themselves would not undertake economically profitable measures for all the gold in the Moscow banks. Even for gold, these states refused to sell Russia the plant and foodstuffs it needed, and imposed a blockade on the country to enforce this policy on all states, while sending armies and supplies to the Whites in the civil war. This is not a moralistic question; as we have stated on substitutionism, (2), it is not because this is morally bad that we oppose it, but because the revolution cannot succeed as a minority coup. Similarly, our opposition to trade between capital and proletarian outposts is not moralistic, but based on the recognition of its impossibility.

During the period of war communism, Russia was isolated from the capitalist world,

"Foreign trade played virtually no part at all in the Soviet economy during the period of war communism. Imports and exports...reached vanishing point in 1919." (E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 p.245).

This was not through any programmatic clarity on the part of the Bolsheviks, but because of the above-mentioned capitalist blockade.

The period of war communism, then, was one where the Bolsheviks were forced by the class, and by objective circumstances to embark (however unwillingly) on policies that were a step towards the disbanding of capitalism and the beginnings of communist construction. Lenin was later quite clear that all this had been forced on the Bolsheviks. 

"The tactics adopted by the capitalist class forced us into a desperate struggle which compelled us to smash up the old relations to a far greater extent than we at first intended." (Sochineniya xxvii 63-64, qu. in E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 p.269).
THE INTERNATIONAL EXTENSION OF THE REVOLUTION.

When we come to look at the international policies of the Bolsheviks in the years to 1921, we find the same confusions, errors and mistakes that mark the events in the political and economic fields. But we also find on balance the same generally positive thrust, partly imposed by ideological factors, and partly by the logic of events themselves.

The initial policy of the Bolshevik regime, isolated in a hostile capitalist world, was to buy time, that is a parallel to its policy with domestic capital. One arm of this strategy was an attempt to play the rival imperialisms off against each other. Negotiations were entered into with the Entente in an effort to procure military equipment in order to resist the expansion of German imperialism into Russia in early 1918. But the Entente saw quite clearly that the survival of Russia as a revolutionary state was more dangerous than a German advance, and refused all aid. After the collapse of Germany, and the intervention of the Entente powers (Britain, France) on the side of the Whites, the Bolsheviks swung to seeking an alliance with Germany, only to meet here too with a rebuff.

But against these maneuvers must be matched the acts of the Bolsheviks in publishing the secret treaties of the Entente (which provided for a carve-up of the world), and in calling on the working class to end the imperialist war by revolution. It was realised that only an extension of the revolution could save the Russian workers. Trotsky, as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs stated,

"If the peoples of Europe do not arise and crush imperialism we shall be crushed—that is beyond doubt. Either the Russian workers' revolution will raise the whirlwind of struggle in the west, or the capitalists of all countries will stifle our struggle."

(Qu. in Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 3 p29).

It had been accepted that an attack on a Soviet Russia which opted out of the war, by either Germany or the Entente would be met by a revolutionary war of defense. When the German demands for vast tracts of the Ukraine and White Russia were presented, Lenin proposed acceptance, but was supported by few in the Central Committee. The outbreak of mass strikes against the war in Germany, led to the Bolsheviks refusing the German terms, and breaking off negotiations. But the resumption of the German advance, and the ebb of the movement in Germany, led to Lenin gaining the approval of the Party for acceptance of the terms, and the rejection of the proposal of the Kommunist group for a revolutionary war. This view was endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Soviets on the same day, and by the Congress of Soviets in March (by 784-261) so whatever its errors, acceptance was no Leninist fiat. The argument of the left-communists was that to engage in a war of revolutionary defense (even a guerilla war which would have
had little chance of defeating the Germans) would have tied up vast numbers of troops, and hastened the collapse of the German war machine and the advent of the German Revolution. Acceptance of the terms would delay the latter, and a 'survival' of Russia based on hindering the world revolution was a self-defeating one. More generally, the lefts felt that the policy of mediations with domestic and international capital was weakening the Revolution. In their text of April 1918, the "Theses on the Present Moment", they said,

"The Russian Workers' Revolution cannot 'save itself' by leaving the international revolutionary path, steadily avoiding a fight, retreating in the face of the pressure of international capital, and making concessions to 'patriotic' capital."

(Carr in Documentary History of Communism (ed) R.V. Daniels pl54).

The Kommunist group were undoubtedly right in their analysis, and in fact at the time of the treaty of Brest Litovsk, the German war machine was near collapse, and carried out a vast bluff. Retreat in the face of its threats allowed Germany to transfer its armies to the western Front, and prolong the war for six months (and the outbreak of the German Revolution). The treaty also lost to the proletarian outpost a vast proportion of its economic resources, which were plundered by the German Army,

"They amounted to 40% of the industry and industrial population of the former Russian Empire, 70% of the iron and steel products, and 90% of the sugar."

(Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 2 p.91)

-not to mention a large working class subject to terroristic reaction in the occupied areas. Some will say that the Soviet state could not have resisted. But three months later it was able to resist, and heroically, for another two years, when the Civil War broke out, and the White-hordes struck towards Moscow and Petrograd—these Whites, incidentally owed much of their success to German support. Civil War, which the main elements in the Party had tried to avoid, was unavoidable. Delay served no useful purpose, and concessions such as that at Brest-Litovsk merely aided the international reaction, and struck grievous physical and spiritual blows at Soviet power.

So serious were the criticisms of the Kommunist group at this time, as to the drift of policy, that they considered splitting from the Bolshevik Party and fighting for their policies in a new organization inside the working class. But at this time it was still possible to express revolutionary aspirations within the Party, and the Civil War itself led to the implementation of many policies advocated by the lefts, eg expropriations and intransigent internationalism. To have split from the Party which only five months.
earlier had been at the head of the seizure of power, would have been no small thing, and on balance the decision of the Kommunist group to remain within the Party was correct.

From the outbreak of the Civil War until mid 1920, the Russian state was in a position of extreme isolation from, and hostility to, the capitalist states. In parallel to the economic blockade imposed, Russia was not recognised by a single capitalist state; as Carr says "the boycott of the new regime by the Allied powers in Petrograd was absolute." In March 1919 the Third International was set up, with its avowed aim as the overthrow of all these capitalist states, with whom Russia was at war, economically and politically. From its foundation, the Third International was marked by grave defects. Set up largely by the Bolsheviks, who were surrounded by the aura of a successful revolution, it was always a potential vehicle for the generalisation of the errors and misconceptions of their programme. Additionally, parties other than the Russian one were very weak, and with the seat of the International in Moscow, opposition groups faced immense uphill battles in the fight for their positions. Even though the Bolsheviks had invited to the founding Congress all those who had taken a revolutionary stand against the war,

"The overwhelming majority of these people belonged directly or indirectly to the Bolshevik Party, were Bolshevik militants conveniently 'converted' into representatives of other parties."

(Lenin and the Comintern Vol 1 Lazlich and Drakhovich p74).

At this congress were taken several fundamental political positions that marked the Third International as an expression of the working class in the revolutionary wave. The Second International was characterised as a thoroughly bourgeois organization, and it was recognised that the War had opened up the epoch of proletarian revolution. Also, the whole emphasis of the meeting was on the conquest of political power by the Soviets, in opposition to peaceful schemas of social change, and the international aspect of the workers' struggle was firmly asserted,

"A new epoch is born: The epoch of the dissolution of capitalism, of its inner disintegration. The epoch of the communist revolution of the proletariat... (The working class) must create order, genuine communist order. It must destroy the rule of capital, make war impossible, abolish state frontiers, change the entire world into one co-operative community, make a reality of the brotherhood and freedom of peoples."Platform of the Communist International.

(Qu. in Documents of the Third International (ed) J. Degras p18-19).

Into the balance-sheet of the positive actions of the Third
International at this time must be put its material and moral support for the struggles of the European workers. The printing of thousands of pamphlets for distribution in Europe, the smuggling of arms to revolutionaries (such as were carried out by Joffe the unofficial Soviet Ambassador in Berlin), the political work among German and Allied prisoners of war in Russia were all undertaken in true revolutionary spirit. And, equally important, the efforts to establish communist parties in all countries, to regroup the proletarian vanguard, was central to the aims of the Comintern at this period. On balance, the policy of the Third International was positive in this period, and reflected the proletarian character of the state in Russia.

In the period from 1917-20, the Bolsheviks were highly sympathetic to the left-communist in Holland and Germany, though by no means agreeing with all their views. In the State and Revolution, Lenin praised Pannekoeks theory of the state, and he later called Gorter one of the 'best' of European Marxists for his position of the First World War, even while attacking his views on the national question. Indeed, in order to break the isolation of the Comintern, a West European Bureau was set up in Amsterdam in late 1919 headed by Gorter and Pannekoek, and given financial help. They proceeded to organize conferences of West European communist groups, and to publish a Bulletin. However, friction resulted over the strongly anti-parliamentary and anti-trades union views of the Bureau, and it was dissolved in April 1920, and its functions taken over by the K.P.D. But as yet the K.A.P.D. were not only allowed to remain in the International, but also given a seat of its Executive Committee. But the Bolsheviks had high hopes of winning over the bulk of the centrist parties, like the U.S.P.D. in Germany and the P.S.I. in Italy, to the Comintern, and by the end of 1920, with the publication of Lenin's Left Wing Communism, the Bolsheviks had taken a definite stand against the K.A.P.D.'s views, and its articles for the Communist International began to be censored, etc.

It is argued by some that this change of policy was also a change of doctrine, that under the impact of the decline of the revolutionary wave, the Bolsheviks backtracked on the issues of parliament and unions. Actually, what had changed was not doctrine, but emphasis. It is true that the defeat of the "Spartakist" Rising in Berlin in Jan 1919, and of the Bavarian and Hungarian Soviet Republics in the same year were severe blows at the international revolution. But the Second Congress of the Third International- at which were adopted the famous 'Twenty-One Conditions' which encouraged trades union and parliamentary work on member parties- took place at a time of high revolutionary enthusiasm. It had been preceded by the Ruhr Insurrection in Germany, and took place at the same time as the advance of the Red Army on Warsaw, and the high point of the Italian
workers’ struggles. What had happened was that events had once again revealed that a coherent revolutionary practice cannot be built around open questions,

"Participation in parliaments and trades unions, which had been treated by Lenin and the Comintern in the autumn of 1919 as secondary questions, not worth bothering about, now became an imperative obligation."

(Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 3 p183).

With the experience of the Third International behind us, we can see the need for a revolutionary organization to have a greater degree of cohesion today. But this was a lesson learned in the class struggle, and until 1921 it was possible for the Lefts to fight within the International for their views, and it remained a proletarian organization.

