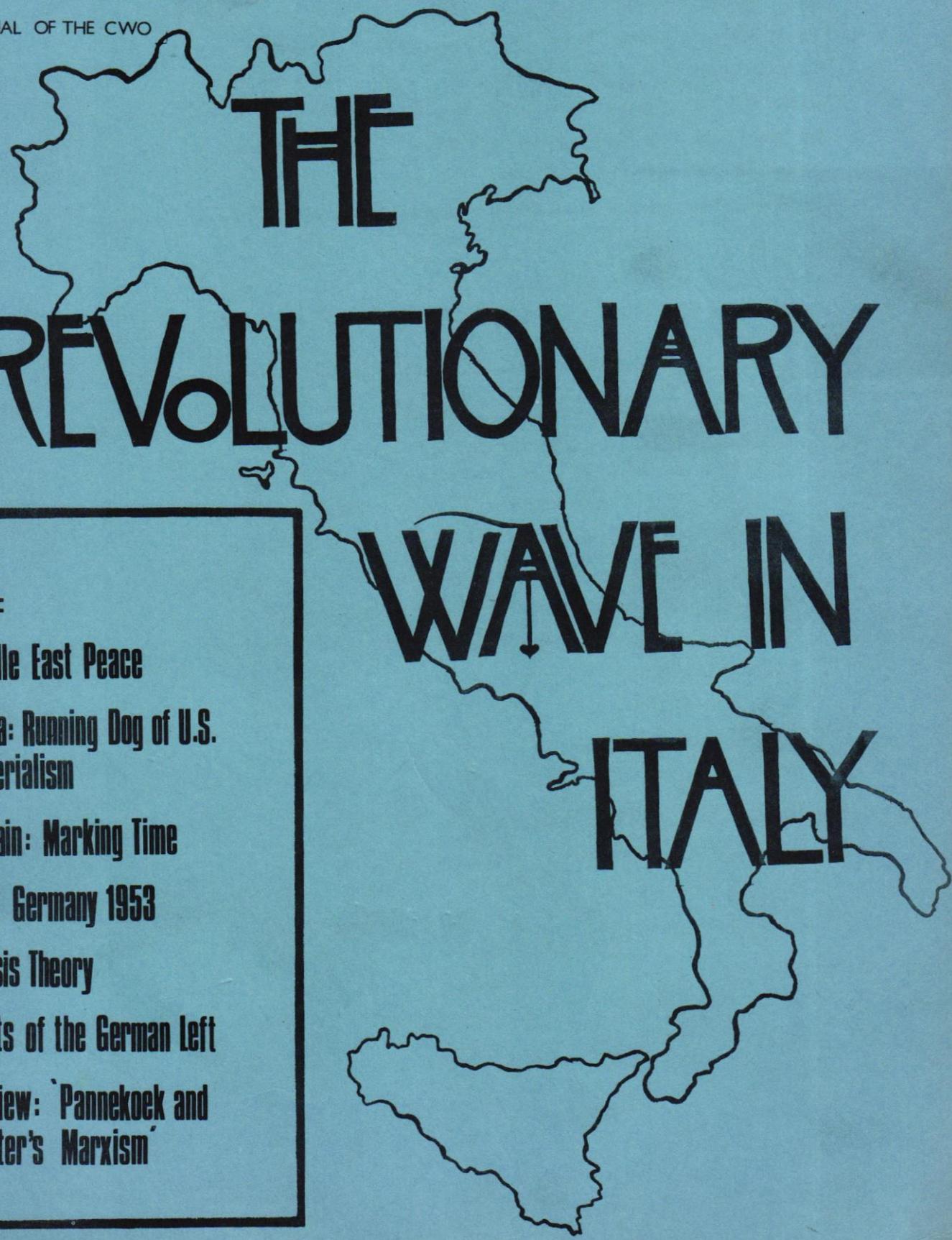


REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES II

35p

JOURNAL OF THE CWO



THE REVOLUTIONARY WAVE IN ITALY

Plus:

Middle East Peace

**China: Running Dog of U.S.
Imperialism**

Britain: Marking Time

East Germany 1953

Crisis Theory

Texts of the German Left

**Review: 'Pannekoek and
Gorter's Marxism'**

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The outcome of the Camp David talks between Presidents Carter of the U.S., Begin of Israel and Sadat of Egypt, has been a major victory for U.S. imperialism. In return for a phased withdrawal from the territory in Sinai it seized from Egypt in the 1967 war, Israel has been granted a separate peace treaty with Sadat, and Egypt will recognise Israel's right to exist as a state. At a stroke, the ring of hostile states round Israel is broken, and the latter faces enemies on only one front. These, without Egypt's military power, are incapable of posing a serious threat to Israel. On the other hand, Israel has given little away on the issue of the West Bank, largely populated by Palestinians, and aside from introducing "autonomy" there, its future status is left conveniently vague.

While the Palestinian Liberation Organization (P.L.O.), and the "radical" Arab states like Libya may denounce the Camp David agreement, they are powerless to oppose it. And despite its initial protests, we can expect Saudi Arabia to fall in line behind the agreement in the end. As compensation for being branded the Judas of the Arab world, Sadat's coffers will be filled with American and Saudi money, while Israel will once again receive inflows of U.S. arms and money. The Russians will look for any means of destabilising the situation in the Middle East, and winning back their lost ground in Egypt, and the Palestinians will try to reverse the tide by engaging in yet more suicidal and murderous activities. But aside from unforeseeable occurrences, a "Pax Americana" has been imposed on the Middle East, and the whole Mediterranean moves closer to becoming an "American lake".

Only fanatical supporters of Israel, or of the Palestinian "liberation" groups, can find it surprising that America, so long the supporter of "Zionist expansionism" in the Middle East, has emerged as the peacemaker. Israel was for long the U.S.'s toe-hold in an area traditionally pro-Russian. But the inability of the latter to provide military and economic aid on the scale required, led many Arab states such as Egypt to re-orient themselves towards the stronger imperialism, that of the U.S.A. With the shift in power created by the Arab oil reserves, the U.S. was only too willing to step in as a supporter of "Arab socialism". This meant, however, that Israel's conflict with the Arabs was increasingly anachronistic, and the long road to Camp David began. The U.S. put unrelenting pressure on the Israelis to make concessions to gain a peace settlement. The outcome of this was never in doubt, despite set backs like the Israeli intervention in Lebanon in March this year. As we said earlier, "as long as rapprochement is in the interests of U.S. imperialism, the Israelis must eventually succumb to American demands" ("Imperialism in the Middle East", in R.P.10,p19).

The U.S. now has one ally-Egypt- in control of the Suez Canal, and another -Saudi Arabia- in control of the world's largest oil reserves. For the masses of the Middle East, however, this "peace" will bring few gains. Living conditions will continue to deteriorate in face of the economic crisis. The war economy will be maintained in Israel against the hostile Arab states, and in Egypt against Gaddafi in Libya and the "enemy within"-the Egyptian working class. And the Palestinians will continue to rot in their refugee camps, a symbol of capitalism's inability to resolve the question of nationality. The realisation that peace will bring few benefits may help the workers of the Middle East, and particularly those of Egypt and Israel, to struggle against their own bourgeoisies. But in the Middle East, as elsewhere, the phoney peace and brotherhood of the bourgeoisie can only be an interlude on the road to new wars. Against these the cry of the proletariat must be, "Down with imperialist war! Workers of the world, Unite!"

BRITAIN: Marking Time.

In the last few months British capitalism has been confronted with a series of well publicised strikes. As this is written the S.U. Carburettors toolroom workers' dispute threatens to make 70,000 Leyland workers redundant and lead to the permanent closure of some plants. At the same time 1,500 semi-skilled workers at Leyland's Bathgate factory have been told by both union and management to return to work or else the plant will close down. In addition we have had strikes at Chrysler's Luton plant as well as the unprecedented struggle of 180,000 defence workers in ordinance depots and naval dockyards. At first it would appear that the class struggle is attaining the intensity of 1972-74 again.

Taking the character of the latest strikes, they have been largely for sectional demands such as "parity" or "restoration of differentials", which by definition concern only the immediate group of workers involved, and as such there is little hope of a generalised struggle emerging from them. Second, the apparently positive aspect of the struggles of the toolroom and Bathgate workers - against not only bosses but also the unions - is not the product of a new level of awareness that the unions are by their very nature the main defenders of capitalism against the workers. In fact the reverse is the case. The unions feel sufficiently strong to throw off their mask of protector of the workers and to openly support the sacking of workers who refuse to accept capitalism's terms. The tendency amongst the workers is therefore not to denounce unions in general but to say that a particular union, the AUEW for example, is a "bad union" and thus the logical tendency will be for new "militant" unions which will, it is thought, negotiate the wage rate "properly". The fact that unions are openly siding with capital shows the extent to which the ruling class has the upper hand. Even the shop stewards, who because of their conflict with the union bureaucracy can pretend they are really on the side of the workers, have openly announced measures for policing the class. Shop stewards at Chrysler Linwood have recently called for increased output, urging workers to meet production targets "every hour, on the hour, day after day", whilst on Tyneside the Tyne Ship Repair Group stewards announced:

"We are determined to provide a dispute-free, efficient, reliable service to all shipowners, covering all sections of workers."

The shop stewards in the defence workers strike also managed to prevent (narrowly) a call for occupation of the workplace to prevent troops scabbing.

The background to this situation has been the success of the Labour Government in stabilising British capitalism since 1974. Coming to power at the time of an intense period of class struggle provoked by a Conservative Government openly intent on smashing the working class, it has gradually grown stronger. Instead of talking about "wage freezes", about issues of "who should rule", the Labour government has instigated more subtle attacks on the class in the form of "social contracts", pay limits of various diminishing sizes and has sought to avoid any open clashes. For most of this period the unions have acted as the instrument of Labour policy, only going through the usual farce of feigned opposition as the restlessness of the working class has become obvious (e.g. at the recent T.U.C. conference). But even in this they have not

been forced to go very far - so passively has the class accepted increasing unemployment and declining living standards. The classic illustration that the initiative still lies with the capitalist state was shown by the ease with which the Labour Government could use troops to defeat the firemen's strike and defence workers' strike. And when all these tactics are exhausted the bourgeoisie can still throw in the old mystification of an election in which unions and Labour will combine against the "Tory menace". Although there is no guarantee of the result, a Labour Government, with its image as a "working class party" is less likely to meet generalised opposition to its programme of gradually increasing austerity and therefore is in the best interests of capital at the moment.

But whatever the date or the result of the election, the capitalist crisis is reflected in further economic stagnation. And even though critical of the nature of some of these strikes we must note that in many cases more and more workers who have no history of class struggle (e.g. defence workers) are now being brought to defend their standard of living. Thus there is a tendency for equalisation of the class struggle throughout different sections of the working class. This is a positive step towards the creation of a generalised class consciousness.

The crisis inexorably deepens. What in the fifties and early sixties was described as the era of "stop-go" has become a situation of "stop-pause". In the past wage freezes and austerity could give way to a new mini-boom - today wage freezes and austerity lead to higher unemployment and more austerity. The crisis is a millstone round the neck of capitalism. And that millstone is becoming very heavy...

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CHINA: RUNNING DOG OF U.S. IMPERIALISM

The last few months have witnessed a rapid re-orientation in China's foreign policy. What is to be made of China, once portrayed by the bourgeois press and many leftist political groups as the shining example of revolutionary idealism, now giving its support to the most brutal regimes on the face of the earth? Maoists may have found China's support for the right-wing military dictatorship in Pakistan, or the pro-Western "liberation" movements in Angola a little perplexing, while China's endorsement of the regime of Sadat in Egypt in its efforts to come to peace with the "Zionist warmongers" may have raised a few eyebrows. But China has recently emerged as a fanatical admirer of the "social barbarian" regimes of Videla in Argentina and Pinochet in Chile, expanding economic and political links with both. It has emerged as a defender of the bloody regime of Mobutu in Zaire and the French legionnaires defending it, and has praised the heroic stand of Vorster in apartheid South Africa against "Russian expansionism", thus giving implicit support to a regime based on the most brutal exploitation of millions of black workers. Not content with this, Chairman Hua has been touring the "southern flank" of Russia, attempting to entice Yugoslavia and Roumania further away from the USSR, and giving, on his way back, an appreciative pat on the back to the Shah of Iran's efforts to defend his regime. Chairman Hua left just in time

to avoid seeing the Shah's troops and police do this by implementing martial law. Meanwhile, on its own doorstep, China has severed all links with the "socialist" state of Vietnam, and is engaged in bitter recrimination over the issue of the latter's ethnic Chinese minority. Not content with this China is actually arming neighbouring Kampuchea (formerly Cambodia) to wage a bloody border war by proxy with Vietnam. Along with all this go increasingly strident overtures from China to be accepted economically and even militarily as part of the Western imperialist bloc.

Whilst the Western press present these developments as remarkable, they are only astonishing to those who don't understand the nature of China and world capitalism today. Those who equate the state capitalism of Russia, China and elsewhere with communism can't understand why China should be making overtures to Western capitalism. In reality, the Chinese working class is no nearer to holding political power than the working class in the West. As in all the other so-called "Communist" countries wage-labour still exists and the working class produces surplus value which is appropriated directly by a state which they do not control.

Some groups do recognise China as state capitalist but mistakenly depict that country as an independent imperialist power. China's appeasement with the West gives the lie to such claims (which anyway are absurd, given China's military and economic backwardness). This is not to say that China does not aspire to be an imperialist power in its own right - this has been the Communist Party's aim ever since Mao took over in 1948; but the history of China since then is perhaps the best example not only of the inability of the "underdeveloped" capitalist states to "catch up" with the advanced countries in the era of decadent capitalism, but also of the impossibility of independent capital accumulation in a world divided up between Russian and U.S. imperialisms.

