Communist Bulletin

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CLARITY and UNITY in RUSSIA

* Phillipines, Haiti, Sudan, Egypt.
* Who Are The Terrorists?
* MEXICO in Crisis
* Teachers, Riots

Communist Bulletin Contents

Front Cover: A demonstration in Moscow in 1905. The front banner reads 'Workers of the World, Unite! '.

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When The Going Gets Tough.....

Baby Doc and Marcos take the money and run; Sudan's Numeiri is shown the door; Korea's Chun and Chile's Pinochet investigate 'civil rights violations'. What's the world coming to? Is God becoming a lefty? Is this the start of the revolution?

Well, in a word.....No!

What we are seeing is yet another effect of the deepening crisis of the capitalist system as the peripheries of the US and Russian empires begin to collapse and damage limitation becomes the order of the day. Thus we see in Sudan Nimeiri being sacrificed in the cause of America's strategic interests - Sudan being a vital staging post for the US Strategic Deployment Force. We predicted this gangster's departure in Bulletin 6., and, sure enough, faced with a debt of $9 billion, an infrastructure in ruins, six million people starving to death and bourgeois factions such as the Ansar religious sect and the Southern black bourgeoisie squaring up to each other, off he went. And what does this 'revolution' bring? A military junta of old Numeiri cronies who have fed from his hand during his sixteen year rule and who'll now take their turn at pushing through the I.M.F.'s austerity package - though the word 'austerity' in the dis aster of the Sudan is a disgusting reminder of the Hell that capitalism has brought to much of the world today.

Meanwhile next door in Egypt, Mubarak must be sleeping uneasily in his bed as his country, with $32 billion of debt and rapidly declining revenues from oil, Suez Canal and Egyptians working abroad, faced $300 million of destroyed property as the country's riot police took their name somewhat too literally. Conscripts, largely from poor rural areas have to serve three year tours of duty, living in desert camps and earning about £2.60 a month. These conscripts, fired by tales of pay cuts and service extensions, attacked and looted rich areas of Cairo, burning the luxury hotels and stealing everything the could lay their hands on. They were joined by huge crowds of the urban poor who went on widespread looting and burning sprees and stormed a local prison holding religious fundamentalist prisoners.

But it's when we look at the 'Dictators Hall of Fame' that we really begin to see which way the wind is blowing.

Haiti, after 29 years of Duvalier rule has got rid - of Baby Doc; but, true to the pattern set in the Sudan, the Duvalierists remain in power. And what they've inherited is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere whose only growth industry is prostitution - male, female and child. Haiti long ago replaced Cuba as America's main offshore brothel and it is no surprise that Aids has become a nightmare there.

Despite Tonton Macoute terror, civil unrest was growing over the past few years as the handouts from big brother declined and the collapse of the world economy prevented even the most rapacious of American capitalists moving to Haiti to take

Rejoicing at the Fall of the Duvaliers in Haiti - But Namphy Waits in the Wings.

advantage of the starvation wage levels there. It was a demonstration calling for lower prices and taxes in which three children were murdered by the Macoute that precipitated the crisis that led to the unlovely Baby being dumped. But the writing had been on the wall for some time. The economy, such as it was, had hit rock bottom and workers were eagerly joining up with slave labour teams to work in the Dominican Republic for less than £30 a year. Deaths from starvation were being reported nightly even in the centre of the city and the popular unrest of the poor was being augmented by the growing discontent of the urban bourgeoisie who could no longer be bought off by the regime as in the days of plenty.

The role of the Catholic Church in all this is interesting - it had worked hand in hand with Duvalier senior until recently (he had destroyed its political independence in the late 50's by arresting priests and deporting the primate and then six years later he came to an agreement with the Pope which gave him a say in the appointment of Bishops) but his star had waned and with his son in command and faltering the Church moved in to take control of popular feeling. By the turn of this year the island's main weekly, the Church-run 'Le Petit Samedi Soir' was boasting that "the church now is leading the country and has been adopted by Haitians as the only institution they still believed in."

But if the unholy alliance of Church and Tontons was holding the 'peace' then this couldn't be expected to last long. The US ambassador was, throughout this time, holding meetimgs with American researchers throughout the island, seeking an alternative to Duvalier that would preserve US

The Poor Go Looting in the Sudan

control. The alternative decided on was General Namphy, whose Junta took control in February with an army and bureaucracy paid out of US funds. His first task was to step in and protect the Tontons from popular revenge and only a few of these creatures got their just deserts. America responded by pumping in aid - $22.2 million development assistance, £2.9 million economic support, $450,000 for military training - while at the same time calling for quick elections before any left wing organisation can get off the ground. As Schultz put it, Haiti needs "a democratically elected government to tackle the country's very, very serious problems" - the White House prefers to deal with those it knows and it certainly knows Namphy and his fellow hoodlums well enough after years of paying for them.

And Baby Doc? America lost face amongst the international network of dictators and tyrants when the Shah was left to pathetically drift around the world like some latter day Flying Dutchman; the mistake wasn't made again. While Haiti's reserves were down to $20 million, the Duvalier clan are living it up on the French Riviera with $500 million.

The story was the same in the Phillipines where Marcos, again using the USAF as his personal trucking company took off with 22 crates of freshly minted Phillipine pesos ($1.4 million worth), 278 crates of jewels, artwork, gold, negotiable assets, real estate deeds (including five New York properties worth $350 million alone). In all this little turd is reckoned to have $10 billion in foreign assets - 30% of his country's GDP and 38% of its international debt. Reagan dismissed criticism of this piracy by saying:

> " this wealth is probably his by way of investment."

The Phillipines pays its president $5,700 a year.

Much else of the Phillipine's story is similar to Haiti's, massive prostitution, with Filipino girls and boys being openly offered for sale in the Middle East and Scandanavian package trips to the Phillipines for 'wives' vying with the torrent of Japanese business trips round the brothels of Manilla.

60% of the country's children are malnourished and when there is work fewer than 25% of the planters pay the minimum wage of just over £1.00 a day. Near bankrupt because of the collapse of sugar worldwide, the planters let more and more of the land stand idle so that between 30 and 40% is no longer cultivated. More and more the bourgeoisie was deserting Marcos in the wake of the world economic depression

The Catholic church, the largest in Asia sought to dampen anger while at the same time warning America that what Bishop Fortich " a social volcano " was about to erupt. And America listened very closely to these warnings.

US analyists are claiming that the Pacific will be more important to US interests than Europe by the end of the century and the Phillipines has a crucial role to play. Hawaii or Guam could take over the role of the Clark airforce base, but the ship repair facilities at Subic bay are seen as essential. Cheap Phillipino skilled labour does most of the repairs to the 90 ships of the 7th Fleet at a cost of about one seventh of US Shipyards. The total cost of leaving the Phillipines is put at over $8 billion for the move to Guam, Saipan and Tinian in the Marianas - islands, plus possible bases in Japan and Korea. The fact that these alternatives are not being seen as likely can be measured by the fact that the Pentagon is asking for $1.3 billion over the next seven years for improvements to Filipino bases including a second runway, backing up a 1984 agreement on the bases which saw Reagan promise $900 million in aid over the next five years. The country's strategic value to the US is strengthened by the fact that the USSR has increased its influence and presence in the region by developing the old US bases in Vietnam especially at Camran Bay which is, by now, the biggest Soviet base outside Russia.

A Couple of Jokers

With all this in mind the US was clearly concerned when its stooge Marcos began to look threatened. It had done its best to protect him: the 1981 election, denounced even by those western states which sent observers, as fraudulent, was hailed in America as a triumph of democracy. At the same time the FBI raided the homes and offices of Filipino opposition figures in American exile, seizing names and addresses which it undoubtedly sent to Marcos.

But by 1985 the bourgeois opposition was more and more being pressed to strike at Marcos to divert the mass waves of popular feeling which threatened to get out of their control and swell the ranks of anti- American factions or horror of horrors try to sweep away the whole rotting edifice altogether. Faced with a 500% jump in days lost by strikes between 1983 and 1985 the one million strong Trade Union Federation (May First Movement) began to stage token general strikes. Squeezed by the sheer volume of the conspicuous consumption of Marcos and his wife Imelda (Governor of Manilla, Minister of Human Settlements and unofficial Foreign Minister who alone amassed $10 million during her thirty years of power) and the IMF's austerity demands, discontent was becoming explosive. The Catholic Church under the arch conservative Cardinal Sin, fearing that Marcos was driving the masses into the arms of the leftists, moved to disassociate themselves from him, while even the Association of S.E.Asian States (ASEAN) pressed for a quick change of regime while local bourgeois support - traditionally strongly pro-Marcos - turned against him, and, more worring for the US, began to show anti American feeling.

It was time for a new stooge to be wheeled onstage. And who better than Cory Aquino. Who could seem to be further distanced from Marcos among the local bourgeoisie following her husband's murder. Aquino only stood against Marcos after lengthy discussions with Sin and the US ambassador - and she clearly impressed. She is the biggest independent sugar producer in the Phillipines and her closest advisor Ongpin, is president of the country's largest mining corporation. Her running mate Laurel, was an erswhile staunch Marcos man and fan of the Marcos imposed martial law during which thousands were murdered. Prodded by America who seem to have been expecting Marcos to die naturally since last year and had been looking round since then for a suitable successor, leading figures in the US controlled military rallied to her side, including such 'radicals' as Defence Minister Ponce Enrile and Deputy of the Armed Forces and head of the para-military constabulary General Ramos. Enrile, who has himself voiced a strong desire to be president was, after February's 'election' still ignoring loud accusations of electoral fraud and proudly boasting that he had delivered the biggest margin of victory for Marcos in his home province. As Defence Minister he was deeply involved in the imposition of martial law to the extent that he provided the excuse for it by claiming a bogus, as he later admitted, attempt on his life in 1972. (Martial Law was imposed just as Marcos was ending his second term in office - and at that time the Filipino constitution did not allow a third term!)

Up until the eleventh hour Ramos was an equally sta- staunch Marcos henchman - he is after all his cousin, but quickly saw the way the wind was blowing. (This festering little joker announced to the crowd during the coup that "I am now a private in the army of the people")

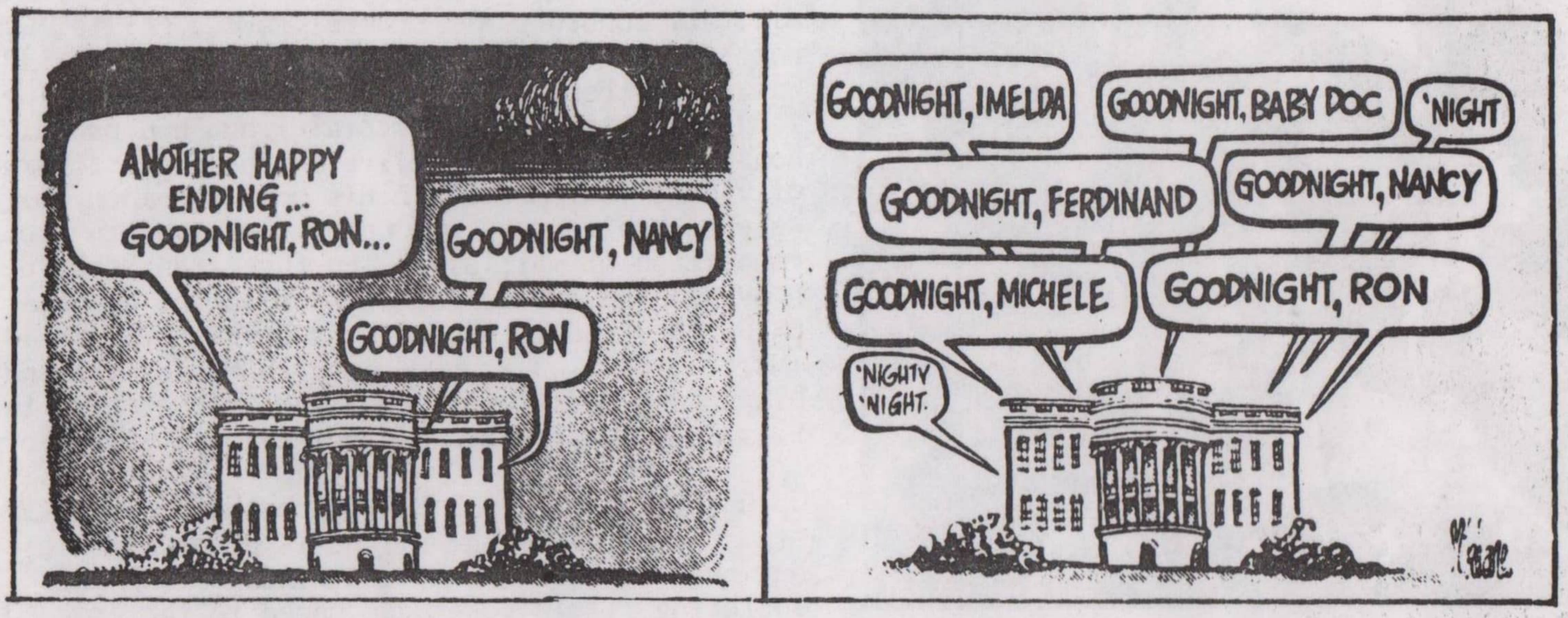
Just how opportunistic the Aquino gang is can perhaps

Marcos and Ronnie in Happier Times

best be seen in Aquino's appointment of General Olivas to a top military job - he was one of those accused of her husband's murder! As in Haiti the Godfather may have passed on, but the same old murderous mafia are still in control.

It's an indication of the fossilisation of Reagan that he is resisting even the token changes seen in Haiti, Sudan and the Phillipines (and indeed in South Africa). The State Department have shown they can drag him and his fellow travellers with them but it says nothing for the agility and flexibility of the bourgeoisie that they have to do so. Increasingly we may see the ideological baggage of the ruling class weigh them down as increasingly circumstances catch them out. We are not crystal ball gazing when we say that Aquino, Namphy and the Sudanese General Sowar al-Dahab will not feed off the backs of workers and peasants as long as their predecessors.

G.M.



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healthier long term growth. But that theory is hard to sell to the Mexicans themselves. Unemployment stands at between 12 and 15%, and fully 40% of Mexican workers hold only part-time jobs. Mexicans are eating less meat and drinking less milk; malnutrition is rising, especially in rural areas. Inevitably, such problems are spilling over into the United States. According to the US Border Patrol, arrests of illegal Mexican immigrants rose to a record 1.3 million last year."

(Newsweek. Jan.13.1985)

The Left can only call for a "moratorium" on foreign debt payments; but even the Catholic Church is for this moratorium and the internal debt ($13 billion) is larger than the foreign bill ($10 billion)!

Despite the media's blackout of global workers' actions against the capitalist crisis, 1986 looms as a year of reckoning where the Mexican working class can begin to see itself and feel itself as the proletariat, the class of complete Social Revolution and, taking cues from the Hormel meatpackers in Minnesota and the fishermen of New England, launch direct counter- attacks against the capitalist imposed misery of the state-bourgeoisie.

TAMPA WORKERS AFFINITY GROUP
January 1986.

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Who Are The Terrorists?

In the 1980s Terrorism is a constant preoccupation of the newspapers and TV; hardly a day goes by without us being bombarded by reports of the latest IRA outrage in Northern Ireland or gory newsfilm of yet another car bomb in Beirut etc The ideological message, explicit or implicit depending on the closeness to home, is always the same: innocent victims have been massacred by the random and unprovoked atrocities of crazed fanatics who have shattered the peace and decorum of our well-ordered society. In order to protect the citizenry from the madmen who perpetrate acts of terror governments "reluctantly" step up surveillance and security measures, insisting that the resulting reduction of individual liberty is a small price to pay for keeping our cities and airports safe from the terrorist's bombs. A convenient alibi of course, particularly when it allows for an international co-ordination of repression (as with the Franco-German agreement in 1985). .

Terrorists and terrorist groups come in many forms - national liberation movements such as the IRA and the Basque separatists ETA, so-called right wing extremists, religious sects and of course the multitudinous leftist gangs. The latter groups in particular recruit from the sweepings of marginalised and desperate strata of society, typically disorientated students no longer assured of a secure future in the professions. Needless to say none of these organizations have anything to do with the proletarian movement despite their grand sounding nomenclature, and their pinprick attacks on capitalism give the bosses the godsend of anti-terrorist campaigns. Petty bourgeois terrorism makes for good headlines in the newspapers, but the depredations of the aforementioned groups pale into insignificance when compared to the antics of an altogether better organized set of terrorists.

Reviewing the events of recent months one could ask the following questions:

* Which terrorist organization hijacked a Syria-bound plane over the mediterranean, forced it to land in another country and attempted to take the passengers hostage ? Not the Red Brigades, but the State of Israel.

* Which terrorist organization has carried out numerous assasination attempts on it's opponents throughout Europe, from Manchester to Cairo ? Not the Red Army Fraction, but the state of Libya.

A Meeting of International Terrorists

* Which terrorist group sent a group across the world to plant a bomb on a ship which sank it and killed one of the crew. PLO? Ghadafi? No the Republic of France when they attacked Greenpeace!

* Which terrorist organization, having previously blown up a nuclear power station in Iraq, killed hundreds of civilians when it bombed a suburb of Tunis? Not Action Directe, but once again the state of Israel.

* Which terrorist organisation mined the harbours of a neighbouring state and sends cash and arms to former torturers to use in shooting up areas under that state's control. The PLO? No, wonderful America with good ol' Ronnie mining the harbours of Nicaragua and arming tne ex-Samoza Guards of the Contras.

Assassinations and bomb attacks are not new tactics of the state - the CIA has long made a speciality of

them (most farcically in its many attempts to kill Castro by poisoned cigar and virus encrusted handkerchief), and its operations have been fully mirrorred by those of the Russian Bloc (as when the Bulgarian Secret Police murdered emigres in London with poisoned umbrellas.)
The individual terrorist gangs nominally responsible for celebrated outrages are frequently financed and often directly recruited by the intelligence agencies of the major powers, while the ranks of most are riddled with covert agents of the state.
This is not to say that all terrorist groups are no more than puppets of this or that state, but their value to capitalism -on both the ideological and military plane- is indisputable.

STATE TERROR

The spectacular acts of international terrorism engineered by the CIA, KGB etc are the tip of an iceberg of orchestrated state terror. As the world economy sinks into a collapse, a desperate bourgeoisie is forced to turn to to this weapon in more and more countries. This is not a pessimistic projection of the future, this is the reality today. Through out the globe, from Argentina to China, from South Africa to South-East Asia, the state attempts to brutalize the populace into a bloody quiescence. Death squads murder possible enemies of the ruling clique, torture chambers use the latest technology to extract names from detainees, hundreds of young people disappear forever from the streets. In Russia dissenters have their minds rearranged in psychiatric camps, while the punishment is usually more abrupt in the so-called political "re-education camps of China. In the many nations where the bosses' grip on power is already tenuous, state terrorism is already the daily norm.

In the nations of western Europe, where relative economic stability still prevails, the population can still be controlled by principally ideological weapons - the parliamentary circus, trade unionism, images of attainable affluence etc. But as the economy crumbles, as unemployment rockets, as the only option left to them is a generalised pauperisation of the working class, the liberal mask will inevitably fall and the tactics of the bosses in the rest of the world will be enthusiastically copied.

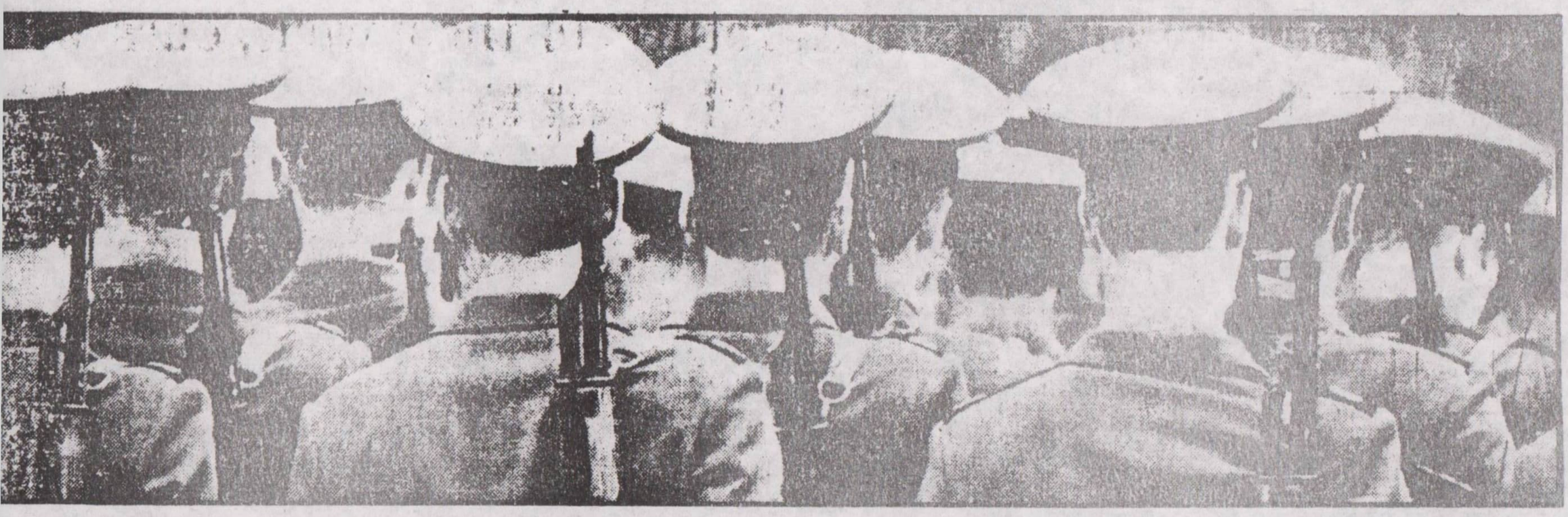
BRITAIN

In the early 1970s the British state used IRA terrorism as an excuse to introduce sweeping new measures of control and surveillance, and in Northern Ireland it discovered a perfect laboratory to test out the latest weapons of state terror and to perfect techniques of population control. As the crisis deep fissures began to emerge in British society, cracks that had become gaping chasms by the time of the 1981 urban riots. A radical revision of police equipment, tactics and hardware was rapidly instituted, and the bosses redefined the role of the boys in blue. The result was the well organized force that suffocated the miners' strike and battled it out with working class youths on the streets of Tottenham. The myth of the good old British bobby has gone forever - today nobody is surprised to see cops carrying a gun, nobody bats an eyelid when they hear of a suspect having his eye gouged out while under interro gation or of a black woman shot dead while police search for her son. On picket line and in working class communities in dispute with the government, the police no longer have any hesitation in resorting to cold-blooded terror tactics. Naked violence is the only way they hope to stay in control of the poverty striken inner cities.

All this is just a taster of what is to come; before long we will be experiencing at first hand what workers in Chile or South Africa have long endured. The British ruling class has, like it's confederates the world over, made detailed plans for far bloodier repression for when it's ailing system really comes under threat. Ulster, of course have been a testing bed for all manner of weapons and techniques and. as the Miners Strike and the beating up of the hippies at Stonehenge last year have shown these techniques are now increasingly to be seen on the mainland. (see also the following extract from The Handgunner to see that we are not alone it noting the change.)

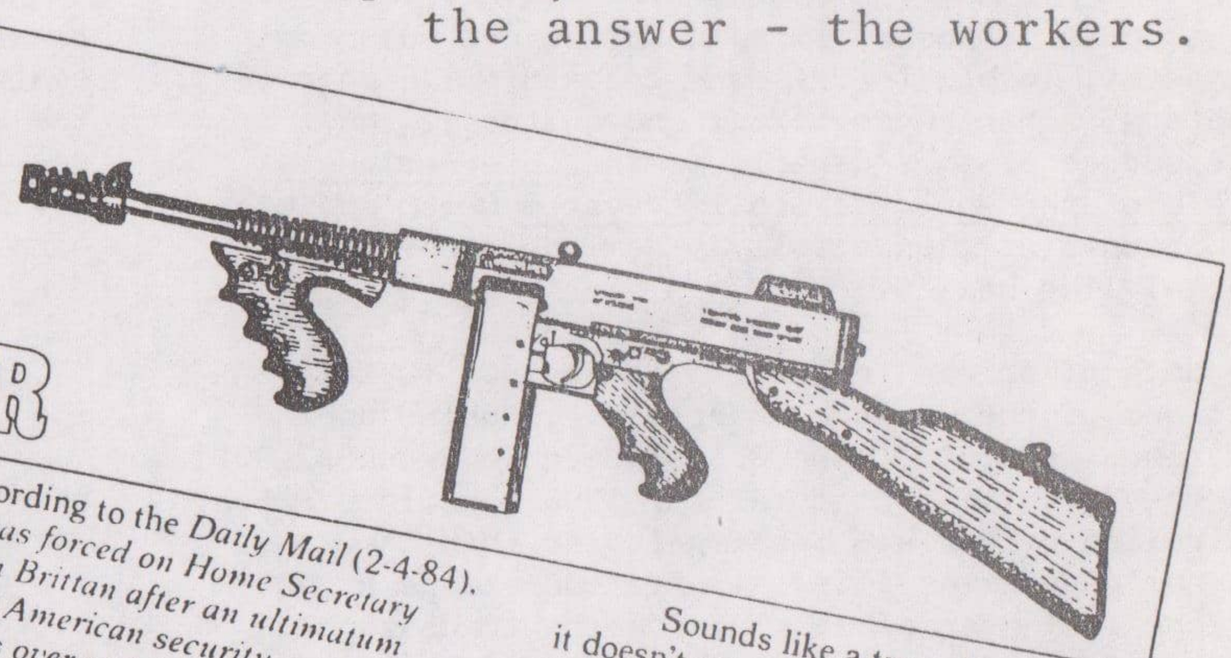
As stated at the begining of this article the real danger to the working class lies not in the much trumpeted terrorism of tinpot groups like the Red Brigades, but in the anti-terrorist campaigns of the state and the increasing state terror that is becoming more and more commonplace. Our response should neithe to bleat about the loss of so-called democratic rights nor to get sucked into useless acts of individual terrorism. General brutalisation on the road to general barbarism is all capitalism has to offer to humanity - the only alternative is provided by the class struggle.

Rowntree



Even certain elements of the bourgeois press have been asking questions about the police in recent months. This editorial from the Gun magazine The Handgunner ends up posing the question -who are the police really worried about that they are tooling up? We, of course know the answer - the workers.

THE EDITORIAL TYPEWRITER



The media have made a meal lately of the joint ACPO/Home Office decision to patrol airport terminals with MP5 SMG's at the ready. After a ritual bewailing of this further tear in the tattered image of the unarmed bobbie, the question that seems to have seized the fourth estate is that of whether the police had actually chosen the right gun for the job, the job's evidently being to tilt with Abu Nidal terrorists come to blow up or mow down queues of El Al passengers.

Peering through this forensic fogbank, we experienced a sense of *déja vu*. Had we not passed this way before? Remember the Met's MP5K's and the 1984 summit conference? That time round. *Handgunner* was evaluating the suitability of the equipment (see No. 23) while the general press raked the political question about—rather inadequately, we fear. This time seems an action replay, with rôle reversal on the press side.

One of Fleet Street's problems is the short memory; they can rarely make connections across much of a gap. The *Observer* (12-1-86) came closest when they wrote, "It is not the weapon which is new-only the publicity." And again, ". . . the purchase of the weapon, the training in its use, the commitment to deploy it all happen in secret." To follow that logic a half step further, is to say that the whole exercise was a publicity stunt.

Perhaps it was. Perhaps the object was to get across to the Abu Nidal faction the message that incidents like those at Vienna and Rome last month are not survivable in Britain. Perhaps they thought things did not get serious here until the SAS were called in.

