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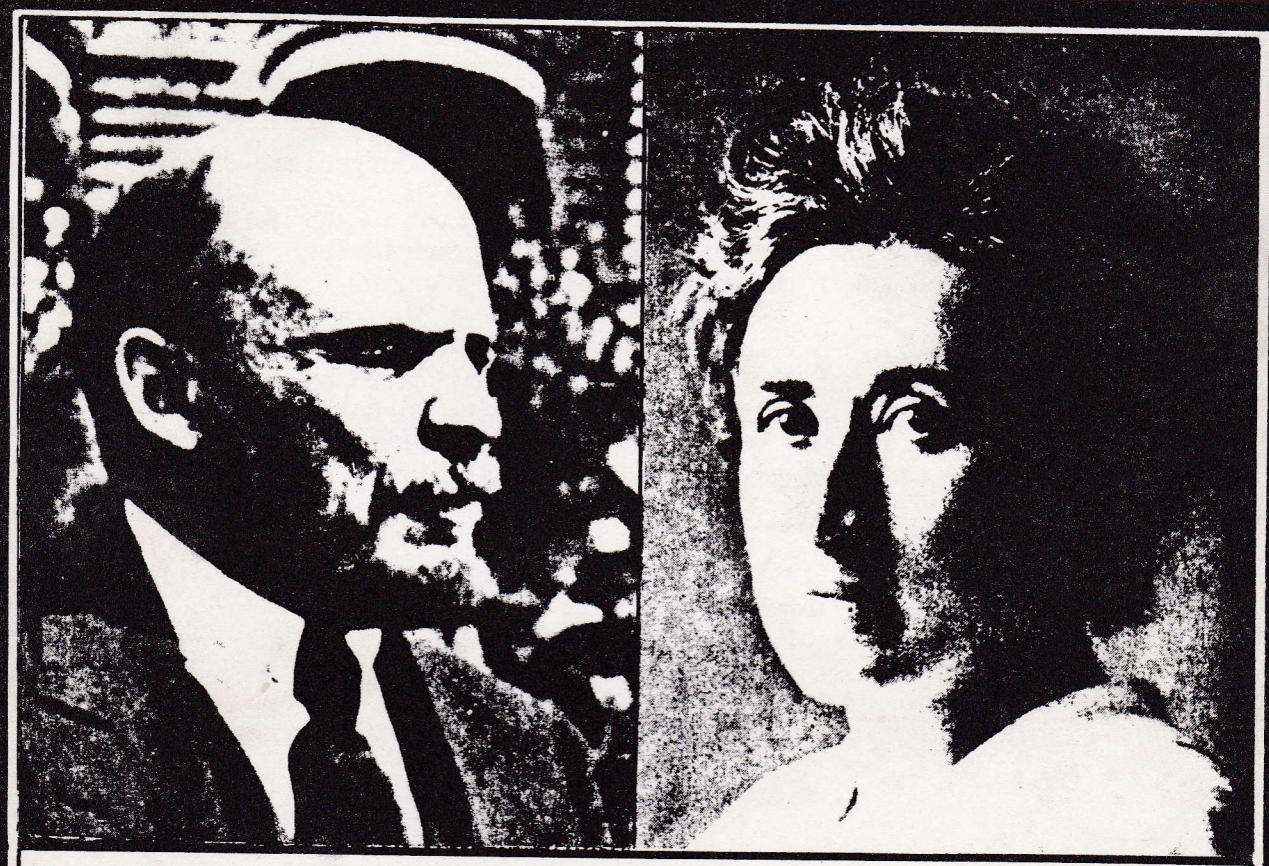

'The process of revolutionary development consists in the proletariat emancipating itself from..... the traditions of the past — and this is only possible through its own experience of struggle.'

CONSCIOUSNESS: CLASS & PARTY

* Teachers Strike * Russian Revolution

* Benefit Cuts * Leaflet * Jan Appel

* Brussels Riots * ICC: Salem's Lot

Communist Bulletin Contents

Cover: Lenin and Luxemburg. The quotation is from Pannekoek's "World Revolution and Communist Tactics." of 1920 (in Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism. ed D.A.Smart.)

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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 words 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.

apparatchniks etc. The resultant disenchantment of teachers has mirrored that of pupils whose prospects outside school are becoming ever more bleak. Friction in the classroom increases (since there is no evading the point that to some extent teachers act to impose capitalist discipline on kids) and another factor is added to the teachers' disenchantment.

And like workers everywhere, teachers are finding the unions confronting their anger, dividing them, trussing them up with their 'codes of practice'. The unions have split teachers with their primary/secondary/further education divisions, their Scottish/English divisions, their distinctions between graduate and non-graduate staff etc. ably supported by an active leftists base whose radical rhetoric and wordy condemnation of the 'leaders' has served to tie teachers to the unions themselves (ie. all thats needed are 'good leaders', more democracy, more consultations etc. - the bullshit is the same in education as in every other workplace where the leftists carry out their loyal opposition). The Scots/English divide was clearly seen last year when the unions fell over themselves to insist that the two 'national' systems of education were quite distinct and nothing was to be gained from joint action. The state obliged by, for once, making two different pay awards - differing by 0.6% - to reinforce this myth. Scots secondary teachers have been faced with an overhaul of the exam system (to make the grading of kids more effective) leading to enormous increases in workload. 'New' and 'radically different' plans have now been announced for England - and of course the Scots and English plans are identical. But the level of teachers militancy can now be seen in the Scots' reaction to 'their' new exams: the syllabus began last August - and fell apart by November due to mass boycotting of the work by teachers. The Scottish Office has had to reschedule them for 1987. Meanwhile the Scots unions, expecting, as usual, to carefully stage-manage their troops have been left clucking on the sidelines, aghast at th militancy that has erupted.

There has been widespread and heartfelt withdrawal from the traditional (and unpaid) 'voluntary' work of teachers - dinner duties, Parent-Teacher Association activities, after hours organisation of extra-curricular activities etc. Many teachers have refused to fill in exam forms and have promised that they will respond to any consequent pay-docking by going off 'sick' en masse for a day.

There is much that is positive in this evaporation of enthusiasm for 'voluntary' duties for all work is dependant on enthusiasm and the committment of the workers which is one reason why capitalism is such a hopelessly inefficient social system. But passive resistance, although a part of and expression of developing militancy is not enough on its own. The fundamental weapon of working class struggle remains the all-out strike. It remains the best starting point for the struggle to move from the defensive to the offensive: for workers to say 'enough' to the endless sacrifices and austerity demanded by a failing capitalism and to become conscious of their own collective interests from that of the bourgeois state. Just as importantly, the all-out strike provides the best possibility for the extension of the fight to other workers. It gives the strikers the physical freedom to go en masse to workers at their place of work, to demonstrate their strength and to ask for solidarity in a common struggle, with identical action against the common enemy. It preserves the momentum of militancy and provides the most fertile forum for the development of consciousness and self-organisation. The whole history of the working class demonstrates time and again, that a struggle can't stand still - it must extend or die. The might of the capitalist state will always win a war of attrition against isolated workers.

Thats why the piecemeal tactics endorsed by the teaching unions - a token day or two here - one or two isolated schools there - is a weapon aimed at the heart of the fight. It means that the vast majority of the teachers only participate in the struggle for a few days each term and even then, in conditions of isolation. General militancy is gradually eroded with a slow but steady loss of support for action that is clearly ineffective and with a consequent growth in internal divisions. Teachers must be clear that it is no accident that the unions have adopted such an apparently impotent course of action. Workers and the unions which claim to represent them DO NOT SHARE the same interests and goals. They are diametrically opposed to each other. The unions are political organisations committed to a political programme for the management of capitalism(even though with capitalism in terminal decline, this can only mean the management of ever-increasing austerity). To implement their goals they must have in their hands the levers of state power and to achieve this they use the control they can exercise over working class militancy. Workers' interests, however, cant be served by a re-juggling of austerity and the system which demands it but by its total rejection. Thus a fight which is a total failure for workers providing no real gains, can be a success for the unions, providing them with a seat at the table. The NUM, for example, were not against lay-offs and closures, but against their exclusion from the process of decision and implementation. Likewise with the teaching unions. They are committed to the health of the capitalist educational system and will not take action which threatens it. That's why they constantly divide, minimise and sabotage the actions and militancy of the teachers.

However, while it is clear that the teachers are being led down a cul-de-sac of long drawn-out but useless action it seems equally clear that, for the moment, the only positive way forward for teachers - an all-out indefinite strike, outside of and against the union prison, spread and linked up to the other sections of workers in struggle such as the Civil Servants, postmen, nurses etc. - is unlikely to be on the cards. The teachers remain a fairly marginal element of the working class, lacking in day-to-day awareness of their collective strength and crippled by the mythology of their committment to "professionalism". In this situation they are likely to be beaten, but that defeat will be another stage in their movement towards a realisation of the need to generalise their struggle. In the meantime their disaffection and alienation is another nail in the coffin of capitalist 'social consensus' and make useful lessons for the kids.

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G.M.

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REAL ACTION not UNION FARCE

For years now, as the EIS has conned and demoralised us with ineffective or non-existent action, there has been a running joke that they would one day call us out during the last week of term. Well, here we are!

This one-day charade is NOT just the result of "unfortunate timing". It is the end result of cynical manipulation by the management and the EIS. The management gain by saving wages at a time when no-one gives a damn if kids miss a school day or not, (it will all help to fund the ½% "compromise" they are no doubt planning) and the EIS gain by both appearing militant and appeasing its frustrated membership, while at the same time, not actually rocking any boats.

Many of us are here today unwillingly. Yes, we are outraged by the attacks on colleagues and yes, we want to take action to defend them, but here we are again dragooned into ineffectual posturing. Most of us know this choice of day is a farce and we know many are at work refusing, understandably, to be suckered by the union: inevitably, such division in our ranks will lead to demoralisation. Why is it that time after time issues come to a head at this time of year? "Unfortunate timing"? No. It's the way management and the EIS keep us passive and biddable.

If we want to stop this rot, stop the endless erosion of wages and conditions, stop the endless sniping of promoted apparatchniks at school and Torpichen Street, we must first take control out of the hands of the EIS and ignore its loyal opposition the Rank and File, who eternally call on us to be faithful since with a better leader here and more grass-root pressure there .... pigs might fly!

Meaningful action will only come when we form our own strike committees in school and then link up school by school to organise strikes, work to rules and boycotts on terms and at times which benefit us and not our bosses. We all know how much more effective this strike would have been on the first day the kids return after the holidays. Most of us know we've thrown money away today. Indeed, most of us can guess the eventual "negotiated" outcome to the whole present dispute will be a wage "rise" below inflation and a new contract which will hamstring us in the future. We're being suckered and are going to go on being suckered until we decide to organise ourselves for our own interests outside the union.