The current moves of China towards appeasement with the U.S. are not a sudden switch in policy but reflect a tendency which has become more and more pronounced since China left the orbit of Russian imperialism in 1960. During the 1950's China relied on Russian aid as a basis for capital accumulation and functioned "virtually as a subsidiary of Russian capitalism". (1) After the breach with Russia the Chinese Communist Party (C.C.P.) tried to "go it alone" in its attempt to catch up with the U.S.A. and Russia. At this time, China tried to develop an "independent" foreign policy, supporting regimes (e.g. Albania) or "liberation movements" (e.g. the Communist Party of Indonesia, PKI) which were anti-West and anti-Moscow. The ensuing economic stagnation and drop in living standards which accompanied this attempt at autarchy (i.e. "going it alone") forced China to look to the advanced countries for supplies of advanced technology. Since Mao's death Chou En Lai's "splendid goal" that the Chinese economy "should be advancing in the front ranks of the world by the end of the century" has been adopted as the slogan of the new Peking leadership. And although even bourgeois economists admit that this is an impossible goal, the only way in which China can embark on yet another rapid attempt at "development" is to import advanced technology and capital from the West, Japan being the main bridgehead for the U.S. dominated bloc to penetrate China. The advocates of self-reliance (the Gang of Four and their supporters) have been vilified and purged from the Party while the double think which the Chinese leaders have to employ to justify the new official policy of "stability, unity and economic growth" only shows the extent to which China is prepared to become integrated into the U.S. imperialist bloc. Although undoubtedly Chinese leaders will insist on China's "non-alignment", the impossibility

(1) See "China: Myth and Reality" in Workers Voice 18 - some copies still available from C.W.O group address.

of such a situation in reality is only emphasised by China's own history. Today China is moving closer to that situation of "Complete integration, economically, politically and militarily with American imperialism" which we predicted two years ago. (1) However, China's use to the West is not really in the international arena, where its hysterical interventions are often an embarrassment. Rather, its use is as a "second flank" behind Russia, forcing the latter to direct large military resources to contain China. Modernisation of China via inflows of Western capital and technology will be linked to making China a viable military power.

For the Chinese working class, many of whom were "pacified" in 1977 with their first wage rise in ten years, the short term future holds out a variety of "material incentives" to increase production familiar to Western workers - piece work, bonuses and pay differentials are now all sanctified by the C.C.P. leadership. But the policy of accumulating on the basis of Western capital and technology is not going to solve the problem of "development" for China. The prospect now opening up is increasing financial indebtedness to the West (accompanied by inflation) and a further weakening of the economic infrastructure as agricultural goods and raw materials are exported to the West in return for industrial imports.

This, of course, means an intensification of exploitation of the Chinese working class who will be asked to pay for capital accumulation by further "sacrifices" to add to those of the last thirty years. Except amongst the most hidebound Maoists who will follow China into blocs with their own bourgeoisie, those developments can only hasten the realisation that China is not a socialist state, but a bastion of capitalism. Increasing exploitation will force upon the Chinese workers the same realisation and provide the material lever for the overthrow of the Chinese ruling class.

(1) Ibid Workers Voice 18 p.17

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EAST GERMANY 1953

Twenty five years ago, in the summer of 1953, East Germany was paralysed by a series of strikes and street demonstrations. East German workers were openly confronting the "communist" state and its Russian overlords. With sticks and stones they fought the "peoples army" and Russian tanks and infantry. While the workers did not make a revolution, and no clearly communist direction was taken, this uprising is worthy nevertheless of its place in the history of the workers' struggle against capitalist exploitation.

On May 8th 1945, German forces in Berlin had surrendered to the Russians. Within days the dismantling of hundreds of factories destined for Russia began. By 1949, when the Russian sector became the German Democratic Republic, the state machine was firmly in the grip of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), a USSR puppet. As window dressing the

forms of bourgeois democracy - elections, parties etc - were maintained and likewise the unions which served as useful transmission belts for State ideology. Under East German "communism" the economy has remained fully capitalist: it has simply become increasingly statified and wage slavery has in no way disappeared. Nationalisation and expropriation has made the State the manager of otherwise unchanged capitalist firms. State direction of trade, centralised planning, price and wage fixing complete the picture of state capitalism.

After the war, East German trade turned increasingly towards Russia, often on unequal terms over and above forced reparations. Another burden on the workers' backs was "Socialist Reconstruction". The first five year plan started in 1951 (aiming at vast investments in basic industries such as iron, steel, and shipbuilding) called for "great sacrifices from the people". The state's efforts were hindered by continued flight of thousands of key workers to the Western zones. The Russians sought to continue their political domination increasingly through local agencies so the armed muscle of the new state was built up in paramilitary forces, with the "New Peoples Army" on its formation in 1952 resulting in a call for - surprise, surprise - yet more sacrifices from the workers! Contrasted with the Marshall Plan (which aided growth in Western Germany with US finance) "Socialist Reconstruction" was especially slow and painful. This reflects the relative strengths of the only two imperialisms left remaining after the Second World War; America poured capital into Western Europe, while Russia leeches it out of her satellites. The resulting burdens on the East European workers were particularly great.

Mourned by few, Stalin died in March 1953 and immediate moves occurred in Russia towards "de-stalinisation". Stalin's "iron fist" was a consequence of the childhood of Russian state capitalism - but now the state bosses saw gains to be made with a somewhat velvet glove approach to the workers. Friction occurred in East Germany as state boss Ulbricht resisted the "New Course". But regardless of the arguments between the masters, attacks on the workers continued. Food and consumer goods were as short as ever, as capital flowed towards Russia and into heavy industry. The 1953 Economic Plan sought yet more from the workers with increased productivity, using the time-honoured capitalist device of widespread piecework. Then in April, food prices rose amid continued rationing.

In May, when norms for production rose by 10% with no increases in pay, class resistance became open. On June 16th, building workers on East Berlin's prestige new Stalin Allee struck, and were joined by 2,000 to 3,000 other building workers from the suburbs. A disorganised column surged to government offices where various demands were made. The demands in the course of the rising included the repeal of the norm increases, for cuts in food prices, for free elections and for no Peoples Army. The striking building workers demanded, fruitlessly, the appearance of Grotewohl, the Chief Minister, or of Ulbricht.

The limited nature of the demands should not shield the nature of the conflict. With the absence of "real" unions there was no buffer between the workers and the state. The workers directly confronted the state and soon its army. In "democratic" Western bloc countries, the union's role is to take up disputes and act as a mediator and safety valve between the workers and the state. Under Eastern bloc state capitalism the unions do not have that potential.

On June 16th, delegates from the striking workers had gone to RIAS (the radio station in the American Sector of West Berlin which

broadcasts in German to East Germany) with pleas to broadcast calls for a mass demonstration and general strike for the following morning. After hesitation, the Americans broadcast the appeals for the demonstration only, thus limiting the scope of the appeal largely to Greater Berlin. Imperialist rivals as they are, the Russians and Americans will unite against their common enemy - the working class.

The following morning, June 17th, brought 100,000 people onto the streets of East Berlin for the demonstration. The "peoples" police quickly lost control as red flags were burnt, ministers mobbed and "party offices were sacked and records hurled into the street, jails invaded and prisoners released" (Shears, The Ugly Frontier p.159). The workers were soon confronted with Russian tanks, armoured cars, infantry and a declaration of martial law. Soviet forces occupied factories and strategic buildings throughout the country. The disorganised workers' response was limited to sticks and stones, resistance being significant in Leipzig and Jena as well as in Berlin. The general strike was not solid but nevertheless seems to have involved 400,000 workers. This was, without question, a movement of the working class.

Regardless of the wishful thinking of "spontaneists" who see a communist consciousness developing simply and automatically out of a mass class struggle, no glimmer of a communist direction can be seen in the workers' demands. No organisations were developed to lead the struggle, to co-ordinate the seizure of radio stations and presses, or to discuss the political direction the struggle had to take. Neither were the workers spared the time to learn the lessons of history again nor to re-discover communism from "square one". That explains why communists today see the necessity for delving into the history books to re-appropriate for the class the lessons that earlier generations of workers learnt in their bloody battles now long obscured by years of counter-revolution. The limited nature of the East German revolt can partly be explained by the fact that it occurred in the depths of the counter-revolution.

The East German workers' uprising of 1953 must be seen as only one in a series of battles by the class in the "socialist" bloc against the conditions of life under decadent state capitalism. Others occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1952, in Roumania in 1953 and especially in Hungary in 1956. This battle has been continued into the seventies, notably by the Polish workers in the winter of 1970-71.

The end of the events in East Germany in 1953 was an inevitable return to work in the face of overwhelming opposition. Arrests and executions ensued, and the SED leaders admitted a few "mistakes". The workers were beaten but not totally down, for after a fortnight's calm, sit-in strikes burst out. As events in Italy in 1920 showed, workers must combat the state and not merely occupy the factories if they are not to be defeated. Sit-in strikes are welcome defiance but little more.

July 1953 might have brought a setback in the German workers' struggles, but they were not totally defeated as in the 1920's. As today's crisis slowly deepens, the strain worldwide on decadent capitalism will bring workers everywhere into conflict with the state. And the East German workers will join in capitalism's last battle as the struggle towards communism begins.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAVE IN ITALY

When the First World War broke out in 1914 the Italian Socialist Party (P.S.I.), unlike the majority of the European Social Democratic Parties, announced its opposition to the war. Whilst most of the parties of the Second International dramatically revealed their anti-working class nature by their acquiescence in the mutual slaughter of the European working class and support for their "own" imperialism, the P.S.I. and the Swiss Social Democrats came out against the war, though both countries were neutral in the fighting. The pacifist theses adopted by the P.S.I. in September 1914, demanding "an early cessation of the massacres of the peoples" were, however, not based on the perspective of international class war. And events were to reveal that the P.S.I., no less than the rest of social democracy, was just as keen to defend its own "national interest" and thus to abandon the international interests of the working class.

By the time Italy entered the war (1) the P.S.I. had adopted the ~~centralist~~ slogan "neither support nor sabotage": a convenient phrase which reflected the paralysis in the party, torn as it was into three factions - the right wing who supported Italy's intervention in the war; the left wing minority who took up a revolutionary opposition to the war (see below); and the centrist pacifist majority. In keeping with the P.S.I. tradition of maintaining divergent factions within its ranks, the party did not split and sustained an "anti-war" image despite occasional "lapses". (e.g. After the Italian military defeat at Caporetto in 1917 when the right wing refused to vote against war credits any longer on the grounds that they were "ashamed of participating in the national defeat".) Nevertheless, in general the centrist majority (Serrati et al.) ensured that the Party's "anti-war" image was upheld - Mussolini had been expelled in 1914 for his support for Italian intervention in the war, and the P.S.I. was the initiator of the first Zimmerwald Conference of international socialists opposed to the War. This popular association of the P.S.I. with anti-militarism gave it credence with the working class as the effects of the War produced a growing disillusionment with imperialism.

In practice the anti-war stance of the majority of the P.S.I. did not go beyond bourgeois pacifism. The Italians may have been the initiators of the Zimmerwald conferences but the P.S.I. never aligned itself with the revolutionary minority (led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and the Bremen Left and later including the Spartacists)

(1) Italian imperialism had been in alliance with Germany and Austria since 1881 when its major claims had been against France in North Africa. With the acquisition of Libya in 1911 Italy's main ambition now lay in reclaiming the "terra irredente" of South Tyrol, Trentino, Istria and Trieste from Austria. Italy thus refused to honour its treaty obligations to Austria and, bribed by the secret Treaty of London, (which offered Italy domination of the Adriatic and East Mediterranean), joined Britain and France against the Central Powers in May 1915.

who at Zimmerwald opposed the War from an uncompromising class position and argued for the transformation of the imperialist war into an international class war against the bourgeoisie. The P.S.I., along with the rest of the Social Democratic parties was destined to play the role of containing the class struggle during the post-war years in Italy.

DECADENCE: WORKING CLASS RESPONSE TO WAR AND REVOLUTION 1914-18

The outbreak of the First World War was the definitive signal of the end of capitalism's progressive development. From this point the history of capitalism is that of a decadent social system whose existence is no longer in the general interest of humanity. For capital, the First World War opened up an era characterised by an interminable round of global economic crisis, imperialist war and reconstruction on the basis of increasing stratification and waste production until today the threat of a third world war poses the possibility of the end of civilisation. For the proletariat, however, reformism was now dead (since capitalism in decline is no longer able to grant lasting and therefore meaningful reforms) while international revolution was placed on the historical agenda. The responsibility for human progress henceforward lay with the proletariat as the only revolutionary class. (1) AND THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH THE INTERESTS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAT COULD BE SERVED BY AN INTER-IMPERIALIST WAR. For revolutionaries at the time the opening of the revolutionary epoch demanded their unambiguous opposition to the war and a clear understanding of the fact that the Social Democratic parties, by virtue of their support for their "own" imperialism (and their basic reformism) were now unreservedly in the camp of counter-revolution. The only revolutionary course was to intransigently oppose the war and fight for the class to break from Social Democracy and for the formation of an unambiguously proletarian party with the sole aim of revolution.

In Italy (as in the other European countries involved in the War) the war had created an objective revolutionary situation, while the combativity and revolutionary potential of the Italian working class was unquestionable. Nevertheless, the post-war class movement in Italy did not generate a class party and never took on a revolutionary political direction: it is this crucial failure which we explain in this article.

In order to understand the revolutionary potential and at the same time the inadequacies of the class struggle in Italy during the Red Years of 1919-20, we must first look briefly at the class movement in general and the development of the revolutionary minority within the P.S.I. during 1914-18.

The effect of the war on Italian industry was an unprecedented expansion, resulting in a growth of industrial takeovers, tremendous increases in profits (the average rate was 16%) and the expansion of the working class (Fiat's workforce alone rose from 7,000 to 30,000). For the growing working class however, the wartime expansion meant an increase in the cost of living and a drop in real wages (these fell by over a quarter from 1914 to 1918); increased working hours and the enforcement of military discipline

(1) For a more detailed explanation of capitalism's decadence and its economic basis see "The Meaning of Decadence" in R.P. 10 and "The Economic Basis of Capitalist Decadence" in R.P. 2.

in the factories via the committees of industrial mobilisation which were responsible for settling disputes and saw that,

"Workers were tied to the job under threat of imprisonment, demotion to lower paid jobs, posting to the front."
(Williams, Proletarian Order p.57)

Strikes, of course, were outlawed, but by 1917 working class exasperation at the high level of exploitation, coupled with news of the February Revolution in Russia, resulted in mass support for a Russian delegation of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (who were greeted by crowds shouting "Viva Lenin!") and finally by a week of anti-war riots in Turin. During the week of 21st-28th August 1917 Turin saw barricades and pitched battles between workers and soldiers. (At least 50 workers were killed and many hundreds injured.)