That, take in isolation, is a credible hypothesis. The message is an urgent one; the means chosen—maximum media fluster—is one unlikely to be ignored. But what about 1984? What was the message then? There was to be an economic summit conference in June, attended by the heads of government of the U.S., Canada and most of the EEC countries. The Met had issued twelve MP5K's for the occasion. This, according to the *Daily Mail* (2-4-84), *...was forced on Home Secretary Leon Brittan after an ultimatum from American security chiefs over a visit to London in June by President Reagan.*

The President's advisers wanted to bring their own, heavily armed, security men to accompany him everywhere during his stay, for a three-day economic summit. Mr. Brittan refused, despite fierce arguments.

But he agreed instead that a 12-man team from the Metropolitan Police would be trained to use the 9mm Heckler & Koch MP5K submachine gun.

The security of visiting heads of government had always been a Special Branch responsibility and Britain had never permitted foreign armed bodyguards to blunder about. Since the U.S. Secret Service could not do the job themselves, they felt obliged to make sure it was done right. You get the picture.

The problem is that the picture is false. We talked to top U.S. security people at the time, and they sounded like baffled men. We talked to lower level people and they were not baffled at all. The chiefs, they said, were lying where they could, and telling the truth where they had to. They could not admit to exerting pressure on the British government, when they had done no such thing, that would be likely to rebound. But they felt they had to claim that they were never armed if that was what their British colleagues wanted to tell the press. In fact, they were always armed and there was never the slightest problem.

So where does that get us? In the first place, the SMG's-at-the-summit-conference thing looks like another publicity stunt—a fabrication on the grand scale. If it follows the message-to-the-other-side hypothesis, what was the message?

It was this: That the heads of Government of most of the Western nations would be coming together, that they would be stripped of their normal protection and that they would all be guarded by twelve bozos with silly guns that could not hit anything.

Sounds like a trap, doesn't it? If it doesn't sound like a trap, it sounds wierd.

The question is whether 1984 and 1986 are linked or separable. We see no way of taking 1984 at face value. Does that mean that 1986 is also a hoax? If so, what is the object, for it would then all be quite elaborate?

We do not know; we can only speculate. One hypothesis is that the police want machine guns, lots of machine guns, and that they want it on the record at an early date rather than risking having the matter blow up into a scandal later. Therefore, whenever a possible "terrorist threat" happens by, like a newsworthy hook, they hang a few more machineguns on it and let the media rant about Dixon of Dock Green for awhile so that it gets firmly recorded. In due course, there will be no more to be said about it.

This drill seems a bit louche to us. One the other hand, we see no reason for the police not to have the tools for the job. For if they cannot do their job, someone else—the Army—will have to do it for them. So what is all the smokescreen for?

If the anti-terrorist scares are just publicity gambits to upgrade the arsenal, on the record, that throws open the question of who the enemy is. The MP5K was not much good for VIP protection, and the MP5 is a ghastly notion for protecting a ticket queue. Whom, then, is ACPO really worried about? Alternatively, is the media hype an end in itself, the machine gun a focus for opprobrium, drawing attention to the horrors which the presence of guns in society have foist upon the police?

Frankly, we find all this a bit of a strain. If Fleet Street would do their job, we could go back to evaluating weapons. Or maybe all the speculation was overheated, in which case we shall have an article by the police in the next issue explaining all. Don't miss it.

JAS

MEXICO:

Land of Uninterrupted Crises

All aspects of social life in Mexico are enduring permanent, insoluble crises - industrial, commercial, monetary, agrarian political and cultural. The sole source of this debacle is the international crisis of the world capitalist system which spares no nation-state, especially a semi-developed capital like Mexico.

The data of crisis in Mexico is obvious to all factions of the Western bourgeoisie. Public debt has risen to 9.6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the domestic debt total for 1985 was $13 billion. Controlled prices are leaping faster than the general government index - inflation stands at 65% for the last year alone. The foreign trade surplus (coming from oil revenues) is estimated at less than $7 billion, down 43.7% from 1984. Total foreign debt is over $96 billion of which $10 billion must be serviced immediately. (Jan.'86).

Oil exports are down 12.7% from 1984: food products sold abroad dove 20.3% and manufactured goods dropped 7.9% in 1985. At the same time imports rose 21.7% over 1984, with foreign beef climbing to a 206% increase! GDP growth was 3% in '85 and is projected at 1% for '86. While inflation was soaring at 65%, real wages were falling 30-35% for the same period. Unemployment was officially listed at 15% and underemployment was estimated at 40% of the Mexican labour force. And of all workers employed, another 40% earn less than the minimum wage of $4.00 a day.

Government austerity measures - meaning budget cuts, lay-offs, price hikes and tight banking credit - are coming at the rate of a new round every six months. For the latest December '85 'Shock Treatment' the government increased sugar and gas prices by 40%. and 50% respectively; the cost of tortillas also went up by 40%. The central bank (Banco de Mexico) further tightened its credit policies (with reserves already at a compulsory 90% of all deposits), and new government tax hikes and spending cuts are planned for this month (January 1986).

> " Despite the pull of domestic political pressures, De La Madrid appears determined to keep the nation on a track of strict economic austerity. The nations 1986 economic program calls for deep cuts in the government deficit, reduction of some subsidies, unloading state-owned companies and tight credit policies.
>
> It hopes to bring inflation down to 50% per year and wind up with an $8 billion balance of trade surplus next year.
>
> It will also be seeking $4 billion in new loans. It pays $10 billion a year to service its current debt, making it a net capital exporter.
> (St Petersburg Times Dec. 17. 1985)

The Mexican nation is a thoroughly state capitalist structure, not much different in kind from Sweden or Yugoslavia (or Nicaragua for that matter). All major ownership and initiatives - industrial, banking, trade, monetary, rural - devolve to the central state. Mexico is completely integrated into the US imperialist bloc, but still exists as a semi-developed capitalism, and one whose further development is historically precluded. No matter how hard the state-bourgeoisie oscillates between central control and the 'free market', Mexican capital lapses into deeper and deeper crises.

The dominant bourgeois party, the PRI, has run the capitalist show for the past forty years, and recently swept the national elections in July 1985. The party nationalized the banking system in 1982, the government reduced the number of trade-banks in feb. '85 from 29 to 20. The two tiered monetary exchange rate (one for tourism and one for business) was cancelled in July because of enormous capital flight, estimated at between $770 million and $5 billion US currency. Even so by Nov. '85 the peso was trading at 500 to the dollar, skyrocketing inflation.

The PRI is now seeking to lure foreign investment by joining the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trading) and modifying its protective legislation, especially the mandatory law that limits foreign companies to only 49% holdings of their plants in Mexico. American and German businesses are poised to penetrate Mexican territory with industrial schemes: Daimler Benz and BMW of Germany are hot for deals to manufacture trucks and motorcycles in Mexico with low labour costs:

> " With oil accounting for 70% of its foreign exchange earnings and a price war looming Mexico could be in for a very tough year in 1986. With that in mind the government has charted what some consider a risky course of promoting non-traditional exports by joining the GATT and encouraging foreign investment. GATT membership is considered crucial to expand trade agreements with the United States, already Mexico's largest trading partner. But it will also spell the end of 40 years of protectionism enjoyed by Mexican industry and could result in the collapse of uncompetitive businesses. "I think it's very dangerous", said Nora Lustig, an economist at the Colegio de Mexico, a Mexico City think-tank. "The trouble is, what does Mexico have to export?" She and other nationalistic Mexicans believe the move will turn Mexico into a kind of sweatshop for US companies that set up factories here to take advantage of low labour costs."
> (St. Petersburg Times December 17. 1985)

But the GATT membership will allow an influx of new products for the well-off supporters of the PRI: Mexico has its yuppies too, you know! What the mexican bourgeoisie is gambling on here is that new foreign investments and profit from sales will enhance its state revenues, cure unemployment somewhat and help to lower its internal and external debts. What they fail to realise is that the international market is already crowded with too many "cheap" goods, and that their new products will be unable to circulate very well, if at all.

Bigger fish eat smaller fish and this describes the relationship of N.America and Europe to Mexico and Mexico's to Nicaragua. In June 1985, Mexico renewed its oil shipments to Nicaragua and moved to fill the 45% trade gap left by the latest US embargo of the latter. As the Sandanistas also have a scarcity of capital, the Mexican bourgeoisie is opting for a barter deal : resumption of its oil to Nicaragua (in lieu of Managua's $500 million debt) for the rights to Nicaraguan fishing waters and to exploit their timber reserves as well. The combination these commercial ties and its political image as an enthusiast of "Latin American solidarity" and "self determination" explains Mexico's persistent support for the Sandanista regime.

Meanwhile, Mexico, after 100 years of periodic rural upheavals, has yet to solve its land question. Technocratic president Miguel de la Madrid announced a new land reform program in May 1985 (opposed by Finance Minister Silva Herzog because the new government outlayswould spell more public debt),the goals of which were higher food production and rural living standards, independence from food imports and increases in land distribution and government credits for farmers. During 1984, despite good weather, production of 10 basic crops covered only 77% of domestic demand. Mexico was only self-sufficient in wheat, while maize, beans and rice were all well below government targets. Food imports rose 70% in 1985, again with beef at a whopping 206% importation rise.

> " PRONADRI (Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural Integral - the reform plan) also fails to tackle the structural problems crippling Mexican agriculture, beyond a familiar pledge to speed up land distribution. The plan allots 75% of its resources to the richer, irrigated areas. But of the 20m. hectares under cultivation, only 6m. hectares are under irrigation. Most Mexican farmers are barely self-sufficient, farming tiny unirrigated lots without machinery. Almost half of Mexico's land is farmed under the ejido system in small lots, 50% of which are under 5 hectares (1 hectare is approx. 2.47 acres.) Garzon Santibanez, leader of the independent peasants' union, the Central Campesina Independiente, wants the government to expand the area under cultivation to 31m. hectares, but this would mean focusing the investment on rain-dependent areas. Drought, both climatic and financial, is the threat hanging over Pronadri."
>
> (Latin American Weekly Report. June 14. 1985)

The PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) was originally founded in 1928 as the National Revolutionary Party and changed its name to the current one in 1946. It's basically a liberal capitalist party, very similar to the US Democratic party - with both a New Deal/unionist and a technocratic wing. Bacause capitalism in Mexico is much more statified than in North America (weaker capitals always are), the PRI has been able to entrench itself in lasting power through an elaborate system of patronage, or "cooptation". To the vast state, union and media bureaucracies, the PRI provides solid jobs, housing subsidised food, lucrative business contracts and opportunities for further wealth and power. The inner circle of ruling-class politicos are almost exclusively of European origin - the pure Castillian strain of Mexico City. De La Madrid - the name itsef connotes aristocracy - is not much different in class background from, say, Valery Giscard d'Estaing in France - a technocrat of "premier" nobility!

The past July 7th the PRI once again swept the national congressional and gubernatorial elections.

The ruling party claimed 75% of the total vote, all seven governorships and 324 of approx. 400 congressional seats. The conservative PAN (Partido Accion Nacional), despite a US media blitz and probably some CIA funding, could only muster 17% of the vote and 50 parliamentary offices. As a Mexican version of the Republican Party, the PAN had campaigned on a platform of an end to government corruption, less government economic intervention, a reversal of agrarian reform and a withdrawal from the (now gasping) Contradora process. The entire left - made up of several Stalinist and Social Democratic coalitions - only won 7% of the vote and 24 seats.

Although the PAN maintained the usual charge of tabulation fraud, the most telling result for the revolutionary movement was the large abstentionism which ran over 50% of registered voters, or 17.5 million Mexican citizens. This abstentionism occured despite massive efforts by all parties to recruit young voters where 'apathy' was especially high, even among university students.

As in most Latin American and European countries the

Misery in Mexico

Left parties are tied closely to the trade unions. But in Mexico, most of the major unions - the CMT (Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico), the CROM (Confederacion regional Obrera Mexicana) and the CROC (Confederacion Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesino) are linked strongly to the PRI. Ten million out of twenty five million Mexican workers belong to unions and almost all are grouped under the C.T. (Congreso del Trabajo) - an umbrella organisation which supports the Mexico City government. The CMT, the CROM and the CROC (of shit!) claim membership of 4.5million, 4 million and 150,000 respectively. For the Mexico City May Day demonstration in 1985, the CT turned out 1.5 million marchers demanding the usual leftist shibboleths - suspension of debt payments, full employment and salary increases. Then at the August meeting the CT's main call was for a "restoration of the purchasing power of the workers" (wages were up 140% against 275% price climbs over the past two years.)

Most of the "independent unions" like STUNAM (Sindi cato de Trabajadores de la Universidad), SITUAN (Sindicato Independiente de los Trajabadores de la Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana) and SUTIN (Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Nuclear) were first controlled by the Mexican Communist Party and its successor, the PSUM (Partido socialista Unificado de Mexico). Lately STUNAM has been "co-opted" ie. drawn into the CT and now negotiating for union privileges with the PRI. Does this remind anyone of the furtive dynamic of, say what? San Francisco's Processed World?

Although there can be no revolutionary demands coming from either the left of the unions, (in fact Fidel Velazquez, the 85-year old fuckhead of the CMT vaingloriously states that the maintenance of "social peace" has been the union's greatest legacy), the continued austerity programs are trepidating the Mexican bourgeoisie.

" Price rises prompted labour representatives at the national commission of minimal salaries to raise their demand for a minimum wage increase (due on January 1st) from 30% to 50%. They threatened to withdraw from the commission - credited with ensuring Labour's docility since the Sixties - if the government, the country's largest employer, forced a lower settlement. Although government mediators are expecting to soothe senior trade union officials, there are fears a low wage settlement could erode the control the unions exert over the labour force.

Ricardo Ramirez, a labour specialist, told us "The system of official unions has survived in its present form since the 1940's precisely because it has permitted the workers to gain increases, however modest, over the years. But if the workers' purchasing power continues deteriorating year after year, it is likely that the union leadership will soon see itself bypassed by the masses."

(Latin American Weekly Report Dec.13. 1985)

The devastation of the September earthquake, however has created new problems for the government and allowed for a rejuvenation of the Left somewhat. The quake left 5,500 dead and between 150,000 and 300,000 homeless in Mexico City. It should go without saying that this tragedy was mostly a capitalist-made disaster: almost all the buildings and housing that collapsed had been built by lucrative government contracts and the use of cheap construction materials. In the aftermath of the destruction workers refused to leave their homes for government shelters until granted documents for new homes. the homeless began to create grass-roots associations of mutual aid outside of state auspices.

" We saw that together we could do a lot (said Antonio Vera), before, we conformed to the way things were."

" Vera is one of about 2000 household heads who belongs to a new neighbourhood organisation called the Associacion Morelos. The association, which formed a week after the Sept. 19 earthquake is one of 40 similar neighbourhood groups that have banded together in an umbrella organisation called the Sole Coordinating Committee of the Homeless. "The idea is that the organisation emerges from the people themselves" says Gabriel Rosas, a 25 year old Morelos organiser. The Morelos Association has an elected 12-member board that meets every eight days with residents to explain where they stand. The government has responded warily to the upsurge of grass-roots organising in areas that have never before shown independent political initiative. But he (city official Carlos Reta) added that Mexico's small leftist parties are behind many of the organising efforts in the barrios. "In some cases the tenants respond to the interests of those political parties," he said. The left does appear to be strongly represented in the homeless movement, in part because leftist organisers responded more quickly than the government."

(St. Petersburg Times Dec.16. 1985)

Although this self-activity is a positive sign, the emergence of the Sole Coordinating Committee must be weighed against the weight of the intrusion of the Leftist parties (hunting for recruits and the reality that no permanent organs can come into being outside of a general working class upsurge, such as revolutionary committees forming from a general or mass strike.

Another factor which must be considered as an advantage for the Mexican ruling class is the safety valve effect of the swarm of illegal immigration into the US. Of an estimated 8 million illegal settlers here, 60% are believed to be Mexicans. This helps the PRI two ways:

" Already about 40% of able-bodied mexicans either have no work at all or scrape by with odd jobs. And so more poor Mexicans than ever are joining the trek north with the blessings of the Mexican government. Not only is emigration to the United States a safety valve against unrest at home, remittances home from Mexicans in the north bring the country hundreds of millions of dollars a year in badly needed foreign currency, Western diplomats in Mexico City say."

(St. Petersburg Times. Dec.19. 1985)

This month (January '86) De la Madrid got the Reagan administration to pledge $4 billion in new loans to Mexico. The IMF, the World Bank and the International Developmental Bank have delivered the new "rescue package" now that the PRI has imposed its December round of belt tightening.

" US officials hope that by adopting such harsh measures now, Mexico might return soon to

CONTINUED ON PAGE FOUR

Correspondence

on Teachers and Riots

The largest volume of correspondence on the contents of Communist Bulletin Nine concerned those articles on the Teachers Strike and the inner city riots as compared to Brussels. One letter from a comrade in Manchester berated us on both points.

....Although the teachers article was dealing specifically with the teachers in relation to "their" union, it lacked any criticism of the teachers' role itself,ie. the contradiction between their position as workers and their position as agents of control, 'soft cops'. This is highly relevant, for it determines the attitude that other workers will have with respect to the teachers struggle. It is very difficult to identify with a group who for ten years have been your oppressors.

Secondly I find the use of the term 'kids' out of place. At what age do you consider one ceases to be a 'kid', are 14,15 and 16year olds 'kids'. Are A-level students 'kids'? Why divide the working class by patronizing one section on the spurious grounds of age.

Thirdly when it comes to "nails in the coffin of capitalist social consensus" it appears to me that teachers have a lot more to learn from their charges than vice-versa. It seems that school students strikes show the teachers how they should struggle.

The article on the Brussels riots was particularly irritating; it started off very well and I agree fully with the first three or four paragraphs. However, to compare the Brussels atrocity with the riots of '81 in inner city areas shows a complete misunderstanding of the nature of these riots.

Although the riots in Bristol, Brixton and Toxteth etc. were born out of frustration they were neither blind, destructive nor aimless. In Bristol, Brixton and Moss Side, for instance, the riots were a reaction to and against the brutal policing of those areas and succeeded, if only temporarily, to force the police to withdraw and soften their approach. In Moss Side, for example, the police still are very wary of leaving the main roads. In Toxteth again the violence was a reaction to both rent increases and again police violence.

To state that the people on the streets in '81 were robbed of their class identity is totally incorrect. Their fight against their common enemy forged that class identity with workers of all ethnic groups fighting together side by side instead of against each other. There was a sense of community which had not existed to such an extent before and this has not been lost. The number of blacks who helped the miners during their strike because they recognised their common situation with victimisation, police violence etc., the community action by the workers of Toxteth against the smack pushers, these are evidence of a class identity that has been gained, not lost. They must be positively built upon not dismissed because of their seemingly spontaneous nature.....

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We replied.....

....on the teachers: we disagree with your assessment of their position. Certainly, the education system is concerned with the reproduction of social values which are invaluable to capitalism. Quite obviously teachers are involved in this. To this extent they can be called "soft-cops". However unlike "hard-cops" their role within capital is full of contradictions and tensions - the fact that the state at the moment is quite willing to concede high wage increases to the police and to resist the demands of the teachers is a sign of this. The role of the police as an instrument of repression is largely unmediated, they directly and "without favour" enforce the law of the land.. Teachers on the other hand work within a system which is founded upon a multiplicity of ideological mystifications, not the least being the necessity for an open and liberal approach to knowledge and its dissemination. In effect this means that teachers, in the face of the demands to accept an erosion of their living standards, have the capacity to challenge the needs of capital. But, as we indicated in the article, they tend to become victim to the ideology of their professional and "superior" status as intellectual workers (the old manual-intellectual labour problem). Thus they distinguish their struggle from that of industrial workers and plead special-case. In fact this parallels the mystifications found in the struggles of other workers, it is not unique to teachers. Until teachers begin to question their special status as producers of intellectual and social values they will succumb to the ideology of the division of labour. Yes we must criticise the educational system as an institution concerned with the reproduction of capitalist value, but this criticism becomes effective in the actual struggle of teachers. The starting point must be their ability to recognise common cause with other workers. From this base it is possible for a collective questioning of education in society. Finally, in this, you say that teachers should look to the actions of students (kids?) as their guide. This is true to the extent that students recognise themselves as part of a class and also to the extent that they are not mystified (wholly that is) about the use of violence and force as opposed to the ideology of "rational" discussion and legality. The rejection of these mystifications is

a starting point for class advance.

The same point can be made about the riots. On reflection I think that the point made in the "Brussels Riots" article about the similarity of football and Toxteth is overstated and failed to sufficiently demarcate between the two. In the urban riots there could be a starting point for genuine class action in that it often begins with a confrontation between the police and the community. This is important, for it gives the potential for those within the locale to recognise a collective interest which is that of workers (who might or might not be employed). This is not to say that the simple act of violent confrontation with the police must of itself mean that the struggle is proletarian - for this conclusion to be drawn the particulars of each situation must be examined. On the other hand the terrain of the football riot has little to recommend it as class territory. It begins from a confrontation not simply between working class youth and the police but between workers and police as the former defending localist and national separations. This can only be reactionary....

Flett

Another comrade from London approached basically the same areas....

...I would like to start a concrete debate here and now, in the hope of mutual clarification. It seems sensible to communicate to you my thoughts on the articles in CB 9.

1. Teachers Strike.

Teachers are not part of the working class and communists should not support their strikes. The fact that you think they are shows a grave fault in your class analysis of society, ie. as regards the "middle" or petty-bourgeois classes. Whilst I agree that "middle-class is a worthless term, of use only to sociologists, your support for the teachers is based on a misunderstanding of what has happenned to the petty bourgeois classes in recent decades, particularly since 1945. You will notice that I say "classes", in the plural. This is because, quite clearly, the middle strata are extremely heterogeneous, with quite conflicting interests. The old petty-bourgeoisie (shopkeepers, small businessmen and traders) has interests which would be served best under neo-liberal policies and in-fighting amongst big firms. The new managerial bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie, with interests in the power of bureaucracies such as local govern-ment and the trade unions (and big firms), are also being squeezed; their interests lie, for example, in "social contract"-style power sharing (for the trade unionists), and in decentralisation of some of the State's executive powers (for the LGO's) as well as in a more"comprehensive" local government policy (eg. cooperating with-not being subordinate to-local business interests). Then there are the strata involved in general private- or State backed propaganda/physical aid for capitalism: journalists, teachers, policemen, priests. There have been journalists and teachers since at least the bourgeois political revolutions and so one could be forgiven for seeing them as simply "petty bourgeois" in the accepted, traditional sense. But, since 1914 (which gave a huge impetus to newspapers), and especially since 1945 (the Welfare State, secondary education for all, many more teaching jobs), the more general role taken on by these strata has meant that their interests are much closer to those of LGO's, middle state bureaucrats, and lower management of big firms, than was the case when teachers and policemen generally came from the same petty-private-capitalist background as shopkeepers. Today they are virtually two different "estates".

Teachers are not "workers with blackboards"; they are part of a class which has its own interests and history. The cut and thrust of your article seems to be that the"fragile 'social consensus' bought by the boom years is well and truly over" (true) and that this has led to a situation where "parts of the working class", who, because of their job, used to be more instilled with reactionary and divisive attitudes than others in their class, are now being prodded into realising where their interests lie.

But the breakdown of the social consensus is not necessarily good for us. In the late '20s and early '30s, when the course was clearly towards war (ie. we can say this when we look back on those years), the social consensus was often in shreds. National Socialism, the French and German Communist Parties, etc., would not otherwise have received the (violent) support they had from the proletariat. They would not have been able to get involved in such bitter and violent struggles. Weimar and the French Third Republic (in the decade or so before its dissolution in 1940) existed in times of anarchy, not consensus. But still, the proletarian chances for revolution were dead by 1921. The post 1921 lifespan of these two republics saw huge numbers of disenchanted and bitter proletarians regard themselves as the allies of bits of other classes. cf. also the alliance between the proletariat and the Stalinist petty-bourgeoisie in Republican Spain. The most important question we face as regards the present "course of history" is: are we in such a period now? Are the chances for the qualitative maturation of the communist project dead or alive? the next five years will tell. The existence of massive struggles in itself (Denmark, South Africa, Bolivia...) doesnt allow us to tell either way. Dialectics does not see merely struggles: it sees their tendencies to develop in quality (conscious anti-trade unionism, desire to abolish wage-labour and the state, desire for the real dictatorship of the proletariat. One must see that such tendencies are very subdued, for all the ICC's pontificating about the "simultaneity" of struggles. At the moment the lack of viable blocs and of a physically defeated proletariat in the advanced countries, prevents us from identifying the "course" as "towards war". But there is no way in which, at the moment, we can identify a course towards generalised class confrontation. The most we can say is: Important struggles are to come.

As regards the social consensus, yes, the teachers are being attacked by the central State. But to see them as part of the proletariat you would have to show that their interests lay in the destruction of capitalism, and not just in resistance to its modernisation or in its alternative modernisation. You might feel tempted to mention as counter-example the dockers and printworkers, especially the latter, who also resist capitalist modernisation and development

of the productive forces. But these workers have no managerial role to play in the running of capital: they have no propaganda-position or position of authority over other workers to defend. The opposite is the case for the teachers. The teaching unions are not alone in being "committed to the health of the capitalist education system.....

2. Brussels Riots.

I agree with most of what you say about Heysel, but am astonished that you can write off the riots in Toxteth, Brixton and Bristol in a few sentences, comparing them with the randomness of football violence, which, as you say, only hits the right targets on occasion, and only by chance. Toxteth, Brixton, Bristol and the riots in dozens of other cities and towns in Britain, mainly in July 1981 were festivals of anti-state violences and looting. There is nothing random about this.... July 1981 saw the hitting of the right targets, repeatedly and consciously. If you were a white woman in Brixton, the streets were certainly a safer place, and a lot of the intra-working class mistrust and hostility was temporarily broken down in the heat of real struggle. They were, in the vast majority of cases, not the actions of anyone who was "lumpenised".

It is you who identify the ICC's "scandalous destruction of political vocabulary"- terms like "councilism","opportunism" and "centrism" - whilst you yourselves do almost the same thing with the exotic word "lumpenised". I'm not saying in any way that you have the same motivation as the ICC (falsification and hierarchical stabilisation), but that you are escaping a class analysis, just as in your article on the teachers. Thelumpenproletariat does not exist on any significant scale in this country; and I dont know if anything different could be said as regards any other country - perhaps India and some South American countries are exceptions, perhaps not. And, anyway, use of the word "lumpenised" in your context implies not only the existence of a significantly-sized lumpenproletariat in this country, but the existence of a process whereby impoverished proletarians are changing class Or perhaps you believe that the lumpenproletariat was never a class? For me, to speak of the crisis as "lumpenising" proletarians is as wrong as speaking of the boom as "bourgeoisifying" them.

The same idea is put forward at the end of an otherwise commendable article on the Welfare State: weak groups "within the working class" have "high quotas of lumpenised and deferential workers"(my emphasis) and cannot fight alone against the State's attack. Firstly, very many members of the three weak groups you mention - "claimants, unemployed, pensioners" - are not workers. Its not "unpretentious" to call them "workers" rather than using the more exact word "proletarians"; its just plain wrong. Secondly, the concept of a "lumpenised worker" would have astounded Marx ! I would have preferred to see your attempts to develop a critique of the tendencies towards a breakdown in the "social consensus", and of the class recomposition in the proletariat, in the "old" petty bourgeoisie, and in the managerial-bureaucratic "new" petty bourgeoisie. For all these are touched on peripherally in CB.9.....

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One of our comrades replied as follows....

