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*BULLETTIN MATTERS*

In This Issue we begin with a letter from Internationalism, the American section of the International Communist Current (ICC),
questioning the DB's practice of "asterisking" ICC publications in the list we publish in each issue. The comrades of Internationalism deny the DB's allegation that the ICC and its derivatives "suffer from the Leninist virus of dictatorship of the partyism" and question my motives for so alleging. My answer to the letter is followed by republication of the earlier correspondence to set the record straight. Part of this is reproduced from Internationalism, whose format uses less space.

Next we have a comment on DB43's review of Ernest Mann's L'Has Robot, by Ernest Mann and another review by Lynn Olson. Both are of interest because they raise questions about free access to goods and about voluntary work in a libertarian socialist society. Henri Simon sets the record straight on Echanges et Mouvement, and Neal Keating questions the syndicalist version of the new society. Monroe Prussack expresses his views about some earlier letters in the DB. This is followed by a letter from R.A.S. in which he comments on a letter in an earlier issue of the DB. R.A.S.'s letter was received some time ago, and I lost it. I apologize and hope things will be organized a bit better in the future. Next we have the conclusion of Wildcat's document, Capitalism and Its Revolutionary Destruction, and the beginning of the debate with the Socialist Party of Great Britain. We end with some reviews of books and pamphlets. No space in this issue for our reviews of periodicals.

Financial Report

We dug ourselves only slightly deeper into the hole financially during the past two months, but this report doesn't reflect some big bills coming up for labels and copies, our annual non-profit bulk mailing fee, and post office box rent. Since the DB is an independent publication and not subsidized by a political group, it needs the support of those readers who see its value as a forum for libertarian socialists. During the period from August 20 through October 27 we received contributions from the following: Harry Wade $25; Sam Brandon $14; Anonymous $5; Francis Smith $5; Bernard Presser $4; Jon Bekken $26.33; Rado Mijanovich $20. Total $99.33. Thank you, comrades.

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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the DB Committee
To the Discussion Bulletin:

We write this letter to respond to the repeated publication in your journal of patently fallacious remarks about the International Communist Current and its English language publications, INTERNATIONALISM (USA publication), WORLD REVOLUTION (British newspaper) and INTERNATIONAL REVIEW (theoretical journal). In commenting on the publications you review regularly in your bulletin, your last few issues have identified the ICC as among those "suffering from the Leninist virus of 'dictatorship of the partyism (sic)'!"

FG of the Discussion Bulletin must know better than this for he has met with comrades of the ICC to discuss politics. The Discussion Bulletin and the ICC have exchanged publications for many years. We have exchanged correspondence, some even specifically on the role of the revolutionary organization.

Perhaps the Discussion Bulletin still fails to understand the importance of the role of revolutionary organization as part of the overall process of the working class coming to consciousness. Worse yet, we are concerned that perhaps the Discussion Bulletin is opportunistically pandering to anarchist and syndicalist elements--anti-marxist elements--within the political milieu and among its readers, who have an allergic reaction to revolutionary Marxism and to the serious, regular activity of theoretical deepening and intervention within the struggles of the working class. Whatever the Discussion Bulletin's confusion, it seems dishonest to label the ICC as advocating substitutionism, the dictatorship of the party.

In the summer of 1988 (Internationalism #60), we published an exchange of correspondence with FG of the Discussion Bulletin, in which he said, "I think everyone in the DB's libertarian socialist sector would reject as a Leninist perversion the idea that I gather from your proposal, namely, that the workers who first become revolutionaries will become members of the revolutionary party of militants and the leaders (...'point out the general line of march.') of the working class masses to whom the idea comes later. This division between the leaders and the led stands in direct opposition to the view held by most readers of the DB that our class must act in response to its own class consciousness, not to the direction of militants who would 'point out the general line of march.'"

While the ICC does defend the indispensability of the revolutionary party as part of the proletariat's coming to consciousness, it is a defense that pre-dates Lenin. At the time we responded in part:

"In your letter you reject the idea that revolutionaries have the role of pointing out the general line of march to communism as a 'Leninist perversion' seemingly with an inevitable link to substitutionism...We think you make a serious error in rejecting our position."

"First let us make it clear that we agree completely with your rejection of substitutionism--the theoretical proposition that the revolutionary party seizes power and rules in the name of the class. The ICC has constantly struggled against this position, which is a manifestation of bourgeois ideology within the working class movement. However, it is a serious mistake to confuse substitutionism with the proposition that revolutionaries have the responsibility to intervene in the class struggle to point out the general line of march to communism. This formulation is not a Leninist perversion; it comes directly from the Communist Manifesto by Marx and
Engels. It is based on a recognition that revolutionary consciousness develops in an heterogeneous manner within the proletariat. Some workers come to understand the nature of the historic tasks of their class before others. They have the responsibility to point out the nature of that struggle to their class brethren.

"As Marx put it in the Manifesto, 'The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class...which pushes forward all the others, on the other hand, theoretically...clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.' Revolutionaries have the responsibility to participate fully in the class struggle to point out the link between the proletariat's nature as an exploited class and as a revolutionary class; between the struggles for the immediate defense of class interests and the historic struggle to destroy capitalism. Again, as Marx put it, 'The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.'

"This view of the role of revolutionaries in no way contradicts the admonition that the liberation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves." (Internationalism, #60)

No, the ICC does not support the dictatorship of the party. It is a basic principle of the ICC to oppose any effort to put a party in power in the name of the proletariat. We publish in every issue of our journals:

"...In destroying the capitalist state, the working class will have to set up the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale... The form of this dictatorship is the international power of the workers' councils... The role of the revolutionary organization is not to 'organize the working class' nor to take power 'on behalf of the workers' but to participate actively in the generalization of proletarian struggles and revolutionary consciousness within the proletariat."

Our platform adopted at the ICC's first congress (see INTERNATIONAL REVIEW No.5, May 1976) states:

"As part of the class, revolutionaries can at no time substitute themselves for the class, either in its struggles within capitalism or, still less, in the overthrow of capitalism and the wielding of political power. Unlike other historical classes, the consciousness of a minority, no matter how enlightened, is not sufficient to accomplish the tasks of the proletariat. These are tasks which demand the constant participation and creative activity of the entire class at all times... The self-organization of workers' struggles and the exercise of power by the class itself is not just one of the roads to communism which can be weighed against others: it is the only road."

Clearly we do not advocate the elitist domination of the working class by the revolutionary party. We are in fact strenuous opponents of that. Trotskyists and Stalinists have often denounced us for our insistence that the proletariat must express its dictatorship through democratically controlled workers' councils, that the revolutionary party is not the sole repository of class consciousness.

The Bordigists and Battaglia Comunista, coming from the Italian left communist tradition, have also attacked us for our refusal to defend the revolutionary party as the 'brains' of the class or its 'general staff'.

In the late seventies a series of conferences among internationalist communist organizations was held in Europe, at which the ICC participated.
In 1980, at the third conference of the series, Battaglia Comunista and the CWO (which somewhat later jointly constituted the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party) insisted on barring the ICC from future conferences precisely because of our rejection of the substitutionist position on the revolutionary party. (See International Review #22, 3rd quarter 1980.)

For the ICC substitutionism is a class line. The proletariat must oppose any party claiming to take power on its behalf. The mistakes of proletarian revolution in Russia and its defeat have taught vital lessons, including--A party ruling on 'behalf' of the class, no matter how firmly rooted in the working class movement, is foreign to the proletariat's needs.