Teachers are not a special case. We face the same attacks on our living standards and our working conditions that every other group of workers face. If we fight this struggle alone we will be picked off and defeated just like the miners. Our only hope is to link up our fight with other workers, like those in the health and social services, who face the same attacks and are prepared to act alongside us. THE UNIONS WILL NOT ORGANISE SUCH A COLLECTIVE AND EFFECTIVE STRUGGLE. Even within the teaching profession they divide and weaken us - primary from secondary, union from union, Scotland from England. We must organise the struggle ourselves in elected strike committees linked up throughout the country, outside of, and when necessary, AGAINST the unions.

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This leaflet is produced by the Communist Bulletin Group. We can be contacted via Box 85. 43 Candlemakers Row. Edinburgh

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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, jingoism and racism fires the pathetic nationalism of some football supporters. (a racism marked by, for example, the British State's donations - announced a few hours apart - of £250,000 to Heysel victims' families and £50,000 to the tens of thousands of victims of the Bangladeshi floods.) Hypocrisy too in the feigned shock from the most bloody and violent social construct in history, the modern capitalist state.

But this hypocrisy aside, the violence at Heysel was real and sickening: workers attacking workers. Where does such violence come from? Part of the answer is that it is fanned by the state's, and its media's nationalistic campaigns. But above all it stems from the violent social relations which are capitalism. Bewildered liberals have, with typical inaccuracy, blamed unemployment, but the problem lies far deeper - few of the Italians and British at Brussels could have afforder the trip if unemployed. The source of such violence is to be found in the violence of daily life under capitalism: the being branded a loser by inadequate schools, the living in crappy housing while being persecuted by TV images of the unattainable capitalist good life; suffering the boredom and destruction of capitalist work or unemployment; suffering the perversion of social relationships so that male-female, child-adult mirrors the exploitative and violent status-quo (work or be shit, succeed or be shit, exploit or be shit, screw or be screwed) - a violence that defines so much of capitalist culture and which attempts to chill, isolate, demoralise and neuter the working class, and which is spawned by the primary social relation, the violent robbing of the fruits of the labour power of workers.

And, products of this violence, our kids adopt a swaggering machismo to hide the insecurity and despair that is the inevitable result of the daily pressure of capitalist life: all too often kid turns upon kid, their pent-up despair erupting in violence.

There is nothing positive about such violence, despite the fact that at times it is aimed at the police; (the very randomness of such violence means that inevitably it hits deserving targets at least from time to time). It is blind, destructive and aimless - worse than, but ultimately ultimately little different from the riots of Toxteth, Brixton and Bristol. Kids out on the street or in football stands are robbed of their class identity - they become lumpenised victims of the state, nihilistic and directionless.

And it is the State's attempts to link such violence with class violence, workers violence, which is collective, liberating and conscious, as was seen in the Miners Strike. that must be resisted. The State - British, Italian,throughout the world - uses the social decomposition that increasingly manifests itself today, to strengthen itself for its real enemy - the working class. It seeks to fan a readiness to accept passively, police repression - and its effectiveness can be seen in Britain a week after the Brussels riots when a few hundred pathetic hippies had the shit beaten out of them by riot police at Stonehenge in the heart of rural England.

Today the state misses no opportunity to rehearse its troops. But make no mistake. It prepares not for tomorrow's Toxteth or tomorrow's Heysel or tomorrow's Stonehenge - but for tomorrows Fitzwilliam.

G.M.

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WELFARE STATE
Where next?

One of the key areas of attack by the bourgeoisie on the working class as they faced up once again to the Fact of economic decay in the late Sixties was the Social Wage. In Britain as the bourgeoisie moved to attack the living standards of workers it was almost the first, and for a time in the Seventies the most significant. As the crisis has deepened the bosses have spread their attack into redundancies, sackings, wholesale closures, reductions in wages, both hidden and overt; the whole gamut, in an effort to save their rotting system. But these assaults on the working class, and the class response they have evoked - the steel strike, the miners strike et alia- havent meant that the attacks on the social wage have been left behind. Far from it. They have continued hand in hand with the others and developed further in scale and effect. Indeed the increased confidence with which the Thatcher government faced the working class in 1984 despite (and in part because of) the miners strike gave them a launching pad upon which to plan further, more radical and more far-reaching attempts to drastically reduce the crucial component that the social wage is.

One arm of this attack was a further continuation of the destruction of the Health Service. Like most former cuts in the social security budget the thinking had been along the following lines. Though the cuts are enormous they effect either people individually, eg. when they are sick, for relatively short periods of time , and this limits their ability to provoke a class response or they are aimed at sectors of the class who are politically weak, like nurses who, for all the public sympathy they get from the rest of the working class, are internally divided by the unions and, by the nature of their job, pose no threat to the implementation of the cuts. The general success of this tactic has led the bourgeoisie to extend it to other weak, isolated 'professional' sectors of the proletariat like the teachers in the recent past and the immediate present.

The same strategy was in operation up to last year with regard to the Social Security budget.

However the last year or so has seen this area of class war take on a whole new dimension and we are now faced with an increasingly determined onslaught, spearheaded by Norman Fowler, to drastically cut this entire area of government expenditure. As Fowler himself has said:

> " Taken together, the various reviews and studies I have set in hand constitute the most substantial examination of the social security system since the Beveridge Report 40 years ago."

And we can certainly agree with him. One needs only to look at what Beveridge and the bourgeoisie of 40 years ago considered the reason for the creation of the Welfare State - a disciplined,fit,healthy, profitable workforce to contrast it with the situation facing the bourgeoisie today and the remedies they envisage. As Beveridge said 40 years ago:

> "The policy for full employment outlined in this report is a policy of spending and doing. If we attack with determination, unity and clear aim the four giant evils of want, disease, ignorance and squalor, we shall destroy in the process their confederate, the fifth giant of idleness enforced by mass unemployment"

Contrast this with Margaret Thatchers view of the present situation in 1984 when in an interview with the New York Times she expressed her fears about the escalating cost of the welfare state. Britain, she warned, faced a "time bomb" over social security spending and something had to be done about it "before it is too late". For the 80s are not the 40s. In the late 40s British Capitalism had emerged from a World War a winner and was looking forward to a period of post-war reconstruction, of economic growth. It needed a large, fit, healthy workforce, educated to be able to handle the technology of an expanding capitalist economy. Thus Beveridge expressed the needs of such a capitalist economy. As Bukharin, describing an earlier situation put it:

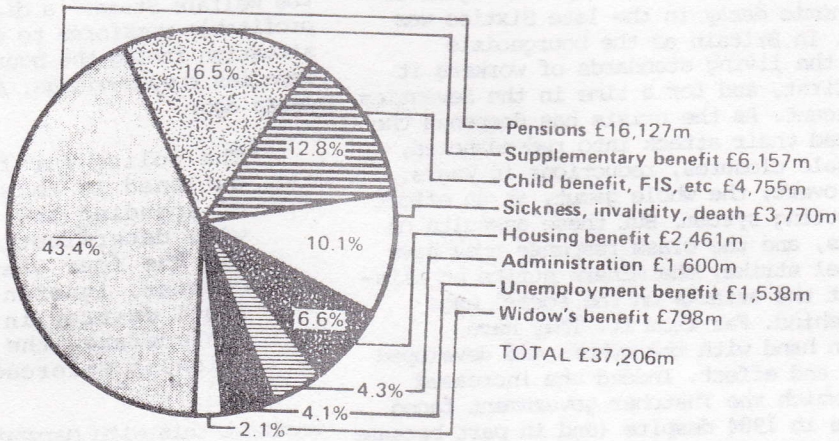
> " The state undertakes a number of measures, comes forth as the "protector of labour" (factory legislation etc). Why?...not because the enslaved proletariat have pretty eyes but because it is profitable for the ruling class, under certain conditions to take this approach."

Contrast this with the situation capitalism in Britain, as capitalism elsewhere in the world, faces today, in 1985. The post-war reconstruction is long gone as capital since the late Sixties has inexorably been collapsing before our eyes. In a desperate effort to regain even a semblance of profitability whole industries are being pared to the bone or scrapped, hundreds of thousands of workers are each year being thrown onto the scrapheap. State expenditure on such 'waste' products is no longer needed, no longer desirable, no longer profitable. It is a positive drain on a capitalist economy desperately scrambling to cut ANY "unnecessary' expenditure it can,

The Time Bomb

What then is this massive expenditure, this nightmare that the bourgeoisie is desperately seeking a solution to. The social security budget is by far the largest spending programme. It constitutes 30% of all public expenditure and almost tops £40 billion making it larger than the Defence,Health and Housing budgets put together. 20 million people in Britain are its direct 'beneficiaries'. With a total spending budget in 1984-85 of £38,391,000,000 the pattern of the expenditure can be seen from the diagram below.

How the money goes on the welfare state



Source: The Government's Expenditure Plans 1984-85 to 1986-87, Cmnd 9143-II 1984, Table 2.12

As can be seen almost half of all social security spending goes on the elderly, the unemployed and families with children get a further third, split equally between them while the disabled and longterm sick get a tenth. But it is not just the collosal size of this 'enforced' expenditure which alarms the bourgeoisie.

Social security has been one of the fastest growing spending programmes in recent years. Ten years ago it took up 20% of total public spending: now it forms more than 30%, and unless something is done say the bourgeoisie, its share will rise by a further 1% every three years.

In cash terms it has risen more than sixfold since 1973-4 and even taking inflation into account over that period this still represents a 68% rise in costs. Three main areas account for this rise in costs: Child Benefit, Pensions and Unemployment Benefit.
The first represents a simple, but effective, swindle by the government who in 1977 introduced the Child Benefit system replacing family allowances and tax allowances for children. By 1979 when the changeover was complete the cost of child benefit had been "added" to public spending at an estimated cost of £2,364,000,000 while, if there were comparable savings in tax, they demonstrably failed to appear as tax cuts

The second cause, pensions reflects the rise during the Seventies of the number of pensioners. In 1973-4 there were 7,750 Million people in Britain entitled to retirement pension. In 1984-5 this has risen to 9,260 Million boosting the cost of Social Security by at least 10%, assuming no increase in the cost of benefit.