....Firstly your p nt about our categorising those in inner city riots as being "lumpenised". You are quite correct to berate us for this. At the very least, if we are to use the term, we should attempt to be rigorous and historically accurate. This, I'm afraid, we were not. I think in all honesty the notion was used as a piece of 'journalese' which, at a superficial level, appears to be working within a consistent class analysis. But rather than doing this we, in fact, obscured the class content of the struggles. Generally we are of the opinion that the riots were proletarian. It is certainly possible to argue the case that the long term unemployment and the petty-crime endemic to riot areas might be sufficient to categorise the elements as a growing mass of lumpenproletariat cut off from the proletarian community and lacking a collective consciousness which could begin to transend the limits of not being 'workers'. However, we think that such an interpretation is mistaken. The rioting community is not simply defined as long term unemployed but by the way in which it is embedded within the larger social context: its relationship to state institutions such as the DHSS, the impact of the crisis upon these institutions, and its direct relationship to the "working" class. This gives a material condition which establishes proletarian credentials and as such makes the struggles of the rioters as a moment in the larger class struggle.

When you criticise us for saying that the Heysel stadium events were "little different from the riots of Toxteth, Brixton and Bristol" you once again make a valid point. Within the CBG there is a difference of opinion on this. I and a number of others in the organisation now reject this view of the city riots. Indeed, we think that to draw such an equation is to fall into an acceptance of the bourgeoisie's categories: all collective action which violently attacks state institutions is simply reduced to criminality; in fact the very category of riot is a juridicial one which obscures class struggle, denies any coherent social purpose and reduces it to the sum of the aims of "wicked" individuals.

The bloodbath at Heysel Stadium was fought out on terrain with little or no chance of breaking out of bourgeois bounds. This particular battle, as with most football clashes, started from a confrontation between working class youth with sectarian attachments. Football generates localistic, religious and nationalist loyalties which inevitably leads to an undermining of the common social bonds which link spectators. Even when both sides attack the police this is usually only a momentary interruption of the ongoing sectarian struggles. It is not totally impossible for the sectarian divide to be crossed at the moment of confrontation with the forces of the state but this possibility is tightly circumscribed by the starting point of these struggles.

On the other hand the larger and broader battles like Toxteth and Tottenham proceed from different starting points. They are within a collectivity which encompasses proletarians of different coloured skins and ethnic backgrounds. But they are bound together by a common social situation which centres upon the institutions of law and order and the dole

system. The confrontations with the police are part of an attempt by this community to defend itself from racism and worsening economic conditions. The battles we have witnessed over the past few years have not been "nihilistic and directionless" as was claimed in the Bulletin. Certainly the way in which the battles emerged was not identical to those in the coal strike. This, however, is a sign of the different material and proletarian conditions within which they grew. The direction taken was an assertion of autonomy and this did not "rob the kids of their class identity" Quite the contrary, the collective action of "riot" is a starting point for a development of consciousness. Whether this occurs or not is problematic, but this is not unique to the 'rioters' situation. All proletarian struggles fight to overcome the ideology of the bourgeoisie. The miners battle was, irrespective of high levels of violence, hemmed in by the bourgeois mystifications of unionism. In the city riots there is the ever-present danger of racism. The attacks which blacks suffer from a predominantly white police force make their battles prey to black nationalist/racist ideologies. So far there is no evidence that blacks have identified their repression with simply the colours of skins. If this did happen, and irrespective of the level of violence against the police, then the riots would have, not become "directionless" but certainly would have "robbed the kids of their class identity".....

Flett

Another comrade, the author of the two original articles, regards the questions differently.....

....First of all it is important to stress that the questions the comrade raises are regarded by us as wholly open questions. The class nature of teachers - get it wrong and you're on the wrong side of the barricades - all that sectarian nonsense is completely alien to how the CBG looks at this and a whole range of other questions. The whole thrust of what the CBG has been arguing since its formation is that such polarisation of debate is sectarian and hostile to political development...

....As we tried to point out in the original article on teachers, sociological definitions as to their status hold no interest for Marxists; only their involvement in the class struggle will determine their class nature conclusively. Communists can be clear on the class nature of the police: they are the hired dogs of the state and the development of the crisis causes the state to bind them ever closer to it. Their interests are wholly inseperable. But other groupings, like the teachers- while serving a policing function for the state - do not have this absolute common interest. To the police, their role is clear cut - to obey and defend the state. Teachers find their role far more contradictory: yes they defend and spread bourgeois values but at the same time their liberal views of education and knowledge lead them into increasing confrontation with the state. We believe that they are a part of the working class - marginalised, bewildered by their anbiguous position as workers and managers, but in a faltering way they are resisting the attacks of the state. The fact that they also see themselves as defending an 'education' system which communists see as largely antithetical to genuine education no more bars them from the working class than, say, those shipyard workers who campaign to win 'defence' contracts. The comrade's willingness to condemn teachers to the ranks of the bourgeoisie seems to indicate a static view of class, and class consciousness. This can be further seen in his appeal for us to address school kids. The fact that the majority of them are from the working class does not, unfortunately, mean that their responses to their social oppression are capable of taking a positive direction in isolation from generalised class activity. Kids, outside the experience of the wage labour process which is crucial in determining the class' potential for liberation, inevitably react individually, individualistically and nihilistically. The occasional attempt at self organisation is doomed to failure - usually through lack of dynamic though the left is always present to mop up any survivors. We do not address kids, per se, because we have nothing to say to them about their struggle - any address would be purely pedagogic, an idealist approach which we reject.

The comrade is right, however to take to task the article which sought to lump the Heysel disaster with the inner city riots. The two, as he says are dissimilar. Football hooliganisam is lumpenised behaviour which can go nowhere - its whole logic is divisive, and the fact that participants gain some perverted sense of community, denied them the rest of the week is merely an ironical underlining of the isolation and social insecurity that drives them against their brothers.

Yes, the inner city riots are different. But they are not working class. Again the comrade tends to sociological interpretations; but the riots were not community wide actions, but largely the work of the unemployed young. As communists our sympathies clearly must lie with these youth and yes, we have an emotional identification with their confrontation with the police - but we must go beyond emotive responses. Why are these youths working class? Most have never worked. (Be quite clear we are not ouvrierists who think that all virtue can only come in some mystical way from sweating at the point of production). So where is the material base which gives the potential for these youth to organise? Your identity with their struggle is like your identity with school kids - 'they are oppressed therefore they have militant potential'. But this is the idealism of anarchism. Where is the material conditions which will enable these groups of disaffected young to fight on working class terrain? After fleeting bursts of community in the actual moment of battle they are left isolated - and where then is the potential in looting shops and retreating back to their individual houses? Much was made of the idea of community defence (especially by Leftists) in Tottenham, Brixton and Toxteth but it seems that much of, say, the burning of cars, was random and nihilistic rather than to create barricades. Where is the potential in messing your own doorstep? There is nothing new in lumpen confrontations with the state. It has happenned in our major cities since they were built. Every weekend there are parts of our housing estates that become no-go areas for the police. Even in Edinburgh there are periodic disturbances with policemen being stoned and their cars overturned or set alight in such areas. This

has happenned for generations. We understand and sympathise with the elements who carry out such attacks - bút see them as positive? No! Their place in society - excluded from the work process which presents the conditions for common action, marginalised, criminalised, makes such elements unstable and incapable of self-organisation: they can only attach themselves to the dominant class - bourgeoisie or proletariat, and, outside of widespread class struggle, they can only be dominated by the bourgeoisie. Thus we can expect nationalistic or racial or leftist ideology to predominate. The comrade's reluctance to to accept the existence of a lumpen proletariat even on a global scale is a weakness on his part. There are millions and millions of sub-proletarians in the Third World who have been thrown off their land and camp now in the disgusting shanty towns which are a featúre of almost every third world city. In times of high class struggle such elements can and will be won to class positions. We should be discussing how this will come about - but to romantically identify with them and see them as capable of development alone is to make a serious mistake.....

G.M.

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This correspondence originated in two articles which appeared in our last issue - Bulletin 9 on the teachers and Brussels.

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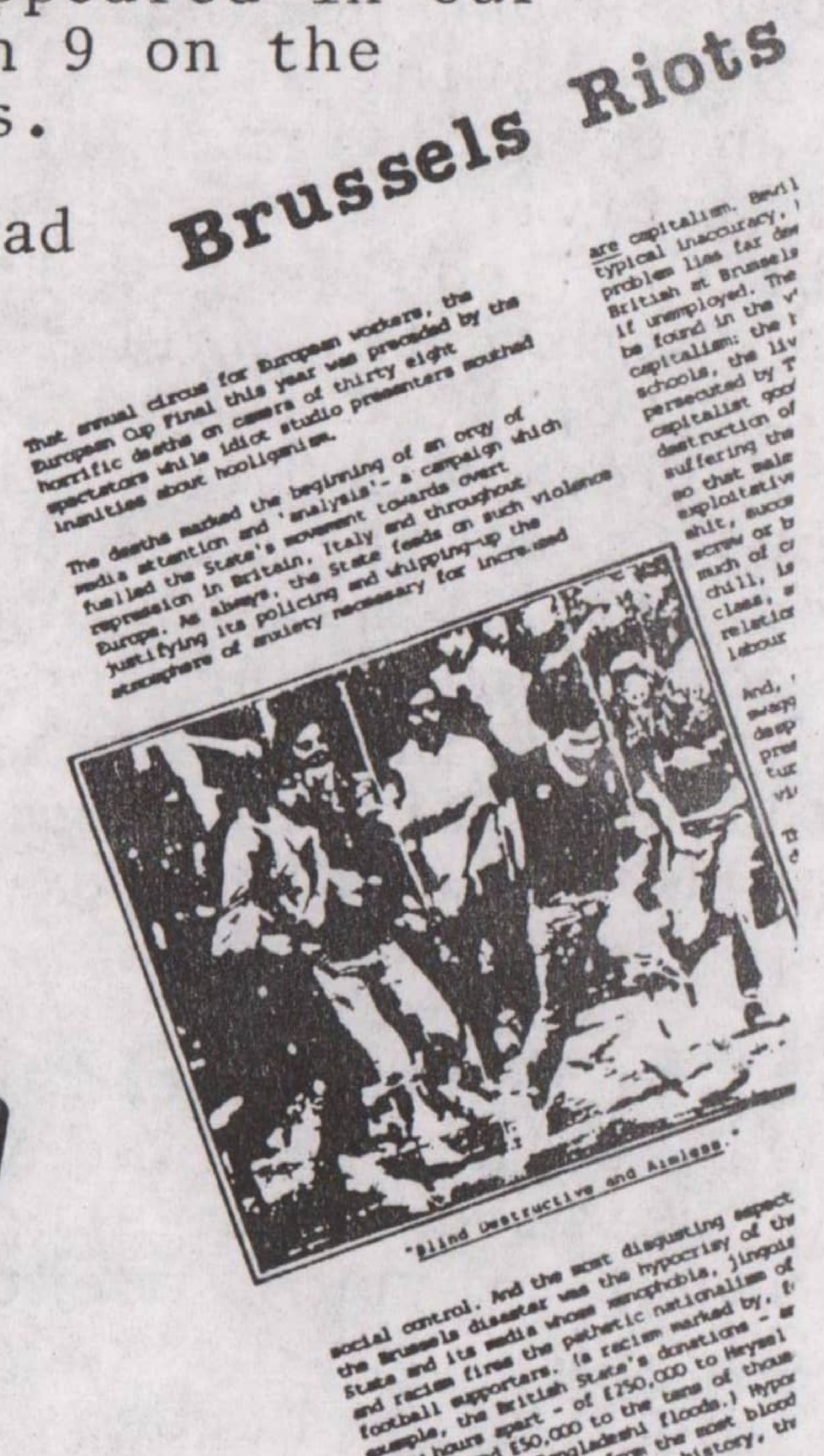

Brussels Riots

That annual circus for European workers, the European Cup Final this year was preceded by the horrific deaths on camera of thirty eight spectators while idiot studio presenters mouthed inanities about hooliganism.

The deaths marked the beginning of an orgy of media attention and 'analysis' - a campaign which fuelled the State's movement towards overt repression in Britain, Italy and throughout Europe. As always, the State feeds on such violence justifying its policing and whipping-up the atmosphere of anxiety necessary for increased

'Blind Destructive and Aimless.'

social control. And the most disgusting aspect of the Brussels disaster was the hypocrisy of the State and its media whose xenophobia, jingois[m] and racism fires the pathetic nationalism of football supporters. (a racism marked by, f[or] example, the British State's donations - a few hours apart - of £250,000 to Heysel families and £50,000 to the tens of thous[ands of] victims of the Bangladeshi floods.) Hypo[crisy] in the feigned shock from the most blood[y] violent social construct in history, the capitalist state.

But this hypocrisy aside, the violence was real and sickening: workers attac[king] ... Where does such violence come from? ... answer is that it is fanned by the ... its media's nationalistic campaign ... it stems from the violent social r[...]

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Teachers Strike

One month after the miners strike the indications are that the defeat of the miners has not left the British working class cowed as in 1926. The state's £3 Billion investment in the strike is not showing any guaranteed returns. And if the miners strike was the most dramatic of the state's attempts to crush workers' resistance to austerity, there have been others - eg. the £200 Million spent over ten months to defeat 400 Civil servants in Newcastle so that efficiency measures could be imposed with a saving of £50,000. In strict terms of profit and loss such disputes do not make a great deal of sense but their real importance for the state lies in their encouragement of a 'mood of realism' - in other wor's apathy, fatalism and demoralisation.

Perhaps a significant pointer to the fact that this mood of capitalist realism is not sweeping workers is the present teachers strike. When what are called by sociologists the 'middle class' take up the class struggle, its a clear sign that the fragile ' social consensus' bought by the boom years is well and truly over. During the 70's the state attempted to focus its austerity attacks on the social wage (education, health care, welfare provision etc.) but in the 80's we have seen the attacks becoming more and more direct (jobs and wages) as the bourgeoisie's room for manoeuvre has narrowed. As Communists we insist that these attacks are the direct result of the crisis and not the personal inclinations of Thatcher. (these may have an influence, but only a marginal one - witness the often similar strategies of the 'socialist' Mitterand in France). Teachers have thus been in the firing line for some 15 years, seeing wage cut after wage cut, in real terms, accompanied by increased workload and deteriorating working conditions.

To an extent, teachers have always been an easy target. Many cling to the mystique that they have little in common with other workers - that they are 'professionals' above the cut and thrust of industrial relations. Sizeable numbers (especially in primary education) regarded struggle for pay and conditions as anathema - a denial of their mythical status. But the steady erosion of teachers' living standards (an effect increasingly felt by even '2nd wage' earners) is changing this. The elaborate promotion structure brought in in the 70's to weaken resistance to attacks has similarly begun to lose its effect. Promotion movement has clogged up and promoted staff are feeling the pinch too.

And the attacks are not just economic; austerity comes in a wide-ranging package. Thus, teachers, like workers everywhere, face a worsening climate of interfering management, petty restraints, run-down of working conditions, promotion of

Once Again the Unions Lead Teachers to Defeat.

On The Fraction

The following letter was written before the appearance of Internationalist Perspective journal of the External Fraction of the International Communist Current. With the appearance of this journal we are now in a much better position to assess the content and trajectory of the External Fraction. We feel, however, that the letter will suffice for the moment. It focusses upon the central issue of asking the comrades of the Fraction to take heed of the nature of the Communist Milieu and the danger of sectarianism. Therefore we shall make no detailed critique of the contents of Internationalist Perspective until the comrades reply to our letter. We would say that their ability to politically respond to our communication will be an indication of the extent to which they are evolving in a healthy political manner.

The only comment we would make about the contents of Internationalist Perspective is that it seems to be an extremely myopic publication concentrating as it does upon the ills done to the Fraction and ignoring or denying that any connection exists between the activities of the ICC in 1980-1 and those of 1984-5. We would ask that the comrades give this question very serious consideration. We would hope that this apparent shortsightedness is only temporary, the product of the inevitable tendency for expelled factions to be momentarily dazzled by events around them. With time, we hope, the comrades' vision will adjust and a better historical perepective achieved.

Communist Bulletin Group

OPEN LETTER TO THOSE COMRADES WHO HAVE LEFT THE I.C.C.

Box 85.
43,Candlemakers Row
EDINBURGH
U.K.
12th January 1986.

Dear Comrades,

Reading the report of the Sixth Congress of the ICC in WR 90. was like stepping back in time to the splits of five years ago.

Over the past few years we have attempted to explain why these splits occured and what their political implications were. By and large we have been forced to focus upon the organisational failures of the ICC, in particular pinpointing its inability to concretely grasp the importance of an open internal life as a pre-requisite of a healthy external activity. This openness is not a luxury which we might or might not indulge in. It is the very essence of the organisation of communists. Whilst we acknowledge, and have done so publically, that many mistakes (notably the threat to involve the police) were made five years ago; nonetheless the response of the ICC at the time and its subsequent actions have demonstrated that it was an organisation which was sinking into the pit of sectarianism and monolithism. It has, in fact, help dig this pit and willingly climbed in. In practice this has meant that the political critiques mounted by the CBG and others were ignored; the ICC preferred the use of lies and vilification.

No doubt comrades of the new tendency were implicated in this un-communist behaviour. It might well be that some of you still believe that the campaign was fully justified. But stopand think comrades, confront the past in the light of your recent experience of the ICC's methods. It has been difficult for us to get the details which lie behind the present split, we have had to rely upon the accounts in WR and International Review. But even with this meagre evidence it is clear to us that the ICC's response has parallelled that of five years ago: lies, distortions and the construction of a dogmatism, necessitating the construction of a new heresy, namely "councilism" and "centrism". Briefly IR43 makes it clear that "centrism" is not simply an error but one of such proportions that it puts those who are centrists over a class line. The ICC does not really argue the point, rather it depends upon caricature: JA is a "malevolent conjuror" whilst "comrades MacIntosh's adherence to the marxist method is only a formal one". Not surprisingly conjurors and non-marxists are not wanted in the so pure, so correct ICC. Hence, it seems, you were driven from the ICC.

First of all the Sixth Congress demanded an oath of allegiance, the affirmation of the dissidents' "militant committment to the organisation". In a proletarian organisation which was healthy this would simply mean militants affirming committment to the

organisation's platform, but in the case of theICC experience has shown that the oath of allegiance is a mechanism used to squash debate and dissent. In effect, to affirm such committment is to accept the rights of central organs to dictate positions. In the event you had the courage to stand up to the onslaught and blackmail of the ICC. But you paid the price. You could no longer work within the ICC. It is clear from the report in WR 90 that the Current is now embarked upon a campaign of covering the new "fraction" with political filth. Just as it did with Chenier and the CBG, so it now imputes "other aims" to those in the fraction. Maybe you are not simply objective agents of an alien ideology, could you not be subjective agents of the bourgeoisie? This is the method of the ICC.

Do not be sidetracked in your critique of the ICC into believing that the split was the result of differences over ideas of the "subterranean maturation of consciousness". Yes, the question of class consciousness is central to the functioning of the organisation, but you must ask yourself why the ICC was not able to contain this debate and accept existing differences. And you must also ask why it is that the ICC uses the "debating" methods of lies and vilification. These are questions of organisational practice and structure.

You will not be surprised to hear that we believe the ICC has become a thoroughly corrupt organisation. This is not to say that the ICC was always corrupt. Indeed we think that in the 1970's, the Current was the single most important organisation in the communist milieu. In particular it added significantly to our understanding of class consciousness and to the importance of openness within the organisations of the proletariat. In fact the ICC's ability to take in the ex-CWO militants, with their differing conceptions of the proletarian state and political economy, is evidence of this. The sad irony of the ICC's present trajectory s that it has abandoned its original strengths of sensitive historical analysis in favour of arid mechanisms and dogmatism.

So where do you go from here? The only way you could return to the ICC would be to admit your guilt and confess to heresy. A life of obedience, largely dumb, would ensue. The only serious alternative open to you is to maintain yourself for the moment as a "fraction" which is willing to work with the range of organisations in the proletarian milieu with the aim of rebuilding and reonstituting an international movement capable of responding in a healthy way to debate and of intervening in the larger class struggle. A first step on the way to this is a reassessment of the life of the ICC over the past few years. Why is it, if you defendthe Platform of the ICC that you can no longer work within the ICC? The CBG was faced with this problem when it formed itself as a distinct communist organisation. We concluded that not only was the ICC a focal point of sectarianism but also that the movement as a whole

was subject to it. Our reading of the period of revolution confirmed for us the need for openness in debate and that the Third International emerged from a complex interaction of differing positions and not from the imposition of the correct positions as the "truth" held by a single organisation.

We ask that you address yourselves to these problems. We ask that you contact other groups in the milieu and publically debate with them. This means not only relating fraternally with organisations such as the CBG and the CWO but also attempting to maintain a militant relationship with the ICC. Do not fall into the trap of exchanging insults with them. To help you in these tasks we offer you the pages of the Bulletin. We make this offer in the same spirit that we have made it to others: the wish to encourage fraternal discussion and our attempts to be involved in rebuilding a healthy international movement. Because the ICC was, to say the least, less than friendly towards us, we are not at all certain thatthe CBG's Bulletin was read by many members of theCurrent. We would encourage you to read these as they have dealt in some detail with the same problems which now confront you. Copies of past issues can behad from us should you need them.

Finally, please send us a contact address for the fraction and ensure that we receive any and all texts that you produce.

Communist Bulletin Group.

Please note that since the above was written the group address of the Communist Bulletin Group has changed. We can now be contacted at

BOX C.B.G.
c/o Boomtown Books
167 King Street
ABERDEEN
Scotland.
U.K.

The External Fraction can be contacted at:

BM Box 8154
London WC 1N 3XX
U.K.

Continued From Colour Supplement Page 2

group". If the CWO are consistent, this will mean that, like the CBG, the EF will be forever excluded from the possibility of joint work with the CWO, from taking an equal place in any political forum for debate organised by the CWO, or even from ever being mentioned in the pages of the CWO's publications, for fear of having "legitimacy" conferred on them. The only relationship possible with the CWO will be one of private debate so that the CWO can endeavour to

"break their collectivity" and drive them into their "real" pole of regroupment. It goes without saying that this bizarre and unique theory of the CWO still awaits a public defence or explanation. Perhaps they would like to tell us who are the current "real" representative of the German Left now that they believe (with a certain amount of justification) that the ICC are gravitating pell-mell towards the "real" representatives of the Italian Left. Are the CBG now the "real" heirs of the German Left, or is it the EF because they are bigger? Or are we both still "pseudo-groups"? How such self-confessed, rigorous dialectical materialists can engage in this destructively sectarian, metaphysical piffle is one of the enduring mysteries of the current revolutionary milieu.

Finally, for ourselves, we welcome whole-heartedly the appearance of the EF and extend whatever support we can to their efforts to slough off the crushing weight of the ICC's monolithic and sectarian practices. The standing offer that we have made to the rest of the milieu is naturally extended to the comrades of the Fraction. We offer -

- exchange of publications;
- mutual servicing of bookshops;
- space in the Bulletin to respond to our polemics;
- an invitation to joint interventions where possible.

We hope that the comrades will respond positively and fraternally.

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE EXTERNAL FRACTION OF THE ICC.

On 12/4/86, the CBG attended the External Fraction of the ICC's first public meeting in Britain since their split with the ICC. The subject was wide-ranging - covering the economic crisis, the inter-imperialist struggle, the balance of class forces and the tasks of revolutionaries. Inevitably, if perhaps unfortunately, the bulk of the meeting concentrated on the question of organisation with particular reference to the splits. The meeting was sparsely attended - some comrades of the EFICC, the comrades of the CBG, 2 members of the ICC, one ex-ICC member, 2 from the CWO and 2 from the SPGB. In other words, with the exception of the SPGB (who claimed not to know why they were there), and the CWO (who announced they were there as observers), it was virtually a meeting between the ICC and ex-members. Without the slightest sign of irony, one of the ICC comrades complained that the enormous amount of interest in the meeting contrasted starkly with the ICC's last public meeting (on the class struggle at Wapping) where no-one had turned up. This, for the ICC, was a clear demonstration of how unhealthy the revolutionary milieu had become. For us, however, and for everyone else with eyes in their head to see, there could be no more convincing demonstration of the enormous damage that the monolithism and sectarianism of the ICC has wreaked over the past few years. Six years ago, an ICC public meeting in London, on any subject, would have automatically attracted a lively and numerous milieu of contacts, sympathisers and fraternal critics. Today, the stark truth facing the ICC is that no-one who is familiar with them has the slightest interest in them or their activities. The comrade of the ICC seemed to have no understanding of how pathetic the attendance actually was. Only those with a vested interest were present. The profound isolation of the ICC is now virtually complete.

At the heart of the debate, was the question posed to the EF from all the participants - Why split from the ICC? Why are you a separate organisation? What is the political basis for your existence given your professed intention to continue defending the ICC's Platform? The varied response from the different comrades of the EF demonstrated clearly that they have only begun to grapple with this problem. A variety of reasons were put forward - the ICC's programmatic degeneration on the question of class consciousness (andtherefore, perhaps on the Party); rejection of the ICC's contention that councillism represents the greatest danger to the proletariat in the present period; the related issue of the possibility of centrism on this issue; and the slide of the ICC into voluntarism (and perhaps even into leftism) on the question of intervention in the class struggle. But, above all this, throughout the Fraction's contributions at the meeting, there were some clear signs that they were beginning to realise that the fundamental crux of their differences with the ICC, lay not so much in the disputed positions themselves, but in the organisational practice which contained them.

Taken together with the texts in the first issue of their publication, it is clear that the EF have managed to take the first step in recognising and rejecting the profound monolithism which lies at the heart of the ICC's practice. Readers of the Internationalist Perspective will find there a a comprehensive and detailed description of this practice - the bureaucratic suppression of debate, the persecution of the dissenters, their exclusion from the central organs and the life of the organisation, the blockage of legitimate tendency activities, the character assassinations, the use of loyalty oaths, the profound terror of, and flight from, open debate - a practice reeking of the worst of Stalinist-type decay and corruption.

However, it has to be said that this rejection of the ICC's monolithism by the Fraction is, for the moment, only a partial one and remains crucially incomplete. They have realised that the ship is ablaze and sinking but they've not only jumped overboard without first learning to swim, they still have the anchor chain wrapped round their necks. First of all, they have to come to grips with the question which confronted them from all sides in the meeting. How does the ICC's behaviour in 1985 differ from the events of 1980? Everybody pointed out to them that there had been NO change in the ICC's treatment of tendencies. Their treatment by the ICC, to an uncanny degree, duplicated in every single respect and detail that received by the splitters in 1980-81. This was pointed out to them by the CBG, the CWO, the ICC themselves, and even by the SPGB members. Certainly, the years since the 1980-81 splits have seen inevitable developments -

the years of suppressed debate have culminated in programmatic degeneration on the question of class consciousness;

the purges of 1981 meant that subsequent dissent was of necessity more homogenous than in 1981;

the ghastly lesson of the idiotic excesses of the last split (thefts etc) has been taken to heart and have provided less excuse for the ICC to erect a hysterical smokescreen.

But these developments cannot obscure the essehtial identity of 1981 and 1985. We are faced with a direct continuation. It is impossible for the comrades to develop a genuine critique of the ICC's current monolithism whilst at the same time affirming the ICC's behaviour in 1980-81, the Extra-Ordinary Congress, and their own individual involvement in that. We say openly to the comrades of the Fraction, that unless this is done in a rational, honest and thoroughgoing manner, they will be politically unable to cast off the degenerate organisational theories and practice of the ICC. They have to get rid of the anchor chain if they want to learn to swim.

Fortunately, there are clear signs that the EF are not going to shirk this task. They accepted at the meeting that the ICC's behaviour in 1980-81 was less than perfect and not capable of being completely defended, and most importantly, they have completely abandoned the ICC's characterisation of the CBG as "gangsters outside the proletarian milieu". They have accepted the CBG as comrades, have re-opened normal fraternal relations with us and have, most importantly, committed themselves to a public response to our political contributions. Certainly they continued to express certain (undefined) reservations about the CBG's behaviour (although from certain of the comments from their comrades it would seem that they are misinformed about the actual details) but at least the possibility of open debate and honest re-assessment is finally on the agenda.