In our interventions, we bring our insistence on the workers taking the struggle in their own hands to the class in our active interventions among the workers. We are opposed to any elitist conception of the revolutionary organization. In 1981, we distributed thousands of hand-outs which read in part:

"Soon the so-called radicals will be coming out of the woodwork, offering their slogans & their recipes for action. These groups come in all varieties. Some are Trotskyists, some are Maoists, some are Castroists. Some wor ship the regime in Albania, some the regime in Cuba, or China or Russia. They use radical language and talk a lot about the working class, but in actuality they are just the extreme left face of capitalism. They play a valuable role for capitalism, reining in workers who develop a disgust for capitalist exploitation. Whatever their differences, these groups have some important things in common. They are all anti-working class, no matter how much they say they are 'the vanguard of the proletariat.' Their goal is not a society run by workers. Whether their model is Albania, Russia, Cuba or China, the kind of society they favor is merely an extreme form of state capitalism, in which the state exploits and mercilessly oppresses working people. These so-called 'radicals' don't want workers to organize themselves and take the struggle into their own hands. They want the workers to follow them--like sheep--so that someday they can set up their own group as the new state capitalist rulers of society. They don't want everyday working people to run society. They want to run it. These groups invariably stand as radical cheerleaders for the unions.

"Whenever the workers begin to break free of the unions' stranglehold, which is the precondition for a serious confrontation with capitalism, these leftists stand ready to defend the unions, and lead the workers back into the union fold. Such groups the working class doesn't need.

"What the working class does need are revolutionary organizations that understand that they are a minority, a part of their class, that has the job of helping to spread the understanding of what we have to do together as a class to destroy capitalism as widely as possible throughout the working class. Our class needs revolutionary organizations which participate in our struggles, help to draw the lessons of past struggle, point out the general path we must pursue to free ourselves from exploitation and to oppose our enemies and their false promises. These organizations will play an indispensable role in the struggle but the are completely different from the so-called radical leftist groups that want to lead workers around by the nose and exploit them." (supplement to Internationalism #30)

More recently, in July 1989 we distributed a leaflet to struggling hospital workers which said in part:

"In order to really spread the struggle, workers need to take the movement into their own hands. We need mass assemblies at each hospital--open to every worker who wants to fight, regardless of job
category or union jurisdiction. The workers have to decide themselves how to
conduct the fight, how to spread it to other workers. One-day strikes and
mass marches can be used to spread the struggle, if the workers are in
control. We need mass marches through the streets to other
workplaces...Isolation breeds defeat...Spread the struggle...Take control of
the fight into your own hands." (See Internationalism #65)

We believe that the Discussion Bulletin should set the record straight
on the position of the ICC on the revolutionary party, its longstanding and
consistent opposition to the 'dictatorship of the party', and should publish
this letter.

We call upon the readers of the Discussion Bulletin who may not be
familiar with our press to write to us and send one dollar to receive by
return mail a sample of our publication in the US INTERNATIONALISM. Our
address is Internationalism, Post Office Box 288, New York, NY 10018-0288.

We hope that the revolutionary milieu can transcend opportunism, and
petty name calling and address the serious tasks confronting the
international proletariat. We hope the knee-jerk 'dread of organization' and
the wholesale and false identification of marxism with stalinism—which the
ruling class fosters—can be overcome by serious revolutionaries.

The economy is in permanent open crisis. Internationally, capitalist
society is rotting on its feet. Social decomposition threatens all of
humanity with wars, suffering, disease and barbarism. Before it's too late,
revolutionaries must confront the lessons of the historical experience of
the working class. Revolutionaries must organize themselves on the basis of
clear politics, on marxism, and intervene actively in the class struggle.

Communist regards,
INTERNATIONALISM
US Section of the International Communist Current

Dear Comrades:

In replying to the letter above by Internationalism, I should begin by
pointing out that most of Internationalism’s objections to the DB’s
(my) identification of Internationalism and other ICC (International
Communist Current) sections and derivatives as “suffering from the
Leninist virus of ‘dictatorship of the partyism’” were raised in an
article “In Defence of the Communist Left” by ER published in DB41 and
answered by me in DB43.

I also wish to point out that in most respects I consider
Internationalism and the ICC respectable members of the political
spectrum for which the DB seeks to serve as a forum. Like other
groups, the ICC (at least as I understand it) opposes reform and sees
the need for social revolution now; recognizes the reformist role of
social democratic and most Leninist political groups; sees the existing
unions as a part of the capitalist apparatus; recognizes that the
economic system in the USSR and its satellites is a species of
capitalism; and believes that when our class wishes to do so, it can
abolish capitalism and institute socialism immediately worldwide.

My reservations about Internationalism center on what it regards as the
role of the “revolutionary organization” (i.e. the party) together
with its highly centralized and anonymous national and international
structure and personnel. It seems to be a Bolshevik-style grouping
with decisions about program and policy being made by a faceless, nameless international bureaucracy. I also question a facet of Internationalism's thinking that I associate with rightwing politics: the conspiracy theory of history. Internationalism expresses this in its idea of the "left in opposition," which asserts that the ruling class in capitalist democracies consciously plots the alternation of liberal and conservative political control of the state as a method of manipulating working class political thinking.

Another reservation is what I consider a rather ambiguous position on the role of the party. Internationalism sees the counter-revolutionary role of the Bolsheviks after the October revolution as what it calls "substitutionist." But it fails to see the effects that "pointing out the line of march" had on the Russian Revolution and presumably could have in any new revolutionary situation that might arise.

All this is spelled out in the earlier correspondence between Internationalism and the DB, which is mentioned in my answer to E.R. in DB43. Internationalism's account of the exchange is correct up to a point. Its first letter was published in DB25. My answer was in DB27. Internationalism's reply was in DB30. Internationalism published my letter and its reply to it in number 90 of its journal, Internationalism. My response was published in DB31; however, the response that was published in DB31 was never published in Internationalism, nor was any other notice taken of it by the group. It is reprinted below, mainly because it discusses at length Internationalism's disavowal of any intention to engage in what it terms "substitutionism." It is preceded by a reproduction of Internationalism's publication of the two preceding letters. I should add that in my response to E.R. in DB43 I relied on my memory and inaccurately described the exchange of letters.

Before closing I feel obliged to reply to Internationalism's accusation that the DB [actually I, since I did the writing] is "dishonest" and engages in "opportunistically pandering...." 1) I think that a person should not be labeled as dishonest just because he questions the effectiveness of Internationalism's desire to avoid what it calls substitutionism. 2) It seems absurdly inaccurate for Internationalism to accuse F.G. of pandering to the anarchist element among DB readership when DB routinely publishes and discusses Internationalism's articles, leaflets, and letters. 3) I, too, hope we all can transcend petty name calling.

One more thing: in the interest of total accuracy DB, beginning with this issue, will characterize Internationalism and its relatives with the formulation "unconsciously carries" the Leninist virus... instead of "suffers from."

Frank Girard
Dear Comrades:

As the person whose job it is to assemble each issue of the Discussion Bulletin, I feel called upon to respond to your letter, published in DB 25. To begin with I had best clear up a misconception which I infer from your addressing the DB as a “discussion group.” Although DB subscribers and especially the active participants, those who write letters and articles, could be thought of as members of a far-flung discussion group which holds bimonthly discussion meetings in the pages of the Discussion Bulletin, no organizational ties exist. Membership in the “Discussion Bulletin Committee,” listed as the publisher of the DB, is an involuntary, unsought, and basically meaningless honor given to any subscriber who contributes either money to the DB or time in the form of articles or letters. DB Committee “members” receive with each issue a ditted “Report” containing a financial statement and other information about the DB. Perhaps the DB could use greater organizational structure, but it doesn’t have it now.

Your second misapprehension concerns the political development of DB readers, which your assumption about the nature of the DB led you believe was in a state of flux. I doubt this is the case in most instances. Most readers, I believe, are members of revolutionary groups or parties with well defined positions and principles. A majority would consider themselves Marxists, members of DeLeonist groups and parties, council communist groups, or the Socialist Party of Great Britain or its American branch. The other element, almost half, are the largely non-Marxist syndicalists, members of either the Industrial Workers of the World or the Workers Solidarity Association (WSA), and the anarchists, some of whom are members of groups and some of whom are independent. As for the rest of us, the non-members, we are largely sympathizers and ex-members of the above-mentioned libertarian socialist groups.

Consequently the DB, since it is not an organization and since its “members” are already committed to political positions and principles, has none of its own. Rather it is a forum in which some of the differences—minor in most instances—can be argued and perhaps resolved or at least better understood. To respond to other concerns raised in your letter, DB readers as active members of their own groups and parties are active in the class struggle and in agitating among our class for socialism. In most instances they support one or more revolutionary journals through which they are informed about the class struggle worldwide.