Most important of all unemployment has hit record levels. At the end of 1973 there were barely half a million registered unemployed. Between 1979 and 1982 this leapt from 560,000 to 1.7 Million and the numbers on the dole have continued to rise to well over 3 Million today. The cost in unemployment benefit during the jump from 79 to 82 was the leap from £705 Million to £4865 Million. Taking other costs like Supplementary Benefit,Housing Benefit into account the cost of unemployment benefit on the social security budget leapt from £364 Million in 1973-4 to £1370 Million in 1978-9 to £6540 Million in 1984-5.

These three factors account for 69% of the increase in the social security budget. But of course this isnt the end of the story. Increasing pauperisation of the working class will continue to increase the demand for Child Benefit, it is expected that the total number of people of pensionable age will continue to rise from 10.1 Million in 1981 to 10.5 Million in 1991.

In addition the number of persons entitled to pensions will also rise as married wives become entitled to pensions in their own right by dint of entering the pension system for contributions made during the past 40 years. The government themselves estimate that the number of persons of pensionable age will rise by 600,000 by the end of the century.

Lastly unemployment levels. The government's own predictions for public consumption reflect the desperate hopes of the bourgeoisie for a road out of the mire of economic collapse and propose a growth rate of 2½% per annum for the five years to 88-89 followed by a rate of growth of between 1½% and 2% in the five years following. They also hope for a productivity rise of 2%. Even these rosy pictures indicate that there will be no drop in the rate of unemployment.
In reality of course, as the bourgeoisie know full well, the continuing crisis and the continued attack on the proletariat is bound to create more and more unemployment, and thus, at present levels, a greater and greater public expenditure on social security payments to a growing mass of unemployed people and their dependants - if the system remains as it is.

Faced with such a situation, the British bourgeoisie in the late Seventies began to prepare contingency plans to solve this 'problem' as part of a generalised onslaught on the living standards of the British working class, in search of the mythical 'return to profitability'.

The Three Agendas

There were a number of different strands of the discussion in bourgeois circles, representing in part different conceptions of the problem by different sections of the bourgeoisie in terms of short term, medium term and long term 'solutions' and different facets of the ideological justifications for the proposed solutions, usually allowed to be 'leaked' to the press so as to act at one and the same time to reinforce the belief that there was a major problem which necessitated 'drastic surgery', and to allow seemingly "wild" solutions to be proposed to act as 'scare stories' which could be officially disavowed but which, once they had sunk into popular consciousness could be used as the basis for cost cutting measures in the future

Traditionally this multiplicity was expressed in the form of the "three agendas" (in media jargon) which supposedly represent three different ways that sectors of the bourgeoisie see the real 'problem', but which, in fact, represent a continuum along which we can expect government policy to gravitate.

The first 'agenda' is what has been presented as the DHSS view of the situation. The present system is antiquated and hard to understand, difficult to supervise and increasingly impossible to operate. The DHSS itself is cracking at the seams, everyone from recipients of benefit to SS officers are agreed that the system is impossible and that the government must act quickly before the system collapses. This kind of argument has allowed the goverment, as we shall see to attack the social security system en masse, rather than just tinkering with benefit levels as in the past, in the false guise of a reforming administration, simplifying an over-loaded overcomplicated system which benefits no-one.

The second agenda takes us from the short term expedient to the governmental assessment of the problem of public spending and the supposed disputes in the Cabinet between 'caring' Fowler and 'nasty' Lawson. As one proponent of the Treasury put it:

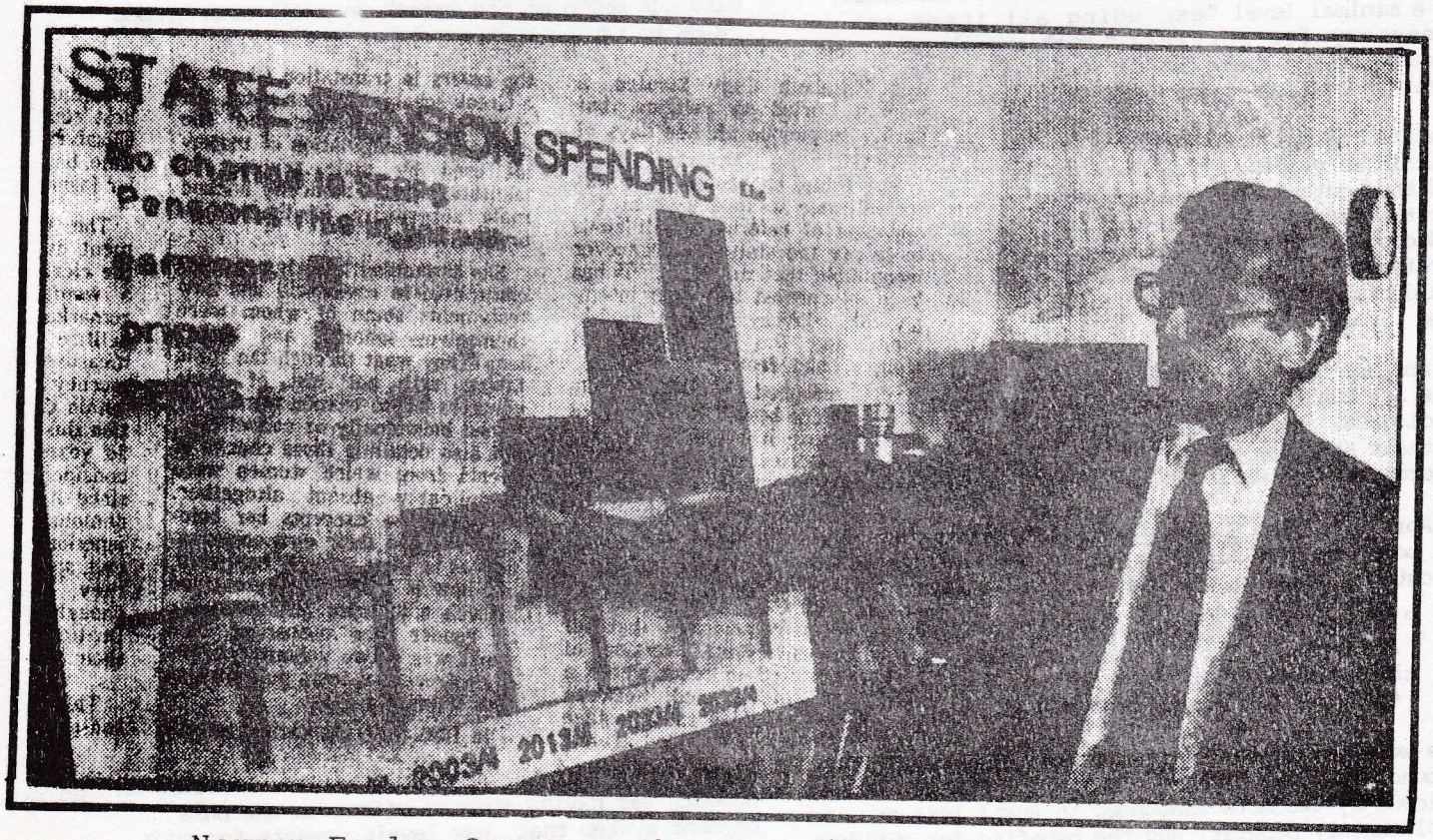
> " If the Treasury is to achieve its goal of containing public spending and thereby cutting taxation in any substantial way, it cannot leave unscathed the social security system which accounts for 30% of the public expenditure planning total."

The argument continued that it would be necessary to attack the major spending programmes of child benefit, and National Insurance benefits such as pensions, to reduce either the size of benefits paid or the numbers to whom they are paid.

In June 1982 the Times leaked details of a report prepared by an "interdepartmental group of officials" on the outlook for public spending and taxation which warned that if the economy remained stagnant tax increases equal to 15 pence in the pound would be needed in income tax to balance the books in the 1990's.

Subsequently the Economist 'revealed' that a paper had been circulated to the Cabinet from the Central Policy Review Staff (the Think Tank) advocating radical surgery on public services to allow room for tax cuts (sic) it considered necessary to boost the economy. As well as suggesting ending all state funding of higher education, replacing the National Health Service with private health insurance, they recommended freezing spending on all social security benefits in cash terms.

Nigel Lawson's Green Paper "The Next Ten Years: Public Expenditure and Taxation into the 1990's" has as its key argument the proposition that public spending must not be allowed to rise in line with the output in the economy - indeed in real terms it may only grow so long as it decreases as a share of the



Norman Fowler Oversees the Assault on the Social Wage

national income.

It is easy to see the rationale for wholesale cuts being proposed here for the more likely eventuality that output doesnt rise, but stays stagnant, or falls. Furthermore the government sees clearly that with the development of the economic crisis and the resultant exacerbation of inter-imperialist tensions, the need to beef up certain sectors of public expenditure in preparation for global war. How else can it do so with a stagnating economy (at best) other than by drastic surgery on such as the Welfare State and a radical shifting of expenditure elsewhere. Thus the government is committed, must be committed to a steady rise in expenditure on arms and law, to face the enemy without and within, to fight both the imperialist war and the class war. Where else can the funds come from if not from existing public expenditure from the successful assault on the proletariat this entails, allowing their pauperisation and mobilisation for war.

The third agenda is the ideological onslaught that the bourgeoisie, through such as the Adam Smith Institute and the Institute of Economic Affairs, have sought to condition us into believing that there is no alternative, and through which they have in effect prepared the ground for further programmes of cuts in the social wage. A governmental exponent publically of such views is Rhodes Boyson who with remarkable candour as early as 1978 said:

> "Conservatives must actively work for the welfare state to wither away as personal freedom and independent provision takes its place."

More graphically bourgeois pundits such as Prof. Patrick Munford of Liverpool University, writing in the I.E.A. Journal argues that it will be necessary to dismantle the whole state unemployment and disability insurance and pension provision, handing them over to private enterprise. The supplementary benefits system would be maintained at a minimal level "excluding all items not necessary for survival " with unemployed workers having their benefit 'capped' at 70% of their income from their last job.

The ideological justification is the reasoning that Britain is pricing itself out of the market - and and thus out of economic prosperity and he holds out the carrot that if public spending was so reduced, and the current level of benefit reduced, forcing low wages to become the norm, unemployment would rise by 2.5 Million - albeit at miniscule wage levels.

We are not here concerned with how realistic all this is, but merely as it exemplifies a pattern of ideological justification used by the bourgeoisie in their attempts to destroy the social wage in general and the social security system in particular.

In April 1984 the Sunday Times reported that a group had been set up within the Cabinet to work out a way of cutting benefits without creating public hostility.

> "It was this group which in February approved Fowler's own suggestion that the spending options should be aired through detailed reviews."