However, this is only the first step for the Fraction. The central question remains - what is the political

basis for their existence as a separate organisation? Why is the question of monolithism in revolutionary organisation a basis for splitting? Without trying to inflate our own contribution over the past five years, we want the comrades to understand that they are not breaking new ground when they take on this task. Their experiences have exactly duplicated ours; their perception of the ICC's monolithism and the necessity to split is identical; the political questions they are now confronted with are the same; and the process they are already embarked upon follows in our steps. We urge the comrades to read our contributions on this question in the past issues of the Bulletin.

The comrades of the EF have described very well, in the meeting and in their magazine, the practical manifestations of this monolithism which they are rejecting in the ICC. But, until they develop a political analysis which goes beyond simple description, they remain vulnerable to the ICC's charge that they are only another group chasing the chimera of anti-bureaucratism. For us, and we think for the comrades, bureaucratism per se is not a splitting issue. The bureaucratism of the ICC is simply an expression, a vehicle for something much more profound. Behind it lies the very heart of the organisation question - the problem of monolithism and sectarianism. Why is this issue so vital? Why is it important enough to demand organisational separation and to cause comrades to turn their backs on an organisation they have devoted more than a decade of their revolutionary commitment to, and whose platform they still defend? The comrades have not yet answered this question and until they do, they will lack the political framework which will allow them to go forward.

Monolithism is incompatible with revolutionary work because it erects a major barrier to the organisation taki up its essential role within the unfolding str gles of the class. For the CBG, for the EF (and once upon a time, for the ICC) the unique contribution the Party brings to the revolutionary process, is fundamentally the provision of political leadership. This does not derive from the Party's ability to organise the class and its struggles nor its ability to function as a political General Staff, but rather, from its ability to point the way forward via the clarity of its programme and slogans. The vital component is clarity. Unlike those who defend the Bordigist vision, for us, programmatic clarity is not some static entity waiting to be discovered (or created) and wielded by an omnipotent Party but is one aspect of the living, developing consciousness of the class. The process of clarification is unceasing and is insparable from continuous, open and free debate.

The other side of the coin of an internal monolithic practice is inevitably, an external practice of sectarianism. So far, the Fraction have confined much of their critique of the ICC to its internal behaviour, but the damage done by the ICC to its own life and militants is exactly matched by the destruction it has achieved within the movement as a whole. Once again, the key is clarity, open and public debate and the whole process of clarification. As we have said elsewhere (see introduction to the article in this issue on the emergence of the Bolshevik Party) we do not think that clarity is ever the creation or possession of any single organisational element and therefore the fraternal confrontation of positions is essential. Without this understanding the process of regroupment which will produce the Party of the future, remains an enigma, and is replaced, as we have seen in the ICC and the CWO, by the destructive and irresonsible pursuit of narrow, organisational self-interest.

We think the Fraction, in texts in their publication and in their contributions at the meeting, have already followed a considerable way towards agreement on this question. However, they have shown no signs yet of grappling with the political and organisational consequences of their clarity on the rejection of monolithism. Unless they do this, they will leave themselves unable to avoid a re-occurrence of the errors of the ICC. Pious wishes are not sufficient. It is not simply a question of will, but a question of organisational practice and structure. We have already published many texts on this in the Bulletin, therefore we will not run through a lengthy repeat here. But the comrades must get to grips with a re-assessment of the fundamentals of revolutionary organisation. They must consider -

- the role and function of centralisation and the nature of central organs;
- what is, and what is not, essential to the programmatic identity of an organisation. In other words, the whole question of taking up positions.
- the meaning of political debate and divergences and how to deal with them internally and publically;
- the theoretical and practical consequences of rejecting sectarianism. In other words, how to relate to the rest of the milieu.

Obviously, as a new organisation the Fraction has many pressing tasks in its first few months of existence, but the organisation question lies at the very heart of all its work. It cannot be left as a political afterthought. If it fails in this, it must face either fragmentation or retreat into the suffocation of the ICC.

As for the ICC themselves, their performance at the meeting was predictable. The critique of the EF was dismissed as a mystifying edifice of lies equalled only by that produced by the "gangsters of the CBG". Why they should be continually confronted with the desertion of their members, making identical accusations of the suppression and destruction of debate by corrupt and monolithic practices, appears to remain a baffling and hurtful mystery to them. Their only political explanation, apart from the inherent malice and wickedness of the splitters, is that their critics are in reality anti-centralism - if you don't accept the monolithism of the ICC then you must reject centralisation. However, no argumentation to to support this contention is ever forthcoming. It remains at the level of simple insult. In reality, both the CBG and the EF remain intransigently commited to centralised organisation. The real question is not for or against centralisation but on the form and content of centralisation.

The CWO's contribution was equally predictable. After first announcing that they were there only as observers and to gather information, they then declared that they couldn't understand a single word of the discussion on organisation. For them, the whole debate on monolithism and the necessity for a free and open internal life within revolutionary organisations was essentially an unreal question. They insisted that like the splits of 1980-81, the separation of the EF from the ICC could have no political justification, therefore, lacking a "real" political basis for existence, the EF could only be, like the CBG, a "pseudo-

Continued on Page 18

CLARITY and UNITY in The Russian Revolution

Introduction

The re-emergence of the infant revolutionary movement in the early seventies, after many decades submerged in the darkness of the most profound counter-revolution, has been, and continues to be, a painful and difficult process. The task facing us was twofold - the re-appropriation of programmatic clarity, and inextricably entwined with that, the problem of how to organise ourselves and our work in order to transform that clarity into a living weapon within the struggles of the class in a way which laid the foundations for the emergence of the Party. In many respects, the initial gains were substantial and rapid. The mid seventies saw the foundation of the Communist Workers Organisation and the International Communist Current round platforms which successfully incorporated the political lessons learned from the experiences of the left factions which split from the decaying Third International in the early twenties - the K.A.P.D., the Dutch Tribune Group, and the Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Left. The political clarity of these platforms - the nature and reality of capitalist decadence; the bourgeois nature of reformism, parliamentarism and of trade unions; the impossibility of national liberation struggles; the capitalist nature of the so-called "socialist" and "communist" countries and their supporters; the insistence that the working class is the only social force capable of achieving the revolutionary transformation of society; and the absolute necessity for a centralised Marxist Party within that revolutionary process - all this remains as a fundamental point of departure for revolutionary work today, and forms the heart of the CBG's own Platform.

The organisational gains achieved by 1975 were also substantial. The emergence of new communist fractions prompted the already-existing Battaglia Communista to take the immensely significant step of organising a series of International Conferences which promised to serve the new revolutionary milieu as an invaluable point of reference and as a permanent forum for debate, fraternal confrontation and the hope of joint work. The pinnacle of achievement, however, was undoubtedly the formation of the ICC, the first genuinely international communist organisation to exist since the defeat of the last revolutionary wave.

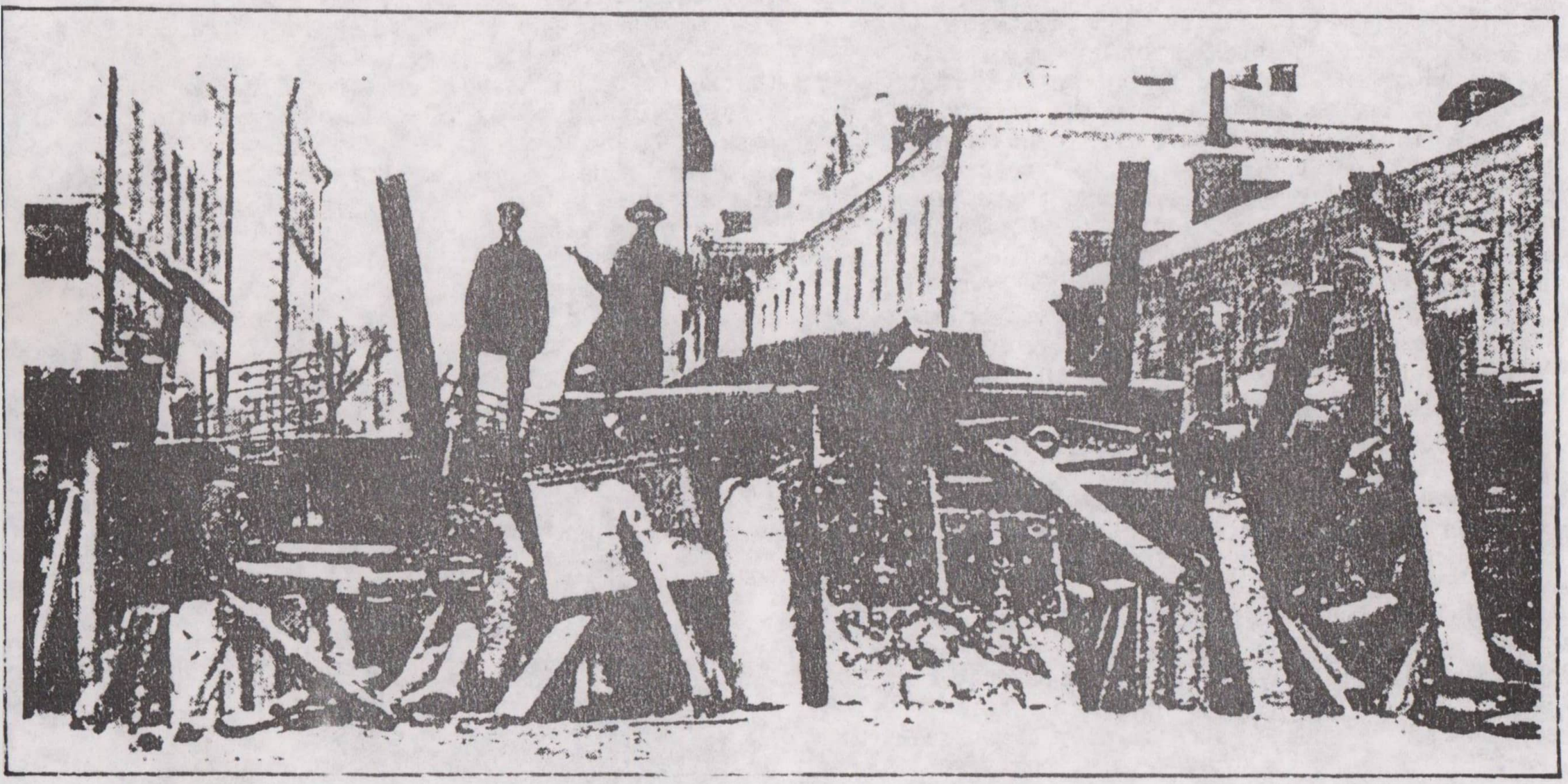
Unfortunately, the passage of more than a decade has not resulted in even a consolidation of these initial gains, let alone their hoped-for extension. Against a background of continuing numerical insignificance and isolation from the class, the International Conferences were destroyed by the opportunistic manoeuvring of the CWO and Battaglia Communista, who saw them as nothing more than a vehicle for their own self-interest. This profound loss was accompanied by an endless series of damaging splits within the ICC and the CWO which has left the entire movement crippled by bitter and divisive fragmentation. At the political heart of this situation, lies the continuing failure of the milieu as a whole, to grapple with the crushing weight of monolithism and sectarianism. The question of organisation remains the apparently insurmountable crux of all our efforts and has been a focus of much of the work of the CBG since our foundation. In Bulletin 2 in "Another Look at the Organisation Question" we made a lengthy examination of the organisational theory and practice of the Bolshevik Party in order to attack the myth that the Bolsheviks were able to undertake their vital contribution as a result of developing an infallible organisational blueprint in 1903 for a well-oiled and disciplined political machine which allowed them to survive the years of counter-revolution and form the Party of 1917. In the following article, we deal with the programmatic side of this myth - that the Bolsheviks emerged in 1903 with a body of vital political positions, unique to them, which were carefully nurtured through the years of counter-revolution and which formed the programmatic heart of the Party in 1917.

Lenin - Myth or Reality

It should be immediately clear to anyone with experience of the current revolutionary movement that our purpose here is a polemical one. It is not an exercise in ancient academic history. The sectarian and destructive fragmentation we have all suffered from in the past decade, with group after group presenting set after set of "essential" positions which, after the damage has been done, turn out to be as transitory as a morning frost, is inextricably tied to a practice which springs from the misreading (and wilful distortion) of the history of the emergence of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern. At the heart of this lies a profound failure to understand the process of regroupment either in the past or in the present. Common to both the ICC and the CWO, is the mistaken belief that the Party will emerge from the "victory" of one single fraction "conquering" the rest of the milieu by virtue of

the "correctness" of its already existing positions and organisational form. We have argued since our foundation that an examination of our own recent history and that of the last revolutionary wave, is at complete variance with this misconception. The crucial role of the Bolsheviks notwithstanding, the Party of 1917 was not simply the Bolshevik Party of 1903 writ large. It was the product of many political elements, contributing a variety of militants, practices and positions. No single fraction ever had a monopoly of the totality of political clarity at any given point. No-one got everything right. In the final result, the Party, its programmatic clarity and its political practice, was a synthesis springing from the interaction of the entire milieu with the onward thrust of the class. What was important was not some mythical, static clarity but the entire process of clarification.

This is the lesson that we must learn today. We must organise ourselves in a manner which facilitates this process of clarification. Political differences and divergences are not weaknesses to be suppressed but are the very foundations of our strength. If like the ICC and the CWO, we can only see debate and divergences as an alien, hostile intrusion, then we will condemn ourselves to the sterile and useless life of the sect.



Workers on the Barricades in Moscow in 1905

Myth and Reality

First the myth. In 1903 Lenin, realising that over the next ten years or so the bulk of the then existing party of Social Democracy in Russia would inexorably move into the camp of counter-revolution, engineered a split within the party on the basis of a disagreement on organisational principles which left two clearly defined factions, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the former of which, through many trials and tribulations, kept to the path of correctness outlined by Lenin in 1903-4 and won over the mass of the proletariat in 1917 to proletarian revolution in Russia.

In previous issues of the Communist Bulletin (in particular issue 2.) we have dealt at length with that part of the myth regarding the organisational "correctness" of the Bolsheviks and the extent to which this position was actually experienced in fact. In this article we wish to examine the notion that it was the organisational question which in reality split the party. It is the contention of this text that although the question of organisation and the struggles of 1903-4 were not forgotten and that they did indeed form one basis for disagreement within Russian Social Democracy up to and beyond the revolution of 1917. it was NOT the basis for the plethora of splits and factions which the RSDLP experienced prior to 1917. What must be realised is that in terms of the real situation facing the working class in Russia the dichotomy between the pipe dreams of the SD emigres and the reality for revolutionaries inside Russia meant that disputes about perfect methods of revolutionary organisation in Russia, centralisation etc. were, by and large, an irrelevance to what actually occured and to what the real situation was. Within Russia the practical question was one of survival, of existence in the face of police repression and arrest and in such circumstances the practical desire for unity and for means of having an effect were little affected by altruistic statements about ideal situations that could not be implemented in the police ridden environment of the working class and Social Democracy. As Lenin's own voluminous correspondence in 1904 itself shows, the reality of organisation in Russia, the problems the SD committees had to face were a far cry from the pipe dreams of organisational method thought up by Lenin and the other emigres in Paris and Geneva.

As one recent biographer of Lenin has succinctly pointed out

> " There was a total cleavage between the ideal of a coherent, efficient party structure as visualized in Lenin's writings, and the ramshackle party organisation that existed."
>
> (T.Cliff. Lenin vol 1. p.137)

It was real disputes about real policies derived from the evaluation of real situations which divided Russian Social Democracy prior to October 1917 and it divided them not into two concrete factions, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, as later historians of both right and left would have us believe, in order to justify their own political and ideological defence or condemnation of Lenin as IKON, but into numerous fractions round each major political question which the force of events leading up to the revolution of 1917 regrouped into either the left wing of the bourgeoisie or the new Communist Party of Russia.

This article will by no means be a history of the period, but will attempt in a schematic way to summarise the real disputes at various key moments and look at the positions of all the fractions at those times in order to develop the argument and to show the rich variety of groupings that existed and how every grouping, without exception, vascillated and split as each new situation produced differing assessments and provoked different courses of action until the dynamic of history propelled the world and capitalism into its decadent phase and the class action of the proletariat en masse forced the class' minorities to regroup around new, clearer lines of demarcation. The main tool here will therefore be comprised of historical exposition by quotation in order to best illustrate what each participant and fraction actually thought.

We should point out however that we must not give the impression that the different conceptions of organisation expounded in 1903-4 did not have a material effect. In 1905 it did, a dramatically bad effect.

Certainly the disputes in RSDLP can be encapsulated in the formula IF WE COULD HAVE IT, THIS WOULD BE THE ORGANISATION WE WOULD HAVE. The fact that neither side could have it is neither here nor there, the fact is that the grouping of Russian SD from 1903 on (loosley termed Menshviks and Bolsheviks) devoted so much time, energy and paper to this argument, both without, and only to a marginally lesser degree, within Russia that this had the material effect of utterly disarming SD precisely at a time when working class discontent was rising, when the Tsarist autocracy had launched itself into a suicidal war with Japan, and when the revolution that all had awaited was immediately on the cards. As Trotsky put it in 1904.

> " Just at a time when history has placed before us the enormous task of cutting the knot of world reaction, Russian Social Democrats do not seem to care for anything except a petty internal struggle."
> (Our Political Tasks. page 4)

It is, however, possible to overemphasise the extent to which Russian SD was embroiled in these organisational disputes since it was precisely the revolution of 1905 that gave them the urge to regroup, to better carry out their task AND which led to the different conceptions of what the revolution implied which in turn became the bases for the breaking up of Russian Social Democracy into a variety of fractions before World War One.

Revolution in Russia

At the onset of the revolution the differences about organisational practice were far less important than the differences about what to do in the practical situation presented by the Mass Strike, the appearance of workers soviets and the reaction to these of the Russian bourgeoisie and autocracy. The differences related to how to treat the bourgeoisie, what form of democracy and the role of socialists in it.

First of all, however, came the war, as Prime Minister Plehve said:

> " We need a small victorious war to stem the tide of revolution."
> (quoted in D.J.Dallin. The Rise of Russia p.428)

Viacheslav K. von Plehve

On the question of the war all fractions of Russian Social Democracy agreed. They united in total opposition to the war with Japan. In addition all fractions realised how badly prepared for such a war Tsarist autocracy was though their continued preoccupation with their internecine struggles prevented many from devoting the time necessary to properly evaluate the situation. Lenin, for example, barely mentions the war in his writings, so engrossed is he in the dispute about organisation. Then like a thunderclap the strikes of Dec/Jan 1905 struck the forces of Social Democracy when they least expected it.

In one sense the whole history of Russian Social Democracy had been a preparation for the revolution. But what revolution. Since the first disputes between Plekhanov and the Populists on the basis of a Marxist analysis of the development of capitalism in Russia all social democrats had accepted the Bourgeois revolution as being on the agenda. All fractions agreed that the collapse of the war effort and the mass strikes of winter 1904/5 had brought this prospect into the open. But now that it was here there were grave, deep and very important differences within Social Democracy about what was about to happen. It was these real differences leading to the

proposing of different tactics based upon analyses of this real situation which formed the basis for the splits within Social Democracy (though, as we shall see paradoxically, unity came first) and which in the aftermath of the defeat of the revolution was the basis for the creation of all the fractions which polarised Russian Marxism during the long night of counterrevolution.

Though all agreed that the revolution was a bourgeois one three clear strands emerged as to how it would enfold. For at the heart of the process lay irreconcilable differences between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Plekhanov and Martynov

For the majority of those who followed Plekhanov in their analysis of the bourgeoi revolution the bourgeoisie must inevitably take power from a bourgeois revolution - and events during 1905 seemed inexorably to be pushing the liberal bourgeoisie into opposition to the autocracy. As the progress of the war and the possibility of defeat grew the liberals became less patriotic, more oppositional. With the crushing defeats Tsarist armies and navies suffered they became openly defeatist. For such as Martynov, Axelrod and Plekhanov this inexorable move to a revolutionary stance validated all they had said about the bourgeois revolution in Russia. Thus, while this bourgeois activity was predicated upon the class action of the proletariat - the mass strike etc.- it had to be 'gentled' along by Social Democracy: thus the liberal Bourgeoisie's Zemstvo and banquet campaigns had to be supported, but most importantly the working class and social democrats must do nothing which might frighten the bourgeoisie into the arms of reaction.

As the editor of Iskra put it in Nov. 1904 in a letter sent to all party organisations.

> " In the person of the liberal zemstvos and Dumas we have to deal with the enemies of our enemy, who are not, however, willing or able to go as far in the struggle against him as is required by the interests of the proletariat. But in coming out officially against absolutism and confronting it with demands aimed at its annihilation, by that alone they show themselves to be our allies.. ...our attitude towards the liberal bourgeoisie is defined by the task of imbuing it with more courage...We would be making a fatal mistake if we tried by strong measures of intimidation to force the Zemstvos or other organs of the bourgeois opposition..."
>
> (Documant 3 in A.Ascher. The Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution.)

Axelrod sought that the actions of the working class and social democracy:

> "shall not plunge the Zemstvoists into panic fear under the impact of which they might throw themselves under the shameful protection of the police and Cossacks."
>
> (Document 6. Axelrods Speech in A Ascher op cit.)

Or as Martynov succinctly put it in his pamphlet "Two Dictatorships". (1904) page 57-58:

> "the coming revolution will be a revolution of the bourgeoisie...if so then to follow the path of simply frightening the majority of the bourgeois elements would mean that the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat could lead to only one result - the restoration of absolutism in its original form."

Axelrod at the 4th Party Congress in 1906 gave the most coherent exposition of this position:

> "
> In the developed capitalist countries of the West, social democracy is faced by a mature, fully developed bourgeois society in which the proletariat and the bourgeoisie confront each other directly as irreconcilable antagonists: one a conservative force fighting to preserve the existing social order, the other a revolutionary force bent on destroying it. In these countries social conditions irresistably impel the revolutionary or proletarian elements to prepare the way for a socialist revolution. In particular cases one or another of these elements may stray from the main path leading towards revolution, but in general the tactics of social democracy in the West are not at variance with its basic aim and do not conflict with the preparation of a socialist revolution. In the case of our own party, however, its historical position is characterised by contrary tendencies, and its immediate task consists not in organising the proletariat to overthrow bourgeois rule, but in destroying root and branch a social and political order which prevents the bourgeoisie from attaining unfettered power. Social relations in Russia have not matured beyond the point of bourgeois revolution: history impels workers and revolutionaries more and more strongly towards bourgeois revolutionism, making them involuntary political servants of the bourgeoisie, rather than in the direction of genuine socialist revolutionism and the tactic and organisational preparation of the proletariat for political rule.
>
> At the present time, owing to the general absence of political rights, there can be no question of a direct struggle of the proletariat with other classes for the attainment of political power, and thus the socialist element in our contemporary revolutionary movement can in parctice only take the form of developing the class-consciousness of the working masses and uniting them into a party based on class, in the context and for the purpose of the struggle against absolutism.....
>
> We cannot, in absolutist Russia, ignore the objective historical requirement for 'political cooperation' between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, the political crux of Russian Social Democracy consists precisely in the problem of organically and systematically uniting the cause of the proletariat with the claims of a broad democracy as they are determined by the social content of our revolution. To put it more exactly, the problem of uniting the cause of developing

the class-consciousness and political coherence of the working masses with the imperative democratic interests and demands of the Russian revolution has been and still is the most important tactical concern of our party and the basis on which it is obliged to act. In the nature of things this dual and self-contradictory objective permits of only a compromise solution, not on account of any subjective wishes or calculations of party representatives but because at the present juncture of history our party's position and its socio-political mission are in an essentially contradictory state."
(ibid.)

With such a conception of what was going on in Russia, therefore, at all costs the class action of the proletariat which had lit the fuse of the 1905 revolution, could not be allowed to develop further. Thus those who agreed with this analysis, the Mensheviks, had to act as a brake on the class preventing their combativity and consciousness enlarging the struggle beyond an attack on the autocracy.

action of the proletariat who will not stop at the democratic revolution but will aspire to the socialist revolution....For this reason the bourgeois struggle for liberty is notoriously timorous, inconsistent and half-hearted."
(Lenin Works Vol 8 pp 511-512)

For Lenin and Trotsky the bourgeoisie was useless, incapable of carrying out the tasks of the bourgeois revolution. But beyond that they disagreed. For Lenin and the bolshevik faction this was nevertheless still the era of the bourgeois revolution and these tasks would still have to be carried out - but without the bourgeoisie. For Trotsky (with Parvus) the seeming contradiction between the objective bourgeois revolution and the subjective proletarian class struggle against the bourgeoisie could be explained in terms of their concept of permanent revolution. As he put it in a leading article in Nachalo:

" It is entirely possible that in the event of a protracted civil war our revolution, which began as a democratic revolution, will wind up as a socialist revolution."

Trotsky, Parvus and Deutch en route to Siberia in 1906

However other fractions within Social Democracy considered the liberal bourgeoisie not as the inheritors of the revolution but as a blatantly counterrevolutionary force. Lenin and Trotsky both epitomised this stance. As Lenin put it:

" The antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie with us is much deeper than it was in 1789, 1848 or 1871, hence the bourgeoisie will be more fearful of the proletarian revolution and will throw itself more readily into the arms of reaction."
(Lenin Works Vol 8 p 258)

and again:

" The bourgeoisie as a whole is incapable of waging a determined struggle against the autocracy; it fears to lose in this struggle its property which binds it to the existing order; it fears an all-too-revolutionary

Thus for Trotsky not only could there be no support for the liberals, there must be a redoubled attack - on all elements of the bourgeoisie and autocracy in the hope that the development of class consciousness would enable the proletariat to seize power, thereby triggering off the proletarian revolution in Western Europe which would then come to the aid of an embattled proletarian power in Russia. How could there be a bourgeois economic order dominated by the political mastery of the proletariat. Such a contradiction was impossible. As he explained in "Results and Prospects pp 233-234:

" The political domination of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic enslavement. No matter under what political flag the proletariat has come to power, it is obliged to take the path of socialist policy. It would be the greatest utopianism to think that the proletariat, having been raised up to political domination by the internal mechanism of a

bourgeois revolution can, even if it so desires, limit its mission to the creation of republican-democratic conditions for the social domination of the bourgeoisie."

To Axelrod and Plekhanov this was anathema. To them support for the liberal bourgeoisie in their attack on autocracy, based upon their conception of the bourgeois revolution, meant that in the event of a transfer of power to the bourgeoisie, their task would have been completed. There could be no question of the proletariat, or social democracy as its representative, either usurping the power from the bourgeoisie as Trotsky would have it, or of sharing the power with the bourgeoisie. At their April/May 1905 meeting in Geneva they passed a resolution "On Conquering Power and on Participating in the Provisional Government" where they stated:

" Social Democracy must not aim at seizing or sharing power in the provisional government but must remain the party of the extreme revolutionary opposition."

A Menshevik conference in the caucasus explained more clearly:

" The Conference believes that the formation of a provisional government by Social Democrats, or their entering such a government would lead, on the one hand, to the masses of the proletariat becoming disappointed in the Social Democratic Party and abandoning it, because the Social Democrats, despite the seizure of power, would not be able to satisfy the pressing needs of the working class, including the establishment of socialism.. ...and, on the other hand, would cause the bourgeois classes to recoil from the revolution and thus diminish its sweep."

(quoted in Dan. The Origins of Bolshevism p332.)

Between the two poles of Trotsky (who had been a menshevik in the organisation debate) and Plekhanov (a bolshevik in the organisation debate) stood Lenin. As we have said he did not consider the bourgeoisie as other than utterly reactionary and thus considered the menshevik policy of putting the brakes on the working class as merely playing into the hands of the autocracy. On the other hand he did not agree with Trotsky that socialist revolution was on the cards. For him it was still a bourgeois revolution. But paradoxically a bourgeois revolution where the bourgeoisie was unable and unwilling to take power.

