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BULLETIN MATTERS

DB58 is the second consecutive issue containing long extracts from the British publication Wildcat. The first of the two articles describes the insurrection that enabled Lenin and the Bolsheviks to seize state power. The second describes their first successful effort at counter revolution -- the Kronstadt communists' attempt to overthrow the new masters. Wildcat's analysis of the two events raises questions about their own views of socialism and socialist revolution. In this connection, we have also filched a
letter and response from their columns. All this has led to the conclusion that we must cut Wildcat in for a share when DB shows a profit.

Next W.J. Laurimore continues the discussion of the recent departure from the Socialist Party (of Great Britain) by dissidents who opposed changes in the party and who have reconstituted themselves as the true Socialist Party of Great Britain. Next Curtis Price reviews two publications by a different Wildcat—in this instance a German autonomist group. Ed Stamm comments on the use by both the capitalist media and revolutionaries of the word "anarchy" to mean chaos.

Robert Sekula then uses Lauren's Otter's DB57 letter as a take-off point for the beginning of a discussion on the significance of events.

(Cont'd on p. 29)
THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

Ten Days That Didn't Overthrow Capitalism

"No-one can belittle the huge importance of the October revolution and its influence on the course of world history and the progress of mankind."

announced the chairman of the Soviet parliament in November 1990. Nevertheless, we're going to try.

The article which follows this introduction views the Russian revolution of October 1917 from the viewpoint of the inhabitants of Kronstadt, a strategic island in the Gulf of Finland, which was universally regarded as the most radical part of Russia, until it was militarily suppressed by the Bolshevik government in March 1921.

This introduction measures theories of what happened in 1917 against the events of February to October, to see what relevance, if any, these events and theories have for the communist project today.

The view that the Soviet system, resulting from the tactical genius of Lenin and the discipline of his party, is a great gain for humanity to be defended by the working class, has been somewhat eroded by that system's collapse. So too has the orthodox Trotskyist variant of this position.

Analyses which endorse October, but say that at some point between then and now, Russia became capitalist, have more life in them. Immediately after the second world war, various tendencies, for example Tony Cliff's, tried to make sense of the Red Army's rule in Eastern Europe. They worked out that wage labour prevailed in these countries, and concluded that they were dominated by a form of capitalism, which they called "state capitalism". The problem was when the gains of October had been lost.

This is not an academic question. Though we try to avoid the habit of seeing today in terms of 1917, there are some lessons to be drawn from then which still apply. We are still engaged in battles against the manoeuvres of Leninists in the class struggle in the 1990s. For this reason alone, this obituary is worthwhile. On the other hand, the funeral is long overdue. The conclusions of the following contributions are necessarily general, and many of them are non-specific to the Russian revolution.

The most dangerous of all errors made by non-Leninists is the tendency to analyse the Russian revolution as the critique of Leninism as undemocratic. Councilists and other democrats turn the ideology of Leninism on its head. Instead of a benevolent genius leading a clear minority through numerous dire straights to ultimate victory, councilists saw an evil genius, with an undemocratic minority party, which seized power without the approval of the majority of the working class, and thus was bound to do no good. The conclusion they draw is that only when the majority of the working class (usually in one country) have voted for the revolution is it safe for it to take place. This idea has been defended by councilists since the early twenties, and still finds an echo in the revolutionary movement of today. Democracy can only hinder the revolutionary minority. Depending on majority approval, whether in one workplace, one city, or one country, will always prevent this minority doing what needs to be done. As we argue throughout these text, what went wrong in Russia was not the result of a minority substituting itself for the working class.

MAJORITY RULERS

The council communist movement arose in the 1920s in response to the Bolshevik counter-revolution and the manoeuvres of the German Communist Party (KPD). The Communist Workers Party (KAPD) had emerged from a split in the KPD, on the basis of opposition to parliament and trade unionism. The council communists, most of whom came from the KAPD and its Dutch equivalent, went further than the KAPD in their critique of the Bolsheviks. Whereas the KAPD argued that the Soviet state, the official communist parties around the world, grouped together in the Communist International, became counter-revolutionary in 1921-22, the council communists discovered that they had never been revolutionary at all.

They defended a simplified Marxist "stages" theory of history, taking at face value the claim that there had been a series of "bourgeois revolutions" which overthrew the old feudal social relations and substituted capitalist ones. These revolutions included the English in 1640, the French in 1789, and the German in 1848. The capitalist outcome of these revolutions was inevitable, notwithstanding the involvement of the proletariat. The clearest defence of this position can be found in From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution by Otto Rühle [1]. For our critique of the concept of bourgeois revolutions, see the article in Wildcat 13 [2].

The councilists argued that Russia could not give birth to a proletarian revolution because it was too backward. This argument is the same as that put forward by most of the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks prior to 1917. Capitalism in Russia, precisely because it had taken root late, was more advanced than that of England. Petrograd had the biggest factory in the world. The fact that the territories of the Russian Empire were full of peasants could not make a workers' and soldiers' uprising in Petrograd capitalist "in
Essence”.

Even if Russian capitalism had been backward, this is beside the point. Petrograd was a link in a chain of industrial cities which stretched around the world, and its workers knew it. That is why they responded to Lenin’s calls for an internationalist revolution.

Councilists were if anything more dogmatic and didactic in their interpretation of Marxism than their Leninist opponents.

"According to the phasicological pattern of development as formulated and advocated by Marx, after feudal tsarism in Russia there had come the capitalist bourgeois state, whose creator and representative is the bourgeois class." ([1], p.13).

But the wars of Russia were capitalist from Peter the Great (1689-1725) onwards. Their religious beliefs did not make them feudal. The tsars, with the aid of foreign capital, had developed Russian capitalism, in particular in the shipping and related industries, creating a modern industrial base in Petrograd and Moscow. "Unlike in Western Europe, the State did not merely supervise the new industries; it directly managed the bulk of heavy industry, and part of light industry, thereby employing the majority of all industrial workers as forced labour" ([3], p.3). "State capitalism" was not introduced by the Bolsheviks.

We therefore reject the councilist analysis of the origins, course and outcome of the Russian revolution. However, they do have the merit of being the first to point out the evidence for the capitalist nature of the Bolshevik regime and the social relations it supervised. In 1920, Otto Reihe refused to take his place in the Communist International in Moscow, as the KAPD had instructed. His journey through Russia had completely disillusioned him with the idea that socialism was being built there. Reihe attacks the Bolshevik national liberation policy, their giving the right of self-determination to the nations (in other words, to the bourgeoisie) of Finland, Poland, etc., as "the outcome of bourgeois political orientation" ([1], p.14). He ridicules their giving land to the peasants, though what the Bolsheviks should have done instead, he does not say. He attacks the treaty of Brest-Litovsk which brought peace between the Soviet state and German imperialism, giving the latter one last chance to step up the fight against both the Entente powers and its own working class. Reihe points out that "nationalisation is not socialisation" and describes the Russian economy as "large-scale tightly centrally-run state capitalism... Only it is still capitalism". He equates the massacre of the Kronstadt uprising of 1921 with the suppression of the Paris Commune and the German revolution.

The "left communists" current, in common with Cliff and other ex-Trotskyists, supports the Bolsheviks in the October revolution, but argues that the revolution degenerated because of Russia’s isolation. This point of view deserves to be seriously considered, before being dismissed out of hand. The problem of when Russia was no longer a workers’ state has caused tremendous problems to these groups, and must of them have given up trying to answer the question.

But they are generally in agreement on the primary cause of the degeneration: isolation. It is true that, if it were not supported by a revolution in the rest of the world, the Russian revolution would inevitably have led to capitalism. However, this is not why it did so. The Bolshevik regime did not try to create communism, find itself isolated, and end up implementing capitalist policies in spite of its best intentions. On the contrary, it enthusiastically administered and expanded capitalism - the exploitation of labour by means of the wages system - from its very first day in office.

"And the facts speak for themselves: after the October revolution Lenin did not want the expropriation of the capitalists, but only 'workers control', control by the workers’ shopfloor organisations over the capitalists, who were to continue to retain management of the enterprises. A fierce class struggle ensued, invalidating Lenin’s thesis on the collaboration of the classes under his power: the capitalists replied with sabotage and the workers’ collectives took over all the factories one after the other... And it was only when the expropriation of the capitalists had been effected de facto by the workers masses that the Soviet government recognized it de jure by publishing the decree on the nationalization of industry. Then, in 1918, Lenin answered the socialist aspirations of the workers by opposing to them the system of State capitalism (on the model of wartime Germany), with the greater participation of former capitalists in the new Soviet economy."


The Bolsheviks were already imprisoning their revolutionary opponents before the outbreak of the civil war in 1918. They had already tried to strike deals to keep the capitalist managers in charge of the factories. As Mandel shows in *The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power* [5], the factory committees frequently came into conflict with the Bolsheviks, who wanted to dissolve them into the trade unions. He also quotes the leather manufacturers’ organisation in Petrograd to the effect that the Bolshevik trade unionsist were preferable, as people with whom jointly to manage production, to the "anarchist-communist" factory committees. Clearly, to some extent, the factory committees attempted to continue the revolution after October in the teeth of Bolshevik opposition. We do not however idolise the factory committees, as does Brinnon in *The Bolsheviks and Workers’ Control* [6]. Though containing useful information, it should be read in conjunction with *Factory Committees and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* [7], in which Goodey shows how simplistic it is to see the committees as the goodie and the Bolsheviks as the baddies.
Relations of production inside Russia never ceased to be capitalist. Hardly any attempt was made to abolish wage labour and the law of value, and none by the Party. The Bolsheviks did carry out nationalizations, under pressure from the factory committees, but these had nothing to do with communism.

In “Left-Wing” Communism [9] written two and a half years after the October uprising, Lenin argued that in Russia the trade unions were “and will long remain,” a necessary means for “gradually transferring the management of the whole economy of the country to the hands of the working class (and not of the separate trades), and later to the hands of all the toilers”. Lenin didn’t claim that at that time the working class even managed the economy. They had not even instituted workers management, let alone socialism. He argued that state capitalism was a step on the road to socialism, and urged Russian socialists to “study the state capitalism of the Germans, to adopt it with all possible strength, not to spare dictatorial methods in order to hasten its adoption” (On “Left” Infantilism and the Petty-Bourgeois Spira, cited in E.H. Carr, [10], p99).

Lenin and the Bolsheviks conceived of a long period of transition, during which workers would gradually exert more and more control over production and society as a whole, eventually, after many years, converting it into socialism (see [6], pp 12-13, citing Lenin, [8], p245). This would be assisted by “general state book-keeping, general state accounting of the production and distribution of goods”, and would be “something in the nature, so to speak, of the skeleton of a socialist society”. In the meantime, the state would be in control of capitalist relations of production. Any Marxist should be able to work out that a state which is in control of capitalism - wage labour - is a capitalist state. In order to run the economy, it has to impose work discipline, and all the accompanying forms of repression which capitalism is heir to. The idea of a “workers’ state” which will gradually transform wage labour into the free association of producers is an un-Marxist utopia. The involvement of the working class in the administration of capitalism, through Soviets, etc., just leads it into managing its own exploitation.

Supporters of the notion of a “workers’ state” will admit that, initially, such a state is in charge of a capitalist economy. What will prevent it becoming a capitalist state is the intentions of the people running it. They - organised in the Party - want to create communism. But it is again basic materialism to point out that states develop independently of the intentions of their functionaries. A state in charge of capitalism cannot transform it into communism by willpower. There has to be another way.

The concept of a “degenerated” workers’ state is absurd. States are administrative bodies based on armed forces. They defend particular social relations. A state cannot degenerate. It cannot gradually change from defending the proletariat to defending the bourgeoisie. This would involve a period of transition in which it abolished wage labour with less and less enthusiasm, followed by a phase in which it defended it with greater and greater vigour, divided by an interregnum in which it couldn’t quite make up its mind.