The idea of unifying these divergent groups has already occurred to some readers. And I am sure it would be possible to write a set of positions and principles that nearly all of us would subscribe to. The problem is that having written the basic set of principles, we would all have additional points that would have to be added to satisfy us. Disagreement on these together with a history of organizational feuding that reaches back a century or more to the First International make any peacemaking difficult. Longstanding differences in organizational and agitational style would also make unity difficult.

As for the “unitary organizations,” the mass revolutionary organizations which you see as distinct from the revolutionary organization of militants, the idea seems to me to be divisive and elitist. I think everyone in the DB’s libertarian socialist sector would reject as a Leninist perversion the idea that I gather from your proposal, namely, that the workers who first become revolutionaries will become members of the revolutionary party of militants and the leaders (“point out the general line of march”) of the working class masses to whom the idea comes later. This division between the leaders and the led stands in direct opposition to the view held by most readers of the DB that our class must act in response to its own class consciousness, not to the direction of militants who would “point out the general line of march.”

The idea that the proletariat needs an international revolutionary organization at this time also sounds premature to me. Consider the four internationals organized to date. All have been failures in their roles as revolutionary organizations. The Second and the Third were worse than failures; they betrayed the working class. Doesn’t it seem more reasonable to you that instead of trying to set up an international of minuscule national revolutionary parties we should wait until the level of socialist consciousness worldwide creates the need for one? And the same holds true, on the national level; unity will come when our class demands it.

I enjoyed your thought-provoking letter to the Discussion Bulletin and its fraternal tone. I hope it won’t be the last.

Fraternally yours,

Frank Girard

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Dear Comrade:

We regret the delay in responding to your reply to our correspondence on the nature of discussion circles. Despite the fact that we clearly had certain misconceptions about the organizational nature of the Discussion Bulletin, we think it would be useful to deepen the discussion of the role of revolutionaries in the class struggle and the organization question.

Though brief, your letter raises or touches on a number of questions. For example, we can identify the following issues:

- the relationship between party and class;
- what is the role of revolutionaries in the class struggle;
- how do revolutionaries contribute to the deepening of class consciousness;
- the problems of substitutionism;
- the historical lessons to be drawn from the experience of the previous Internationals;
- the nature of the so-called Fourth International;
- when is it appropriate to constitute a new international;
- what is the nature of an international revolutionary organization;
- what is the difference between an organization comprised of
revolutionaries and a unitary organization of the working class.

These are all interrelated issues and of crucial importance to the revolutionary movement. The ICC has elaborated on these questions in many texts and has published a pamphlet, "Class Consciousness and the Organization of Revolutionaries," available for $3.00. I hope you will read it, and invite you to review.

In this reply we will limit ourselves to commenting on two central themes: the role of revolutionaries and the types of organizations the working class has historically developed to wage its struggle.

In your letter you reject the idea that revolutionaries have the role of pointing out the general line of march to communism as "a Leninist perversion" seemingly with an inevitable link to substitutionism. You also reject the idea that the proletariat has two basic types of organization which it uses in its struggle against capitalism: a revolutionary political organization and a unitary organization. Unfortunately you do not offer any alternative views on either question, which suggests that perhaps you don't have a clearly developed position. But these are fundamental questions dealing with the very reasons for the existence of revolutionaries, their role in the class struggle, and how the working class struggles. Indeed these are the kinds of questions you could open up for full debate in the Discussion Bulletin.

We think you have made a serious error in rejecting our position. First let us make it clear that we agree completely with your rejection of substitutionism—the theoretical proposition that the revolutionary party seizes power and rules in the name of the class. The ICC has constantly struggled against this position, which is a manifestation of bourgeois ideology within the working class movement. However, it is a serious mistake to confuse substitutionism with the proposition that revolutionaries have the responsibility to intervene in the class struggle to point out the general line of march to communism. This formulation is not a Leninist perversion; it comes directly from the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels. It is based on a recognition that revolutionary consciousness develops in an heterogeneous manner within the proletariat. Some workers come to understand the nature of the historic tasks of their class before others. They have the responsibility to point out the nature of that struggle to their class brethren.

As Marx put it in the Manifesto, "The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class... which pushes forward all the others; on the other hand, theoretically... clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." Revolutionaries have the responsibility to participate fully in the class struggle to point out the link between the proletariat's nature as an exploited class and as a revolutionary class; between the struggles for the immediate defense of class interests and the historic struggle to destroy capitalism. Again, as Marx put it, "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement."

This view of the role of revolutionaries, in no way contradicts the admonition that the liberation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves. You also reject our differentiation between political organizations and the unitary organizations as "divisive and elitist." Again we think you make a serious error.

Historically there has been some confusion on this question within the revolutionary movement, in the sense that there was a tendency to see the party as an organization which would grow until it encompassed all the proletariat, and would become the state of the transition period. However, there was at the same time a clear recognition that revolutionary militants regrouped themselves in organizations on the basis of a set of political principles, not a sociological basis.

When we say that the proletariat has armed itself with unitary organs and political minority organizations, we are not being divisive or elitist; we are describing an historical reality. In the ascendant period of capitalism, the unitary organ which regrouped all workers on a purely sociological basis were the trade unions. The political organizations were the parties of the Social Democracy. In decadent capitalism, the trade unions have been lost to the proletariat, and integrated into the capitalistic state apparatus. Since the beginning of the 20th century the unitary organ is the workers' council. The revolutionary parties differ only in that they can no longer have any pretensions of becoming mass organs. The revolutionary organizations are an integral part of their class, but a minority. They intervene in the unitary organs of their class to defend revolutionary positions, to push forward the struggle in the direction of communism.

If you reject our position on the role of revolutionaries and the relationship between unitary organs and political organs, what is your position? What is the function of revolutionaries? What is the purpose of a revolutionary organization? If the working class will not make its revolution through mass workers councils, in which revolutionary organizations will participate and actively intervene, what then is the manner in which history demonstrates proletarian revolution will unfold? If revolutionary groups don't understand these questions they will not be able to fulfill the responsibilities for which they have been secreted by the working class.

We look forward to continuing this discussion with you in the future and in learning your comments on our pamphlet.

Revolutionary regards,

INTERNATIONALISM
Dear Comrades,

This is intended as a reply to Internationalism's letter in DB30 and as a review of Communist Organizations & Class Consciousness (128pp., No Date, $3 from P.O. Box 286, New York, NY 10018), which it invited DB to review. The program and analyses in Communist Organizations and Class Consciousness (CO&CC), published by the International Communist Current (ICC) of which Internationalism is the U.S. section, have much to recommend them to third force, non-market, libertarian socialists. These include its view of the USSR as state capitalist, its rejection of reformism, and its views on unionism and third-world nationalist struggles.

Especially apt, in my view, is CO&CC's description of the changes in organizational theory made necessary by capitalism's cooption of the mass social democratic parties and the trades union movement. By 1900, as CO&CC points out, the social democratic parties had become the left wing of capitalism's political machine. At the same time the trades unions had become anti-revolutionary and integrated into the economic system as a labor control mechanism.

While agreeing with much of the pamphlet, I do have serious differences with some of the ideas it presents. These begin with its acceptance of the "Bolshevik" or "Leninist" concept of the revolutionary party. For regardless of its disavowal of what it terms the "substitutionism" of the Bolshevks for the working class in Russia after the revolution, CO&CC's insistence on the need for a leadership party that will "point out the general line of march" for the working class prior to the revolution and its failure to call for its own dissolution immediately after the revolution ensures its proceeding on a substitutionist course after the revolution.

One evidence to support this prediction is its attitude toward the role played by the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution. While recognizing that the Bolsheviks substituted themselves for the working class by gathering power into their hands after the November revolution, it fails to see that Bolshevik action during the entire post-February period was substitutionist. Its Central Committee and Lenin privately debating when and how to stampede the Petrograd working class and Bolshevik supporters in the military garrison into seizing power.

