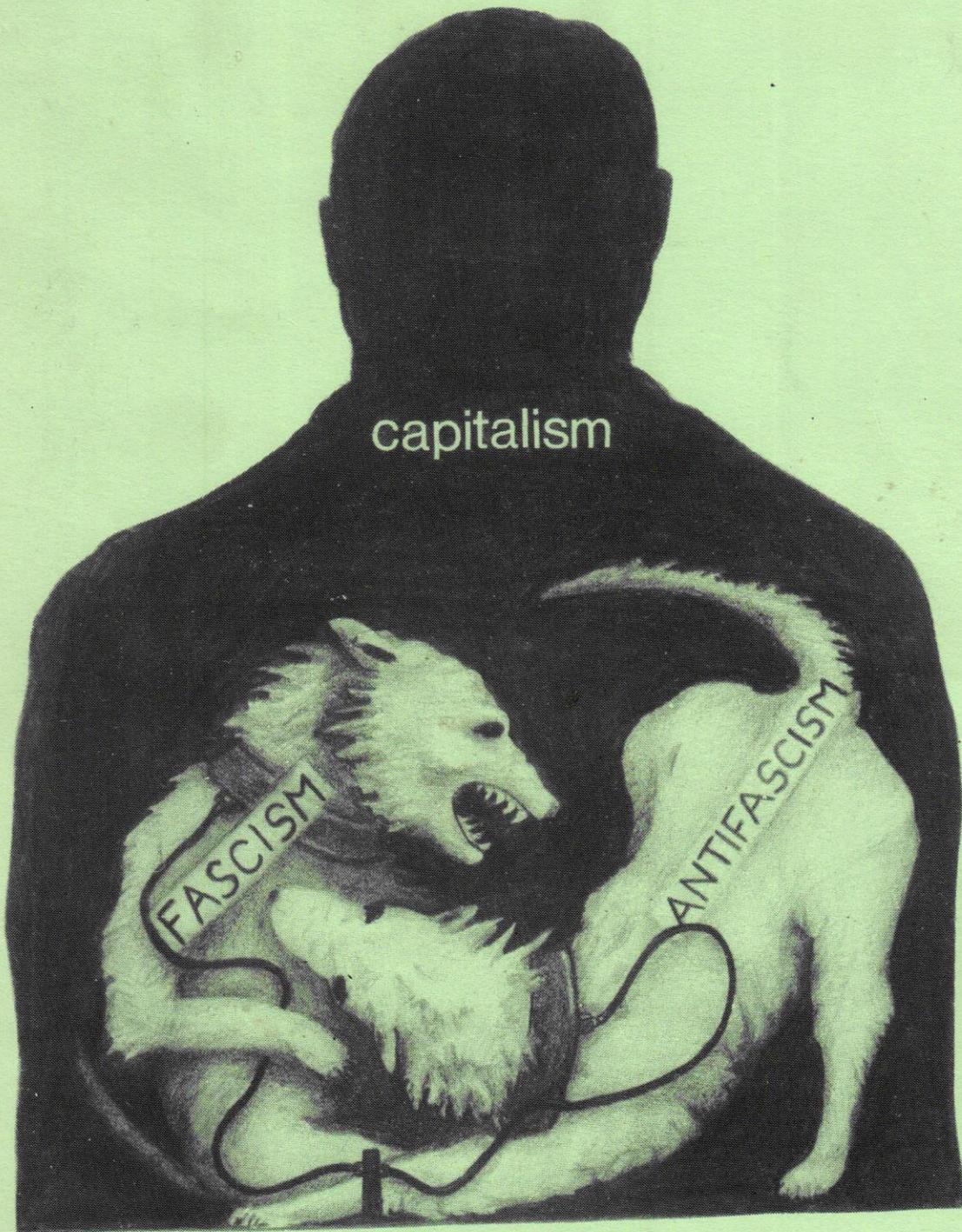


REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES 9

35p

Journal of the C.W.O.



PLUS Firemen Terror Middle East PCI
Trotskyism Oslo Meeting

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ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

Write in the following manner **ONLY** to:

C.W.O.
c/o 21 Durham St.,
Pelaw,
Gateshead,
Tyne and Wear,
NE10 OXS.

Middle East

PEACE IN OUR TIME?

The dramatic turn in events in the Middle East in the last few months has once again brought bewilderment into the ranks of all leftists, and supporters of national liberation. The Egyptian President Sadat, hero of the 1973 war against Israel, has met with the arch-Zionist Israeli President Begin, to pledge their support for an initiative towards "peace" in the Middle East. What is portrayed by the bourgeois media as "courageous statesmanship" and denounced by all "supporters of oppressed people" as "cowardly betrayals", should instead be seen as the inevitable outcome of a process going on in the region since 1973. This process has undermined traditional imperialist alignments in the area, and left many conflicts, particularly that between Israel and Egypt, as "anachronisms", to be resolved in favour of U.S. imperialism.

The year 1973 seemed to herald a great advance for the anti-Israeli alliance in the Middle East, and a massive defeat for Israel's traditional backer, the U.S. Egypt launched an attack on Israel in that year, and though hardly a victory ("liberating" only the Suez Canal, lost in the 1967 war), it was the first time in the series of wars since 1948 that Israel had not won convincingly, and the myth of her invulnerability was dashed. At the same time, the newly rich Arab oil states (Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states) showed their willingness to use oil as a political weapon, in their support for the cause of the Palestinians in particular, and the Arab bloc in general. An oil embargo was imposed, followed by a three-fold increase in oil prices which hit hard the already ailing economies of Europe.

Till 1973, Russian imperialism was gaining steadily in the Middle East, largely through its supplying of various states with armaments, supplemented by economic aid. But in 1973 they made a big mistake; feeling that Egypt would be defeated as in the Six Day War of 1967, they had restrained Sadat and withheld vital supplies of arms from the Egyptians. This created a rupture between Sadat and Moscow and the abrogation of Nasser's Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union, and the expulsion of Soviet military and economic advisers.

In the situation where a power vacuum had been created, the U.S. quickly realised:

- 1) Israel was not, after all, invincible. Additionally it was causing a vast drain on American finances (\$1,000 million a year) in defensive aid, and its economic value was negligible.
- 2) The economic weight of the Arab states had increased with the development of the oil reserves, and the centre of gravity in the Arab world had shifted from the "radical" states like Egypt and Iraq, to the conservative ones, typified by Saudi Arabia.

U.S. imperialism made a series of bold moves which initiated the transformation in the Middle East which is now reaching culmination. At first the U.S. announced its opposition to continued Israeli possession of the lands seized in the 1967 war (Sinai, Golan and the West Bank), but under the Carter administration this took the shape of announcing its acceptance of the "rights of the Palestinians" to a homeland, preferably tied to Jordan but, if unavoidable, independent. Simultaneously, American economic aid was lavished on Egypt via I.M.F. loans, and military aid soon followed (initially China, the U.S.'s new ally, supplied spares and replacements for Russian military equipment'). In the manoeuvres of U.S.

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imperialism, Saudi Arabia played a crucial role. A reactionary, clerical state, they naturally wanted the expulsion of the Russians from the area (especially from Egypt which had attempted under Nasser to stir up revolt in the Arabian peninsula). As oil prices rose, money flowed into Saudi Arabia, mainly from Europe, since America imports no Middle Eastern oil; thus the grand strategy of American imperialism in the Middle East was paid for by its allies in Europe. Apart from internal uses, the revenues were put to building up Saudi Arabia as a loyal ally of the U.S., and via its purchase of U.S. arms, making it one of the best equipped military forces in the whole region. Simultaneously, Saudi gold began to find its way into the "radical" Arab states as a way of "taming" them (e.g. via economic aid to Egypt).

Within the space of three years, this has brought Egypt firmly into the American camp. Syria, another traditionally pro-Russian state, was also induced to join the winning side during the civil war in Lebanon in 1975-76, when it policed an anti-Palestinian peace hatched in the region. Russia has been left with few footholds in the region, such as the volatile Gaddafi in Libya, Iraq and negligible backwoods like Yemen, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) which, seeing its isolation, is now moving towards a closer relationship with the "socialist camp". None of these are "front line" states, and none of them are capable of acting independently against Israel and preventing the momentum towards a "pax Americana" gaining pace. Even Gaddafi's weakness was shown by the failure of his attempts to overthrow Sadat (border battles in 1977).

For the rest, the Middle East has been transformed into an area of American domination, from Morocco to Iran, encompassing regimes as varied as monarchies, military dictatorships and "anti-imperialist" republics. It is, therefore, in America's interest that a peace be concluded between its new ally Egypt and its old satellite Israel; if this is achieved, even a separate limited peace between the two front line states will make a new war impossible. And a new war, shattering present power constellations, is the only threat to American ascendancy. In response, the Russians will be obliged to new heights of audacity, by stimulating the PLO to new adventures (like the Lebanon Civil War) or by attempting to overthrow Sadat either by internal moves, or by egging on Gaddafi, to whom Soviet arms are flowing. But at the moment it seems unlikely that such moves will upset the momentum undertaken by Sadat and Begin in the interest of American imperialism.

Leftists and anti-Zionists of all descriptions raised cries of alarm when Begin of the Likud coalition was elected as Israel's president in 1977, pledging to maintain the "gains" of 1967. But Israel's worsening economic plight, growing military burden and total dependence on the U.S. meant that, whoever was in power, the policies adopted would have to conform to the interests of U.S. capital. Demounced as a fascist Begin will possibly be the vehicle for the achievement of the "rights" of the Palestinians.

For the working class of the area, the move towards peace can be used to serve the interests of the ruling class just as well as the moves towards war. The grip of chauvinist hysteria was showing signs of weakening, especially in the strike waves of the workers of Israel and Egypt in recent years. Now that the bourgeoisie has changed to its peace loving mask, we can be sure that this will be used to assure the workers that with peace round the corner, a new era of peace and prosperity lies ahead, if they once more put their shoulders to the wheel. But these sirensongs will be exposed as the crisis worsens, and the class struggle inevitably grows. As for the struggles for an "independent Palestine" or a "secular and democratic Israel", these have nothing to do with the interests of the working class or the struggle for socialism, and are meant to deflect the struggle from its real class goals. The whole problem of the Middle East cannot be solved on a local basis, but only within the framework of a worldwide socialist revolution.

Fireman's Strike

After three years of austerity which the trades unions have policed for the Labour government, there are signs that the working class is beginning to assert itself once more-although only in a confused and defensive way- against the capitalist crisis. From 3 million days in 1976, the number of days lost in strikes in 1977 rose to 9 million. But the class continues to be dominated by defensive, sectionalist attitudes, and a passive orientation towards the leadership of its struggles. Both in scope and quality the class struggle has declined from the heights of the years 1972-74.

One of the high points of the class struggle in those years was the 1973 strike by Glasgow firemen, which overturned the wage legislation of the then Conservative government. The struggle was waged on an anti-union basis, through an elected strike committee which tried to spread the struggle to other sectors of the class. Today, we have just witnessed another firemens strike, this time a national one. It has been defeated openly by strike breaking troops, and covertly by the mens' union, the F.B.U. After nine weeks on strike the men were forced back to work on an offer little improved from the one originally rejected. In fact the last few months have brought major victories in the governments moves to control wages, for example in the case of the miners via the N.U.M. agreeing to pit by pit productivity bargaining, despite the men themselves voting 2-1 against it. Also, many weak sectors were persuaded to settle for "10%", but millions more were waiting to see if any strong group of workers could smash the pay limits. In this situation, the firemens' strike was a godsend for the government.

The firemen are a group of workers who appear to have "muscle", but in fact the effect of their strike on production is minimal, though it certainly destroys property values. Additionally, the government felt opinion could be mobilized against the men in the event of deaths in fires etc. Smashing the firemen would produce among millions of other workers a feeling of helplessness, and resignation to another round of wage austerity. Thus, the struggle had little chance of success, especially when, in order to forestall-wildcats and action by the men themselves, the union called an official strike and dampened the whole affair by backstairs "negotiations", and eventually when the men were demoralised, moved to call off the strike. Despite any exceptions, such as the threatening action by oil delivery drivers, the next few months should see a flood of acceptable wage settlements for capitalism.

As a mocking echo to all this, the supposed "recovery" of British capitalism will be announced in the coming months. Certainly inflation has fallen from 20 to around 12%, and the balance of payments has shown a healthy surplus in the last few months. But this only reflects the low level of economic activity; the G.N.P of British capital is hardly greater in 1978 than it was in 1972, and unemployment is still officially at 1,500,000, though in reality nearer to 2,000,000. In contrast to this, the level of the class' activity and consciousness is low, but the class struggle is deceptive. Like a volcano it can be dormant for long periods before erupting, and the coming period will see class struggle reaching even greater heights than those of 72-4. In these battles the class will do well to look back, not to this strike just finished, but to that of the Glasgow firemen in 1973, and see the need to generalise struggles which they keep firmly in their own hands.

The Janus Face of Capital

The impression that the spectre of fascism has raised its head again has been given by last summer's fascist and anti-fascist carnival (giving both the National Front and the Socialist Workers Party the publicity they both sought), T.V. programmes about the N.F.'s use of football thugs as their unofficial Stormtroopers and NF publicity about their new youth section. A December party political broadcast by the Labour Party completely devoted to anti-fascism and the foundation of the Anti-Nazi League have all added further voices to the rantings of the Leftists that the fascist menace is again with us.

A brief glance at the above summary of events is enough to show that the main evidence for a new fascist menace comes from the activities of the anti-fascists themselves! Nor is it surprising to find that the "fascist hordes" were outnumbered four to one by counter-demonstrators on their own marches into immigrant areas. Even on an empirical basis the "fascist menace" evaporates as soon as we try to come to grips with it. This only goes to prove that the Sorelian myth is no longer the prerogative of the fascists. Today the greatest myth is that fascism is going to be the same "threat" as it was in the Thirties.