But even though the class struggle at times reached insurrectionary proportions during the war years the Italian working class did not develop a revolutionary consciousness. In fact, anarchists and syndicalists traditionally dominated these local insurrectionary movements and, just as before the war, the P.S.I. failed to give the class any political leadership. This lack of political direction was also evident in Turin in 1917 where the rising was again dominated by anarchist and syndicalist militants. On this occasion the P.S.I. was so little in evidence that Serrati found it necessary to go to Turin so that the Party would be "associated with the movement".
(Williams op cit. p.64)

For revolutionaries today with the lessons of history before us, it is relatively easy to understand the role of the P.S.I. in these struggles. Whenever the class struggle took on insurrectionary proportions the Party Directorate would supply the appropriate revolutionary rhetoric in an attempt to undermine support for the anarchists and syndicalists and to retain the Party's "revolutionary" reputation within the working class. Without an understanding of the irreversibly counter-revolutionary nature of Social Democracy now that international revolution was on the agenda, it could appear to contemporary militants and revolutionaries within the P.S.I. that the Party's failure to produce a revolutionary policy was the result of right wing pressure from the reformists and Parliamentary deputies. Such a perspective leads logically to the corollary that the P.S.I. could be transformed into a weapon for revolution if only the reformists were excluded. This was in fact the position of the revolutionary minorities within the P.S.I.

THE REVOLUTIONARY MINORITY WITHIN THE P.S.I.

By the beginning of 1917 there did exist an anti-War minority within the P.S.I., around Amadeo Bordiga, who argued for an end to the War by means of proletarian revolution. Bordiga, who, since the formation of the Karl Marx Circle in 1912, had been struggling for a Marxist perspective in the P.S.I. against the inroads of the Italian versions of reformism and revisionism, was opposed to the War from an internationalist Marxist standpoint. In August 1914 he wrote,

"In reality the bourgeoisie of all countries is equally responsible for the conflict, or rather, it is the capitalist system which is responsible...."(Quoted in Camatte, Bordiga et la Passion du Communisme p.200)

Until May 1915, as editor of Il Socialista in Naples he was able to develop his propaganda against the War and P.S.I. official policy but this avenue closed when Il Socialista ceased publication with Italy's entry into the War. (The last number of Il Socialista carried the heading "It is War. Down with the War".)

By the Spring of 1917 the P.S.I.'s apparent neutrality as regards the War broke down when news of the February Revolution in Russia and of America's entry into the War led the Party to officially support a Russian-American democratic bloc against "imperialist autocracies". The bourgeois democratic basis of the P.S.I. was unambiguous and was further confirmed by the democratic programme of post-War reconstruction drawn up by the P.S.I. Directorate in May 1917.

The Naples section reacted to these same events by issuing a revolutionary statement of principle which called for an end to the War by means of revolutionary class action. However, if this statement had been accompanied by a call for revolutionaries to break from the P.S.I. and form a communist party it might have been more effective. As it was it remained inadequate since the Party was still seen as having revolutionary potential with Bordiga urging it to make itself the head of the mass struggle of the proletariat against capitalism and bourgeois militarism

It was following the initiative of the Naples section under Bordiga that the minority of revolutionaries from about 100 sections within the P.S.I. united and took the old name of intransigent revolutionaries (1) in June 1917. At the same time, further news of strikes in Germany encouraged the P.S.I. youth movement to hold out the prospect of revolution in Italy and for a time Bordiga did build up support within the P.S.I. However, the intransigent voice was lost in the wave of nationalism which engulfed the P.S.I. after the Italian defeat at Caporetto and in November 1917 an intransigent conference itself voted against Bordiga's motion for working class action against the War (2) and the official slogan ("neither support nor sabotage") was reaffirmed. Bordiga was called up after Caporetto but in December he wrote an article for Avanguardia welcoming the Russian Revolution.

Immediately after the War (in December 1918) Bordiga began to publish Il Soviet in Naples which called for the expulsion of the reformists from the Party.

The position of the intransigents within the P.S.I. resembled that of the Spartacusbund (formed three months earlier) within German Social Democracy. Both stood for a revolutionary opposition to the War (although the intransigents were not present at the Zimmerwald conferences) and called for the formation of a new International; yet both thought it possible to "revolutionise" Social Democracy and chose to remain within its folds. But while the Spartacists were driven by the impetus of the class struggle and appeals from the German Left communists to leave Social Democracy and take part in the formation of the German Communist Party (K.P.D.) at the beginning of 1919,

(1) This name was originally used by activists within the PSI who were reacting against the Party's increasing co-operation with the Giolitti Government.

(2) "The time for action has come. The workers in the fields and factories are armed, they are tired of it all. We must act!" (Quoted in Williams, op.cit. p.65.)

Bordiga and the intransigent fraction were still trying to "revolutionise" the P.S.I. from within. Even after the formation of the abstentionist communist fraction in 1919, when the Bordigists began to think in terms of a split, they remained within the P.S.I. for over a year.

We have criticised the Spartacists for not breaking with Social Democracy earlier than they did (see R.P. 7 p.5), and the intransigents were also mistaken to remain as a fraction within the P.S.I. until 1921. The point is that during the war years and the two years of intense class struggle which followed, the Bordigists were slow to realise the incompatibility between the aims of Social Democracy and communists. In fact, though they existed as a distinct fraction within the P.S.I., they did not develop a general criticism of the maximum programme of Social Democracy. (Which held out the ultimate aim of the Party to be "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and the "socialisation of the means of production" but which remained silent about the actual content of both these slogans and the means of achieving them: whilst reformism was seen as being able to co-exist with the revolutionary struggle.) The fact that when the intransigent fraction eventually did have its own platform (in 1919) it still remained within the P.S.I. and emphasised the issue of participation in parliament and parliamentary elections as the main difference between the Centrist Social Democrats and the Communists, indicates how much Bordiga himself still acted within the framework of social democracy. (1) How far this situation reflected the limitations of the class struggle in Italy and how far the absence of a communist party was responsible for the limited political struggle during the upheavals of 1919-20 is difficult to judge (since there is a dialectical relationship between the two). But it is certain that, for all the Bordigists' emphasis on the necessity for a truly communist party to exist as a pre-condition for revolution in Italy, their decision to remain within the P.S.I. made it almost impossible for the vast majority of the working class to distinguish the positions of the communist fraction from those of the rest of the Party.

THE BIENNIO ROSSO (THE RED TWO YEARS).

For Italian capitalists, with a major part of their capital tied up in the now redundant war industries the immediate post-war period saw a drop in profits and production and a collapse of exports. For the working class, the same period was one of shortages of two basic necessities - food and fuel, accompanied by ever increasing prices (e.g. In Milan the retail food price index rose from 287.5 to 344.9 between April and June 1919 (1912 = 100).) The objective situation - the virtual collapse of the capitalist economy at a time of international revolutionary upheavals - was favourable to proletarian

(1) In the summer of 1919 the intransigents formed the communist abstentionist fraction of the P.S.I. While Bordiga's opposition to participation in parliament and parliamentary elections (abstentionism) had developed from a tactical position, aimed at expelling the right wing "reformists" from the P.S.I., into a clear understanding of the mystificatory and divergent nature of so-called revolutionary parliamentarism, (see the "Theses on Parliamentarism" of the Italian Left which Bordiga presented at the 2nd Congress of the International in 1920 - published by the C.W.O. in R.P. 3) he did not achieve a similar lucidity when it came to the inadequacies of the maximum programme as a whole.

revolution. The Biennio Rosso was a time of unprecedented class struggle which at first took on insurrectionary dimensions but which ended with the working class locked in the factories and then passively evacuating them and leaving them to the employers. Again, the class struggle in Italy is remarkable for its militancy but lack of political direction. There were thousands of factory councils (committees) in existence but no widespread formation of soviets (the basic organs of the proletariat's political power), still less a communist leadership within them; and only a small minority of revolutionaries either saw the need for the class to confront the capitalist state or had any idea of how the class would do this.

In June 1919 there were riots throughout Italy against increases in food prices which developed into an insurrectionary movement - at first in the anarchist and syndicalist strongholds of Liguria and the Romagna and then into the North and Emilia. The authority of local governments collapsed as "citizens' price committees" and food co-operatives were set up. But these quickly came under the control of the local prefects and the C.G.L. (Italy's equivalent of the T.U.C.) The latter could be relied on to defend capital's interests:

"shopkeepers brought their keys to the camere del lavoro and entrusted their stocks to the union organisations." (Williams, op cit p 71).

The P.S.I. preferred to leave the policing of this movement to the C.G.L. and maintained its usual inertia combined with a certain amount of "revolutionary" posturing (e.g. calling for support for the international strike in support of the Hungarian and Russian soviet republics.) and instead concentrated its attention on the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

After the riots the issue of workers' control in the factories assumed importance. During the war there had been a growth of the so-called "internal commissions" - a small group of workers in a particular factory, either chosen by local union officials or, less often, elected by all union members, to negotiate with management. By 1919 many of the internal commissions had broken away from the official trade unions and workers, particularly in the metallurgical industry, were demanding that they be recognised as the official negotiating bodies. In Turin certain members of the P.S.I. (including Gramsci, Togliatti, Terracini, et.al.) saw this movement as a potential basis for the formation of workers' councils and a step towards communism. In May 1919 the council movement gained support from this Turin fraction of the P.S.I., known as the ordinovisti, from their paper, L'Ordine Nuovo (The New Order), when they began to propagandise for the extension of the internal commissions and the formation of factory councils. They saw the councils as a means for the working class to gain experience in self-management which they thought would prepare the class for a seizure of power. On 20th October car workers' and metal workers' "workshop commissars" elected a "Study Committee for Factory Councils" (which included ordinovisti and the abstentionist (1) Boero) to prepare a programme for the council movement. The subsequent Programme of the Workshop Commissars, influenced by Gramsci, is not a revolutionary document. It was concerned essentially with

(1) The name adopted by this time by Bordiga's followers.

establishing the right of "workshop commissars" to negotiate with management and defining the areas for workers' control within the factories. The influence of Gramsci is shown by the claim that of the workshop commissars' two functions - bargaining over the price of labour power and promoting workers' control in the factory- the latter is a revolutionary one in that it has:

"... the potential objective of preparing men, organisations and ideas, in a continuous pre-revolutionary control operation, so that they are ready to replace employer authority in the enterprise and impose a new discipline on social life."
(Quoted in Williams, op.cit. p.124)

But this is no more than an argument for workers' self-management of production which history has shown can easily be integrated into capitalism and indeed the perspective of the "Programme of the Workshop Commissars" is remarkably similar to the Italian Prime Minister Giolitti's own idea of how to reconcile the demands of the workers with capitalism (see below). So long as the class struggle remained confined to the factories there was no threat to the capitalist state and no possibility of proletarian revolution in Italy. At this point (May 1919) the crucial inadequacy of the intransigent fraction as a basis for revolutionary leadership within the P.S.I. is apparent. In Turin there were Bordigists in the class movement but at no point did they challenge the limited perspectives of the Workshop Commissars (although the intransigent, Boero was a member of the Study Committee) and present a clear programme to the class voicing the need to create soviets and promote a concerted onslaught on the capitalist state apparatus. The reaction of Lenin to the Italian experience is apt. As he put it,

"During the occupation of the factories did one single communist make an appearance in Italy?"

Instead the ordinovisti dominated the class movement in Turin and pre-occupied themselves with the attempt to build "communism" within capitalism by claiming the council movement to be one of "concrete revolutionary preparation" and arguing for the creation of industrial unions. The parallel with syndicalism is obvious.

Outside of Turin the council movement grew under the domination of the self-confessed syndicalists and its success forced the P.S.I. and the C.G.L. to come up with their own alternatives in order to try and establish control over the class struggle. They managed to do this in January 1920 when an outbreak of strikes in support of the establishment of workers' councils was quelled by promises by the C.G.L. and the P.S.I. to implement their own "council" and "soviet" schemes.

By Spring 1920, against the background of deepening economic crisis (the price index rose from 634.7 in January to 855.7 in April), the class struggle was focused on the issue of workers' control. The employers, meanwhile, successfully strengthened their hand for the coming struggle when the confederation of Industry (Confindustria) had its first national meeting and agreed to fight the "rising tide of indiscipline" by planning lockouts and gaining government support for the upholding of existing industrial regulations. In accordance with this agreement the workers' actions were met by a lockout, the surrounding of factories by troops with machine guns, and the forcible ejection of workers. After a fortnight the workers conceded defeat on their immediate demands but when the employers demanded an end to the

councils the response in Turin was a mass strike in defence of the factory councils which spread within a few days throughout the region of Piedmont.

The P.S.I., no less than the C.G.L. and the employers, was opposed to the movement and did its best to paralyse it and prevent it from taking a revolutionary course. At a meeting of the Party national council during the strike the ordinovisti delegates, armed with Gramsci's "For a Renewal of the Socialist Party", argued for an extension of the struggle to a general strike throughout Italy under the political leadership of the P.S.I. The Directorate, however, condemned the Turin section's involvement in the strike and the failure to consult the leadership beforehand and the Party adopted a motion, conveniently couched in "revolutionary" phraseology, which condemned the "localist initiatives" and the Party's participation in the strike. Moreover, the paralysis of the abstentionists contributed towards the limited nature of the movement. Without an independent existence as a party which could provide the class with an alternative revolutionary way forward (i.e. the communists should have been in a position to call for an extension of the struggle in terms of the formation of soviets and preparation for an armed assault on the state), the abstentionists could neither support a general strike under the auspices of the P.S.I. in favour of what they recognised as the non-revolutionary end of factory councils; but equally they could not oppose a mass strike which was already taking place in Northern Italy. The abstentionists (and the class as a whole) were paying the price of their failure to break from the P.S.I. The fact that the strike collapsed after the P.S.I. and the C.G.L. refused to support it (it was called off on 23rd April) shows the extent to which the class struggle in Italy still remained within the framework of reformism.

The collapse of the strike meant that the employers' position was strengthened and the shopfloor power of the "councils" was curtailed in favour of the unions. However, as the crisis deepened and the employers were increasingly unable to grant economic concessions and lay-offs and redundancies became the order of the day, the social-democratic unions once more suffered a loss of credibility and the syndicalists again came to the fore. When the metalworkers' employers announced that "given the state of the industry, no demand for economic betterment can be entertained at this time" (Quoted in Spriano The Occupation of the Factories p.45), the metalworkers' union, F.I.O.M., was pressed by its members to take action. The policy adopted at first was that of obstructionism (go-slow) in all engineering and metallurgical works and every naval dock-yard. (The go-slow instructions also carried a rider to the effect that any lock-out should be met by an occupation of the plants.)