Later the party maneuvered to control the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) set up by the Soviet during the Kornilov threat in late August. Then at the time of the insurrection in October (November) it becomes clear from all four of the eye-witness accounts that I read that the decision for the insurrection was made at a closed meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee on November 8. What could be more substitutionist than to have the tactics and moment of the revolutionary act dictated by the party rather than the working class? State power was seized in the name, not of the Soviets but the Military Revolutionary Committee headed by the Trotsky and the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks then received state power from the hands of the MRC. Incidentally, a serious criticism of the pamphlet is its
entirely off-base conclusion about his action: "The workers as a whole made decisions and held in their hands the reins of history, even if day to day military actions were implemented by a small number of people." (p. 61) and "No party substituted itself for the practical decisive activity of the workers." (p. 62)

A major issue here is the concept of "pointing the line of march," which Internationalism advanced in DB30, quoting from the Communist Manifesto. If Internationalism means no more by the phrase than pointing out to our class that capitalism is the source of our problems and socialism the solution and describing the general outline of a socialist society, then one can agree with the concept. But in the case of the Russian Revolution it meant that the political party seized the moment, decided on the action, and with the support of war-weary peasant boys in the Petrograd garrison and Kronstadt, seized power. This action placed it in a position to continue its substitutionism and laid the groundwork for post-revolutionary actions of Lenin and Stalin, on to Gorbachev.

In some respects Internationalism's concept of unitary organizations, explained in some detail in IMRO, seems to accord with the reality of revolutionary behavior as we have seen it historically. In Russia these unitary organizations took the form of councils of the revolutionary elements--industrial workers, peasants, and soldiers (the sons of peasants).

Internationalism suggested that my earlier letter indicated the lack of a position on this matter and that of the revolutionary party. While agreeing with Internationalism that what it calls unitary organizations will appear and must be encouraged by revolutionaries, I am much less certain about the form they will take. Whether they will be workers councils in industrially advanced countries remains to be seen.

In this connection, around the turn of the century the American De Leon and like-minded critics of the coopted, trade union movement reacted by organizing a revolutionary socialist industrial union, the IWW. It is at least possible that our class will produce a new union movement on syndicalist (IWW/STUist) lines as the unitary organizations in a new period of revolutionary activity by workers in the advanced industrial nations of Western Europe, the Far East, and the Americas. Militating toward that end, it seems to me, is the the lack of a peasantry and a military derived from it in these parts of the globe, the tendency of industrial workers to form unions when under attack, and the current disillusionment of workers with the capitalist union movement.

The matter of the revolutionary party remains a question for me and, I believe, for others in our political sector. Some of us are, at the very least, ambivalent about national and international political parties of socialism. On the one hand they do serve as the mechanism through which revolutionaries can discuss, and gather the resources to disseminate revolutionary ideas among our class. On the other hand they have a tendency toward cliquish authoritarianism,
organizational patriotism which is very divisive, and substitutionism. All these seem to be inherent and to resist the best efforts of their members to mitigate them.

All of our experience in the nearly three quarters of a century since the Russian Revolution tells us 1) that such parties are weak reeds at best, at least in the period of working class quiescence, 2) that our class is infinitely suspicious of them and their motives, and 3) that they begin to decay almost as soon as they are born because they provide a warm, wet place for the growth of hair-splitting factionalism and personal feuds.

Any party, national or international, that sees itself as destined to provide leadership for the working class and the unitary organizations is bound to fail. It will be lost in the myriad of leagues, parties, currents, and other groups even in our own political sector, not to mention the social democratic radicals and the Leninist denominations.

And what if such a party does succeed in dominating the revolutionary movement—the unitary organizations—to the point that the Bolsheviks did in 1917? Can anyone really believe that such a party wouldn’t be “forced” to take the same path as the Bolsheviks to “save” the revolution, regardless of its good intentions.

Under these circumstances, aren’t we, the revolutionary militants Internationalism speaks of, better off avoiding any sort national or international unified party and instead working individually and in autonomous local groups to raise the consciousness of our class and to let the organizations thrown up spontaneously by our class—the SIUs or Workers’ councils—set up as much or as little of a political party reflex as they need?

I wish to end this by recommending to the reader ICC’s very serious and well thought out pamphlet and to thank Internationalism for the opportunity to answer its letter. In the latter connection I should point out to DB readers that I haven’t appointed myself their spokesperson, that the ideas expressed here are my own, and that the DB is open to further responses to Internationalism’s letter.

Frank Girard
Response to Ed Stamm’s book review of I WAS ROBOT:

I can understand Ed’s remarks about what his experience has been with human nature. He said, “I think there are many more people who want unlimited free access to what is produced than people who are willing to put in volunteer labor.” Many people have expressed this same doubt.

But, the Free Skills Pool, which I visited about ten years ago in Monterey, CA, told me that it was their experience that in their group of about 135, people were very willing to give, but they were more reluctant to ask for a service. They did not keep track of how much people gave or took.

I find that this is true for myself also. I find it much easier to give of my surplus, than to take a gift from someone. When I have traveled in this country and abroad, I have found people extremely willing to give me free directions, if I ask.

Could the mass media have planted the thought in our heads that everyone is greedy and out to get us? Would this be in line with their “divide and rule” policy? Would it tend to make us afraid to try large cooperative efforts? Like trusting our self to rule our self and trusting others to be able to do likewise?

Ed said he didn’t think people would be willing to put in volunteer labor. But according to the Christian Science Monitor of March 30, 1982, there were 84 million Americans who donated volunteer labor. They were able to do this, Because they had other means of support. Which would be like the Priceless Economic System. With the PES everyone would have everything free of charge.

Perhaps Ed meant there would be no volunteers for jobs he considers “no fun jobs.” If you will examine some of those 84 million volunteer’s jobs, you will find many jobs you would not choose to do. Don’t volunteers often do jobs that are distasteful, merely because they think they should be done. They may have preferred lounging on the beach in the sun, but instead they did what they thought needed doing.

Writing, publishing and distributing the Little Free Press for the past 21 years is certainly not the most fun thing that I could have been doing. And it costs me a tidy sum to do it. But darn it, when you see your boat is leaking, you start bailing. Even look, to find where the water is coming in and try to stop it. Even though I would prefer to lie on the beach in the sun -- I can weigh the priorities, and know which is more important, if I see my boat filling up with water.

Buckminister Fuller, in his book, CRITICAL PATH, stated, “About 90% of all U.S.A. employment is engaged in tasks producing no life-support wealth.” In 1981 there were 100,397,000 people in the U.S. in paid jobs (Reader’s Digest 1985 Almanac). 10% of these would be 10,039,700 life-supportive jobs. With 84,000,000 volunteers we would have 8.38 volunteers per job. If the jobs averaged 45 hours per week, that would amount to 5.38 hours of work, per volunteer, per week to keep our life support system going. That would be about 14 work one day per week and have six days off. Not many people would object to working just a little to carry their share of the load, do you think? Especially when they learn how it will end wars, taxes, pollution, stealing and starving.

If no one volunteered for the 90% of non life-supportive jobs, we might be better off.

With the world-wide Wage/Profit System, they attempt to create a demand for products and services that we don’t want. With the Priceless Economic System (PES), we would produce enough to fill the demand. Probably a bit
more, to create a little inventory so there would always be an abundance available.

Then industry could cooperate in designing only the best, most efficient and most beautiful products for everyone. We have the technology to make products last a long time and be trouble free, but in the Wage/Profit system there is more incentive to do just the opposite. So when we make products last a longer time and be more trouble free, we won't have to reproduce them so often. This will cut down our labor force even more.

Ed and most people seem to think that we should go on using pay for work. But don't they realize that as long as people are paid, they can be told what they must do? They can be told to fight in a war, harass civilians, pollute our environment, guard investment property to keep people from growing their own food and having a place to lay their head at night. When you take pay, you must obey! They used to call that "slavery." Slaves were forced to work! People are all forced to work today! Work or you don't get any of those green slips of paper with a picture of one of your dead slavemasters on it, to use to barter for food or rent. Work or starve! Anyone who accumulates enough of those green slips of paper (or who prints their own) can hire people as slaves. People will do almost anything if you give them enough of those green trading slips. People will even sell their dignity and go on welfare for those green slips of paper.