The most catastrophic policy pursued by the Bolsheviks at this time was over the question of national self-determination to the peripheral regions of the former Russian Empire. Lenin had crossed swords with Luxemburg over this issue in the early years of the century, and later did so with Bukharin. Both felt that with the development of a world economy and imperialism, the old demand of national self-determination was reactionary. Lenin felt that it could be used as a tactic to win the workers of the oppressed nationalities to the socialist cause. Elements within the Bolshevik Party had opposed this perspective during the war, and voiced their views again after the revolution. Pyatakov, at the Party Congress in April 1917, advanced a resolution,

"which declared that the national question could only be solved by the method of the socialist revolution under the slogan ‘away with frontiers’...and branded the right of self determination as 'simply a phrase without definite content'."

(Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 1 p267-8).

The proletarian revolution has no need for national chauvinism, and the Bolsheviks undoubtedly ended the suppression of many nationalities of limited social and economic development in Russia. But the granting of full independence to the western borderlands (Finland, Poland, Ukraine), was simply the granting to the bourgeoisie of those areas of the right to massacre its own workers, with the support of one or other of the big imperialist blocs. Poland became a puppet state of the Entente and suppressed its workers movement, while in Finland the Soviets were suppressed in a wave of terror. Likewise in the Ukraine the German pawn Petlyura massacred the revolutionary workers. Luxemburg mercilessly attacked the fruits of Lenin’s theory on the national question,

"One after another these 'nations' used their freshly-granted freedom to ally themselves with German imperialism against the Russian Revolution, to carry the
The banner of the counter revolution into Russia itself.
The Bolsheviks were to be taught to their own great hurt, and that of the revolution, that under the rule of capitalism there is no self-determination of peoples, that in class society each class of the nation strives to 'determine itself' in a different fashion, and that for the bourgeois class the standpoint of national freedom is fully subordinated to that of class rule. The Finnish bourgeoisie, like the Ukrainian bourgeoisie, were unanimous in preferring violent rule by Germany to national freedom, if the latter be bound up with Bolshevism."

(The Russian Revolution Luxemburg (Merlin) p50-1).

Indeed it was again the logic of events that compelled the Bolsheviks to overcome their errors, and to invade the Ukraine and oust the White Armies, and support the local working class. Similarly, the Entente inspired attack on Russia by Poland in 1920, forced the Soviet state to carry the war to the gates of Warsaw itself. The erroneous view of the national question led to support for the 'national struggles' of the Eastern peoples, and the calling of the Baku Congress of the Toilers of the East in September 1920, in an attempt to spread the bourgeois-national movement in Asia. But at this time these efforts were dwarfed by the work of the Comintern among the working class in Europe.

We have so far studied the political, economic and international policies pursued by the Soviet state in the period 1917-21. In this period, many revolutionary actions were carried out, many errors made which remained uncorrected, though many were corrected under the impact of events or of the class' movement. But the general character of such policies is such that (allowance made for the facts that we are dealing with a movement emerging from the 'peaceful' period of capitalist development, facing many new problems, in a situation of extreme economic backwardness), the defensible, proletarian character of the isolated Soviet outpost is clear.

But there is a strict time limit during which such an isolation can be maintained—and this would be much less today than in 1917, due to the greater military/economic power of capitalism. The failure of the workers in Europe to break the isolation which was strangling Russia, and the utter devastation of the country by the end of the Civil War, led to the collapse of proletarian power and the passage of the Bolshevik Party into the role of the organizers of Russian capital. To demonstrate this, and show the indefensibility of Russia by 1921, we will now examine the same three areas of political power, economic policy and international policy, to show that, with the early months of 1921 as a turning-point, with gathering speed the movement in Russia was now in the other direction, i.e., to counter revolution.
While choosing early 1921 as the Russian Thermidor, as marking a qualitative leap in development, we must make clear that it was the culmination of a process of degeneration and not the beginning. From mid-1920 the situation was desperate and declining fast, but we must take our positions on decisive overt manifestations of decay and not its early germination. Moreover, the process of decline was not linear from October 1917, but rather ebbed and flowed with many ups and downs till 1921. 1919 rather than 1917 was the high point of the movement.

In what follows we will also show that all attempts to split the totality of the revolutionary process into component parts, independent of each other, and each with varying importance for evaluation of the Soviet state, is impossible. As with the revolutionary phase, the political, economic and international aspects of the situation form a dialectical totality in counter-revolution.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION: THE STATE.

By early 1921 the economic situation in Russia was desperate. There was a massive decline in industrial production, and the breakdown of the distribution of commodities at fixed prices led to a growth of illicit free trade which N.E.P. was soon to make legal. As cause and effect of all this, there was the exodus of the urban workers to the countryside. The decline in the size of the working class was so great that by 1921 there were less than half the number of workers there had been in industry in 1914. It was impossible for the class to continue to hold power in a situation where it had all but ceased to exist.

The class held no political power by 1921. The Soviets, which had been weakened by the civil war, played no role in the formulation of policy, and no longer even ratified Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) decisions. Elections to them were held under Cheka supervision, and only approved candidates allowed to stand. The trades unions were also controlled by the Party, which ratified all appointments, and the factory committees had ceased to exist. being absorbed into the unions. All political appointments to positions of power in the state were made by the Party itself. No longer was it asserted that the state was a workers' state. On the contrary, now was the period which saw the birth of conceptions of the Party's birthright, of the idea that only the Party could manage the state.

"We need a single strong, powerful central committee which is the leader of everything...The central committee is the central committee because it is the same central committee for the soviets, and for the trades unions, and for the co-operatives, and for the
The working class, reacting against the loss of state power, began to struggle against the Bolsheviks; this marks a fundamental change in the relationship between class and party. Previously, in such matters as expropriations, the class had conflicted with the Bolsheviks and forced them to act; now it was class war.

In early 1921 demands began to be made in the Baltic fleet for more democracy, and criticisms were made of bureaucracy and careerism in the party and state. More serious trouble came in February with mass strikes in Petrograd; the strikers demanded freedom of assembly and of the press, of the release of political prisoners and of the return to proletarian democracy in the state. Some counter-revolutionary elements appeared, demanding the return of the Constituent Assembly, while others, faced with food shortages, wanted the opening of local markets. But such demands were incidental to the main thrust of the movement, which was in the tradition of the Petrograd workers who had shown the world in 1917 the path to international revolution. The Bolsheviks' reaction of blind panic shows how totally they had become divorced from the class.

Troops were sent in to break up the strike meetings, the leaders were arrested, and slanders that they were dominated by peasant elements spread. These allegations were obviously untrue as by 1921 the first generation workers had already left the cities; those who remained were the hard core proletariat, with no remaining rural ties, who had been the revolutionary vanguard.

Following on the Petrograd strikes came a series of demands from the sailors at Kronstadt, Petrograd's naval port. The sailors sent delegates to Petrograd to find out what was happening. On their return they drew up a series of demands, the Kronstadt Programme; the main demands voiced were for greater working class democracy, thus echoing the demands of the Petrograd strikers. The sailors called for new elections to the soviets, freedom of press and assembly, and the freedom of political prisoners from the leftist parties. Contrary to the accusation of Trotsky in 1938, the sailors were not demanding special privileges. On the contrary, one of their demands was for an equalisation of rations. As in any class movement, there was not absolute clarity on all points; for example, they called for the freeing of peasant and small scale production, provided that hired labour was not used. But at a time when many revolutionaries were imprisoned, and the counter-revolution on the upsurge, such confusions cannot be judged too harshly. What is important is that the principal demands were proletarian. The events in Kronstadt, from February 28th till its ultimate suppression in March 18th,
indicated the class consciousness of the masses involved. All their actions were in the proletarian tradition, echoing those of the Paris Commune of 1871, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 itself. Though we should be clear the Kronstadt Programme was not a communist programme and reflects in some ways the defeat of the working class.

The first move was to set up a Provisional Revolutionary Committee, which in its first proclamation announced that free elections to the soviets would be held. All strategic points were occupied, including the premises and printing shop of the local Izvestia, which published the views of the sailors for the duration of the rising. These showed clearly the gulf that had grown between the party and the masses,

"The Communist Party, master of the state, has detached itself from the masses. It has shown itself incapable of getting the country out of its mess. Countless incidents have recently occurred in Petrograd and Moscow which show clearly that the party has lost the confidence of the working masses. The party is ignoring working class demands, because it believes that these demands are the result of counter-revolutionary activity. In this the party is making a profound mistake."
Kronstadt Izvestia (Qu. in Ida Mett, Kronstadt Commune. p.12)

So convinced were the Bolsheviks of their own infallibility, that any independent move by the class was seen as counter-revolutionary. This is not the place to enumerate the distortions spread by the Bolsheviks about the sailors. Suffice it to say that all the members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee were rank and file sailors and workers who had been active in 1917, and not 'White Guards'. The Bolshevik answer to the sailors was to refuse outright to negotiate on their demands, in a deliberate attempt to cause bloodshed and intimidate the working class. Physical suppression of the class placed the Bolsheviks beyond the pale, and made of the party a counter-revolutionary organisation.

The last grouping to emerge within the Bolshevik Party which expressed in some way the class' interests, and holding communist positions, was the Workers' Opposition. This faction grew up in the winter of 1920-21, and contained some of the earlier 'left' communists of 1918, but its positions were a mere diluted version of that groups'. The Opposition did have some strong support from the metal workers of the Petrograd region, and formed an active minority within the Party. Their demands centred round the restoration of workers' control over production (which had been gradually abrogated during the civil war period), to be exercised by the trades unions, into which the factory committees had by this time been integrated. In addition they opposed the employment of bourgeois specialists and managers in industry, called for the
equalisation of rations and the ending of concessions to foreign capitalists. They argued,

"Who can be the builder and creator of communist economy? That class...which is organically bound with the newly developing, painfully-born forms of production of a more productive and perfect system of economy."

(A. Kollantai, The Workers' Opposition p.20)

The Opposition had some links with the K.A.P.D. in Germany, and published appeals outside Russia, denouncing the idea of a 'United Front' and of 'co-existence' with the capitalist states. But their weaknesses were revealed in practice in 1921. The leading members of the Opposition, Kollantai and Shlyapnikov, who were at the Tenth Party Congress when the Kronstadt revolt broke out, supported its suppression. At the crucial moment they sided with a party which was no longer proletarian against a class movement that echoed the bulk of their own demands. And when the Tenth Congress defeated the Platform of the Opposition, and outlawed factions, making it impossible to organise on a revolutionary platform within the Bolshevik Party, the Opposition toed the line and quickly disintegrated. Henceforth the class could only express itself outside and against the Bolshevik Party, and all faction fights within the Party were discussions on how best to organise Russian capital. Even the Party was no longer that which it had been; of the 500,000 members in 1924, only 2% had been members in October 1917!