To summarize, demonstrate the nature of the Bolshevik regime, we will briefly look at three areas of society in which the new regime strengthened capitalism with a resolve which must have been the envy of the liberals they had just overthrown.

The Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-Revolution, or Cheka, was founded on December 8, 1917 “to watch the press, saboteurs, strikers, and the Socialist-Revolutionaries of the Right” (Daniels, [18], p90, citing the Cheka’s founding decree, our emphasis). Strikers were now labelled agents of the counter-revolution, and subject to rapidly increasing repression, starting with “confiscation, confinement, deprivation of (food) cards”, and ending with summary execution.

In March 1918, Trotsky abolished the elective principle in the army, replacing elected officers with former Tsarist officers who “in the area of command, operations and fighting” (in other words, everything), were given “full responsibility” and “the necessary rights” ([18], p92). On one year after the revolution which destroyed the tsar’s army and navy, Trotsky restored them.

Finally, in the economy, Lenin said in April 1918: “We must raise the question of piecework and apply and test it in practice; we must raise the question of applying much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system, we must make wages correspond to the total amount of goods turned out…” ([18], p96).

And he didn’t just raise these questions, he answered them.

When a particular state imprisons strikers, decimates soldiers, militarises labour, cooperates with factory owners and negotiates territory with imperialist powers, its nature is clear. Such a state defends the capitalist class and the capitalist mode of production against the proletariat and the communist movement. Such was the nature of the Soviet state created by the October revolution.

WE GOT THE POWER

Between February and October 1917, the working class had a significant amount of power in Russia. Following the Petrograd mutiny of 27 February, when troops refused to shoot demonstrators and striking workers and joined them, the whole edifice of tsarist autocracy collapsed. Kerensky commented that throughout the whole of the Russian lands, there was “literally not one policeman”. They crowded into the jails to avoid lynching, taking the place of thousands of hardened revolutionaries of all factions who wasted no time in getting stuck in. From February to October, a situation of “dual power” existed, with a weak bourgeois government
and numerous organs of working class power. Even at the lowest points during these eight months, when the bourgeoisie was on the offensive, workers defied the bosses, and soldiers and sailors chose which orders to obey. The Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, led by the Petrograd Soviet, had more power than the Provisional Government, though they persistently refused to use it to destroy the latter, in fact they propped it up by sending ministers and giving it "socialist" credibility.

Finally, on October 25, the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Bolshevik-dominated Petrograd Soviet smashed the Provisional Government and announced that the Soviets were now the power in the land. The Congress of Soviets elected a government, the Council of People's Commissars, headed by Lenin and Trotsky, to which the Soviets now gave increasing amounts of their own power. From the viewpoint of the working class, it is difficult to find any major gains resulting from October. There is one major exception: peace.

It is understandable that the Soviets, after much debate, accepted Lenin's arguments for signing a peace treaty with Germany. Most of the Soviets initially bitterly opposed the idea, arguing that a revolutionary war, even a guerrilla war which would not actually beat Germany, would hasten the advent of the world revolution. But the argument that Russia was exhausted won the day. The Brest-Litovsk treaty was disastrous for the working class. It freed German militarism from fighting a war on two fronts, giving it the Ukraine, and boosted its morale (its power over its own workers), which enabled it to launch the March-July 1918 offensives on the Western Front, prolonging the war.

It is impossible for us to say exactly what effect a refusal by the working class to accept Brest-Litovsk would have had. Certainly the Germans would have advanced towards Petrograd, but a communist guerrilla war would have tied up vast numbers of troops, bringing forward the collapse of the Central Powers and the wave of Revolutions which eventually brought them down in November 1918. There was certainly a readiness for a fight, as shown by the debates in the Soviets, and by subsequent events in the Ukraine, where a large anarchist army fought the counter-revolution with considerable success, until it was suppressed by the Red Army (see Voline, The Unknown Revolution, [11]).

The Russian revolution was not defeated primarily because Russia was isolated by the civil war and the defeat of the German revolution - it had already been seriously undermined from within before isolation had a chance to take hold. Of course, the invasion of White Russian and imperialist armies in the summer of 1918 took its toll of surviving revolutionary gains, not least because it enabled the Bolshevik government to impose capitalist discipline and the militarisation of labour. But the Soviet government was already defending capital against communism before the outbreak of the civil war. So "isolation" is a feeble excuse.

The suppression of Kronstadt in 1921, the most spectacular act of the Bolshevik counter-revolution, was the culmination of four years of constant attacks on the working class revolution of February 1917. Lenin succeeded where Kerensky had failed.

Nor were the Bolsheviks forced to conduct the civil war in the way they did by circumstances beyond their control. Insurgents in the Ukraine were capable of holding Soviet congresses to organise the struggle against the White armies. The Red Army under Trotsky ruthlessly liquidated such attempts to conduct a communist civil war against counter-revolution. Voline cites Trotsky's order no. 1824 of June 4, 1919, which calls participation in a Soviet Congress of insurgents in various regions of the Ukraine, "an act of high treason", and forbids it: "In no case shall it take place" ([11], pp. 596-597). Whilst the "anarchist bands" were fighting Denikin's offensive, the Red Army attacked them from the rear.

One of the causes of the 1921 uprising was the capitalist organisation of the Red Army. This was not a consequence of the civil war, preceding it by four months. The arbitrary brutality of bourgeois military discipline is neither necessary nor possible in a class struggle army. We only have to look at Maklakov's partisans to see this (see Arshinov, [13]).

Another was corruption. The armed guards who checked people bringing in food from the countryside took bribes to allow black marketers through, and took what they wanted for resale or for themselves.

It is quite clear from Trotsky's account ([14]) that the Bolshevik Party consistently tried to hold back the class struggle up to October 1917 until they were in a position to dominate the government which resulted from the insurrection. Had Kornilov taken Petrograd in August 1917, he would have murdered the left-wing leaders, yet when sailors, from the Aurora visited Trotsky in prison, he urged restraint ([14], p. 253).

THE FIREHOSE

Some of the writings and speeches of Bolshevik leaders at this time are impressive. Lenin's April Theses ([13]) served to radicalise the Bolshevik apparatus in 1917. The depth of this radicalisation can be gauged by the introduction of one-man management a year later. The State and Revolution ([16]). Lenin's most revolutionary work, was not published until 1918, when the counter-revolution was well under way, thus made no positive contribution. The Bolsheviks talked of a "commune-state", of "the arming of the whole people", of the "abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy", and proceeded to create a capitalist police state which disarmed the working class and gave birth to the biggest bureaucracy the world has ever seen. The more radical elements of Bolshevik propaganda had the effect of disguising a
The Bolsheviks were, of all the Russian underground groups, the most opposed to the formation of Soviets in 1905. In February 1917.

"Inside Russia, the most active group in St. Petersburg, the Bolsheviks, refused requests for arms from the strikers and tried to dissuade them from further demonstrations, convinced that the time was on the side and that consolidation was needed." ([17], p.39).

In August, "The Bolshevik leaders themselves often joked about the similarity of their warnings to the political leitmotif of the German social democracy, which has invariably restrained the masses from every serious struggle by referring to the danger of provocateurs and necessity of accumulating strength." ([14], 2, p.31).

A generally held view of revolution is that timing is of the essence. The prospective revolutionary class or party must choose its moment well. Too early an insurrectionary attempt will provoke repression; too late, and the revolutionaries will have missed their chance.

"A proletarian revolution is only possible when the ruling class is in severe crisis, which is likely to last for months. Such was the case in Russia in 1917. In such situations, it is unlikely that the proletariat will lose much by going on the offensive. Even in the normal day-to-day life of capitalist society, it is unusual, though not unheard-of, for a genuine revolutionary group (as opposed to a leftist one) to urge restraint.

Military analogies are over-used in the class war, and often misleading. The class war is fundamentally different from a war between states. The workers are not an army until they start fighting. But in straightforward physical confrontations between classes, an understanding of timing, the balance of forces, and so on, is important. We cannot condemn the Bolsheviks simply because they held back the armed struggle. However, revolutionaries would not spend most of their time trying to hold back the class where the government is weak and the working class has real autonomous power in sections of society, including the armed forces. They would not try to prevent strikes as the Bolsheviks in the Vyborg district did ([14], 2, p.10).

The Bolsheviks' strategy of holding back the class war was based not on fear of provoking the government (what would the government have done when provoked that it couldn't have done in any case?), but on the argument that there was no coherent force to take power. They left the Provisional Government in power while they were unsure of their ability to provide an alternative administration. The government could not even control the naval force which defended Petrograd. So when Lenin urged "caution, caution, caution", he was trying to hold back the class struggle until the Bolsheviks were in a position to use it for their own ends. To do this, he needed a more disciplined party, so he described Bolsheviks who had supported the slogan "Down with the Provisional Government" against the more moderate official Bolshevik slogan "Long Live the Soviet" as guilty of a serious crime. "Long Live the Soviet" in July 1917 meant supporting the body which, as Lenin constantly pointed out, was the main prop of the capitalist government.

In Petrograd, even at the militant Putilov factory, the Bolsheviks tried to stop the July demo, but were swept aside by the workers. The party in the Vyborg district decided it had to go along to "maintain order" ([14], 2, p.17). Although Lenin did everything he could to prevent the July 4th armed demonstration, he explained why he had to support it once it was inevitable: "For our party to have broken with the spontaneous movement of the Kronstadt masses would have struck an irreparable blow at its authority."

Describing the genesis of the July Days, Trotsky admits: "With an embarrassed shake of the head, the Vyborg Bolsheviks would complain to their friends: 'We have to play the part of the fire hose.'" ([14], 2, p.11). He candidly describes how he persuaded the 176th regiment to defend the "socialist" ministers against the demonstrations. When the demonstrators demanded to see minister Tseretelli, leading Bolshevik Zinoviev came out and spoke: "I appealed to that audience to dispense peacefully at once, keeping perfect order, and under no circumstances permitting anyone to provoke them to any aggressive action." Trotsky adds: "This episode offers the best possible illustration of the keen discontent of the masses, their lack of any plan of attack, and the actual role of the Bolshevik party in the July events" ([14], 2, p.55). It certainly does.

LOYAL OPPOSITIONS

Our critique of October is not that it was an undemocratic coup d'état. Firstly, because we do not believe that a majority of the working class has to endorse an assault on state power by a minority, and secondly, because the
Bolsheviks did have the support of a large proportion of the most militant workers. We would not quibble over the description of the result of October as a "workers' state", since it was based on the Soviets. But this is no guarantee that it will defend the interests of the working class.

Neither do we argue that the party was internally undemocratic. The Kommunist faction (see 19), composed of some of the leading Bolsheviks in Moscow, argued against the party's decisions, saying that they "instead of raising the banner forward to communism, raise the banner back to capitalism." The left communists also opposed the Brest-Litovsk treaty. When the civil war started, the left described the situation inside Russia as "War Communism". Housing was redistributed (see 20), rail and post were free, electricity and water free when available, rent was abolished, and so, it appeared, was money. In practice, most of the food was obtained on the black market, otherwise even more people would have died of starvation (20, p.101). Cannibalism also helped supplement Russia's meagre diet. Money was abolished only in the sense that inflation decimated it to such an extent it was replaced with barter.

Kollontai's Workers' Opposition advocated workers' control of capitalism, via the trade unions. Nowhere in The Workers' Opposition (21) does Kollontai understand that Russia is capitalist. The Workers' Opposition were "the first" to volunteer for the suppression of Kronstadt in 1921 at the 10th Party Congress. At this congress, the left communists lunched to the right, defending private trade. After this, factions were banned, sent to Siberia, or shot. There were nevertheless numerous oppositions formally inside the Party even after this period, some of them quite positive, for example Musin's Workers' Group and Bogdanov's Workers' Truth Group:

"The Soviet, party, and trade-union bureaucracies and organizers find themselves with material conditions which are sharply distinguished from the conditions of existence of the working class. Their very well-being and the stability of their general position depend on the degree to which the toiling masses are exploited and subordinated to them." (Appeal of the Workers' Truth Group, 1922, cited in 18, p.47).