The employers in fact ignored the go-slow and refused to resume pay negotiations, and this led to a deepening of the workers' response. Between 24th-30th August the go-slow developed into a sit-down strike in some factories and the employers became more determined to prevent further occupations by a lock-out. On 30th August Romeo's 2,000 workers in Milan were locked out and F.I.O.M. responded by ordering the occupation of about 300 metallurgical works in and around Milan. Confindustria retaliated in the same way as in the previous April but this time the lock-outs were proclaimed throughout Italy. By 4th September half a million metalworkers were occupying their factories.

The activities of F.I.O.M. are not an example of a trade union being pushed into a revolutionary policy. In fact F.I.O.M.'s call for occupations was a defensive measure implemented as a means to retain control over the struggle and to restrict it to inside the factories. It was welcomed by F.I.O.M. as a less "dangerous" and incidentally less costly form of action than a strike. At no point did the F.I.O.M. leadership act in any other terms than a desire for a "peaceful settlement". For instance, it accompanied its call to members to occupy the plants with instructions to continue production within the limits of obstructionism and expressed the hope that:

"the tenacity of the workers in remaining at their posts of struggle and sacrifice will finally persuade the industrialists to take other steps towards a solution." (Quoted in Spriano, op.cit. p.58)

The movement was successfully contained within the confines of the social-democratic institutions - i.e. by means of "workshop commissars" co-operating with the old internal commissions, co-operatives, "communist" soup kitchens; and by co-ordination of the councils under the control of local camera del lavoro - roughly equivalent to British trade councils.

The syndicalists called for an extension of the occupations to other industries but the only calls for an extension of the struggle to a direct onslaught on the capitalist state came from a minority of the ordinovistirump. In Turin this group had disintegrated after the defeat of the April strikes and occupations and the remaining local sections took up different positions vis a vis the occupations in September. The clearest voice came from the Piedmont Avanti which argued that:

"A permanent establishment of the workers in the factories as self-governing producers rather than wage earners is not possible unless other forces enter into play, forces which will completely displace the focus of the present struggle, which will carry the battle into other sectors, direct the workers' power against the real centres of the capitalist system; the means of communication, the banks the armed forces, the state."
(September 3rd 1920)

But typically this passage fails to mention the role of the revolutionary party or how a political struggle against the capitalist state can be waged without the existence of soviets.

The rest is no more than the pathetic details of the end of a lost revolutionary opportunity. The prime minister, Giolitti, persuaded the employers of the compatibility of "trade union control" with capitalist enterprise (1) and, after tactfully ensuring that there would be no provocative acts of violence by the government forces of "law and order", he obtained a meeting of C.G.L., Confindustria, F.I.O.M. and government representatives which worked out a

(1) "A final solution of the industrial question lies in the integration of workers, if necessary as shareholders, into the structure of industry, in full practical participation. Above all, workers' representatives must participate in administrative councils so that they learn the real conditions of industry and the state of profit." (Quoted in Spriano, op.cit. p. 99)

"settlement" based on union control. For the most part the working class, tired and demoralised, acquiesced (although the syndicalist union called for workers to remain in the factories). In any case the back of the movement was broken during 25th - 30th September when the majority of workers left the factories after a F.I.O.M. referendum on the "settlement".

Despite the turmoil and the militancy of the working class during the Red Two Years the class struggle in Italy never realised its revolutionary potential. In particular, the much vaunted factory occupations do not symbolise the revolutionary aspirations of the class but represent the limitations of the class consciousness of the Italian working class in this period.

Certainly the activities of the C.G.L. and the P.S.I. confirm the universal counter-revolutionary role of social democracy as soon as the historical possibility of proletarian revolution was posed. Serrati boasted that the P.S.I. had no Noske (the German social Democratic leader who was responsible for the massacre of German workers) but this was only because the class struggle in Italy never reached the point where the class was fighting to exercise political power (there were no isolated soviets to declare the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as in Germany - e.g. Bremen, Munich) and there was never a revolutionary confrontation with the capitalist state. To a certain extent the syndicalist tradition within the Italian working class must have been responsible for the restriction of the class struggle to the domain of the factory, but the fact remains that the trade unions and the P.S.I. maintained enough influence in the class to allow a "settlement" to be reached in terms of trade union control. The Italian experience demonstrates that insurrections and widespread existence of factory councils do not in themselves guarantee the development of soviets or the generalisation of a communist consciousness.

How do we explain the absence of a political party with a clear communist programme in Italy throughout the post-War revolutionary crisis? Throughout the Biennio Rosso the abstentionist fraction of the P.S.I. did not realise the necessity of breaking from the P.S.I. and forming a communist party, and failed to do so until after the workers had been defeated. It is in this context that we must analyse the role of the revolutionary minorities within the P.S.I. during 1919-20 and the eventual formation of the Communist Party of Italy in January 1921.

GRAMSCI AND THE ORDINE NUOVO.

From the start the ordinovisti's views were confused and contributors to the paper ranged from anarchists to abstentionists. The latter did work with the ordinovisti and by the end of 1919 the Turin section of the P.S.I. was under their joint control. (1)

(1) Although the relationship between the Naples (abstentionist) section of the PSI led by Bordiga and the ordinovisti was one of mutual fraternal criticism (e.g. in June 1919 L'Ordine Nuovo published the communist fraction's programme while Il Soviet criticised the Ordine Nuovo programme in September 1919), in Turin the abstentionists became for practical purposes absorbed into the Ordine Nuovo, particularly after October 1919 when the abstentionists ceased to put forward their own propaganda and suspended publication of Il Soviet (see below). It was the Turin section of the PSI which gave impetus to the council movement there and both abstentionists and ordinovisti were involved in the class activity.

The ordinovist's factoryist orientation led them to a position where they advocated the formation of factory councils as an end in itself. The political aspects of the proletarian revolution were ignored and indeed Gramsci was of the opinion in 1919 that communism could be built within capitalism through existing working class institutions.

"The socialist State already exists potentially in the institutions of social life characteristic of the exploited working class." ("Workers Democracy" 21.6.19, published in Soviets in Italy p.1)

The similarity with syndicalism is striking and not surprising given Gramsci's sympathy for the I.W.W., de Leon and the British Shop Steward movement. As the ordinovisti became increasingly involved in the council movement they failed to distinguish between factory councils (which had come into being) and soviets and implied that the former were the means by which the proletariat would exercise its political power. Bordiga criticised this confusion. (1)

But the ordinovist's emphasis on democracy within the factory involved a further confusion as to the role of the party in the revolutionary process. In 1919 Gramsci was concerned that "the party" should have an active mass base but he was by no means clear about its political composition. (He used the terms "socialist party" and "communist fraction within the socialist party" interchangeably without defining the difference between them.) The burning issue of whether to abstain from or participate in elections was ignored in 1919 while the absence of a coherent criticism of the P.S.I. and social democracy in general meant that the ordinovisti supported the P.S.I. leaders on the issue of party unity. The strong anarcho-syndicalist tradition in Italy which scorned political parties and the political struggle in general was evident throughout the Biennio Rosso. But although the ordinovisti became aware of the limitations of a movement which stressed that the class struggle should be restricted entirely to the domain of industry (thereby denying that the proletariat should seize state power and effectively disarming the revolution) it was only after the defeat of the strikes and occupations in April 1920 that the Ordine Nuovo began to seriously consider the need for political direction from a revolutionary party.

As the consequences of the absence of political leadership became apparent even to Gramsci the ordinovisti, along with the abstentionists in Turin, drew up an Action Programme of the Turin Socialist Section, followed by Gramsci's "First: Renew the Socialist Party". (As the title suggests, essentially an attempt to inject a "communist" policy into the P.S.I.) The incoherence of the ordinovisti was shown when as soon as they moved towards a clearer definition of the party and its relationship to the class struggle the group began to break up. The defeats of the class caused the group to disintegrate further and it was in no position to put forward a clear position by September 1920.

(1) Bordiga, in the journal Comunismo accused the ordinovisti of having:

"a curious confusion between soviets, political organs and instruments of government of a triumphant revolution, and factory committees, technical organs of production and industrial regulation." (Quoted in Williams. op.cit. p.157)

The ordinovisti's lack of political coherence meant that far from being able to act as a vanguard for the class, their political positions tended to be a direct reflection of where the class movement was at any particular juncture. Their initial slowness to recognise the importance of the political struggle for the conquest of power by the proletariat led them (however unwittingly) into the cul-de-sac of syndicalism. Moreover, once the ordinovisti had accepted the crucial role of a communist party the group began to break up because they had no overall conception of the counter-revolutionary role of social democracy. This failure to understand the bankruptcy of social democracy meant that Gramsci always held out the prospect of winning over the P.S.I. - even after the formation of the Italian Communist Party (P.C.I.)

BORDIGA AND THE ABSTENTIONISTS

While the political incoherence and factoryist orientation of the Ordine Nuovo explain that group's failure to even see the need for a break with the P.S.I. until after the defeat in 1920, it is less obvious why Bordiga's abstentionist fraction (so-called because it opposed participating in elections) did not split from social democracy before 1921. Although the fraction took the name "communist" when it was formed in July 1919, Bordiga still held out hope for an internal "revolutionisation" of the P.S.I. and the abstentionist policy was still a tactical one, designed to force the P.S.I. away from the electoral divergence and along a revolutionary path and to drive out the reformists. In spite of Bordiga's opposition to the war from a class standpoint and his criticisms of the P.S.I. he had not developed a full understanding of the capitalist nature of the whole of social democracy. This slowness to make a full theoretical and practical break is only comprehensible when we consider the apparently revolutionary position adopted by the P.S.I. by its adherence to the Third International and the social democratic misconceptions still held by the Bolsheviks and which existed in the International, becoming more predominant as the international revolutionary wave declined. Both of these factors had an important influence on the abstentionists. On the one hand the P.S.I. was ostensibly in favour of international proletarian revolution and the centrist leadership of the party, under Serrati, enjoyed the support of Lenin. On the other, the International refused to recognise that participation in parliament and elections was a counter-revolutionary divergence from the revolutionary struggle, promoting all kinds of illusions in the possibility of a democratic and "peaceful" proletarian revolution. The International also favoured the creation of a mass "communist" party in Italy centred round the P.S.I. leadership and urged the abstentionists to participate in parliamentary elections and use parliament as a revolutionary platform.

At the Bologna Congress of the P.S.I. in October 1919 the abstentionists, far from breaking with the Party, were still trying to revolutionise it by democratic means and they proposed that the Party adhere to the Third International, that it adopt the title of communist party as a symbol of the revolutionising of the party's programme and proposed that it :

"... declare the incompatibility of the presence in the party of those who proclaim the possibility of the emancipation of the proletariat in the body of the democratic regime and repudiate the method of the armed struggle against the bourgeoisie for the installation of the proletarian dictatorship."
(Quoted in Cammatte, op.cit.)

This motion was defeated, but the abstentionists no doubt impressed by the P.S.I. vote to confirm its support to the Third International, accepted the Congress decision to suspend their propaganda and the publication of Il Soviet!!

In effect the communist fraction had disarmed itself: instead of leaving a party which, by its own definition was incompatible with communist politics, and forming an independent organisation on the basis of a clear communist platform, they had agreed to silence themselves (and at a time when abstentionist propaganda would have posed an immediate problem for the P.S.I. involved as it was in campaigning for the November parliamentary elections). At the end of 1919 the deeper critique of social democracy which Bordiga was developing (where the issue of participation in parliament was becoming more than a tactical question) was undermined by the P.S.I.'s adherence to the Third International. (Lenin wrote to the P.S.I. after the Bologna Congress, supporting the party's decision to participate in the elections and criticising the "ultra-Left" and this was used by the P.S.I. to justify their policy and their opposition to the abstentionists.)

Thus the abstentionists were out on a limb and without guidance or support from the International - a support which Bordiga mistakenly thought would be given once the situation in Italy and the abstentionist view had been clearly explained. (1) It was despite the International's policy in Italy that the abstentionists eventually decided on a split. In January 1920 Bordiga wrote again to Lenin announcing the abstentionists' intention to split and form a communist party, even if they were only a minority. (2) On January 4th the fraction had resumed the publication of Il Soviet which devoted its pages to a critique of the factory council movement, the elaboration of the basis of their abstentionism, and the need for a coherent communist party.

"At the point where we now are, when the state of the proletariat is a programmatic aspiration, the fundamental problem is that of the conquest of power by the proletariat, better still by the communist proletariat, that is, the workers organised in a class political party, resolute to achieve the historical form of revolutionary power, the dictatorship of the proletariat." (Quoted from Il Soviet Jan-Feb 1920, in Williams op.cit. p.180)

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- (1) In November 1919 Bordiga wrote a letter to the International which never reached its destination but which showed the abstentionists' misgivings over the PSI's adherence to the International; their understanding of the limitations of the factory movement in Turin at the time ("a reformist modification of the trade union structure"); and their concern for advice from the International as to the revolutionary way forward in Italy - including the problem of participation in elections, a split in the party and the creation of soviets. (See Williams, op.cit. p.84)
- (2) In this letter Bordiga argued that the abstentionists' position within the PSI corresponded to that of the Spartacists within the USPD before they split to form the German Communist Party. He stressed that Italian abstentionism was not the same as that of the KPD Opposition which had been expelled from the K.P.D. in October. He apparently already accepted the misrepresentation of this Opposition's politics. For details of the split in the K.P.D. and the formation of the K.A.P.D., see R.P.7

But the recognition of the necessity for a split in principle was not immediately translated into practice and in May the abstentionist conference at Florence resolved to form a communist party after the Second Congress of the International, and to form an anti-parliamentary fraction within that Congress where they hoped to win over the International to revolutionary anti-parliamentarism. The ordinovisti, however, were far from seeing the need for a split: it was not until April that Gramsci's "For a Renewal..." was published. During this period (January--August 1920) Il Soviet also extended its correspondence with European Left Communists and published articles by Pannekoek, Gorter, Pankhurst, et.al. (p.207 Camatte op.cit.) By the time of the Second Congress of the International Bordiga had developed a full critique of the role of parliament in the epoch of proletarian revolution. (See "Texts of the Communist Left" in R.P.3)

But despite this commitment to the formation of an authentic class party the fact is that the abstentionists were still a fraction of the P.S.I. and remained so until the defeat of the working class. Ironically, it was the fraction which saw most clearly the necessity for a coherent communist party in Italy during the post-War years of revolutionary upheaval that failed to have any significant impact on the mass movement of the class by virtue of its position as a minority inside social democracy and its own policy of trying to transform the P.S.I. from within.