Here we must consider what would have happened if the Bolsheviks had acceded to the demands of the Kronstadt rising, just to show that it is objective and not subjective factors which defeated the revolution. Free elections to the Soviets etc., with free speech would have led, in 1921, undoubtedly to a SR/Menshevik majority in the country as a whole. This in turn would have led to some sort of restoration of private capital, or to the Balkanisation of Russia by Western imperialism. In no circumstances would it have led to the salvation of the revolution; the whole objective weight of the historical impasse could not be swept away simply by the restoration of the right of free elections in the Soviets. A revolutionary in 1921 would have had to demand that the Bolsheviks accept the programme of the Kronstadters, and go on fighting in opposition to whatever regime emerged. With the failure of this to be acceded to, the place of any communist was on the side of the sailors, against the Bolshevik Party.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION: THE ECONOMY

Bolshevik slanders against Kronstadt centre on the claim that the sailors were demanding "free trade", whereas we showed the falsity of this claim. Usually Kronstadt is linked to the New Economic Policy, but the preparations for abandoning war
The essential aspect of the so-called N.E.P. were a return to the capitalist economy; the 'tax in kind' whereby the peasantry returned a fixed amount of grain to the state in the form of a tax and retained the surplus to sell commercially; the ending of rationing; reopening of the market; and the extension of the powers of factory management.

The introduction of the tax-in-kind and the reopening of the market marks the beginning of a new relationship between the Bolsheviks and the peasantry. Now able to trade on the free market for profit, the peasantry were reconciled to the Bolsheviks. This change of emphasis from the proletariat to the peasantry was important for Bolshevik maintenance of state power when the last hopes for an international proletarian revolution had died. Important now was to have the support of the peasantry who formed the majority of the population. Furthermore, the N.E.P. also recognised the rights of private ownership, thus granting the peasantry security of tenure and the right to lease land and hire labour. All things considered, the peasantry fared well under N.E.P.: in the towns their grain sold for high prices to the starving workers. And Lenin saw the prosperity of the peasantry as a just vindication of Bolshevik policies.

"The peasantry is satisfied with its present position... any serious disaffection against us on the part of the peasantry as a whole is in any event completely excluded. This has been achieved in the course of a single year."
(Qu. from E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.2 p.294)

The largesse distributed under the N.E.P. was not just for the peasantry. The industrial managers were also granted many favours and the small artisans and rural petty industry were granted the same opportunities to trade as the peasants. But the most important effect of N.E.P. on industry was the return to private management and control. This was done through a system of 'leasing' industries to co-operatives or private owners.

One final, though not less important, aspect of N.E.P. was the ending of rationing and the return to wage labour. This move, however, because of its unpopularity among the workers, was introduced only gradually:
"The change from payments in kind to a monetary wage system was too unpopular to be introduced except by slow stages. The worker, unconcerned with theory, was alive to the consequences of receiving, in the place of his guaranteed ration, payment in a currency of uncertain and constantly declining purchasing power."


Well might the Bolsheviks fear that they were moving too fast against the working class. The period of N.E.P. was one which saw a grave deterioration of the living standards of the working class and each accommodation to the petit bourgeoisie had to be paid for by the workers.

The ending of compulsory requisitioning of grain from the peasants meant less rations for the industrial workers and the surplus grain now for sale on the free market could only be bought for high prices. In fact, grain under N.E.P. was so scarce that the system of rationing was considerably reduced: Prior to N.E.P. 34,000,000 people were receiving rations compared with only 7,000,000 after. This period also saw the end of free rent and transport.

The return to capitalism was not without all the attendant misery so common among the proletariat of the west. In an attempt to rationalise industry and 'make it pay' many workers were made redundant, creating a vast 'reserve army of labour'. The unemployment figures for the N.E.P. period are a telling indictment of the policy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Unemployed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1922</td>
<td>175,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1923</td>
<td>625,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1924</td>
<td>1,240,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The January 1924 figure is equivalent to 25% unemployment and is especially significant when one remembers that only 20% of these received any unemployment benefits.

The most vicious attack of all on the class by the Bolsheviks was during what is known as the 'scissors crisis'. This was caused by a fall of grain prices in the winter of 1922/23, coinciding with a sharp rise in industrial prices. In order to placate the peasantry, grain was exported to keep prices up and build up currency reserves. And in order to lower the prices of industrial goods many workers were laid off (see figures above). Trotsky, who favoured a period of 'primitive socialist accumulation', advised the managers of industry "not to take the line of least resistance in question of productivity of labour, wages etc." and also warned the workers that "there may be moments when the state does not pay a full wage or pays only a half, and you, the worker, give a credit to your state at the expense of your wages."

That the workers had to pay heavily for the reinstatement of capitalism is made evident by E.H.Carr,
"The plight of the industrial worker grew progressively graver through the spring and summer of 1923. It was part of the logic of N.E.P. that the burden which had been partially lifted from the shoulders of the peasant should have been transferred to those of the worker."

(\textit{The Interregnum} p. 84/85).

This period of capitalist accumulation, then, was only achieved at the expense of the living standards of the working class and by this time it is quite clear that here we are dealing with another instance of international capital's attack on labour.

Again the class reacted to such blatant attacks with a series of strikes from 1922 to 1923. The wages in heavy industry had declined sharply and, to make matters even worse, management had delayed wage payments which led to a depreciation of wages in real terms. The Bolshevik response to the strikes was just what we would expect from a counter-revolutionary state. The GPU (the secret police) intervened to break up the strikes, arrest the leaders and sack other strikers.

Significantly, under N.E.P. trade links were reestablished with other capitalist countries. It is evident, then, that counter-revolutionary foreign and domestic policies are inseparable. In order to trade with the capitalist world, concessions must be made. But for us the question is no. a formalistic one, nor a moral question of whether to mediate with capitalism or not. The important question to be considered is why the capitalists were prepared to mediate in 1921 and not in 1918. The answer, of course, lies in the international defeat of the working class. Prospects for an international proletarian revolution having been diminished, the Bolsheviks no longer posed a threat to the capitalist world. And while not condoning Russia's return to capitalism, we must understand that the move was inevitable.

This brings us to the class nature of the so-called 'left Opposition' of 1923-24, which is seen by some as the last gasp of the proletariat in the face of the developing counter-revolution. But neither on the political nor on the economic level was this 'trotskyist' opposition an expression of the class or revolutionary positions. Rather it expressed the needs of industrial capital in Russia as against agricultural capital. The economic policies of the Opposition favoured an increase of industrial prices relative to agricultural ones, coupled with a more intensive exploitation of the working class, in order to generate the capital needed for more intensive growth in the Soviet economy. In essence, a weakened version of the later 5-year plans. The Opposition also called for 'democracy' in the Party, since it was controlled by the Stalin-Bukharin bloc favourable (at this point) to agrarian capital. Consequently, in keeping with its positions, the class basis of the Opposition lay clearly
in the intelligentsia and the managerial strata. Here Carr's judgement is significant.

"The section of the rank and file of the Party whom the Opposition at this time was least successful in rallying to its side was the industrial workers. The material appeal of the Opposition was to the interests of industry, but to the managers and technicians, rather than the industrial proletariat. Nothing in either its economic or its political platform was likely to catch the imagination of the worker... The Opposition was doomed to fail because it lacked any broad social and economic basis of support within the Party, and specifically because it dared not, and could not, identify itself with the cause of the industrial proletariat."

(The Interregnum p.326-327).

One of the most pernicious myths is that the Opposition opposed the idea of socialism in one country, and instead demanded an offensive foreign policy. Indeed at a time when Stalin was still denying the possibility of socialism in one country in Problems of Leninism (1924), Trotsky was calling for 'primitive socialist accumulation'. The Opposition endorsed the united front policy, and Trotsky himself was one of the main instigators of the alliances worked out between Russia and the capitalist states in the military and economic field. The Opposition's policy was summed up in 1923,

"We do not regard the French invasion of the Ruhr as a revolutionary stimulus... it is not at all in our interest that the revolution should take place in a Europe drained of blood" and Russia was "vitally interested in the preservation of peace".

(Trotsky qu. in E.H.Carr, The Interregnum p.166).

True to form the Opposition played no part in the mass strikes of 1923, (since the Opposition approved of the policies which caused the strikes). This contrasts markedly with the role of groups such as the Workers' Group of Miasnikov and Bogdanov's Workers' Truth, who intervened in the strikes and called on the workers to adopt political as well as economic demands (such as the right of assembly and publication, and the restoration of Soviet power). These groups analysed the sequence of events from N.E.P. to the 'United Front' as the victory of counterrevolution. They established contact with groups like the German K.A.P.D., and formed workers' circles in factories, and undercover cells within the Party itself. Both these groups were outlawed, harassed and eventually suppressed by the G.P.U. (secret police). The analysis put forward by Bogdanov's group was that,

"The working class okes out a miserable existence while the new bourgeoisie (responsible party workers, directors of factories, managers of trusts, presidents of Executive committees etc,) live in
luxury and revives in our memory the picture of the bourgeosie of all ages. Their very material prosperity and the stability of their positions depends on the degree of exploitation of the toiling masses. All this makes inevitable a contradiction of interests, a rift between the Communist Party and the masses." (Appeal of Workers' Truth, Qu. in Documentary History of Communism (ed) Daniels p220)

With the groups like the K.A.P.D. which broke from the Comintern, the Workers' Truth and Workers' Group, are the first clear reactions of communists against the developing counter-revolution. Between them and the 'left' Opposition and its legatees (or defenders, however critical) there is an unbridgeable gulf.

THE COUNTER REVOLUTION: INTERNATIONAL POLICY.

The exhaustion of the revolutionary wave, and the forcing of Russia back into capitalist relations, had as its inevitable outcome the end of the revolutionary thrust of the Soviet state and the Comintern. A straight line runs from N.E.P. to the United Front.

The necessity of economic relations with capitalism, led to the need for political relations. Trade, investment etc., had to be carried out on a secure political basis. This can be seen in Russia's first main breakthrough, the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement of March 1921. This placed large orders with industry in Britain to help rebuild Russian industry. In return Britain demanded, and obtained, compensation for firms nationalised in 1918, arranged by the floating of British loans to Russia. Additionally, Britain demanded, and obtained, assurances that the activities of Communist Parties in the Empire would be curtailed. The agreement stated,

"That the Russian Soviet Government refrains from any attempt by military or diplomatic or other forms of action or propaganda, to encourage the peoples of Asia in any form of hostile action against British interests or the British Empire."

(Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 3 p288).

In this world of wheeling and dealing with the capitalist states, the Bolsheviks had to seek the best terms. Despite the agreement with Britain, and attempts to form an anti-Japanese alliance with the U.S.A. in the Far East, in return for loans, it was towards Germany that Russia's main efforts were directed. German capitalism had been bled white by the Versailles Treaty of 1919. Huge amounts of war reparations had to be paid, and its Army was kept tiny. Denied the ability to manufacture war materials, influential elements in the German ruling class, were won over to a policy of an alliance with Russia against the Entente powers, Lenin
analysed this clearly,

"The German bourgeois government madly hates the Bolsheviks, but the interests of the international situation are pushing it towards peace with Soviet Russia against its will."

(Qu. in Carr The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 3 p 330).