" ...it is a question not of a socialist revolution...but of one of the two methods of consumating the bourgeois revolution."

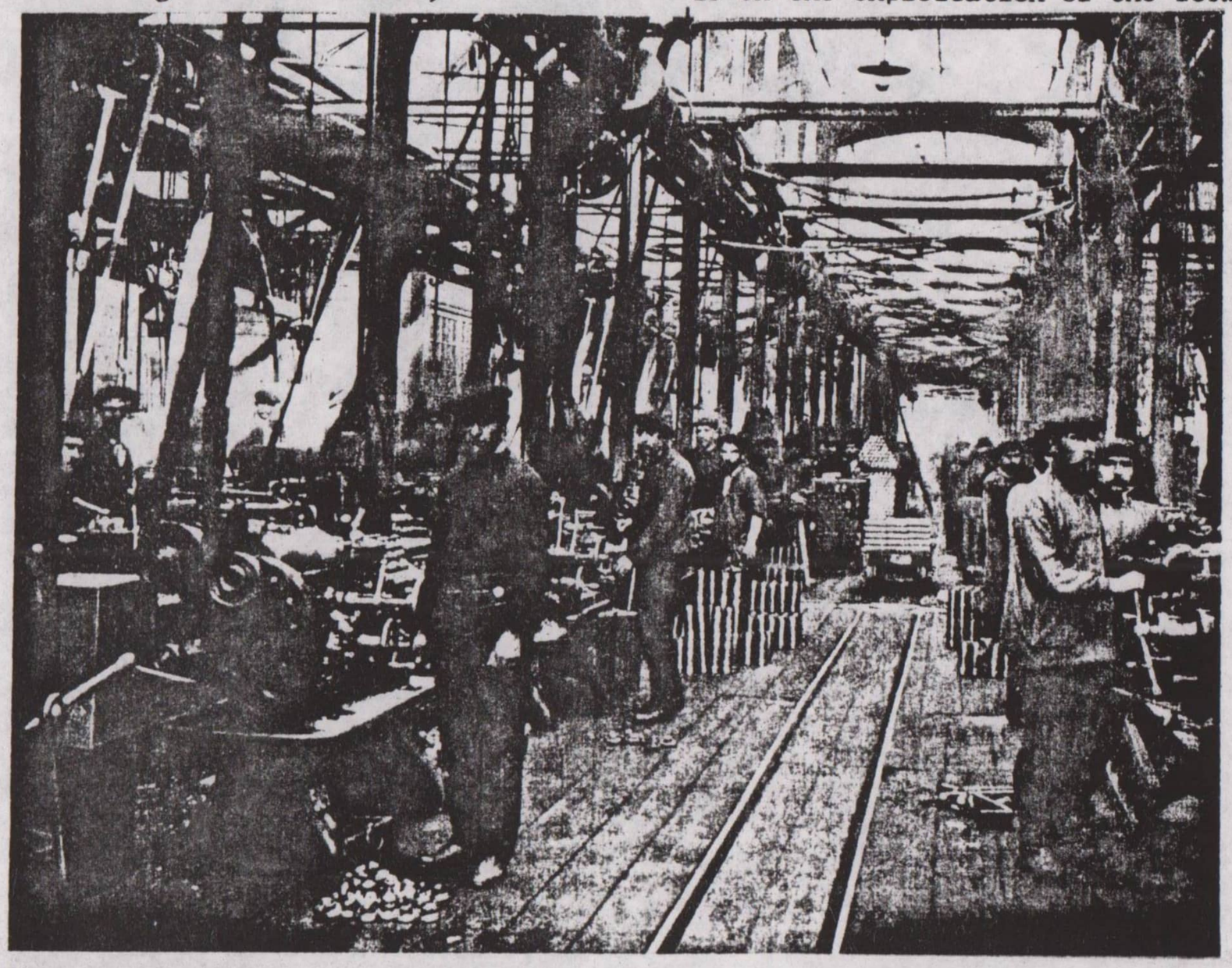
Lenin rationalised this seeming contradiction by arguing for a bourgeois revolution led by the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry. For him for the bourgeois revolution in Russia to succeed a revolutionary dictatorship was necessary. As he put it in Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution:

"the only force capable of gaining a decisive victory over Tsarism is the people ie. the proletariat and the peasantry....The revolution's decisive victory over Tsarism means the establishment of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."

(Lenin Works vol 9 p 56.)

"mobilising all the democratic forces - the peasants above all and before all - calling upon them to ally themselves with the leading class, to achieve the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' for the purpose of a full democratic victory and the creation of the best conditions for the quickest and freest development of capitalism."

He was scathing about menshevik fears of scaring the bourgeoisie, but it must be said that his bizarre conception of a proletariat in alliance with the peasantry running the capitalist economy based as it is on the exploitation of the former and the destructi



"The Only Force Capable of Gaining a Decisive Victory'

of the latter has never satisfactorily been explained especially since he clearly conceived that a whole historical epoch would divide the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions in Russia.

Of course no one in the Social Democracy conceived of capitalism as a global system which produced at a global level the conditions for the transformation to socialist society while large areas had not experienced, could not experience a national bourgeois revolution. Only with the elaboration of the concept of dacadence could revolutionaries realise that it was precisely the proletarian revolution which was on the cards, not only in Russia but world wide.

These were the questions which divided Russian Social Democracy as Russia launched itself into revolution dividing the party NOT on the basis of the disputes of 1903 on organisational practice but on the basis of the nature of the revolution that was unfolding before their very eyes.

Division and Unity

Paradoxically however the first impulse was not to organisational separation in the light of these differences but to regroupment and unity. For the explanation of this it is necessary to turn from the actions of the bourgeoisie and the Social Democrats assessment of their revolutionary potential to look at what the working class were doing. the the class whose actions had set off the whole revolutionary explosion; a class however whose first response was not to turn to a social democratic movement who had been so deeply embroiled in their organisational disputes that they practically missed the outbreak of the mass strike entirely.

For at the point of the outbreak of the mass strike the influence of social democracy was very weak ind indeed. Workers were certainly organised in unions and were displaying a fine spirit of combativity but the extent to which they were organised for industrial struggle owed more to figures such as the police agent Gapon and the unions set up by the secret police chief Zubatov. As one Bolshevik commented in January 1905:

> " The workers, most of whom were unquestionably under Gapon's influence, did not at that time regard Social Democracy as their own party."
> (Doroshenko quoted in Schwarz p 68.)

Or as Martov put it:

> " Strange as it may seem, it must be noted that the revolutionary organisations in Petrograd had overlooked the growth and gradual transformation of the legal workers organisations founded by Father Gapon....the Social Democrats were completely overtaken by the events..."
> (in Treti sezd. RSDRP p 54.)

Yet despite being an organisational network created and nurtured by the secret police it was precisely in such organisations and in such circumstances that the proletariat of St. Petersburg instigated the Mass Strike and the revolution when four members of a Gapon union were sacked, because they were members of it. Lenin wrote about the Zubatovist movement

> "..outgrowing its bounds. Initiated by the police, in the interests of the police, in the interests of supporting the autocracy and demoralising the political consciousness of the workers, the movement is turning against the autocracy, and is becoming an outbreak of the proletarian class struggle."
> (Lenin Works Vol 8 pp 90-91)

For many within Social Democracy the fact that the strikes, marches etc were led by such as Gapon proved that they were not proletarian and the disagreements which arose on this question, about the nature of the class struggle enfolding before them under Gapon and inside Zubatovist unions formed the basis for further disagreements when the mass of striking, revolutionary workers set up a system of soviets as an expression of their new self-expression and self-organisation.

Gapon

Nor were the differences, once again between the already existing factions of social democracy. All factions were extremely suspicious of the Zubatovist movement, of Gapon and of workers raised to consciousness as a result of having been members of such organisations. The bolsheviks carrying their burden of 'ideal' organisational forms were most hostile to the emergence of the soviets since it appeared merely a development of the Zubatovist unions(and not a party organisation)at a higher stage and all fractions spoke of the danger of a non-SD workers party developing from the likes of Gapon and Zubatov.

However it was precisely because the workers had to burst through the limits of the Zubatovist unions (Zubatov himself was disgraced by the Tsar) and of the Gaponist appeal to the 'little father' Tsar in order to continue their struggle, their mass strike and their creation of the Soviets that a vast wave of workers so radicalised were precisely propelled after Bloody Sunday towards Social Democracy

As Lenin himself explained in a later article commemorating 1905:

> "The very conditions of their lives makes the workers capable of struggle and impels them to struggle. Capital collects the workers in

great masses in big cities, uniting them, teaching them to act in unison. At every step they come face to face with their enemy - the capitalist class. In combat with this enemy the worker becomes a socialist, comes to realise the necessity of a complete abolition of all poverty and all oppression."
(Lenin Works Vol 16 pp 301-302)

" At Every Stage They Come Face to Face With Their Enemy." (Bloody Sunday)

Thus despite the origin of their political activity in the Zubatovist unions workers were impelled by the dynamic of their own class action, their own class consciousness into opposition to the autocracy and thus into opposition to their unions, and to the whole paternalistic, pro autocratic basis of their economic and political organisation. They turned, then in their thousands to Social Democracy.

Lane has made the following numerical assessment of the extent of this mass move to Social Democracy by the workers in struggle.

" On the basis of reports presented to the Second Congress, membership of the RSDLP in Russia in 1903 could not have been more than a few thousand, excluding membership of the Bund. ...By the Fourth Congress in April 1906 membership had grown, it is estimated, to 13000 for the Bolsheviks and 18000 for the Mensheviks. Another estimate (for Oct. 1906) was 33,000 Bolsheviks, 43,000 Mensheviks...By 1907 the total membership had increased to 150,000: Bolsheviks - 46,143, Mensheviks - 38,174, Bund - 25,468, and the Polish and Latvian parts of the party 25,654 and 13,000 respectively."
(D.Lane The Roots of Russian Communism pp 12-13.)

Such an influx of thousands of workers into what had hitherto been a predominantly intellectual organisation had an enormous, and profound effect. Though such a mass move produced opposition from within Social Democracy, many of whose committee men were wary of being swamped by workers just out of Zubatovist unions, all fractions of Social Democracy were radically transformed by the demands of the thousands of workers who came fresh from their experience of the mass strike and eager to defeat autocracy.

In such circumstances even the most hidebound of pedants like Martynov, the former Economist, were transformed into supporters of the immediate transformation of the bourgeois revolution into a socialist one. The Menshevik press Nachalo became an enthusiastic supporter of Trotsky and his position and the influx of workers forced an anti autocratic and anti bourgeois position to be taken, and the carefully constructed positions of Axelrod et alia lapsed into a discreet silence. Thus both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, under pressure from below, attacked both the autocracy and the bourgeoisie.

For the facts of life in the factory for the mass of the workers made them unwilling and unable to support th bourgeoisie, their oppressors. Thus the menshevik slogans of support for the liberal bourgeoisie were rejected out of hand - though it must be said that in the early days of the mass strike the bourgeoisie, seeing their workers as a source of support against the autocracy raised wages etc only to turn fearful later as the working class demonstrated their class consciousness and launched a series of strikes against both autocracy and bourgeoisie. More, the workers by transforming the soviets into the organised arm of the proletariat came up against the hidebound notions of the bolsheviks and similarly transformed bolshevik positions on these centres of power despite the reluctance of many in the Bolshevik committees.

To his credit Lenin, like Trotsky, was similarly transformed and used all his influence to persuade the bolshevik fraction to give all support to the creation of the Soviets just as Trotsky was doing within the menshevik fraction; for both saw the soviets as the nucleus of the proletarian state and sought in such a situation to open wide the doors of the party to as many workers as possible knowing that such pressure would transform and unify the party in preparation for the taking of power.

As Lenin put it in 1905:

" It is no secret to anyone that the vast majority of Social Democratic workers are exceedingly dissatisfied with the split in the party and are demanding unity. It is no secret to anyone that the split has caused a certain cooling-off among Social Democratic workers (or workers ready to become Social Democrats) towards the Social Democratic Party. The workers have lost almost all hope that the party 'chiefs' willunite of themselves. The need for unity was formally recognised both by the third Congress of the RSDLP and by the Menshevik conference held last May. Six months months have passed since then, but the cause of unity has hardly made any progress. No wonder the workers are beginning to show signs of impatience."
(Lenin Works Vol 10 p 37.)

In Nachalo Trotsky applauded the Bolshevik move towards unity:

" The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks with Lenin participating, passed a unanimous resolution to the effect that thesplit was merely the result of the conditions of foreign exile, and the events of the revolution had deprived the factional struggle of any reasonable grounds. I defended the same line

in Nachalo, with only a passive resistance from Martov."

(Trotsky My Life p 182.)

By early 1906 Lenin was convinced that the differences between the fractions, under pressure from the class were insignificant and that unity was absolutely necessary:

" The tactics adopted in the period of 'whirlwind' did not further estrange the two wings of the Social Democratic Party, but brought them closer together. Former disagreements gave way to unity of opinion on the question of armed uprising....Old controversies of the pre-revolutionary period gave way to unanimity on practical questions. The upsurge of the revolutionary tide pushed aside disagreements, compelling Social Democrats to adopt militant tactics....put the question of insurrection on the order of the day...In Severny Golos, the Mensheviks, jointly with the Bolsheviks, called for a general strike and insurrection; and they called upon the workers to continue this struggle until they had captured power....There were arguments only over matters of detail in the appraisal of events....Nachalo inclined towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. Novaya Zhizn advocated the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. But have disagreements of this kind not been observed at every stage of development of every socialist party in Europe?"

(Lenin Works Vol 10 pp251-252.)

Thus the vast creative power of the proletariat transformed the split party into an organ of the working class for unity, pushing for the overthrow of the autocracy, pushing for the power of the soviets.

Defeat

But the 1905 revolution was crushed. And as in all periods following the collapse of a period of class struggle Social Democracy, increasingly cut off from the class began, in exile, a prolonged period of reassessment of their situation and of the experience of the class, a reassessment made more difficult by the severe reaction and counter-revolution produced by the defeat of the proletariat. If the political differences in 1905 had been overcome by the mass class action of the workers then the very absence of such class action formed the basis for the splits which fragmented Russian Social Democracy almost totally during the era of reaction. From 1906 when it became clear to most that the revolution had failed to 1908 when the balance sheet of the whole experience of the revolutionary period was drawn up - so to speak - everyone within Social Democracy was conscious of the need to examine what had happenned, to explain the failure of 1905/6 and to see what that experience meant for the future of Social Democracy, the working class and Russia itself. It would take too long to go into all the ramifications of all the different points of view as they emerged or the internecine feuds which living in embittered exile created in such a period of seeming defeat. But it is precisely this period and the bases for the different positions which produced the definitive divergences within Russian Social Democracy, differences which had emerged at the beginning of 1905 only to be swept aside by the activity of the class but which now reappeared in the process of reassessment and which really defined the fractions of the RSDLP rather than the disputes of 1903.

1905 had produced two basic conceptions of the future development of Russia in the minds of socialists. By 1908 these two basic conceptions stood clear of one another with Lenin forming one important differentiation within one of them, but each had further split so that in effect there were at least six clear different fractions within Russian Social Democracy, clear divisions which formed the basis for the fragmentation of the RSDLP and its near collapse until the rising tide of class struggle and the Great War began the process of regroupment into the two poles of communist and bourgeois organisations which faced one another in 1917.

" The Vast Creative Power of the Proletariat"

This process of reassessment lay at two levels. At the higher level lay the general reassessment of the entire historical period, of the prospects for Russia after the failure of 1905. At the more direct level this general assessment formed the basis for how Social Democracy should react to legal activity in Russia, in particular what the response of Russian Social Democracy should be to the creation by the Tsar of a new Duma, a supposed parliamentary forum.

Firstly we should be clear that almost all sections

of Social Democracy regarded the Tsar's Duma, in whatever manifestation, as a fraud, especially when successive readjustments by the autocracy reduced practically to nil the ability of the working class to have representation on it and reduced its effect to less than zero. However different fractions had different opinions regarding the value of participating in the fraud which hinged upon radically different appreciations of the possibilities for legal and illegal work and upon differences in the prognosis for revolution in the future.

We should note too that the downturn after 1905 and the autarchic reaction crippled not only the consciousness of the proletariat but also had a severe effect on the Social Democracy. In march 1908 for example Lenin commented on:

> " a considerable decline and weakening of all revolutionary organisations, including those of social democracy."
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 17.)

Trotsky commenting on the effect of the defeat on the workers noted:

> " The world industrial crisis, which broke out in 1907, extended the prolonged depression in Russia for three additional years, and far from inspiring the workers to engage in a new fight, dispersed them and weakened them more than ever. Under the blows of lockout, unemployment and poverty, the weary masses became definitely discouraged."
> (Trotsky. Stalin p 95.)

Even Stalin commented in 1908:

> " It is no secret to anyone that our party is passing through a severe crisis....The party's loss of members, the shrinking and weakness of the organisations, the latter's isolation from one another - the absence of all coordinated party work - all show that the party is ailing, that it is passing through a grave crisis."
> (Stalin Works Vol 2 pp 150-151)

For example in Moscow in the summer of 1905 there were 1435 members. By midway into 1906 there were 5320. But by mid 1908 there were only 250 and by the end of that year only 150. The organisation subsequently disappeared due to a combination of dismay and the activities ofthe secret police who had penetrated the collapsing district apparatus to the core.

Zinoviev was even more pessimistic. As he later put it:

> "...at this unhappy period the party as a whole ceased to exist."
> (History of the Bolshevik Party p 241)

Or as Martov put it:

> " At this point the forces of the party collapsed like a house of cards."
> (quoted in Ascher.)

Those who went into exile of course were not spared the effects of demoralisation and disintegration. As Lenin put it in a letter to Gorky in 1910:

> " Life in exile is now a hundred times harder than it was before the revolution. Life in exile and squabbling are inseparable."
> (Lenin Works Vol 34 p 421.)

It was the splits on these questions and in this kind of atmosphere which determined the factional basis of the groupings within Social Democracy.

At one extreme stood those castigated by Lenin as Liquidators, exemplefied by Potresov and Cherevanin. Deeply despondent at the failure of the revolution and the subsequent collapse - as they saw it of the RSDLP they considered that revolution had failed, the illegal apparatus of the party had failed, in fact Social Democracy as a separate tendency had failed. All this old dross must now be removed like scales from mens' eyes. The way forward for Russia was one of 'organic development'. Illegal activity was to be shunned as forcing the autocracy to further eliminate what legal areas for activity still existed. All the legal opportunities, and ONLY the legal opportunities now had validity and Social Democracy should reorganise itself to take advantage of what was available. As for the party, and the notion of Liquidationism, as Potresov said:

> " In the summer of 1909 can there exist in sober reality, and not merely as the figment of a diseased imagination, a school of thought that advocates liquidating what has already ceased to be an organic whole? The party to be sure exists as an ideologival inheritance, an unshakeable link between the...proletariat and the ideology of the movement...but it does not exist as a coherent hierarchic institution."

If necessary, said Potresov, in order to continue legal activity it might be necessary to cease calling ourseoves social democrats. So be it, since the perspective was of a long period of education within the working class in alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie as the revisionists in Germany had shown, without the prospect of revolution, the failure of 1905 having clearly cancelled out that possibility for ever. Thus marxists should be prepared to dissolve themselves into the most varied and multifarious organisations to seek progress in Russia.

Next came the bulk of those termed mensheviks, epitomized by Axelrod and Dan. For them too the failure of 1905/6 meant the end of illegal work.

Zinoviev

(Martov agreed with them on this question. Though he disagreed on many grounds with this group such was his rage at the illegal expropriations in Tiflis and elsewhere that he sided with this faction though by and large he kept his distance.)

All energies must be channelled into legal activiies and the Duma and the attempt to create large legal non-party organisations such as unions and the 'labour congress'. Though Lenin tarred them with

the same brush as the liquidators these were by no means synonymous with the former. Dan, for example, in his text " The Struggle for Legality" explains how illegal activity must continue to exist but that its purpose must be the defence of legal activity. Even he was aware of the paradoxical nature of this conception. What really identified this group was the conception that the non-political organisations must be backed by political organisations. As Dan said:

" By writing on its banner "struggle for legality" Social Democratic activists of the legal labour movement thereby go beyond the bounds of "purely trade union" or "purely cooperative" or "purely educational" tasks. At the same time they inevitably go beyond the bounds of"legality" The political struggle is a necessary precondition even for the open existence of nonpolitical labour organisations; the illegal rallying (of the working class) is the necessary weapon in the struggle for legality. Perhaps this sounds paradoxical. But in actuality this is a historical fact, which the Russian labourer has already faced throughout the course of his development".
(in Ascher p 74 quoted from Golos)

However it should be said that in actual practice what they were arguing for seemed little different from what liquidators like Potresov were seeking, with a little added gilding given by the 'conscious' eminence-grises in the background. As the reaction deepened and the opportunities for such social democratic input into the legal organisations faded to practically nil there was a reaction by many within this menshevik camp to what they saw as the abandonment of the illegal party and the move closer and closer towards Potresov.

In December 1908 Plakhanov abandoned the editorial board of Golos Sotsildemocrat, incensed by Potresov's statements about the party no longer existing and the support he was getting from the bulk of the


РОССІЙСКАЯ СОЦІАЛЬ-ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКАЯ РАБОЧАЯ ПАРТІЯ.

ГОЛОСЪ СОЦІАЛЬДЕМОКРАТА

[La voix du social-democrate.]

ПРОЛЕТАРІИ ВСѢХЪ СТРАНЪ, СОЕДИНЯЙТЕСЬ!

Годъ II. Апрѣль 1909 г. № 12.

Golos Sotsialdemocrat

menshevik group. To Potresov he retorted:

" There is no doubt that a man for whom our party does not exist, does not himself exist for our party. Now all the members of the party will have to say that Mr. Potresov is no comrade of theirs, and some of them will,perhaps stop accusing me on the score that I have long since ceased to regard him as such."
(quoted in Lenin Works Vol 17 pp 493-494.)

He further commented on liquidationism:

" Among them new wine is converted into a very sour liquid suitable only for preparing petit-bourgeois vinegar...(which)...facilitates the penetration of petit-bourgeois tendencies in a proletarian environment."
(quoted in Lenin Works Vol 16 p 20.)

Plekhanov and Potresov

On Potresov himself:

" Potresov has lost the ability to look at social life through the eyes of a revolutionary."
(ibid p 19.)

On those within the main menshevik stream whom he saw increasingly willing to accomodate liquidationism:

" I have repeatedly tried to prove to influentual menshevik comrades that they are making a great mistake in displaying at times the readiness to go hand in hand with gentlemen (a term of abuse among SDs) who to a greater or lesser extent are redolent of opportunism."
(ibid p 20.)

Plekhanov got some support from social democrats within Russia as well as amongst the emigres and formed the fraction of Party Mensheviks which published Dnevnik' Sotsial Democrat and Edinstvo up to 1914 saying:

" One must make a choice here: either liquidationism or a fight against it."
(quoted in Lenin Works Vol 16 p 17.)

All the above fractions can be termed menshevik, not because of their attachment to particular organisation forms a-la 1903 but because their analysis during and following a major class upheaval, 1905/6 formed their conceptions in a particular mould. Their conception of the bourgeois revolution, developed during and after 1905, the role of the working class, of Social Democracy and especially of the bourgeoisie presented them with certain tactics and strategies which ran contrary to the development of consciousness within the working class, which during 1905 had forced them to attempt to brake the dynamic of proletarian revolution until swept away by an influx of proletarians into (reluctantly in many cases) revolutionary positions. Though the defeat of the revolution fragmented this strand of Russian socialism into different fractions with different

conceptions of precisely what the future held for Russia, the role of social democracy, the party, the Duma etc, all were agreed on the nature of the period and the necessity for the bourgeoisie, one way or another, to come to power in Russia.

Outwith this strand, menshevism, stood Lenin, the Vperiodists and Trotsky.

All these took very different lessons from the experience of 1905. Moreover they considered that the revolution had been a tremendous experience for the Russian working class.

First of all it had definitively demonstrated the counterrevolutionary nature of the liberal bourgeoisie. As Lenin put it:

> " What before the revolution was known as liberal and liberal Narodnik society...has displayed itself in the revolution as the ideologues and supporters of the bourgeoisie and has taken up what all can recognise now as a counter-revolutionary position in respect of the mass struggle of the socialist proletariat and the democratic peasantry. The counterrevolutionary liberal bourgeoisie has come into existence and is growing."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 268.)

Secondly the revolution had been a powerful lesson for the class as a whole. As one commentator has put it the revolution had won the workers even if the workers had not won the revolution. Lenin again:

> " By the heroic struggle it waged during the course of the three years the Russian proletariat won for itself and for theRussian people gains that took other nations decades to win. It won the emancipation of the working masses from the influence of treacherous and contemptably impotent liberalism ...It won for all the oppressed and exploited classes of Russia the ability to wage a revolutionary mass struggle, without which nothing has been achieved anywhere in the world."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 16 p 387.)

and again:

> " Millions among the population have gained practical experience, in the most varied forms of a genuinely mass and directly revolutionary struggle, including a general strike."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 268.)

> " Only struggle educates the exploited class. Only struggle discloses to it the magnitude of its own power, widens its horizons, enhances its abilities, clarifies its mind, forges its will."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 23 p 241.)

> " Just wait, 1905 will come again. That is how the workers look at things. For them that year of struggle provided a model of what has to be done. For the intellectuals and the renegading petit-bourgeoisie it was the 'insane year', a model of what should not be done. For the proletariat, the working over and critical acceptance of the experience of the revolution must consist in learning how to apply the methods of struggle more successfully, so as to make the same October strike struggle and December armed struggle more massive, more concentrated and more conscious."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 53.)

Where these fractions disagreed was on how soon was the dress rehearsal going to be followed by the the first night and what they should be doing in the interim.

The first analysis of the Bolsheviks was to see a repeat of 1905 almost immediately. Soon after the the defeat of the Dec. uprising Lenin said:

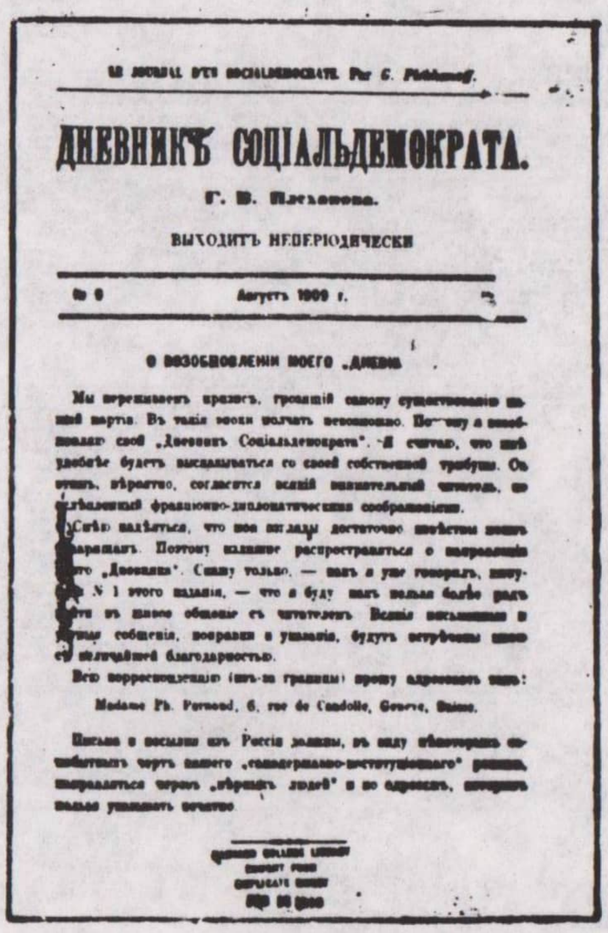
> " The new outbreak may not take place in the spring: but it is approaching and in all probability is not very far off."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 10 p 135.)