When we all work as volunteers we will no longer have a need for a government. We will save over a trillion dollars per year there. Think of the resources that government wastes each year! I don't know about you, but I can't see that government does anything beneficial for me. If I need leadership on any project, after we change over to the PES, I'll just ask someone with more expertise than I have. Government has never offered me any leadership that was to my benefit.

Ed could be right and I could be wrong, but these are some of the reasons why I think the Priceless Economic System would work. It is already working in my own life. I have more freedom in my work, writing and distributing my Little Free Press newsletter. I write what I believe to be true. I don't have to please an editor, publisher or my readers, because I give the Little Free Press, free of charge. I wish I had enough surplus to afford to give my book, I WAS ROBOT, free of charge too, but I don't, so I can't, so I must charge $7.95 postpaid for it. But I can see that I won't make a profit or any wages on it, in the end.

I'm merely trying to point out to my fellow seafarers, the holes they are drilling into our space-ship Earth's hull. Every time we buy something new, the store orders another one and the factory pollutes a little more as they produce another one. Industry hires us to drill the holes, and pays us those green slips, so that we can buy another "thing."

So there really is no struggle. We just need to learn to get along on less "things" to gain more free time to figure out, for our self, how we can live the priceless way. This will make our own life better and happier right away. A world of happy individuals, might be called a happy society. If the units are OK, the whole is OK. I can work with my own unit (me) and I don't need to attend a committee meeting to do it and I don't need any ones permission. I am becoming free!

Ernest Mann
Rt. 1, Box 102
Cushing, MN 56443
The DB 43, Sept-Oct 1990, carried what was listed as a review by Ed Stamm of Ernest Mann's book, "I Was Robot." Since that was less of a review and more of an attempt to promote the notion that we should be wage-slaves for 32 hours a week instead of the current 40 I have taken the trouble to prepare the following review:

I Was Robot, by Ernest Mann. Little Free Press, Rt. 1, Box 102, Cushing, NM 56443, 319 pages, $7.95.

Mann summarizes his thoughts on page 291: "...if we would quit using money, barter and property ownership...work at our jobs for free...make all products and services free for everyone...control our own jobs and keep people informed of all the ways that anyone could make slaves out of us. Government would then be unnecessary. Wars and pollution would stop when there was no profit motive." The book discusses Mann's Priceless Economic System (PES) and details its advantages. In the PES there is no price tag on anything. Everything produced is given away to whoever needs or wants it.

Mann finds that profits cause war and other evils and that we waste our lives as wage slaves ("You work for pay, you must obey.") storing up profits for the few who control the government, the military, the media, the corporations, the schools and the legal system.

Mann exposes the system of private property: "Because the Elite group (with their hired soldiers) convinced the earlier passengers that the Elite owned all the state rooms and seats on Spaceship Earth; they made the passengers work, to make Money, to buy tickets, for space on our spaceships..."They allow some of the passengers to own small specks of it. Thus we think that Ownership is a good idea. But the Elite claim ownership to the most and the best of it."--page 99.

"The Elite claim they own most of the best land, buildings and factories. But how can they own them--WE built them! And the land was here before they were. They can only own them--IF we work for them as soldiers and force this ownership idea of theirs on ourselves. "The free game will use a different idea about land. It will be an idea of 'Usership.'"--page 111.

He exposes the voting game: "We are given a few of 'their' stooges to vote for...and no matter who wins--we lose...the...elected ALWAYS serve...the Elite..."--page 113.

He offers a solution: "If everyone works as a volunteer, there will not be a monetary cost of goods, so all goods and services can be free of charge. When everything is free there will no longer be a profit in the seven major problems."--page 207.

On how to implement the solution he admits: "I honestly don't know. But perhaps we can each start living FREE as much as we can in our own lives. I give my newsletter away for free."--page 207.
The idea that people will work without being paid has been dismissed by some as impractical. Argued is that "human nature" will not allow people to give away what they produce and think the human species lived for at least a million years before anyone ever received payment for his/her efforts. In the few remaining hunter/gathering societies people still give to others what they hunt, gather or produce without expecting payment. It would seem that Mann's PES has been the prevailing economic system for most of the period of human development.

Mann attaches himself to no movement and adopts no label but his arguments can be found in anarchist, socialist, communist and libertarian ideas of other writers before him. Even the idea of giving away can be found in the New Testament: "Give what you have to the poor..." If others have said what he says---what is the value of his book? Mann has the gift of writing what is readable. What he writes can be easily read and easily understood. He uses none of the long, involved sentences, erudite terms and academic jargon that plagues so much of the more scholarly works. Mann will be read by ordinary working people who would never attempt the scholarly books if only because he is easy to read and even fun to read. And he should be read by the professors, the scholars and other serious writers who need to learn what readable writing looks like. Many writers could benefit by his example of how to put important ideas into simple, direct, effective and strong statements.

---Lynn Olson

Dear Discussion Bulletin comrades,

We have just received the Discussion Bulletin n° 43, sept-oct. 90 and I could see that you have published my letter concerning the position of ICO and Echanges. Thank you.

I have to tell that I was a bit confused when I read in the issue n° 40, march 90 p 22 a presentation of Echanges which gives to me a leading role in it I never had and that I don't want to have. Of course I would not deny to be an active participant to this publication, and that it takes a part of my life, but some other participants did and still do a lot too, each of them bringing according the circumstances one's energy and thinking: without them, my own 'energy and thinking' could not bring Echanges into light.

We can appreciate what DB wrote about the regular review of publications in Echanges: I think these reviews are presented in the same way and with the same approach we can see in the presentations and the discussions in the pages of the Discussion Bulletin. This unprejudiced approach made us thinking sometimes to propose to DB a closer collaboration to avoid waste of time working and printing the same things. Nevertheless, what you find most interesting (this nation by nation review) in Echanges is not for us the most interesting though we don't consider it at all as useless (otherwise it would not be mentioned in Echanges). What we consider most interesting is what happens in the class struggle all over the world, not the commentaries on it but its content and its forms of organisation, in other words, all the workers activity; I can recognize that, for a lot of reasons Echanges is far from being what we think it could be in this respect.
In your presentation you label Echanges as a 'councilist publication'. I can only refer to what I wrote in the letter you have published in your issue n°43: 'councilist', like 'anarchist' or 'communist' or 'socialist' can mean so many different (and radically opposed) positions that we avoid to use this word. It is not only that: if we think that the emancipation of the workers can only come from the workers themselves, the organisational form of their struggle and at the same time of another society could be something else than workers' councils, something we don't know closely linked to the evolution of society as a whole. Another reason to emphasize our main interest about class struggle because we think we have constantly to learn from it.

In DB n°43, I observe you have begun the publication of the text 'Capitalism and its revolutionary destruction' from the english group Wildcat. Can I mention that Echanges has published a critique of this pamphlet (n°51, march-april 87', p 1/?) which could be just referred with a note in this debate.

Fraternally

Henri Simon

Echanges et Mouvement
BM Box 91
London WC1N 3XX
England

I've recently had the opportunity to read through the last five or six issues of DB, and I come away from that experience rather puzzled at a certain adherence to the morality of work as displayed by more than one writer.

I would like to ask the editor, or anyone else so inclined, why this persistence in the notion of self-managed work-as-salvation? Such a notion can only be described as sentimental and nostalgic, given the economic and social conditions that permeate us today.

If we were living in a situation in which raw materials were unlimited and in which our imaginations thrived on economic production, then perhaps there would be something to the idea of syndicalism. But not much.

There is already far too much work going on. Far too much production. If in fact you are interested in coming up with some kind of sane approach to getting the things done we need to get done, then the first step must needs be to halt this megamachine, dismantle it, melt it, whatever. To continue the discussion of self-managed workers without first dealing with this overall context is the height of schizophrenic crackpot realism.

If we were to tinker with the fundamental structure of capitalism, and remove the gameboard the element of surplus value, i.e., profit, then we would see about 90% of the work that's currently done on Earth go back to where it came from; namely, thin air.