Thus we have had the review of pensions (phase one) announced in 1983, then the review of Housing benefit followed by two more announced in April 1984 on Supplementary Benefit, and the benefits for children and young people. Then in mid may there was a relatively low key review of maternity benefits as well as a 'survey' of the number of people with disabilities and there has for some time been a management review of the health services.

No aspect of the DHSS is being left untouched and these reviews are nothing like as piecemeal as they would appear at first sight as the changes which have been implemented over the past year have shown. Every change, every 'reform', every review has clearly been seen to be part of an integrated cost cutting exercise. And this before Fowlers Green Paper in June 1985.

Who Has Been Attacked

In addition we can see that the Green Paper represents not merely more of the same but a subtle shift in the nature of the attack because of the political importance of the new wave of victims. Up until now, the attack, like the attack on the Health Services, where they have been across the board, have been carefully orchestrated with massive ideological backup and camouflaged behind loss-leaders and cosmetic exercises like the pensioners Xmas bonus. Where they have gone beyond this they have gone for specific low profile groups already atomised by unemployment, isolated, with no political voice, even in bourgeois terms, and with no political pull with this administration - predominantly the young, the single and the homeless. For it is instructive to look at how the cuts in the social wage, in benefits have affected certain groups like this, before the Green Paper, to see the extent of the attack prepared for the rest of us.

What I want to emphasise here is the fact that by looking at the depth and scale of the cuts perpetrated on such weak groups we can see what is planned for the rest of us. For, just as in every other area of attack the bourgeoisie has been trying out not merely its method of assault but also the depth of the attack on small weak groups PRIOR to trying them out in method and scale on larger concentrations of workers which it MUST attack in the future. Thus a detailed look at how, for example the young, the single and the homeless have been battered is not merely an exercise in the description of bourgeois brutality but is also an object lesson on the means they plan to use for the rest of those workers claiming, the pensioners, the unemployed etc etc.

Single and Homeless

The most recent 1984 statistics estimates that there are 181,500 people categorised as boarders living in lodging houses, guest houses, hotels, bed and breakfast, or digs, about 30% of them elderly, an increase of 129,500 since 1979. As expenditure on housing has collapsed and the social effects of the collapse of the capitalist economy has batterred employment possibilities for such as single people and split families unable to withstand the rigors of life together on the dole, thousands have ended up on the streets and, unable to get local authority housing have ended up in lodging houses or bed and breakfast - situations in reality far removed from the bourgeois media's fantasy of costa-del-dole.

By November 1983 the effect of such an increase in numbers was having such an effect on the DHSS payment system that new levels payable for such accomodation had fallen so far behind the real cost that when new levels were set they seemed an

enormous leap from the previous levels. Of course landlords immediately took advantage and promptly set new scales at the top end of the new local limits and thus fuelled the hysteria of such as the Daily Express who in that month screamed in their headlines: "Scandal of £100 dole dropouts." which seemed to miss the point that the claimant saw precious little of this cash since it went straight into the landlord's pocket.

Thus in March 1984 it was proposed that claimants living in hostels, lodging houses or similar establishments should no longer be regarded as boarders. The suggestion was speedily withdrawn less in the face of the inevitable liberal whining than in the realisation that the middle of the Miners Strike was the worst time to be faced with scores of young unemployed people thrust onto the streets. More time was needed to prepare. Thus by November 1984 new draft regulations were introduced due for implementation by April 1985 fixing new, reduced limits of £70 (from £100 previously) in London and allowing only £48.30 for bed and breakfast. Elsewhere the limit was reduced to £50-£60 with B+B as low as £28.30 with the limit for a couple fixed at from 1½ to 1¾ the single person limit. Even this will only come with benefit for between 2 and 4 weeks before the benefit is reduced to the non-householder rate of £22.40.

Two justifications have been presented.
1. A high level of benefit for boarders, however economically justifiable, (even if most of it goes in the landlord'd pocket) deters recipients taking up any low paid work available as their wages would be so low that their benefit plus B+B money would be greater than the pittance they could earn.

2. As Rhodes Boyson at the DHSSput it, he "believed that high levels of benefit for temporary accomodation could encourage young people to leave home" and that this "damaged family life".

At the same time the government announced the proposed closure of the remaining 23 "Resettlement Units" still existing in Egland while giving no assurance that the funds so saved would be utilised to provide any alternative accomodation or to allow the voluntary sector to replace what was being lost.

Youth

Young single people on the dole were even worse affected.

Already in 1980 the government had implemented rules abolishing Supplementary benefit for school leavers in the weeks immediately after they left school saving almost £3 Million by this, in effect, official prolongation of childhood. Since then youth have been increasingly seen as a sector without any political influence who can be increasingly attacked with impunity by forcing the transfer of support for the growing number of unemployed teenagers from the state to their families, themselved likewise increasingly unemployed.

In May 1982 child benefit to a family ceased if a school leaver got a job or a MSC placement and from November 1984 a school leaver's earnings or MSC allowance have counted against the benefit their parents have received for them. When Housing Benefit was introduced it was the excuse for further cuts. From April 1983 all 16 and 17 year olds claiming Supp. Ben. had their benefit reduced by £3.10 per week below those of that age ALREADY getting Supp. Ben. so that instead of getting £18.90 they only got £15.80. A year later the Supp. Ben. of the 18 to 20 age group was similarly cut by £3.10, dropping from £24.55 to £21.45 per week. This saved the government £73 Million in a full year.

In 1981 the government published a White Paper introducing the YTS which was a replacement for the YOP to come into operation in Sept. 1983 which would force kids into it with a training allowance set at £14.40, less than the Supp. Ben. they could get at that time. In 1981, however they didnt feel sufficiently confident about pushing through such a measure and when opposition to their proposal emerged it was quietly dropped though it still waits in the wings for future use. The real cut in benefit was, instead, introduced by the time honoured method of simply refusing to uprate it as inflation rose. Thus the YTS/YOP training allowance only rose from £19.50 in 1978 to £26.25 in November 1984, the real value of the 1978 level in 1984 being £35.76 per week thus cutting the allowance by a real £9.51. They also had a 40% reduction in benefit for any 16 year old

Young Workers have Been Battered By The Cuts

thinking of refusing or giving up a YTS place. Further attacks on young people living at home were implemented by reducing the benefit of their parents to take account of a higher supposed rental that their sons or daughters were supposed to be contributing to the household budget.

By 1983 then attacks on the living standards of a whole section of the working class, the young workers, were in full swing. As the Economist put it

> "Some ministers appear to favour larger cuts in the dole more narrowly directed at unemployed young people. At first sight there is a stronger case for this on public spending grounds. There are 721,000 people on the dole and living with their parents. Those aged 16-17 years receive £15.80 a week and those who are 18 or over get £23.65. If these rates were cut back to the £13.15 for each child (11-15) paid to unemployed parents, the savings could add up to around £300m a year."

As the Guardian pointed out the savings were substantial compared to those which could be made elsewhere.

> "These savings do not look negligible especially when put beside the £13 million a year which could be cut from unemployment benefit - or £40 million from supplementary benefit and unemployment benefit - for each 1 per cent point real cut."

The Times at least had the honesty to explain to its readers the political context of the cuts, aimed at a section of workers least likely to cause a ruckus. The motives were, they explained:

> "primarily to allow the DHSS to offer a meaty sacrifice on the altar of the Public Expenditure Survey Committee. This, from Whitehall's point of view, has the merit of being seen to hurt (the Treasury is never convinced unless there are screams) but also, more important for the long run, to establish the violability of basic social benefits and do it for a group over which the political screams will not be too loud."

Tied in, of course, was the ideological justification - defence of the family - with which the government would try to defuse criticism from those sections of the bourgeoisie still concerned with social welfare. As Sir Keith Joseph put it

> "Inasmuch as personal responsibility has been eroded by a shift of housing, education and welfare provision excessively to the state, we are trying to shift that balance."

and as leaks to the Guardian in February 1983 from the Cabinet's Family Policy Review Group showed, one of the government's key aims was to look at

> "what more could be done to encourage families - in the widest sense - to reassume....responsibility for the disabled, elderly.(and)..unemployed 16 year olds."

A further ideological justification, at a different level appeared with the carefully orchestrated media campaign against the supposedly luxurious lifestyle of 'kids in the dole' with burglaries in Cornwall blamed by the Telegraph on an influx of unemployed young people on the Costa Del Dole. The Chief Inspector of Newquay police was reported by them as saying:

> "They like it down here because they can pick up £51.60 per week."

and the Times reported hoteliers (who of course were pocketing the bulk of such cash themselves) as saying that their lodgers were pretty well off for pocket money.

The Sunday Times solemnly summed up the campaign by horror stories of ministers being shocked by this overabundance of wealth and bemoaning the consequent break-up of family life.

> "They have been shocked by tales of jobless youngsters removing to cheap winter lettings at holiday resorts to enjoy a life of dubious moraility at the state's expense."

In November 1984 then, having served its purpose,the media campaign resulted in the government limiting both the categories generally eligible for Board and Lodging payments and the amounts they could receive. (see above) Specially selected for brutal treatment were 16 and 17 year olds who were prevented from claiming at all unless they continued to live at home, regardless of their family circumstances. If you are 18 or older, though you will be able to claim, you will only be able to live in one place for between two and four weeks before being refused benefit and forced, a new race of nomads, to move to another area before being allowed to claim again. No financial aid to allow you to move will be given and no help will be given to allow claimants to break the circle by obtaining rented accomodation such as furniture allowances etc since the DHSS now consider lodgings a suitable form of accomodation for such as are already in them.

This, it is hoped, will force the young either back to live at starvation benefit levels with their parents, parents who are increasingly likely to be in that situation themselves already, or out onto the streets where the new police tactics so well shown in the Miners Strike or at Stonehenge will be able to deal with them, or into the low paid jobs that the bourgeoisie believe are the key to economic recovery. As Thatcher put it in 1981:

> "Because the wages of young people are often too high in relation to experienced adults, employers cannot afford to take them on - even though it is clear that many employers want to help."

And so they do for not only would it be labour at slave wage rates for the young but it would be a powerful weapon in the bourgeoisie"s war to reduce wage levels for ALL workers to pauper levels.

As Thatcher said soon after her election victory, further moves along this route await only the correct political moment for implementation:

> "It really has been my dream to have unemployment not an option for the young, so that they either stay at school or go into further education,

or into a job or into some form of training.....It's too easy for some of them, straight out of school, to go straight onto social security at the age of 16. They like it, they have a lot of money and some of them, not all of them by a long chalk,but some of them, learn a way of life they should never have a chance to learn."