In mid 1906 Lenin was saying:

> " The possibility of simultaneous action all over Russia is increasing. The probability of all partial risings merging into one is increasing. The inevitability of a political strike and of an uprising as a fight for power is felt as never before by large sections of the population."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 11 p 130.)

By the end of 1906 however all agreed that the revolutionary wave was on the ebb and when the international economic slump of 1907 hit Russia all fractions had to admit that the immediate prospects of a resurgence of revolutionary activity were non-existant. As the counterrevolution triumphed and the reaction deepened through 1907-8-9 the Bolshevik fraction fragmented.

For Lenin, since the timing of the onset of a new revolutionary wave was unknown, revolutionaries must learn new tactics while they waited. Though, along with the rest of the bolshevik faction, including Bogdanov he was at first in support of a boycott of the reactionary duma set up by the Tsar, based upon his assumption that the revolutionary wave was not over, he then quickly changed his position and in so doing split the faction. An extended period of non revolutionary activity for him necessitated involvement in the legal activities allowed though this must not jeapardise the illegal organisation of Social Democracy. The illegal party must be kept intact and strengthened both by means of agitation carried out by legal organs and by illegal expropria-



ДНЕВНИКЪ СОЦІАЛЬДЕМОКРАТА.

Г. В. Плехановъ.

ВЫХОДИТЪ НЕПЕРІОДИЧЕСКИ

№ 0 Августъ 1909 г.

О ВОЗОБНОВЛЕНИИ МОЕГО „ДНЕВНИКА"

Dnevnik Sotsialdemocrat

tions such as those which so infuriated Martov. However for the forseeable future the political activity of the party of the party must concentrate on legal unions, legal insurance and the Duma. Though he had no illusions about the reactionary basis of the Duma Lenin and those bolsheviks who followed him accepted that involvement in it was, on balance, positive for the development of proletarian consciousness:

> " To agree...to participate in the third and fourth Dumas was a compromise, a temporary renunciation of revolutionary demands. But this was a compromise absolutely forced upon us, for the balance of class forces made it impossible for the time being to conduct a mass revolutionary struggle."
> (Lenin Works Vol 25 pp 305-306.)

and:

> " since the accursed counterrevolution has driven us into this accursed pigsty, we shall work there too for the benefit of the revolution, without whining, but also without boasting."
> (Lenin Works Vol 13 p 42.)

and thus:

> " the time has now come when the revolutionary social democrats must cease to be boycottists."
> (Lenin Works Vol 11 p 145.)

It was not until 1908 however that this type of argument won over sections of the bolshevik fraction and it was only by underhand methods that Lenin was able to expel from the fraction those who did not agree with the change in policy.

Thus those bolsheviks who followed Lenin gravitated to a position on the party, on the duma and on the new period very close to that of Plekhanov and his Party Mensheviks. It is no surprise therefore to note that around 1909 there were serious attempts to regroup the two factions - leaving aside their profound differences on the bourgeoisie and the nature of the coming bourgeois revolution until history could bring the question to the fore again. Lenin later gave those within his faction who pushed for such regroupment most the name 'conciliators' but they called themselves 'Party Bolsheviks' and though subsequent historians and ideologues have tried to hide it Lenin came round to their way of thinking. In a letter to Shklovsky in October 1910 he describes his, and the bolsheviks attitude:

> " Since 1909 I have been wholly in favour of a regroupment with the Plekhanovites. And even more so now. We can and should build the party only with the Plekhanovites."
> (Lenin Works Vol 34 p 340.)

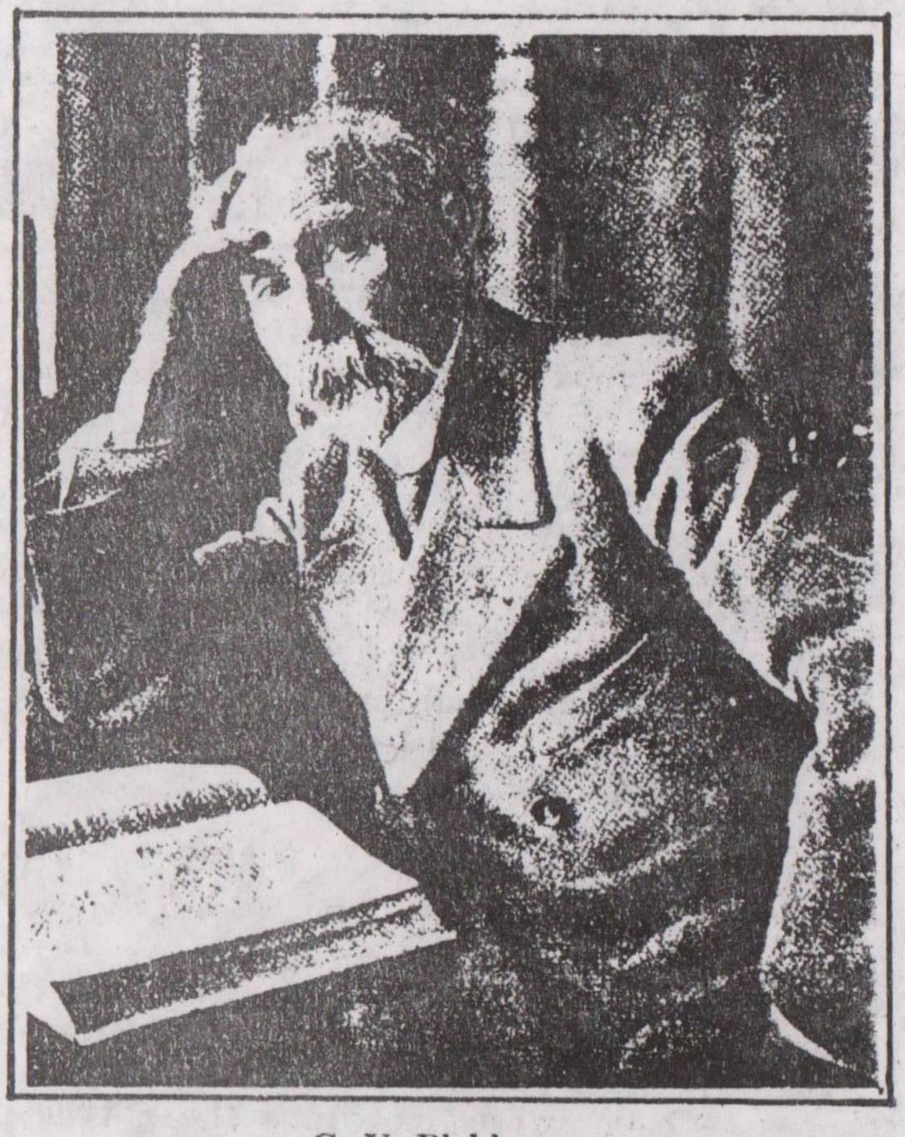
Such an attitude was helped by the joint action of the two factions within Russia where the pro-bourgeois line of the main menshevik groups had constantly to face up to the reality of capitalist oppression and the resultant hostility of the workers to their bosses - even when cowed at the height of the reaction - and which drove those mensheviks working at 'the coal face' into a clearer notion of the 'progressiveness' of the bourgeoisie. However the attempt at regroupment failed, partly because, isolated in exile from the constraining activity of the class both sides fell victim to the pettiness of emigration. Thus Lenin and Plekhanov were reduced to the most vile slanders about each other in order to further their political differences. More importantly their differences about how to act towards the Cadets increasingly became a major stumbling block reflecting their differing conception of the role of the bourgeoisie.

The bloc, which had seen joint committees operating throughout Russia between Bolsheviks and Plekhanovites broke up finally in 1911.

One wing of the bolsheviks did not go with Lenin. Relegated by bourgeois historians and leftist ideologues both to a mere footnote in history and their positions obfuscated by Lenin and Leninists in discussions about 'God-building' the Vperiodist bolsheviks are little studied - yet they formed an important element not only of bolshevism, but of Russian Social Democracy and eventually of the Russian Communist Party.

At the party conference held in Finland in July 1907 of the nine bolshevik delegates, eight, led by Bogdanov voted to return to the policy of boycott of the Duma. Lenin was the only bolshevik to vote with the mensheviks, the bund and Polish Social Democracy. By 1909 those in disagreement with Lenin had developed a faction within the bolshevik group and, fearful of allowing such a powerful group to remain within his faction Lenin manoeuvred their expulsion. The expelled regrouped round Bogdanov and numbered Krasin, Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky, Alexinsky, the leader of the bolshevik group in the duma and the writer Gorky. Had they not been expelled and vilified by Lenin it is doubtful whether these would ever have formed a specific grouping. Certainly they felt that they had been forced into such a move by the underhand methods of Lenin and those who were willing to act as his catspaws. Thus it could be argued that Vperiod was soley a creation of Lenin.

Lenin's transformation after the defeat of 1906 from a boycottist to a supporter of involvement in the Duma, even the Black Hundred Duma of 1909, took most within the bolshevik faction by surprise. Those who were to become Vperiodists resolutely combatted what they clearly saw as an accomodation with



G. V. Plekhanov

menshevism and as "dispersing the bolshevik faction" as well as seeking "parliamentarism at any price". This is not to say that lenin saw the use of the Duma as Dan saw it. No he regarded their attitude to the Duma and the social democratic duma group as setting the duma group on an "anti-party road" and thus tearing it away from being the workers vanguard. He sought to "expose these tactics as fatal to the party." He sought to curb their independent minded ways by placing them more formly under the control of the party. For the otzovists and ultimatumists the Duma group had already been 'torn', purely by taking part in the Duma charade at all. Thus Lenin's attitude was condemned by them as menshevik. As Dan put it gleefully in 1908:

" Who does not know that the Bolsheviks are now accusing Lenin of betraying Bolshevism."
(quoted in Lenin Works Vol 16 p 48.)

However this does not mean that Vperiod, when it was founded was all otzovist. Indeed it would appear that the otzovists, to start with anyway, were in the minority. Bogdanov, for example, was an ultimatumist. While agreeing with the otzovists on the class nature of the Duma he - and other ultimatumists - grudgingly agreed that use could be made of it as a tribune but demanded that the SD Duma group be presented with an; ultimatum to behave or be disowned by the Party. He considered that otzovism "constituted a legitimate strand of opinion within the party and opposed the sectarian and organisational means being used to expel them."

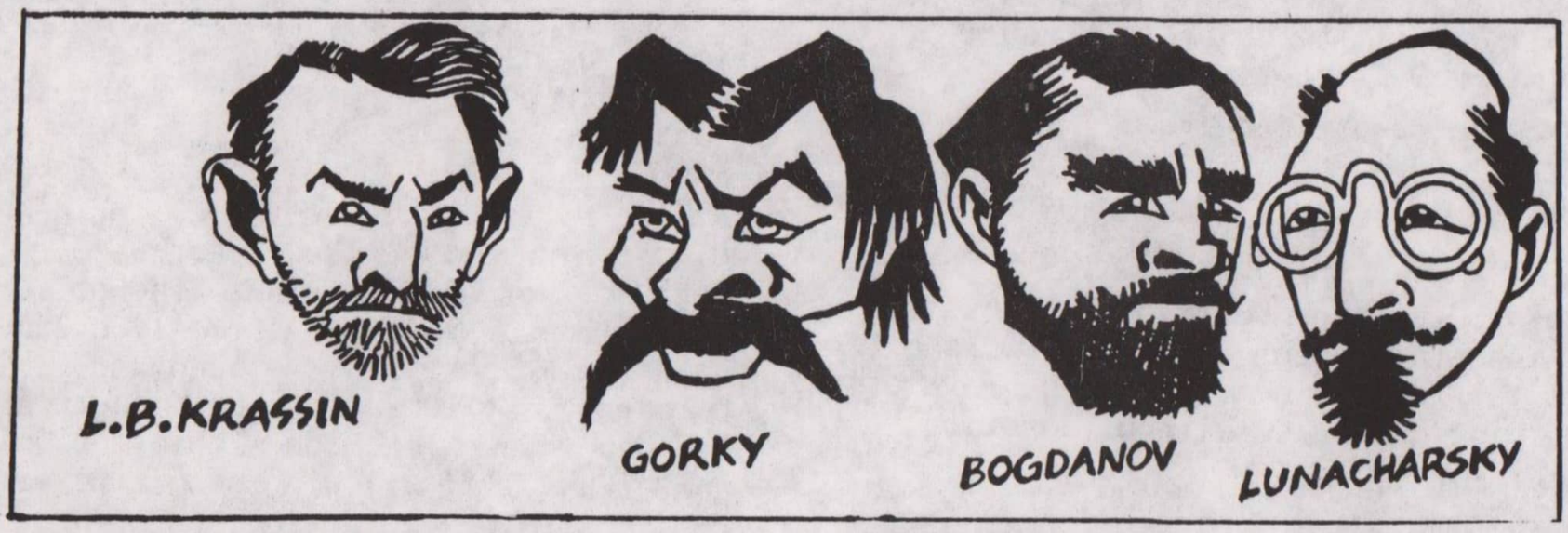
For Lenin, throughout 1909-10, fulminated against the otzovists and blamed the ultimatumists for covering for otzovism, in the same way as he accused the mensheviks of covering for liquidationism. Later, of course, he took this argument to its logical conclusion (?) and accused Vperiod of being liquidationist in an early example of the 'amalgam' technique so beloved of Stalin. Lenin equated Vperiod with Golos and demanded "the expulsion of both from the party, the liquidators of the party, the latter into petty bourgeoisie and the former into anarchism." He resolved:

"..to rid our fraction and Party more rapidly of the disease of otzovism - ultimatism, more drastic methods are required and the more decisively we combat the overt and covert otzovists the sooner we shall be able to rid the party of this disease."
(Lenin Works Vol 16 p 74.)

One cannot help but sense the outrage of impotent pique here.

The sheer nastiness of Lenins diatribes against Vperiod - a clear indication of his frantic efforts to discredit them as they persistently refused to disappear - have served to cloud their true positions, hidden as they are behind a cloud of impotent vituperation in his writings, our main source but behind such epithets as "semi-anarchists", then "anarchists", "liquidators" then "anti party elements" until finally he considers them along with the liquidators as a "disease", we can trace their true positions.

Even if, at first,otzovism was not predominant, it certainly characterised the group as time went on. Further it is difficult to tell whether their blanket anti-parliamentarianism was a residue of anarchism or a forward looking realisation of the true nature of parliamentarianism in the new epoch of capitalism's decline. Certainly Lenins charge



of anarchism based as it was upon a comparison with the virtue of German parliamentarism sits uneasily on todays reader who knows where German parliamentarism led. When Lenin says:

" The German Social Democrats far from standing for parliamentarism at any price, not only do not do subordinate everything to parliamentarism but on the contrary, in the international army of the proletariat, they, best of all, have developed such extra-parliamentary means of struggle..."
(Lenin Works Vol 16 p 34.)

we can only note that the later desertion of german social democracy significantly lessens the impact of such an argument.

What then did Vperiod stand for. Fundamentally, like every other fraction were attempting to reassess the situation in Russia in the wake of and in the light of the experiece of the class in 1905-6 As Bogdanov put it:

" Where are we going? What is the historic fate of our generation - a new revolutionary wave or an organic development?... If we are holding a course towards 'organic development', then revolutionary-military questions and tasks simply do not exist for our generation, and the tradition connected with them is a harmful survival from the past...But we assert that the long 'organic development' of Russia is only an Octobrist dream..."
(Bogdanov 'Letter to All Comrades from Declaration of the Vperiod Group quoted in Daniels: Documentar History of Communism Vol 1 pp44-45.)

Or as their St. Petersburg supporters put it in 1909:

" Russia...is moving towards a new revolutionary uprising...characterised by a sharp conflict with the ruling bloc of the big bourgeoisie and the feudalist landlords."
(Lenin Works Vol 15 p383.)

This necessitated combatting the reactionary idea

that a long period of peaceful economic development was on the cards where legal activities were to be the norm along the lines of Germany. What was being faced was a temporary reaction in the aftermath of the defeat of 1905. Since this situation was only temporary the illegal party had not only to be retained but must be strengthened both numerically and ideologically with the adoption of policies in preparation for a renewed outbreak of violent class struggle. Central therefore was the discussion on tactics to be adopted, particularly tactics which must be avoided, tactics which detracted from the preparations for renewed revolution. As Bogdanov said in 1910:

> " At a time of acute..reaction all this changes again. The Party cannot then carry out a big and spectacular election campaign, nor obtain worthwhile parliamentary representation."
>
> (quoted in Lenin Vol 16 p 30.)

Thus the question of participation in the Duma was, at the very least, "very disputable". They typified the Duma in 1909 as:

> "....a deal and a weapon of the counterrevolution.." (and that)..."it only serves to bolster up the autocracy...a screen.."
>
> (Lenin Vol 15 p 389.)

By 1910 they were saying:

> " All the State Dumas have hitherto been institutions devoid of real power and authority, and did not express the real relation of social forces in the country. The government convened them under the pressure of the popular movement in order, on the one hand, to turn the indignation of the masses from the path of direct struggle into peaceful electoral channels, and, on the other hand, in order to come to terms in that Duma with those social groups which could support the government in its struggle against the revolution."
>
> (from 'The Present Situation and the Tasks of the Party (Vperiod Platform) quoted in Lenin Vol 16 p 201.)

Thus for the Vperiodists the parliamentary forum which existed in Russia was a complete sham which served only to confuse the proletariat.

> " Our Duma cannot be regarded as a parliament working in an environment of political liberty and with a measure of freedom for the class struggle of the proletariat but is merely a deal between Tsarism and the big bourgeoisie."
>
> (from Resolution of the St. Petersburg Otzovists quoted in Lenin Vol 15 p 389.)

Thus while parliamentarism in general might not be redundant in the particular circumstances of Russia it was specifically aimed against the working class. Thus, unlike Lenin, they did not see parliament as a forum, which could be used, despite the nature of most of its inhabitants but as a specific weapon of the proletariat's class enemies which had the effect of diverting the class struggle of the proletariat along false trails and which thus had to be opposed. As the quotation from 1910 above shows their conceptions of the purpose and effect of the Duma seem to presage our present understanding of parliamentarianism. They thus accused Lenin and the 'Party Bolsheviks' of falling into the trap set by the Tsar and the bourgeoisie, a trap which would inexorably take over the activity of the faction, "menshevising" them. They pointed to the activity of the Social Democratic group in the Duma as evidence:

> " Our Duma group...persistently pursuing opportunist tactics could not and cannot be a ...consistent representation of the revolutionary proletariat."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 390.)

> " The continued presence of the SD group in the Duma...can only do harm to the interests of the proletariat."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 392.)

Thus the 'Recallists' (otzovists) called for the.

> "...recall (of) the Duma group...this will emphasise both the character of the Duma and the revolutionary tactics of the Social Democrats."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 392.)

They wanted to:

> "..devote all efforts to organisation and preparation..for open..struggle..and to propaganda."
>
> (Lenin Works Vol 15 p 393.)

Once expelled from the Bolshevik faction they assembled all their arguments in their Platform which stated:

> " A new revolutionary crisis is maturing in which

The Reality of the Duma

the proletariat will play a leading role..There is no real constitution in Russia and..the Duma is only a phantom of it, devoid of power and importance."

(Lenin Works Vol 16 p 32.)

This crisis would then lead inexorably, as they had said in 1909 to:

" The solution of this..in view of the strongly developed class antagonisms in Russia, will assume the form of a revolution which will lead to an armed uprising."

(Lenin Works Vol 15 p 384,point 5.)

However it is unclear what they envisaged the end result of this uprising to be. Coming from the Bolshevik fraction one can assume that along with Lenin they envisaged a bourgeois revolution led by the proletariat and peasantry. However in their texts, especially in their Platform they come close to Trotsky's analysis that the state of the world market and world politics makes the:

"..international situation more and more revolutionary".

(Lenin Works Vol 16 p 32.)

Российская Социалъ-демократическая Рабочая Партія

Впередъ

Сборникъ статей по вопросамъ

Отъ редакціи

Товарищи!

Несколько месяцевъ тому назадъ наша группа, впервые выступая съ объясненіемъ своихъ взглядовъ на современное положеніе и задачи партіи, заявила о своемъ намѣреніи при первой возможности приступить къ изданію популярной рабочей газеты. До сихъ поръ недостатокъ матеріальныхъ средствъ мѣшалъ намъ выполнить свое намѣреніе. Теперь это препятствіе удалось устранить. Но все же мы въ данный моментъ выпускаемъ въ свѣтъ еще не періодическій органъ, а пока только популярный сборникъ, по составу подходящій къ типу органа. Мы рѣшили продолжать изданіе и сдѣлать его періодическимъ въ томъ случаѣ, если оно найдетъ сочувствіе и сотрудничество товарищей, работающихъ въ Россіи. Мы вотимъ тратить силы и средства группы лишь съ полной увѣренностью, что наша работа удовлетворитъ партійную потребность и серьезно служитъ дѣлу возрожденія партіи.

Итакъ, товарищи, мы ждемъ вашего отклика и вашей поддержки. Ваши корреспонденціи, статьи, вопросы, совѣты должны стать основнымъ и руководящимъ матеріаломъ для редакціи въ дальнѣйшей работѣ. Время трудное, партіи нужна работа. Соединимъ усилія для общаго дѣла!

Редакція

Проектировать въ борьбѣ за соціализмъ

VPERIOD

and that in the coming revolution the:

" proletariat must strive for the conquest of political power."

(ibid)

Certainly their relations with Trotsky were very good - he was invited to come to their Party School in Bologna and their subsequent history shows a close connection with Trotsky. However the material available is insufficient to say when they took up a position on the proletarian nature of the revolution approaching though it is clear they held this position by 1914.

One thing they definitely did agree on with Trotsky was the fact that the reaction following 1905 had not only demoralised the class but had also demoralised the party and split it into shards, sundering the relationship between party and class which had been forged in the revolution. As Vperiod put it:

" The mechanical force of reaction severs the connection of the already existing Party faction with the masses and makes it terribly difficult for the party to influence them, with the result that this representative body is unable to conduct sufficiently broad and deep organisational and propaganda work in the interests of the party. If the party itself is weakened there is not excluded even the danger of degeneration of the faction and its deviation from the main line of Social Democracy."

(quoted in Lenin Works Vol 16 p 32.)

If the Vperiodists thought that this was a possibility for the bolshevik fraction as a whole cut off from the masses during the period of reaction then Trotsky held a surprisingly similar analysis regarding the whole of Russian Social Democracy. (see below)

As I have said the Vperiodist Bolsheviks held on as long as they were allowed within the bolsheviks until they were expelled and thereafter, using funds from expropriations in Russia (funds which Lenin was furious he could not get his hands on) they set up their own fraction and press. Bogdanov, Manuilsky, Lunacharsky, Gorky, M.N.Pokrovsky, Alexinsky, Krasin, Bubnov, Kalinin et alia published Vperiod (Forward) and from 1912 to 1914 'Na Temi Dnia (On the Themes of the Day) along with a number of broadsheets and pamphlets though Bogdanov and Lunacharsky left the group in 1911 because of 'proletarian culture'.

Despite this loss Vperiod continued their fractional activity both within and without Russia especially in St. Petersburg where, in alliance with Trotsky's Pravdaists they constituted a sizeable and important locus of socialist activity in the capital. Though they continued to be critical of Lenin, such was the situation there that they regularly contributed not merely to Pravda but also to the bolshevik press - for the situation of emnity among the exiles was not mirrored in Russia itself.

Within Russia this panorama of fractions was not duplicated in the same manner. Social Democrats of all tendencies devoured ALL the social democratic press and their attempts to develop joint organisational forms ran completely counter to the situation of the exiles. Added to this the ability of the police to smash whatever organisations WERE set up, - almost at will, due to their provocateurs meant that the organisational situation within Russia was extremely confused. It was not unusual for one group in attempting to set up some party organ to find not one but two other identical party organs already set up for precisely the same purpose but in conditions of such secrecy that none knew the other existed. Often they even approached one another to ask for participation in the organ being formed. Thus though supporters of the liquidators, mensheviks, bolsheviks, Pravda Plekhanov and Vperiod could be found in Russia especially in St. Petersburg there was much more of a desire to carry out joint work that in exile, though this did not prevent them arguing over fundamental differences of policy on such questions as the Duma and the legal unions.

This brings us to Trotsky and his fraction. For Trotsky throughout this period attempted to present himself and his paper as non factional, even supra-factional. To a certain extent this was based on his vision of a party rent by splits about the precise nature of the 'bourgeois' revolution to come when in

Trotsky

fact he stood outwith this argument with his conception of the revolution being a precursor and trigger for the proletarian revolution. His initial writings (Results and Prospects) on this theme were soon bolstered by his experiences as a correspondent in the Balkan Wars and a more intense involvement in exile in the dynamic of class struggle internationally than the largely parochial Russians were willing to involve themselves in. The struggle of the proletariat internationally showed him how ripe

Western Europe was for proletarian revolution and demonstrated (for him) the key role of the Russian workers acting as a trigger. In such circumstances and with such views we can well understand why he played down differences of opinion about how the bourgeois revolution was to unfold.

Further, he believed that the various fractions would not come together as a result of a process of argumentation - especially while the reaction lasted - but onl as a result of the MASS action of the class, just in 1905. In 1905 the soviets had been created, the mass strike organised et alia without the organisation of Social Democracy. More, the subsequent unity of the RSDLP round revolutionary positions - even the acceptance of socialist revolution - was by dint of the massive influx of workers into the party. And so it would prove next time around he thought.

Even at the height of the bickering etc. he foresaw a similar process of clarification and regroupment occurring whwnever the class moved again. He deprecated the slanging matches and the conniving to dominate empty party organs soley to claim pre-eminence in a party which no one actually working in Russia paid any attention to. He sought in such circumstances a broad organisation - though not a liquidationist one - that could encompass all shades of opinion within one party - holding the party together until mass class action could determine the true line and transform the organisation again.

Nevertheless though he proposed non-factionalism, and was supported by the International for such a stance, in actual fact his supporters constituted a coherent fraction both within Russia and in exile. This was grouped round his paper Pravda which was smuggled into Russia via the Black Sea seamen, and where it had widespread circulation and in St. Petersburg where the 'Central group' were, in alliance with Vperiod, involved in the political scene as supporters of Trotsky. Trotsky was even able to send emissaries, such as Joffe, into Russia every year up to 1915 to discuss with his supporters throughout Russia.

The Upturn and the War

By the winter of 1911-12 it was clear to everyone in Russian Social Democracy that the years of reaction were over. The number of strikes, the Lena massacre etc. all showed the Russian working class to be becoming more combative. All fractions sought to present their policies for the future to the class, a class now de-Gaponised and reorganising itself in a network of unions, struggling to see a way forward against the autocracy and their bosses. By 1914 Lenin had given up on the mensheviks and liquidators ever moving in his direction and by the usual devious means had reformed his bolshevik fraction as a separate party. Among all the other fractions the impetus towards regroupment remained strong especially as the upturn was driving workers once more towards the RSDLP. However the differences between the fractions were sufficiently wide to prevent all these attempts succeeding. What did occur however was that joint activity continued and certain of the fractions cooperated so closely that they were to all intents and purposes the same. This mood even effected the bolsheviks within Russia. Their paper printed articles by Plekhanov and the Vperiodists among others to Lenins disgust and there continued to be joint Social Democratic commitees encompassing all fractions, especially since the rise of legal unions and the continued involvement in the Duma of Social Democracy necessitated the political attention of the socialists if these were not to become completely liquidationist.This is not to say that there were no major differences of opinion - there were - since the different fractions were still based on radically different conceptions of what was going to happen as a result of the rise in class combativity and struggle.