The only way I can see such a thing coming about is through the abolition of exchange in favor of a gift-giving socio-economic basis. That's right. We all work for free. But without the pressures of surplus value and exchange, we would all work a lot less. Thus, the discussion of self-management would quickly become a discussion of what to do with one's life now that it's liberated from the workplace.

All this is by way of shifting the emphasis away from civilization, progress, industrialism and technology, and towards convivial and perhaps even ecstatic participation in the experience of being alive.
It would be cruel indeed to suggest this is a form of nostalgia, a Rousseau-esque desire to go "backwards". Hardly. What this is is an argument for establishing a position from which we can then go in all directions at once, wheresoever our desires lead us.

So I project a three-step process. 1. a Permanent Universal Rent Strike, beginning on Columbus Day 1992--- for immediate relief, and to provide the extra time for discussion and reflection regarding at 2. the advent of the Priceless Economic System (as outlined above). Once this is in place we can begin preparations for creating an improved form of Fourier's New Amorous World.

Whaddya say?
Neal Keating
P.O.B 2265
Albany, NY 12220

Dear readers,

In this letter I would like to comment on undemocratic criticism I experienced and witnessed from the political right as well as the left. For the record my position on democracy is similar to Frederick Engels who said that socialists benefit from democracy because their position is unassailable. People who sacrifice democracy even for a good cause are not doing a service to the revolution that requires public enlightenment as well as participation to succeed.

Before I retired from a very large company someone passed the word around that I was a Marxist socialist. As a result over a period of years a few fellow workers described how they would like to kill me, one fellow called me a piece of shit when he passed me and one or two others won't even greet me. Not even one person I worked with was willing to discuss my political beliefs to determine if I was pro Russian. So long as people choose to close their minds to other points of view, it must be harmful to most American people especially the working class.

In B.B. #41 an anonymous writer wrongly criticized articles I wrote for B.B. He revealed himself when he mentioned that some countries in Europe had fascism or industrial feudalism but he did not include Russia's system as being harmful. It did not occur to him that Russia could have industrial feudalism and not be called fascist, it does not make me sad to be attacked by the Obicians, who can attack Russia's enemies and not Russia itself.

In issue 42 a person calling himself A Boeing Worker wrote a long article on his avant garde views and also criticized another writer to B.B. He seemed to favor Freud and to be critical of Christianity among other things. The fact that he praised the great socialist LE Leon must have justified his authority and his desire to remain anonymous. He must feel that he speaks for the future socialist society when people will share a common store according to their needs. At such time our names and egos will be less important than our identification to the group which will include all of humanity. Until then it would be of greater benefit to humanity that people have self respect and pride in what they do and write. It is sportsmanship
for a person to sign his articles so people may know whom
they disagree with possibly. Not to sign one's name is to assume
infallibility which is conceit and is generally despised.

Fraternally yours,
Monroe Prussack

A reply the correspondent won't see
by R.A.S.

No writer enjoys writing for an intended audience that will
never see what the writer wrote because they do not subscribe
to the publication. Nevertheless, I was moved to put into words
a few thoughts for Ed Stam and anyone else who may have the
same thoughts.

No one can deny what Stamm said about the apathy of the
workers: just give them their paychecks on time and allow them
the credit to buy sports cars and power boats. And sure, they
are happy and won't revolt! I could go beyond Stamm and list
everything material from VCR's and Nintendo to what seems to
me to be larger homes and mortgages than most people either
need or can reasonably expect to pay off. So, I accept his
one point.

But if Stamm or anyone else believes that we can create a
utopian society in isolation by whatever means he is mistaken.
No socio-economic-political society has ever survived for very
long in a vacuum and least of all when the rest of society is
openly hostile.

This is why earlier socialist attempts on the North American
continent were failures in only a few years. J.A. Wayland, better
known for his turn of the century Appeal to Reason, created
what was supposed to be a socialist town in Ruskin, Tennessee.
Other early Socialist Partyites believed that socialists only
had to move to California en-masse and would win elections and
rid California of capitalists and the Republicans and Democrats.
Other misguided "socialists" favored such schemes elsewhere
where they were already winning some elections. Wisconsin was
one such place. But even if every socialist in North America
had packed their bags for Wisconsin or California would they
have created a viable community without interference from the
Federal government or political/economic distortions?

Today, would such a community survive when there are no places
anywhere that are not claimed by some government and every
government is hostile to those who do things their own way
(those too idealistic to fit the approved mold). Stamm insists
a community could survive in the system of exchange of goods.
Is he kidding? The hippy communes could not do it some years
ago and it is not likely any community of self-sufficient
producers could sell their goods for very long in a world
economy dominated by huge corporations and changing every day.

So the answer remains what it has always been: a world
without capitalism. Yes, it is frustrating and maybe we will
never see socialism (or anarchism, as Stamm prefers) because
the vast majority of people lack the imagination to create
anything beyond what they already know. But we will never reach
the goal the way Stamm suggests. As a socialist industrial
unionist I believe only through a worldwide revolution that
dispossess the capitalists and replaces the administration of people we can create the administration of things.

Stamm should know it is not counter-revolutionary to have doubts. And I hope that anyone who has doubts will take the time to study the program of the I.U.P. And they can do so for pocket change—not like Wildcat or other groups. They may write to the Industrial Union Party at P.O. Box 80, Madison Sq. St.
New York, N.Y. 10159.
The Socialist Republic magazine is $3.00 for 4 issues (about one issue every 6 months) and most I.U.P. literature is priced at $.50 or $.60. The most expensive piece is $2.50.

CAPITALISM & ITS REVOLUTIONARY DESTRUCTION (Continued)

Part 1 of Capitalism & Its Revolutionary Destruction concentrated on Wildcat's view of capitalism. Under the subtitle "The Struggle for Communism" part 2 below concentrates on the "revolutionary destruction" of capitalism. Beginning in this issue also is the debate between Wildcat, the British group that published the pamphlet and the Socialist Party of Great Britain. At our request Wildcat typed up the material, much --but not all--of which was published in the Socialist Standard, the SPGB's monthly magazine. We will carry as much of the debate as we have room for in this issue and continue it the next issue along with the critique of the pamphlet published in Echanges et Mouvement, if we can obtain it.

THE STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM

A. Seizing Control from the Unions

Despite the limitations of today's struggles they contain the seeds of a future struggle for communism. We already know from the experience of past struggles how, in broad outlines, this transformation will occur.

In its present stage the struggle in the workplace is generally marked by a conflict between a militant minority who more or less clearly see the need to break from union traditions, and the largely passive majority who accept them. So long as this is the case the minority are forced to act independently and often against the wishes of the majority.

For a while the fate of an entire struggle may depend on the courage and resolve of a small minority of militants. They need to organise themselves independently to carry out whatever actions are necessary. They are in the forefront of attempts to raise the aims and broaden the scope of the struggle. They strike up links with other similar minorities, working together to try to spread the struggle. They produce leaflets arguing their case. One of the most positive results of all this is often that they try to understand the wider political significance of what they are doing, by contacting and discussing with revolutionary political organisations. However they are right to have
a sceptical attitude towards all such groups.

But a small minority cannot win the struggle on its own. Nor can its aim be to replace the existing reactionary trade union leadership with its own "enlightened" leadership. Their primary aim must be to get more and more people actively involved in the struggle, in the organisation of the struggle, and in the discussion of strategy and tactics. On this basis a new form of organisation can emerge during the course of mass struggle through which the working class can seize controls of its struggle from the trade unions.

In the communities, a similar process will free the struggle from the reactionary influence of religious and so-called "community" leaders.

B. Organising Ourselves

From the mass struggles which have occurred in: East Germany '53, Hungary '56, France '68, Spain in the late Seventies and early Eighties, Poland '81... as well as the historical experience of the Russian and German Revolutions:-we can see what the basic form of this organisation will be. It will be based around mass assemblies of everyone actively involved in the struggle, both in the workplaces and neighbourhoods, meeting daily or in permanent session. These assemblies will elect delegates to regional and inter/national assemblies to coordinate the struggle. These delegates will be chosen, mandatable, revokable and dismissible by the meetings which elected them.