Other examples can be found in Daniels, 22, and Olliga, 12. The latter describes the debates among oppositionists in prison and in exile in the late twenties and early thirties, many of whom had managed to work out what had gone wrong. But by this time it was too late.

FOR ANTI-STATE COMMUNISM

It is obvious that conditions today are far removed from 1917, so we would not mechanically transfer the lessons of the proletariat's mistakes in Russia to today. However, there are some general points which can be drawn from the Russian experience. Between February and October, the proletariat had considerable power in Russia, but then rapidly lost it, and a strong capitalist state was created. When class warfare reaches a certain level, a Soviet state may emerge. However it will only be a step on the road to communism if the revolutionary workers refuse to accept the Soviet state as their own, and oppose it as intransigently as they did its predecessor.

There is no substitute for the immediate task of socialising the entire economy, abolishing money, destroying all bureaucratic hangovers of capitalist rule, and rapidly internationalising the revolution. Any organisation which tries to hold back these measures should be swept aside.

There are no forms which guarantee the success of the revolution, neither is there much point in trying to avoid particular forms, nor making rules about which pre-ordained tasks each type of organisation must take on or refuse. With obvious qualifications, Herman Gorter's 1920 formulation against formalism still stands: "...during the revolution, every Trade Union, every workers' union even, is a political party - either pro or counter revolution." (Gorter, 23).

No one organisation, whether formally political or ostensibly economic, will hold a monopoly of correct positions. The "revolutionary party" is the sum of all individuals and organisations, whether formal political organisations or not, which actually defend the needs of the social revolution at a given moment. It is impossible to centralise such a minority under one command. However, immense discipline and more importantly, solidarity, will be required for such a party to act in a unified way against the bourgeoisie and its well-organised political forces, let alone its military ones.

This minority can certainly take any action - for example, the overthrow of the state - which serves proletarian goals, without endorsement from the majority of the working class. It cannot however impose communism - this can only be the product of mass activity - therefore it does not seek to create a new state power - a "workers' state" - in place of the old administration. It remains continuously in opposition to any state which it set up, participating in organising the class war until its final victory in the destruction of all states, and the creation of world communism, a free association of producers, in which the freedom of each is the condition for the freedom of all.
REMEMBER KRONSTADT

The 70th anniversary of the suppression of the Kronstadt uprising coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union, giving us two convenient excuses to re-examine the Russian revolution. This brief history of the naval fortress-town in the Gulf of Finland gives us a particular viewpoint on the revolution itself: the viewpoint of some of its most combative participants.

Following the destruction of the fleet by the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, Kronstadt joined the general uprising which swept the demoralised country. The first Kronstadt uprising in October 1905 was basically a large armed riot, accompanied by liberal political demands. The Tsarist autocracy managed to regain control after two days. Although the majority of Kronstadt’s 13,000 sailors and soldiers participated in the uprising, only 208 were brought to trial. None were sentenced to death and only one to hard labour for life. This exceptionally lenient treatment was the result of the explicit solidarity offered by the workers of St. Petersburg who stood against the courts martial.

Kronstadt’s second uprising took place in July 1906. The Socialist Revolutionaries and a few members of the Bolshevik Party convinced the rest of the Kronstadters that their parties would be able to organise a nationwide naval mutiny and then a revolution. It was totally unsuccessful, and brutally suppressed.

Directly after the debacle of the 1906 mutiny, the Minister of War received a letter from 71 sailors and 136 soldiers of Kronstadt who assembled in a forest and vowed to avenge their executed comrades. “...for every comrade soldier killed, we will hang three officers edgewise, and shoot another five” (I. Getzler, [24], p8).

Kronstadt’s revolutionary tradition had begun.

Politically, Kronstadt was originally peasant-oriented. Land and Liberty were the main slogans. Following her humiliation by the Japanese, Russia resolved to build a modern fleet. From 1906, the Russian navy became increasingly composed of industrial workers who were capable of using and maintaining modern battleships, which had the effect of fostering the elemental aspirations of the peasantry with the class-conscious industrial proletariat.

The revolutionary spirit revived after the fall of Warsaw to the Germans on 4 August 1915, exactly one year into the First World War. Politically, patriotism was still on the ascendant, and the Kronstadt sailors mixed anti-German sentiments with their demands for better food and more humane treatment; many of their officers had German names. Nevertheless, the Kronstadters were miles ahead of the rest of the working class of Europe, who were busy killing each other. The demonstrations in Kronstadt in the summer of 1915 turned to mutiny in October. This was another failure.

As is usually the case when the barriers of discipline within the armed forces break down, the revolution in Kronstadt in February 1917 was rapid and violent. Sailors abstained from singing hymns with their officers, and refused en masse to reply when spoken to. Soldiers ordered to shoot the mutineers joined them instead, and Kronstadt joined the revolutionary soldiers and workers who were already in the process of destroying the Tsarist regime in Petrograd (the city’s name had been Russified). They encountered little real resistance. The police ran, and most of the officers quickly saved their skins by surrendering. The revolutionaries shot Admiral Viren, another fifty officers, and around thirty police and police spies ([24], p24).

The working class now held power in Kronstadt. Whereas, throughout most of the country, the workers and soldiers tolerated an uneasy truce with the bourgeoisie, Kronstadt refused to recognise orders from the new Provisional Government. This defiance was to be its major strength for the next four years. A battleship would only sail from Kronstadt if the Soviet agreed to it.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Provisional Government of constitutional democrats, Mensheviks and Right SRs was able (just) to continue the war until October, the naval fort which guarded the approach to its capital was in a state of permanent mutiny through February, right through to October, and as we shall see, even after the Bolshevik revolution. Kronstadt effectively seceded from Russia. The soldiers and sailors refused to accept the authority of the Provisional Government, and it could do nothing about it. This was the dictatorship of the proletariat.

PARTIES AT KRONSTADT

Although the primarily peasant Socialist Revolutionary Party was until May the majority party in the Kronstadt Soviet, the Kronstadt SRs were mainly of the party’s left wing. These had the same war policy as the Bolsheviks: armistice on all fronts, publication of the secret treaties, and no annexations.

There was a non-Party group at Kronstadt, led by Anatoli Lamanov. According to Getzler [24], “it rejected party factionalism and “stood for pure sovietism”. In August 1917, it joined the Union of Socialist Revolutionaries-Maximalists. They sought an immediate agrarian and urban social revolution, calling for the “socialisation of power, of the land and of the factories” ([24] p155) to be organised by a federation of soviets based on direct elections and instant recall, as a first step towards socialism. They rejected parliamentarism in principle and were against political parties, though it is not clear in what way they did not
constitute a party themselves. According to Getzler's account, they preferred the council communist current. They urged workers to seize control of the factories, rather than merely exercising control over production while leaving ownership and management unchanged, as the Bolsheviks advocated.

The Anarchists were less influential. There were anarcho-syndicalists, allied to the Bolsheviks, and a more puritanical group led by Bickhun, who appeared at mass meetings brandishing with guns and ammunition, advocating a bloody war of class vengeance.

The Kronstadt Soviet was less party-dominated than other Soviets, in particular the Petrograd Soviet, the most powerful institution in the country from March to October. The debates at Kronstadt were real denouement, in which the deputies, even to some extent Bolshevik ones, decided the organisational issues, rather than on the basis of the party line. This contrasts with Petrograd, where the real business of the Soviet had been worked out by the party whips, so that "the resolutions moved by the speaker were almost automatically adopted" (Liebovitch, cited in [24] p54).

Since no political fraction is always right, it is sensible to allow members to decide issues on the basis of the arguments, not on the basis of which party the speaker belongs to. There is however a tendency to take this argument too far. If parties have no monopoly of truth, neither do Soviets. The Soviet form of organisation is not intrinsically more likely to produce a communist programme than a political or any other kind of organisation. Kronstadt's 1921 slogan "All Power to the Soviets and not the Parties" is no formula for success: it ignores completely the question of reactionary soviets.

The Mensheviks at Kronstadt were also on the extreme left, joining the Menshevik Internationalists, who rejected the main Menshevik Party's participation in the government and support for the war.

It is worth mentioning at this point that this factional fluidity was not restricted to Kronstadt, nor to 1917. Different parts of parties frequently defied the official line on this or that issue, and the Bolsheviks were no exception. When Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917, he had to admonish Bolsheviks for defensism (support for Russia in the war against Germany). As [17] makes clear, no single party or faction represented the clear programme of revolution.

The Bolshevik party certainly played no role in the February revolution at Kronstadt, since it didn't exist. Its organisation had been completely smashed by the Okhrana secret police in September 1916. Bolshevik sympathisers participated as individuals or in league with the SRs, but had no organisational connection with each other. So in the first Kronstadt Soviet elections, the Bolsheviks gained only 11 deputies. In May, they became the largest party in the Soviet, with 96 delegates.

This is remarkable considering how badly the Bolsheviks had cocked up their first intervention at Kronstadt as an organised party after March, which Getzler describes as "aggressive and shrill", and was accompanied by the publication of self-serving lies in Pravda about how the Bolsheviks had pulled the revolution in Kronstadt together ([24] p42).

The Bolsheviks gained the upper hand by saying what the sailors and soldiers wanted to hear, and by being better organised than the other parties. For example, they said that the bourgeois-democratic revolution had just begun, and the socialist revolution was not on the agenda, whereas Lenin's April Theses [15] argued that the former was complete, and the latter about to commence.

Following the Provisional Government's declaration of unswerving allegiance to the Entente's war aims on 18 April, the Bolsheviks at Kronstadt turned sharply to the left, in line with Lenin's, and increasingly the Party's, views. They were thus able to put themselves at the head of the militant mobs when these put pressure on the Soviet for a more radical break with the government. They became, along with the left wing of the anarchists, the most consistent opponents of the Petrograd Soviet's coalition with the bourgeoisie.

This position - all power to the Soviets and the overthrow of the government - enabled them to win the May Soviet elections. Kronstadt Bolsheviks were able to distinguish between Soviets, and said that only the more radical Soviets should take power, though in practice they supported the SR position of recognising the Petrograd Soviet, despite the latter's support for the government.

The Anarchists went one better: they refused to recognise the authority even of the Kronstadt Soviet. "We, as Anarcho-Communists, can support a power only in the extent that it executes our will" ([24] p76).

The Kronstadters as a whole embarrassed the Petrograd Soviet by recognising only its authority "in matters of state", implicitly urging it to stop propping up the Provisional Government. This provoked a crisis. The Kronstadt Bolsheviks supported the unilateral declaration of independence from the government, though Lenin rebuked them for failing to consult the Central Committee first: for such breaches of discipline, he warned, "we shall shoot!".

The war continued. But it became increasingly difficult for the Provisional Government to mobilise men for the front. At the beginning of July, according to Trotsky ([14], 2, p6), "the offensive... was dying in convulsions". The June offensive had failed. Anti-war agitation of all sorts continued at the front and in the rear, despite desperate attempts to suppress it.
It was their anti-war policy - a just peace, with no annexations - that gave the Bolsheviks their complete victory in the Kronstadt Soviet on 23 June when it debated the Kerensky offensive. The Left SRs and Menshevik-Internationalists, as well as the Maximalists and Anarchists, agreed with the Bolsheviks' anti-war message, but it was the Bolsheviks who were the best organised propagandists in its favour.

**DISCIPLINE**

The central importance of organisation - but not of centralised party discipline - is demonstrated by Gezler's account of how Raskolnikov and the other Kronstadt Bolsheviks ensured not only Kronstadt's participation in the July Days, but their leadership of it. The impressively named Petrograd Machine-Gunners, which had taken to Kronstadt to ask for support for a massive armed demonstration on 4 July. The Bolsheviks and their anarchist allies were quite elated that this was to be a campaign for the overthrow of the government.