Il Soviet made some poignant criticisms of ordinovisti politics and the factory council movement, always stressing the centrality of political power as opposed to workers' control in the factories. In September 1919 Bordiga argued that attempts to create organs of workers' power in the factories before the capitalist state had been overthrown were:

"... a formal imitation of a future institution, but one which lacks its fundamentally revolutionary character. Those who can, today, represent the proletariat which will assume power TOMORROW are the workers who are fully conscious of this historical perspective, that is to say WORKERS INSCRIBED IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY. The proletariat which struggles against bourgeois power is represented by its CLASS PARTY, even if this is only an audacious minority. The soviets of tomorrow must have their genesis in the local sections of the communist party." (Il Soviet 21st September 1919)

Although this quote shows that Bordiga well understood that the party is the political organisation of the class and that without political consciousness the working class cannot hope to make a revolution, on the question of the communist party being responsible for the creation of the soviets, he seems to have had a rather formalistic approach. While it is true that the post-War class movement in Italy did not engender soviets (at least in any widespread sense), history has shown (Russia 1905, 1917, Germany Hungary) that soviets are creations of the working class as a whole and are the organs in which the class party must fight for the mass adoption of the communist programme by the class. This is not to argue that communism will be a spontaneous creation of the class, but it is unrealistic to expect that in any more than exceptional areas the communist party would be strong enough to form soviets made up entirely of its own members. Certainly it is the duty of the communist party to call for the formation of soviets and to assist in their formation wherever possible. However, it is

just this former course of action which the abstentionists did not take. While Bordiga was (correctly) concerned with the formation of the communist party he became engrossed in the tactics of splitting with the P.S.I. at the expense of presenting a clear revolutionary voice in the class struggle as it raged in Italy. While the abstentionists in Turin joined the factory occupations (in fact the abstentionist Parodi led the internal commission, under the control of the factory committee, at Fiat Centro), Il Soviet failed even to mention these occupations, which inspired the ruling class with the fear of revolution, in its editorials. For the abstentionist leadership in Naples these struggles were dismissed as "economistic" (which they were) but this does not preclude the necessity of putting forward the communist viewpoint. (1)

Since Bordiga did not see the possible development of soviets by intensification of the class struggle, he could not envisage the transformation of the class struggle in Italy into a conscious revolutionary movement. The strikes and occupations which took place before and during the Biennio Rosso would have had to make a qualitative leap if the movement was to take on the power of the state, but this possibility was inherent in the situation. For a start the struggle in Italy was not an isolated affair: these events took place at a time when revolution was sweeping throughout Europe and the bourgeoisie was trembling with the fear of revolution. As we have already pointed out, the economic crisis in Italy was so severe that the economy had all but collapsed and the Italian state was paralysed. Moreover, the militancy of the Italian working class is undeniable and it is worth pointing out that the class action was not always restricted to the economic level. (Take for instance the mass strike in support of the Russian and Hungarian soviet republics in July 1919.) There was more revolutionary potential there than Bordiga realised. Even the occupations themselves, which the abstentionists saw in completely negative terms, posed the possibility of the growth of genuine class-wide organisations. But as it was all these movements remained under the influence of the anarcho-syndicalists or the social democrats and the communist fraction did not coherently relate to them.

THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF ITALY (P.C.I.) AND THE ONSET OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

With the defeat of the September occupations the Turin abstentionists called for the fraction's national committee:

"... to begin work towards the immediate creation of the communist party, Italian section of the Third International, and to convene a national congress of the fraction to set up the necessary executive organs." (Quoted in Williams, op.cit. p.271)

But Bordiga who, before his attendance at the Second Congress of the International, had been committed to a split with the P.S.I. and the formation of a communist party in Italy, once the Congress was over now argued against a "premature" split. The new line was supported by the Comintern representative who pleaded with the potential seceders:

(1) This ignoring of the class movement so long as it had not reached a communist consciousness contains the seeds of some of the Italian Left's later view, which developed during the counter-revolution, of the working class as a "class-for-capital" so long as its actions were outside the framework of a communist party.

"I recommend and entreat you, in the name of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, not to take any hasty steps.... we must instead remain in the party for the time being and devote all our energies to winning control of it." (ibid. p.271-2)

This somersault was the result of the International's rejection of the anti-parliamentarist theses and their subsequent withdrawal by Bordiga, followed by his adoption of the Russian policy to form the future communist party on as wide a base as possible. The International's emphasis on the mass party as a futile attempt to stave off the counter-revolution involved making concessions to social democracy. Lenin blamed the absence of an Italian revolution on the absence of a communist party and yet the International's policy in Italy all along had been to support first the P.S.I. leaders' call for unity in the P.S.I. and their parliamentarism and then the ordinovisti's plan for a "renewal" from within. This was digging the ground from under the feet of the revolution. And now Bordiga, by withdrawing the anti-parliamentarist theses and agreeing to work for the formation of a mass communist party without too much emphasis on programmatic coherence, had succumbed to the same errors as the Bolsheviks. The Third International, born under the impetus of the Russian Revolution, was regarded as the guiding authority for the international revolutionary movement. But the Bolsheviks' social democratic idea that revolutionaries should participate in parliament and the growing emphasis on the creation of mass parties resulted in a mistaken attempt to fly in the face of counter-revolution. Moreover, the identification of the interests of the Russian state with the international revolution became an outright promotion of support for Russian state capitalism. (1).

Already, by the end of 1920, Lenin, refusing to recognise the symptoms of counter-revolution began to employ the double think which was to become characteristic of the Comintern after 1921. While a communist fraction of the P.S.I. organised itself round Gramsci, Terracini and Bordiga, Lenin, arguing for a communist party which was both clear and which had mass support, made overtures to Serrati and the P.S.I. leaders (who now went under the name of unitarian communist!) and urged them to link up with the communist fraction. But since Serrati refused to expel the reformists (despite his acceptance of the 21 points) and also to submit to outside direction from the International (he insisted on "national autonomy" for the party) the Comintern settled for the promotion of the less numerous, but more compliant communist fraction as the basis for the new communist party. Thus, at the Livorno Congress of the P.S.I. in 1921, where the communist fraction eventually seceded, the Comintern representative read out a massive denunciation of Serrati.

But the P.C.I. was born with the defeat of the international revolution and although it was "around and behind Bordiga that the party formed" (Williams, op.cit. p.283) its programme did not reflect the clarity which the abstentionists had reached in early 1920. Bordiga's renunciation of abstentionism had been a step backwards to social democratic conceptions and indeed at the Imola congress in

(1) For further detail of how the defeat of the international revolution led to the degeneration of the first proletarian state in history into the first state capitalist power by 1921 - see "Russia: Revolution and Counter-Revolution 1917-21" in R.P.4

November 1920 the communist fraction had adopted the P.S.I.'s Bologna programme (based on the 1892 maximum socialist programme) with the proviso that the party would carry through this programme in a revolutionary manner. This was none other than the programme Bordiga had opposed at the Bologna Congress of 1919 and which advocated the co-ordination of parliamentary and "extra-parliamentary" action for the achievement of both the minimum and maximum programme. Clearly, a mere modification of such a programme could not incorporate the necessary lessons which the new historical period brought with it (e.g. the crucial role of soviets as learnt from the Russian Revolution). The formation of the P.C.I. is symbolical of the confusion which accompanied the triumph of the imminent counter-revolution, and to hold up Livorno as a symbol of the intransigence of the communist programme (as the International Communist Party do today) is to ignore the concessions which the P.C.I. made to the counter-revolution. While on some issues Bordiga's previous clarity on the necessity of a coherent party and the class nature of social democracy were evident and for a time pushed the P.C.I. into opposition with the Comintern, in other areas the P.C.I. reverted to social democratic practices until, finally by 1924 the P.C.I., under Gramsci, was completely under the control of the Comintern and the Bordigists were reduced to a small minority who later went on to carry on the earlier revolutionary insights of Bordiga in exile.

But this does not mean that until 1924 the P.C.I. was resolutely following a communist policy; the concessions to the counter-revolution were very real, particularly in the field of trade unions and parliament. In May 1921 the P.C.I. participated in its first parliamentary election campaign and sent deputies to parliament. On the subject of the trade unions, Bordiga had never accepted that their reformist role meant that communists could not work within them once the reformist struggle had been superseded by the revolutionary one. Although he had criticised the council movement for its attempts to democratise the unions, he also saw the latter as working class organisations through which communists could struggle for the generalisation of communist consciousness in the class and he had supported Lenin's attack on the K.A.P.D. at the Second Congress of the International. (1) He had attacked the syndicalists for trying to turn the unions into communist organs and yet his policy was for the formation of communist groups within the unions to "make them "communist" in agency" (Williams, op.cit. p.134). In fact the abstentionists Boero and Parodi were involved in these very attempts at democratisation. In early 1921, therefore, there was no opposition to the P.C.I. attempts to win control of the C.G.L. (led by the Turin section).

It was over the question of the united front that the P.C.I. came into opposition with the Comintern, encapsulated in the Rome Theses presented by Bordiga and adopted by the party in 1922. According

(1) Unlike the KAPD who recognised that in the revolutionary period the trade unions could only have a counter-revolutionary role and "cannot be transformed from within", Bordiga, like Lenin, was of the view that "the trades union, even if it is corrupted, is always an organisation of the working masses" and attacked the KAPD's view as syndicalist at the Second Congress of the International. For more detail on this, see R.P.3 p.43 and for the KAPD's position see "The KAPD Programme, 1920" published in R.P.4.

to the Comintern a united front of communists with social democrats and sometimes syndicalists would combat the counter-revolutionary offensive of the capitalists, whilst at the same time encouraging recruitment to the communist parties participating in them. A corollary of this was the slogan of "workers government" (i.e. a government which would adopt a pro-Russian policy) which the national communist parties were instructed to adopt. Specifically, in Italy the Comintern urged for the alliance of the P.C.I. with the P.S.I. But here, for a while Bordiga's understanding of the need for a clear communist party won through. In early 1922 he formulated the concept of "organic centralism", based on a communist programme which is the result of the historical lessons of the class struggle. The Rome Theses reiterated that the Communist Party's policies must be determined by the nature of the historical period, not by short term tactical manoeuvres designed to recruit a mass following.

"It is an error to suppose that one can by expedients and manoeuvres, expand the party base among the masses at any time, since relations between the party and the masses depend in great part on the objective conditions of the situation...

Party influence among the masses will grow when the situation becomes more revolutionary, provided that the party holds firm to its preconceived organisation and tactics. The other factions apparently see the problem of "conquering the masses" as a problem of will; but actually they fall into opportunism by continually adapting themselves to special situations. Thus they deform the nature and functions of the party so that it is incapable of conquering the masses or of performing its supreme tasks when the situation does occur." (From the "Rome Theses", quoted in R.P.3 p.41).

Similarly, Bordiga's opposition to the growing fascist movement which was being appropriated by the industrialists now that the class was defeated, was not accompanied by efforts to form a united front. While the Bolsheviks saw Mussolini as another Kornilov who could be overthrown by the combined forces of the P.C.I. and the social democrats (as the Bolsheviks had defeated Kornilov) Bordiga emphasised that it was useless for the proletariat to ally with one faction of the bourgeoisie against another. Bordiga was one of the first communists to see that, in relation to the proletariat, liberal democracy and fascism have the same interest and he pointed out that the fascists were first organised against communists and not against bourgeois democrats and the only possible way the class could make an offensive against the fascist attacks was to remain strictly on its own terrain. (1) In 1922 then the P.C.I. refused to co-operate with the "Arditi del popolo" - popular anti-fascist squads (although Gramsci was sympathetic to them) - and Bordiga opposed the Comintern's attempts to achieve a fusion with the P.S.I. (which finally rejected its right wing in October and re-joined the International).

The Rome Theses in fact supported the notion of a united front at the economic level, which seems to have meant continuing the practice of having communist groups working in the trade unions and in the syndicalist unions and trying to win them over to the Red Trade Union International.

(1) See "The Janus Face of Capital" in R.P.9 for an analysis of fascism and anti-fascism.

Politically the Bordigists remained as a left fraction within the International (until 1927) which they saw as degenerating more and more into opportunism but which they did not recognise as an arm of an imperialist state capitalist power. At the Fourth Congress of the Comintern Bordiga stated:

"We affirm that the danger of seeing the united front degenerate into a communist revisionism is very real" (Quoted in Camatte, op.cit. p.213)

In the same year (1922) as Gorter was working for the establishment of a truly communist international (Communist Workers' International - K.A.I.) (1) Bordiga was involved in the attempts of the Comintern to unite the Second, 2½ and Third Internationals.

After 1922 the revolutionary Left became an ever smaller minority: they were fighting a losing battle to maintain the P.C.I. as a revolutionary party. Despite the Bordigists' constant reaffirmation of the collaborationist nature of the policy of the united front and fusion with the P.S.I., and Bordiga's opposition to the concept of "socialism in one country" when it was formally introduced by Stalin in 1924, their criticisms could not transform the class character of the Comintern, or the P.C.I. which was increasingly determined to follow its path.

By 1924 Gramsci was leading the opposition within the P.C.I. to the Rome Theses which he declared were preventing the development of the party as a mass organisation and in the same year the P.S.I. fused with the P.C.I. In 1926 the Rome Theses were finally displaced by Gramsci's Lyons Theses, symbolising the definitive defeat of the Left. At the Lyons Congress the theses of the Left, presented by Bordiga, as well as reiterating their opposition to the united front and the "workers' government", condemned the policy of the "bolshevisation" of the P.C.I. which was yet another attempt by the Comintern to create a "unified" mass party in Italy, this time by organisational means of basing the party on factory cells. Bordiga pointed out that revolution was not just a question of organisational forms and the real strength of the communist party lay in its programmatic unity and coherence (organic centralism).

Nevertheless, despite the clarity which the Left had achieved, particularly on the nature of the communist party and the question of the united front, the counter-revolution imposed limitations on their political understanding. Most important was Bordiga's failure to recognise the Comintern as a counter-revolutionary organisation which served as an arm of Russian state capitalism. Instead he saw it as a degenerating proletarian body which could be reset on a revolutionary path. Thus at the Sixth Comintern Congress where he was finally expelled, Bordiga argued that the policies of the Russian state should be determined by the interests of the international revolution and he seriously thought that the Russian party would tolerate a left opposition within the Comintern. Given Bordiga's faith in the basically proletarian character of the Comintern it is not surprising that on the issue of the class nature of the Russian state the Italian Left only recognised Russia as state capitalist after World War Two.