Such an alliance would rebuild Russian industry with German capital, and allow Germany to rearm itself secretly via Russia. Feelers were put out in 1921, and led to the setting up of a cover organization G.E.F.U. to manufacture poison gas and munitions in Russia for Germany; in return large grants of capital and equipment were made to Russia. A central role in these negotiations was played by Trotsky, and they culminated in 1922 with the Treaty of Rapallo, which cleared the way for widespread military, economic and political relations between the countries that continued till 1933, in fact till 1940.

These political manoeuvres implied changes in the policy of the Comintern. For example, in Germany itself, it meant that the K.P.D. allied with those most favourable to Russia that is, the German fascists and nationalists, with whom they worked on the so-called Schlageter Campaign of 1923. The French had occupied the Ruhr in 1923, and they found themselves opposed by a 'united front' of the K.P.D. and the German right, calling for a struggle against 'French imperialism'. Under the cloak of fighting for the 'national independence' of Germany, the Comintern was pursuing the interests of Russian capitalism.

The absence of any revolutionary content to Russian foreign policy at this time was general. In China the Kou Min Tang was supported, rather than the local C.P., partly because the K.M.T. had in return abandoned Chinese claims to Mongolia, and to the Trans-Siberian railway in Manchuria. In Turkey, the 'Young Turk' Enver Pasha (author of the genocide of the Armenians during World War One), was supported against 'Entente Imperialism' in the Greek-Turkish war of 1922—in return for free Russian access to the straits of Constantinople for its Black Sea Fleet.

This struggle for a place in the sun with the capitalist states, necessitated a more general change in the policy of the Comintern. Originally set up to overcome the collapse of the Second International, and to destroy it as one of the pillars of capitalism, by 1921 the Third International had formulated the policy of the 'United Front'. The theory behind the United Front, was that an alliance with the social-democratic parties (and the syndicalists, where they were a force) would arrest the capitalist offensive which had been gathering force since 1921, and in the process the mass of workers following these groups would be won over to the communist parties.
The fallaciousness of this idea is the view that the generalisation of class consciousness is simply a question of tactics and organizational devices, and not a result of the objective situation. The K.P.D. broke with the Comintern over this issue above all; they argued that by working with the Social Democratic parties, the communists would obscure their role as bulwarks of capitalism, and lend them legitimacy. Indeed, the case with which the Bolsheviks slipped into the United Front stems not only from the victory of the counter-revolution, but also from their own failure to break with outmoded social-democratic conceptions. There is a coherence in the errors of the Bolsheviks even in the period 1917-21, which ties them together (national question, state capitalism)—that is: they were largely social democratic residues.

Gorter, in calling for the foundation of a new International, clearly recognised the link between the N.E.P. and the United Front,

"8. And just as the now capitalist Bolshevik Party renewed its relations with European capitalist governments and European capitalism to reconstruct capitalism in Russia, so the Third International renews its relations with the Second International and the 2½ International, for the reconstruction of European capitalism.

9. The aim of the Second, the 2½ and the Third Internationals is thus the same, it is that of the capitalist states and governments. The 'United Front' of these Internationals in a united front with capitalism.

10. That is why the Bolshevik Party and the Third International have become completely counterrevolutionary organizations, which are betraying the proletarian cause. They have put themselves in the same sack as the Second and 2½ Internationals."

(Lines of Orientation of the Communist workers' International, 1922.)

Gorter's analysis makes it clear that it is no longer a question of making mistakes. It is essential to realise that the United Front was a policy of Russian capitalism. It was the logical result of the defeat of the world revolution, and of the N.E.P. in Russia. For those who might scoff at Gorter's analysis, it will be valuable to pass in review the demands that were to be highlighted in the United Front campaign. As well as economic demands to 'unite' the class, diplomatic recognition of Russia (by now favoured by Mussolini and Ramsay Macdonald) was demanded, as well as the opening of economic relations with Russia, and an attack on unemployment in the West, by the rebuilding of the Soviet economy. The document which finally launched the policy, For the Proletarian United Front, announced,
"It is becoming clear to even the most stupid bourgeois that without recognition of the invincible Soviet government, without the economic reconstruction of Russia, neither the world economic crisis, nor the great political tensions can be overcome... Unemployment will grow if the capitalist world tries to impose conditions of slavery on Soviet Russia. Therefore, unite and fight for the cancellation of war debts, against the strangling of Germany, for the recognition of Soviet Russia and its reconstruction in accordance with the needs of the international proletariat."

(Qu. in Degras Documents of the Communist International Vol 1 p318-9).

Despite its erroneous nature, the view was widespread at this time that the rebuilding of the world economy depended on the re-opening of the Russian market to western capitalism. And in this praiseworthy task, the Bolsheviks were ready to lend a hand.

The United Front signified the end of the Third International as a revolutionary force. Elements like the Italian Communist Party around Bordiga stood out against it for a short time, but because they saw it as a 'tactic' and not the expression of Russian capital, they soon capitulated on this, as on other issues, such as parliamentaryism. By the Fourth Comintern Congress the Bordigists had accepted the United Front and also fused with the rump of the P.S.I. The best elements in the International now faced the choice of abandoning their positions, or of leaving. In the event, the K.A.P.D., along with some small groupings in Holland, England and Bulgaria refused to accept the United Front, as they had refused to work in parliament. This led to their severing of relations with the Third International, and to short-lived efforts to set up an alternative International. In a real, historical situation, revolutionaries were forced to make a choice of abandoning their views, or abandoning an organization which had become counter-revolutionary. The policy of the K.A.P.D. in leaving and denouncing the Comintern is an example of principled revolutionary action, which we unreservedly endorse. Henceforward, tendencies could only express revolutionary views, outside of and against the Comintern. Those who prevaricate on this issue, cannot claim to have synthised the experience of the working class. History does not beg questions. Are you with the Kronstadtians or with those who massacred them? Are you with the Comintern, or with those who were forced to leave it?

In this survey of the ebb of the revolutionary wave, we have shown that in the State, the economy and international policy, the Bolsheviks were carrying out the counter-revolution from the beginning of 1921, and that it was not possible to fight these from within the Party itself, or
from within the International. But let it be understood that
we look upon all these factors as expressions of the defeat of
the revolution, not as causes. By this time the isolation of
Russia had gone on so long, and the European revolution been
so decisively defeated, that the historical alternative was no
longer revolution or counter revolution, but simply the form
in which the counterrevolution would be acted out. Addition­
ally, revolution and counter revolution are not fragments that
can be isolated at will, and graded in order of importance.
When a revolutionary movement is in the ascendant, it is so
in all spheres, and when it is in decline the economic, polit­
ic and international aspects of the decline form a totality,
as this text has shown.

THE COMMUNIST LEFT AND THE REVOLUTION.

The Russian Revolution must be seen as a totality, recognising
all the flaws and advances, and seeing the participants learn­
ing through victories and defeats. The groups of communists
which existed through the long period of counter revolution
from 1921 till the mid 1960's, of necessity lost this total
view, and developed partial, fragmented views of the revolution.
Here essentially we are dealing with two trends, the survivors
of the German left (the council communists), and the legatees
of the Italian left, the Bordigist sects.

The German communists, observing the Bolsheviks when they had
become the organizers of Russian capitalism, wrongly concluded
that this had been their role all along, and took the Russian
revolution to be a bourgeois one, e.g. in Rühle's work of 1924.
From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution. But this
view is untenable, and at its height all revolutionaries, in­
luding Rühle knew the revolution to be a proletarian one.
The 'bourgeois revolution' theory fails to take into account
the international framework, and takes up a nationalistic
perspective. What must be remembered is that the Russian
workers, though weak numerically, were part of an interna­tional
movement of the class. Similarly, that a bourgeois revolution
is possible in the twentieth century is at variance with the
theory of decadence. If capitalism can still undergo such life
transfusions, then the proletarian revolution cannot be on the
agenda. The bourgeois revolution theory is a post-hoc ration­
alisation born of defeat.

The Bordigists, on the other hand, go to the other extreme, and
are completely uncritical of the Bolsheviks, even when they
are pursuing counter revolutionary policies. Because they
have no clear conception of the historical movement, and the
way revolutionary theory develops, their conception of the
communist programme was a static one. Dreamed up by Marx and
later re-discovered by Lenin, its possession meant that the
Bolsheviks could do no wrong. They were unable to understand
that the Bolsheviks, although the most advanced section of the
class in one period, could later become counter revolutionary.
Their view of the Bolsheviks as the 'perfect party' leads them to underestimate the positive role played by the class in the revolution, which we have pointed out many times. This text has shown how false are the positions of total rejection or total endorsement of the Bolsheviks. When the revolutionary wave was on the ascendant, they were a vital part of the process (though far from being the infallible party of the Bordigist fable). On the other hand, as the wave declined, they became the organizers of Russian capital, but this does not mean that this was their role at all along. Both currents approached the revolution in a-historical ways, and fetischised aspects of it; the Bordigists the Party, and the German left the Councils.

It is clear that the confusionist views of the German and Italian lefts are the product of the counter-revolution, and that revolutionary theory can only be a coherent whole in a revolutionary period. Only now, when we are coming into another such period, can the Russian experience be evaluated historically; this article is dedicated to that task.

LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

The main features of what we consider these lessons to be should be clear from the text itself, but by way of conclusion we wish to re-iterate them briefly in order that there may be no doubt. But a word of caution: 1917 is not 1976, and the many radical changes in the global situation - economic and political - in which the working class finds itself today has overlain many of the main issues of the Russian revolution, or altered the contours of others. In no way can the problems of a workers' revolution today be seen simply as those of 1917 writ large on a world scale.

An obvious case in point is the peasantry, which occupied (at least in an negative sense) a crucial role in the outcome of the events in Russia. But the statification of agriculture in the Eastern 'bloc', and the mechanisation of farming in the 'mixed' economies, means that what peasantry still exists today is the impoverished, subsistence peasantry of the Third World who are no threat to the proletarian revolution. Another factor is the much more internationally integrated aspect of capital today which means that the effects of the overthrow of capitalism in one area would have immediate repercussions on a much greater level than before. This, combined with capitalism's massively developed technology of repression, means that the possible length of time an isolated proletarian outpost could exist, would today be measured in months, not years. Finally, since the class has passed through the experience of the struggles of 1917-21, and the development of capitalism since, much less credit can today be extended to groups spreading confusions and repeating errors, than we can accord to the Bolsheviks. Their 'confusions' are now part of the counter-revolution. The class, with less leeway to make and 'correct' errors than before, demands the utmost clarity from its
revolutionary minorities, and not errors, or equally bad, prevarications. All these warnings notwithstanding, we can still draw together certain crucial points.

1. Political power and the State. In a necessarily violent struggle the proletariat must destroy the institutions of the bourgeois state, and build a council-state of its own to express its dictatorship over all other strata, and for the purpose of the international extension of the revolution. This state will hold all political power, and be bound up with organs at the point of production, where the economic power of the class can be asserted. In the council-state all delegates must be elected and revocable at any time, and covered by binding mandates. The elective principle is central to proletarian democracy, and at no point can be side-stepped. The class-wide militias (and the Red Army) will have the sole right to bear arms, and be controlled by the Councils. Arbitration of intra-class disputes will be the task of the State. But having made these stipulations, we realise that it is not any formalistic guarantees that secure the revolutionary character of the state, but the active power of the class itself, making the state its own.