Unlike capitalist democracy which is based on the passivity of the individual, this working class self-organisation is meaningless unless it is based on mass struggle and the active participation of the vast majority of those involved. It reflects the collective fighting spirit of the working class.

Many mass struggles that have taken this form have been defeated. Attempts to preserve the form when the active, potentially revolutionary content has disappeared has only left empty organisational shells. Where they have not simply disappeared they have played a reactionary role in subsequent struggles.

Nevertheless such forms of organisation, whilst not guaranteeing the development of the class struggle towards communism, provide the best framework for an active and militant class to control and extend its struggle.

As part of the militant class the most clear-sighted minorities will be active in pushing the struggle forward. Inevitably in the early stages there will still be a conflict between the majority views of the assemblies and these minorities, who must maintain their independent existence and activity. But eventually if revolution is to succeed, the great mass of the working class must become conscious communists.
C. Revolution

By then the stage would be set for the seizure of power by these mass assemblies, organised into Workers' Councils—a modern form of the Raten and Soviets of the revolutions in Germany and Russia after WWI—in a revolution which overthrows capitalism.

In communist society the Workers' Councils will provide the initial means by which people will maintain an equal and active part in the running of social affairs.

D. Violence

The violence inherent to capitalist society will disappear under communism, a society based on the free association of individuals. But the revolution itself will inevitably be a bloody affair. Even the limited struggles of today, for very modest demands, provoke a violent response from the ruling class. But this is only a foretaste of the ferocious violence which the ruling class is already preparing to use against a future revolutionary struggle. At all times—before, during and for as long as is necessary after the revolution—the working class must be prepared to use whatever violence is necessary to drive its struggle forward and seal its victory.

To those who deplore the need for bloodshed, we reply: there is no alternative. Nevertheless, the experience of past mass struggles suggests that, at its highest points, the movement tends to acquire an irresistible force which simply cannot be opposed. The stronger, the better organised we are, the less actual violence will be necessary.

E. The Transformation of Society

The organisation of communist society will be based on the collective 'administration of things', not on the political power of a ruling minority over the majority. The State, which throughout history has been the organisation of ruling class power, will have been abolished.

The struggle of the working class, as a class, to seize power is, at the same time, a struggle to transform society towards communism. This struggle continues after the seizure of power. It takes place on many different levels.

It is a struggle to spread the revolution to all parts of the world, to remove pockets of resistance, to guard against sabotage, and to destroy all remnants of capitalist organisation—that is the structures of the state, parliament, the unions and the various parties which claim to represent the working class.

It is a struggle to overcome the limits which capitalism has placed on our imaginations; to find ways of organising ourselves and relating to one another which enable us to develop the full potential of the new society.

But fundamentally it is a struggle to replace competition by cooperation, production for profit by production for need. This will
make it possible to redevelop the large areas of the world devastated by capitalism, and to institute a system of global planned production. A communist society such as we envisage is only possible on the basis of material abundance. The potential for this has already been created by the development of capitalist industry and agriculture.

Goods will be freely available and free of charge. Money will disappear. However, communist society will not be like a huge supermarket where passive individuals simply help themselves. Work will be done because we want it to be done and want to do it - not because we have to in order to survive. The focus of interest in our lives will shift away from passively consuming, to include the new form of productive activity. This does not mean that overnight all productive activities will become passionately interesting... but a free society will strive to make them so, by continually transforming the aims and methods of production. There will no longer be a mad scramble to exploit resources without concern for the future, or a rush to buy the "latest model" which gives the illusion of inventiveness and newness.

The separation between work and leisure will actually disappear. People will freely associate to creatively use and transform their lives, by creatively using and transforming goods, activities and the environment, in an attempt to satisfy all our developing needs and desires. Community and communication will emerge in this common project: people will no longer be mere objects in the production process. The essence of communism is the passionate transformation of the world and of ourselves, in the creation of a world human community.

Revolutionary Organisations

Our role as revolutionaries in all this is, through our propaganda, agitation and active involvement, to publicise, support and encourage in today's struggle all tendencies which help lead to the spread of revolutionary ideas and a revolutionary spirit within the working class. And wherever possible to actively escalate the class war towards communism. As long as communist ideas are only held by a small minority, communists are forced to organise in political groups. But this is not a situation we wish to perpetuate. Some groupings of class-conscious working class people get together through the experience of a struggle, others get together through sharing political ideas. As the mass of the working class becomes active in the practical escalation of revolutionary struggle this separation will tend to disappear.

There are many other groups throughout the world which - broadly speaking - share our ideas, but this "movement" to which we belong is very fragmented and torn by divisions, some real and some petty. Whilst not underestimating the difficulties involved, we seek to resolve the differences between us, both through discussion and where possible joint activity, as a step towards the unification of our movement at an international level.

End of pamphlet -- Debate begins on p. 24
When a party, group or movement presents itself as "revolutionary" it is necessary to ask some questions about it: * Does it possess an understanding of the capitalist system? * Does it possess a serious conception of the socialist alternative? * Does it propose a serious strategy for the revolutionary transformation of society?

In relation to most of the so-called revolutionary groups these questions are easily answered, always in the negative. For example, the Communist Party does not understand what capitalism is, has a wholly mistaken and misleading conception of socialism and cannot even agree within its own ranks about how to achieve revolution.

The situation was different when The Socialist Party was formed in 1904. There were groups in various parts of the world which did possess a considerable degree of understanding about what capitalism is and what socialism means. In the early days of our party it was recognised that there were others who were close to our aim and the main disagreement with them was about how to achieve a wageless, moneyless, stateless society. In the 1980s there are again some revolutionaries existing in parts of the world with whom socialists would not need to argue much about what socialism is but with whom we are in major disagreement on the question of how socialists must go about the task of working for the revolutionary transformation of society, and what "revolution" means.

Reading the new pamphlet produced by the Manchester-based group, Wildcat, it becomes clear that much of what these "council communists" have to say about capitalism and socialism is not very different from what The Socialist Party says. Their criticism of capitalism is elementary but correct, quite properly making the point that "Nothing could be further from the truth than the idea that state capitalism equals socialism, or a step towards it." (Capitalism and its Revolutionary Destruction - A Statement by Wildcat). What they say about socialism or communism - like The Socialist Party they use the words interchangeably - is reasonable enough: "A communist society such as we envisage is only possible on the basis of material abundance...Goods will be freely available and free of charge. Money will disappear... Work will be done because we want it to be done and want to do it..." But the most beautiful visions in the world are of no value unless they are accompanied by serious ideas and action to make them real. It is on that point that Wildcat must be criticised.

Within the first three sentences of the pamphlet there is the best and worst of Wildcat. Sentence one: "Wildcat stands for the abolition of capitalism by communist revolution". Good. And what this means in practice is stated in sentence three: "We struggle in favour of strikes, riots and all other acts of rebellion against capitalism". But strikes are not "acts of rebellion against capitalism". In general, they are sectional efforts to obtain better wages and conditions for workers within capitalism. Neither are riots "acts of rebellion against capitalism". If Wildcat is committed to "struggle in favour of riots" we must assume that they recommend workers to have more riots - to indulge in more futile street fights in which workers always get hurt.

They also struggle for "all other acts of rebellion against capitalism". Such as assassination? Sabotage? We are sure the strikers and the rioters are waiting for further details. But why would workers, when we can take action against capitalism as a whole, waste time striking or rioting? Once enough workers understand and want socialism it will not be time to strike - stop work - but to work hard because the means of wealth production and distribution at that stage will become ours. Why riot against capitalism once you have understood that its real power will not be
beaten by smashing workers' heads and workers' possessions?

According to Wildcat, the revolution will come about as a result of workers forming councils:

From the mass struggles which have occurred in East Germany '53, Hungary '56, France '68, Spain in the late Seventies, Poland '81...as well as the historical experience of the Russian and German Revolutions - we can see what the basic form of this organisation will be. It will be based around mass assemblies of everyone actively involved in the struggle, both in the workplaces and neighbourhoods, meeting daily or in permanent session. These assemblies will elect delegates to regional and inter/national assemblies to coordinate the struggle.