Whilst superficial empiricism is an adequate basis for the analyses made by organisations like the Trotskyists, revolutionaries must base their analysis on a scientific foundation by locating the fascist phenomenon of the Thirties, and that of today, in the specific historical contexts which gave birth to them. In so doing we show that the anti-fascists in the Thirties were as big a menace to the proletariat as the fascists. We also show why the bourgeoisie will not turn to the fascist solution this side of its final Gotterdammerung and why anti-fascism represents a greater threat than fascism itself. A Marxist analysis of history reveals a different reality entirely to the absurd posturings of the anti-fascists.

CAPITALIST DECADENCE: THE ERA OF PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

From about the turn of the century the system which had prided itself on the virtues of self-help, laissez-faire and individual enterprise, was in almost visible decline. Final proof of this was the eruption of the First World War which opened the new era, the era of capitalist decadence. Now capitalism could only further develop at the cost of periodic self-cannibalisation of men and machines in world wars. During and after the First World War the old tendencies towards monopoly increased and statification and attempted autarchy destroyed the ideological backbone of the system (i.e. laissez-faire). (1)

Whilst on the one hand this created by 1917 a working class ready for revolution, on the other it also undermined one of the old bulwarks of capitalism, the artisan and petty bourgeois classes. The "new world" offered to them in 1918 was one of declassé poverty and political disorientation. In the immediate post-war struggles these classes played an ambiguous and confused part, sometimes siding with the revolutionary workers, sometimes providing soldiers for the whites, and often doing nothing. As it was the working class revolutionary wave

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Whilst on the one hand this created by 1917 a working class ready for revolution, on the other it also undermined one of the old bulwarks of capitalism, the artisan and petty bourgeois classes. The "new world" offered to them in 1918 was one of declassé poverty and political disorientation. In the immediate post-war struggles these classes played an ambiguous and confused part, sometimes siding with the revolutionary workers, sometimes providing soldiers for the whites, and often doing nothing. As it was the working class revolutionary wave

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was defeated in most countries by the old order of leading industrialists and landowners in alliance with the officer class of the army. By 1921 the working class everywhere had been crushed and nineteen months later the first fascist party to take power did so in Italy. (1)

In Russia however the situation was different in that the party of the working class revolution had, in the face of international isolation, and the almost total extinction of the revolutionary working class, actually carried out the policies of the counter-revolution (NEP, Kronstadt, etc. -(2)). However, the bourgeoisie had been severely enough frightened by the communist risings in Bavaria, North Germany, Hungary and the factory occupations in Italy to still see a "red spectre" haunting Europe. This was to partially affect the solutions adopted by the bourgeoisie to the crisis of capitalist decadence, though the main element was the concrete situation in different countries.

In countries like Britain and France, which had "won" the war and in which "democratic" institutions pre-dated 1914 by many years, the trade unions and "socialist" or labour parties were not challenged as parties of the workers, despite their open capitulation to the bourgeoisie. Here conditions favoured the "democratic" face in politics coupled with an attempt to keep the state from intervening in the economy (though even here the "liberal democracies" were forced to recognise the passing of an era and capitulated to protectionism and attempted autarchy).

But in countries like Italy and Germany, where economic dislocation brought about by the war was much greater; and where "democratic" institutions had not been so firmly established, the bourgeoisie looked for some other solution which would give stability in a world dominated by "the rebellion of the masses". For the bourgeoisie, democracy seemed equivalent to a loss of power and a prelude to "Red" revolution. What they required was a political movement which would guarantee the existing social order but at the same time would also achieve the involvement of the much-feared masses. These apparently contradictory aims were realised in the emergence of fascism.

THE ORIGINS OF FASCISM

Fascism, rigorously defined as a mass movement of the petit bourgeoisie with a reactionary anti-capitalist and revanchist ideology, was triumphant in only two countries, Germany and Italy, and for almost identical reasons. In both countries the bourgeoisie had been badly shaken by proletarian revolution and though they had managed to defeat the working class they thought it only a matter of time before the masses seized state power. Given this perspective they realised that they too needed a mass movement which would support the general aims of capital. They found it in fascism.

Fascism's roots however lay not with the captains of industry but with the petit bourgeoisie, peasants and shopkeepers, the lower middle class, the artisans and former bureaucrats of the old Empires. Returning from the war they found that the giant cartels had destroyed the opportunities for the "mittelstand" of small producers and that inflation had wiped out their savings almost overnight. Facing proletarianisation or lumpenisation, these ex-petit bourgeois drifted into the numerous paramilitary organisations, which alone seemed to offer a recognisable existence in a changing world.

(1) But even here the Fascists played no part in the defeat of the Italian workers in 1920. See M Clark The Failure of Revolution in Italy 1919-20.

(2) See Revolutionary Perspectives 4 "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Russia"

"A vague and utopian anti-capitalism grew up among these heterogenous strata dispossessed by the grande bourgeoisie. Their anti-capitalism was reactionary in that it aimed at a return to a bygone stage of capitalism. Thus despite their radicalism they became a conservative factor and easily became the instrument of monopoly capitalism." (A. Lehmann "The Economic, Political, and Social Origins of Fascism." Masses 2 (Nov. 1933). (1)

But the political strand which united this movement of the declassé petit bourgeoisie with big capital lay in nationalism. In both Italy and Germany the Versailles Treaty of 1919 had produced national humiliation. To the petit bourgeoisie this was tied up with their new lumpenised status, to the grand masters of German and Italian capital only a war could undo the damage to their interests brought about by the 1919 Peace. Whilst the petit bourgeoisie looked around for internal scapegoats like the Jews or the Communists the grande bourgeoisie wanted an instrument of revenge. Gradually they began to appropriate fascism, first using it as a force to break strikes then backing it financially in elections. The list of names supporting Hitler and Mussolini reads like an international capitalists "Who's Who" Agnelli (Fiat), Pirelli, Benni, Volpe di Misurata, Ansaldo and the Perrones (the Krupps of Italy) helped the Italian Duce whilst Vogler, Thyssen, Stinnes, Funk and Krupps are among those who backed Hitler. Significantly the largest financial support came from the arms manufacturers who saw in the fascist war economy a future chance of large profits.

Once secure in power the war economy was precisely what the fascists set out to build: attempted autarchy, import substitution, a massive build up of arms and the virtual mobilisation of labour made it clear from the beginning exactly how fascist economic policy was based ultimately on a future war. The contradiction between the conservative anti-capitalism of the petit bourgeoisie and the needs of capitalism was resolved in favour of the latter (the failure of Rocco in Italy, the Night of the Long Knives in Germany) as only the latter could provide the basis for a war economy. But fascist economies were a symptom of rather than a cure for the international capitalist crisis. Arms production offered no solution to the permanent crisis of decadent capitalism. As a communist predicted in 1933:

"... the impossibility of capitalism surmounting its economic difficulties and the sharpening of contradictions on an international level open the way to fascism in all countries and, at the same time, exclude the possibility of fascism stabilising itself. The solution to this dialectical contradiction can only lie in the proletarian revolution. However, a solution may be sought by the bourgeoisie in a new world war if the proletariat does not take the initiative towards decisive action. But the world war itself is not a solution and the dilemma which will be remorselessly posed is the one foreseen by Marx: Communism or Barbarism." (Lehmann op.cit.)

THE ORIGINS OF ANTI-FASCISM

The defeat of the European working class and the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Third International was complete by 1921. The history of the Comintern from this time on is the history of an arm of the state capitalist regime in Russia. Its activities from 1921-43 are not therefore those of an opportunist or confusionist body (since that would imply that it had some proletarian basis), but a reflection of its true class nature. From united frontism through 'social fascism' and the Popular Front to "defence of the Soviet Motherland" the Third International represented the bourgeois interests of Russian state capitalism.

(1) Reprinted in International Review 2 Lehmann was a member of one of the groups of international communists which emerged from the K.A.P.D.

It is no surprise to find that its policy towards fascism reflects the imperialist power struggle. The Comintern did not claim that fascism represented a major threat until after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. In fact in Germany it had encouraged the German C.P. to unite with the fascists in the "Schlageter Line" in 1923. According to Radek it was a revolutionary act at that time for communists to defend the nation in Germany. (1) At this time the Russo-German alliance was at its height and the Russians were frightened that Britain and France were about to occupy Germany thus isolating Russia once again. But after October 1923 the formation of the pro-Entente government of Stresemann led to this alliance slowly breaking up. But later the German C.P. was able to once more tactically ally with fascism to the extent of joining the Nazis in the November 1932 transport strike in Prussia.

Hitler's rise to power did not make the Comintern change its mind immediately. The Social Democrats were still called "social fascists" (the term fascist had already been devalued into a meaningless word of general abuse by this time) as it was expected that the Nazi government would not last long. But the total lack of working class response to a general strike call against Hitler showed Stalin that Hitler was not an eccentric figure who would soon be pushed aside. In addition, Hitler soon showed that his aims for "lebensraum" could only be satisfied through conquest of the "inferior slavs" to the east. Stalin saw his isolation. Russia was distrusted by Britain and France and now faced a twin threat from expansionist powers like Germany and Japan on its borders.

In 1934 a new strategy was developed. Trotsky had already called (in 1931) for a new united front of socialists and communists against the fascist menace in Europe (though an anti-fascist alliance had been concocted in Italy which had been joined by Bordiga in 1924). Stalin took this one step further (though logically alliance with the socialists is the same as an alliance with any bourgeois party) by calling for a Popular Front of "all democratic forces" against the fascist menace. His purpose was not primarily to create Popular Front governments in Western Europe but rather to convince the governments of France and Britain that the Soviet Union was now a champion of "democracy" and hence a worthy ally. Thus anti-fascism as a political ideology was born and developed as an adjunct of Russian foreign policy.

Here we must pause to analyse events. Stalin and Trotsky both saw the rise of the Fascists as the consequence of the rivalry of the socialists and communists which split the working class movement. But in what sense can these movements be said to have represented the working class in the Twenties? The Communist Parties had ceased to represent proletarian internationalism after the defeat of the European and Russian Revolutions in 1921, whilst the Socialists, by their support for the imperialist slaughter of 1914 had also gone over to the bourgeoisie. The fact that workers still voted for them does not legitimise their proletarian status. As many workers voted for the Nazis as for the Communists. We judge the proletarian nature of a movement by its politics not by its adherents alone. In 1920 when the proletariat in Germany was as yet undefeated it had struck to bring down Kapp's right wing government. The lack of response to the Hitler coup like the lack of response to the capitalist collapse of 1929 shows that the working class had suffered its greatest historical defeat in 1921. In fact the lumpenisation caused by the extended unemployment of the Depression further weakened class solidarity.

In the second place the slogan of "anti-fascism" obscured the real interests of the workers which is anti-capitalism, in all its forms, democratic or fascist. The real defeat of the working class had come in 1921, not in Italy in 1922, not in Germany in 1933. Fascism was merely

(1) See Revolutionary Perspectives 7 "Revolution and Counter-revolution in Germany"

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the particular solution that the bourgeoisie utilised in those countries to solve the crisis of capitalist decadence. Thus the anti-fascist slogan was equally bourgeois in that millions of workers in Spain (1) and in the Second World War were slaughtered to defend it when in fact the real beneficiaries were U.S. and Soviet Imperialism. Although anti-fascism failed in its immediate aim (to form a Soviet-Anglo-French alliance in 1938-39) it provided a rallying call for Trotskyists and others to defend the "socialist gains" of the USSR and helped cement the alliance between Stalin and the West until the defeat of Germany, Italy and Japan.

FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCISM TODAY

Since 1945 fascism has had an existence but a generally minute one. In the early Sixties the M.S.I. in Italy and the neo-Nazis in Germany won some electoral support (but never more than 10% of the votes) but today the main evidence for a fascist revival in every European country lies in the atavistic reaction of the Leftists. Anti-fascism in Italy, Germany and France has grown stronger the weaker the fascists have become. In the 12,000 strong National Front Britain has the largest fascist party in Europe but this cannot boast of a single MP. The reasons for its appearance are not hard to find. Made up predominantly of the petit-bourgeois self-employed class it is a reflection of the fact that the burden of the crisis initially fell on them in the form of taxation and inflation (which has hit those on fixed incomes the hardest) (2) It is to this sector that the scapegoat politics of racialism which comprises the nationalism of the Front always appeals. But since 1914 the decimation of this class has ceased to become a threat but has become a fact: the social basis for a mass fascist movement no longer exists. Given its feeble support it would seem that the N.F. is no danger. In order to avoid the charge of complacency let us analyse its prospects for growth. What made the fascists in the Thirties strong was the support of the big bourgeoisie. Without it today they will remain small. And it does not seem likely that they will turn to fascism. First, neither of the major imperialist powers is directly revanchist as Germany and Italy were in 1919. Neither wants to overthrow the settlement of 1945 - both wish to preserve their gains and any "revanchist" notions of the smaller states are impossible to fulfil in today's imperialist situation where the USA and the USSR dominate formerly independent imperialisms like Germany. Second, the steady advance of state capitalism has meant that there are less private capital fortunes a la Krupps which can be used for supporting the Fascists. Third and most important, the bourgeoisie today is fully aware that fascism means war. Hence it can only be used as a last resort to solve their problems. Other solutions are much more logical for them as we shall see below.