Whilst not wishing to detract from the political insights of the Italian Left it is necessary also to point out that these insights are

(1) Albeit, an unrealisable project given the lack of mass support internationally for communism with the triumph of the counter-revolution.

not the result of an intransigent defence by the Italian Left of a communist programme enshrined by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century. Against the myth of the invariance of the Italian Left's programme as portrayed by the various "intransigent" descendents existing today (such as the P.C.I.- International Communist Party), must be placed the reality of revolutionaries whose clarity was achieved as a result of self-criticism of the mistakes of the revolutionary minority and the limitations of the class movement as a whole in Italy during the revolutionary period. This clarity was not flawless and was inevitably blurred by the growth of the counter-revolution. Instead of claiming a spurious "invariance" of the Italian Left from Marx to the abstentionists of 1919, through to Livorno in 1921, it is more useful to recognise their mistakes in the revolutionary period and backward moves during the grip of the counter-revolution and by so doing the clarity which they did reach on notable issues (e.g. the united front) can be understood as a remarkable achievement of revolutionary understanding. Communists today must build on this achievement and go beyond it if they are to be prepared for the next revolutionary upheaval.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE C.W.O.

Copies of the following issues are still available:

<u>Revolutionary Perspectives 5</u> Spain 1936: Anti-Fascism; Spain 1976: Class Struggle	<u>Revolutionary Perspectives 8</u> Money, Credit and the Crisis History of the C.W.O.
<u>Revolutionary Perspectives 6</u> Capitalism in Africa Critique of Luxemburgist Economics	<u>Revolutionary Perspectives 9</u> Fascism and Anti-Fascism Terrorism and Communism Trotskyism and the Counter- Revolution (Russia 1921-28)
<u>Revolutionary Perspectives 7</u> The German Revolution Crisis in COMECON	<u>Revolutionary Perspectives 10</u> The Meaning of Decadence Latin America Imperialism in the Middle East

Crisis Theory - A Reply to the ICC

We were interested to see that, with the publication of "Marxism and Crisis Theory" in International Review 13, the International Communist Current (I.C.C.), were at last showing some concern to defend the economic theories which they nominally assert. It was amusing to read, however, that "the debate is now opening up", since we have been addressing texts to them on this issue for nearly five years: to these texts they have hitherto turned a deaf ear. Now at last they have stepped forward to explain their acceptance of a variation of the theories first put forward by Rosa Luxemburg in her work, The Accumulation of Capital, written in 1913. The motive for the I.C.C.'s sudden concern for this previously "academic" issue, is the awareness that, independently, a number of groups from different countries have all concluded that the explanation of the capitalist crisis is to be found in the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, and not, as the I.C.C. claim, following Luxemburg, in the saturation of the world market. The main target of "Marxism and Crisis Theory" is the economic theories of the C.W.O., - although it totally avoids many of the trenchant criticisms we have made on Luxemburgism. For example, our criticisms of her views on the money question and on the explanation of state capitalism, are simply ignored. Nevertheless, their recent article requires a response; but first, we have to clear up certain misconceptions on the significance of the discussion on "economics".

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEBATE.

What is the significance of the debate on rival economic theories in the revolutionary movement? The I.C.C., since their inception, have continually downgraded the discussion on economics, saying that we "exaggerate the importance of the debate" in order to avoid the issue of the regroupment of revolutionaries within one organization. But this is not the case. In our "Open Letter to the I.C.C." (Feb 1975), we stated that, had economics been the only issue dividing us from the I.C.C., "we would in all likelihood have asked to be accepted within the tendency" (1). The I.C.C. declined to answer this letter.

Another supposed consequence of our so-called exaggeration of the issue of economics, is that we write about it too much. So much so in fact, that out of all the texts published in Revolutionary Perspectives since its foundation, precisely 3 have been devoted directly to the discussion of economic theory. But even this is too much for the I.C.C., since in the four years since we published the "Economic Foundations of Capitalist Decadence" in Revolutionary Perspectives 2 (which the I.C.C. call a "serious effort"), it has failed to evoke a response from them. Even now, a reply is promised "for the future". Inevitably, for the I.C.C., the insistence on the need to thrash out economic differences is evidence of sectarianism. (2). We are

- (1) This, along with other texts from the history of the C.W.O., is published in R.P.8 (Available from group address.)
- (2) "...for the C.W.O. "economics" is used as a cover for sectarianism." (International Review 12, p25.)

sectarian for attempting to demonstrate that Luxemburg's economics are unmarxist (despite the fact that we were at great pains to show in our article exactly what were Luxemburg's great political contributions to the workers' movement.). But most seriously we are sectarian for showing that the economic theories held by a group do have consequences for its politics: though we do not say that all political positions of a group are products of economic theory, a view the I.C.C. attribute to us. The I.C.C. actually wants to have it both ways on this. On the one hand, they argue that our attempt to show that some of their political views, eg their perspectives for activity and regroupment stem from a Luxemburgist economic theory, is "absurd" (I.R. 13, p26). But when it comes to an analysis of the C.W.O we are cautioned that "this does not mean that there are simply no political consequences involved" (op.cit p33) in an economic analysis. Then it seems that potential confusions lurk in our economics on the issue of the national question, and the class nature of the Russian state, not to mention our actual supposed confusions on the period of transition. The I.C.C. argues,

"that these erroneous positions are linked mainly to a unilateral "falling rate of profit" theory like Mattick's or the C.W.O.'s"(1)

In fact, the I.C.C.'s erroneous identification of our economics with those of Grossman and Mattick rebounds on themselves. Although Mattick and Grossman made valuable contributions to economic theory, and although they were stepping stones on the C.W.O.'s path to economic clarity, they are also a perfect illustration of the effect which economic theories have upon political positions. Unlike the C.W.O., they both deny that the law of value underlies the Russian economy, and therefore quite logically argue that Russia cannot be capitalist or imperialist. This argues for the view we have defended in the past that abandoning the law of value can lead, good motives notwithstanding, to an apology for one or other faction of the bourgeoisie. Thus the logical Luxemburgist theorists Gillman and Sternberg were led to a similar conclusion as to the "non capitalist" nature of Russia, since they saw no crisis of "overproduction" there.

The crucial argument that the I.C.C. puts forward to diminish the seriousness of the debate is to accuse us of academicism, and of seeking out a role as the "political economists" of the revolutionary movement. At the same time they assert that the study of economics is a waste of time, since its consequences are entirely derivative,

"In the last analysis it is the class viewpoint which makes it possible to have a clear grasp of the economic processes of capitalism—and not the other way round" (Inter. Review 13 p26)

This patent, undialectical nonsense is supposed to hold true not only for revolutionaries today, but also for the founders of scientific socialism, Marx and Engels. This summarises the I.C.C.'s views on economics. A groups politics do not derive from its understanding of economic reality, but it rather chooses its economic theory to fit in with its political aims. And this method is presented as the epitome of Marxism!

On a subjective level—which unfortunately the I.C.C. never go beyond—there is something in this. Clearly, only someone who had crossed from the radical bourgeoisie to the proletariat, like Marx, could have revealed the contradictions of capitalism. But this "class viewpoint"

(1) Int Review 13 p35 ; available from; B.M. Box 869 London WC IV 6XX.

is not enough to account for the scientific achievement of Marx and Engels. There were many other theorists who took the side of the proletariat, eg the utopians Owen, Weitling or Proudhon, but who by virtue of their inability to understand the law of value and hence the workings of the capitalist economy, led the proletariat into cul-de-sacs like model communities, self management and co-operatives. Marx did not, as the I.C.C. argue, take over the law of value from the classical bourgeois economists like Smith and Ricardo, and add a proletarian twist to it; this in fact was the method of the utopians. Rather he developed a complete understanding of the source of all exchange value in human labour power, and of the origin of surplus value in unpaid labour. Just how necessary this was is shown by a cursory examination of the theories which the utopians took over. Smith for example viewed rent and profit as contributions to the value of a commodity, and even gets a cow by virtue of its milk production to create surplus value! Even the clearer sighted Ricardo could not explain the origin of the capitalist's profit, and confused the technical and value aspects of capitalism. And many were the utopians who erected political theories on their interpretations of Ricardo's economics.

Thus, it is not simply a "class viewpoint" which enabled Marx to come to a clear understanding of the workings of capitalism, and the way to supersede it. Scientific precision and application of his insights into the law of value allowed him to establish an understanding of exploitation, which not only cut through bourgeois mystification, but also freed the proletariat from the "oughts" and "ifs" and "buts" of the utopians.

ONCE AGAIN ON "MARKETS" AND "PROFITS".

The central core of the I.C.C. argument in "Marxism and Crisis Theory" consists mainly of long quotations from Marx's "Theories Of Surplus Value (henceforth TSV) Part II, which concerns his critique of Ricardo. As a counter to the argument in the Grundrisse that the law of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall is,

"..in every respect the most important law of modern political economy, and the most essential for understanding the most difficult relations." (Pelican edn p 748-9)

the I.C.C. quote TSV II which says that overproduction of commodities is "the basic phenomenon in crises" (Int Review 13, p27-our emphasis). However, there is an obvious difference between a law and a phenomenon, and although nothing causes I.C.C. hackles to rise as much as discussions about "method", we must attempt to clear up this confusion.

A phenomenon can be seen, it is an end product, a manifestation of a process, whilst a law is not in itself visible, but explains the nature of the process which produces the phenomenal end product. The I.C.C. are unable to understand the difference between the two, calling both saturated markets and the fall in the rate of profit "phenomena" (I.R. 13 p27). To our knowledge no one has actually seen the rate of profit fall (the law), though plenty of bourgeois spokesmen complain of being unable to sell their goods (one phenomenal form of this law). Marx was quite clear as to what he was saying on this, and only failure to understand his procedure can lead to a confusion of the issues involved. In Capital Vol 3, Marx states:

"On the other hand, the rate of self expansion of total capital, or the rate of profit, being the goad of capitalist production ...its fall checks the formation of new independent capitals and thus appears as a threat to the capitalist production process. It breeds over-production, speculation, crises, surplus capital alongside surplus population. (Pp241-2).

Thus it is the fall in the rate of profit which causes over production. Overproduction is relative to the capacity of capital for self expansion, and this capacity is determined by the value relations of capital; i.e., the relationship of living to dead labour, or organic composition of capital. Therefore the long quotations by Marx against Ricardo which the I.C.C. quote against the C.W.O. are simply irrelevant. Since the I.C.C. don't understand the difference between a law and a phenomenon, they are unable to understand Marx's polemic against Ricardo. Marx was trying to show that Ricardo could not accept what was before his very eyes; that crises manifested themselves in generalised overproduction. Marx was not trying to argue that crises were (even partially) caused by overproduction, although he did not deny the fact of overproduction. The "historical contradiction" which explains the phenomena of generalised over production, the real explanation of the cause of the capitalist crisis, can only be found in the "laws of production of capital" themselves.

This fumbling attempt to equate our views with those of Ricardo is a prologue to the main thrust of the argument, which is to show that "overproduction" is as legitimate, in Marxist economics, as an explanation of the capitalist crisis, as the law of the falling rate of profit. They argue along the following lines,

"The C.W.O., for example, in their attempt to show that an analysis of decadence, based on the falling rate of profit is the only Marxist one, have fallen into the trap of branding virtually (sic) any concern with the problem of overproduction of commodities...as having nothing to do with Marx." (International Review 13 p27).

This "virtually" robs the statement of much of its force; but it could not be omitted, since in our article "The Accumulation of Contradictions, or the Economic Consequences of Rosa Luxemburg"(1). we showed exactly how it was possible to misread a tendency to underconsumptionism into certain isolated statements by Marx, for example,

"The last cause of all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses..." (Capital 3, p257)

But we went on to demonstrate that Marx located such a view within value relations themselves,

"There are not too many necessities of life produced, in proportion to existing population. Quite the reverse. Too little is produced to decently and humanely satisfy the wants of the great mass..." (Loc.cit.)

(1) In Revolutionary Perspectives 6 pp16-17. This text, which is a global critique of the Accumulation of Capital remains unanswered by the I.C.C.-or any other Luxemburgists. In particular we ask her defenders to explain how she can possibly adhere to a Marxist theory of value when she describes the production of armaments as productive for capital, and a "province of accumulation".

Thus capitalism is faced with the almost unbelievable contradiction that:

"There are not too few labourers or too many productive forces in the world, but there are too few productive labourers to create the necessary mass of profit to offset the decline in the rate of profit; and there are too many productive forces to be able to sell commodities profitably."

("The Accumulation of Contradictions" in R.P.6 p.17)

But this is not the theory of Luxemburg; she looks outside the wage-labour-capital relationship to those "pre-capitalist" areas which, according to her, provide an outlet for commodities whose value cannot be realised on the domestic market. When all these are used up, then capitalism enters its death throes. Despite the I.C.C.'s assertions, this is a totally different picture to that given us by Marx.

Indeed, at least Luxemburg herself was honest when, in both the Accumulation and in her reply to her critics, the Anti-Critique, she said that her theory of capitalist accumulation and crisis was different from Marx's. But to return to the I.C.C. They triumphantly pick out quotations from Marx which describe how, as capitalism expands, it integrates all pre-capitalist areas into its orbit, and present this as conclusive evidence for Luxemburg's theories.(1) But again, the same fundamental confusion between phenomena and the laws which cause them is evident. For Luxemburg, the integration of pre-capitalist areas into the orbit of capital was the basic law in the capital accumulation process, the one which determined its rise and fall. For Marx, the integration of pre-capitalist areas into capitalism was a phenomenon caused by the same basic inner law of capital which caused over production, i.e. the falling rate of profit. Marx showed how at every stage of its development (not just in the imperialist epoch) capitalism sought to integrate pre-capitalist areas into its sphere in an effort to offset the falling rate of profit. In the section of Capital Vol.III where he deals with the counter tendencies to the falling rate of profit, he outlines this process,

"Since foreign trade partly cheapens the elements of constant capital, and partly the necessities of life for which the variable capital is exchanged, it tends to raise the rate of profit ...

Capitals invested in foreign trade can yield a higher rate of profit, because, in the first place, there is competition with commodities produced in other countries with inferior production facilities, so that the most advanced country sells its goods above their value ...

(they) may yield higher rates of profit ... because of the use of slaves, coolies, etc." (Capital Volume III p.237-8)

Marx does not say that it could not realise surplus value produced at all without this trade, without the integration of pre-capitalist areas, as Luxemburg said. He argues that such trade enables, among all the other points mentioned above, the commodities to be sold above value. Thus maximisation, and not realisation, of surplus value is the real logic of such trade. The question which Luxemburgists are unable to answer is "Why could capitalism integrate such areas in the past, and not today?" For us the answer lies in the global value composition of capital: it is no longer profitable to do so. However, our

(1) See International Review 13 p.30, where they quote from Capital Volume II p.237-8.