It was into this optimistic, but still confused situation that the Great War burst like a

Joffe

thunderbolt. Almost without exception response to the war split every fraction, every grouping within Russian Social Democracy. While it is true that

the relationship of socialism to the autocracy prevented the wholesale embracing of bourgeois nationalism that smashed social democracy elsewhere there was a split in each fraction into supporters of the war and opponents, supporters of the autocracy's war effort and opponents of the autocracy's war effort.

Outwith Russia the bolshevik centre in Paris disintegrated, with many of its members enlisting in the French army - 11 out of 94 bolsheviks in France enlisted and many more became defencists such as Krzhizhanovsky and Goldenberg. Alexinsky who had been in Vperiod became a rabid defencist (and later a white guard) and many mensheviks came out in support of Russia in the war while many others - especially in the Polish, Baltic and Latvian minorities openly took up pro-German positions in the hope that the Germans would smash their nation's oppressors and give them independence. Worst of all the father of Russian social democracy, Plekhanov took up a rabidly defencist position splitting his fraction round Edinstvo who sent delegates from Russia to interview the old man and who, once his position had been made clear, broke with him completely.

That such delegates had to be sent out is an illustration of a key fact. It is vital if we are to understand the political fractions during the war to understand how utterly isolated those within Russia were from those in exile. Only the February revolution allowed them to reunite. Until then we must treat them separately.

Outside Russia the various emigres were hustled out of the belligerent countries into a variety of temporary homes, Trotsky escaping from Vienna to Paris, Lenin from Galicia to Switzerland, others to Sweden - even America. Thus without even the limited contact they had previously had with their comrades in Russia the exile social democratic community floundered in assessing the effect of the war on and in Russia and were unable to influence the activity of social democrats in the Tsarist Empire.

However the War forced the exiles, especially the defeatists to turn much more of their attention to the international situation, both of capitalism and of social democracy. Thus the war period saw such as Bukharin and Luxemburg try to come to terms with what was clearly a new period in capitalisms history, in the life of the capitalist economy and the capitalist state with thus new appreciations of the prospects for proletarian revolution - internationally. It is therefore no surprise to find more and more Russian social democrats turning to the question of the proletarian revolution not just in western europe but in Russia too. (Shlyapnikovs memoirs and Bukharins writings show this most clearly). Similarly the utter betrayal of international Social Democracy brought many round to seeing the way forward as the construction of a new international.

These were in a minority however. The majority of social democrats hoped that, as with other wars, it would soon be over and the International could get back to business again soon though as the war dragged on this became increasingly unlikely and some joined those who had already realised that it could never be the same again in the International. Many however moved firmly into the camp of the bourgeoisie supporting not only the war but attacking the class when in defence of its class interests it opposed the war and the war effort. Most, however, took a pacifist position. The war was a disgrace, the role of International Social Democracy was a disgrace; they would give no support to either side. They would sit out the war and see what could be made international social democracy afterwards. It was precisely such sentiments which predominated at Zimmerwald.

To the left of such sentiments stood two groups First, represented by Trotsky opposed the pacifist approach but were, initally, unwilling to distance themselves from the Second International which they hoped would emerge from the war radicalised and once more 'on the right track'. Trotsky, for example, was convinced that proletarian revolution would emerge from the debris of the war and hoped, based on his experience of 1905, that the whole of Social Democracy would once again be radicalised by mass class action and put on a revolutionary path. He thus argued against a break with the International.

Lenin, supported by the German IKD who had already broken with German Social Democracy argued that the Second International was dead. He also argued that:

> " The imperialist war is ushering in the era of social revolution."
> (lenin Works Vol 21 p 347.)

and he urged that revolutionaries:

> "..do everything possible to turn the imperialist war between the peoples into a civil war of the oppressed classes against their oppressors, a war for the expropriation of the class of capitalists, for the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and the realisation of socialism."
> (Lenin Works Vol 21 p 348.)

Further, Lenin argued that revolutionaries in a particular nation state should fight for the defeat of their own government, of their own bourgeoisie.

> " A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, and cannot fail to see that the latter's military reverses must facilitate its overthrow."
> (Lenin Works Vol 21 p 315.)

Trotsky opposed this last position, not from any pacifist stance but because, as it stood, it could be taken as pro-german and it was in precisely this spirit, and with this conception of Lenin's viewpoint that the German General Staff and Parvus, who had been diligently channelling funds to Lettish, Jewish and Baltic social democrats, sought to expand this funding to the bolsheviks.

Trotsky countered what he considered a dangerous one-sidedness in this by arguing for a Socialist United States of Europe to bebuilt on the bones of the capitalist crisis which the war was clearly the precursor of. In Nashe Slove Trotsky reaffirmed his belief in the socialist revolution in Russia as in Europe:

> "...a national bourgeois revolution is impossible in Russia...the time for national revolutions has passed - at least for Europe just as the time for national wars has passed."
> (Nashe Slovo Oct 17 1915.)

In Russia he argued that:

> " The workers must take the political leadership of the whole struggle, which above all will be a

proletarian struggle...it is clear that victory in this struggle must transfer power to the class that has led the struggle ie. the Social Democratic Proletariat."

(ibid.)

And in case there should be any uncertainty about the nature of the revolutionary regime:

" The question, therefore, is not simply of a 'revolutionary provisional government' - an empty phrase to which the historical process will have to give some kind of context, but of a revolutionary workers government, the conquest of power by the Russian proletariat."

and

"....if the proletariat does not tear the power out of the hands of the monarchy nobody else will do so."

(both ibid.)

Despite these differences of opinion at an international level the dynamic between Trotsky's group round his paper Nashe Slovo and the emigre bolsheviks was towards regroupment. Even more clear was the dynamic towards total divorce with the bulk of the pacifists let alone the defencists, as can be seen by the move left between Zimmerwald and Keinthal. With Martov being gently elbowed out of Nashe Slovo a fairly coherent group of Trotsky, former Vperiodists and mensheviks opposed to the war took shape. By early 1915 they were arguing that the situation facing the proletariat was: "permanent war or permanent revolution" and they echoed Lenin's call "to gather the forces of the Third International."

But Trotsky himself was not at the forefront of these deliberations. The group with Antonov-Ovseenko, Kollontarin and Uritsky coming from menshevism and Manuilsky and Pokrovsky from Vperiod as well as Lozovsky and Sokolnikov the bolshevik conciliator et alia discreetly criticised Trotsky for delaying the movement towards regroupment with the bolsheviks which the new world situation demanded.

While Manuilsky still spoke of the "national narrow-mindedness and angular crudity" of bolshevism he insisted that it had become a crucial part of the coming communist party. As Deutcher puts it:

" he was prodded and pushed that way by the pro-bolsheviks on his staff, who...were quicker in grasping the trend of the realignment and urged him to abandon his old loyalties and to draw conclusions from the new situation."

(Deutcher: Prophet Armed p 233.)

The Vperiodists too, now working with Trotsky in Nashe Slovo considered that just as they and Trotsky had changed as a result of the war so too had the bolsheviks:

" One ought not to and need not share the sectarian narrow-mindedness of (Lenins group) ..but it cannot be denied that..in Russia, in the thick of political action, so-called Leninism is freeing itself from its sectarian features...and that the workers' groups connected with Social Democrat (Lenin's paper) are now in Russia the only active and consistently internationalist force...For those internationalists who belong to no faction there is no way out but to merge with the Leninist organisation..There exists, of course, the danger that through such a merger we shall forfeit some valuable features....but the spirit of the class struggle, which lives not in literary laboratories but in the dust and tension of mass political strife, will brace itself and boldly develop."

(Nashe Slove Jan 19 1916 quoted in Deutcher p233.)

Vperiod issued the call for:

" The unification of all revolutionary internationalist elements regardless of other differences which do not go beyond the limits of the fundamental principles of revolutionary marxism."

(quoted in Daniels: Conscience of the Revolution p 31.)


НАШЕ СЛОВО

NOTRE PAROLE — NACHE SLOWO

1916 г.

Nashe Slovo Jan. 19 1916

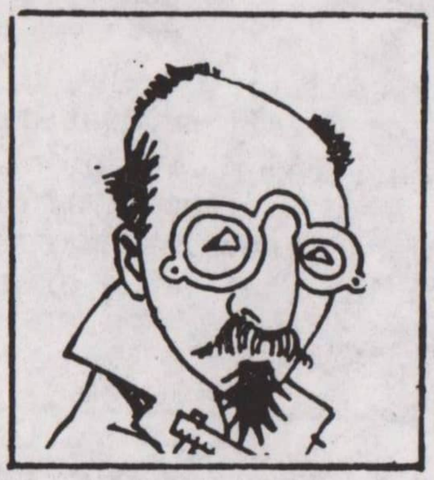
The last lines of the Nashe Slovo quote epitomise the general atmosphere of expectation. From Lenin too there was a realisation that a regroupment was in order, even though within the fraction itself there were further splits over the national question as Bukharin, Piatakov et alia with their assessment of the entry of capitalism into its decadent era disputed the question with Lenin. Even Lenin himself began to be aware of the process of regroupment though in his usual sectarian way he still conceived of it as others accepting what he had always said. It was only quite late, when he began to understand the nature of what was happenning both in Russia and in western Europe and the possibilities for proletarian revolution in Russia itself that he eagerly pushed for regroupment of the internationalist current within Russian Social Democracy.

Contacts with Russia dramatically improved in 1915 when the Mezdurayontsy managed to send out a delegation to establish contact and agreed to contribute to Nashe Slovo on the basis of the slogan "Long Live the Third International. Long Live the United RSDLP."

Lunacharsky in his memoirs "The Great Overturn" of 1919 describes the mood thus:

" The convergence of the Vperiod group and the bolsheviks and the solidification in general of the left wing came about as a result of the war (and

it led to) the merger of all Left groups of the former Social Democratic Party in the great united Communist Party."
(quoted In Daniels.)



Lunacharsky

Within Russia itself the situation was much more confused and although there too international consideration were coming to the fore, purely Russian events were the essential basis for regroupment.

The onset of the war in 1914 had, at first, a catastrophic effect on the rising combativity of the working class who, since 1912 had been on a rising crescendo of class struggle. It was only after the initial defeats of the Russian Army and the realisation that a long war was in prospect with enormous changes going to take place that thousands of workers responded to the situation and the possibilities inherent in it to fight once again against the autocracy and the bourgeoisie. But the war also galvanised the other social classes in Russia - predominantly in support of the war in terms of the liberal intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie and into violent opposition to it with regard to the peasantry

In such circumstances the autocracy used the onset of war to radically intensify their draconian hold on society. The secret police, who even before the war had infiltrated social democracy to the extent that unified action was nigh on impossible, now utilised the patriotic fervour that infected all section of Russian society to further infiltrate and destroy the organised groups of socialists that existed: So much so that throughout the war many groups active in a particular locale were unaware that other similar groups also existed there, so unwilling were they to reveal their presense to the police.

In terms of support for and opposition to the war the situation in Russia was similar to that of the emigres except that it could be argued that defencism was stronger in Russia than out of it. Every fraction spawned outright chauvinists and defencists but there were - to begin with at least - few who looked beyond either a pacifist or a "peace without annexations and a return to business as usual" orientation. Certainly the fractions were much closer within Russia than they were in exile. In part, paradoxically this was due to the activities of the police who forced those already in contact, such as in St. Petersburg, where political life was vibrant, to huddle together for comfort. In the capital this had led in 1913 to the formation of the Mezdurayontsy, a coalition of Vperiodists, Trotskyists, Plekhanovites and bolsheviks who were unwilling to tolerate the sectarian squabbles of the exiles but who opposed the liquidationists policies of mainstream menshevism.

When the war began and all fractions were forced to reaffirm their political stances vis a vis it, it was such as the Mezdurayontsy who were active in regrouping those anti-war socialists escaping from the mensheviks who collapsed into chauvinism with Plekhanov or into confusion about the meaning of the war. However the confusions of the mensheviks, cleansed of their defencists, were to have important repercussions for all fractions, bolsheviks included in 1917. It is therefore important to look at these confusions and differences.

All fractions opposed the autocracy and so all opposed the war except for thr chauvinists. However this opposition was often given in conditional terms leading to the possibility that if the conditions were to be met a similar conditional approval of the war might ensue.

Thus out on the right such as Potresov could oppose the Tsar's war and the potential victory of the Tsar but could hope for a victory of the democratic 'entente' who were the Tsar's allies against Germany, Turkey and Austria, in the hope that such a victory would 'democratise' Russia. Of course therefore should Russia 'democratise' itself the theoretical justification for support of the war was already there. Most of the mensheviks, and as we shall see, not a few of the bolsheviks agreed.

Martov in 1915 for example:

> " It is self-evident that if the present crisis should lead to the victory of the democratic revolution, to a republic, then the character of the war would radically change."

Martov in 1917

By 1915 when Russian despotism was obviously reeling and clearly utterly incapable of organising the state for a modern war of long duration the bourgeois War Industries Committees throughout Russia, were coming by default to be in charge of the Russian war effort, in charge of the production for war and the entire war economy. For Potresov, Maslov et alia., convinced as they were, despite their continued opposition to the Tsar, that the German Army threatened the existence of Russian workers as well as the existence of the Tsar, saw these War Industries Committees as a major step to the autocracy losing control, a great step towards the democratisation they earnestly sought and a perfect example of the bourgeoisie being forced to take the helm in the national interest against the national foe. The bourgeois revolution was beginning.

This self-defencist position was opposed by many other groups of mensheviks in petrograd, Moscow and by most mensheviks in exile in Siberia who,

while they saw great possibilities in the W.I.C.'s for workers to regroup after the hammer blows of wartime police repression, to impose their class demands and to help embattled social democrats regroup and grow, and thus support the election of social democrats to the W.I.C.s, they opposed the self-defencist notion of fighting for democracy equalling fighting the germans. In effect involvement in the Committees was a tactical move to enable the class and party to operate freely AND it allowed the liberal bourgeoisie who were to inherit power in Russia to develop their powers or organisation with proletarian assistance while the dying hand of Tsarism was slipping.

Still others opposed not only the war but also the Committees as a means whereby the state mobilised workers ideologically for the war. These groups, while disagreeing with the mezdurayontsy and bolsheviks over the role of the liberals, moved left towards these groups as the Committees took over more and more of the war effort and oppressed the working class more and more in doing so.

As for the bolsheviks, the vast majority in Russia had no conception of turning the war into a civil war but, by and large agreed with the left wing of menshevism that the war was an interruption with which the working class and the RSDLP could not become implicated in - and that went for the W.I.C.s too.

By 1916, with the continued failure of the Russian army to do anything other than retreat, the complete collapse of the Tsarist economy and a rising tide of mass class struggle against the privations of the war, had to a considerable extent, solidified social democrats in Russia into clear camps of defencists - for the war, self-defencists - for involvement in the war upon certain conditions being met, and anti-war who opposed all involvement.

The rising tide of class struggle naturally pushed the first group more and more into anti-proletarian statements castigating the class for selling out Russia and totally exposed before the class those such as Plekhanov, as now counterrevolutionary elements masquarading as socialists and so firmly within the bourgeois camp. The second group too, though they supported the class in strikes etc. once again, as in 1905, were seen increasingly to be a restraining influence on the self-activity of the workers, trying to use the power of the class to 'democratise' industry and the state in the interests of the bourgeoisie but fearful that the class might 'go overboard' and frighten the bourgeoisie, ruining everything.. Only the last group enthusiastically supported the rising class struggle as a complete attack on the Tsarist autocracy and opposed all attempts to enveigle the proletariat into participation in the war effort.

This radicalisation, plus the increasingly clear international aspects of a war which engulfed the whole world, from Brazil to East Africa, Australia to the Arctic forced revolutionaries both within and without Russia to examine the prospect that capitalism had entered a new phase and that a new orientation was necessary for revolutionaries and the working class not merely within Russia but throughout the world. Thus we see Bukharin, strongly influenced by Vperiod and Bogdanov, taking up increasingly clear positions like Luxemburg on the national question, in the internationalism of the proletariat and world revolution, on capitalism as a global economy, exposed by its global war and requiring a global solution, and on the nature of the capitalist state in such a period, leading to a realisation of the necessity to smash it, not democratise it. It is precisely in this period that we see in Russian Social Democracy a synthesis of the brief glimpses into the future various groups and individuals had had since 1905 leading to, with the Third International a coherent programme for world revolution in the period of capitalist decadence.

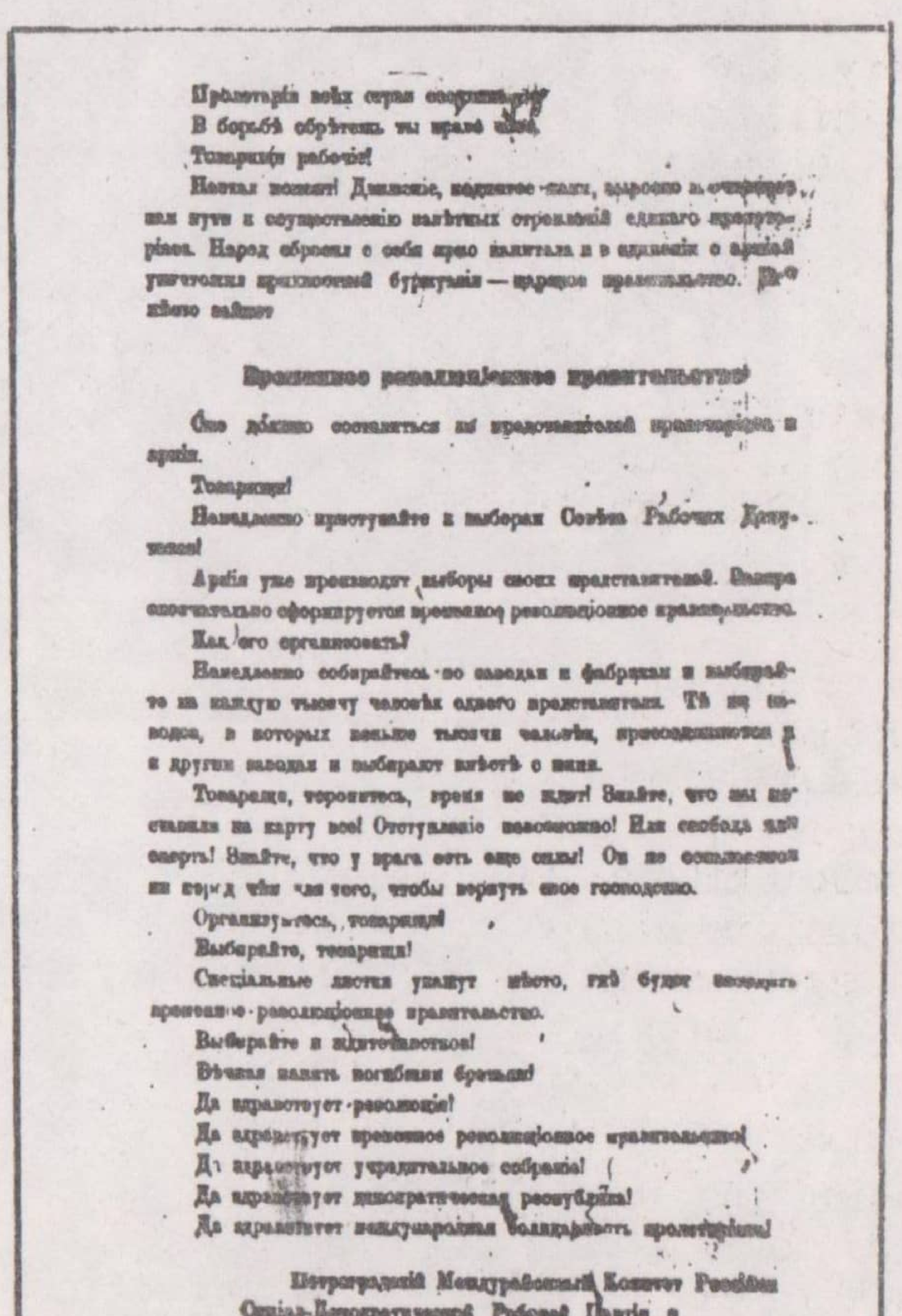
Thus both within and without Russia there were many groping their way towards a break with the Second International and the creation of a Third. Such conceptions were to blow apart the various conceptions of 'bourgeois revolution' and the conceptions of the role of the proletariat in it leading to a clear conception of the proletarian revolution, in accord with the class demands of a revolutionary proletariat in Russia and thus a new alignment of revolutionaries along those lines.

February

Into the midst of this burst the February revolution. For the exiles there was no inkling that the class struggle they had known was developing would so quickly end Tsarism. Lenin had only just remarked in Switzerland that the revolution might come too late for him to see it. 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 tide was on the ebb and that consolidation was needed.

On the unpreparedness of Social Democracy for the upheaval all are agreed. Sukhanov says:

> " Not one party was preparing for the great upheaval."
> (Sukhanov: The Russian Revolution p 36.)



Пролетарiи всѣхъ странъ соединяйтесь!
В борьбѣ обрѣтешь ты право свое.
Товарищи рабочiе!
Настал момент! [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] буржуазiи — царское правительство. [illegible]

Временное революцiонное правительство

Оно должно составиться из представителей пролетарiата и армiи.
Товарищи!
Немедленно приступайте к выборам Совѣта Рабочих Депутатов!
Армiя уже производит выборы своих представителей. Вскоре окончательно сформируется временное революцiонное правительство.
Как его организовать?
Немедленно собирайтесь по заводам и фабрикам и выбирайте на каждую тысячу человѣк одного представителя. Тѣ из заводов, в которых меньше тысячи человѣк, присоединяются к другим заводам и выбирают вмѣстѣ с ними.
Товарищи, торопитесь, время не ждет! Знайте, что мы поставили на карту все! Отступленiе невозможно! Или свобода или смерть! Знайте, что у врага есть еще силы! Он не остановится ни перед чѣм для того, чтобы вернуть свое господство.
Организуйтесь, товарищи!
Выбирайте, товарищи!
Специальные листки укажут мѣсто, гдѣ будет заседать временное революцiонное правительство.
Выбирайте в правительство!
Вѣчная память погибшим братьям!
Да здравствует революцiя!
Да здравствует временное революцiонное правительство!
Да здравствует учредительное собранiе!
Да здравствует демократическая республика!
Да здравствует международная солидарность пролетарiата!

Петроградскiй Междурайонный Комитет Россiйской Соцiал-Демократической Рабочей Партiи и Партiи Соцiалистов-Революцiонеров.

The Mezdurayontsy Issue the First Leaflet Calling For the Formation Of Soviets in 1917

Trotsky:

"...no one, positively no one - we can assert this categorically upon the basis of all the data - then thought that February 23rd was to mark the beginning of a decisive drive against absolutism."
(History of the Russian Revolution p 122.)

Within Russia Kaiurov of the Vyborg Bolsheviks:

" no one thought of such an imminent possibility of revolution."
(Proletarskaya Revolutsia No 1 1923.)

The Working Class Fight for Communism in 1917

and on the sunday he was saying:

" the revolution is petering out. The demonstrators are disarmed. No one can do anything to the government once it has taken decisive action." (ibid.)

The first leaflet issued heralding the revolution and demanding the formation of and all power to the proletarian soviets came from the Mezdurayontsy, who partly as a result of their close connections with Trotsky already had the position that proletarian revolution was on the cards (as indeed did Bukharin, Radek and Luxemburg) and who from their stronghold on Vasilevsky Island and the Narva district of Petrograd and in their press argued for the proletarian revolution. They continued to do so up to their regroupment with the bolsheviks in August 1917.

For the other fractions outwith the defencists, the bolsheviks and mainstream mensheviks who had opposed the Tsar's war the success of the February revolution brought real problems. In effect, for them, the bourgeois revolution had begun, and the working class had, through the Petrograd Soviets Executive Committee had handed power over to a bourgeois government who were committed to carrying on the war in support of the equally bourgeois governments of France and Britain.

For the mensheviks the democratisation of Russia meant that defending Russia equalled defending the revolution against the Germans and therefore self-defencism. Almost to a man therefore, apart from Martov and a few others, the mensheviks now swung round to support the war, though they might cavil at annexations. They thus set themselves diametrically and increasingly obviously against the anti-war stance of the working class and soldiers and peasants. Thus the erosion of their position within the proletariat can be easily explained. As the war got worse, and the workers, soldiers and peasants beca more anti-war the 'defence of democracy' isolated such as Dan et alia more and more from the proletariat. Only the small fraction under Martov, the miniscule Internationalists and a few others resolutely continued to oppose the war - but on pacifist grounds and while supporting the bourgeois democracy. Their only real dispute was on the role of the soviets in sustaining the bourgeois govern-ment when with the collapse of the Russian war

effort in mid-1917 the mensheviks entered the bourgeois government itself. For, true to the positions they had held since 1905, the mensheviks supported not merely the war but the provisional government which waged it and castigated the class for opposing it. Rabochaia Gazeta put it thus:

" The temporary Duma committee strives to found a Provisional Government. This government will be decidedly bourgeois in character... Do not struggle for its removal, do not struggle to replace the government with representatives from the Soviet."
(Sukhanov pp6-7.)

Even Sukhanov, on the extreme left of menshevism thought:

" The power to take the place of the Tsar must be only bourgeois. Rasputin and Trepov ought and can only be replaced by the bosses of the Progressive Bloc."
(Sukhanov p 8.)

And the logic of this stance is expressed well by him:

" It was clear then a-priori that if a bourgeois government and the adherence of the bourgeoisie to the revolution were to be counted on, it was temporarily necessary to shelve the slogans against the war." (my emphasis)
(Sukhanov pp 8-9.)

But what of the bolsheviks. By February their support within the working class in its fight both against the war and against the factory bosses as they sought to impose increasing austerity, meant that they were the fraction most in tune with the demands of the class, enjoying great support within the class on a nation wide basis.

However the February revolution found the bolshevik committee men utterly unsure of where they were. Essentially there were three strands withing bolshevik thinking inside Russia about what the February revolution meant and what their positions should be now.

Out on the left stood such as the Vyborg Committee who held to the classic Leninist position of 1905 on the democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry holding power in a bourgeois revolution. Thus on March 1st a general meeting of Vyborg Bolsheviks adopted a resolution calling on the Soviets to seize power and to abolish the Provisional Committee. At a meeting of the Petrograd Committee they proposed the following draft resolution.

1. The task of the moment is the founding of a provisional revolutionary government, growing out of the unification of local soviets of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Deputies in the whole of Russia.
2. To prepare for the full seizure of central power it is necessary to (a) strengthen the power of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies (b) proceed locally to the partial seizure of power by overthrowing the organs of the old power and replacing them with Soviets of Workers Peasants and Soldiers Deputies, the tasks of which are the arming of the people, the oragnisation of the army on democratic principles, the confiscation of the land, and the carrying out of all the other demands of the minimum programme....

The power of the provisional government which was founded by the Provisional Committee of the Duma will be recognised and supported only until the formation of a revolutionary government from the Soviets of Workers Peasants and Soldiers Deputies and only insofar as its actions are consistent with the interests of the proletariat and the broad democratic masses. (quoted in Kudelli pp 19-20.)

They believed, as in 1905, that the bourgeoisie was incapable of carrying out the bourgeois revolution and incapable of implementing the minimum programme of Social Democracy

"..a democratic republic, the eight hour working day, confiscation of all the land...ending the war."
(ibid p 27.)

Only the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry could accomplish this.

Close to the Vyborg restatement of classic bolshevik ideas stood the Russian Bureau represented by Shyliapnikov, Molotov and Zalutsky. They agreed with Vyborg on the role of the Soviets and encouraged

Shlyapnikov

workers to form and join them, supported the demand for the implementation by a provisional revolutionary government of the minimum programme, free elections etc. Where they differed was in delaying putting forward the slogan of All Power to the Soviets. Though they considered the soviets as "the embryo of the revolutionary power" they did not consider them capable of holding that power at the moment.