Using techniques which are familiar to anyone who encounters their epigones in the class struggle today, the Bolsheviks packed a non-quorate meeting of the Soviet Executive Committee with "some 30 unverified representatives of armed units" (24), p113, and then used their domination of this meeting to organise the arming and transportation of Kronstadters to Petrograd. But the basically Raskolnikov and his comrade did something today's Leninists would never have the audacity to do. Telephoning the Bolshevik Central Committee, he told them he was unable to hold back the masses, whereas he hadn't even tried, but rather had done everything in his power to ensure Kronstadt's participation in the July days under Bolshevik leadership. This had the effect of galvanizing the Central Committee into action (see "The Hunt for Red October"). When the 10-12,000 armed men of Kronstadt arrived in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks led them straight to HQ at Smolny. First, Bolshevik speakers tried to persuade them to go home (14, 2, p21). When this didn't work, the Bolsheviks bored them with speeches and lined them up behind the banner of the Central Committee.

Those who propose democratic solutions to the manoeuvres of today's leftist parties should think again. What was right and wrong about Raskolnikov moving the goalposts on 3 and 4 July coincides in no way to what was democratic or undemocratic about it. For a minority to outmanoeuvre its more conservative opponents by bending the rules in order to achieve a step forward in the class struggle is a fine thing.

It is the content of an organisation's activity that counts, not its form. For example, packing meetings is not in itself reactionary, but claiming that participants are valid because they have been elected is. It depends on what they are doing - are they sidestepping an obstacle in the class struggle or creating one? Raskolnikov's creative approach to party discipline - acting first, then informing the leadership - is a useful counter-example to advocates of military hierarchy as the model for organisation.

The same applies to the larger example of the October uprising. The fact that the Military Revolutionary Committee did not wait for the Congress of Soviets to endorse the attack on the provisional government before acting is not a sin. Our critique is of the Bolshevik Party's capitalist programme.

The July Days ended in failure. The Kronstadters were not all veterans, and when someone fired at the demo, panic broke out. Their lack of confidence is shown by this episode and by their behaviour outside the Tauride Palace, the seat of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee, where Trotsky and the Bolsheviks managed to rescue the SR minister Chernov from lynching by the Kronstadters. In a speech which sounds ironic in the light of his more critical evaluation four years later, Trotsky addressed the sailors as the "pride and glory of the Russian revolution", and went on to persuade them to free "comrade Chernov".

Could the working class have seized power in July? Trotsky, in (14) 2, looks at the situation on the Russo-German Front, quoting a representative letter from a soldier. The soldier threatened to bayonet the Provisional Government, but says "we don't understand very well about parties". According to Trotsky, the army "maintained constantly, but was far from ready to raise an insurrection in order to give power to the Bolshevik Party" (p70). He then adds that in many other areas of the country, the Soviets were ready to take power. He adds that, immediately after the suppression of the July demonstrations, news came through from the front that the June offensive had collapsed. This would certainly have aided an insurrection had one been tried. Finally, the Bolsheviks' opposition to the demonstrations significantly reduced the chance of an uprising. Trotsky candidly explains how the Bolsheviks acted as a "firehose" during the hot summer of 1917 (see "The Hunt for Red October").

He argues that the Bolsheviks urged restraint in July in case they would be blamed for causing the collapse of the war offensive. But, he admits, they were blamed in any case. The offensive had already collapsed, this was already known in the capital, and would have been far more widely known had the Bolsheviks publicised it. The working class had every interest in undermining the war effort, and openly boasting of the demoralising effect of its unpatriotic action. The ease with which the working class defected Kornilov's attempted coup shows how much power it still had directly after the July counter-revolution.

Trotsky was only interested in whether the workers could have put the Bolsheviks in power in July. In spite of weaknesses on the proletarian side, the government was weaker. The class could have smashed the Provisional Government. One of the things which stopped them is the Bolsheviks.
In spite of major downturns, the proletariat had power between February and October, but consistently failed to use it to destroy the power of capital. Even after October, the soviets were the power in the land, together with the factory committees and to some extent peasant committees. Inasmuch as they gave this power to the reactionary leadership of the Bolsheviks, they undermined their own. The Brats-Liubovsk treaty with Germany in 1918 was certainly an error by the working class - the soviets were persuaded to accept Lenin's argument for peace with imperialism. Although the soviets weren't ideal means for representing the will of the class, there is no reason to believe better forms would have had a markedly different context.

The July Days finished in fiasco, but not in rout. The July Days went only to institute the mildest counter-revolution at Kronstadt: two of the Bolshevik leaders were arrested, red flags were taken down, and the imprisoned tsarist officers (held by Kronstadt since February) were handed over. When General Brusilov, the commander-in-chief, suggested the disarmament of Kronstadt, and its bombardment in the event of resistance, Kerensky desisted, realising he just didn't have the men. Kronstadt was still in a state of permanent mutiny, during the darkest hour of the post-July reaction. The first commandant of the fort appointed by the provisional government turned out to be mentally unbalanced, and was simply laughed at until he was recalled. The government then appointed a more sympathetic commandant, a Left SR who immediately accepted the Soviet. On 17 July Kronstadt gave its traditional welcome to the Assistant Minister for the navy, Lieutenant Lebedev, who narrowly escaped a beating.

The Bolsheviks suffered a temporary setback in popularity at Kronstadt following July. Lenin had abandoned "All Power to the Soviets" because of the Menshevik predominance in the Petrograd Soviet. This slogan was taken up by the Union of SR-Maximalists. However, he reintroduced it when his party gained a majority in the Soviets.

Kronstadt played a key role in the October 25 uprising, storming the Winter Palace, arresting the provisional government and defending Petrograd against the attempted coup by Kerensky. Approximately 4,000 Kronstadters constitutes nearly 40% of the naval force which in turn made up the bulk of the Petrograd Soviet's teams on the day. The Bolsheviks rewarded their loyalty in March 1921.

Housing was reorganised so everyone had roughly the same amount of space, in place of the tremendous inequality which had prevailed before 1918. The Bolsheviks defended privilege against the first tentative steps towards communism, in Kronstadt as everywhere else.

Unfortunately, our main source on this question, Voleinc, a leading authority on anarchism, is concerned solely with the democratic forms which socialisation took. House Committees sent delegates to Street Committees, then came the District Committees, the Borough Committees, and finally the City Committee (111 p.457). The militia was also democratically elected. These democratic, libertarian policemen "functioned admirably", of course, along with all the other public services. But one day, along came the wicked Bolsheviks, who subverted the autonomous administration and replaced it by a "mechanical statist organisation controlled by officials" (111 p.458). This misses the central point, that the Bolshevik appointed police served the interests of capitalism, by defending the state, which was opposing the tentative communist movement.

The Kronstadt Soviet was itself constantly pressurised by mass meetings, generally held in Anchor Square. For
example, on 25 May 1917, a large crowd, inspired by Bolshevik and anarchist speakers, marched to the Naval Assembly and forced the leaders of the Soviet to rescind their agreement with the more moderate Petrograd Soviet. The more reactionary elements were often manhandled by mobs. Kronstadt’s sanguinaries tend to downplay the less democratic aspects of the fortress’s daily life. If we knew more, we would redress the balance.

On 18 April 1918, the Kronstadt Soviet denounced the Moscow Soviet’s round-up of anarchists. The Bolsheviks had a struggle to exert control. This appeared to be over when the 6th Congress of Soviets purged the Left SR’s in July following the assassination of the German ambassador and their attempt to organise peasant uprisings. Kronstadt’s Left SR’s were expelled from the Soviet, giving the Bolshevik Party, its hands stained with workers’ rather than diplomats’ blood, was allowed to organise until the end of 1920.

As the civil war progressed, the rule of the Communist Party at Kronstadt became more and more repressive, bureaucratic, paranoid and arbitrary. The more sinister its propaganda, though, the more evident its fragility. The country was in chaos, and the Communists blamed each other as well as everyone else. Undoubtedly, the white and foreign armies helped finish off the revolution, strengthening the Bolshevik dictatorship. However, the communist tradition at Kronstadt had been suppressed by the Bolsheviks, its rank- and-file committees replaced by party ones, and its debates by histronic propaganda issued from the Soviet government. Before it was put in the front line of the civil war by Yudenich’s White North-Western Army in May 1919.

The third revolution of 1921 was not primarily a response to conditions at Kronstadt. It was not chiefly motivated by Communist Party dictatorship at the fortress, despite the opulent lifestyle openly enjoyed by the apparatchiks at Kronstadt and in Petrograd, compared with the relative austerity imposed on the sailors and soldiers. Kronstadt was, from the start of the civil war, a holiday camp compared to the rest of Russia, in which millions died of starvation. In the countryside, the only way out for many people was to become corrupt Communist Party officials. Kronstadters on leave couldn’t avoid noticing the contrast between the ideals of socialism and the reality. Soldier Egorov described how the Communists ‘poked it over us in a manner never before permitted to any except the village policemen of tsarist days’ and ‘took the bread not from those they should have taken it from, but only from those who were not their friends’, and ‘went on the train and, sheltering behind the word “requisition”, robbed everyone of whatever took their fancy, but spared the speculators – this fact was obvious’.

An analysis of 211 complaints that had arrived in the Complaints Bureau of the Politburo (Political Committee) of the Baltic Fleet by the end of 1920, many lodged by the crews of the “Petropavlovsk”, the “Sevastopol” and the minelayer “Narova”, has shown that the abuses of provincial authorities, the injustice of forced grain collections and illegal requisitioning provided the major focus of discontent.” ([24], p. 269).

Conditions in the countryside fanned the Kronstadters’ discontent, but it was contact with the Petrograd industrial proletariat which sparked off the uprising.

Faction fighting within the Communist Party led to the virtual collapse of its supposedly iron discipline at Kronstadt at the beginning of 1921. One third of party workers on the island left during 1920 ([24], p. 21). Unauthorised sailors’ meetings began to take place in February 1921, at the same time as strikes against austerity in Petrograd. The government introduced martial law and made mass arrests. The Kronstadters, defying the commissar, sent a delegation. Most workers were too terrified by the Cheka to speak. One did, and told the delegation of the starvation and repression which the workers had to endure, and of the demand for new soviets. This demand was backed by the Mensheviks. The party which had supported the war and the Provisional Government now called for new soviet elections to bring the state into the hands of the toilers, and the true realisation of “the workers’ democracy.” ([24], p. 213). Reactionary parties always support some of the workers’ demands in any struggle against capitalism so as not to become totally discredited. The Kronstadters returned to the battleship Petropavlovsk and adopted 15 resolutions:

1. That in view of the fact that the present Soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, new elections by secret ballot be held immediately, with free preliminary propaganda for all workers and peasants before the elections;
2. freedom of speech and press for workers and peasants, anarchists and left socialist parties;
3. freedom of assembly for trade unions and peasant associations;
4. that a non-party conference of workers, Red Army soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt and Petrograd Province be convened not later than 30 March 1921;
5. the liberation of all political prisoners of socialist parties, as well as all workers and peasants, Red Army soldiers and sailors imprisoned in connection with the working-class and peasant movements;
6. the election of a commission to review the cases of those who are held in jails and concentration camps;
7. the abolition of all political departments because no single party should have special privileges in the propaganda of its ideas and receive funds from the state for this purpose; instead of these departments locally funded
The PCInr. realise there was something amiss in Russia. "In the factories the odious methods of Taylorism were returning in order to increase efficiency and production". This refers to the introduction of time-and-motion schemes. But these methods weren't introducing themselves, they were being imposed on the working class by the Bolshevik government. The chief advocate of Taylorism was the head of government, the PCInr's hero, Lenin. In a similar jeu de mots, they say "a hierarchical order was reinstalled" in the factories. But the Bolshheviks had been responsible for introducing Taylorism. As can be seen from our account, the Bolsheviks had nothing to do with the revolutionary spirit of the fleet, other than the introduction of the hierarchical order which "annulled" it.