2. The Economic Transformation. Just as we reject the idea of socialism in one country co-existing with world capital, so we reject the idea that a communist outpost can pursue a revolutionary foreign policy, while carrying out a dictatorship over capital at home. The attack on capitalist relations of production will be a great impetus to pushing the world class struggle to greater heights, while an offensive attitude to world capital will have to be backed by an outpost 'made safe for communism' in the rear. The events of the Russian Revolution show clearly that these two aspects-political and economic-cannot be arbitrarily severed, but are inseparably linked. It is not a question of formalism, of being 'against' mediations or concessions to capitalism, but of the logic of the revolutionary movement.

3. The Communist Party. Because of the experience the class has gone through since 1917, the elements which are the nuclei of the future communist party, must be much clearer than were the Bolsheviks on a whole range of issues which this study, has highlighted. By the revolutionary period, the organization will be active in the class via its programme. The communist party must struggle, as did the Bolsheviks, to win a clear majority in the class for its views. To oppose this perspective, and to seek formal guarantees against the Party substituting itself for the class, is to be traumatised by an erroneous analysis of the Russian events, exploded by this text. "Substitutionism" can only be the result, and not the cause, of the defeat of a working class which has taken power.

State power of the Councils, an intransigent attack on capitalist relations of production, and a revolutionary communist
party; these are the weapons of the working class in a revolutionary struggle. But even this 'Holy Trinity' is merely a collection of empty shells unless they are the emanations of a powerful, international class movement. As weapons of the masses they are everything, without the masses they are nothing.

"The masses are the crucial factor." (Luxemburg).

Notes;

(1). A fuller treatment of the military problems of the insurrection and civil war, from a contemporary point of view, will be published in Workers' Voice No.19.

(2). For a more developed treatment of our views on the issue of organization, see the article in R.P.3, "Communist Organization in the Proletarian Revolution"

MESSAGE TO READERS.

The C.W.O. welcomes observations and criticisms of its political viewpoints, as they are expressed in its press. Any received will be answered, and should they be of more general interest, published. Send to the group address. We have sections in the following areas; Aberdeen, Leeds, Clydeside, Mersyside and Tyneside. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with readers in those areas who were sympathetic to our views (meetings could also be arranged in other areas).

We would also welcome offers to help in the distribution of our press, both Revolutionary Perspectives, and our more agitational paper, Workers' Voice. Bundles can be sent sale/return, and offers to stock bookshops would be of particular help. The C.W.O. also engages in regular distribution of leaflets to the working class, on issues of topical interest. The latest we have produced is a denunciation of the methods and ideology of the various terrorist groupings, and an analysis of violence from a class-viewpoint. Offers to help in its distribution would be welcomed; write to the group address (inside front cover).
The Convulsions of the ICC

Since the defeat of the last revolutionary wave of 1917-21, the communist tradition of the proletariat has been buried by half a century of lies and misrepresentation. In that time we have been offered a multitude of programmes claiming to lead to communism, but actually expressing—the highest form of capitalism; state capitalism. However, since 1968, the activities of the world proletariat have lead to the formation of groups which have attempted to build on the lessons of the last revolutionary wave, particularly those lessons expressed by the left communists who broke from the decaying Third International in 1920-1. In Britain, the elements which now form the C.W.O., and World Revolution— the British group of the International Communist Current—held many long and open debates between June 1973 and January 1975. During these discussion, World Revolution suddenly accepted in toto the positions of their French parent group, Revolution Internationale. Debate at this point ceased to be open. Though the future members of the C.W.O. received many positive ideas from R.I., there were equally many of their positions which we could not accept, and we wished to carry the debate further. W.R.; on the other hand, now arrogantly announced that it was a "pole of regroupment", and with this self-appointed stamp of legitimacy, branded any attempts by the rest of us to deepen the debate as merely the erection of artificial barriers to regroupment (this is re-asserted in W.R. No6 p17). After further months, in which elements of todays C.W.O. attempted to criticise what they saw as the errors of the I.C.C., the I.C.C. ceased to reply to our documents. The debate had actually ceased long before the formation of the C.W.O. in Sept. 1975.

Initially, we saw the issues which separated us as dividing lines, issues which had to be thrashed out before fusion was practicably possible. But the recent publications of the I.C.C., in which they have at last stated their views openly on the Russian Revolution, have convinced us that they are just one more group which bases itself on the counterrevolution after 1921. We do not want this article to be a major "hatchet job" on the I.C.C., or a refutation of the slanders and
misrepresentations of our views which they make. Rather, we wish simply to outline the differences which prevented us from regrouping with the I.C.C. and, more positively, to establish a framework within which we will relate to all other aspiring communist groups in the immediate future.

In World Revolution No.5, the C.W.O. is attacked as an "incomplete regroupment" because we deny "the need in practice for the unity of all conscious proletarian forces ...by establishing false reasons for separation from the I.C.C."(pp.6-7). Let us start by straightaway saying that this is not our position. The C.W.O. seeks to regroup all conscious revolutionary forces in preparation for the next revolutionary onslaught of the working class on capitalism. Before and during this onslaught it will be the responsibility of all communists to be active in the struggles of the working class, in an attempt to point them towards communism. In this task it is obvious that the more active communists there are, the further their influence is likely to spread. However, the strength and influence of a communist organization do not grow simply because we wish it. Whether we "will" it or not, it only grows with the tendency towards communism, and thus can only be motivated by the struggle of the whole working class.

In the meantime, the goal of communists should be to pursue regroupment on the basis of fundamental political agreement. The only reason for the existence of a political organization of communists separate from the working class as a whole, is its political clarity as to the ultimate direction of a truly revolutionary struggle. Hence at this point in time, regroupment is pursued by resolving the differences between potential communist groups.

DIVIDING LINES AND CLASS LINES.

For two groups to say that communism is a desirable system isn't enough. Marxism is not about what ought to be, but about what is. The two groups must first attempt to understand the reality of the historical process, and the direction in which this reality is taking us. At this point there will arise issues which prevent the carrying out of effective practical work, because of different interpretations of that reality. These differences are not necessarily class lines, not necessarily such fundamental differences as to represent an alien class viewpoint. But it is clear that if they represent obstacles to working together, then they must be thrashed out before fusion is practicable. This is what we mean by a dividing line. And the C.W.O. has learned this lesson through bitter practical experience. In the past we have found it impossible to agree on an intervention in the class struggle with the I.C.C. (and with the group Pour un Intervention Communiste-P.I.C.) because of differences concerning our economic explanations of the crisis of capitalism, and the ramifications of such an analysis.
The I.C.C. views Luxemburg's analysis of the capitalist crisis as superior to the explanation offered by Marx in the three volumes of Capital. In their view the crisis is caused by the saturation of markets, by the exhaustion of pre-capitalist areas for capitalism to expand into. The C.W.O. affirms, on the contrary, that the origins of the crisis can only be understood by following the operation of the law of value; that the crisis is caused by the rise in the organic composition of capital (the amount of capital invested in machines plus raw materials in relation to the amount expended in labour). As a result of this rise the rate of profit falls (because labour is the source of all value). We don't have the space here to demonstrate publicly, as we have already done in polemical documents, the scientific strength of Marxism on this question (1). What we will consider is the practical implications of holding these opposed views.

For the I.C.C., because markets are saturated the crisis is here and will not get more profound, merely more extensive. Thus, for them, the objective conditions for revolution are already with us. What is lacking is the subjective will and the necessary instrument. The I.C.C., however, believes it is the necessary instrument and its propaganda will provide the proletariat with the subjective will. Hence, its activity demands not only the recruitment immediately of all "revolutionaries" but has also led them to castigate the class for its inactivity:

"If we were to allow our brothers in Portugal to be massacred... we would ultimately share responsibility for our own massacre for not responding as a revolutionary class to the crisis before capitalism applied its own solution..." (A leaflet on Portugal in June 1974, which all the present elements in the C.W.O. could not sign).

This is not our perspective. Our view is that the crisis will be qualitatively different from anything we have seen in this depression, and that this depression is a prelude to the final crisis of capitalism. Consequently, although we too wish for speediest possible international regroupment of communists and realise that the failure of the proletariat to act in the long run will spell the end of humanity, we do not think that that time is now. When the crisis does come the proletariat will not simply await some "revolutionary" organisation like the I.C.C. to "demystify it" but will act first from material necessity. The communists will hope, by their example and propaganda, to steer this activity in the direction of communism.

Stemming from what the I.C.C. sees as the need to "demystify" an inert class, comes the insistence on building the party now, of basing regroupment on "minimum points", and on relegating vital issues to 'open questions'. Those who attack such an opportunistic and voluntaristic-practice and denounced as 'sectarians'. In their latest masterpiece, the I.C.C.

(1). A critique of Luxemburg's economics, based on these texts, will be in R.P.6. Meanwhile, see our own views in R.P.2.
"Turning its back on the monolithism of the sects, (the I.C.C.) calls upon the communists of all countries...to abandon the false quarrels which separate them... The I.C.C. calls upon them to join in this effort to constitute (before the class engages in decisive struggles) the international and unified organization of its vanguard " (Manifesto of the I.C.C.)

If pigs could fly, such opportunism and voluntarism might also be the way to construct a revolutionary movement. This difference also justified organizational separation, but like the economics, was a dividing line. However, it has now become clear that what separates us is not disagreement over this or that issue, but that the whole political position of the I.C.C. represents an opposing class viewpoint. In the remainder of this article we will show how the I.C.C. has failed to escape the paralysis of the counterrevolution.

Before proceeding on this task we must first state that this decision is not an arbitrary whim on our part, a fit of pique because we failed to engage the I.C.C. in political dialogue. Even had we disagreed with the I.C.C. on every conceivable issue it would not have automatically meant that they were a capitalist organisation. Whilst the tendency of the proletariat is towards one understanding of what communism is, towards a single programme, it will not be the privilege of one group to provide that programme ready written. This programme will only emerge through debate amongst the most advanced communist workers thrown up by the class struggle. Issues which divide communist groups will have to be debated until they are resolved, but on no account can we hold debates with those groups that defend some aspect of the counter-revolution.

This does not mean that we bury our heads in the sand and ignore the counter-revolution. It is one of the tasks of a communist to face this head on. However, we do not denounce the left to the left - we do not meet them in the market places of Trotskyism. We debate with them in the only way we can - which is to expose their programme in front of the class.

To decide whether a group is counter-revolutionary or not we must take into consideration the following:

a) Does this group defend some aspect of capitalism?
b) Will that group act in a counter-revolutionary fashion in the revolution given its political world outlook?