Most importantly the proletariat of today has yet to face its battle with capitalism and so long as it is undefeated the bourgeoisie cannot freely impose its solution on the crisis. And even if the proletariat is defeated and the bourgeoisie turn to the war economy it will not necessarily mean that they also turn to fascism. The left-wing of capital, today's anti-fascists, with their ability to mobilise workers for capitalist ends through the unions could do the job far more efficiently than the fascists. After all the unions have supported two imperialist slaughters already and the Left in face of the present crisis, is already founding import controls and autarchy drives ("national" socialism) which would be sure preludes to an intensification of the international crisis.

Thus the "fascist threat" exists largely in the minds of the various supporters of the left wing of capital. The term fascist itself has either become a meaningless term of abuse, used in a sloppy and unscientific fashion to describe everything (as for example used by the

(1) For a more extensive analysis of the concrete results of anti-fascism see R.P.5 "The Revolutionary Myth".

(2) See R.P.3 "Perspectives for Crisis and Class Struggle"

Maocists or populists like the Baader-Meinhof Red Army Faction); or is simply intended as recruiting slogans for groups like the Socialist Workers Party which attempt to use issues to bolster its numbers. Like the Communist Party in the Thirties most of its recruits on this liberal basis come from the middle class intelligentsia rather than from workers. As far as publicity goes the SWP and the NF gain strength from each other's activities. If the NF did not exist the SWP would have to invent it. More seriously though, the antics of the fascists and the anti-fascists have had an excellent propaganda effect for the bourgeois state in that our "wonderful" British police have been able to portray themselves as the defenders of individual liberty whilst at the same time they have gained excellent practice in riot techniques which will serve them well when the proletariat comes to carry out its own struggles.

A serious misuse of the word "fascist" is to use it as if it were synonymous with "right wing authoritarian" to describe, for example, some of the regimes in South America. Despite its undoubted horrors, a regime like Pinochet's in Chile is not fascist. It does not have an economic policy which puts the direction of all economic life under a state preparing for war. It does not have a mass military style party and re-vanchist ideology (with a handy external scapegoat - for these regimes the enemy lies within). Pinochet's Chile, Videla's Argentina are simply right wing dictatorships such as Latin America experienced in the nineteenth century. They dispense with even fascist "legality" and the economic system could best be described as "Social Darwinian" or the survival of the richest. But for the Leftists who describe the fascist threat in Britain Chile is also "fascist". The fact that they cannot attack these regimes for what they are (i.e. capitalist) further illustrates that the Left are not the antithesis of capital but just one of its factions.

Fascism was largely a product of a particular crisis of capitalist decadence. Today, the most likely saviour of capitalism is precisely that faction of capital which talks most loudly of the "fascist menace" - the state capitalist Left. The most effective barrier against a rising tide of class struggle - initially at least - is a government of the Left, which can deflect the struggle onto terrain that is safe for capitalism. Of this historical examples are legion. Workers must not be side-tracked into fighting just one of the capitalist hydra's heads. The proletariat's fight must be against the whole body of capitalism. Once it is aware of this there will be no fascist threat, for the workers will have taken the first steps in consciousness which will lead to the destruction of the system that spawned both fascism and anti-fascism.

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Terrorism and Communism

The recent spate of murders, kidnappings and bombings in West Germany and Holland culminating in the deaths of three imprisoned terrorist leaders has resulted in much publicity for the Baader-Meinhof gang - the so-called Red Army Faction.

We unreservedly condemn the activities of these terrorists - but what is the basis for our opposition? We do not support the capitalist state, nor is our objection on liberal humanitarian grounds. (Although we do not condone the deaths of the many innocent victims of terrorist bombings and hijackings). It is both the aims and the methods of the terrorists which condemn them as counter-revolutionary.

What the terrorists stand for.

When we look at the aims of the myriad of terrorist groups in the world today it is easy for revolutionaries with a clear view of communism to identify as counter-revolutionary those groups with nationalistic aims and more or less popular support. (From the IRA and their demand for a "united" Ireland to the ETA who want "independence" for the Basques and the PFLP which wants the creation of a Palestinean state - the list is infinite.) Communists today do not support one capitalist state rather than another, or prefer state capitalism to the "mixed economies" of the West. In the era of proletarian revolution national liberation struggles cannot possibly result in a progressive development of the productive forces, instead they are doomed to remain the playground of inter-imperialist rivalry and as such deserve no support from communists. (1)

The counter-revolutionary nature of groups like Baader-Meinhof is not so obvious however since they often claim a common interest with the proletarian revolution as a result of their opposition to the existing state. A closer look at Baader-Meinhof and groups like them reveals their basically anti-working class nature. A product of the disintegration of the student movement in the late Sixties/ early Seventies, groups like the Red Army Faction in West Germany, (2), the Angry Brigade (Britain), the Weathermen (U.S.) and the Japanese Red Army were formed, typically of the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie and reflecting the despair of bourgeois intellectuals in Western capitalist society at the end of the post-war boom. (3). However, a disillusionment with Western society did not lead these "angry young men" to a revolutionary understanding of capitalism or consequent identification with the interests of the working class as the only revolutionary class. On the contrary, when the student revolt did not lead to the end of the "consumer society" these naive and confused "revolutionaries" (not understanding that a mass revolutionary consciousness is not a matter of will) embarked on their course of terrorism, apparently aimed against the capitalist state.

(1) For more details of our views on national liberation, see the documents of the Oslo meeting of revolutionaries and the references to our previous writings, in this issue.

(2) In 1968 Andreas Baader, then a member of the (leftist) Sozialistischer Deutscher Studenten Bund was imprisoned for setting fire to two warehouses. The R.A.F. was formed in 1970 after the armed "rescue" of Baader from his guards in a Berlin library

(3) In Italy student support for the Red Brigades has grown with the deepening of the economic crisis and the increasing inability of capitalism to provide employment for students.

"The bullets which struck Rudi (Dutschke) finished the dream of peace and non-violence. Those who don't defend themselves die, those who don't die are buried alive in prisons, in educational institutions, in slums such as Neuklin, in the stone coffins of the new estates.....Start armed resistance NOW, help build the Red Army." (First Communique of the Baader-Meinhof group).

In practise then the "revolutionary" aims of the terrorists have led them no further than mindless attacks on individual representatives of the bourgeoisie and indiscriminate killings in support of various national liberation organisations. Support for "national liberation" is in itself enough to condemn groups like Baader-Meinhof as anti-working class, but what of terrorism itself as a revolutionary spark?

It is axiomatic for communists that

- a) Communism can only be established by the mass movement of a self-conscious working class (not by a Blanquist elite of self-styled "revolutionaries").
- b) The development of a mass revolutionary consciousness will be the result of the historical development of capitalism itself and specifically the impact of the economic crisis. (1).

But since the terrorists do not understand what capitalism is, much less their much professed world revolution, their aims are anathema to communism. In so far as Baader-Meinhof et al. have stipulated any coherent aims, and judging from their activities, these groups are clearly anti-working class. Both Baader-Meinhof and the Japanese Red Army are known to have links with Palestinian terrorist organisations. In 1971 the Japanese Red Army carried out the massacre of 27 people at Lod airport in Israel on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). In early 1972 this co-operation was systematised at an international terrorist meeting in Lebanon sponsored by the PFLP, where terrorists from the IRA to Baader-Meinhof agreed to assist each other and carry out attacks on behalf of other organisations. As far as Baader-Meinhof is concerned this agreement has been reciprocated at least once in Khartoum in 1973 when Black September attacked the Saudi Arabian Embassy, killed three hostages (including the American Ambassador) and outlined their demands, one of which was that the German Government release its Baader-Meinhof prisoners.

Thus, whether the terrorists' violence is intended to seriously weaken the capitalist state; or whether it is a modern version of the nineteenth century anarchists' "propaganda by the deed", intended to encourage the development of a mass revolutionary consciousness; we can see that their efforts are equally futile. Indeed, the effect of terrorist campaigns in Britain and West Germany has been the strengthening of the State's organs of repression as a result of anti-terrorist legislation as well as the "counter-insurgency" measures and the development of techniques for occupying hostile urban areas (e.g. Northern Ireland), all useful practice for the army in dealing with a future insurrection. Moreover, as a propaganda weapon, terrorism is shown to be counter-productive with the only noticeable effect upon the working class being a general antipathy towards the terrorist outfits' indiscriminate killings and a consequent reinforcement of the legitimacy of the capitalist state in the eyes of the working class.

(1) We are not arguing that this development is automatic or spontaneous. What it does mean is that the most effective weapon of revolutionaries in the development of a generalised revolutionary consciousness is political propaganda which points to a coherent alternative in the face of capitalism's collapse. No amount of individualistic terrorist acts can point to the political alternative to capitalism or speed this process up.

Our opposition to Baader-Meinhof et.al. is therefore based on two counts. Firstly, their capitalistic aims have nothing in common with communism. Secondly, the practice of terrorism is at best irrelevant to the class struggle and at worst involves the massacre of innocent proletarians and the strengthening of the bourgeois state.

Terrorism and the State: the Revolutionary Use of Terror.

Although terrorism within capitalism is against the interests of the working class, this does not mean that communists are against violence per se (our objections to present-day terrorist activity are not on pacifistic grounds). For Marxists it is axiomatic that whilst the consent of the subordinate class in normal times means that the use of naked force is unnecessary, all state power rests ultimately on violence. This is so because the state is the instrument by which the ruling class maintains its position - the violence is a necessary feature of class society. Since no ruling class in history has relinquished power without a struggle it would be sheer suicide if the working class did not use arms at the moment of its revolutionary confrontation with the State. But proletarian violence does not end with the seizure of state power. As in previous epochs, the proletariat must impose its will on the remaining classes in society (bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, peasantry) and it can only do this by means of a state apparatus - i.e. the organised violence of the ruling class, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Once the proletariat has gained state power, the revolutionary use of terror will be a necessary part of the consolidation of the gains of the revolution. It is in this sense that we can distinguish between the reactionary terror of disillusioned minorities within capitalism today and the future revolutionary use of terror by the proletarian dictatorship. On the one hand we have individualistic, random acts of violence, and on the other, the violence of a revolutionary CLASS directed towards its reactionary enemies of the old society.

This distinction was understood by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century and explains why they could criticise the terrorist activities of groups like the Fenians, and yet recognise the necessity of terror during the revolution. Thus, Marx wrote to Engels in 1867:

"... the last exploit of the Fenians in Clerkenwell was a very stupid thing... One cannot expect the London proletarians to allow themselves to be blown up in honour of the Fenian emissaries " (4/12/1867 Marx, Engels Ireland and the Irish Question P 149)

While in 1873 Engels, criticising the "anti-authoritarian" Anarchists who believed that the state would immediately disappear at the onset of the revolution, explained:

"A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will on the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon - authoritarian means if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not wish to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries." (Marx-Engels Selected Works Vol. 1 "On Authority")

It was the Anarchists, opposed to "the State" as such, who formed conspiratorial groups, often indulging in acts of terrorism, who were most horrified at the prospect of class terror imposed by the proletariat. For Marxists however, the proletarian revolution is distinguished from all preceding revolutions, not by the non-existence of a state, but by the fact that the proletariat, as a non-exploiting class, poses the possibility of classless society and hence the eventual disappearance of the State. But before this can happen the proletariat must ensure that the counter-revolution is crushed. In this respect the proletarian revolution is similar to that of the bourgeoisie and the terror must be seen as a vital part of the revolutionary process.

The Russian Social Democrats followed Marx's method when they condemned the Narodnik-style individualistic terror of the Social Revolutionaries but still recognised in principle the role of terror as part of a mass revolutionary movement. However, although the Bolsheviks were not opposed to the use of terror in principle, the leniency which was shown by the proletariat to the counter-revolution during the first few months of the Russian Revolution is well documented. This leniency was expressed by Lenin ten days after the seizure of power:

"We are reproached with using terror. But such terror as was used by the French revolutionaries who guillotined unarmed people we do not use and, I hope shall not use... When we have made arrests we have said "we will let you go if you will sign a paper promising not to commit acts of sabotage." And such signatures are given." (Quoted in Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol 1 p.p.161)

The Russian proletariat were to learn from experience that this sort of leniency is totally misguided. While the Whites were totally ruthless in their opposition to the Revolution, the proletariat was still reluctant to impose the death penalty. (For example, in Moscow the Whites massacred the workers in the Arsenal and the Kremlin while General Krasnov was released on parole only to go and fight for the Whites in South Russia) According to Carr, "no regular executions either by summary judgement or by normal judicial process appear to have taken place in the first three months of the regime." (op cit p.162)

In December 1917 the Vee-Cheka (Extraordinary Commission for Struggle Against Sabotage and Counter-Revolution) was established by a decree of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). Originally an off-shoot of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, the Cheka was a proletarian organ at its inception. An examination of the Cheka's activities shows that the degree of violence invoked by the Red terror was determined by the extent of the opposition to the Revolution from both within and outside Russia.

The Cheka first directed its powers against purely internal enemies of the Revolution - sabotage of the administration by the bourgeoisie; vandalism and rioting by drunken mobs; and banditry "under the flag of anarchism". In February 1918, when the Germans rejected the armistice and renewed their advance into Russia, the Cheka issued an order to all local Soviets "to seek out, arrest and shoot "immediately" all enemy agents, counter-revolutionary agitators and speculators." (Carr op.cit. p.168) But the Cheka was not just engaged in suppressing armed violence against the revolution. In a situation of civil war and increasing shortage of food in the towns an important part of its tasks was to act against food hoarders and speculators.

The change in attitude of the Russian proletariat towards its enemies, from a reluctance to implement the death penalty or even imprisonment, to the ruthless suppression of known enemies of the revolution was inspired by the violence and atrocities committed by the counter-revolution itself. In a more general sense too the fate of the Cheka, like other aspects of the state machine, reflected the fate of the revolution as a whole in a situation where the absence of a European Revolution meant certain defeat for the Russian proletariat. By 1921, the Cheka was defending the first state-capitalist state in history.