Or as Lawson said a month later:

"There can be no doubt whatever that at the margin there are people, even in present circumstances, who take a rational decision that it is not worth their while taking a job at the sort of pay at which jobs would be on offer."

As one liberal commentator has remarked:

"The depression of youth wages would have to be very severe to bring them near to the £16.50 per week paid currently to 16-17 year olds or the £21.45 paid to 18-21 year olds living with their parents."

Yet this is undoubtedly the intention of the government for as the Times pointed out

"The elderly not only have votes and lobbyists but a range of formidable allies including several of the most venerable attractions of the upper House of Parliament. Children have no votes; they rely shakily on politicians' sense of family. When children become adolescents, their political interest declines even further, until they become old enough to vote."

The Green Paper

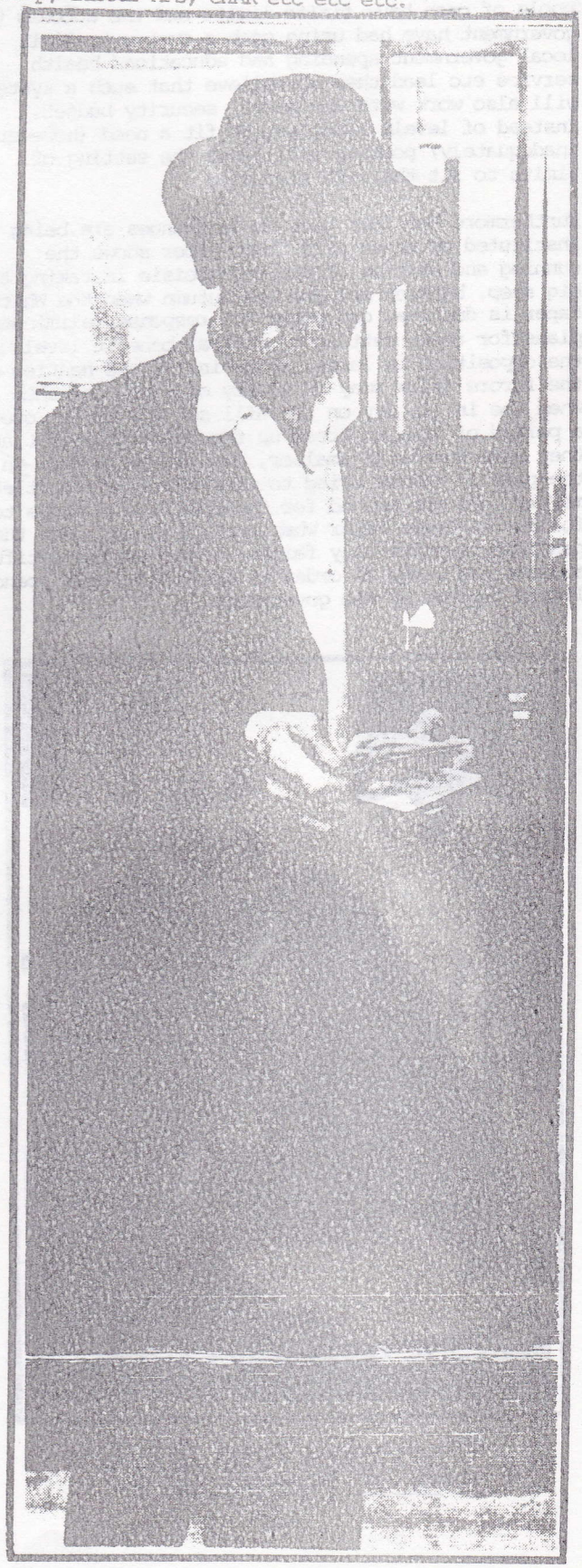
Up to now then it has been only those sections of the working class least able to defend themselves, even by means of the vote, that have borne the full brunt of the bourgeoisie's drive against this aspect of the social wage. With the continuing decline of British capital this was clearly not enough and Thatcher, Fowler et alia have girded their loins for a wider fray.

For once you have hammered the young, the disabled, the homeless etc the next step must be to widen the attack to those groups where real opposition might be encountered. Hence the Green Paper, which, at first glance, seems rather a damp squib but which is, in reality, a much subtler approach at a larger quarry. The real target of course is the 47% of the cake that the pensioners get. (though of course the rest will also get bashed even more.) Along with a whole range of relatively trivial cuts, cutting Housing Benefit, death grants etc, the only real cruncher displayed for public scrutiny is the abolition of SERPS. While since the Green Paper was published, all sorts of leaks have told us about purported last minute exclusions 'at the printers', pundits have had a field day with Thatchers reluctance to say what the real effects on benefit levels will be

Thus the daily paper The Scotsman, mocking the coyness of the Green Paper can say:

" if the government can predict that SERPS will cost £43 Billion in the financial year 2033-34 who can believe it when it says it cannot predict what social security spending will be in 1987-88."

And thus week after week the real cost of the Green Paper continues to filter out via 'leaks', assessments by such as the Child Poverty Action Group, Labour MPs, CHAR etc etc etc.



Not Much Now - Less To Follow

The paper itself seemingly seeks only to redefine the 'notion' of a social security system itself so that the benefit levels based upon such a redefinition can be set later. The paper thus concentrates on the elimination of the present DEMAND system of social security, ie. one where anyone entitled to benefit can claim; to one where a set amount of finance is allowed and thats your lot. Termed a "Social Fund" in this case such pools of cash have finite limits and the success the government have had using such a system to limit local government spending and education/ health service etc lead them to believe that such a system will also work with the social security budget. Instead of levels being set to fit a need (however inadequately) pooling will force the setting of limits to fit the cash allocated.

Furthermore the fact that these changes are being instituted by means of a Green Paper shows the cunning and caution of the bourgeoisie in taking this big step. between now and the Autumn when the White Paper is due they can gauge the response, eliminate plans for rapid setting of minimal benefit levels if the opposition is large, slide in all the nasties if the furore falls away in plenty of time. And then when the ink is dry on the Bill set new levels over a period of time to break up the opposition just as they have done with smaller, less potent groups in the past as I have tried to show above. The subtlety merely lays the ground for the more brutal blows to follow the Green Paper when pensioners will see their pensions 'mysteriously falter' even from the pitiful amounts now given in order to conform to DHSS spending limits imposed by the government

Pensioners Face The Next Wave of Benefit Cuts.

What They Have In Store For The The Rest Of Us.

For the degree of cuts already implemented, the depth of pauperisation already imposed on such groups as those identified above are precisely the scale of cuts designed in the near future for larger groups like pensioners, and in the longer term for the whole working class. Just as the brutal face of the police, masked by and large by the democratic facade in 'happier times' was only fully seen by such minority groups as blacks, the same tactics they have suffered for years are now being consciously extended, used against pickets in the Miners strike, student protestors at Leon Brittan meetings and hippies at Stonehenge. As social cohesion continues to deteriorate the use of such tactics, showing the true nature of the capitalist police will become the norm at a time when the brutal face of decadent capitalism will be more readily recognisable by all.

And Labour..?

But is this just the approach of a right wing monetarist capitalist government, determined to smash the working class and restore profitability to those industries owned by its financial backers. Is Labour Party policy not also committed to the same ends or will they restore Beveridge. They certainly pay a lot of lip service to Beveridge and the Welfare State.

The truth, however, is somewhat more prosaic. The Labour Party is just as committed, of course, to the maintenance of capitalism as the Tories. For all the hoo-haw about the Social Security cuts, the Green Paper etc they are likewise just as committed to cutting industrial costs and restoring profitability as their political opponents. Certainly this does not mean that their ideas about how to achieve this are the same as Thatchers but fundamentally they approach the problem in the same way. With their power base in the Unions they certainly have many different concerns, within the framework of profitability which represent different appraisals of fundamentally the same agendas.

The rantings of the left of course have little to do with Kinnock's policies for the future of the welfare state. At one end he has recently been forced by economic reality to agree with Willis etc. in public that a return to full employment is impossible now or in the future even under a Labour government - just like the Tories. As far as his, as yet rudimentary policies tell us (Robin Cook has yet to concoct a satisfactory melange for him) future labour policy will rest on three planks.
1. Early retirement. Kinnock follows the TUC in pushing this one so as to take as many out of the job market into pensions as possible; in other words getting as many onto the bread line as early as possible and accustomed to a paupers income on a pension and supplementary benefit.
2. Work sharing. In effect sharing out the misery of employment at half the wages and, as well as saving on benefit, making two people live off the same wage.
3. A massive extension for young workers of the YOP/YTS type schemes getting young workers used to working for pennies and thus, just like Thatcher, getting the class as a whole used to low wages.

None of this is new. However tarted up it is merely an accentuation of certain of the Tories

own strategies, merely copying one plank of the present governments plans for the working class, the plank of low pay, demoralisation and pauperis ation - so as to find the mythical route to profitability. Kinnock's carrot is a job rather than the dole, relying on whatever remnants of the Protestant Ethic still bemuse British workers. Thus the Labour party seeks the same thing as the Tories, only the carrots and sticks are different, representing what each party sees as their strengths and weaknesses vis a vis the working class.

Conclusion.

Whichever government carries out the assault on our living standards in the second half of the Eighties they will still have to contend with a working class whose experience of defeat in the last and present wave of class struggle, epitomised by the Miners strike, has failed to demoralise them. indeed whose defeats in recent months merely seem to have fuelled a rise in bitterness which infects each strike as the follows the last.

We must accept then that if the young, the single etc were a particularly weak group within the larger group of 'claimants', a group who could be battered with relative impunity then so too the rest of the mass of claimants, unemployed, pensioners remain a particularly weak group within the working class as a whole. It is difficult to see how such groups, with their high quotas of lumpenised and deferential workers mixed in with exhausted pensioners can sustain a fight against the state. Their only hope is the merging of their fight into the general fight of the whole working class against austerity and pauperisation. Only if the assault of the bourgeoisie against all the sectors of the proletariat touches off a mass response from workers, pensioners, the unemployed will we halt the bourgeoisie on each of these fronts - and then go forward from the defense of our living standards to an assault on capitalism itself.

Ingram

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Russian Revolution

Introduction.

Discussion of the Russian revolution among revolutionaries never stops. The experience of our class during the last revolutionary wave and the smashing of bourgeois state power in Russia were and are seminal events in the history of our class and the unfolding of the communist revolution.

Over the past year there has been considerable discussion on a number of questions relating to the proletarian revolution in Russia among revolutionary fractions. 'Wildcat' recently held a day of study on the question for which substantial contributions were presented both by 'Wildcat' members and others. The C.B.G. has, since our text in Bulletin 2 continued to discuss the organisation question and other related experiences of the working class in Russia which will result in texts to appear in forthcoming Bulletins.