Luxemburgists explain the decadence of capitalism by the exhaustion of pre-capitalist markets, and then explain capitalism's inability to integrate pre-capitalist areas into its orbit by.....the decadence of capitalism.

The final confusion exhibited by the I.C.C. is manifested when discussing Marx's diagrams in Volume 11 of Capital. These diagrams attempt to show that, with a constant rate of profit, capitalism can accumulate satisfactorily, and effect exchange between the two Departments of Production (ie. capital goods and consumer goods.) When confronted with these diagrams, the I.C.C. feels the ground sinking beneath its feet,

"There is no getting away from the fact that to take the diagrams literally means that capitalism can indefinitely create its own market " (Int Review 13 p31.)

-and therefore, they conclude as did Luxemburg, that Marx must have "made a mistake". Luxemburg herself says,

" The flaw in Marx's analysis is, in our opinion, the misguided formulation of the problem... the real issue is the effective demand, the use made of goods, not the source of the money which is paid for them. " (Accumulation of Capital, p 155).

But there is no mistake; Marx was not attempting to disprove the view that capitalism, if it could maintain its own self-expansion, could create its own market. But the I.C.C. cannot see this, since for them a capitalism creating its own market is a crisis free capitalism. Marx was trying to show the basic conditions under which accumulation could take place. He was not here investigating the mechanism of crisis because he located that crisis in the process of production, and not in circulation ("the process of circulation of capital" was the concern of Capital Vol 11). Once this is grasped then Marx's diagram is not in contradiction with his intentions, which were to show that capitalism posed definite limits to its own self expansion, since the cause of this limit lay elsewhere. What Luxemburg set about to prove was that "pure" capitalism-irrespective of the value composition of capital-could not accumulate at all!

"Marxism and Crisis Theory" shows the I.C.C. on the defensive against the growing tendency for acceptance of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall as the mainspring of the crisis. For the first time their "luxemburgism" has become a political stumbling block. Faced with arguments against the concept of "saturated markets" which they are unable to answer, the I.C.C. attempt to confuse the issue by talking about "the problem of the market", "the problem of overproduction of commodities", and the "problem of overproduction". (1) The I.C.C. would have us believe that all these terms are synonymous, but in actual fact saturated markets can be found nowhere in Marx's writings, whereas the other three can, used in the way we have explained. Then they try to elevate this phenomenon to the level of a law, and announce that there is one global Marxist theory of crisis which encompasses both "laws", ie., that of the falling rate of profit and that of "overproduction", and establishes a "relationship" between the two. Certainly there is a relationship; this relationship is that of cause and effect, law and phenomenal form of the law, and in that sense alone can we speak of a relationship between

(1) Though gone are such vulgarities as "shrinking markets" (used in their earlier text the Decadence of Capitalism) which was at odds with Marxism that it could not even serve as a confusion.

"markets" and "profits". The concept of "saturated markets", despite all the I.C.C.'s verbal twists, remains a concept alien to Marxist crisis theory. Until they begin to grasp some of the fundamentals of Marx's method, and stop confusing causes with effects, laws with phenomena and appearance with reality, there is scant hope that the I.C.C. will develop an economic standpoint, on which to base a firm set of perspectives for the coming period.

CONCLUSION.

Thus the debate is not just about "the economic foundations of decadence" (Inter Review 13 p25), but also about the methods and activities of the communist organisation. Our economic theory not only enables us to explain the real world now, but also furnishes us with prescriptions for action in the future. Here we find the I.C.C.'s perspectives wanting. For them "the crisis is here" and has been since 1968. Their early texts were filled with calls to "demystify" the class in to seeing the reality of the crisis, or in seeing imminent revolutions or world wars round every corner. Their activity was thus stamped with activism and their propaganda with journalism, and this has continued to the present. Parallel with this, goes hand in hand an over estimation. of the potential for regroupment in the present situation and attempts to minimise political differences between groups, to facilitate such regroupment.

However, in the British section of the I.C.C., a hint of realism is creeping in after years of toeing the official line as to the imminence of revolution. In contrast to their frenetic reaction to the events in Portugal in 1974-5, the I.C.C. recently criticised an article by the Spanish section of the I.C.C. in the following terms,

"In particular we think that there is a certain overestimation of the level of class struggle today, leading to a somewhat optimistic expectation that we are on the eve of a major outbreak of proletarian struggle." (World Revolution 16, p11).

But to square this up with their Luxemburgist economic perspectives, we are told that there is a "gap between the depth of the crisis and the response of the working class" (ibid) The real gap is between the economic perspective of the I.C.C., and reality. There is a real danger that such a perspective which castigates the class for failing to live up to the objective situation will only lead to demoralisation. Such a demoralisation can only be avoided by a thorough understanding of the law of value as the basis for the analysis of "the real movement of capitalist production, competition and credit".

Two Texts of the K.A.I.

The two texts which follow were written by Herman Gorter, a leading thinker of the K.A.P.D. (German Communist Workers' Party) in 1921 and 1922 respectively. Gorter had played a leading role in the fight against opportunism in the pre-1914 Social Democratic International. On the outbreak of war he took up a defeatist position, called for the war to be turned into a civil war, and supported the Russian Revolution of 1917. One of the founder members of the German Communist Party in January 1919, he was expelled with the majority of that party later that year for his opposition to parliamentarism and trade unionism. The left-wing of the K.P.D., who formed the K.A.P.D. in 1920, argued that in a revolutionary situation these acted as a barrier to the development of the class struggle. Lenin's work "Left-Wing Communism" was largely directed against the K.A.P.D. and Gorter wrote a reply, entitled "Open Letter to Comrade Lenin" in 1920. The texts printed here were published after the expulsion of the K.A.P.D. from the Third International in June 1921.

The topicality of Gorter's texts of fifty years ago is evident. He portrays vividly the growing misery of the European and World proletariat, and the objective necessity for a communist revolution, in words which could apply directly to today's situation. Crisis and war, the expressions of decadent capitalism, have returned to haunt the contemporary proletariat, and the bankruptcy of reformism is once again evident. Superficially, there is also a parallel in the passivity of the proletariat in the face of the threatening situation. Gorter confronts the inertia of the class, and today revolutionaries are faced with a trough in the international class struggle that has lasted - despite isolated outbursts - for the past few years. But there the similarity ends; the class was passive in 1921 because of the defeat of the international revolutionary wave following World War One. Today, however, the class has not been defeated; rather the failure of the struggles of 1968-74 (France, Italy, Poland, Argentina) to produce any lasting "gains" despite their militancy, has left the workers temporarily disillusioned. But as the crisis intensifies and the prospect of austerity looms, then the class will launch itself into struggle again. The defeat of the class by 1921 had made Gorter's call for a new international premature (though we can only say this with hindsight), since renewed crisis in the 1920's acted upon a class which had lost the will to fight. Today, the upsurge which we can confidently expect - though not predict its actual coming - will lead to a situation where the eventual creation of a new international will be both necessary and possible.

If Gorter was wrong in 1921 about the possibility of the creation of a new international, he was absolutely right that the Third International had become counter-revolutionary. Isolation had led to the loss of political power by the Russian workers by early 1921. However, many believed that it would be possible to keep the Comintern independent of the Soviet state, and thus preserve its revolutionary orientation. The K.A.P.D. had fought the increasing slide of the Third International into opportunistic policies, and had suffered expulsion as a

consequence. But there is only a fine distinction between opportunism and counter-revolution. With the proclamation of the United Front in 1922 (after its "trial run" in 1921 in Germany), the new international announced its capitulation to capitalism. The Second International had signed its death warrant as a proletarian body with its collaboration with the bourgeoisie in national defence in 1914-18, and its active participation in the suppression of proletarian upheavals afterwards. But the Russian regime now wanted to use the United Front as a means of creating pro-Soviet bourgeois governments, and of helping to rebuild the Russian economy. The United Front was, as Gorter says, a bourgeois policy both internationally and in its intentions regarding Russia. His idea that the crisis could be overcome by the re-integration of Russia into world capital was widely shared in leading capitalist circles at this time and by the Bolsheviks themselves, although it was in fact erroneous.

One point that Gorter makes in this text is of the half-bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution. Many revolutionaries at this time argued that two classes - the proletariat and the peasantry - were involved in the Revolution, and that it thus had a "double" character. But the action of the peasantry was decidedly negative in Russia (desertion from the army and land division) while that of the proletariat created a new state form (Soviets) and was part of an international movement. The proletariat was the dominant class in the revolution, and October a decidedly proletarian experience. The reactionary developments in Russia took place not due to the peasantry, but due to the failure of the revolution in the rest of Europe and the isolation of the Russian workers.

Another point we should clarify is that concerning Gorter's rejection of the idea of "party dictatorship". By this, he was not arguing against the idea of the need for a resolute, disciplined communist party, which fought for its ideas within the class. On the contrary, he was rejecting, as he explains elsewhere (e.g. in the "Open Letter to Comrade Lenin"), the idea that the party can either seize power through a putsch without being rooted in the masses, or through a parliamentary-orientated tactic where the party masses are used as dumb voting fodder with little account being made of their political coherence. For Gorter, the class had to exercise its dictatorship through its own class organs - the Soviets - after a period of struggle where it made itself capable of wielding power. The party was an essential part of this process, before and after the proletariat's seizure of power. (For K.A.P.D. views on the role of the party, see "Theses on the Party" published in R.P.2)

Groups like the C.W.O. which argue that under decadent capitalism viable reforms are an illusion and that parliamentarism and trades unionism and the policy of "frontism" are fetters on the struggle of the working class, do not spring from nowhere. Like the class itself, we have a history and that is why we re-publish texts such as these. Despite confusions in Gorter's analysis, his basic perspectives and tactics are valid today. The revolutionary international which the K.A.P.D. could not set in motion due to the onset of the period of counter-revolution, will surely be forged in the revolutionary wave which is today on the historical agenda.

Why we need the Communist Workers' International

The post-war situation of the international workers' movement is distinguished from the pre-war period by certain fundamental changes.

Through the war a great world economic crisis has increased the tension between capital and labour to breaking point. The general disruption of the capitalist system of production has lowered enormously the standard of living of the world proletariat. Nevertheless, the working class of the entire world, without exception, undoubtedly remains content to better its condition, if it can, within the capitalist system, by the old pre-war methods. Especially in the countries which are directly affected by the war has the vicious and fallacious running round in a circle, from which there is no escape, been developed. It is clearly proven here that every apparent increase in wages is automatically nullified through a corresponding rise in the price of commodities on the one side, and on the other through the greater output of the paper money press which causes a false depreciation in the value of money. The rise in the price of commodities, which is simultaneous with the depreciation in the money value, is naturally followed by fresh wage demands, and thus the vicious circle continues.

This situation, so unbearable for the exploited classes, can only be altered by the destruction of the capitalist system and the establishment of a communist system of production and distribution.

Whilst the policy of social reform was once an historic necessity in order to raise the living conditions of the working class, and as a preparation for the final struggle for political and economic power, today social reformist tactics are proved to be totally illusory. To pursue them further will cause ever-increasing misery to the proletariat, a misery which as it grows will stimulate their revolutionary energies.

The development sketched here in outline has called forth within the working class itself far-reaching changes which have led it far from its position before the world war. The outstanding characteristic of the epoch of the Second International is the organisational unity of the workers' movement. Social democracy was, in effect, the united political organisation of the proletariat, whilst the trade unions fulfilled the same function on the economic field. This organisational unity bound together political conceptions which were diametrically opposed.

Thus the German Social Democracy united the revolutionary wing of Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Mehring with the revisionist tendency of Bernstein, Heine, David, etc., and between these two extremes was the famous Marxist centre. (i.e. Kautsky and the "orthodox" leaders - C.W.O) The uniting within one party of tendencies which were poles apart when viewed historically, is seen to have been possible only because during the period of the Second International social reform and revolution did not confront each other as dialectical antitheses.

Both principles formed a united whole in the class war. That is the real reason why it was possible to have a united political organisation as represented by social democracy in the pre-war period.

The characteristic phenomenon of the post-war workers' movement is organisational disruption on the political and economic field. The splitting of the organisationally united framework is a clear proof that the political oppositions within the working class have acquired quite a different significance from that which they presented during the period of the Second International. The mass of the proletariat today differs from that of the pre-war period in that these two poles represent absolute opposites which mutually exclude each other.

The leaders of reformism, as in the pre-war period, are the trade unions; but equally so today are those parties which are working in league with the trade unions. The chief aim of the unions is to reconstruct capitalism. This aim is quite clearly formulated by them. Therefore, for them, alliance is only possible with parties which stand for the reconstruction of capitalism and accept as a basis the political and economic union of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In this sense the Moscow International works quite openly with the Amsterdam Trade Union International and the "Two and a Half International" (a short-lived International of the European Centrist parties - e.g. the British I.L.P. .. C.W.O.). To most of the sections adhering to the Third International this is neither repugnant nor surprising because they have remained inherently the same Social Democratic Parties which they were before their baptism in the holy water of communism. The only new circumstance is that the language as well as the composition of the Third International can no longer be distinguished from that of social democracy. No longer will it set aside any manifesto as opportunist; the call to participation in the reconstruction of capitalism resounds ever more clearly as the official Moscow policy.

In Germany the participation of the Communist Party in the United Front, initiated by those sections of the proletariat which have made common cause with bourgeois democracy for the protection of the capitalist Republic, speaks in such unmistakeable language that every proletarian must notice in which direction the Communist Party has turned. This is perhaps more clearly apparent in the abandonment of the tactics of opposition to the reactionary trade unions on the part of the German Communist Party. The deal by which the revolutionary district executive of the Halle metalworkers was united by the Communist Party with the Central Union, from which it had seceded, was not exactly honourable. In fact it was a suspension of the fight against the Amsterdam International and a direct participation in the reconstruction of capitalism under the wing of Amsterdam. Today the Moscow International finds itself in tow to the Amsterdam International which means that it is actually in tow to the international bourgeoisie. The more Russia develops towards capitalism, the more apparent will be the bourgeois character of the Third International.

Therefore we must admit that, regarded from an international standpoint, there is at present no organisation capable and willing to step forth as the instrument of the revolutionary world proletariat in the struggle against capitalism and its adherents in the proletarian camp.