But even though the Russian Revolution was defeated, the fact remains that here the proletariat did establish state power and in spite of the original reluctance, did find it necessary to use terror. To portray the Red terror (as Luxemburg did) as an unfortunate product of particularly brutal domestic circumstances is mistaken and misleading (See Luxemburg's The Russian Revolution - Leninism or Marxism P.79) Although clearly the specific features of the Red terror will vary from area to area, according to the amount of general support for the

revolutionary movement and other local conditions. The Bolsheviks had learned from history when they accepted in principle that class terror would be a vital part of the proletarian revolution. In the autumn of 1918 Lenin pointed out to foreign critics:

"The English bourgeoisie have forgotten their 1649, the French their 1793. The terror was just and legitimate when it was applied by the bourgeoisie for its own advantage over the feudal lords. The terror became monstrous and criminal when the workers and poor peasants dared to apply it against the bourgeoisie." (Carr. op. cit. p. 177)

In Germany, however, the Social Democrats, infected by liberal humanitarian misconceptions, had forgotten this lesson (it was not only Kautsky who objected to the use of terror) and although Luxemburg had grudgingly accepted the existence of the Red Terror in Russia, the KPD programme specifically rejects the use of terror by the proletariat:

"In bourgeois revolutions the shedding of blood, terror and political murder were the indispensable weapons of the rising classes. The proletarian revolution needs for its purposes no terror, it hates and abominates murder." (ibid. p.166)

Fine phrases, but unfortunately humanitarian sentiments do not ensure that the capitalists will not take up arms against the revolution - the murder of Luxemburg herself by the hands of the counter-revolutionary Freikorps is testimony to this. In fact the experience of the defeated German revolution confirms that the White terror (and consequently the Red) is not merely the product of a barbaric opposition to the proletarian revolution in a "backward" country, but is rather the standard response of the bourgeois and petit bourgeois classes to the revolution. The brutality of the German Freikorps which increased as the victory of the counter-revolution became more certain bloodily matches the White terror in Russia. (Take for instance the White's orgy of killing after the defeat of the Munich Soviet when more than 1,000 workers were indiscriminately killed in less than a week.) But the record for the White Terror must go to the "semaine sanglante" following the defeat of the Paris Commune of 1871. Despite the fact that the Communards had resorted to terror only after indiscriminate shootings by their opponents, the Versailles shot 20,000 Communards compared to the 84 executed members of the bourgeoisie.

"Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not using it enough? (Engels "On Authority" Selected Works Vol 1 p.639)

It should be clear that we have outlined the need for Red Terror in the revolution, not because we revel in the prospect of violence but because historical experience from the Commune onwards shows that the counter-revolution will not refrain from violence even if the proletariat does. We do not make a virtue of necessity (as Luxemburg accused the Bolsheviks of doing). But we do accept that an organised body under the control of the soviets must be established to combat White Terror, food hoarders, black marketeers and all forms of sabotage against the revolution.

"There is only one way of shortening and simplifying the murderous death pangs of the old society, the bloody birth pangs of the new - only one way, revolutionary terrorism." (Marx, "the Victory of the Counter-Revolution in Vienna" 6.11.1848.)

Trotskyism and the Counter-revolution

The present article is the first of a series, outlining the history of various political currents, and examining their class nature. If a political tradition is proletarian, we can learn from it today and integrate its acquisitions into our programme. If it is not proletarian, then we must be on our guard against seeing the manoeuvres of its descendents as anything other than those of capital.

Those who struggle for revolutionary clarity today are generally confronted by the presentation of Trotskyism as a valid, if not the only valid, political expression of the working class in the fifty years of working class defeats which have lapsed since the Russian Revolution. Many individuals are swallowed up by the myriad sects claiming to be the valid descendents of the IVth International, set up by Trotsky in 1938, and who present Trotsky as the incorruptible defender of the great traditions of Bolshevism. Such a picture is compounded by those groups and tendencies, which claim to have absorbed the lessons of the defeats suffered by the class after the First World War, who nevertheless extend legitimacy to Trotskyism as a proletarian current, specifically because of its fight against "Stalinism" and "socialism in one country". In an effort to aid the process of clarification among such individuals and tendencies, it is necessary to demonstrate that the oppositions associated with Trotsky in the 1920's were in no way expressions of the resistance of the working class to the counter-revolution; rather they were themselves expressions of the latter process. It will also be necessary to demonstrate why "socialism in one country" cannot be used to draw the line between revolution and counter-revolution in Russia; this is an insufficient, indeed irrelevant criterion, and by the time the discussion round it took place, the counter-revolution had already happened.

ORIGINS OF TROTSKYISM

A valid criticism of Trotskyism has nothing in common with the Stalinist method of unearthing his Menshevik past prior to 1917, nor does it deny the contribution he made, both in theory and practise, to the Russian Revolution itself. But Trotskyism as a political movement, despite any roots that may lie in the period before 1921, is essentially a product of a later period, and it is this that we categorise as bourgeois.

The movement inside Russia associated with Trotsky arose in a situation where the revolution in Europe had been decisively defeated. White terror raged in Hungary, the Fascists were poised to take power in Italy, and the last efforts of a section of the German working class to overthrow the bourgeoisie had ended in defeat in March 1921. Though outbursts of class struggle certainly occurred after this (eg 1926 in Britain, 1927 in China) none threatened bourgeois dominance and each was isolated and fragmented. Inside Russia itself four years of isolation and civil war had led to the virtual elimination of the working class, the abandonment of war communism and the introduction of NEP, and the capitulation of the Bolshevik Party to capitalism in the form of the United Front with Social Democracy, and in a series of military/political alliances with capitalist states (eg the Rapallo Treaty of 1922 with Germany). We repeat that we have no illusions that things could have been otherwise; the failure of the European Revolution led to counter-revolution in

Russia as night follows day. (1). It was felt by many, specifically the international left current grouped around the German K.A.P.D., that a new wave of revolution would follow in a few years, and inevitably Russia would act within this as a defender of its own particular interests, and not as a supporter of the working class. Therefore, only by breaking with the Third International could communists play a positive role in the next revolutionary wave. Gorter expressed this concisely in his text "Why we need a Fourth International". (See Workers Voice 13)

Trotsky and his followers did not accept this; for them there had been no counter-revolution, and the Soviet State, the Bolshevik Party and Comintern were all still proletarian organs within which they fought for their views. Indeed, not only did Trotsky not recognise the counter-revolution in Russia, but from 1921-23 he was one of its main agents. Trotsky was a general in the army of the counter-revolution while Stalin was still a little corporal. In so far as the views of the oppositionists were not simply plain struggles for power cloaked in political garb, they expressed rival views to those in power on how to develop and defend the national capital. Some of the more notable steps in the abandonment of the working class which were trodden with Trotsky's approval, or initiation, in the period before 1923 were:

1921 Organiser of the crushing of the Petrograd strikes and Kronstadt rebellion which demanded the restoration of Soviet power.

1922 Endorser of the Treaty of Rapallo, and agent of the alliance with German militarism. Defender of the United Front.

Had the subsequent history of Trotskyism been a break with its own past and from the defence of the Russian state, it could have trodden the path back to the proletarian camp. But its history from 1923 was a logical continuation of its earlier counter-revolutionary role.

THE LEFT OPPOSITION AND THE UNITED OPPOSITION.

The so-called "Left Opposition" which arose late in 1923, was only indirectly connected with Trotsky, who did not at the time identify with it, though the Oppositionists welcomed Trotsky's New Course, which had recently appeared. This opposition, contrary to mythology, was in no way connected with opposition to the idea of socialism in one country for the simple reason that it had ended before the theory was announced. The Opposition arose during the "scissors crisis" in 1923, when rising industrial and falling agricultural prices caused economic dislocation. The Opposition contended that the bureaucratic leadership of the party (at this time Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin and Bukharin) was incapable of solving the crisis - which it then promptly solved! According to the oppositionists a little planning had to be added to the market economy of NEP, mainly slow industrialisation via taxation of the peasantry. For Trotsky this meant the need to "develop state industry as the keystone of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the basis of socialism." (New Course p.120). Naturally, since it did not control the apparatus, the Opposition called for "democracy" inside the party but apart from industrialisation gave no political answer as to what this democracy would serve as a vehicle for. The Opposition was unconcerned with foreign affairs, and criticised none of the policies adopted since 1921, (e.g. United Fronts or rapprochement with capitalist states). Trotsky himself did write on these matters, but was regarded abroad as on the right of the Party, as an endorser of the United Front and National Bolshevism in Germany; meanwhile the allies of the "left wing" in the German party (Maslow, Fischer and Thalemann) were Zinoviev and Stalin! Trotsky's ventures into foreign policy, such as the Lessons of October (1924), were concerned to show that just as they had failed to perceive it in 1917, Zinoviev and Kamenev had failed to seize the revolutionary

(1) Here we cannot go into the whole question of the decline of the Russian Revolution. The subject is exhaustively treated in "Revolution and Counter-Revolution" in Revolutionary Perspectives 4.

opportunity in Germany in 1923. Slowly being squeezed out of power, Trotsky seized on the failure of the United Front governments in Saxony and Thuringia to make a revolution, as a stick to beat Zinoviev with. At this time Trotsky saw Zinoviev as a much greater danger than Stalin. But these governments had been products of political manoeuvres, not of class struggle. Earlier in the summer, when there had been mass class action in Germany, following on the collapse of the currency, Trotsky had come out against any attempt to overthrow the German government,

"We do not regard the French invasion of the Ruhr as a revolutionary stimulus . . . it is not at all in our interests that the revolution should take place in a Europe drained of blood. . . (We are) vitally interested in the preservation of peace." (2).

What was the reason for this? At this time Trotsky was the chief mediator in the alliance between Germany and Russia against the Entente (France and Britain.), and organizer of economic and military links between the two countries. Such a policy meant an alliance with the right wing regime in Germany, and with the forces of nationalism and fascism against the French (who had occupied the Ruhr) called "National Bolshevism". His own gradual slide from power, plus the emergence of a pro-Western regime in Germany converted Trotsky into a "revolutionary". A further point concerning "National Bolshevism" is that it was actually the brain child of Radek-one of the leaders of the "left opposition".

In parallel with the poverty, indeed virtual non-existence of its political programme, the left opposition was devoid of working class support. This, in itself, is not a definitive factor; at certain moments, real proletarian groups could find themselves with little support. Most of the opposition were noted for anti-working class positions on the question of 'labour discipline', and had denounced the mass strike wave which broke out in 1923 over continued deterioration in living conditions. Its appeal was to party bureaucrats and industrial managers, rather than to the working class,

"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. Nothing in either its economic or its political platform was likely to catch the imagination of the worker." (3).

The bureaucracy made a few concessions to the oppositions demands, but it was condemned at the 13th Congress, and faded away early in 1924. Such an opposition merits the epithet left no more than it merits that of an opposition at all. But let us leave the final word to the Russian worker who said of the struggle between the bureaucracy and the opposition in 1923,

"The workers will ask me what your fundamental differences are; to speak frankly, I do not know how to answer " (4).

This lapidary proletarian sentence exhausts the question of the Left Opposition.

Subsequent to this, manoeuvrings in the Party took on some weird contours. Stalin had allied with Zinoviev against Trotsky in 1923, and later when Stalin and Bukharin moved against Zinoviev, Trotsky entered into a tacit alliance with Stalin, since Zinoviev was still the main enemy.

(2). Trotsky, quoted in E H Carr The Interregnum p166

(3). Carr, Op. Cit p326-7.

(4). Quoted in Critique 4, p44.

Later, in 1925, when the Politburo removed Trotsky from his post as Commissar for War, Stalin repayed Trotsky's earlier favour by blocking Zinoviev's demand to have Trotsky expelled from the party altogether. This was at a time when Stalin had already advanced the theory of socialism in one country; so much for Trotsky's heroic "anti-Stalinist struggle". By 1925 it had not even begun, and Trotsky's main enemy, the leader of the bureaucratic degeneration, was Zinoviev.

Gradually, as it became clear that the Stalin-Bukharin group, with its pro-peasant policy was coming out on top in the power struggle, Zinoviev and Kamenev moved into opposition. They formed the Leningrad Opposition, which had the honour of first combatting "socialism in one country" as an ideology. Trotsky at first remained aloof but gradually moved into an alliance with the Zinoviev group, called the United Opposition which functioned throughout 1925-27. The Opposition took up the call for planning and industrialisation, and for a struggle against the "nep men and kulaks" in the domestic field, and as usual called for more party democracy. In the field of foreign policy, the Opposition began to criticise some of the bureaucracy's applications of the United Front, especially in China, where the Communist Party had been subject to the Kou Min Tang. But again, all this was purely tactical manoeuvring. The idea of the United Front itself was not criticised, and both Zinoviev (who was one of its main architects) and Trotsky had approved of frontism in both Germany and China since 1922, and endorsed the subordination of local communist parties to national bourgeois parties in China, Turkey and elsewhere when they themselves were in power. Indeed, when Stalin after 1929 (the so-called Third Period) moved against the idea of united fronts, Trotsky found himself having to come forward as their chief defender against Stalinist sectarianism. Similarly, once the idea of industrialisation was adopted by Stalin, and he had broken with Bukharin, Trotsky found himself advocating caution and denouncing the exaggerated hopes of the Stalinist planners. Political positions were as easily changed as shoes in Russia in the 1920's.