And finally we must take into account

c) The direction in which an organisation is travelling. The C.W.O. will in the near future doubtlessly engage in dialogue with groups and individuals which have just broken with the left wing of capital (i.e. Stalinists, Trotskyists etc.) Groups which, like Union Ouvrière in France, have seen through
the state capitalist nature of the left and are struggling to achieve a communist perspective. If it is quite clear that they are moving away from state capitalism then it is the duty of all communists to assist in their development and engage them in political dialogue. But the I.C.C. is not travelling in this direction. Though at present it looks closer to us than any of the leftists, it will be clear from the following that they are moving away from a communist position.

THE I.C.C. – IN ORGANIC CONTINUITY WITH CAPITAL.

We cannot separate the issues on which the I.C.C. takes up an alien class viewpoint. As we said in our article on the Russian Revolution we cannot fragment the revolutionary totality of the proletarian experience. However, the I.C.C. believes that the revolutionary totality we are arguing for can be fragmented and that the "political" aspects of the revolution take precedence over the "economic". Now, if this is merely saying that the workers must take political power in order to begin the work of economic transformation, then they are saying the obvious. But in their writings on both the Russian revolution and the period of transition, the I.C.C. states that it is possible for the working class to hold political power over capital. If, as we are assured, "the law of value is a product of the entire capitalist world and cannot in any way, shape or form be eliminated in one country (even of the highly developed countries), or in any group of countries." (International Review No. 3 p8)

–then it must be possible for communists to support state capitalism, or self-management as the economic programme of the revolutionary period. This method allows them to brush aside the NSP in Russia as a "setback" which wasn't fundamental since the class still held 'political' power, rather than as an expression, with all the other factors, of the victory of the counterrevolution.

But even were we to concede that the whole question of the economic programme of the revolution was 'secondary', and attempt to evaluate the progress of the Russian revolution solely in 'political' terms (a caricature of Marxism if ever there was one), there is still no basis for a defense of Russia after 1921. They state, "Economically the class may make errors which must be corrected, but if they turn power over to another class or Party, any economic transformation is by definition impossible." (International Review No. 3 p10). But as usual, the I.C.C. prevaricates even on the questions raised by its own method. When did the class finally lose all vestige of power in Russia? By 1921 the class had been decimated, massacred by the state, denied all right to self-defence and self-expression, and was subject to the capitalist market, which produced 25% unemployment in three years. Is such a class 'in power'? If we turn to the last shreds of the defence, international policy, again there is nothing...
defensible in this by 1921. The United Front? The Treaty of Rapallo? National Bolshevism? Only an incurable nominalist can claim that the formalistic declaration of socialism in one country changes anything as regards the content of policy, either domestically or internationally. The totally arbitrary nature of such a "class line" is shown by the fact that in 1924 Stalin was still attacking such ideas. In "Foundations of Leninism," he wrote, "Can the final victory of socialism be achieved in one country? No, it cannot. For the victory of socialism, the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are needed."

-at the same period Trotsky was calling for "primitive socialist accumulation". The inability of the I.C.C. to grasp the class nature of the so-called 'Opposition', is as total as their ignorance of its positions, since they seem to think that it fought "socialism in one country". Indeed Trotsky is chided for his failure to 'link up' with the workers' strikes of 1923. Hardly surprising, when the workers' discontent was caused by policies Trotsky advocated.

Confusion is heaped upon confusion when the I.C.C. turns to the events of Kronstadt. The realisation that the revolution had spent itself is mixed with the claim that the Kronstadt programme could have meant new blood for the anemic body of the revolution. Similarly they're confused as to the crucial importance of the events in March 1921. Talking of them as a 'class line' which 'probably' (nothing like hedging your bets) meant the end of the Bolshevists as a revolutionary party, they go on to say that only in 1924 was the counterrevolution completed. So the message is; fight for the Kronstadters, but if you escape massacre, re-join those who carried out the massacre.

The I.C.C. compound their failure to understand the class nature of Russia after 1921, with a formalistic and idealist approach to the reasons for the revolution's failure. Whilst paying lip-service to the idea that what was fundamental was the failure of the European revolution, they present an analysis which gives "wrong ideas" a powerful role. For them, the Bolshevists were permeated with evil 'substitutionist' ideas, and they also confused state capitalism with socialism. Careful reading of the text in this issue of R.P. will show the falseness and inadequacies of these views. But the essential point we would make is that the ideas held by the Bolshevists shifted and developed according to the ebbs and flows of the class movement, and were moulded by this movement. The lesson is that the class movement is the only guarantee of the forward progress of the revolution - not formal 'guarantees', or proletarian constitution mongering.

The idea of guarantees and constitution-mongering as a safeguard against the repeat of the decline of the Russian Revolution permeates the thinking of the I.C.C. on the question of the State in the period of transition. On this
issue they argue, (see International Review No. p37-39), that where the Russian workers went wrong was to identify the State with the class. For the C.W.O. the failure of the revolution in Russia was due to the virtual extinction of the class and its continued isolation, but the I.C.C. thinks that where it all went wrong was in the class identifying itself with a body-the State- which only exists to defend the status quo. They therefore advocate that in the future revolution, the class does not hold State power, but instead lends its support to an 'all-class' State, which will mediate their conflicting interests! How the dictatorship of the proletariat is carried out is not clear. There is a similar idealist reticence concerning the question of the relationship of the revolutionary Party to the Workers Councils. After correctly saying that no minority can rule for the class, they then announce that the revolutionary organization will never have majority support. Does this mean that the class can be revolutionary while the Councils are dominated by counterrevolutionary organizations?

If the I.C.C. answers to these questions are formalistic, its solutions for others are positively reactionary. After the creation of this state-which is not a state, which is not the Workers' Councils, we are told that its function will be to mediate with the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. So slavishly do they follow their 'lessons' of the Russian experience, that they raise the spectre of the revolution being drowned by waves of counterrevolutionary peasants, who will refuse to produce food unless the market is maintained. But if this is going to happen no amount of mediation will prevent it. There is nothing neutral about the peasantry (or any section of the petty bourgeoisie) and Lenin's chimera of a "workers' and peasants state" was a complete fantasy. Either the working class holds state power as it did in Russia till 1921- or the attempt to mediate delivers the revolution over to capitalism.

Whilst busily mediating with the petty bourgeoisie, the I.C.C. 'State' will also be trying to mediate with the international bourgeoisie. It has the role of negotiation of trade agreements etc., with countries where the workers have not yet risen in revolt. But again, this is a pure utopian fantasy. No capitalist power would have anything to do with Russia at any price as long as the international revolutionary wave was in progress. It was only when it had subsided by 1921, that trade with Russia was begun. In other words revolutionaries realise the impossibility of trade between a proletarian outpost and capitalism. Either the revolution is in the ascendant- in which case the capitalists will attack it economically and if possible, militarily- or the revolutionary wave is defeated, and we are dealing with reactions of capitalist states.

We have outlined why we see the I.C.C. as counterrevolutionary in a number of areas. Apart from the fact that the whole thrust of their political development is away from, rather than towards, communism, in concrete terms they are capitalist
because:
a) They regard state capitalist Russia after 1921 and the Bolsheviks as defensible.
b) They maintain that a state capitalist gang, such as was the Trotskyist Left Opposition, was a proletarian group.
c) They advocate the the workers in the revolution mediate with the capitalist classes of the peasantry and the international bourgeoisie.

Though we have dealt with these issues separately, it is clear that they are different aspects of the same problem. By slavishly presenting the defeats of the 1921-6 period as "lessons for the class", the I.C.C. shows that it is incapable of distinguishing between the ongoing revolutionary process and its very opposite. They thus advocate a repeat of the programme of the counterrevolution.

Thus, to say that the I.C.C. and the C.W.O. "defend the same class positions", is a complete distortion. The C.W.O. and the I.C.C. might agree on the level of clarity achieved by the revolutionaries of the post World War One period on the trades unions, or on working in parliament. But this represents nowhere near the totality of communist positions. It is not enough today to agree on 'minimum points', we must have overall political clarity. Those who would throw insults of "sectarianism" should bear in mind that the whole thrust of working class history is to produce ever more clear revolutionary minorities.

The First International collapsed because of its lack of political clarity, and the Second International was paralyzed by the divisions between reformists and revolutionaries (a division which reflected the paralysis in the class). Republicans who did not understand what socialism was joined the First international, whilst the Second was made up of all those who thought that socialism was a good thing—sometime in the future! Only the Bolsheviks and a few others achieved any degree of clarity before 1914, and it is obvious now that even this was inadequate.

On the basis of their errors, cruelly exposed in the class struggle, the K.A.P.D. in Germany achieved a revolutionary understanding. But to do this they not only had to break with the ghosts of the past, but also the errors of the present as represented by the Third International.

This is not to say that we have perfected the communist programme. When we affirm with Luxemburg that "the working class demands the right to make its mistakes in the dialectic of history", we also affirm that the communist minority of the class has the duty to formulate, as clearly as it can, from the lessons of these mistakes, a line of action in order than the next revolutionary wave may be the final and successful one. The I.C.C. choses to turn its back on this, and attempts to build an organization from a recruiting drive based on minimum points. In this it has already encountered several disasters, of which we will
list the most important:
- scission and collapse of the Spanish section Accion Proletaria, on an ouvrierist position, Feb. 75.
- scission of a class for capital group (Un Tendance Communiste) and an activist group (Pour un Intervention Communiste) from the French section Revolution Internationale in 1974.
- scission of members pending Marxist positions on economics and the State from the US section Internationalism, 1974.

These failures have led the I.C.C. to cast its nets wider, and in W.R. No 5 they reprint an article from the Portuguese group Combate, along with a flattering introduction which says that Combate and W.R. "have the same class positions." In fact, despite the article being a useful analysis of the class situation in Portugal, Combate is only gradually working itself free of its former support for "independence for the Portuguese colonies", militant rank and fileism, and very "councilist" positions on organization. The fact that the same article, with more flattery, was published by the counterrevolutionary self management group Solidarity, shows how far the I.C.C. has abandoned its attempts to achieve political clarity. Combate, and other groups with similar potential, must be approached in a spirit of fraternal and principled criticism, and not in such a fawning manner.

The C.W.O. is not interested in organizational regroupment, there have been many such attempts in the last 50 years of reaction. On the contrary, what we are dedicated to is the political regroupment of revolutionaries. The issues we raise which make it quite impossible for us to regroup with the I.C.C., are not theoretical quibbles about the minutiae of proletarian history. They are a fundamental appreciation of the lessons of the revolutionary working class struggle. As such, agreement on them is an absolute necessity for a common revolutionary practice, and they are the basic issues for revolutionary Marxists today to grapple with.

For a fuller analysis of our views on the political and economic problems of the period of revolutionary transformation, see the following texts:

"The Transition Period", in Workers' Voice No 14.

"Economics of the Transition Period" in Workers Voice No 15.

To receive both issues, send 25p (includes post) to the group address inside front cover.
We reprint the following programme of the K.A.P.D. as testimony to the clarity and coherence achieved by the revolutionary working class in Germany during the upheavals throughout Europe from 1917 to 1921.