International capitalism, aided by the trade unions, will make desperate attempts to overcome the present economic crisis. The overcoming of the economic crisis is largely dependent upon the opening of the Russian market to West European capital. The English and German

capitalist groups especially are working to this end.

As a significant new sign, the tendency of the capitalist great powers to come to an understanding amongst themselves must be emphasised. In spite of the deep-rooted opposition of economic interests between Britain and America, Britain finds herself compelled to avoid every open conflict with the great trusts across the Atlantic. The same is true of England and France and of America and Japan.

The national antagonisms within the sphere of world capitalism pale ever more and more. The economic and political collapse in the world standard of values rises as a threatening spectre before the proletariat of all countries. The imperialist conflict of the capitalist great powers against each other is side-stepped in the interests of the class war of international capitalism against the world proletariat. The withdrawal of Russia as a factor in the world revolution has completely altered the whole situation. A united bourgeois front for the reconstruction of capitalism, in conjunction with the Amsterdam Trade Unions and the Third International, has become an accomplished fact.

The revolutionary working class of the whole world stands powerless before the situation. It has no class-war organisation which would be capable and willing to lead the revolutionary struggle aiming at the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism by proletarian methods.

The longer the situation remains which secures to capitalism an unbounded playground for the reconstruction of the capitalist economy, so much harder will it be for the proletariat to maintain its defensive position towards the bourgeoisie.

The sooner an international centre, which will incorporate the interests of the proletarian revolution, comes into being, so much sooner will the fall of the Third International take place.

A crystalised kernel must be formed, to which those elements and groups which are opposed to the Moscow International and are comprised of what is known as "Left" Communism, may be regrouped.

If the construction of a Communist Workers' International does not take place at the right moment we must expect those organisations in all countries which now stand for the platform of the Communist Workers' party of Germany to fall back to the level of the Third International.

The conference of the Communist Workers' Party of Germany (the K.A.P.D.) has shown that it understands the signs of the times and is willing to undertake the mighty task to be accomplished in the interests of communism and world revolution.

K.A.I.

Lines of Orientation

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL.

1. The Third International was a Russian creation, a creation of the Russian Communist Party. It was created to support the Russian Revolution, that is to say a half-bourgeois and half-proletarian revolution.
2. From the double character of the Russian Revolution came the double character and aims of the Third International, partly proletarian in as far as it supported the Russian proletarian revolution, and partly bourgeois in as far as it supported the Russian bourgeois revolution.
3. In as far as it called for revolution, for the expropriation of the capitalists, it was a revolutionary proletarian organisation for the suppression of capitalism. In as far as it held fast to parliamentarism, trade unionism, the dictatorship of the party and of its leaders, it was a bourgeois organisation, created to maintain capitalism and to reconstruct it. Parliamentarism, trade unionism, the party dictatorship, lead not to communism, but to the maintainance of capitalism.
4. The Third International was thus, from the beginning, a partly counter-revolutionary organisation.
5. In the countries of Western Europe, this organisation led not to the victory but to the defeat of the proletariat.
6. Since from the spring of 1921 the Bolshevik Party, which exercised its dictatorship in Russia, passed over to capitalism, it was constrained to turn the Third International rapidly towards capitalist policies, and effectively from the summer of 1921 the Third International came completely bourgeois and capitalist. The revolution was abandoned, its aspirations were now only to reforms, and its aim the reconstruction of capitalism.
7. Since Russian capitalism had to be rebuilt, and since this capitalism could only be rebuilt by the restoration and reconstruction of European capitalism, the Third International was forced to abandon revolution and to pass over to reformism, that is to have as its aim the reconstruction of capitalism.
8. And just as the now-capitalist Bolshevik Party renewed its relations with European capitalist governments and with European capitalism to reconstruct capitalism in Russia, so the Third International renewed its relations with the Second International, and the 2½ International for the reconstruction of European capitalism.
9. The aim of the Second, the 2½ and the Third International is thus the same; it is that of the capitalist states and governments. The "united front" of these three Internationals is the united front with capitalism.
10. Thus when capitalism is in a mortal crisis, with no way out, the Soviet government and the Third International are offering to save it.

11. This is why the Third International and the Bolshevik Party have become completely counter-revolutionary organisations which are betraying the proletarian cause. They have put themselves in the same sack as the Second and 2½ Internationals.

12. In all countries the proletariat is at the moment the instrument in the hands of the social democratic bourgeois and reactionary parties for the maintenance of capitalism, to reconstruct and extend it throughout the world, by giving governmental power to these parties and their leaders. Now, in the same manner, the proletariat has become an instrument in the hands of the Third International for the same ends. Its aim is thus not the revolution, the liberation of the proletariat, but for personal power in the bourgeois state and the enslavement of the proletariat.

THE COMMUNIST WORKERS INTERNATIONAL.

1. Thus the situation of the whole world proletariat which finds itself in the interior of a world capitalism which is in its death agony, demands proletarian revolution as an immediate practical task to be carried out. On the other hand the mental disposition and organisational relations of the world working class correspond little to this historical situation. The overwhelming majority of the world proletariat is a prisoner of modes of thought coming from bourgeois private property and of forms of international class collaboration between the working class and the bourgeoisie. These forms have a firm grip on all the existing organisations of the proletariat, and this places on revolutionary proletarians of all countries the historically inevitable responsibility to found a new workers' international.

2. This new proletarian International, the Communist Workers' International, represents the uncompromising class struggle whose practical task is the abolition of bourgeois private property and its transformation into proletarian-socialist communal property. In addition to this objective, it struggles unflinchingly for the realisation of a communist society.

3. Recognising that the objective conditions for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the domination of the proletariat exist, the K.A.I. puts at the centre of its activity the principle of the development of proletarian class consciousness. That is to say it wants to guide the proletariat to the recognition that it is a historic necessity to immediately eliminate capitalism; it wishes to awaken in the proletariat the effective determination to carry out the proletarian revolution.

4. The acceptance of such aims demands as a first necessary condition the thoroughly anti-capitalist character (from the point of view of form as well as of content) of its organisation as well as of the carrying out of every struggle. Its supreme point of reference is not the particular interests of national groups of workers taken in isolation, but the common interests of the whole world proletariat; the world proletarian revolution.

5. As the first step on the road which will lead to its aim, it strives to achieve the proclamation of the class dictatorship of the proletariat by means of the destruction of mechanisms of bourgeois state power. It rejects all methods of reformist struggle, and from a standpoint of anti-parliamentarism and anti-trade unionism strives for the creation of revolutionary workers' councils and revolutionary factory organisations (workers unions).

6. In particular it struggles against the existing international workers' organisations (the Internationals of London, Vienna and Moscow) which, as accomplices of the world bourgeoisie in their common effort to reconstruct world capitalism, are striving to accomplish a united front of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat against the world proletariat revolution, and in consequence represent the most dangerous obstacle to the liberation of the proletariat.

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Review: 'Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism' Edited by D.A. Smart

The publication of this volume should go some way towards dispelling the myths which have surrounded the politics of the German K.A.P.D., and in making the ideas of its two leading thinkers, Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter, more widely known. The volume contains two of Pannekoek's main theoretical texts, along with a pair of shorter, polemical pieces by Gorter.

The first text of Pannekoek, Marxist Theory and Revolutionary Tactics, dates from 1912, and is part of the famous controversy he waged against Kautsky. Of this debate, Lenin said in State and Revolution, "In this controversy it is not Kautsky but Pannekoek who represents Marxism". The text illustrates clearly the criticism by the left wing of social democracy before the First World War of the so-called "orthodox" Marxist centre of Kautsky and co. The positions of the text are very close to those put forward by Rosa Luxemburg in her Mass Strikes (1906). Pannekoek polemicises against Kautsky's rejection of the mass strike as a weapon of struggle, and in favour of the idea that the socialist party should take over mass outbreaks of class struggle and lead them on to an assault on bourgeois state power, through which the class's consciousness and power will develop: "(The party) cannot simply sit down and wait until the masses rise up spontaneously... the party actually has a duty to instigate revolutionary action" (p.73). At this point Pannekoek, like Luxemburg, felt that the Social Democratic Party could be pushed, under the impact of mass class action and the intransigence of the "left-wing" into leading a revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

Pannekoek's second text, World Revolution and Communist Tactics, which dates from 1920, is written after the participation of the socialist parties in national defence in the War and in actively suppressing the outbreaks of working class struggle in the years after the War. In this situation the "distinguishing feature of this developing process is a sharp separation of communism from socialism" (p.95). Pannekoek's text is a discussion of the tactical differences in the forging of a new communist movement. He argues that in any revolutionary reflux, the issue of radicalism versus opportunism comes to the fore. The Communist

Party must fight off tendencies to opportunism, which Pannekoek identifies with the influx of ex-"centrist" elements into the Third International. Against this he argues,

"The function of a revolutionary party lies in propagating clear understanding in advance, so that throughout the masses there will be elements who know what must be done... leadership in the revolution thus falls to the Communist Party by virtue of the world-transforming power of its unambiguous principles" (p.101).

In this work he also puts forward the idea, basic to K.A.P.D. theory, of the differences between the tactics of revolution in East and West Europe. In an objectively revolutionary situation, the West European working class had remained largely non-revolutionary; why was this? Pannekoek argued that in the countries with a long tradition of bourgeois development capitalist ideology had a profound grip on the mental culture and organisation of the proletariat, as opposed to Eastern Europe and Asia where capitalism had a much weaker implantation. Thus, only through mass, self-led struggle could the workers shake off their subjection to bourgeois ideology. Trades unionism and parliamentarism acted to re-inforce, rather than undermine this mental dependence. World Revolution and Communist Tactics was written as part of the struggle against opportunism with the Third International waged by the KAPD. In the "Afterword" also printed here, Pannekoek explains the triumph of opportunism at the Second Comintern Congress in 1921 as the result of the isolation of Russia from any supporting revolution in Europe and the resulting attempt of the Bolsheviks to re-open economic links with bourgeois states and encourage "pro-Soviet" governments based around the social democratic parties.

"The sluggish pace of revolutionary developments in Western Europe thus compels the Soviet Republic to seek a modus vivendi with the capitalist world.. We can now see why the tactics of the Third International... are determined not only by the needs of communist agitation in these countries, but also by the political needs of Soviet Russia." (p.143-4)

Some other points in this text are revealing; for example the approval by Pannekoek of industrial unions as opposed to trades unions as a form of economic struggle. More importantly comes his approval of national self-determination, and hope that the anti-colonial movement will become a pro-communist one, along official Third International lines. Pannekoek writes that "the standpoint of complete freedom for India (is) an integral element of the communist programme" (p.126) and feels that "the national liberation movement of Asia will perhaps adopt a communist world-view" (p.140). Gorter, on the other hand, shows greater clarity on this issue and follows the analysis of Luxemburg that "capitalism, and in particular imperialism, cannot resolve the problem of nationality." Such confusions as Pannekoek's show that revolutionary clarity is a painful process and no group or individual could conceive of all the implications of capitalist decadence which now, fifty years and the lessons of history behind us, are so apparent.

Gorter's texts are less weighty than Pannekoek's, and written in a popularised style. The Origins of Nationalism in the Proletariat (1)

(1) This is actually an extract from Gorter's Imperialism, World War and Social Democracy of 1915. Lenin called this an "excellent pamphlet" in his Right of Nations to Self-Determination, and while disagreeing with Gorter's position on the national question said "(he is) among the best revolutionary and internationalist elements in Social -Democracy."

written in 1915 argues that revisionism in the Second International, by concentrating the attention of the class on immediate gains and parliamentary manoeuvres which took place by definition within the national framework, centred the attention of the class on the "nation" within which it grew to feel it had something to defend. Thus the defeat of the class ideologically by revisionism prepared the way for nationalism and imperialism, which was seen as a policy from which "immediate benefits" could be reaped. His later Organisation of the Proletariat's Class Struggle of 1921 is an attempt to propagandise the views of the KAPD on the political party and on the organisation of the daily struggle of the class, centred on the so-called "Industrial Unions" of the AAUD. Although much of this text is negative in that it shows the illusions of the K.A.P., based on a certain "factoryism" that permanent alternatives to the unions could be built under capitalism, it is useful in that it contains polemics against those expelled from the K.A.P. for arguing against any need for a party.

"Can they deny that the class condition of the proletariat enables only a small section of the proletariat to develop a broad and deep understanding? ...by rejecting the party, the syndicalists, anarchists and people like Rühle prove that they make their judgments ...only on the basis of personal sentiment." (p.166-7)

A review is too short to do real justice to these texts, particularly those of Pannekoek which are underlain by a profound scientific grasp of historical materialism and dialectics. Would that we could say the same about the "Introduction" to the book, by the editor.

Smart has struggled hard to say nothing in his introduction, but even in something which strives to be purely historical, his "political" prejudices show through. Firstly there is the total academicism of his approach: no organisational or political perspectives are drawn from his introduction. At one point he paraphrases Pannekoek's argument that "it is not a question of disinterested individuals transforming society as lucid agents on the basis of detached reflection" (p.16), but his whole approach shows that Smart has not really assimilated this. He makes only the briefest mention of any revolutionary organisations which exist today, claiming a continuity with the German Left. He doesn't mention the only existing organisation in Britain which has re-issued texts by the KAPD, that is the C.W.O., (i.e. our reprints of their "Theses on the Party" and "Programme".) But our reissue of such texts is part of an effort to re-define the problems of communist politics, not to parade our pseudo-erudition.

Smart also strives to exaggerate the differences between the German Left and the Bolsheviks, saying that "an open break (of the KAPD) with Moscow ensued after the proclamation of the 21 Conditions at the Second Congress of the Comintern" (p.9). In fact the German Left had been, with the Bolsheviks, part of an ongoing revolutionary critique of the opportunism and betrayals of social democracy, and both recognised each other as such. The KAPD did not storm out of the 3rd International at the first opportunist stain it bore, but remained inside it till expelled and would have remained inside longer, had they not been forced out. Neither in 1919 did Lenin welcome the split in the KPD, and in 1920 the Comintern tried to reunite the party. Smart also does not criticise the positions of Rühle who opposed the very idea of a party and felt that Russia was already "soviet in name only" in 1920. Nor does Smart take up a stance on the whole issue of Rühle's split from the KAPD on the above issues. Such abstention from adopting political positions in no way makes the editor of this book someone who can help clarify the task of the proletariat in the tradition of Pannekoek and Gorter. Nevertheless, we urge our readers to buy and study the texts it contains.