If it is claimed that the United Opposition was an expression of the working class, then inescapably, so was the policy turn adopted by Stalin from 1929-34, which took up most of the positions of the Opposition. This conclusion is not only deductable from hindsight; the bulk of the Oppositionists who had not already done so, capitulated willingly to Stalin after 1929, and even Preobrazhensky announced that the continuing opposition of Trotsky was unjustified. (5). Once again, the Opposition had failed to gain a significant working class following; once again its main strength lay in the bureaucracy which it claimed to criticise.

SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY

It will be conceded by many that all this is indeed true, but that the real saving grace of Trotskyism was its opposition to "socialism in one country" (first coherently advanced by Stalin in December 1924) with the supposed abandonment of proletarian internationalism which such a theory implied. Around no other single issue have so many myths and mystifications centred as this one. Before going on to look at the "controversy" in Russia itself, a fairly lengthy tangent on the "pre-history" of socialism in one country will have to be followed.

We find no elaborated position on this issue in the workers' movement before the First World War. Marx's own views on the question of the realisation of socialism within the framework of the bourgeois nation state are in no way developed. In the 1850's he had raised the question of whether socialism in one continent could survive, without answering it,

(5) R.V. Daniels, The Conscience of the Revolution p.374-75

"The difficult question for us is this; on the Continent the revolution is imminent, and will immediately assume a socialist character. Is it not bound to be crushed in this little corner, considering that in a far greater territory the movement of bourgeois society is still in the ascendant?" (6)

A few years later, the rules of the First International talked about the need for co-operation between the workers in several 'advanced' states for their liberation, but later, in the Civil War in France Marx talks about the Commune as the form through which a socialist republic could be introduced in France (though he subsequently expressed second thoughts on this). The views of Marx are thus ambiguous, and the problem of socialism within national boundaries had not been posed by history itself.

The view of the Second International, founded in 1889, was that within each bourgeois nation state, there would be a peaceful transition to socialism, and that each new socialist state would then federate with the others into a socialist commonwealth. Though the left wing of the International broke with the idea of a peaceful transition to socialism, they never rejected the idea, that in the advanced countries at least, such a transition could be undertaken within national boundaries. In these states the material pre-requisites for such a transformation existed. Lenin, at the height of the imperialist war, wrote,

"(The United States of Europe Slogan) may be interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in one country is impossible... Uneven political and economic development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible, first in several, or even one capitalist country taken singly. The proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and organized its own socialist production, would stand up against the rest of the world " (7).

The main area of controversy was Russia itself, and here the discussion was rooted in the specific question of Russian "backwardness". Lenin, and most of the Bolsheviks felt until very late in the day that the bourgeois revolution was still on the agenda in Russia, even if it had to be brought to its conclusion by the proletariat. Trotsky, with his theory of "permanent revolution" on the other hand claimed that if the Russian revolution occurred at the same time as one in western Europe, this backwardness could be overcome, and the revolution could proceed to its socialist phase. Lenin, independently, came to similar conclusions in his April Theses in 1917.

From then on the Bolsheviks had few reservations; they were out to build socialism in Russia ("Let us proceed to create the socialist order"-Lenin), and to spread the world revolution. It was not, of course, assumed that a "socialist" state would turn its back on the world revolution, in fact building socialism at home and spreading revolution abroad were considered to be synonymous. In the early years of the revolution, the emphasis on building socialism was strongly identified with the left, internationalist wing of the Bolshevik Party. For example, Ossinski, one of the leaders of the Kommunist group in 1918, and opponent of Brest Litovsk, wrote On the Building of Socialism with the aim of defending the construction of socialism by the workers themselves, and opposing one man management, piece work etc. Similarly, Kollontai in her text The Workers' Opposition of 1921 gave detailed attention to the question of whether the producers themselves, or the managers, would build socialism. The Workers Opposition was the only group in the Bolshevik Party to oppose the United Front. Even the Left Opposition of 1923 was headed by Preobrazhensky, who wrote a book called Primitive Socialist Accumulation (a term borrowed from Trotsky) to describe the economic policies of that group.

Turning to Lenin himself, his ideas that the N.E.P. was a strategic retreat that might last twenty years began to change. Gradually he began to see the

(6) Marx and Engels On Colonialism p320

(7) Lenin, quoted in R. V. Daniels A Documentary History of Bolshevism p71.

N.E.P. as the framework for the movement of Russia into socialism. His later writings talk about socialism in one country in everything but name,

"Socialism is no longer a matter of the distant future. . . . We have brought socialism into everyday life. N.E.P. Russia will become socialist Russia." Pravda Nov21 1922.

"Our opponents told us repeatedly that we were rash in undertaking to implement socialism in an insufficiently cultured country. . . . (A) cultural revolution would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country." Pravda May 26 1923 (8)

Stalin stood on the right of the party at this time, along with Bukharin and others who saw the N.E.P. as a long term concession to the peasantry, and admitted the bourgeois nature of the Russian economy. In Foundations of Leninism of 1924 he repudiated the idea that socialism could be built in Russia. Stalin and Bukharin later proclaimed precisely this economy as potentially socialist, and felt that as long as the "smytchka" (alliance between workers and peasants) could be maintained, socialism could be built in Russia. "Socialism in one country" initially repudiated industrialisation as a threat to the "smytchka", but later Stalin took up Trotskys views on the need for industrialisation as the basis for socialism, and broke with Bukharin, who continued to favour N.E.P.

The reservations expressed by the Bolsheviks were not that it would be impossible to build socialism in one country, or that the Russian economy was becoming socialist. What they felt that that a socialist state would probably not survive in a capitalist world due to political hostility and eventual military intervention by the capitalist states. Intervention in the Civil War had been the supreme example of this, and in the 20s and 30s Bolshevik Party leaders remained haunted by fears of a united imperialist front leading to an invasion and bourgeois restoration in Russia. Hence the policy of "driving wedges" between the imperialist powers (eg., supporting Germany against the Entente), or of weakening them by supporting national liberation movements in their colonies. Lenin's oft-quoted remarks about the inability of Russia to survive in isolation refer not to the impossibility of socialist construction, but to the inevitability of a capitalist attack on Russia. Once the Soviet state had shown its ability to survive in the capitalist world (mainly by capitulating to it), the theory of the possibility of socialist construction in Russia inevitably emerged, as the doctrine of "socialism in one country" first put forward by Stalin in Dec. 1924.

At this time Trotsky was unconcerned with Stalin's innovations, indeed his own writings of the period explicitly accept the possibility of socialism in one country, even a backward one,

"It is clear that under conditions of a capitalist rebirth in Europe and in the whole world, possibly enduring for many years, socialism in a backward country would find itself eye to eye with colossal dangers." (9)

-for tactical reasons Trotsky back pedalled on these views when it came to a fight with Stalin.

The debate over socialism in one country climaxed in 1925-7; actually, what was discussed was whether it could be built in Russia, since the whole debate took place within a national framework. In the discussion, Stalin's main arguments came from the Bolshevik historian Pokrovsky. He argued that since Russia had reached in imperialist stage before W.W.I, the material pre-conditions for socialism must exist within its boundaries. Trotsky's counter argument had been that Russia was a client of Entente capital, and not itself an independent imperialism, therefore the pre-conditions for socialism did not exist, though Trotsky was quite prepared to assert the predominantly socialist character of the Russian economy before the debate

(8). Lenin Socialism and Communism in the U.S.S.R. p26, p38-9

(9) Trotsky Challenge of the Left Opposition p375.

actually assumed political importance. Since they shared many of the same premises, the opponents of Stalin were forced to back peddle on their arguments. Thus Zinoviev, speaking at the Fourteenth Party Congress said,

"We're only in dispute over whether it is possible to complete the building of socialism in one country.... We are not in dispute over whether the building of socialism in one country is impossible; the numbers of the proletariat in the Soviet Union are sufficient for this... the economic pre-requisites are present." (11).

Contrary to what the I.C.C. claim (I R. 11, p18), it was not the Left Opposition which attacked the idea of socialism on one country at the Fourteenth Congress of 1925, but the Zinovievist Leningrad Opposition, at this time unconnected with Trotsky. The latter, who was present, said nothing, being still more anti-Zinovievist than anti-Stalinist. The issue which threw Trotsky into the arms of Zinoviev was not common opposition to socialism in one country, but Zinoviev's conversion to the need for industrialisation. While Trotsky jettisoned the idea of permanent revolution to come to an alliance with the Zinovievists, the latter announced their support for Trotsky's view that industrialisation was needed to build socialism in Russia. As Trotsky put it in Towards Socialism or Capitalism,

"Unless the productive forces grow, there can be no question of socialism" (12)

In the whole debate there were only differences of emphasis. While Stalin announced that it was possible to completely build socialism in Russia, Zinoviev felt that it was possible to build it, but not completely. Trotsky on the other hand felt that to build it needed industrialisation. The debate concerned only Russia, and didn't deny the possibility of socialism in an advanced country.

In relation to Russia in the 1920s "socialism in one country" cannot be a class line, nor can it mark the end of the Russian revolution, nor of any of the bodies (such as the Bolsheviks or the Comintern) which endorsed it. Indeed, no one claimed so at the time. The theory broke with no established practical or theoretical precedent in the workers movement. And if the belief in the possibility of building socialism in one country is a class line, then all the left factions of Bolshevism from 1918-21 had crossed over to the counter-revolution long before Stalin.

The class line is NOT "socialism on one country", but rather the psuedo-debate in Russia conceals two real class lines;

1. The identification of a bourgeois economy with a socialist or proto-socialist one. This all factions on Russia from Trotsky to Stalin did, and all are equally stained.
2. The abandonment of the world revolution, and subjection of the needs of the international working class to those of the Russian state. On this particular class line, Trotsky crossed over to the bourgeoisie before Stalin, with his actions at Kronstadt and in Germany.

Those who wish to make socialism in one country into some kind of dividing line, glibly assume that such a policy was synonymous with abandoning the world revolution. But in so far as they still understood it, neither the bureaucracy, nor the opposition disavowed revolution at this point in time. As far as calling for world revolution went, Stalin's group did as much of this as that of Trotsky, until the actual dissolution of the Comintern during W.W. 2. Consider only the "Third Period" when "ultra-leftist" revolutionary talk was cheap.

(11) Zinoviev at the Fourteenth Congress, quoted in Daniels Conscience of the Revolution, p 265.

(12) Trotsky Challenge of the Left Opposition p295.

"The controversy over socialism in one country did not, as is commonly thought, turn on the question of whether to stir up revolutionaries abroad, or abandon the world revolution. Both the opposition and the party leadership welcomed support, while neither was prepared to take risks with the security of the soviet state " (12)

It will doubtless be asserted by nominalists, that in fact if not in words a disavowal of world revolution had occurred long before the dissolution of the Comintern. With this we would agree, but add;

-in fact, if not in words, the Bolshevics had abandoned, or become an obstacle to the class' struggle from 1921, since the world revolution had abandoned them, and forced their capitulation to world capital. The putchist exceptions to this, such as Germany in 1923 and China in 1927, were connected with faction fights inside the party, or relations with bourgeois factions abroad.

-in fact, if not in words, socialism in one country, or more vitally, the identification of a bourgeois economy with socialism, had been generally accepted Bolshevik philosophy since 1921. All Stalin did was to make this explicit.

The Left Opposition was from its inception organically part of the counter-revolution, and its struggles with the bureaucracy were conflicts over how best to develop the national capital. The lack of class content to the debates is shown by the ease with which one group adopted the positions of the other. Any group which emerged defending proletarian interests after 1921 was inevitably forced out of the Bolshevik Party, for example the Workers Group or Workers Truth.

"Socialism in one country" thus changed nothing as regards the character of the Russian economy, the position of the working class, the role of the Comintern, or Bolshevik foreign policy. Never before or since in the workers movement have four words devoid of content been used to baptise a counter revolutionary group in the holy water of communism. The attempt to use the issue as a cordon sanitair to separate one from the horrors of Stalinism is impossible. Rejection of the idea that Thermidor had occurred in 1921 means there is no possibility of rejecting a defencist position on the Soviet Union till 1939 at the earliest, when it became manifestly imperialist (Finland, Poland).

Socialism in one country is thus no class line; were it possible, then we would be obliged to support socialist construction in any isolated nation state. Indeed, an isolated proletarian bastion would be obliged to undermine as far as possible the domination of capital within its boundaries, both as an aid to the world revolution, and as a basis for later socialist construction. But today we know that any isolated bastion could not survive long without capitulating to capitalism. Necessity would force it back onto the world market with all the political and economic concessions which this would imply. Competition from outside would force accumulation and exploitation of the working class. The question does not really hinge on the level of industrialisation, availability of resources etc. Even a workers revolution in the U.S.A would revert to capitalism unless it spread.

To repeat; the class lines are the abandonment of the world revolution and attempts to come to an arrangement with international capital, which had happened in Russia by 1921, and the identification of state capitalism with a socialist or semi-socialist economy, which was made by all factions of the Bolsheviks long before Stalins pronouncements.

CONCLUSION

Groups like the I.M.G. in Britain, which claim to continue the work of the Fourth International quite logically defend Trotsky's political history in the 1920's and claim Trotskyism as the only legitimate political expression of the working class in the face of the counter-revolution. Their critical defence of Russian capital today is inextricably interwoven with their defence of it in the past. But what are we to make of groups which claim heritage with the international communist left of the period after the First World War, and who nevertheless adopt the view that Trotskyism was an expression of the working class, which only capitulated to capital later, if indeed it has capitulated at all?