We have said elsewhere that "coherence is born out of the actual struggle of the working class." (1) From their understanding of capitalism's decadence, those revolutionaries who were later to form the K.A.P.D. were amongst the first to realise that parliamentarism and trade unions, whilst important weapons for a proletariat struggling for reforms, could only be part of the counter-revolution in the new period of revolutionary struggle for communism. The future members of the K.A.P.D. were expelled from the German Communist Party (K.P.D.) in October 1919 over just these two issues. It was not until April 1920, however, after the defeat of the working class in the struggles following the right-wing Kapp putsch, that the full importance of breaking with the tactics of Social Democracy was grasped.

After initially opposing the general strike which led to the defeat of the Kapp putsch, the K.P.D. and Independent Socialist (U.S.P.D.) leaders quickly assumed control of the struggle and, in areas where workers had formed soviets, these parties advocated their dissolution. In the Ruhr where workers had formed a Red Army to fight the Reichswehr, the K.P.D. and U.S.P.D. leaders withdrew their supporters from the fighting and recommended that the workers give up their arms. Those workers, particularly in the western Ruhr, who had continued to fight were bloodily defeated. Those who had accepted the dissolution of the soviets and those who had lain down their arms in the Ruhr had done so on the basis of support either for a Party which had never pretended to break with parliamentarism or else for a "Communist" Party which offered itself as a "loyal opposition" within a parliamentary system of government. Both parties held out the promise of nationalisation of the mines as a further incentive to the Ruhr workers to give up their arms. But parliamentary government and state ownership of the mines do not advance the struggle for communism. The prospect of the German proletariat seizing power through the soviets at the beginning of 1920 had been lost. The K.P.D. had critically weakened the revolutionary struggle by its

(1) In "Texts of the Communist Left No.2" in K.P.D. For further information on the K.A.P.D., see the Introduction to this text and the text itself, the K.A.P.D.'s "Theses on the Party."
reformist diversions and had proved itself, like the S.P.D. at the outbreak of the war and later in November 1918, to be yet one more aspect of the left-wing of capital.

This failure by the German working class to continue the revolutionary struggle led the most class-conscious workers in Germany to form the K.A.P.D., a party which was clear about the revolutionary way forward. From its foundation congress came the following programme.

A programme is not a platform. Outside of the revolution itself the communist tradition is kept alive by small groups of revolutionaries struggling to gain a fuller understanding of the historical lessons of the class struggle. A platform consists of the fundamental positions defended by a revolutionary group which in turn are based on an historical analysis of the class struggle. It serves two main functions. Firstly, it theoretically delineates communists from the counter-revolution. Secondly, as the influence of the counter-revolution wanes, it provides the basis of discussion between communists during the process of regroupment on the principle of fundamental political agreement and homogeneity.

A programme, on the other hand, is part of the revolution itself. Drawn up by the revolutionary section of the proletariat, its function is to promote the generalisation of a communist consciousness. It does this by focussing on the particular issues holding back the development of a full revolutionary consciousness and by clearly outlining to the whole of the class its immediate tasks if it is to defeat the bourgeois state and move the revolution forward.

If their programme sounds cataclysmic, it is not because the K.A.P.D. was an "extremist" sect given to religious proclamations of an apocalyptic nature, but on the contrary, because the K.A.P.D. (whose members numbered 50,000 in 1920) had grasped the full implications of the First World War. They realised that capitalism had ceased to be a historically progressive system and was now unable to grant the working class meaningful reforms; that, as a consequence, for the first time in history successful proletarian revolution was a possibility as well as a necessity from the viewpoint of the interest of humanity as a whole. To pose the alternative of "relapse into barterism or construction of a socialist world" in May 1920 was not the product of a fanatical "doom-merchant" mentality, but represented the clearest grasp by the most class-conscious workers in Germany of the nature of the struggles which were still raging within Germany and the rest of Europe.

The programme of the K.A.P.D. is then, a direct product of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. It shows not only an understanding of the nature of the new period (the decadence of capitalism) and the needs of the proletarian revolution (e.g. that to be successful it must be international); but also reflects the situation of the German working class in 1920. Thus, the soviets are reaffirmed as the historically determined form by which the proletariat will institute its dictatorship. Above all, the Programme is concerned with condemning parliamentarism and trade unionism, the two issues which had shown themselves to be the greatest obstacle to the
formation of a generalised revolutionary consciousness in Germany.

Unlike Russia, the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions were strong, mass organisations in Germany at the outbreak of the First World War. In spite of their support for Imperialism and their open rejection of revolution, Social Democratic ideology still had a powerful influence over the German working class. Even those revolutionaries within Germany who were most clear about the character of the period opened up by the war and who were most determined in the struggle for communism, were slow to realise the need for a clear, revolutionary alternative to Social Democracy. The history of the revolutionary organisations in Germany during the revolutionary period demonstrates the tortuous process by which the class struggle itself impressed upon the most class conscious workers not only the reactionary nature of ALL aspects of Social Democracy, but also the necessity of openly and consistently attacking reformism to the rest of the class. Although those members of the K.P.D. who appreciated the reactionary role of parliamentarism and trade unionism were expelled in October 1919, it was not until after the K.P.D. had actively participated in the crushing of the soviets and disarming of the workers that they formed the K.A.P.D. and unremittingly attacked the unions and parliamentarism.

Both these aspects of Social Democracy had proved themselves to be the most effective ideological weapons held by capital in its fight to regain control over the working class and prevent revolution in Germany. On the one hand, parliamentarism undermined the political basis of an incipient proletarian dictatorship, i.e. the soviets, and reinforced the authority of the bourgeois state. On the other hand, the trade unions were opposed to the organs of democracy in the workplace - the factory committees and instead attempted to organise the working class as PAGE LABOURERS on the basis of the EXISTING divisions within the class.

The achievement of the K.A.P.D. is in their realisation (along with the other Left Communists of the period) that opposition to parliament and the unions is not merely a question of appropriate revolutionary tactics but, that in the era of proletarian revolution, this is an intrinsic part of the revolutionary programme without which there is no possibility of success. Thus, the Left Communists reached a clarity which Lenin and the majority of the Bolsheviks never achieved and which Lenin rejected in Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, published shortly after the formation of the K.A.P.D.

The ensuing "united front" tactics pursued by the Moscow-dominated "Communist Parties" signalled the triumph of the counter-revolution internationally. But in 1920, despite the signs of degeneration of the Russian Revolution there was still the possibility of successful proletarian uprisings in Europe strengthening the power of the soviets. The K.A.P.D. knew that success for the proletariat depended upon the internationalising of the Russian Revolution and initially upon the German workers' defeat of their own bourgeoisie.

Tragically the German proletariat as a whole did not achieve the consciousness necessary to destroy the capitalist
state. Nevertheless, the German revolution has bequeathed us, in the texts of the K.A.P.D., major historical insights which groups today can only incorporate into their analysis if they are going to reach the necessary political understanding to produce a clear programme in the coming revolutionary period.

The KAPD Programme
1920


ural products, will be in a position to establish a really socialist mode of production, and will not be obliged to make economic, and therefore political, concessions to world capitalism.

If the German proletariat does not carry out in a short time its historical tasks, the development of the world revolution will be problematic for several years, if not for several decades. In fact Germany is today the 'key' to the world revolution. In the victorious "Entente" countries, the revolution cannot be set in motion until a strong bastion has been raised in Central Europe. The economic conditions for the proletarian revolution are thus incomparably more favourable in Germany than in the victorious Entente countries. The German economy has been ransacked after the signature of the Treaty of Versailles, which has led to a pauperisation pushing towards a violent solution of a catastrophic situation. But the brigandish peace of Versailles does not only weigh heavily on the German capitalist economy, it also puts on the proletariat chains which it cannot bear. Its most dangerous aspect is that it could undermine the basis of the future socialist economy in Germany, and thus in equal measure pose problems for the development of the world proletarian revolution. Only a vigorous upsurge of the proletarian revolution in Germany can extricate us from this dilemma. The economic and political situation in Germany is more than ripe for the outbreak of the proletarian revolution. At the present stage of historical evolution, where the process of decomposition of capitalism can not be artificially obscured, everything must be concentrated on helping the proletariat to achieve the consciousness that it only needs to carry out an energetic intervention to possess in reality that power which it already effectively does hold. At a period of revolutionary class struggle like the present, where the last phase of the struggle between capital and labour has begun, and where the decisive battle is already engaged, there can be no question of compromises with the mortal enemy, but only of a fight to the finish. In particular it is necessary to attack those institutions which tend to throw a bridge over the gulf of the class struggle, and which base themselves on the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft" (class cooperation) between exploiters and exploited in the political and economic fields.

At the moment when the objective conditions for the outbreak of the proletarian revolution are given, where the permanent crisis of capitalism can only get much worse, there must be reasons of a subjective nature for the holding back of an accelerated progress of the revolution. To put it another way, the consciousness of the proletariat is still partly the prisoner of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology. The mental disposition of the German working class, at the present moment, shows only too clearly the traces of secular and militaristic enslavement, with the characteristic signs of a lack of self-awareness. This is the natural product of parliamentary criticism of the old Social Democracy and the U.S.P.D. on the one side, and of the absolutism of the trade union bureaucracy on the other. The subjective element is playing a decisive role in the German revolution. The central
problem of the German revolution is the problem of the development of the self-awareness of the German proletariat.

Recognising this situation, and thus the necessity to accelerate the rhythm of development of the world revolution, and equally faithful to the spirit of the Third International, the K.A.P.D. struggles for the maximum demand of the immediate abolition of bourgeois democracy and the installation of the proletarian dictatorship. It rejects in the democratic constitution the doubly absurd and untenable position that in the present situation, the exploiting capitalist class can be granted political rights and the exclusive power to dispose of the means of production.

In conformity with its maximalist views, the K.A.P.D. declares itself in opposition to all reformist and opportunist methods of struggle, which it sees as only a means to dampen the decisive struggles of the workers with the bourgeoisie. It does not want to dampen these struggles, but on the contrary to deepen them. In a state which carries all the symptoms of the period of the decadence of capitalism, participation in parliament belongs to opportunistic and reformist methods of struggle. To urge, in such a period, that the working class take part in elections to parliament, signifies a wish to re-awaken and nourish in the class the illusion that the crisis can be overcome by parliamentary means. It is to apply in a different period the means formerly used by the bourgeoisie in its own class struggle, whereas we are now in a situation where only the methods of proletarian class struggle, pursued in a resolute and uncompromising manner, can have a decisive success. Participation in bourgeois parliaments, in a period where the proletarian revolution is in full surge, signifies nothing else than the sabotage of the Council idea.