Firstly, it must be noted that all these examples of workers' councils were failures: they failed to oppose capitalism as a system or to prepare for socialism or to prevent themselves from being smashed by the state. Why is this? Because if you leave armed power in the hands of the state and then proceed to ignore the state by forming alternative councils (or soviets) the class which controls the state will use it to crush the councils. That is why it is vital for revolutionaries to gain control of the state - by democratic means. But Wildcat, with emphatic dogmatism, asserts that "revolutionaries do not, under any circumstances, participate in parliament or elections". Not "under any circumstances": even if there is a socialist majority which could send delegates into parliament for the single act of dispossessing the capitalist class Wildcat is opposed to such a politically wise course of action.

Furthermore, "under no circumstances" do revolutionaries participate in elections, we are told. Why not? If we are a minority we can use elections to publicise our alternative outlook and discover how many (more to the point, how few) of our fellow workers agree with us. If we are in a majority what have we to lose by winning the election? If the statement quoted is read literally and we are to assume that Wildcat is opposed to participation in any election - ever, under any circumstances - then we wonder how these "mass assemblies" will make decisions. Is voting to be rejected in principle? Can we assume that Wildcat never delegates any of its members to perform a function; if it does, do members refuse to elect such delegates? And what of the reference to electing delegates if revolutionaries, "under no circumstances" participate in elections?

Of course, there is one strong reason for opposing electoral methods and that is if it is thought that the revolutionaries will be in a minority at the time of the revolution. At times Wildcat seems to think like that:

For a while the fate of an entire struggle may depend on the courage and resolve of a small minority of militants. They need to organise themselves independently to carry out whatever actions are necessary. They are in the forefront of attempts to raise the aims and broaden the scope of the struggle.

No Leninist would disagree with that. Nor with the assertion by Wildcat that "the revolution itself will inevitably be a bloody affair". Brave talk. But who is going to spill this blood? If workers are in a majority in establishing socialism, as they must be if it is to be established, it is hardly likely that the minority which is non-socialist will last long in putting up bloody, undemocratic resistance to the revolution - even if they were foolish enough to try, which is not "inevitable". It is possible that an anti-socialist minority at the time of the revolution, seeing that they are up against a conscious majority which controls the coercive force of the state, will simply give up the struggle. Even if this recalcitrant minority does have to be contained, while The Socialist Party accepts the possible need to use force for that purpose, that is a very different matter
from "a bloody affair". If, on the other hand, a minority under capitalism which has no conscious support from the working-class majority attempts to enact a revolution without winning electoral victory and gaining control of state power, we can be sure that "a bloody affair" would follow: the ruling class would crush the minority. It is all very well for Wildcat to announce that "We call for mutinies in the armed forces of all warring states" but this misses the point that wars are not commenced or directed by the workers in uniform but by the capitalist-controlled state.

The Socialist Party does not claim to have a blueprint for socialist revolution. Many of the crucial decisions regarding the transformation of society will need to be made by socialists as the movement grows to thousands, millions and then a majority. But in the late 1980s, while the world socialist movement is for the moment only a small minority, we have a responsibility to present a strategy for revolution which is credible. Maybe workers in the future will evolve better methods of transforming society but they will not look back on our Principles and accuse us of proposing a revolutionary means which is out of line with the revolutionary end. As for Wildcat and others in their tradition, their strategy amounts at best to adventurist phrase-making and at worst to a recipe for another crushed workers' rebellion.


TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Dear Comrades,

I should appreciate the opportunity of commenting on your review of our pamphlet Capitalism and its Revolutionary Destruction. Whilst the review does identify some genuine areas of disagreement between us, its basically sectarian and dishonest treatment of our views only hinders a clear understanding of these differences.

For example, the reference to our "opposition to elections" is taken completely out of its context of capitalist parliamentary and local government elections, allowing your reviewer to supposedly identify some contradiction with our support for workers' assemblies and councils, which any intelligent reader will realise just doesn't exist. Similarly, our reference to the 'inevitability of violence' in the revolutionary process is laboured, without mentioning our qualification that such violence can be minimised by the degree of conscious self-organisation achieved by the working class.

We do think, as the review indicates, that the role of organised revolutionary minorities is crucial to the transformation of mass class struggle into conscious struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. But we do not think as the review implies that successful revolutions are made without the great mass of workers being involved.

The review is correct in saying that our examples of pre-revolutionary situations vis a vis Russia 1917, Germany 1918, France 1968 etc. failed to go on to establish socialism. This is an obvious statement, as obvious as the fact that 83 years of SPGB propaganda has also failed to establish a socialist society. However, our approach does have the merit of linking the struggle for socialism with the existence of a real movement of mass class struggle against the effects of capitalism. It is firmly based in material reality. The SPGB approach on the other hand relies on a gradual working class awareness emerging from a passive reflection on the horrors of capitalism assisted by its own educational efforts. The class struggle apparently carries on in the same old way until 51% of the voters turns
this passive awareness into the reality of socialism. This is simple 'idealism' and has nothing in common with the SPGB's much-vaunted Marxist materialism.

As our pamphlet says, it was produced as an aid to discussion amongst revolutionaries. Members of the SPGB would do well to read it for themselves to get an honest impression of its contents...

Fraternally,
MB for Wildcat

(this letter was not published by the SPGB) To be continued.

Dear D.B.

I am writing in response to the request by "The Chican" in the last issue. There is a book on Axelrod called AXELROD AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENSHIEVISM by someone named Asher whose first name I can't remember. For Martov see MARTOV by Israel Getzler. Most of the material in my article was gotten from these two volumes. For the WORKERS' OPPOSITION see Alexandra Kollontai's THE WORKERS' OPPOSITION IN HER SELECTED WRITINGS published by WW Norton London, 1977. London Solidarity also did a version of this as well, perhaps Wooden Shoe Book in Philadelphia can get you a copy.

Yours in Solidarity,
Larry Getzler

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS RECEIVED

The State and Revolution (V.I. Lenin) Revisited in the Light of Soviet Experience, Part I by Perry Sanders, 8 pp., wraps, $1 from author, 755 W. Cornelia, #108, Chicago, IL 60657.

In this short pamphlet the author attempts to explain the contradiction between the ideas about the state that Lenin expressed in TEAR and the bureaucratic state that began to develop immediately after the revolution. Not only does he try to explain it, but he tries to set up conditions that will prevent its occurrence in the future. Unfortunately Sanders does not see the vanguard party as the root of the problem. While deploring the post-revolutionary role of the Bolshevik Party, he somehow can't conceive of a revolutionary proletariat without a party at its head. The result is the less than clear thinking his summary exhibits:

Even when a particular workers' party closely represents the class interests of the proletariat, it should only play a leading role and not the leading and directing role. Such a revolutionary Marxist workers' party does have a leading role to play, but the leading and directing role must at all times be carried out by the working class itself.

What we have here is a sincere attempt to come to grips with the ungrippable. The vanguard party, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers' state are all incompatible with socialism.
Redwing Blackbird Distribution, P.O. Box 2042, Decatur, GA 30031, publishes a mailorder catalog listing many periodicals and books that will interest libertarian socialists of all denominations. Among them are several that I haven’t yet seen: Love and Rage and its alter ego, The Alarm to name two. Other titles that interest me are Red November, Black November about how the IWW was influenced by anarchist militants, The Abolition of Work & Other Essays by Bob Black, and various Semiotext(e) publications. Catalog free to DB readers.

1981 IWW Labor History Calendar from IWW, P.O. Box 204, Oak Park, IL 60303. This calendar has “Striking Photos from Classic Strikes from around the world, with more than 300 dates from American and world labor history.” $7.00 each, $4.20 each for five or more.

Spanner, BM Spanner, London WC1N 3XX, England. Issue number 2, a special issue on democracy, will be out soon. Issues three and four will be on "Ecology" and "Culture and Community" respectively. Interested readers can obtain Spanner from the address above for $3 (1£) per copy.

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