This is easy to explain when we consider the Bordigist groups who use Trotskyism as a veil to cover their own accommodations with the counter-revolution in the Twenties. In order to avoid being expelled from the Comintern, the Italian Communist Party under Bordiga was forced to abandon anti-parliamentarism, and endorse the United Front and anti-fascism in Italy. Clearly, such capitulations could only be justified if Russia and the Comintern were still, in spite of everything, proletarian. Thus, the Bordigists can use the existence of the Trotskyist Opposition to give proletarian legitimacy to the Comintern and Russia, and justify their own reactionary slidings. However, despite this, Bordigism was never organically part of the counter-revolution, as was Trotskyism, and the Italian Left later broke from the Comintern and, to some extent, criticised their past mistakes.

With the I.C.C., we are dealing, to some extent, with opportunism. In an attempt to win over individuals from Trotskyism, the I.C.C. adopts the idea that Trotskyism was once proletarian, but went astray along the way somewhere:

"Thus the Left Opposition in Russia undeniably appeared, developed and died as a proletarian reaction to the nascent Stalinist counter-revolution." (World Revolution 11 p. 18)

To justify this the usual mixture of half truths and distortions are paraded. On a deeper level, the I.C.C.'s analysis of the Trotskyist Oppositions is part of its more general faulty analysis of the decline of the Russian Revolution; an analysis which leads it to advocate policies for the next revolutionary wave whose logic is positively counter-revolution. For the I.C.C., despite everything, the Bolsheviks and the Comintern were still proletarian after 1921, and hence they think that all sorts of positive lessons can be drawn from these years What for the C.W.O. are the logical policies of a bourgeois group, are for the I.C.C. still mistakes of a proletarian current. Trotskyism (along with the Bordigists whose capitulations kept them in the Comintern) provides them with the evidence that proletarian tendencies were still in operation inside the Bolshevik Party at this time, and hence they must have been a proletarian party though in degeneration. The I.C.C. believes that had different policies been adopted after 1921, the tide of counter-revolution could have been arrested. If only the Bolsheviks had not identified themselves with the state, if only an economic policy and a state reconciling the peasants to the proletarian dictatorship could have been formulated, if only the Comintern had been independent of the Russian state. etc., etc. then the Bolsheviks and the Communist International would have played a positive role in the world revolution, which the I.C.C. microscope sees continuing till 1927 at least.

As long as the I.C.C. continue to see the counter revolution in Russia as a quantitative accumulation of errors and not as a **qualitative** change, they will continue to seek for means by which the process could have been organised in the interests of the proletariat, and they will continue to need Trotsky as evidence that the Bolshevik Party was not yet

bourgeois. They will thus continue to favour policies on the period of transition which involve the creation of an "all class" state, and the enactment of inter-classist economic policies. Rather than being an open question of purely historical importance, the evaluation of Trotskyism is part of an overall analysis of the decline of the Russian Revolution. Failure to grasp the dialectics of this decline could lead to a group being on the other side of the barricades in the coming revolution.

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International:

1. Oslo Meeting

At a meeting on 23rd-25th September, 1977, several groups in Scandinavia met to discuss problems of revolutionary politics, viz. Arbetarmakt (Sweden),* Arbeiderkamp (Oslo), Marxist Study Group (Trondheim) and Marxist Working Group (Stockholm). To this meeting were invited representatives of the C.W.O and the International Communist Current (I.C.C). The Scandinavian groups are all of fairly recent origin, reflecting the recent and immature impact of the economic and political crisis there. They are generally breakaways from the populist Anarchist and Maoist movements which are strong in Scandinavia and have been strongly influenced by council communism. The main issues discussed at the meeting were state capitalism and national liberation, with Arbetarmakt, the group with the most developed positions (none of them have yet arrived at programmatic coherence) providing most of the opposition to the views of the C.W.O and I.C.C on these issues. The textual contribution of the C.W.O follows our brief summary of the discussion at the meeting and the decisions taken.

STATE CAPITALISM

The discussion on this issue began with the C.W.O delegate outlining the theory of state capitalism, the form of capitalism's decay. In our view state capitalism takes different forms in different countries due to specific circumstances, but its central cause is the need for national capitals to grapple with the fall in the rate of profit. Distribution of surplus value via taxation, rationalisation via nationalisation, and postponement of the crisis by currency depreciation are its major features. State capitalism also developed from initial state control of a war economy to the later Keynesian mixed economies in response to the crisis. The so-called socialist blocs are extreme forms of state capitalism, not a new form of society. Against defenders of the non-capitalist nature of Russia it was argued that Marx foresaw the possibility of the centralisation of capital at a national level, and the Russian economy is based on accumulation - forced by military and economic competition - by exploitation of value-producing labour power. Inadequate theories of state capitalism - like the I.C.C's Luxemburgism, were criticised; unless it can be explained economically, state capitalism remains a moral epithet.(1)

The contribution of the I.C.C argued that Marx's theory of crisis was that adopted by Rosa Luxemburg (although the C.W.O has pointed out on many occasions that she herself realised that this was not the case(2)), and the assertion that state capitalism is simply a war economy, all of the features of which have existed since 1914. In conclusion, their delegate argued that as long as it was agreed that capitalism is decadent, explanations of the economic basis of state capitalism could not be a serious issue between groups.

The Swedish group, Arbetarmakt, announced that their efforts to apply Marxism to Eastern Europe had failed. In their view, state capitalism in the West runs nationalised units as competing units; fiscal policy rather than statification is the main arm of state capitalism; neither of these

* Though not all sections of Arbetarmakt attended the meeting or saw its importance.

(1) See R.P. 1 "Theories of State Capitalism" and R.P.7 "The Crisis of Comecon" for an expansion of the C.W.O's views.

(2) For a critique of Luxemburg's views on state capitalism, see R.P.1 ibid and R.P.6 "The Accumulation of Contradictions".

factors exists in the "state bureaucratic" countries. Since these countries cannot compete on the world market, they withdraw autarchically and develop via a planned economy, where there is no market and no realisation of surplus value. The comrades were aware of the problems in their analysis, e.g. Does the existence of this new social formation render the possibility of socialism impossible? Are there classes in this new mode of production, and if so, what are they? On this issue Arbetarmakt are agnostic; they conclude that possibly there is no working class in Russia.

A lively discussion followed this contribution. A comrade from M.A.G (Marxist Working Group) argued that if Russia is not capitalist, then the relations of production must be a modification of some form of slavery or forced labour. Inevitably such systems experienced decadence through a falling labour productivity, whereas in Russia clearly the opposite is the case. Similarly, if Russia is non-capitalist why can the subject class not simply pressurise it for reforms, and hence ultimately into socialism? Advocates of similar theories, like Kuron have drawn this conclusion.

The final C.W.O contribution on this issue began by saying that from Hilferding's theories on "finance capital" to theories of "state bureaucracy" people have been announcing that ne economic developments have rendered Marxist economics obsolete. We argued that Russia is not autarchic; military competition forces it to rapidly accumulate in order to survive, and since a disproportionate amount has to be devoted to matching the efforts of the U.S.A (which has an economy twice its size) surplus value is limited for re-investment in other areas. In an attempt to produce relative surplus value, the U.S.S.R has obtained Western credits for technology, to be paid for in exports of raw materials at dumping prices. But the crisis has led to a decline in demand for these, and to the curtailing of credits, meaning that the slow-down in growth in the Eastern bloc is directly related to the outbreak of the world economic crisis. Russia's relations with its allies are also imperialist ones, not as Arbetarmakt seemed to imply, the natural solidarity of threatened "non-capitalist" systems. However, the concept of state capitalism is a working tool, which has to be refined and defended with empirical explorations. The task of Marxists is to apply themselves to this, not to chase down non-capitalist sidetracks, or imagine that the pronouncement of the epithet "state capitalism" is the end of our theoretical tasks.

NATIONAL LIBERATION

This was introduced by a contribution from the I.C.C. Arguing that the practice of national liberation in the twentieth century shows it to be counter-revolutionary, they listed a series of "facts" about "national liberation" today (e.g. Inability of the class to maintain independence.) which nevertheless appeared to us to be applicable in the previous epoch. In the I.C.C view "class criteria", not objectivist economic ones, decide revolutionary positions.

The contributions of Arbetarmakt on this issue were less coherent than on the issue of "state bureaucracy". Some members of the group inclined to support all so-called "national liberation" struggles, whereas others supported only those which established "state bureaucratic" societies. The view of the latter was that by withdrawing from the world market these states are able to develop the productive forces by creating a working class. However, revolutionaries' support for such struggles should stop the moment they defeat the external imperialism, and be transferred to the workers' struggle against their new masters. The contradictions of such a theory were highlighted. Despite being unsure as to whether a working class exists in such societies, Arbetarmakt gives them support precisely for creating such a class! Similarly, it is illogical to support them only until the new bureaucracies take power, since their "progressive" role only starts after seizing power. In

addition to these criticisms (from MAG), other comrades validly disputed the assertion that economic development necessarily takes place faster in these "state bureaucracies" than in areas like Korea, Iran, etc. which remain tied to Western imperialism. Moreover, the imperialist relationship is established anew between the state capitalist bloc and the new "state bureaucracy".

The C.W.O contribution stressed that moral approaches to national liberation are inadequate. Communism and nationalism are antithetical. Before 1914 certain reasons existed to support certain national struggles, but now these no longer apply. It is not mainly that the class has little independence or is massacred in national struggles - this was also the case in struggles in the nineteenth century. The main reason is economic, i.e the possibility of such struggles leading to a progressive, independent growth of the productive forces is nil. Neither autarchy, nor competition with other powers is a permanent possibility and the imperialist relationship is soon re-established. Until the victory of the communist revolution, there are no lesser evils for such areas, as events in Cambodia have shown. The fallacies of national liberation are additionally highlighted by the contemporary war between Ethiopia and Somalia in the Ogaden.

Time cut this discussion short and it was agreed to continue it at a future meeting.

PROPOSALS

The C.W.O proposed that a summary of the meeting be produced, and the texts presented included in a discussion bulletin. We also proposed a further series of meetings with international participation in Scandinavia, and also that the groups there attend the conferences initiated by the P.C.I (Italy), the first of which took place in May, 1977. While these proposals met with general approval, there was a tendency amongst some of the Scandinavian comrades towards a certain isolationism, and a failure to see the vital importance of international confrontations in the process of political clarification. Similarly, an academic tendency emerged, wishing to turn the meetings away from political confrontation to a series of seminars of a research nature. Finally, it was agreed to hold meetings of both types. The C.W.O certainly welcomes the emergence of a process of political clarification in Scandinavia, and the willingness to seek outside contributions. We hope that the deepening of the crisis and resulting political effects will reduce any residual tendencies towards isolationism and academicism among the participants, as well as helping to clarify the issues at stake themselves.

FORTHCOMING:

ARTICLES TO APPEAR IN REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES 10 & 11

Debate with the I.C.C. on Economics

Trade Unions

Middle East

Texts of the K.A.I.

Capitalist Decadence in Latin America

COMMUNISM, STATE CAPITALISM and NATIONAL LIBERATION

Text of the C.W.O for Oslo meeting, 23rd-25th September 1977

The establishment of a communist society will not be a spontaneous or automatic act by the working class but will be the result of a conscious destruction of the capitalist state and organisation of the proletarian dictatorship through the workers' councils.

Because the development of class consciousness is an uneven and not an automatic process it is necessary that the revolutionary minorities which already exist and those that undoubtedly will come into being later should recognise their responsibility to the working class as a whole and work for the generalisation and deepening of class consciousness both nationally and internationally. To do otherwise is to leave unchallenged pseudo-communists like the Trotskyists, whose organised attempts at counter-revolution must be defeated by the most class conscious workers organised together.

The very fact that this meeting is taking place reflects the beginnings of understanding of the need for a political organisation of the working class among the participants. But that this understanding is still at an embryonic level is shown by the vagueness with which the participants talk about the organisational issue. e.g.

"The task of a revolutionary organisation is not to 'organise the working class' or to take power'on behalf of the working class' but to actively struggle for workers' power and the development of revolutionary consciousness in the working class." (The First Platform of Arbeiderkamp)

Fine phrases, but they take us no nearer the concrete tasks and concrete structure of a communist group.

In order to be effective in its task the revolutionary organisation must a) be clear about the historical lessons of the class struggle and the way forward for the proletariat, and b) understand the importance of the deepening of the economic crisis for the extension of the class struggle beyond a reformist level.

It is within this framework that we can outline the form and function of the revolutionary organisation both before and during the revolution.

Above all, the revolutionary organisation must be clear about the political steps the proletariat must take to advance its interests during the revolution. Of necessity this means that revolutionary minorities must study working class history, particularly the last revolutionary wave, so that the historical lessons are understood and there is less possibility of the proletariat repeating past mistakes during the next revolution. Obviously, therefore, if the communist party is to be the "one sure compass" (Gorter) for the proletariat during the revolutionary struggle, then today's revolutionary minorities, who are the kernel of the future communist party, must regroup only on the basis of full programmatic agreement. There is no room in a revolutionary organisation for open questions on issues which will be decisive for the success or failure of the revolution. (e.g. the nature of the state during the period of transition from capitalism to communism, or the role of the communist party). To relegate such issues to ones where every individual can hold

an opinion but on which the organisation has no clear political stance means that during the revolution, when the party will be expected to show firm revolutionary policies, it will in fact be divided and unable to fulfil its role as the pole of clarity and coherence. It is a dangerous mistake for today's revolutionaries to regroup on the basis of common agreement about the organisation's activities before the revolution without reaching agreement about the far more important tasks of the organisation during the revolution itself. The argument that building up the numerical strength of the communist organisation is more important than programmatic coherence, since during the revolution the organisation can split when "open questions" gain practical significance, is spurious because it misses the whole point of why the revolutionary organisation exists in the first place. The C.W.O does not deny that regroupment today is an important task of communists, but we affirm that regroupment is futile unless it is on the basis of agreement, political clarification precedes discussions on regroupment. Thus, while welcoming the present meeting as a step in political clarification, we cannot endorse the view which sees it as "part of a process of regroupment of revolutionaries on a world scale" (I.C.C text for Oslo meeting). Certainly the organisational issue must be discussed, but to pose regroupment in this concrete way, at this stage when many fundamental issues remain unclarified, is to put the cart before the horse.