Molotov

" At the present moment these Soviets should exercise the most decisive control over all the actions of the provisional government and its agents both in the centre and in the provinces; and they should themselves assume a number of functions of state and of an economic character arising from the complete disorganisation of economic life in the country and from the urgent necessity to apply the most resolute measures for safeguarding the famine-stricken population whom war has ruined."

(quoted in Trotsky: Stalin School of Falsification p 240.)

For the moment state power was to be left in the hands of the bourgeoisie over whom extreme vigilance had to be instituted until the soviets were strong enough to take power. And in case the bourgeoisie tried from its position of power to destroy the soviets:

" The most urgent and important task of the Soviets, the fulfilment of which will alone guarantee the victory over all the forces of counter-revolution and the further development and deepening of the revolution, is, in the opinion of the party, the universal arming of the people, and, in particular, the immediate creation of Workers' Red Guards throughout the entire land."

(ibid p 241)

By and large therefore these two strands of opinion mirrorred the traditional positions of bolshevism regarding the bourgeois revolution. However to the right of these two stood what beame in March the majority position of bolshevism, represented first by the Petrograd Committee. As the minutes of the meeting of that committee of 7th March show their position on the war was expressed by Federov:

Kamanev, Muralov and Stalin

"...impossible categorically to demand its ending since if the front is weakened there is a risk of losing those freedoms which we have already succeeded in securing. The danger of a German regime being established is a considerably greater danger than the establishment of the pre- revolutionary government."

(Kudelli p 24.)

As Avilov put it:

"...an immediate end to the war under present conditions ie. the continued power of the German imperialist government and the presence of danger from the counterrevolution in Russia, is inadmissable. On the contrary we must declare that until these dangers are removed our front must be defended against German attack."

(Kudelli pp 24-26.)

Thus the February revolution turned the Committee into defencists, self-defencists. ie. the bourgeois revolution and its gains had to be defended. As to this bourgeois government, the same meeting passed a resolution saying that the bolsheviks would:

"not oppose the power of the provisional government in so far as its activities correspond to the interests of the proletariat and of the broad democratic masses of the people."

(Kudelli p 19.)

On the 12th March Bolshevik exiles from Siberia returned to the capital, among them Kamanev, Stalin and Muranov and took control of Pravda. As Sukhanov puts it:

" In a flash it (Pravda) became unrecognisable"

(Sukhanov p 227.)

For this group took up the Petrograd committee's position wholeheartedly announcing that the Bolshevik Party would:

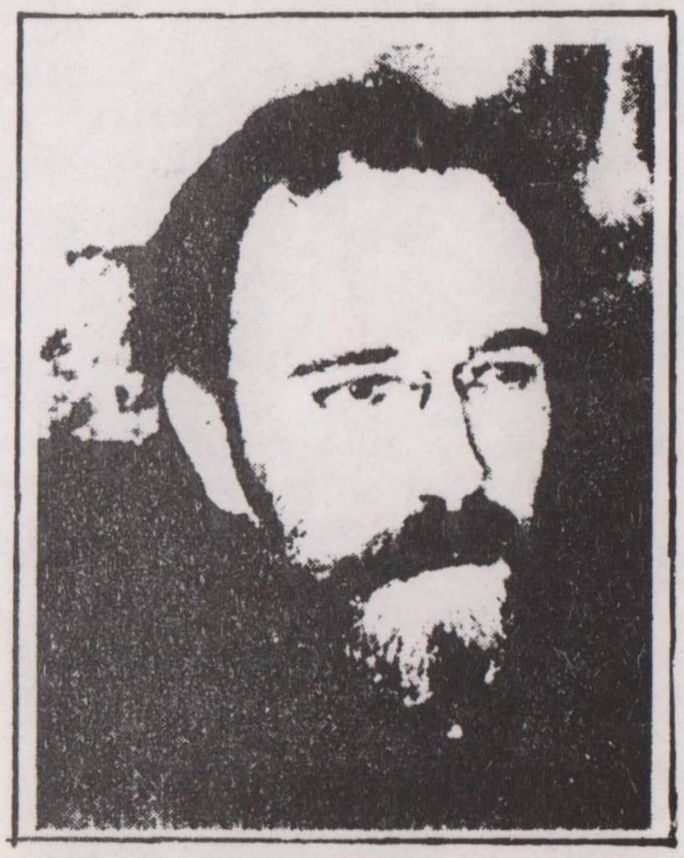
"support the provisional government insofar as it struggles against reaction or counterrevolution.

(Pravda in March.)

On the war Kamanev said.

" The war goes on. The great Russian revolution did not interrupt it. And no one entertains the hope that it will end tomorrow, of the day after. The soldiers, the peasants and the workers of Russia who went to war at the call of the deposed Tsar, and who shed their blood under his banners, have liberated themselves, and the Tsarist banners have been replaced by the red banners of the revolution. But the war will go on, because the German army has not followed the example of the Russian army and is still obeying its Emperor, who avidly seeks his prey on the battle-fields of death.

When an army stands against an army, the most absurd policy would be to propose that one of them lay down its arms and go home. This policy would not be the policy of peace but a policy of slavery, a policy which the free people would reject with indignation. No, the free people will stand firmly at their posts, will reply bullet



Kamanev

for bullet and shell for shell. This is unavoidable. The revolutionary officers and soldiers who have overthrown the yoke of the Tsar will not quit their trenches so as to clear the place for the German or Austrian soldiers or officers, who as yet have not had the courage to overthrow the yoke of their own government. We cannot permit any disorganisation of the military forces of the revolution! War must be ended in an organised way, by a pact among the peoples which have liberated themselves, and not by subordination to the will of the neighbouring conquerer and imperialist."

(Pravda 15 March 1917. quoted in Browder and Kerensky: The Provisional Goverhment. Documents.)

Российская Соціалъ-Демократическая Рабочая Партія

ПРАВДА

ОРГАНЪ Центральнаго Комитета и Петербургскаго Комитета Р. С.-Д. Р. П.

№ 7 Воскресенье ЕЖЕДНЕВНАЯ ГАЗЕТА 12 марта [25 марта] 1917 г.

Постановление

Первый шаг

Pravda in March 1917

The defencists were delighted. The bolsheviks had at last seen sense. Throughout Russia among the bolshevik committees this position of 'support' for both the war and the provisional government was echoed. In Moscow:

" Until peace has been achieved - we do not throw away our arms."

In Kharkov:

" Until German Social Democracy takes power into its hands our army must stand up like a wall of steel, armed from head to foot against Prussian militarism, for the victory of Prussian militarism is the death of our freedom."

At the All-Russian Bolshevik Conference of 28th March the Petrograd position on the bourgeois revolution became the formal position of the Bolshevik Party. In his report 'On the Attitude to the Provisional Government', Stalin said:

" The power has been divided between two organs, of which neither possesses full power. There is and there ought to be friction and struggle between them...The Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies is the revolutionary leader of the insurrectionary people; an organ of control over the Provisional Government. On the other hand the Provisional Government has in fact taken the role of fortifier of the conquests of the revolutionary people...Such a situation has disadvantages, but also has advantageous sides."

(quoted in Stalin School of Falsification appendix)

On the war, although the Conference did not produce a resolution the right wing position was clearly stated by Vasiliev, the delegate from Saratov:

" Revolutionary democratic Russia does not seek an inch of foreign property. But not an inch of our own soil or a penny of our own property can be taken away from us...As long as peace is not concluded we must stand fully armed; and in guarding the interests of new democratic Russia we must increase tenfold our efforts, for we are now defending our budding liberties. The revolutionary army must be powerful and unconquerable. It must be provided by the workers and by the provisional government with everything necessary to strengthen its forces. Discipline in the ranks being the necessary condition for an army's strength, must be sustained not out of fear but out of free will, and based upon mutual confidence between the democratic officer staff and the revolutionary soldiers."

(ibid.)

Thus the February revolution and the 'victory' of the bourgeois revolution moved the apparat of the Bolshevik Party into positions defending the 'gains' of the revolution and thus the bourgeois government itself - and its war. As Trotsky wrote long after:

" A reading of the reports...frequently produces a feeling of amazement: is it possible that a party represented by these delegates will after seven months seize the power with an iron hand?"

(History of the Russian Revolution p 316.)

In March 1917 only the Mezdurayontsy with their calls for all power to the soviets and for the proletarian revolution stood outside the collection of factions calling for the unification of the party round self-defencist positions. When Tseretelli for the mensheviks suggested the regroupment of mensheviks and bolsheviks Stalin was in agreement:

" We ought to go. It is necessary to define our proposals as to the terms of unification. Unification is possible along the lines of Zimmerwald-Keinthal."

(quoted in Stalin School.)

In truth there was little to differentiate between this bolshevik statement and mainstream menshevism after February 1917.

How then do we explain the fact that in less than a month, following Lenin's return to Russia and the April Congress of the Bolshevik Party, that party stood fair and square for the proletarian revolution - not only in Russia but - ushered in by World War One, in the whole of Europe, for the defeat and destruction of the Provisional Government and the taking of power.

The traditional view is that Lenin, with his April Theses and his Letters from Afar so galvanised the stupefied bolsheviks that they completely changed course, adopted his positions on the strength of his charisma and political clarity alone and then led the working class to victory.

Certainly Lenin, as in 1905, played an important

role, in that he was able to realise the new needs of the proletariat and the period and was not afraid to argue for a radical transformation of the Bolshevik Party on that basis. From his first arrival at the Finland station to the April Congress he continually hammered home the results of the exiles analyses of the international situation. On the very evening he returned he said:

" We dont need a parliamentary republic; we dont need bourgeois democracy, we dont need any government except the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Farm Labourers Deputies."
(quoted by Sukhanov pp 281-282.)

Lenin was not alone in returning to Russia with such conceptions. As more and more emigres returned, Trotsky from America, Bukharin from Sweden and a host of others, the international consequences of the war, the ripeness of the whole capitalist world for proletarian revolution were argued by more and more influential revolutionaries. Lenin himself put it thus:

" Only a special coincidence of historical conditions has made the proletariat of Russia, for a time, perhaps a very short time, the advance skirmishers of the revolutionary proletariat of the whole world."
(Lenin Works Vol 20 p 68.)


Herman Axelbank

Trotsky Returns in 1917

This is not to say that such positions were not already being advocated in Russia itself. On the contrary! The mezdurayontsy had been arguing along these lines at least since the start of the war and since February had been arguing for all power to the soviets too. Strengthened by Trotsky's return with those elements who had regrouped round Nashe Slovo they soon turned decisively towards a policy of regroupment with the Bolsheviks especially after the acceptance of the April Theses and the abandonment of the concept of the bourgeois revolution by the bolsheviks.

Even within the bolshevik committees voices from at least as early as 1915 had been heard on the realisation of the proletarian nature of the incipient revolution - as Shlyapnikov makes clear in his memoirs. Even at the March Conference there had been appeals against the trend there from those more in tune with the mood of the class. Skrynik said:

" the government is not fortifying, but checking the cause of the revolution. There can be no more talk of supporting the government. There is a conspiracy of the provisional government against the people and the revolution, and it is necessary to prepare for a struggle against it."
(quoted in Stalin School.)

Nogin added:

" It is clear that we ought not now to talk about support but about resistance."
(ibid.)

But this is not sufficient to explain the transformatio of the bolsheviks in the teeth of violent attack throughout March from Kamanev, Zinoviev and a whole host of longtime bolsheviks at the highest levels of the party organisation who opposed Lenin and his supporters.


Zinoviev.

No, the answer once again, just as in 1905 is the mass action and consciousness of the class. From their activity throughout the war the bolsheviks were seen as a part of the class, as an organisation of the class and thus with the victory of the February revolution the proletarian masses flooded into all the socialist organisations including the bolsheviks.

We need only look at a few statistics quoted by Cliff to see the extent of the numerical transformation:

bolshevik party membership	beginning of March	Seventh Conference (24-29 April)
Petrograd	2000	16000
Moscow	600	7000
Ivano-Voznesensk	10	3564
Ekaterinoslav	400	1500
Lugan	100	1500
Kharkov	105	1200
Kiev	200	1900
Saratov	60	1600
Ekaterinburg	40	1700

Thus in Petrograd there was a rise of 800 per cent and in Moscow almost 1200 per cent.

The influx of conscious workers into the bolshevik organisation forced a radicalisation that mirrorred the radicalisation of the class itself. All Power to the Soviets, Down with the Bourgeoisie, No Support for the Bosses and the Provisional

Government and No Support for the War.

Thus when Pravda, under the new editorship of the Siberian exiles moved dramatically to the right, as Shlyapnikov tells us:

> " In the factories this number of Pravda produced stupefaction among the adherents of our party and its sympathisers, and the spiteful satisfaction of our enemies...What was happenning? Why had our paper left the Bolshevik policy to follow that of the'defencists'?"
> (Shlyapnikov Vol 2 p 185.)

This vast influx of workers were unwilling to let the situation remain thus and were the crucial element in the transformation of the bolsheviks in April. One statistic demonstrates this completely. A mere 15% of the provincial delegates to the March conference secured their election to the April 7th conference which accepted the April Theses. Quite simply it would appear that the former were simply chucked out when they returned and replaced by others who were in tune with the membership. As one academic has put it:

> " There would at least appear to be strong circumstancial evidence that the Conference's radicalisation was a reflection of the wide-spread radicalisation of rank and file members who, by then, had used their voting power to change the political complexion of many local committees and local delegations."
> (G.Swain: Russian Social Democracy and the Legal Labour Movement.)

"Who...Used Their Voting Power to Change."

Indeed the Moscow Province delegates who constituted 6% of the April delegates and who were some of the most vociferous anti-government delegates had not even been represented at the March conference.

With this transformation occasioned by the vast influx of revolutionary workers into the organisation and the resultant taking of revolutionary positions the path was opened not only for the flight of those bolsheviks who held to the outdated 'old bolshevik' positions on the bourgeois revolution into the ranks of the mensheviks, but also for those individuals and fractions such as the mezdurayontsy who were already arguing for the proletarian revolution into regroupment with the bolsheviks to form the unified

Communist Party since the last key difference had been overcome by the bolshevik acceptance of proletarian revolution under pressure from the class. Shlyapnikov claims that regroupment had been agreed in March with the Mezdurayontsy but that the return of the Siberian exiles and the jump to the right and defencism had prevented it.

The war and the February events which flowed from it thus formed the basis for the irrevocable split of Russian Social Democracy into two groups, for and against the war, for and against the continuance of the bourgeois slaughter, and for and against the bourgeois government carrying out as inheritors of the autocracy. The revolutionary events of Feb. 1917 built upon that basis to further differentiate and regroup those who, further saw the future as one of proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie and the taking of state power by the proletariat.

From April to October, through the failure of the July days to the success of the October revolution, the process of delineation on these lines continued as the class itself were increasingly won over to these positions and regrouped itself round these clear positions, round the new Communist organisation formed from the various strands of bolsheviks, Vperiodists, mezdurayontsy, former Plekhanovists et alia which had been recreated in dialectical fashion in the course of the revolutionary struggle.

Lessons for Today

The historical exposition above has validity in its own right as an exercise in historical exposition by quotation - as an attempt to redress the bias of ikonologists et alia who have wilfully perverted our understanding of one of the major events of history, the first attempt by the proletariat to destroy capitalism, and the history of the Russian communists in their attempts to play a crucial role in the socialist transformation of Russia from the foundation of the RSDLP to the foundation of the RCP. However we also want to use this material

as historical evidence, to show how certain historical processess actually occur, the real meaning of certain historical events and positions, the relationship of party to class, fraction to party, the real meaning of crucial analytical categories for today. An honest appraisal of such a crucial period of our own class past cannot but illuminate the problems faced by the class and its minorities today. We seek to deal with three vital and inextricably interconnected questions which face revolutionaries today and which are starkly illustrated by the experience of the Russian communist minorities.

1. Fractions.

First of all we must nail the lie that fractions and factions are a response to degeneration, a theory which implies that differences of opinion themselves are a reflection of degeneration. The whole experience of Russian Social Democracy shows that cogitation by revolutionaries upon real events which effected the proletariat, and the attempts by revolutionaries to assess these events and draw lessons from them, inevitably produced differing assessments of what was going to happen, different tactics, different slogans, even sometimes different organisational forms. Only the subsequent actions of the class and the interaction of revolutionaries with the class clarified these questions for all revolutionaries, propelling some forward into the political leadership of the class or backward into the ranks - of the bourgeoisie. The split between Vperiod and Lenin is an excellent example. Both fractions within the bolshevik faction attempted to understand what the experience of 1905 meant for the development of the proletariat and socialism. They developed differing understandings of thet future development which necessitated different tactics for thw period to come. Vperiod can be seen in retrospect as groping towards an understanding of the bourgeois nature of parliament (and the unions) and the necessity of violent revolution and the overthrow of the state while Lenin, still trapped within the framework of German Social Democracy, argues for using the parkiamentary rostrum, however reactionary, for revolutionary propaganda beause the workers are 'there'. Only the experience of WW1, the bourgeois government of the Provisional Committee exposed the bourgeois nature of such organs leading to all the communists denouncing the government, refusing to deal with it (unlike the mensheviks who even enter it) and calling for a workers, soviet power.

More tellingly the different conceptions of just WHAT KIND of revolution in Russia was it going to be, bourgeois, bourgeois led by the proletariat and peasantry, or socialist, all came from attempts to assess the experience of 1905-6, the development of Russian capitalism, and the prospects for the proletariat. Only with the crisis, worldwide of the War, and the resultant transformation, internationally of the capitalist system, do all fractions, other than those who have gone over to the bourgeoisie, realise the socialist nature of the events, that the proletarian revolution will form merely the first part of a potential socialist transformation of the whole world. Thus those tentative probings in this direction by Trotsky with his conception of 'permanent revolution' and the mezdurayontsy are in part vindicated, in part transformed by the real experience of the world proletariat, clearly shown by Bukharin in 1915, and by Lenin in his April Theses.

The key is of course that these different points of view on questions still to be determined by history managed to coexist in the same organisation. Only in the depths of the reaction do we see such notable sectarians as Lenin slating other fractions for expulsion from the RSDLP, to be utterly ignored by all and sundry.

If we compare this situation with that pertaining in the revolutionary milieu today we can see how bizarre the present situation is; one where the sectarianism of one minute handful of people competes with the sectarianism of another handful of individuals - each group convinced that they possess the holy grail, are 100% correct and that the others are fools, charlatans or worse, deserving only of contempt and diatribe - or not worth a response at all.

This is not to say that there was no sectarianism in the RSDLP. On the contrary, one need only remind ourselves that placing the 'convict badge' was for the Lenin the standard means of political discussion. But they were able to contain all this within the organisation, an organisation split into numerous fractions who all sought to play a part in the actions of the party and who all sought representation on party organs. Some sought to capture the apparatus of the party and take control of the press etc especially when there were large sums of money, held by the SDP at stake. Others, like Vperiod saw the party as able to sustain widely disparate points of view - competing within the class until real life demonstrated whose conceptions were correct. Certainly groups could be expelled from factions when their politics became incompatable with that of the majority but it was rare indeed that one faction sought to expel another from the party itself.

Most saw the separation into fractions, whatever the violence of the language used as only temporary phenomena caused by the undecided nature of events, or often as a necessary phase revolutionaries had to go through to get their ideas clearer. Thus the bolsheviks opposed Lenins violent language against Vperiod. Rykov complained:

> " I do not want to make it difficult for the Vperiod split elements to achieve a rapprochement."

The bolsheviks' attempts to regroup with Plekhanov shows this even more clearly. At a later period Lenin could view with equanimity the prospect of Piatakov and Bukharin leaving the bolsheviks, remarking that they probably needed time as a fraction of their own to get their ideas together before - at some point in the future, undoubtedly regrouping with the bolsheviks.

Stuck in the sectarian morass of 1986 it is difficult to understand all this- to understand that Lenin's formation of the Bolshevik Party in 1912 wasnt consigning everyone else to the lower reaches of hell but was an attempt in a situation which he (correctly or incorrectly - it doesnt matter) considered utterly confused, to create what he believed was a clear pole of regroupment.

Thus fractions were not mutually antagonistic g rou- groupings treating all others as garbage but honest regroupments round real, specific, important positions, willing to polemicise with each other in a fraternal fashion(despite tendencies towards slander, vituperation et ala) with the constant belief that it would be the actions of the class which would, in the end, determine who was right and who was wrong.

2. Regroupment.

We can see that the basis for the ensuing regroupment was clearly the mass action of the class, and that this operated in two connected fashions.

First of all by transforming the political positions within an organisation by means of entering it en masse as it did the bolsheviks in April 1917 or the mensheviks in 1905, recognising that it was a proletarian organisation which defended class Positions and joining in their thousands.

Secondly by pushing the differing fractions together on the basis of these 'new' political positions defended by the class as a response to major events- for example the demand that the bolsheviks and mezdurayontsy regroup in 1917 despite opposition from elements within both who remembered the bitter factional and personal slanders of the past. The regroupment was predicated by the change of positions of the two fractions and the necessity to regroup proletarian forces round these positions.

3. Positions.

Looking back at this vitally important experience for the whole class we can see that NO SINGLE fraction had a monopoly of correctness - at ANY time and that the Communist Party was founded from the combination of fractions in the light of the urgent necessity of unity based on the new circumstances. With the enormous benefit of hind-sight we can see where various groups from 1905 to 1917 sought to penetrate the murk, tried, on the basis of their understanding of 1905 to identify class positions for the future, positions which only became a reality with the war and the revolution. Lenin on the reactionary nature of the bourgeoisie in all its forms, Trotsky on the proletarian nature of the revolution to come, Vperiod on the nature of bourgeois organs, Bukharin on the nature of capitalist decadence, the bourgeois state etc etc. - all were defined by historical class experience and became foundation stones of the Third International and the communist movement at its high point.

Revolutionary groups in 1986 STILL have this lesson to learn.

Ingram

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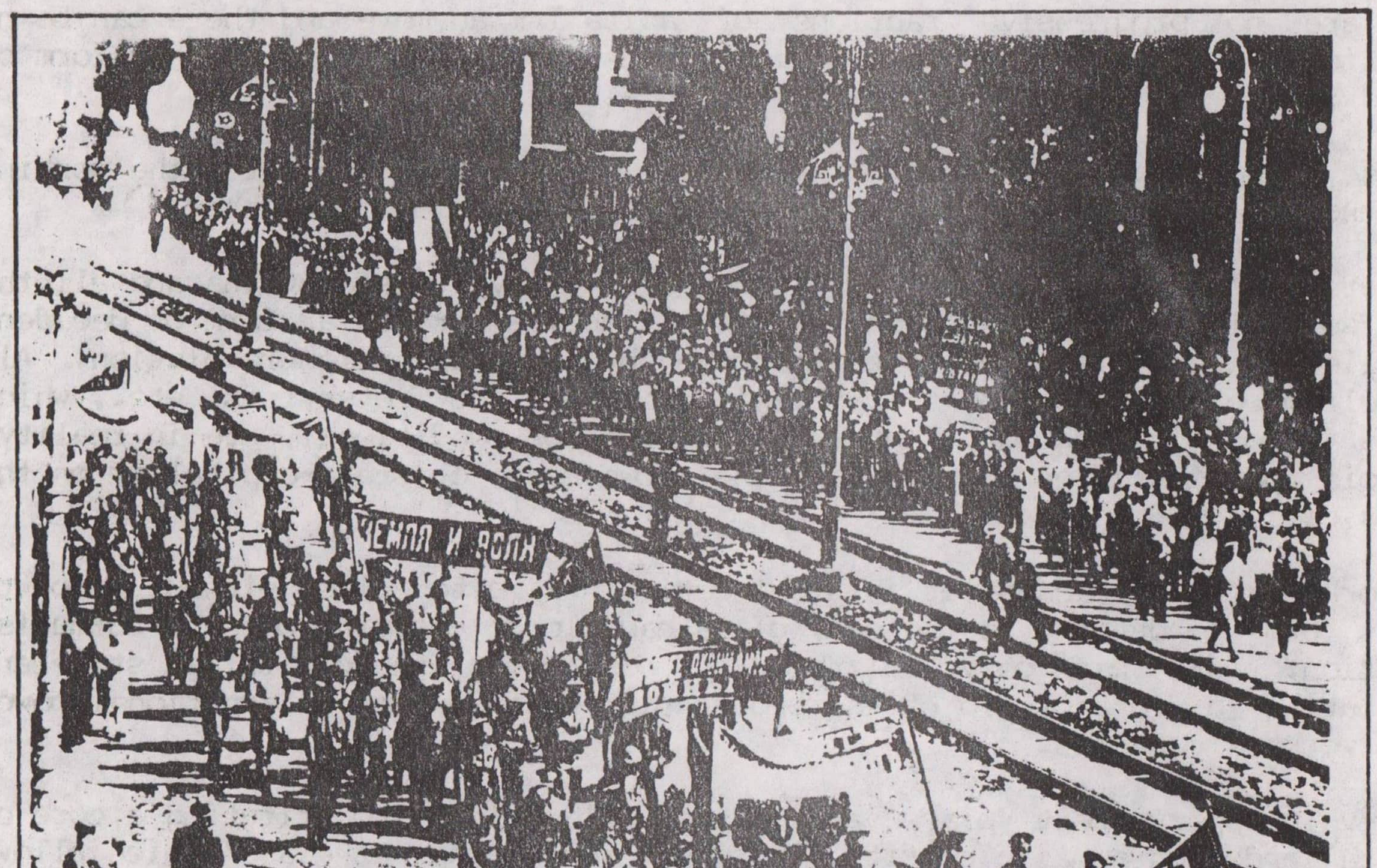

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Communist Bulletin Group

The Communist Bulletin Group locates itself within the political tradition generally known as Left Communism - that is, the revolutionary milieu which traces its origins to the left factions which split from the decaying Third International, in particular, the German, Italian and Dutch Left.

We believe that adherence to the following positions are the defining characteristics of the revolutionary communist milieu.

Capitalism, as a mode of production, has been demonstrably decadent since the outbreak of W.W.I. and has nothing to offer now but a catastrophic cycle of crises, global war, followed by a temporary 'boom' located in post-war reconstruction.

The struggle for reforms which was an integral part of the working class' fight for its own interests in the 19th Century, the period of capitalism's ascendance, is now a bourgeois diversion directed against the working class. The defence of working class interests today can only lead to the overthrow of capitalism, not its reform.

In this era any participation in the parliamentary circus of 'democracy' at any level whatsoever, including the use of parliamentarism as a 'revolutionary tribune', can only be an attack on the consciousness and self organisation of the proletariat.

Today trade unions everywhere, in every guise, are capitalist weapons which attack the proletarian struggle in order to defend capitalism.

There are no progressive factions of capitalism anymore and there can be no 'conditional support' for one faction against another. Therefore any form of 'united front' is an attack on the working class struggle.

Likewise, 'national liberation' struggles have nothing to offer the working class except a shift of alliance from one imperialist bloc to another.

There are no 'socialist' countries in the world today; Russia, China and all the other so-called 'communist' states are simply a particular form of decadent capitalism which will have to be destroyed by the proletarian revolution. All the self-proclaimed 'workers parties', the CP's, the Trotskyists, etc., which provide them with support, however critical or conditional, are in reality, bourgeois parties intent on imposing their own brand of state-capitalism on the working class.

The working class, because it is a collective, exploited class without property of its own to defend, is the only class capable of carrying out the communist revolution. It can only do this by destroying the capitalist state and constituting a dictatorship of the proletariat based on the international power of the workers councils.

The revolutionary part plays an indispensable role by constituting a core of political and programmatic clarity, 'hard as steel, clear as glass' which allows it to undertake the 'political leadership' of the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat.

The C.B.G. believes that this 'core' of the future party is not to be found in any single revolutionary organisation currently existing. It will emerge, hand in hand with the development of the class' own struggles, from a process of fraternal confrontation and clarification involving the whole revolutionary milieu. Therefore revolutionaries today must organise themselves in a fashion which utterly rejects the suppression of this process by monolithic structure internally and by sectarian practice externally.