You would have to be very athletic to sit on the fence over such a clear-cut battle of class against class, and the PCInr. don't quite manage it. First they try to use the aftermath of the revolt to smear the rebels. The leaders, they say,

"though to the left of the communist party in words, took refuge in Finland once the revolt was suppressed, and fell into (or more accurately re-entered) the arms of the counter-revolution, with whom they shared ideas and positions."

But the Communist Party didn't merely share ideas and positions with the counter-revolution, it was its main instrument. The fact that the survivors fled to Finland is hardly surprising; there was nowhere else to go. In defence of their attempted neutrality, the PCInr. plead the complicated nature of the situation: the insurgents had various confused ideas. But what proletarian movement doesn't? The Kronstadt program contains various confusions, such as belief in democracy, but when thousands of workers take up arms against a corrupt police state which jail strikers, identifies soldiers and exiles revolutionaries, this is class war. At no point in their analysis of Kronstadt do these Marxist-Leninists use class as a category. Yet they accuse the anarchists of precisely this failing: "... social conflict, rather than being seen as a dispute between classes, is depicted as a dispute between two opposing tendencies; authority on the one hand and liberty on the other."

The Bolsheviks suppressed the anarchist groups in Moscow in April 1918, not because of their idealist conception of history, but because of their opposition to capitalism. The anarchists and the SR-Maximalists clearly saw the Kronstadt revolt as a struggle of the proletariat against capital.

At one point in its failed attempt to sit on the fence, the PCInr. tries to stand on both sides at once. It admits that the uprising was revolutionary, then says that the Bolsheviks considered the uprising to be "simply a conspiracy by Entente spics" (p33). Lenin knew that the Kronstadters were neither for the Bolsheviks nor the counter-revolution but they were "taken advantage of by skilful international centres of counter-revolution". Finally, it quotes Victor Serge: "Insurgent Kronstadt was not counter-revolutionary, but its victory
would have led inexorably to the counter-revolution.

To summarise, the Italians argue that the Kronstadt uprising was revolutionary, counter-revolutionary, and neither. We hope nobody thinks we have deliberately chosen this article in order to make our own analysis look clearer.

They can’t hide in no-man’s-land for ever.

"The Russian emigres, indirectly supported by the imperialist forces of the Entente, were plotting. Plotting and scheming too were the provacateurs inside the revolt. Given these last two points, the repression of the revolt - even if it opened up a chapter of deep agony in the workers' movement, had more than enough reasons to justify itself." ([4], p.35).

We prefer the position of the Trotskyists, who are at least honest about the need to take sides.

Back to reality, Valatin, chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets, addressed the mass meeting called by the Communist Party at Kronstadt on March 1st. Kalin opened with the sailors, soldiers and civilians to give the people's government a chance to repair the economy, and not to listen to Mensheviks, white guardists, and other enemies of the revolution. Like Ceausescu in 1989, he was becaked off the rostrum. The uprising had begun.

It was too late for party hacks to flatter the "pride and glory of the Russian revolution". New Soviet elections were held, and not a single Communist won. The Petrograd Bolsheviks became Kronstadt's manifesto. The senior military commanders, some of them old tsarist officers who had been in charge of Kronstadt by the Communist Party, agreed to serve as specialists under the orders of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee and under the close control of elected rank-and-file committees. Whilst Lenin allowed himself the luxury of arguing that the Kronstadters wanted only to "correct Bolshevik policy", though this put them objectively on the side of the white guards, Trotsky, as head of the Red Army, simply said that the Kronstadters were controlled by white guard tsarist generals. This is a lie for two reasons. Firstly the ex-tsarist officers were not white guards, and secondly, they were controlled by the Kronstadters, not the other way round. Whereas Trotsky, when he put the ex-tsarist officers in charge in March 1918, had abolished sailors' and soldiers' control by decree.

The Communist response to the third revolution is well known. Red Kronstadt had become a white guard, Black Hundred, right-wing, Left-SR counter-revolution. Kronstadt was militarily isolated to prevent links with the mainland being maintained. The Communists' fear of the solidarity shown by the Petrogradskii for Petrograd was also demonstrated by their sudden concessions to the latter, who received food and clothing. The Red Army prepared to shoot the Kronstadt revolutionaries down "like partridges", and at the 10th Party Congress, delegates, including Kolontai's Workers' Opposition and the left communists, clamoured and volunteered for its suppression.

The politics of the SR-Maximalists rapidly became dominant at Kronstadt again: "All Power to Soviets and not to Parties" was the watchword broadcast by Radio Petrogradskii. "To All... To All... To All... Our cause is just; we stand for the power of Soviets and not parties". They stood for the legalisation only of "left-wing socialist parties". They rejected right-wing forces, and the support of Russian emigre newspapers which reinforced Communist lies by claiming that the ex-tsarist general Kozlovsky was in charge. When Chernov (the Right-SR leader roughed up in July 1917) promised military aid if the Kronstadters would support a Constituent Assembly with himself as chairman, it was rejected by a large majority.

Ironically, Kozlovsky's military advice might have saved many of the Kronstadters, but they refused to attack the supply depot at Orelii-Miami, relying on a policy of "passive defence" and waiting for a Soviet revolution to occur on the mainland. But the working class as a whole was too demoralised to fight. Instead of a delegation of workers, Kronstadt woke up on 17 March to find a delegation from the 10th Party Congress, accompanied by 45-50,000 troops, advancing across the ice. Whereas in 1905 the Kronstadters were rescued by the Petrograd workers, by 1921 the counter-revolution had taken its toll, and the bloody suppression of the mutiny was totally successful. The last sparks of the Russian revolution were snuffed out. Capitalism had finally found the regime it
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Ironically, Kozlovsky's military advice might have saved many of the Kronstadters, but they refused to attack the supply depot at Orenburg, relying on a policy of "passive defence" and waiting for a Soviet revolution to occur on the mainland. But the working class as a whole was too demoralised to fight. Instead of a delegation of workers, Kronstadt woke up on 17 March to find a delegation from the 10th Party Congress, accompanied by 45-50,000 troops, advancing across the ice. Whereas in 1905 the Kronstadters were rescued by the Petrograd workers, by 1921 the counter-revolution had taken its toll, and the bloody suppression of the mutiny was totally successful. The last sparks of the Russian revolution were snuffed out. Capitalism had finally found the regime it
needed. Only now has the Leninist counter-revolution served its purpose.

One-quarter of the delegates from the Party Congress (279), plus 2,798 additional party volunteers, stiffened the resolve of the Red Army battalions. They realised that ordinary Red Army soldiers were unsuited to a battle against Red Kronstadt; many had to be "driven at gunpoint onto the ice" ([24], p243). Communist Party members suffered up to 80% losses in dead and wounded; greater than the number of Kronstadters killed in the battle of March 17th-18th or subsequently executed. Now the system they died for has itself undergone a terminal experience.

REFERENCES FOR THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER AND REMEMBER KRONSTADT


* * *

A NOTE ON DB’S PUBLICATION OF "THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER" AND "REMEMBER KRONSTADT"

Wildcat published these two essays a year and a half ago. DB51 reviewed them briefly, noted their importance, and hoped to reprint at least "The Hunt for Red October" when space permitted. In the meantime a DB reader, Will Guest (associated with Collide-O-Scope), wrote to Wildcat (with a copy to DB) questioning its rejection of democracy. One finds Wildcat's position on democracy expressed most clearly in the final paragraphs of "The Hunt for Red October." The letter and Wildcat's answer were published in Wildcat 18, and we are
We hope that readers will respond to this problem that revolutionaries haven’t generally addressed except to criticize the Bolsheviks: What do revolutionary workers do when society is on the brink of revolution but the majority of our class are still listening to social democrats, fascists, and Leninists?

2. LETTER FROM COLLIDE-O-SCOPE

Dear Comrades,

I’m writing in response to your latest issue (15) with the long and important discussion of the Russian Counter Revolution. It is remarkable that after so much time and analysis we are still trying to understand what happened in Russia in 1917. Your articles “The Hunt for Red October” and “Remember Kronstadt” for the most part advance the attempt at clarification and are much to be desired. I would like to argue, however, that in one central respect your analysis is still confused and in an area of specific interest to you, the question of “democracy” in the revolutionary movement. That the question has particular importance for you is clear from the statement you make on p. 9: “One of our long-term aims is an international journal of anti-democratic communism.”

Part of the confusion evident in your articles stems from your failure to define what you mean by “democracy.” From the contexts in which you use the word it seems to mean a formalized process of decision-making based on voting according to rules to which all adhere. But this conception of democracy looks only at forms, not at content. True democracy, democracy of content, needn’t be institutionalized in formal voting bodies to exist. In a revolutionary situation especially rules are broken and new rules are made to be broken anew. True, the Bolsheviks seized the state without waiting for a vote. But they would not have been able to seize the state without a majority of the working class behind them in the critical locations - garrisons, naval vessels, factories, railroad stations, communication centers, etc. The Bolsheviks acted when they did because they believed that the majority support was there, that is, the people had “voted”, although informally.

If majority backing had been lacking, the insurrection would have failed. That the Bolsheviks themselves were “undemocratic” is true (how you can call such a critique “the most dangerous of all errors made by non-Leninist tendencies” [p 17] is a mystery to me). Nevertheless they knew that their pursuit of power relied on the support of a majority of the working class. As you show, they held their hand until they were confident they could control this support for their own purposes. They struck when the moment was ripe, had they waited, they feared, the fickle masses might have switched allegiance to other parties. The point is that despite their undemocratic mentality, the Bolsheviks depended on the will of the majority for their power. Democracy is the expression of this will, whether in votes or in revolutionary action. Revolution is the most forceful and direct form of democracy.

The Bolshevik Counter Revolution began when they preserved elements of the pre-existing state apparatus and added to them the Soviet components they controlled. Was this activity undemocratic? No, it was democratic. In the areas under Bolshevik working class control all but a very few, the anarchists, were convinced that a state was necessary. (As they had pointed out for years, all states are counter-revolutionary.) But the Marxist parties and the workers they influenced and drew their power from still were controlled by the fetish of the state. In a formal sense the state the Bolsheviks constructed was undemocratic, in that decisions were made by the Central Committee of the party or the Politburo or by Lenin alone. But in a more profound sense the early Soviet State was democratic, in that the vast majority of the working class believed they need to have a state that placed their interests first. They believed the Bolshevik state to fit the bill. Of course, when the Bolsheviks tried to impose their machine over the vast stretches of rural Russia and the surrounding areas, the great bulk of the population the peasants, were not interested. As the Makhnovists in Ukraine and the Greens in Tambov and Siberia showed they didn’t want any state controlling their lives. Clearly you recognize the counter-revolutionary nature of the state, as you call for “anti-state communism” on p 22. The creation of stateless communism cannot be the action of a minority any more than the seizure and destruction of the pre-existing state can. All of these acts require the will and action of the majority. As long as the fetish of the state persists as the dominant social ideology
(shared by the bourgeoisie, the Marxist "revolutionaries", and the mass of the working class), revolutionary activity will be channelled into counter revolution.

Your critique of the Bolsheviks as counter-revolutionaries who established a new capitalist state and dictatorial rule would seem to be correct. 

But I don't believe you can mean to assert this intention, hence my conclusion that you are confused. Your evaluation of the Kronstadt soviet is revealing in this respect. I would like to think. On p. 24 you say "The debates at Kronstadt were real debates, in which the deputies, even to some extent the Bolshevik ones, decided the issues on their merits, rather than on the basis of the party line." Exactly, this is democracy of content. There is no substitute for making the case for communism on its merits. Perhaps that is not very glamorous or hopeful work at times, but then that's the task. I'm afraid your call for "anti-democratic communism" sounds like a call for "undemocratic communism", the Leninist variety, which you know is just another name for capitalism. If you don't mean to give this impression, you've got to make "the case" more clearly.