Our comrade in Hong Kong, LLM recently published two substantial texts in Chinese in his International Correspondence 2. specifically on major questions raised by the revolution in Russia and plans, once translated into English to publish them together as a pamphlet. The first text 'Eastern Capitalism: A Politico-Economic Analysis', deals with the economics of State Capitalism as it emerged from the destruction of Soviet Russia. The second has yet to be translated deals specifically with the revolutionary experience and is entitled 'Russia: Revolution and Counter-Revolution (1917-1921). The CBG considers both texts extremely valuable and will be commenting publically when they appear in print. However LLM presented a synopsis of the latter text to the Wilcat meeting on the Russian Revolution. The core of the synopsis concentrates on the programme of the proletariat, both economic and political, during the transition period relating it to and discussing it in the light of the experience of Russia. In this was LLM is successful in drawing together a mass of material into a coherent text centred on the analysis of the correctness or otherwise of the programme of the Bolsheviks vis-a-vis what he considers the essential programme of a victorious proletarian revolution. Though only a synopsis it is too long to publish here but we think that our readers will see the value of an extended extract.

The first part of the text deals with the economic programme of the transition period and examines in detail the economic thinking of the Bolsheviks and their attempts to organise production in Russia on what they conceived were socialist lines. The second part of the text attempts by a description of the political power of the Bolshevik Party vis-a-vis the Russian proletariat to identify elements in the degeneration of the revolution in Russia and in what LLM calls the 'Paris Commune Principle ', about which he has written in previous Bulletins, which must form the basis for the political power of the proletariat in their revolution.

Whatever our opinion of specific points raised the clarity of such a method of tying together an exceedingly complex series of events is at once refreshing and thought provoking.

Copies of the whole synopsis can be obtained either direct from LLM in Hong Kong or from ourselves though we, and LLM would appreciate a contribution towards the postage.

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The October Revolution: Establishment and Destruction of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

1. This section starts by examining several ideologies concerning the Russian Revolution, namely,
a. it was simply a Bolshevik coup, propagated by some 'hardline' anarchists, usurping the revolutionary initiative of the masses.

To counter those who see the Bolsheviks as no more than a bunch of (bourgeois) power mongers the following points are made:
b. The setting up of the cheka was correct, its transformation into a machinery for the one party dictatorship must be understood as part and parcel of the Russian Revolution's degeneration as a whole, and not on its own (in fact, as I now see it the Russian anarchists, in agitating for federalist self-management, were playing as much a counter-revolutionary role as the Bolsheviks were in extinguishing the Paris Commune Principle (PCp). this point must be taken into consideration when judging their suppression).
c. It has been argued by, for example the TWAG, that the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks (? it was dissolved by the VTsIK, though the Bolsheviks had a majority in the VTsIK, the State and the RCP must be distinguished for failure to do so, as for example the old CWO did, either leads to apologising for Leninism (I'll return to this point later) or signifies a refusal to understand how the Russian Revolution was actually defeated) when they failed to obtain a majority ia a 'proof' of their 'power-monger' nature. Such an argument either shows one to be on the side of the Mensheviks and Right SRs (cf Tsere-teli's and Chernov's arguments in the Constituent Assembly), or one is saying that the proletariat should not overthrow capitalism until the peasantry has also achieved proletarian consciousness (the RCP obtained a majority in all large cities, but that, of course was not enough for them to have a majority in the Assembly because 90% of the population were peasants.)
d. The suppression of the bourgeois press immediately after the seizure of power was correct. Just look at what the position of the Mensheviks, the SRs (not to mention the Cadets) was concerning the Oct. Rev!

2. This section then goes into the following four subsections.

The Organisation of the Soviet Government: The Russian Revolution's Theory and Practice. (1)

1. This subsection only deals with the power relationship between the Sovnarkom (Sovn), the VTsIK and the All Russian Congress of Soviets (ARC), ie. only with the apex of the soviet structure.

2. Initially the ARC was indeed elected from the bottom up, though I have some doubts as to the propriety of the actual procedure (see pt 5 below). The conference of voting rights on the peasants was a tactical move, though it never paid off, as the peasants, from the very first day after the Oct. Rev. never stopped, and this was very natural, sabotaging the revolution.

3. It was correct for the Sovn to have legislative and judicial (the Commissar of Justice being a member of the Sovn) as well as executive power. Though the VTsIK and the ARC are not directly involved in executive work, the fact that the Sovn is appointed by them and they possess the right of recall of any individual delegate make them different from the legislative branch in a bourgeois state. (By the way Ossinsky's proposal that the Sovn and the VTsIK be combined appears to me to be worth considering. Instead of having the Sovn, the VTsIK would delegate its members to various working parties or sub-committees to deal with various aspects of central state administration. I'll return to this point later).

4. With the above structure, it is very important to define clearly the power relationship between the three bodies: which powers belong to the ARC alone? On what matters can the Sovn decide on its own without the VTsIK's prior or subsequent ratification?...it is well known that the Soviet Government completely failed to do so, resulting in the usurpation of the ARC's and VTsIK's powers by the Sovn, and when it subsequently attempted to do so, all it did was to codify this usurpation. (The blame, if we must find a simple answer and identify a culprit, as some people insist we do, is not the Bolsheviks alone; since the basic principle of the commune state was defined by Marx and Engels, no marxist (or for that matter, anarchist) ever spent any thought on the transitional political programme. State and Revolution etc. only repeated the basic principle. Today with the stark experience of the

The First Council of People's Commissars. Center: V. I. Lenin. Top row, left to right: I. V. Stalin, V. P. Miliutin, A. I. Rykov, A. G. Shliapnikov, N. P. Avilov. Second row: V. P. Nogin, A. V. Lunacharsky. Third row: I. I. Skvortsov, L. D. Trotsky. Fourth row: G. Lomov, I. A. Teodorovich. Fifth row: N. V. Krylenko, V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko, P. E. Dybenko.

Russian Revolution staring right at us, if we dont do so, history will not forgive us - the left communist milieu has exactly failed to do so except for the old CWO's rehashing of part of the work done by the German-Dutch Left in the 30's on the economic side, today's Left Communist milieu should feel shame all over themselves. I'm not talking about any blueprint, but it is necessary to examine the basic features of the organisation of the commune state.)

This usurpation of power (a similar process occured between the lower level soviets and their ECs) directly destroys the PCp. It renders the nominal power of control void of even form, let alone substance. It renders the formal power of recall void of any substance, since this power can only be effectively exercised when lower level bodies are exercising actual control of higher level bodies. Thus, even though initially the ARC, the VTsIK and the Sovn were indeed elected bottom up in substance the Sovn had risen above the soviet system. Even the formal power of recall became an object of ridicule when from 1919 onwards, the ARC only met once a year, while the VTsIK, originally meant to sit in permanent session, convened only several times a year, (by 1921 thrice annually).

5. I said in point 2 that I have some doubts as to the election procedure. This is illustrated by how the Sovn was elected by the ARC. From my references, it seems to me that the Sovn was elected en bloc from a list of candidates submitted by the praesidium of the ARC, the list being drawn up by negotiations between the different parties represented in the ARC. En Bloc voting certainly goes against the PCp. So do Party lists. While party members should stand for delegation on the party programme it is not right that they can stand as candidates only on the party's nomination. Further, the way the Sovn was elected suggests that only party members nominated by the parties could stand as candidates. While it is correct to have political leaders who aren't workers co-opted into the soviet executives, this is not equivalent to the above. I suspect a similar procedure applied to elections at all levels in the soviet system. However, I regard this as a minor point, a breach of the PCp in degree, so as to say, compared to the usurpation of power of the soviets at various levels by their ECs and, more importantly, to the two processes mentioned in the following subsection, which breach the PCp in kind, so to say. I've remained silent on this point in the original Chinese text because I've tried in vain to confirm or refute whether the election procedure was as described above. I'd be grateful if you can give me some ideas/information if you have, for I want to address the question in part two of the text.

6. One final point, while I think it's alright for peoples commissars to swap portfolios, it is certainly a breach of the PCp, in kind for the Sovn (or the RCP?) to sack, reinstate or appoint new peoples commissars on its own authority. This happenned immediately after the seizure of power. Foe example Shliapnikov was sacked and later reinstated during the coalition government row. Ossinsky et alia, for another example, were replaced by Rykov et alia in the Vesenkha by the Sovn (or the RCP?).

The Organisation of the Soviet Government: The Russian Revolution's Theory and Practice. (2)

1. How can the PCp in fact be implemented. As far as I can see (the follc ing picture of how soviets should work is, even formally, somewhat different from the organisation of soviets in 1917), soviets at all levels should have a similar structure, viz. a congress, or congress of deputies (depending on the level) and an EC. The ECs (or some of their members delegated by them) of the soviets at one level form the congress of deputies at the level avove it. Congresses meet at regular intervals, say every two months (they get re-elected at longer intervals) to exercise power vested in congresses exclusively, to exercise control over the ECs, as well as to exercise the power of recall. ECs submit working reports to congresses at shorter intervals so that the latter's control over them is substantial as well as formal. Ecs as Ecs meet in permanent session to conduct business belonging to the level in the soviet system to which their congesses belong. For this purpose Ecs elect various working committees (both their chairmen and members) either from within their own ranks or by coopting revolutionary militants who arent EC members. These working committees are responsible to the EC Plenum, not directly to the congress. Since ECs meet in permanent session, the power of control over and recall of these committees and their members resp. is exercised permanently. ECs at all levels up to and including the VTsIK (I'm adopting Ossinsky's proposal here) will have the same working committees. Thus lets say we have a peoples commissariat of national economy. ECs at various levels will have corresponding working committees. While this PCNE is responsible for drawing up the national economic plan, the execution (to be defined below) of the plan will be carried out at the various levels by the corresponding working committees. Execution here means: a. abiding by the decisions reached at higher levels. eg. meeting a certain production target; and b. within a's framework, make decisions and putting them into effect within the respective areas of jurisdiction. This is how the proletariat achieves self-government. The state is the commune system tself. All state functionaries holding actual power are delegated by the workers themselves and are recallable by them, from bottom up. If people such as bourgeois experts have to be appointed from top down, they will be restricted to an advisory role, holding no power. (NB: the above picture is only a skeletal outline, the question needs to be investigated much more deeply than has been done by anyone so far.)