Apart from the development of our understanding of proletarian history and the present economic crisis and the regroupment of revolutionaries, there is another important task today for the revolutionary organisation - that is the establishment of a political presence within the working class. Despite the weakness of any revolutionary organisation at the present time and the general low level of class consciousness, revolutionaries must propagandise their views within the class, not with the idealist aim of moving the reformist struggle on to a political level, but to establish a consistent presence within the class and to point the revolutionary way forward. As the crisis hits harder and the struggle begins to move on to a political level (as the working class becomes more and more disillusioned with wage struggles) revolutionaries must be in a position to present the communist programme to the class to which gradually more workers will adhere. The adoption of the communist programme by the class will not be automatic and revolutionaries must relate directly to the class as a whole. For the majority of the proletariat, the adoption of a communist consciousness will be a practical response to a historical situation in which the programme of the communist group - a distillation of its platform - will be seen as the only way out of humanity's impasse; both in the general sense of defining the aims of the movement, and in proposing specific steps in the revolutionary process.

As the crisis deepens and the class struggle begins to take on political dimensions, the revolutionary organisation, if it has established a presence within the class, will be transformed into a political party as masses of workers accept its programme. Far from reflecting the "substitutionist" designs of a counter-revolutionary minority, the development of a revolutionary organisation into a party with a mass basis will be a sign of the generalisation of class consciousness and the onward movement of the revolution.

If we look at the relationship between party and class as it will exist at a time when the revolution is going forward it becomes absurd to say that the party must not allow itself to take power when the majority of class conscious workers within the councils are party members. In a situation where the working class is moving towards communism it is no less than counter-revolutionary to advocate that the most conscious workers, because they are members of the revolutionary party, should refuse delegation to the councils. This is tantamount to advocating that the councils should implement non-revolutionary policies. As we have said many times, the only guarantee against substitutionism is the mass

movement of the working class towards communism; but the communist party is essential for the promotion of the generalised consciousness necessary for the development of that mass movement, and as a vehicle for its successful implementation.

The tasks of the working class and its revolutionary organisations do not vary from place to place: in the mixed economies, the 'socialist' bloc and the third world, they are the same. This is because everywhere capitalism reigns, and everywhere its forms are determined by its historical senility.

It is invalid for revolutionaries to base their view of the nature of the so-called socialist societies on moral criteria. They must be understood in terms of their economic basis which can only be explained as a form of capitalism. The problems of state capitalism and national liberation go together as today "national liberation" struggles lead only to the establishment of state capitalist regimes. The inadequacy of moral critiques should be obvious enough. Some can find moral justification for regimes of "national liberation" because they seem to offer a marginally better life to the "peoples" of those countries. However, even on an empirical level this is inadequate. Even in the most "successful" of these countries (e.g. China) the improvements brought about by "liberation" have been tiny and purchased at the expense of ferocious exploitation. But "moral" arguments are really reactionary ones. Those who do give "critical" support to "national liberation" regimes do so on a racialist basis. For them these regimes are fine for "backward" Africans, Asians and Latin Americans but are too "authoritarian" for Western revolutionaries. Logically, support for "national liberation" abroad should lead to support for Stalinism at home.

On this "moral" level we could proceed for ever without getting one iota nearer to understanding how these societies operate. Only Marxism can provide us with this. Contrary to what the Cardanites of Socialisme ou Barbarie or Solidarity have said, the obvious inadequacies of the so-called "Marxist" regimes does not therefore imply the end of Marxism. Rather, a Marxist analysis of the real relations of production in those countries reveals the spuriousness of their claims to be Marxist. An analysis of the nature of Russia etc. cannot be divorced from an analysis of capitalist development as a whole and our starting point must therefore be what for Marx was the defining characteristic of a capitalist economy above all others.

The only necessary condition, "the essential feature of capitalist production is the generalised exploitation of wage labour" (R.P 7 p.32). On this basis can arise any variety of political superstructures; there is clearly a superstructural difference between the state in the classical period of laissez-faire, and the developed state control of today. In the laissez-faire period, the organic composition of capital was relatively low, and though the rate of profit exhibited a tendency to fall, it could be periodically arrested and equalised through the decennial crisis. Each crisis led to the bankruptcy of weaker capitals, the consolidation of those remaining, and then to the repetition of the cycle on a higher level. This continued until the era of 'monopoly capitalism' at home and imperialism abroad, when with fewer weaker capitals to devalue by bankruptcy, the only remaining way in which capital could be devalued was by its physical destruction via war (both constant and variable capital). In this era the functions of the state increased greatly.

The First World War shattered the abundance promised by the capitalists at the turn of the century, and revealed capitalism as a decadent social system. Under decadence, the contradictions of capitalism have grown so intense that the purely economic means to ensure its continued accum-

ulation (the crisis) can no longer suffice. For reasons we have explained elsewhere (1), the law of value can no longer ensure the necessary equalisation of the rate of profit necessary for the national economy, and this function has to be taken over by the state, which is also the only organ capable of postponing the crisis via credit expansion, and the increase in the money supply. Under decadence, the transformation of the capitalist state from its nineteenth century form, into the personification, the embodiment of the national capital as a whole is completed. Naturally, the forms in which this occurs vary from country to country, depending on specific historical and political circumstances. In all countries the state regulates specific units in the interests of the capital as a whole, and even in the U.S.A, the world's strongest capitalist power, particular interests are overruled in the aid of general aims, e.g. Gulf Oil in Angola. (2)

Though state capitalism has developed 'organically' in the old capitalist metropolises, it has achieved its classical forms in those areas which were relatively backward at the beginning of the era of permanent crisis. In these countries (e.g. Russia, China, Cuba) the state is the only instrument capable of ensuring any capital accumulation, via total control of the economic life of the country - usually including the extinction of the old private, parasitic and comprador bourgeoisie. In many of these countries, the ruling class claimed that capitalism had been abolished, and a new form of society installed. Their claim that these societies were 'socialist' was echoed by the Trotskyists and others, who saw them as 'transitional societies', which had overthrown capitalism (3). It is ironical that the participants of this conference from Scandinavia, in baptising it as a "non-Leninist" meeting, yet echo so many of the erroneous ideas of Lenin and Trotsky on national liberation and the non-capitalist nature of Russia, while at the same time rejecting the real programmatic and practical achievements of Bolshevism, represented in the fight against the imperialist war, and the October Revolution. The spurious claim to be non-capitalist rests on two features which these societies supposedly share with a socialist society of the future - abolition of private property and a planned economy. But 'planning' in these societies is not for human needs, and is determined by the needs of capital accumulation and the dictates of economic and military competition. Thus it is simply a utopian attempt to plan chaos. Since production is not for needs, neither is the property in Russia common property, rather it is still 'private' to the class which directs society, and exists as an alien force to the producers, expropriating the surplus value they produce. The integral state capitalist countries represent a more fully developed form of the state capitalism of the 'mixed' economies, and they share in the crisis which has once again erupted on a world scale, caused by the rising organic composition of capital. Advocates of such theories as the "state bureaucratic mode" of production are unable to explain why this is happening, and why it is happening simultaneously with the crisis in the West. (3) Also, to argue that here we are dealing with a different mode of production implies that we are dealing with a different exploited class (as yet unidentified!). Indeed, there cannot be a working class in existence there if there is no capitalism, and the tasks of the exploited class must be radically different from those of the world proletariat. Thus such ideas lead to the splitting of the world's workers, just as do those which advocate the workers in 'backward' areas support their own national bourgeoisies to achieve national liberation.

But it is almost equally inadequate to argue that Russia is capitalist

(1) See "The Economics of Capitalist Decadence" in R.P. 2

(2) See "Angola" in Workers Voice 17

(3) See "Crisis of Comecon" in R.P. 7

and be unable to explain why, except at the level of journalistic rhetoric. An argument like that of the I.C.C which bases itself on Luxemburgism, simply puts weapons in the hands of our adversaries.(1) We argue that Russia is capitalist because Marxist science points to this conclusion; we cannot announce it as capitalist - and then proclaim that how the conclusion was reached is irrelevant. In this schema, theory becomes a vulgar, post-hoc apology for what is really an intuitive or moral stance.

If the global operation of the law of value makes it impossible for non-capitalist societies to exist, it equally makes it impossible for national liberation to succeed today. In the last historical period, the working class could, in certain cases, and subject to certain restrictions (2), give support to struggles for national unification or liberation, since they led to a concentration of resources and the expansion of the productive forces. In the decadent period, the high organic composition of the advanced states, means that no new state can break on to the world market as a competitor, and is instead forced to simply change masters, and leave unchanged the imperialist relationship. No amount of humanistic spasms can alter the fact that without the proletarian revolution, barbarism is on the agenda for the 'third world'.

Supporters of national liberation must have great difficulty in swallowing recent events, such as the "liberation" of Cambodia, or Uganda's "anti-imperialist" struggle. But the recent dramatic events in the Horn of Africa, show that it is logically, as well as politically impossible to support 'national liberation'. Here we have a bloody war raging in the Ogaden, between 'Marxist' Ethiopia and 'Marxist' Somalia, both recently hailed as shining examples of national liberation and indeed 'socialist' societies. Which of these is due our support? Somalia, which is trying to 'liberate' the Ogaden, with the help of U.S and Arab backers (who also support the liberation struggle of the 'Marxist' Eritrean Liberation Front)? Or do we support Ethiopia, which after liberating itself from Selassie with U.S backing, is now fighting to maintain itself, with the aid of Russia, formerly Somalia's firmest ally!

We hope these events will open the eyes of the advocates of support for national liberation, and lead them to advocate globally revolutionary defeatism. The only war the proletariat can support is the civil war against the bourgeoisie. Capitalism is everywhere decadent, the tasks of the working class, and of revolutionaries, are everywhere the same.

C.W.O September, 1977

(1) For a detailed critique of Luxemburgist and other inadequate explanations of Russia, see "Theories of State Capitalism" in R.P 1 (For Luxemburgism see pp.13-14). Further criticism of the economics of Luxemburg on this issue can be found in "The Accumulation of Contradictions" in R.P 6.

(2) The framework for this is outlined in "Marxism and the Irish Question" in R.P. 2 pp.1-4.

DISCUSSION BULLETIN OF THE NON-LENINIST CONFERENCE No. 5

This has now been published and contains (in English) the C.W.O's article "The Theory of State Bureaucracy: Some Criticisms". Available from:

Arbetarmakt, Box 49 035, 5-100 28 STOCKHOLM, Sweden; OR:
B. Karlsson, Fassbergsgatan 7, 431 39 Mølndal, Sweden.

2. Battaglia Comunista

The Partito Comunista Internazionale, (which publishes the paper Battaglia Comunista and the journal Prometeo (1)), some time ago initiated a dialogue with the C.W.O. We welcome their initiative as a sure sign that- to quote their text printed here- "the crisis has agitated the political waters of the vanguard" The establishment of relations with this group is all the more welcome since we have found that on many issues Battaglia shares the same political positions as the C.W.O (eg. idea of decadence, falling rate of profit as the cause of the crisis, views on the period of transition.)

The history of our relations began with an article in Prometeo (No 24/5,1975), welcoming the formation of the C.W.O., whilst at the same time criticising our views on the question of the political party. Then Battaglia invited us to participate in a conference of groups of the communist left, held in Milan in May 1977. Unfortunately we were unable to attend the meeting, and our participation was limited to our conference texts (2), and general support for the initiative of the P.C.Int. in calling it. However, we were able to send two comrades to Milan in August 1977, where meetings of an exploratory nature were held. A summary of these discussions, and their subsequent amplification is given below. Exchanges have continued, and in Battaglia Comunista 35th year, No13 our views, as expressed in the conference texts for the Oslo Conference (3) are again subject to scrutiny, and criticism. In the article, Battaglia underline their agreement with us on the necessity for the party to struggle within the workers councils for the communist programme, and that it is only possible to talk of revolution once the majority of the class, through the councils, are making this programme their own. Thus in the revolution-and afterwards-we share the views of Battaglia. But they claim that our desire for a "political presence" in the class is purely verbal until we establish "suitable instruments of intervention and agitation" in the class; in other words we should be engaged in building up factory groups of communists now.

We do not accept Battaglia's views on this, not as a matter of principle, but as one of feasibility. We cannot afford to eschew any method in the struggle for communism on 'principle'. Any amount of revolutionary will is powerless in the face of a low level of class consciousness-such as exists today. Whilst factory groups- whose precise role is still to be defined- will be essential in the future, any effort to build them now would not only be voluntaristic, but could lead to the kind of revolutionary "auctioneering" indulged in by the Trotskyists. If workers are still at the level of fighting defensive economic actions, it is not the task of communists to incite them to more of the same, but to go beyond the sectional impasse. And this too would be voluntaristic if it were not located within the perspective of the deepening of the crisis, which will in the end force workers to take seriously what communists are saying. With that, we leave the reader to study the report of the discussions, and the text of Battaglia

- (1). Available from Casella Postale 1753, 20100, Milano, Italy.
- (2). The texts of this conference, along with the discussions which took place have been published in English, and is available at 30p from; B.M. Box 869, London WCLV 6XX. We strongly recommend readers of R.P. to avail themselves of the chance of studying this publication.
- (3). See the preceding article on the Oslo meeting, and the accompanying C.W.O. conference document, which is the object of the Battaglia text.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH BATTAGLIA COMUNISTA MILAN AUG. 1977.