In the period of proletarian struggle for political power, the Council-idea is at the centre of the revolutionary process. The more or less strong echo which the council-idea raises in the masses is the thermometer which allows us to measure the development of the social revolution. The struggle for the recognition of revolutionary enterprise-councils and political workers councils in the framework of a revolutionary situation, is born logically of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat against the dictatorship of capital. This revolutionary struggle, whose political axis is that of the idea of the councils, under the pressure of historical necessity, is forced to come into conflict with the totality of the bourgeois social order, and thus also against its political form, bourgeois parliamentarism. Council system or parliamentarism? This is a question of historical importance. Construction of a communist, proletarian world, or shipwreck in the anarchical swamp of bourgeois capitalism? In a situation so fully revolutionary as that in Germany today, participation in parliamentarism thus signifies not only the sabotage of the council-idea, but also in addition helps to give the putrifying bourgeois world a new lease of life, and thus in a manner more or less overt, to slow down the course of the proletarian revolution.

Along with bourgeois parliamentarism, the trades unions form
the principal dam against the further development of the proletarian revolution in Germany. Their position during the World War is well known. Their decisive influence on the formulation of the principles and tactics of the old Social Democracy led to the proclamation of the "sacred union" with the bourgeoisie, which amounted to a declaration of war on the international proletariat. Their usefulness as social traitors led logically to their role when the German revolution broke out in November 1918. They testified to their counterrevolutionary intentions in this crisis situation, by drawing up the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft" with the German industrialists in order to secure social peace. They have maintained their counterrevolutionary stance to the present day, through the whole course of the German revolution.

The trades union bureaucracy have opposed with the utmost violence the Council-idea, which was rooting itself more deeply in the German working class. It was the same bureaucracy which found the means to paralyse all striving for proletarian political power, which arose logically from the economic mass actions of the class. The counterrevolutionary character of the trades unions is so well known, that employers in certain parts of Germany will only employ trades union members. It is clear to everyone that the trades union bureaucracy will in the future take an active part in the defense of the capitalist system, which is visibly cracking up. The history of the last 18 months has vividly shown that these organizations cannot be transformed from within. The revolutionising of the trades unions is not a question of persons; the counterrevolutionary character of the organization comes from its structure and its specific function. This means that a death sentence has been passed on the unions; only the actual destruction of the trades unions can open the way for the social revolution in Germany. Socialist construction has need of something other than these fossilised organs.

In the struggle of the masses themselves has appeared the factory organization. It came to the surface as something which had no precursors, and shot up everywhere during the revolution, as a necessary weapon of the struggle of the class. It corresponded to the Council-idea, and that is why it is not an absolutely pure form. Born to attain its real tasks in the future, it is the expressional form of the social revolution which tends towards the classless society. It is an organization of uncompromising proletarian class struggle.

The proletariat cannot be organized for the remorseless overthrow of the old society, if it is split up into trades outside the actual terrain of struggle. That is why it is necessary that the struggle be carried on on the basis of the factory. It is here that the worker is side by side with his other class comrades, it is here that all of necessity have equal rights. Here the class is itself the motor of production, which it is ceaselessly forced to master, in order to be able to carry it out itself. It is here that the ideological struggle, the revolutionizing of consciousness is carried out in permanent tumult, man to man, mass to mass. All is oriented towards the interests of the class, and the different sectional interests are reduced in proportion.
Such an organization, a dorsal fin of factory councils, is an infinitely more subtle instrument of the class-struggle, an organism always receiving fresh blood, due to the possibility of permanent recall, of re-elections, etc. Developing with the mass actions of the class, the factory organizations must necessarily create the centralized organization which corresponds to its revolutionary development. Its main task will be the development of the revolution, and not of plans, statutes and programmes in detail. It won't be an organization of benefits and life-assurance, but of course it will not fear to collect funds for the support of strikes. Factory assemblies, political discussions, uninterrupted propaganda for socialism, all these will be among its tasks. In brief, it is the revolution as it manifests itself in the factory.

In general, the factory organization has a double aim. The first task is to destroy the trades unions, and the totality of the anti-proletarian ideas which they represent. There is nothing surer than that in this struggle they will come up against relentless enemies in all the bourgeois outfits. But this will additionally be the case with the partisans of the U.S.P.D. and the K.P.D., in so far as these are still trapped unaware in the old schemas of Social Democracy. Even if they have adopted a different political programme, basically they adhere to a political-moral critique of the 'errors' of Social Democracy. It is not possible to have any agreement with the U.S.P.D., in so far as it does not recognize the justification for the factory organizations, on the basis of the struggle for Councils. A large part of the masses already recognize the factory organizations, rather than the U.S.P.D., as their political leadership; this is a good sign. The factory organizations, in unleashing mass strikes, and in transforming their political orientation, will contribute to the more rapid and sure unmasking and annihilation of the counterrevolutionary trades unions.

The second great aim of the factory organizations is in preparing for the construction of the communist society. All workers who declare for the dictatorship of the proletariat can become members of the factory organization. In addition they must firmly reject the trades unions, and be free of their ideological orientation. This latter condition should be the touchstone for admission. It is thus that the worker shows his adhesion to the proletarian class struggle and its proper methods; it is not necessary to demand adherence to the political programme of a party for admission. By its nature and its potential, the factory organization serves communism and points to the communist society. Its kernel must always be expressly communist, and its struggles lead the mass in the same direction. However, the programme of a party must naturally treat of reality in its widest definition, and serious intellectual qualities are demanded of party members. A political party like the K.N.P.D., advancing and modifying itself rapidly in relation to the global revolutionary process, can never have a great quantitative importance. Were this to happen it would regress and become corrupted. The revolutionary masses on the other hand are united in the factory organizations by virtue of
their class solidarity, their consciousness of belonging to the proletariat. A union such as that achieved in the factory organisations can never be possible on the basis of the programme of a political party. The factory organisation carries out its tasks in close unity with the K.A.P.D. (Communist Workers Party). The political organisation has as its task the regroupment of the advanced elements of the working class on the basis of the programme of the party. The relation of the party to the factory organisations results from the nature of the factory organisation. The work of the K.A.P.D. inside these organisations will be that of indefatigable propaganda. The revolutionary cadres within the factory become the mobile weapon of the party. In addition, it is obviously necessary that the party itself also assumes a more and more proletarian character, a proletarian class expression, that it carries out the dictatorship from below. As the circle of its tasks grows larger, it at the same time acquires more powerful support. What must be guaranteed is that victory, the taking of political power by the proletariat, leads to the dictatorship of the whole class, and not to the dictatorship of the various party chiefs. The factory organisation is the guarantee of this.

The phase of the seizure of political power by the proletariat necessitates the most resolute suppression of bourgeois-capitalist movements. This will be carried out by the setting up of an organisation of councils, holding the totality of political and economic power. In this phase the factory organisation itself becomes an element of the proletarian dictatorship, carried through into the factory. This has, in addition, the task in this period of tending to transform itself into the economic basis of the council system.

The factory organisation is an economic condition for the construction of the communist community (Gemeinwesen). The political organisational form of the communist community is the council-system. The factory organisation intervenes in order that political power is only carried out by the executive of the councils.

The K.A.P.D. thus struggles for the realisation of the maximum revolutionary programme, whose concrete demands are contained in the following points:

POLITICAL SPHERE.

1. Immediate political and economic fusion with all victorious proletarian countries, such as Soviet Russia, in the spirit of the international class struggle, with the aim of a common defence against the aggressive actions of world capital.
2. The arming of the politically-organised revolutionary working class, constitution of local groups of military defence, formation of a Red Army. Disarming of the bourgeoisie, of all police and army officers and of "citizens defence groups".
3. Dissolution of all Parliaments and municipal councils.
5. Meeting of a Congress of German workers councils as the
supreme political power of a Council-Germany.

6. Taking over control of the press by the working class under the direction of local political councils.

7. Destruction of the bourgeois judicial apparatus and the immediate institution of revolutionary tribunals. Taking over of the organs of security and of the bourgeois penitentiary powers by the appropriate proletarian organs.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SPHERE.

1. Cancellation of all state debts and other public debts, cancellation of war reparations.

2. Expropriation by the Republic of Councils of all banks, mines, foundries, and large enterprises of industry and commerce.

3. Confiscation of all property above a certain level to be fixed by the central council of the German workers councils.

4. Transformation of landed private property into collective property under the direction of local councils and competent agrarian councils.

5. Socialisation of all public transport by the Council Republic.

6. Central regulation and direction of the totality of production by superior economic councils, charged of this function by the congress of economic councils.

7. Adaptation of the whole of production to the service of needs, on the basis of the most rigorous statistical economic calculations.

8. Putting into operation the right to work without exception.

9. The guaranteeing of individual existence with respect to food, lodging, clothing etc. Provision for the aged, sick, invalids etc.

10. Abolition of all differences of cast, of decorations, and of titles. Complete social and juridical equality of the sexes.

11. Immediate transformation in a radical way of provisions, lodgings and health in the interests of the proletarian population.

12. In the same time as the K.A.P.D. declares resolutely its war on the capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois state, it directs its attack on the totality of bourgeois ideology, and makes itself the pioneer of a revolutionary-proletarian view of the world. An essential factor in the acceleration of the social revolution lies in the revolutionising of the whole intellectual outlook of the working class. The K.A.P.D. thus supports all tendencies in the arts and sciences that have a character corresponding to the nature of the proletarian revolution. In particular, the K.A.P.D. encourages all serious revolutionary efforts which allow the youth of both sexes to express themselves. The K.A.P.D. rejects all domination of youth. In the interests of the revolution it is an aim of the K.A.P.D. that youth obtains in its struggle all the support possible.

The K.A.P.D. is equally aware that after the conquest of political power by the proletariat, a great field of activity will open for youth in the construction of a communist society; the defence of the Council-Republic by the Red Army, the transformation of the process of production, the creation of communist work-schools, which will carry out their creative tasks
in close links with the factories.

Here then is the Programme of the Communist Workers Party of Germany. Faithful to the spirit of the Third International, the K.A.P.D. remains likewise faithful to the ideas of the founders of scientific socialism, according to which the conquest of political power by the proletariat means the annihilation of the political power of the bourgeoisie. To destroy the whole apparatus of the bourgeois state, with its capitalist army under the control of bourgeois and Junker officers, with its police, its judges and its jailers, with its priests and its bureaucrats - this must be the first task of the proletarian revolution. The victorious proletariat must be steered against the blows of the bourgeois counter-revolution. When the latter is enforced on it by the bourgeoisie, the proletariat will be forced to mercilessly prosecute the civil war with rigorous violence. The K.A.P.D. knows that the struggle between capital and labour can finally only be solved beyond nationally frontiers. Just as capitalism will not let itself be stopped at national frontiers by some nationalist scruple, so can the proletariat not close its eyes, blinded by the hypnosis of nationalist ideology, to the fundamental idea of the solidarity of the international class struggle. The more that the idea of the international nature of the class struggle is clearly grasped by the proletariat, thus will be more massive and vigorous the blows of the world revolution which will smash decaying world capitalism to pieces. Beyond all national specific features, across all frontiers, and against all patriotism, rings out in its eternal tones the battle cry of the proletariat:

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

Berlin, May 1920.

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