2. In 1917, Sovn was originally meant to be a general working committee of the VTsIK. But that was not to be. The peoples commissars were elected (ignoring the question put in pt. 5 in the previous subsection), but members of the various commissariats were appointed and sacked by Sovn or the commissars themselves on their own authority. (No surprises really,as we've seen, even the commissars themselves were sacked by Sovn itself - allow me to make this point clear: in the system described above in pt. 1 Ecs can sack etc members of the working committees because the latter are responsible to the former. In 1917 Sovn was elected by the VTsIK, its members were, thus, responsible to the VTsIK, not to Sovn ! This brings us to our central question.

3. The PCp was destroyed principally by two

developments: a. the abolition of the elective principle in the state (eg. ECs of Soviets at various levels - even congresses of deputies - not being genuinely elected by the workers); b. the usurpation of soviet power by an appointed state machinery divorced from the soviet system. I'll deal with (b) first.

4. The best example of point 3b is the case of Vesenkha. (the establishment of Vesenkha itself is very correct). Vesenkha's glavkis and their local branches were all appointed organs divorced from the soviet system. Not only were they responsible for carrying out Vesenkha's policies, they made all decisions pertaining to production at every level, usurping the power of the soviets.

5. Since March 1918 Vesenkha began to appoint so-called soviet commissars and directors to usurp the power of the management committees of the enterprises. (Lenin was right to say in "Left Wing Childishness.." that the bourgeois experts were subject to control and recall by...these so-called commissars. But these latter were not subject to the workers control and recall from bottom up, they were not even elected by them in the first place.) Here a word of clarification is needed. While anarchists and libertarians are mistaken to denounce the setting up of Vesenkha itself (see later), it is equally mistaken to say that denunciation of the usurpation of the management committees' power by the so-called commissars is a libertarian argument. For what we are saying is not that enterprises need not abide by Vesenkha's national plans. We are not deserting the soviets for the shopfloor. As the lowest level soviets, (soviets of individual enterprises or a number of enterprises together in the city or village soviets in the countryside - our attention is on the former category) never functioned and disappeared very early on (the lowest level soviet in the city was the territorial soviet of deputies), the management committee of enterprises became workers organisations at the lowest levels, and should work in accordance with the PCp under the direction of the territorial soviets. Thus the usurpation of the management committees' power by the so-called commissars is, in essence, the same thing as the usurpation of the power of the soviet system.

6. When Lenin said that the absolute, unquestioning obedience of the so- called commissars' dictatorial power was only required at work in purely executive matters, while workers still had the right to discuss working conditions etc., which, according to him, was the essence of proletarian democracy, he was playing with words. WE've seen what execution, according to the PCp means, while Marx and Engels made it very clear that the commune is not a parliamentary (limited to discussion) organ. In the later stages of the Russian Revolution's degeneration even the workers' right to discuss was abolished.

7. In May 1918, the First Congress of Regional Economic councils resolved that only one third of the management committee's members were to be elected by workers. Note, however that these management committees had already, since March, become empty shells - mere talking shops.

8. The Ninth Party Congress (March 1920) introduced one man management. It seems strange that so much fuss has been made about this, whereas in reality the real damage was done since Vesenkha started to appoint functionaries divorced from the Soviets and especially since March 1918.

9. The usurpation of the soviets by Vesenkha is a sufficient condition, all by itself, to separate the producers from the means of production, rendering the workers, proletarians in the capitalist sense (since the law of value remained intact), and the state appointees de facto owners of the means of production.

10. The setting up of the 'Revolutionary Committees' on 24.10.19, totally destroyed the soviet system in all but name (even ignoring the abolition of the elective principle in the soviets themselves for the moment). What Vesenkha accomplished in the field of production, the 'Revolutionary Committees' accomplished in other areas of state administration.

11. Concerning the abolition of the elective principle in the state itself, the evidence that I've been able to find is comparatively less abundant: the reason being whereby bourgeois historians are not concerned, anarchist/libertarians have only been able to give us indignation and abstract statements such as "the killing of the masses' own free initiative". Nevertheless, the evidence that I've been able to find is still conclusive.

12. the elective principle in the Red Army was abolished by Trotsky as soon as he became Commissar for Military Affairs after Brest-Litovsk. Commanders previously elected from bottom up were now appointed top down. Soldiers committees were dissolved. Etc.

13. At the Second All Russian Congress of Trade Unions the following was revealed:
a. "although in most regions there were institutions representing the Trade Union movement, these institutions were not elected or ratified in any way; where elections had been conducted and individuals elected who were not suitable to the needs of the central council or local powers, the elections had been annulled very freely and the individuals replaced by others more subservient to the administration."
b. representatives elected by workers to the Commissariat of Labour had to be confirmed by authorities at higher levels before being recognised as representatives.

14. Concerning the elective principle in the Soviets, it appears to me that formally, at the lowest level it had not been abolished during the period with which we're concerned (1917-21). But in substance there can be no doubt that the elective principle had by 1921 long been dead. Firstly both the Kronstadt programme and strikers' proclamations raised contemporaneously in Petrograd called for the re-juvenation of freely elected Soviets with free campaigning and by secret ballot. This confirms that the elections at the lowest level were manipulated and policed by the Bolsheviks, a point on which more below. (note please that I'm not assuming that Kronstadt and the Petrograd strike were proletarian by using the Kronstadt programme and the Petrograd proclamations as evidence. This point is important. For if we are to use, as I do, the suppression of these workers movements as showing that the process of degeneration prior to these events had been completed and that the state now faced the working class as a newly born bourgeoisie and bourgeois state, we cannot at the same time start by assuming these movements to be proletarian in nature ((not all workers actions are revolutionary or even possess revolutionary potential. It depends on their 'target'. eg. striking government employees after the seizure of power were counterrevolutionary.)) We must first prove the degeneration prior to these events. Only then can we say, on the basis of that proof, that they are class movements of the prolet-

ariat being suppressed by a newly born bourgeois state. What I'm using here thus are only facts revealed by these movements, their class nature has nothing to do with us yet and does not affect our present argument.)

The nature of the Bolsheviks' manipulation and policing of soviet elections at the lowest level is well documented. Candidates not favoured were arrested and imprisoned. Harrassment and/or outlawing of other parties (since November 1918, the Mensheviks had renounced overthrowing the new regime); voters being intimidated to vote as the RCP wished, (thats why the Kronstadters and Petrograd strikers demanded the secret ballot), while concerning the working of the soviets, admission to sessions was by card only, which, as a rule, only Bolshevik delegates could procure. As to the ECs the elective principle was definitely replaced by the selection (ie. appointment) principle. In April 1921, Sovn passed a decree the general aim of which was "to maintain the link between Soviet institutions and the broad masses of the workers" (Lenin in his last years was, I believe, honestly concerned about the growth of bureaucracy). One specific aim was to draft (!) female workers into the soviet ECs through...the RCP! This clearly indicates that the ECs were filled by party appointees (though I cannot confirm when this practice started, there can be little doubt that it was long before 1921). When the Workers Opposition raised at the Tenth party congress the issue of "the cleavage between the authority of the soviet apparatus as a whole and the broad working masses", Trotsky answered: "They (the Workers Opposition) have made a fetish of democratic principles. They have placed the workers right to elect representatives above the Party...the dictatorship does not base itself at every given moment on the formal principle of workers' democracy..." (the old CWO would be well advised to ponder over these words). Though my research is far from thorough, I think the above is enough to show how the elective principle was extinguished in the soviets. Also, with the well-documented suppression of the PCp in other state organs such as the Red Army and the TUs, as well as in the RCP itself, it would indeed be unthinkable that a parallel suppression, as briefly sketched out above, did not occur in the soviets.

15. In view of the extinguishing of the PCp in the soviets, we must be careful when examining the struggle between, for example, the provincial ECs and Sovn in the later stages of degeneration and after. For such struggles were more struggles between different sections of the emergent state bourgeoisie, instead of a defence versus degenerating tendencies. (just as the workers opposition, the members of which suppressed the PCp in the TUs just as mercilessly as Trotsky did in the Red Army which arose directly in response to Trotsky's militarisation of labour proposal which would severely reduce the importance of the Trade Unions, is most properly understood as a power struggle within the emergent state bourgeoisie, though it was the last major faction within the RCP to raise the question of workers democracy for the workers and not simply party democracy, the sole concern of all subsequent oppositions.

The Relationship Between the Communist Party, The State and the Class: Theory and Practice of the October Revolution.

1. The CP or generally communist groups do not hold power, not even through the soviets. Communists have the duty to seek delegation to the soviets and their executives, and I cannot see the revolution, both before and after the seizure of power, proceeding unless communists have majority support in the soviets. But soviets are unitary class organs, the power of delegation and recall belong to them and them alone. Not to the communist groups represented in them.

2. Not so for the Bolsheviks. Not so in 1917. Having obtained a majority in the soviets the Bolsheviks formed a governing party in the bourgeois parliamentary sense. Party members were appointed, by the party, to state positions, while state members were sacked and replaced by the party as well. The RCP's statutes adopted by the Eighth party congress prescribed the penalty of removal from state (and party) work for party members breaching party discipline. Examples are too numerous to require enumeration.

3. Thus a. the R.C.P became a governing party. and b. the PCp being extinguished in the state. (These two processes often happen simultaneously in one stroke: the RCP directly (instead of through Sovn) appointing state members, thereby at the same time destroying the PCp). Add them together and we arrive at the formula: The RCP's dictatorship over the prolatariat = the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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Correspondence

Regular readers of the Bulletin will be aware that the CBG's origins lie in the splits which took place within the International Communist Current in 1981. The early issues of the Bulletin dealt at length with our view that separation from the ICC was essential, not because of any disagreements we had with the class lines contained in their platform, but because we considered their political practice, both within the group, and in their relations and approach to the external world, to be unacceptable. In other words, our differences with the ICC lie within the fundamental question of revolutionary organisation. The issue for us is not simply one of the political clarity contained within a Platform, but of how to transform that clarity into a fighting weapon within the struggles of the class and into a basis for the Party of the future. We have argued from the beginning, that an organisation isn't, and can't be, defined simply by its Platform but by the political practice within which that Platform is located. Certainly there's nothing novel in that contention: it was precisely on the question of organisation that the Bolshevik fraction itself first emerged

However' the question of the validity of our split with the ICC has been raised again in correspondence with two comrades in Belfast. (The comrades have also been discussing with the ICC and the CWO. See issue 22 of Workers Voice.) In a letter written to us some months ago, they write that they had discussed with a CWO member the CWO's view "that you are a 'pseudo-group'." The letter continues:

> "He" (the CWO member) "expressed the view that after three years of a separate existence, you still, to all intents and purposes, occupied the political terrain of the ICC (that is you are within their Platform) and so, with an absence of any real dynamic, didn't merit legitimacy as a political tendency. He suggested, that if you maintain that the CBG is effectively little more than a 'neo-ICC', it would be better to re-approach a bureaucratic, but 'real' ICC and argue for reform" (like Melmoth? See World Revolution 75)," - that is, a comrade who split from the ICC at the same time as the comrades of the CBG and subsequently attempted, unsuccessfully, to rejoin. - "rather than weaken revolutionary forces by retaining your independence.
>
> "Comrades, although we fully recognise the important contribution that you have made to the organisation question, with all the best will in the world, it is hard not to sympathise with the CWO's view."