1. Tasks of revolutionaries today and the development of the Party.

The issue of the development of the Party occupied the bulk of the discussion and was the question on which most disagreement centred. We outlined our view that the communist organization would grow with the growth in class consciousness-itself a product of the development of the crisis-and that only when the class was moving towards us could we constitute the class party. At the moment we have to direct interventions towards the class in order to establish a political presence round which the growth of the Party will centre as the crisis deepens. Battaglia argued that it was important to constitute the party now; the party was not a question of numbers, but of orientation. The party should seek to establish its presence in the class in concrete terms, through groups of international communists in the factories. These factory groups would be the link between the party and the masses, enabling the party to participate in the class struggle today.

Pointing out that we did not reject the idea of factory groups in principle, we countered with the argument that it would be difficult to be involved in the class struggle at the present time without abandoning revolutionary positions. Battaglia charged us with having similar abstentionist positions to the now defunct U.S. group, Forward. However, though the C.W.O. does not take part in wage struggles, we do not, like Forward condemn the class for doing so. For us the task of revolutionaries is to intervene in their struggles to point out to the class the positive and negative aspects of the battles it wages, mainly through political leaflets. We asked Battaglia to explain concretely how their factory groups managed to operate without abandoning revolutionary positions. On this, their answers were a little obscure. One comrade said they did not abandon revolutionary positions, while another argued that it was necessary to begin from issues like wages which workers were interested in today. From this involvement, the party would grow and extend its influence.

2. Italian and German Left.

The views of Battaglia on the crucial role of the party in transforming a revolutionary situation into a political struggle were based on the experiences of the Italian workers in 1919-20; here an insurrectionary movement did not develop into a revolutionary struggle because the party did not exist. In reply we pointed out that the Italian workers were following syndicalist methods of struggle, partly because of the failure of the left communists in Italy (Bordiga etc.) to break with the Socialist Party in time, and that the growth of the party was dialectically related to that of class consciousness. Battaglia agreed that Bordiga had made a tactical error in staying in the P.S.I. too long, but said this could not be equated with the tardiness of Luxemburg, who defended staying in the S.P.D. on a theoretical basis. We found it a welcome fact that Battaglia are able to view critically the history of the Italian Left, unlike most 'bordigists'. On the other hand, they still see the K.A.P.D. as simply anarcho syndicalist and councillist (in other words Rühle made up the K.A.P.D. for them), and they contrasted the failure of the K.A.P.D. to survive with the success of the Italian Left in maintaining its existence in the 20s and 30s. When we argued that the K.A.P.D. did emphasise the need for a strong party, Battaglia argued that this wasn't enough, they didn't understand how it developed in relation to the class.

To set the matter straight, we mentioned that the K.A.P.D. was a mass party with 50,000 members. The fact that the Essen tendency of the K.A.P.D. was the first to collapse was because it was the most principled communist organization in the face of the counter revolution. The same counter-revolution bore heavily on the Italian Left, which was only able to survive organizationally by capitulating to counter revolutionary positions on certain issues, (eg. parliamentarism and United Fronts). Battaglia insisted that the K.A.P.D. was wrong to leave the Comintern in 1921, and we pointed

out that in fact they were expelled for refusing to merge into the V.K.P.D. into which the "centrist" U.S.P.D. had just been admitted. We asked the comrades to study the texts of the K.A.P.D. in Revolutionary Perspectives, since we felt that the K.A.P.D. had received an ill informed critique from the Italian comrades.

This is all the more ironical, since the P.C.Int's idea of "transmission belts" between party and class mirror exactly the views of the K.A.P.D. on the role of their workers' "Unionen", where class conscious workers were grouped round party cadres in a 200,000 strong network of factory groups, through which the K.A.P.D. propagated its views to the class. But these groups had sprung up in a revolutionary situation and gravitated to the party; they were not previously established structures. Efforts to bring them into existence before mass class struggle, or to maintain them once this is on the decline, seem doomed.

It was agreed to deepen the discussion in writing.

3. National Liberation Struggles

We criticised Battaglia's newspaper heading which appeared to give support to national liberation struggles. Amongst the other points which they say "distinguishes" the P.C.Int. was the following;

"class solidarity with peoples in revolt against any form of colonialism, under the leadership of the national and international revolutionary proletariat."

They clarified their views as follows,

1. National liberation is impossible today.
2. The revolution in countries with no, or only a very small proletariat depends on the international revolution.
3. The interests of the proletariat are international, and revolutionaries in backward countries should work for revolutionary defeatism during "anti imperialist" struggles, and propagandise against national liberation.
4. The proletariat cannot ally with the peasantry during the revolution (this is anyway not necessary today, since most of the world's food is produced by proletarians).
5. Thus their slogan of "support for peoples" refers only to a post-revolutionary situation where there is no proletariat.

We found these views strikingly in accord with our own, but hoped that Battaglia might re-phrase their "distinguishing" points to avoid further misunderstandings.

4. The Russian Revolution

We were asked by Battaglia to outline our method for explaining the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. We said that the Bolsheviks degenerated mainly through objective circumstances (isolation of the revolution, etc.) and passed over to the counter-revolution only when the proletariat had been defeated internationally, that is early in 1921. They agreed with this method, but argued that the counter-revolution was not a question of dates. We explained that the date was a convenient short hand reference for a series of events (eg United Frontism, N.E.P. etc).

5. Economic Analysis

Battaglia's text for the May Conference and further discussion in Milan, showed that the P.C.Int bases its analysis of the crisis of capitalism on the law of value and the falling rate of profit. They criticised the view expressed by the International Communist Current (I.C.C.) that the crisis can be understood as a "saturation of markets", and that in any case "there s a crisis and that's all we need to agree on". The C.W.O. and the P.C.Int feel that there are important political and tactical implications which flow from economic analyses, and that

these . . . must be tackled in debate between groups.

6. International Meetings.

Unlike the I.C.C., Battaglia did not see the present series of meetings as the precursors of regroupment. The discussions were not aimed at achieving compromise, but to effect genuine exchanges of ideas and develop political positions; the May meeting was the first moment in this. The May meeting established the issues of unions, party and class and national liberation as the reference points for the next international. But the next international would not be formed on the basis of an artificial imposition of ideas from a single centre. Each group had to reach political maturity independently so that they could come together in a mature fashion in the pre revolutionary period, to form an international based on a common programme.

We feel this conception to be a little "national" in its framework. The coming to maturity of revolutionaries is an international issue, and communists today must strive to make their organization from the outset as international in its political and organizational aspects as possible. In contrast to the IInd International, which was a federation of national parties, the IIIrd established international poles of regroupment from the outset, small though they were. Despite this, we welcome the initiative of Battaglia in calling the first in this series of meetings, and are glad to present their text to our readers.

A MEETING OF SCANDINAVIAN GROUPS

in OSLO

(Translation from Battaglia Comunista - paper of the Internationalist Communist Party (Italy).)

MARGINAL NOTES- THE C.W.O. AND THE PROBLEM OF THE PARTY

On the 23-25th September a meeting was held in Oslo amongst groups from Scandinavia, in which the British C.W.O. (Communist Workers' Organization) also participated. This news is (let it be said) second-hand; up to the present we have not received any official communication, nor even an agenda. We had an informal announcement of the meeting from delegates of the C.W.O. in Milan in August, but have heard no more since then. Instead we have received a copy of the text which the same British group presented in Oslo. From this document two things emerge;

- the groups organizing the meeting christen it as "non-Leninist".
- strongly present in them is critical support for so-called "national liberation" positions, which was one of our discriminatory lines laid down for adhesion to the Milan conference in May.

On both points the C.W.O. adopts a polemical position, writing,

"It is ironical that the participants of this conference from Scandinavia, in baptising it as a "non-Leninist" meeting, yet echo so many of the erroneous idea of Lenin and Trotsky on national liberation and the non capitalist nature of Russia."

(How does Lenin come into it we ask?)

"Whilst at the same time rejecting the real programmatic and practical achievements of Bolshevism, represented in the fight against the imperialist war, and in the October Revolution."

The document of the C.W.O. seems additionally interesting to us, in so far as it takes further steps forward in the acquisition of essential points in the party-class problem, though it still shows considerable anti-Leninist drawbacks.

The C.W.O. being a group which "seeks to establish a presence in the class", continues to see the party as the product of the "last minute", and its formation as the result of the revolutionary impetus of the class. Nevertheless, they come remarkably close to our basic thesis on the party-class relationship when they consider the period of transition, that is to say the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the course of which the party has "the task of struggling in the councils for the communist programme." The C.W.O. explicitly states "It is only when the programme begins to be adopted by the councils that it is possible to talk of proletarian revolution"; and again, "In a situation in which the working class moves towards communism it is no less than counter-revolutionary to maintain that the most conscious workers, because they are members of the revolutionary party, should refuse delegation to the councils." - a thesis evidently held by the Scandinavian comrades, and by the I.C.C. though differently expressed.

"The ONLY GUARANTEE" continues the C.W.O., "against substitutionism is the MASS movement (C.W.O. emphasis) towards communism, but the communist party is essential for the promotion of the generalised consciousness necessary for the development of that mass movement." The first part of the sentence seems to draw weight from our Platform (1952), and along with the other quotations is very well suited for a polemic with the Scandinavian groups as well as with the I.C.C., whose aberrant position we have coherently examined in the previous number of Battaglia. (1).

There remain some other unclear points of no less importance. The comrades of the C.W.O. correctly verbalise the problem of a "political presence in the class" on the part of the revolutionary organisation, but they fail to consider the problem in its concrete political aspects. They maintain in fact that "As the crisis deepens and the class struggle begins to take on political dimensions, the revolutionary organisation transforms itself into a political party because masses of workers accept its programme." This is the same as saying that the revolutionary party is characterised by its mass nature. It remains then to wonder how it happens that the class struggle assumes a political dimension, not in itself but in a communist sense, if not already through the working presence of the same Party in the first phase of the workers' struggles. And how does the "revolutionary organisation" establish its presence within the class if not as a party, without giving itself suitable instruments of intervention and agitation, without giving itself working arms inside the class? And this is what was discussed at the meeting held in Milan with the two British delegates, and with the I.C.C. on the 1st of May, but which evidently remains to be deepened. From a summary of the discussion, edited by the C.W.O. and sent to us for verification, it transpires that for these comrades our second thesis, in which the communists establish their political presence within the class by participating in the class struggle and putting forward the platform and revolutionary programme "is incomprehensible".

(1) In two articles entitled "Disorientation and Confusion - on the Second Congress of the I.C.C." published in the preceding two issues of Battaglia Comunista.

It is curious, but worthy of simple reflection, that the C.W.O. on one side and the I.C.C. on the other refuse or are unable to understand the role which we assign to the organised network of revolutionary workers (the factory groups); a sign of the distance which still separates the weak international revolutionary movement from a solid acquisition of the experiences of the communist movement. In a fierce polemic between them on points which are not secondary, both these organisations start from a substantially incorrect position; no accidental result of the collapse of the communist movement of the '20's.

The position of the Comintern on the party and the unions certainly began weakly, allowing rapid degeneration and subsequent treason by crossing the class barricade. It is a matter then of evaluating the limits, which consists in not taking the risk of interpreting the UNIONS AS SUCH as a transmission belt of the party, but instead as a simple area of work for communist groups. We talk of a risk which it is certain neither Lenin nor Bordiga ran (see Rome Theses 1922). Rather, the as yet immature experience left open the problem of the complex role of the unions in the imperialist era, allowing the hypothesis of a struggle for the revolutionary leadership of the unions by communist groups (even by force, Bordiga said more recently) to become accepted. It was thus easy for opportunism to conceal the successive degeneration of the same party behind the veil of tactics; and on the other hand, also difficult for great revolutionaries like Bordiga to follow the real course of the unions and to separate his position from the scum who at this point had become opportunist. On this problem then, we have had three different answers.

- a) the real use of the unions as a transmission belt of a bourgeois party (the P.C.I.); the carrying to formal extremes of positions not yet definite from a theoretical and political point of view.
- b) declaring absolute the formula "conquest of the unions" - a provisory formula of positions not yet sufficiently matured in the fire of experience (and this is as much the case with Bordigists as with leftists of various extractions).
- c) the rejection, together with the formula of the '20's, of some previously acquired closed points in the dialectical relationship that the party establishes between the economic and political struggle. The C.W.O and the I.C.C. move on this third line, a spurious outcome of the collapse of the Comintern; throwing out the baby with the bath water. Their guidelines on the economic struggle in relation to the political action of communists appear then absurdly schematic and such that from it results a de facto impossibility to establish the yearned for "political presence in the class".

While the C.W.O. with the greatest seriousness shows itself available to deepening the critique and abstains from elevating itself into a communist school teacher, the confusionists of the I.C.C. claim to pass judgement on the confusions of others, numbering amongst the confused groups the finest flower of leftist reactionaries, the Trotskyists.

We hope to return to the argument from which we began (the Oslo meeting) as soon as we have further informative and critical material. We close with one consideration: going by the C.W.O. document, the positions of the Scandinavian groups are very far from ours, but experience tells us that new revolutionary formations are susceptible to the deepening of the crisis and show notable capacities for maturity. The international revolutionary camp is in continuous movement; regroupments and ruptures, polemical exchanges, meetings and encounters are the sign that something is moving. The crisis, if it does not yet move the bulk of the class from the limited economic struggle has, however, agitated the political waters of the vanguard. Their maturity and the consolidation of poles of regroupment is a crucial question of the moment for revolutionaries. It is this political work which we have nurtured with the initiative begun last year and which is always finding new sustenance.