3. REPLY TO COLLIDE-O-SCOPE

"The great issues of the day are not decided by fine speeches and majority verdicts, but by iron and blood." Bismarck.

Dear comrades,

This is a reply to your letter of 19 November. You are right to say we didn’t explain what we mean by democracy. Since Wildcat 11, we have not really tackled the issue head-on. We welcome this opportunity to do so.

We didn’t intend to give the impression that we regard democracy as a formalized decision-making process. We are against the content of democracy rather than majority voting. Democracy means more than this. It means the dictatorship of individual citizens over the class struggle activists, who are always a minority. Workers' democracy means taking orders from that section of the citizenry who happen to be sociologically working class, rather than from those who actually defend proletarian interests. There is no middle way. Either you are a democrat, in which case you respect the views of the majority, even if you know they are dangerously wrong, or you are for the class struggle, regardless of how many people support it.

You say that the Bolshevik counter revolution in Russia was democratic, yet don't see this as a condemnation of democracy. You try to have it both ways when you say that the Bolshevik Party had "a majority of the working class behind them in the critical locations - garrisons, naval vessels, streets, factories, railroad stations, communication centres, etc." Well, which is it? The majority of the working class, or the party of the critical locations? It was when the Party was able to mobilize supporters in the key strategic points that it took power. It did not have a majority of the workers in Russia, who remained passive throughout, nor did it need one. Using the term "majority" to describe its supporters is meaningless.

Some have rejected our arguments on the grounds that we are being "elitist". If you think that advocating clear minority leadership by example is dangerous, we can only say that relying on majority votes to make decisions at any stage in the revolutionary process is guaranteed to lead to
disaster, because the dominant ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Since we know that revolution is possible, and that it cannot be democratic, we can only conclude that it will be undemocratic, and no number of dire warnings about the dangers of dictatorship will change our minds. You say there is no substitute for making the case for communism on its merits, in other words trying to win the battle of ideas. Fortunately, there is - action. You say that revolution is the most forceful and direct form of democracy. We agree it takes a lot of people to make a revolution, but why a majority? A majority of what?

We are against any state, not for the moralistic

reasons put forward by anarchists, but because it cannot be used for our purposes. We are however for taking dictatorial measures. When insurgents in Iraq recently stormed a prison in which Baathist pigs were being held by the Kurdish nationalists and killed them, they did not take a vote on it in the workers councils first. After all, people might vote the wrong way. We are not going to kid people that we are democratic when we support defying the majority whenever necessary.

We hope you will discuss this issue with other comrades in the Bay Area, and let us know when our views are supported by the majority.

My congratulations and compliments to Dave Perrin for his bang up job in explaining the split in the Socialist Party. I would now like to impart some personal observations to this controversy.

Some pen pals of mine in the Socialist Party view the split as resulting from personality conflicts. With the minority self proclaimed SPGB inventing ideological differences to suit their personality posturing. They refused to distribute the party's publication, The Socialist Standard, claiming that it had taken up "anarchist" positions as well as "reformist" ones. And that the party as a whole is comprised of overwhelmingly "genuine socialist" but were all being "mislead" by a clique of "anarchist" who had infiltrated the party.

From my point of view, even if it is coming from the other side of the Atlantic ocean, there has been no such drastic changes in the Socialist Standard. To claim that the rank and file membership of the Socialist Party is being 'deceived', 'mislead' or whatever frankly is an insult to their intelligence.

Despite our numerous differences as outlined in WINNING THE CLASS STRUGGLE; even the distinguished Mr. Otter, with his smoothed down close cropped hair, would agree with me that the Socialist Party is not an organization being piloted by anarchist.

What Dave Perrin did not point out was that even before this self proclaimed SPGB group was formally expelled, they proclaimed themselves as belonging to a separate party from what is now the Socialist Party. So it is not like they were drummed out of the party or anything sinister like that. Now as to why the Socialist Party of Great Britain changed it's name to the Socialist Party is a mystery to me. I think if they were going to change it to anything it should of started with "WORLD" like over here in the states and down under in New Zealand and Australia, for technically we are all comrades in one international party. Something like World Socialist Party of the British Isles comes to mind. But that is neither here nor there at this point.

W.J. Laurimore
P.O. Box 1052
Lithonia, Ga. 30058

yours for socialism,
"Class Struggle in A German Town" is the English language debut of a text by a German group coming out of the "autonomist" tradition. Although translated materials from this group seem to have circulated informally—especially in England—to my knowledge, this is the first time these comrades’ work has been issued in pamphlet form. Hopefully, this is just the beginning, because judging by the contents of both the "Class Struggle" pamphlet and the "Wildcat Reader"—a series of texts produced for an international conference held in Germany at the end of 1991 which alone amounts to over 100 pages of high quality, sophisticated material—Wildcat is an organization worth watching.

"Class Struggle in A German Town" describes the attempt of some comrades to perform a "militant investigation" in the German nuclear power industry sometime in the late 80’s. "Militant investigation" is a practice that evolved out of the Italian "workerist" tradition in the early 60’s in which "workerist" intellectuals collaborated with workers in several factories—most notably the Porta Marghera chemical plant—to investigate the conditions and organization of work from the shop floor. In other words, "militant investigation" was a counter-strategy to the industrial sociology then very much in vogue that studied the same conditions, but from the point of view of management and sharing managers’ concerns—improving productivity, rationalization, etc. "Militant investigation" differed too in that no attempt was made to be "neutral", but in fact to be a stimulus to struggles in the factory wherever possible. Probably the closest thing to "militant investigation" in the English in Britain and the U.S. were some pamphlets issued by the Correspondence/Facing Reality group and articles in early issues of "Solidarity" London’s journal. But the Italian "workerists" were the most consistent and long-running with this tactic... (Interestingly enough, the inspiration for "militant investigation" dates back to Marx himself, who wrote a very little known article titled "A Workers’ Inquiry" consisting of 80 odd questions designed to be asked of French workers.)

In "Class Struggle in a German Town", comrades then working in the nuclear power construction industry give an overview of the organization of the construction industry—particularly its reliance on immigrant workers and the industry’s use of casual labor through a system of private contractors known as "slave traders". And, of course, the barely disguised role of the State in enforcing work discipline and policing the whole set up on behalf of a strategically significant sector of industry then widely under attack (from the outside) of the German anti-nuclear movement. Wildcat zeros in too on the everyday resistance of the workforce—acts of sabotage, referral to Foreman as "Kapos", and the informal networks that workers on the sites
created. And it's here that some of the most interesting insights of the pamphlet are developed, especially when discussing the contradictions and divisions among workers themselves. To WILDCAT's credit they refuse to either gloss-over these very real divisions or engage in romanticizing a fictitious unity.

The "WILDCAT Readers", on the other hand, are a much broader analysis of class struggle and class recomposition, with a special emphasis on recent changes and struggles in Europe. The first "Reader" is entirely in English and the other two mainly in German and Italian with summaries of key articles in English. I was extremely impressed by how clear and focused most of the articles were. Almost completely absent was the sweeping abstract jargon that might mar similar themed documents produced by other groups. The modesty and preciseness remind me very much of "Echanges" — another project whose work doesn't circulate enough over here.

(DB readers who can comprehend German can contact WILDCAT directly at the following address: WILDCAT, Sisina, Postfach 360, 32271000 Berlin 36, GERMANY. I can order copies of the "WILDCAT" Reader at cost, without pretending any affiliation. Write: Curtis Price, 1101 St. Paul St., #2002, Balto., MD., 21202.)

Many journalists, and now Mr. Lawrimore in DB 57, have been referring to the civil wars in Somalia, Yugoslavia, and Lebanon as "anarchy". I wrote a letter to the editors of U.S. News and World Report to straighten them out (not published). In Somalia, Yugoslavia, and Lebanon, and in civil wars in general, the fight is over who will control the government, and thus the ability to control and extort money from the residents of the territory they control. NO GOVERNMENTS is the solution to ethnic and political strife. Can't we all just get along? Not if the statisticians and fear-mongering media can help it. There may be situations where a moderate government is preferable to banditry and chaos, but this has nothing to do with anarchy, which is a state of voluntary cooperation without a coercive hierarchy. Two choices are offered by the media; bandits or government. But the possibility of living without either is never considered, not to mention the fact that yesterday's bandits often become tomorrow's government. Ed Stamm.
In Response to Laurens Otter on the Former U.S.S.R.  (DB #57)

What I suppose was a coup of some sort in the U.S.S.R. in 1990, I agree looks convincingly like the natural development of Communist Revisionism that blossomed following the fall of Stalinism in 1953. However, I have neither the self-assurance nor the daring to assert that there is "no need to discuss the fall of Stalinism," or the fall of Soviet union. Events in Eastern Europe have been very much on my mind. When placed in the context of events elsewhere in the world, there is the inescapable sense that we are witnessing a monumental turning point in global history. Am I suffering from anachronistic Marxist historical theories, or does my ego-centrism compel me to believe that this time is special?

I find myself in agreement with the central thesis of a recent article (Harper's Jan. 1988) by John Lukacs, if not subscribing to his specific views: the 20th Century has ended. It ended in 1989. (Nice number; rhymes with 1789) I would suggest that the U.S.S.R. began its end in 1953. To be self-assured and bold (trace yourselves), I would suggest that what we have witnessed in the U.S.S.R. is the withering away of the State.

That might be a foolish thing to say, like saying history has ended. The safe thing to say is that it is too early to say. Events are still developing in the Commonwealth of Disintegrating States. Were I to seriously discuss the future of Eastern Europe, I believe some generalizations on the dialectics of Nationalism and Anarchism would be in order. What is the connection between the two philosophies, if any?

I was struck by the similarities between Comrade Otter's critique of the U.S.S.R. and the Revisionist position, especially Milovan Djilas's criticism (The New Class 1957). How closely would Comrade Otter side with Djilas? This is intriguing for me in view of recent events in Djilas's homeland, the former Yugoslavia.

I believe there are many parallels between general Revisionist theory and the earlier De Leonist approach to class conflict. But the parallels diverge over the question of revolution-reformism and the anti-industrial demands of the Revisionists. My understanding is that the disillusioned Revisionists, long ago became disillusioned with their prospects for success and evolved into democratic socialists, as Otter suggests in his 5th & 6th paragraphs.

All this is but theoretical whipped cream unless we return to the question of the withering of the State and the surge of Nationalism. What do these events have to say for De Leonists? I would suggest that this is fertile ground for discussion.

Comrade Otter's concluding paragraph offers interesting possibilities for a beginning. Without the Soviet example, socialism is ripe with opportunity. We should not discount Latin American and Asian examples, but still, history is hungry for alternatives. The specter of Nationalism frightens me, but the disintegration of States presents exciting prospects. I, for one, would like to see more discussion in this area.

Fraternally, ROBERT SEKULA
Why the Greens Are Not on the Proletarian Terrain

In “Greening the Proletarian Terrain,” Frank Girard still doesn’t get it. He just doesn’t understand what the ICC means when it talks about “the proletarian terrain.” The answer we gave in our previous polemic, “What Does It Mean to Fight on the Working Class Terrain (Internationalism #78),” strikes Girard as “irrelevant,” “goes off at a tangent or else it(s) written in a political dialect I can’t understand.” He cites a key sentence from our text: “When the ICC speaks of the working class terrain, we mean that the working class must fight and organize itself independently of any other classes.” Girard then asks rather indignantly, “What does this have to do with where or on what subjects revolutionaries should agitate?” Let’s be clear. “Proletarian terrain” is a political concept, not a geographical location.

In the English dialect we speak and write, “independent” means “not dependent; not subject to the control, influence, or determination of another or others; not subordinate.” (Webster’s Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd edition) According to Roget’s Thesaurus synonyms for independent include: self-sufficient, self-governing, self-reliant, self-directing, autonomous. So we don’t think it should be too difficult to understand what we mean when we say that the working class must fight and organize itself independently of any other classes.

What does this have to do with the activities of revolutionaries? Everything. It means that revolutionaries must support and work within those movements which foster the development of working class independence and self-reliance. It means we must participate in struggles which are directly linked to the working class survival as a class and to the development of an awareness of the revolutionary responsibilities of our class. Conversely we must oppose efforts to block working class independence and development of consciousness.

The proletariat’s power to transform society resides in the fact that it is an exploited and oppressed class that has no vested interest in the maintenance of the capitalist system and its potential unity and consciousness as a collective class of its revolutionary tasks and goals. Revolutionaries have long understood the necessity for the workers to organize themselves separately, distinct from other classes, to defend their own interests in the immediate struggle and to advance towards the final goal of communism. This need for separate and autonomous organization was at the root of the recognition of the need for the proletariat to organize its own political party, its own class dictatorship, and for the development of workers councils in Russia in 1905 and in 1917, the founding of the IWW, and even in DeLeon’s conception of Socialist Industrial Unions. The working class is the only revolutionary class in society today.

Among the most reliable ideological weapons that capitalism has used for generations against the development of class consciousness and unity have been interclassist mass movements. Whether they are movements for civil rights, women’s rights, environmentalism, or any other partial or secondary struggle, such movements are used to block the trend for the working class to become conscious of itself as an independent entity and to organize itself as such. Instead, workers find themselves submerged in “the people,” or the “movement,” and are dragged into reformist or dead-end struggles. Such movements may center on real problems that confront society, that workers are angry and indignant about, but can only be solved by the destruction of capitalism. These movements are used to perpetuate the myth that capitalism can be reformed, that the serious social problems we face can be solved within the system.

The ICC’s position on environmentalism can be summed up in this passage: “...in so far as it underlines the growing urgency of communist revolution, an awareness of the depth of the current ecological problems will play its part in the transition of the proletarian struggle from a defensive, economic level to the level of a conscious and political combat against capitalism as a whole...”
"But it would be an error to think that the ecological issue can serve as a focus for the mobilization of the proletariat on its own class terrain today. Although certain aspects of the problem (e.g., health and safety at work) can be integrated into authentic class demands, the issue as such doesn't allow the proletariat to affirm itself as a distinct social force. Indeed as we have seen, it provides an ideal pretext for the bourgeoisie's interclassist campaigns, and the workers will have to resist actively the various attempts of the bourgeoisie, particularly its Green and leftist elements to use the issue as a means of dragging them off their own class ground. It remains the case that it is above all by struggling against the effect of the economic crisis -- against wage cuts, unemployment, growing impoverishment at all levels -- that the workers will be able to constitute themselves into a force capable of confronting the entire bourgeois order. "The working class will only be able to deal with the ecological issue as a whole when it has conquered political power on a world scale." (International Review #63)

HOW REVOLUTIONARIES INTERVENE IN CLASS STRUGGLE

Girard ends his text with three questions which he invites us to answer. The first is "How does Internationalism 'actively intervene' in working class struggles in ways that libertarian socialists including DeLeonists do not?" We have published many articles about the intervention of the ICC in struggles in many countries, and the theoretical framework for situating this intervention(1). The ICC's intervention varies, depending upon the characteristics of the period in which a particular struggle occurs. In a period of rising class struggle, an agitational intervention may be appropriate; in a period of reflux, a more propagandistic, general intervention is more relevant.

In all cases, a fundamental theme is the necessity for workers to push aside the capitalist trade unions and take the struggle into their own hands, and to spread the struggle across the false divisions of craft, category, sector (public or private), etc. In oral interventions, in leaflets and in the press, we denounce the maneuvers of the unions and the leftists to delay and destroy workers' efforts to advance the struggle, whether they use bourgeois legalism or corporatism: nationalism, etc. (2). These interventions are always supplemented by the distribution of our press, with articles dealing with revolutionary analysis of all questions facing the working class and the revolutionary struggle. So important historic events occur, such as the collapse of the Stalinist bloc or the Gulf war, the ICC, as an international, organization, has produced leaflets, special manifestos or supplements, which analyze and put these events into context, and are distributed at workplaces and demonstrations in 12 countries.

How does this differ from what libertarians and DeLeonists do? To be honest, in most cases we don't know what, if anything, these groups do. It appears that most of them give tacit, critical support to the existing trade unions or call for the formation of new unions. We know from reading the pages of Discussion Bulletin that there was no discussion in this milieu about the meaning of the collapse of Stalinism or the Gulf war. Too often this milieu limits its intervention in the working class to partial struggles without addressing the historic tasks -- the revolutionary mission -- of the working class.

Questions 2 and 3 are closely related: 'What does Internationalism regard as 'political struggle' that can't be carried on in the environmental movement?' and "How does advocating revolutionary socialism among workers concerned about the environment constitute 'abandoning Marxism and the working class?'" We have implicitly answered these questions earlier in this text. The intervention to be made in the environmental movement is to call on workers to break with it and instead take up an independent movement for the proletarian revolution, which alone is capable of providing a basis to deal with the problems of the environment. To make such an intervention as a member or participant in the environmental movement is a contradiction. If it is something that workers must break with, then revolutionaries cannot be in it. To be an active supporter -- no matter how "critically" -- of a movement or organizations being used to deal with workers from constituting
themselves as an independent force in society is an abandonment of marxism and the class struggle.

The "place" for workers and revolutionaries to be is not inside these movements which are used to derall the workers and stymie the struggle, as leaders or participants or "critical" supporters, but outside them denouncing these movements for what they are and praticalizing to revolutionary anarchists to regroup themselves as class conscious workers. For would-be revolutionaries to work within these movements is to allow themselves to be used by the bourgeoisie to legitimize them, to give them a radical cover and help them to keep workers from developing their own independence, i.e. seeking their own proletarian terrain.

A LACK OF GROUNDING IN MARXIST FUNDAMENTALS

One of the striking things we've notice in Girard's latest polemics against the ICC is a real lack of grounding in the marxist tradition, which unfortunately is all too often characteristic of comrades coming from DeLeonism. For example, when we point out that while the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are indeed the two main historic classes in capitalist society, Marx, Engels and Luxemburg, etc. were very clear on the existence of other strata and classes, such as as the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, Girard accuses us of "rejecting" Marx's class analysis of capitalist society. In an earlier exchange, Girard even denied that the dictatorship of the proletariat was a basic position of Marx.

When we insist that the proletarian revolution begins as a seizure of political power by the working class and the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat organized in the workers councils, followed by a transition period in which the economic laws and ideological baggage of bourgeois society will be systematically rooted out, Girard evokes a simplistic anarchist view of revolution, which was theoretically refuted long ago by Marx.

The necessity for a period of transition is a basic theoretical acquisition of the revolutionary marxist movement. For example in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx wrote: "...between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other..." Marx was clear that the newly emergent revolutionary society would still be marked by remnants of bourgeois society. "What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges..." The process of change and transformation that would be undertaken during the period of transition was also described by Marx, "...in a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth have more abundantly -- only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe in its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!" (Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme)

Contrast this conception of revolution and the tasks of the revolutionary proletariat during the transition period to Girard's simplistic statement that the revolution "consists of our class's walking into their workplaces, kicking out the bosses, and democratically carrying on production for use. We won't be seizing power so much as we will be abolishing it, at least private ownership of the means of production, which confers power on the capitalist state." Girard doesn't even mention the need to destroy the capitalist state, or the necessity for the proletariat to use violence.

In attempting to refute our agreement with Marx on the need for a transition period, Girard lapses into virulent anti-communism, equating the transitional state with the Stalinist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union -- which is exactly what bourgeois
ideology has tried to do for years, especially in
the tremendous propaganda campaign
about the "death of communism" in the past
two years. The Stalinist regime in Russia was
not trying to stamp out "vestiges of bourgeois
ideology" and then inevitably suppressing the
working class, despite what Girard and the
bourgeoisie would have us believe. The
stalinist regime was a counter-revolution
which used state terror to stamp out the
vestiges of revolutionary class consciousness
in the Soviet Union. Girard scoffs at our call
to analyze the lessons of the revolution in
Russia, to understand how and why it failed,
and instead marches off unflinchingly into the
arms of the bourgeois environmentalist
movement.

THE CLASS LINE BETWEEN CAPITALISM
AND WORKING CLASS

Not only does Girard refuse to acknowledge
the existence of the petty bourgeoisie in
modern capitalist society, which makes him
blind to the social composition of the Greens,
his peculiarity is his political class line that
exists between the proletariat and the
bourgeoisie. For him, everything is
determined sociologically. According to his
definition, everyone who is not a private
owner of the means of production is a worker,
so therefore the Greens are proletarian. While
he doesn't like the slick, rich organizations in
the environmental movement with their
million dollar budgets, or the members of the
Greens who have aspirations for political
office, he can't bring himself to denounce
them as bourgeois, as class enemies of the
proletariat.

For political organizations, their class nature
is determined by their political program and
objective function. If the positions they
defend are bourgeois, then the organizations
are bourgeois. It doesn't matter if the
members of a local KKK group all work in
factories, their group is not part of the
proletariat, but lies in the camp of our class
enemies. Likewise, groups or movements that
promote illusions that capitalism can be
reformed and thereby derail the working class
struggle (like the Greens and the left
Greens) are bourgeois, notwithstanding the

fact that they may tolerate some people who
spout marxist rhetoric in their midst.

Again, we insist that by entering the Green
movement DB and other groups in the
DeLeonist/libertarian milieu, have made a
serious political error, which will lead them
into the arms of capitalism. The choice is Red
or Green.

-- Jerry Grevin for Internationalism

(1) See "How Revolutionaries Intervene," in
Internationalism #19. Available for $2 from
Internationalism, POB 288, NY NY 10018-0288.

(2) Thus, in France in 1986 in the railway
strike, which occurred outside the control of
the unions and gave rise to "coordination"
which gathered delegates from railroad
facilities all over the country, we intervened to
propose that the coordination call upon
workers in other industries to join the
struggle against government austerity, and
denounced the efforts of Trotskyists to take
control of the coordination. In Italy in
1987, our comrades participated in the
formation of COBAS in the education sector
(representing not only teachers, but cafeteria
workers and janitors), and insisted on
excluding the unions from the deliberations
and exposing the leftist efforts to derail the
struggle. In the U.S. we have intervened in
strikes at the telephone company, the
hospitals, hotels, NYU clerical, Eastern airlines,
Greyhound, always calling for workers to
organize themselves independently of the
unions.
PROLETARIAN TERRAIN OR SECTARIAN TERRAIN?

This response to Jerry Grevin (and Internationalism) must begin by referring to the last paragraph in their article. They "just don't seem to get it." The DB is not the publication of an organization, DeLeonist or otherwise. When people (including Frank Girard) write letters and articles for publication in DB, they speak only for themselves unless, as in the case of Jerry Grevin, they specifically claim to represent an organization. Also, to my knowledge very few DB readers have joined the Greens or Left Greens, nor have any DeLeonist groups that I know of.

Now to get back to Internationalism's contention that revolutionary agitation among the Greens is not on the "proletarian terrain." The term first came up in the last sentence of Eric Fischer's "Open Letter" in DB52 criticizing efforts to agitate in Green groups: "Don't go from the swamp to the land of the class enemy...Clarify political positions within the context of active intervention on the proletarian terrain."

Internationalism defined "proletarian terrain" in DB55: "When the ICC speaks of the working class terrain, we mean that the working class must fight and organize itself independently of other classes." The problem with this definition is that suddenly Internationalism is no longer talking about where revolutionaries should agitate for socialism among workers, but rather about how the working class should organize itself: i.e. independently.

Let's get back to the original question. It seems to me that proletarian or working class terrain can mean only one thing: terrain on which workers can be found. In Grand Rapids that includes St. Alphonsus Catholic Church, the Democratic Party, the General Motors stamping plant, the Grand Rapids Area Greens, the United Auto Workers, and Grand Rapids City Hall (The KKK hasn't appeared here yet). Revolutionaries should agitate—that is try to convince workers that capitalism is their enemy—in any of those places that they can.

But their opportunities are going to be limited in such places as St. Alphonsus, the UAW, and on the job at City Hall or the GM stamping plant. In the Greens, on the other hand, revolutionaries have the opportunity to take part in the discussions, write for the periodicals, and talk to individuals on a topic, environmentalism, for which abolition of the capitalist cause is the only solution. And certainly the environment "is directly linked to the working class survival as a class." --and in fact, to human survival as a species. As for reformism in the Greens, it is as prevalent as reformism among our class as a whole. The task of revolutionaries is to refute reformism to show that it can't solve social problems.

Internationalism raises an interesting point when it sums up its position on environmentalism: that as an issue it allows reformists to drag the working class off into "interclassist campaigns" and doesn't permit them to assert themselves as a separate class as does agitation on such matters of immediate concern to our class as wages, working conditions, and unemployment.

It isn't too difficult to see what Internationalism regards as a
problem here. They want workers in separate revolutionary organizations where only the true revolutionary gospel as expressed by Internationalism will be preached. Unfortunately, when a revolutionary group accepts the splendid, principled isolation from our class this idea imposes, it condemns itself to a lingering death. For an example, one has only to examine Socialist Labor Party (SLP) history since the early 1920s.

The real problem for us revolutionaries is how to break out of the isolation that our ideas impose. The 1899-1900 split in the socialist movement forced De Leon to recognize the problem, and in 1905 he seized the opportunity to bring the SLP with him to create the "swamp" of the original Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). When that didn't work out, he advocated that the SLP join the reformist Socialist Party (SP) as an autonomous federation. In both cases the effort was guided by a need to give revolutionary ideas a hearing among non-revolutionary workers.

As for my alleged "lack of grounding in Marxist fundamentals," I can only plead that my teachers were obviously at fault. They led me to believe that capitalism increasingly divided people into two classes: the capitalist class that owns the tools of production and the working class that doesn't own these tools and, in order to live, must rent itself out to the capitalist class. Our class produces nearly all the wealth in this society, but it goes to the owning class, which returns a small portion to us in the form of wages.

They also taught me that society is in a constant state of flux. Thus we must not accept as never-changing fundamentals the conclusions Marx drew from observations he made 100 or a 150 years ago. The economic importance of the petty bourgeois strata of small manufacturers and small farmers (peasants) has become insignificant. They exist on the sufferance of big capital. Self-employed retailers and professionals may benefit from capitalist ownership and control, but they are parasites on the ruling class, not its partners. The various strata of public and private administrators and office workers are proletarians. The continuing capitalist depression will revolutionize their thinking just as it will that of the rest of the working class.

As for the dictatorship of the proletariat, Internationalism seems to be caught up in the ideology of a Leninist time warp. Germany in 1875 may have led Marx to certain conclusions about a transition period, but a century of capitalist development has destroyed the economic basis for his conclusions. The division of society into two classes has been sharpened, and industrialization has solved the problem of scarcity. The vast majority of the people worldwide are workers and can create a socialist society whenever they have the will to do so. As a class, we don't need the leadership of Leninists; rather, we need the understanding and knowledge of the capitalist system that revolutionaries can provide. And having thrown off the yoke, we won't need lessons on how to be socialists, which is what is implied by Leninist groups that assert the need for a proletarian dictatorship. The track record of proletarian dictatorship leaves much to be desired. For over seventy years Russian workers endured the results of an insurrection and seizure of state power led by Leninists. And the capitalist press--Internationalism to the contrary notwithstanding--uniformly speaks of the failure of the Soviet system,
not in terms of the dictatorship of the proletariat but as the failure of real socialism or communism.

I regret that Internationalism regards my replies to their letters as attacks. But in the matter of the proper arena for revolutionary agitation, I can only paraphrase—in the spirit of socialist brotherhood—their admonition to me: Don't withdraw still further from the proletariat—into the total isolation of the sectarian terrain.

--Frank Girard

(Cont'd from p. 2)

in Russia and Eastern Europe for revolutionary socialism. Then comes the next installment in a "discussion" that has probably reached the point where nothing new is being said. Internationalism attempts to translate ICCese in an effort that reminds me of the White Queen's in Alice in Wonderland. My response also says nothing very new. This issue ends with a few "Short Reviews."

FINANCES: Because of a big increase in contributions, the DB accomplished what Clinton only hopes to do: cut the rate at which the deficit increases. Actually, had it not been for our annual post office box rent and the need to buy an unusually large amount of postage, we would have reduced the deficit substantially.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Sam Leight $17; Glen Johnson $20; John Craven $7; Ron Somerlott $17; Frank Girard $25; Harry Wade $20; Don Fitz $10. Total $116. Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE December 21, 1982 (per bank) [deficit] $81.74

RECEIPTS

Contributions $118.00
Subs and sales 73.87
Total $191.87

DISBURSEMENTS

Postage $118.50
Printing 37.50
Rubber stamp 6.85
Postage due .35
PO box rent 35.00
Total $196.20

BALANCE February 21, 1983 [deficit] $88.07

Fraternally submitted,
Frank Girard
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gregorio Londynski recently took a trip to Cuba which resulted in his writing a paper, "Cuba: Etat Socialiste...Societe Socialiste?" He would like to make it available to DB readers who understand French and want it either to satisfy their own interest or possibly to translate it into English. Interested readers should write to him at 1765 Riverside Dr., #1407, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 3P7, Canada.

Comrade Londynski's letter reminded me that DB has some French language periodicals and pamphlets which we will send to anyone willing to pay for postage. Write and we'll send a list.

In our last issue we announced a wrong E-mail address for Mike Lepore, editor of the electronic publication Organized Thoughts. The correct address is mlelore@mcmail.com (no period after "@".

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SHORT REVIEWS

SYNTHESIS/REGENERATION 5. "Synthesis/Regeneration is the new theoretical discussion bulletin of the Greens/Green Party USA. It succeeds both Green Synthesis, edited for a long time by Robert Long, and Regeneration, briefly put out in cooperation with the Left Green Network." Subtitled "A Magazine of Green Social Thought," S/R is the latest manifestation of two periodicals originally published by expelled or resigned ex-members of the Socialist Labor Party. Philadelphia Solidarity, a group of defrocked DeLeonists began publishing Synthesis in 1975[?]. Later a sympathizing group in Los Angeles, the League for Economic [later Ecological] Democracy co-published it and still later took it over. In the eighties under the name Green Synthesis, it became an organ of the Greens. Regeneration was originally Workers' Democracy published by expelled SLPers in St. Louis. They changed the name to Regeneration in 1981 when it became the theoretical journal of the Left Greens.

Number 5 (it continues the numbering of Regeneration) carries the theme "Education for Democratic Empowerment." The table of contents lists around twenty-five short articles, most of which promote the idea that capitalism's educational system can be used to subvert the system for anti-capitalist purposes.

The theme of the next issue will be the North American Free Trade Agreement. Write for the advanced sales price of bundle orders. A four-issue sub is $12. WD Press, Synthesis/Regeneration, PO Box 24115, St. Louis, MO 63130.

ARGUMENTS WITH OBDURACY: Problems and Questions for the International Working Class. This most recent publication of Kommunist Kranti collects in one pamphlet three documents published by this Indian marxist theoretical group. One of these, "Towards an Understanding of the Dynamics of Capital" was published in DB56 under the title "Fundamental Problems Facing the Marxist Communist Movement Today." Of the other two, "Formation of the Red Army in Russia: Revolutionary Necessity or Counter-Revolutionary Choice" answers an article in Workers' Voice and carries Wildcat's critique of the Bolsheviks that begins this issue into another aspect of post-revolutionary Russia: the decision by Lenin and the Bolsheviks to organize a Red Army. The authors see this decision, which it regards as inconsistent with
socialist revolution, not as the work of conspirators hungry for power but as the result of a flawed perception of the revolutionary goal common to nearly all parties coming out of the Second International. The last, "Notes for a Debate" was written for a conference on "Challenges before the Communist Movement" in Nagpur, India. It has sections DB readers will find interesting on "The Material Basis for Communism," "Nationalization--'Public' Sector," "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," and other topics. Twenty-nine pages, 8 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches, $1 from Mazdoor Library, Auto пЧ Jhuggi, N.I.T. Faridabad - 121001, India.

SOCIETY AND NATURE: THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY.

Two issues have been published of this new journal, typically academic in size and form--178 pages, 9 by 6 inches. In this case I feel obliged to temper my personal antipathy toward such publications, which usually seem to be written by academics for academics. For one thing S&N's aims are explicitly anti-capitalist. It intends to "function as a forum for the interchange of ideas between social ecologists, ecosalsials, and other green left movements in an attempt to reach a synthesis of the democratic, libertarian socialist and radical green traditions." This includes publishing "articles that develop a critique of the existing socio-economic mode and/or expand modern thinking about ways to re-organize it..."

Each issue is organized around a theme, the first being "The Polis and Self-Management." Articles discuss the role of the city in Greek antiquity and the city's potential in a socialist society. Three major articles are by Murray Bookchin and his disciples, and indeed the publication appears to be in part an organ devoted to libertarian municipalism. Issue two, with the theme "The Philosophy of Ecology," includes sections on "Deep or Social Ecology" and "Marxism and Ecology," with articles by Bookchin; Arne Naess, the deep ecologist; and Cornelius Castoriadis, one time guru of London Solidarity. Nearly all articles are reprinted from books or other journals. Issue three, we are told, will contain articles exploring "the relationship between the state and an ecological society." A one-year (three-issue) sub is $20 (US) from P.O. Box 637, Littleton, CO 80169.

PIRATE PRESS. The following pamphlets along with several others have been published by Pirate Press, whose address is Black Star, P.O. Box 448, Sheffield S1 1NY, England. The address above, however, may no longer be valid. I suggest that for information on prices and titles currently available interested readers inquire from Bob Jones, 8 Lillian Street, Bradford BD4 8LP, England.

THE LAST WAR by George Barrett. This pamphlet (around 70 pages, 5 3/4 by 8 inches) collects three essays: "The Anarchist Revolution," "Objections to Anarchism," and "The Last War." Barrett, who died of consumption in 1917 while still in his late twenties, was an agitator, who came into real prominence as a writer and speaker in Glasgow during the first World War. In the title essay of this collection, Barrett recounts some interesting stories about promptu fraternization between allied and German soldiers in the trenches in France. Also interesting to libertarian socialists is a personal after-note in which he describes himself as an anarchist, one who "believes that the factory workers should organize and run their factories themselves..." Along with workers in transportation and distribution they "would be labouring only to supply the needs of the people, and not slaving to produce profits and luxuries for the
masters.

TOWARDS ANARCHISM by Errico Malatesta. In this tiny eight-page, 4 by 5 1/2 inch pamphlet, Malatesta (1853-1932) advocates an anarchism that differs little from socialism as I understand it except that he is a bit more frank about the need for material force to destroy capitalism. He is concerned about reforms and couples capitalism along with authority and the government as the enemy. And his idea of revolution is class oriented: "...it is essential that the workers, grouped according to the various branches of production, place themselves in a position that will ensure the proper functioning of their social life -- without the aid of need of capitalists or government."

ONE STEP BEYOND OR SMASH THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY. Despite the violent-sounding subtitle, much of this small 16-page, 6 3/4 by 4 3/4 inch pamphlet consists of a reasonable historical explanation for the rise of authoritarian cadre organizations among Leninist political groups. The Revolutionary Communist Party in the UK is used as an example.

THE PARIS COMMUNE AND THE IDEA OF THE STATE by Michael Bakunin. The title explains the content. It would seem to be a good (and short--24 pages, 6 1/2 by 4 3/4 inches) booklet to read in conjunction with Marx's The Paris Commune. According to the cover, "This essay was not published in full English translation until the 1971 CIRA edition..."

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