In our reply we attempted first of all to demonstrate that we don't consider, and never have considered, ourselves to be a "neo-ICC".

A "Neo-ICC".

We're surprised that you seem to accept the CWO's contention that we occupy the same political terrain as the ICC. We don't think so, the ICC don't think so and neither does anyone else in the milieu. It's true that we share the fundamental class lines contained in the ICC's Platform, as you yourselves seem to, but an organisation isn't simply defined by these positions. If it was, we would already all be in the same organisation. An organisation is defined by the political positions it defends AND the political practice within which those positions are contained and implemented. The "important contribution" you say we have made on the organisation question is the complete rejection of the ICC's practice and method of organisation and the adoption of a practice and a programme of action which is opposed to that of the ICC and certainly couldn't be contained within it. It means the rejection of the ICC's conception of centralisation and a different role and activity for the central organs. It means the rejection of the suppression of internal debate and the insistence that internal differences are, as a matter of course, given public expression. It means a specific rejection of many of the conjunctural and secondary positions which the ICC insist are part of their identity - the Transition State, economics, the Left in Opposition, etc. More importantly, it involves, as we have said, a completely different approach to the whole question of when and how to take up positions and how much weight to give a position once adopted. It means a completely different approach to the question of regroupment and therefore a completely different practical relationship with other revolutionaries. In addition, we're still discussing to what extent

our contributions on the organisation question effects our understanding of class consciousness and the role of the Party. In other words, the approach, the attitude, the conceptions, the practice and the actions are all different. If for example, you were to come to accept our views on organisation, you would not, and could not, be accepted into the ICC. They would consider you quite correctly, to be outside their "political terrain". The contention that we should re-enter the ICC and fight for these positions is simply, theoretically a non-starter. (In practice also, of course, it's a non-starter for us. Even if we were to abandon all our views, the ICC would still not have us back. What would the CWO recommend we do in that case - abandon militant life?)

We can add here to underline the point, that even if by some miracle the ICC could bring themselves to integrate comrades with our positions, their practice is such that we would be forever silenced. The "important contributions" that the comrades themselves say we have made would have been denied to them and to all the rest of the milieu. How can this be considered a"strengthening of revolutionary forces"?

In the rest of the letter, we explain at greater length, the fundamental differences separating our practice from that of the ICC and begin by explaining that the organisational weaknesses of the ICC (and of much of the rest of the milieu) are inextricably tied up with a failure to correctly assess the historical specificity of the current period.

The crippling weight of monolithism and the insanely destructive behaviour of sectarianism, which inflicts the entire revolutionary milieu, is a product of a numerical insignificance and an isolation from the class which is historically unprecedented in a pre-revolutionary period. We can't begin to apply the lessons of the revolutionary movement of the last revolutionary wave until we understand how fundamentally different our situation is. The revolutionary fractions of pre-1917 were numbered in hundreds of thousands, embedded within millions of proletarian supporters. They were a living part of the actions and experiences of the class and operated not simply as separate organisations but as parts of a wider movement. Their members, their press, their politics were entirely familiar to the working class. Certainly, the tendencies towards a sectarian and monolithic practice were always present, but they were balanced by an unceasing intercourse with other revolutionaries and with the class as a whole. We don't think anyone of the revolutionary movement today has faced up to how qualitatively different our situation is. It's simple derangement to pretend that we're latter-day Bolsheviks or a modern KAPD or whatever. Many organisations never have more than a dozen members, only the ICC has managed some sort of international presence and, of course, we're so remote from the class, the vast majority of workers have no idea of our existence or our politics. In this situation, the pressures towards a sect-like behaviour are overwhelming.

What the CBG is arguing is that we must try and understand the political consequences of this and fight for a method of organising our revolutionary work which minimises it. First of all, we don't think we can, through our own efforts, overcome our isolation from the class.As revolutiomaries, of course, we must intervene within the class to the limits of our abilities - and we're open to argument about the best way of doing that - but a transformation in our relationship to the class is out of our hands. We must play our role within the historical process which implants revolutionaries in the heart of the class and at the head of the revolution to the best of our ability, but there are no devices, like imaginary factory groups etc, which can short-cut this process. The failure to understand this leads directly to political opportunism and to voluntarism in both of its guises - on the one hand into localism and councilism, and on the other, into the megalomania of substitutionism.

It seems clear to us, that the most direct and immediate effect of

> our isolation from the class is that there is no safeguard from an arbitrariness in the way that organisations take up positions. Our positions are no longer tested immediately in the heat of the class struggle or subjected to the harsh scrutiny of the class itself. We have no feedback and no input from the class. For the moment, we're condemned to a situation where the process of political clarification comes very close to being simply an exercise in intellectual reflection on the outside world and the class' activities. If we compare that to the Bolsheviks' experience we can see what a qualitative difference there is. When they took up a position it wasn't simply the result of an internal process, of revolutionary cogitation - the fact that they were a living, day to day, part of the class, open to all the pressures from the class feeding directly into the party, meant that the process of clarification was a part, and an expression of class action. Cul-de-sacs, errors and inadequacies were subject to immediate exposure. The most powerful and direct influence in the party's "reflections" was the class and its struggles.

All of this has, of course, been frequently covered in past issues of the Bulletin (see Nos. 3,4 and 6 in particular) and we repeat here what we said then -- that we are prepared to listen to arguments that what we consider to be fundamental differences are either mistaken or trivial and therefore not worth separate existence. So far, not one of our critics has attempted to mount a critique of our position on organisation to demonstrate one or the other. In four years, the ICC has not moved from the assertions that the splits were simply the product of bourgeois agent-provacateurs, criminals and councillists, and that, therefore, there is nothing to discuss but moral turpitude.

The CWO and "Pseudo-Groups."

However, when we turn to our other major critics on organisation, the CWO, political argument, even of the ICC's desperately bankrupt kind, is left behind for a plunge down a Rabbit Hole with Alice into a political wonderland. The legitimate starting point of the Belfast comrades was that an examination of CBG positions might lead to the conclusion that we failed to occupy political terrain independent of the ICC.

(a contention we hope we've disproved above.) That seems to us a valid approach, being a matter of empirically establishing the political differences we say exist and making a political judgement as to their weight.

However, the CWO's starting point is the complete reverse of this. For them, we're not a "real" group but a "pseudo-group" and therefore what we have said on revolutionary practice and organisation does not have to be dealt with on its own merits to ascertain whether or not it constitutes "legitimate, independent terrain". And how do they know that we are a "pseudo" and not a "real" group? Simple - because we don't occupy independent terrain!

"legitimate, independent terrain"! In fact, the CWO go further than this. They contend that we can never do so because all such terrain is already occupied by "real" groups. All other political elements are "unreal". What constitutes a "real" group and how can they be recognised? Unfortunately only the CWO know the answer to this and they are not telling. At least not in print.

We are left with a hypothesis, an assertion, which is based upon political premises which have not been defined, explained or defended. From face to face discussions we have had with CWO members, their starting point seems to be that only a limited number of positions on class consciousness and the role of the Party are possible. As far as we can tell, for them the number is three, consisting of the position of the Italian Left, the German Left and that of councilism/anarcho-syndicalism. This is compounded by their completely unexamined contention that only ONE practice, and therefore only one organisation, can be derived from each position. For them, these organisations - the "real" ones - are already in existence - ie. the CWO/Battaglia Communista, the ICC and the amorphous "libertarian" milieu. (However, it has to be said here that recent writings of the CWO, particularly in WV 22 in their introduction to the correspondence of the Belfast comrades, seem to suggest that they are toying with the idea that there is only ONE possible valid position on the Party - their own one - and that even the ICC/German Left position is in fact an untenable one and that the ICC must eventually move into the camp of councillism or into the only "real" pole- the CWO/Battaglia Communista.) This hodge-podge then, of sheer idiocy and vulgar Marxism is, as far as we can tell, the basis for the CWO' assertion that we are a "pseudo-group" and therefore to be publically ignored.

Unfortunately, a subsequent letter from the comrades in Belfast has revealed that they have blindly rushed into the CWO's political version of the topsy-turvy world of quantum physics and joined them in the bizarre search for political quarks, anti-matter and probability waves. In aletter sent to us in April this year, they ask:

> "What independent ground, not occupied by another tendency does the CBG occupy; what is the world-historic reason for its existence? ... What are your 'real political issues'? Where is your 'real publication'? In around a year you have produced two issues, much of each 'pseudo debates' with anarchoid groups ...Is this 'real politics'? It certainly isn't our definition of it. ... Comrades, either you are a neo ICC, and have no legitimacy, or you are headed towards, over a long period, libertarianism. ... Whatever differences the CWO/Battaglia have with the ICC are real differences over real issues."

Regular readers of the Bulletin can judge this assessment of the Bulletin and our work for themselves. Certainly given the tiny size of the CBG we have not been able to publish as frequently as we would wish, but each issue has contained systematic coverage and analysis of the class struggle, the international situation, contributions to revolutionary theory and coverage of polemical debate within the revolutionary milieu. In addition we have produced regular leaflets for intervention and carried out ontinuous and wide-ranging correspondence and discussion with other political organisations and elements (only a fraction of which appears in the Bulletin). Unfortunately, the Belfast comrades have followed the example of their new masters faithfully and have refused to explain to us what it is that is "unreal" about this activity. Not a glimmer of explanation of this political novelty has appeared. The theory and historical precedent which lies behind it remains a mystery. Until this is forthcoming, it is impossible to accept the whole bizarre edifice of what is politically "real" and "unreal' as anything other than an irresponsible and sectarian device to avoid open and honest political debate.

Cormack

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The Bulletin April 1985 No 8

ICC: Salem's Lot

Readers of the press of the International Communist Current, in particular of issues 41 and 42 of their International Review will be aware that the ICC is once again wracked by internal turmoil. The response of much of the revolutionary milieu to the esoteric and theological tone with which the debates are being conducted, will be a shrug of the shoulders and a "So, whats new?" However we think that response, while understandable, is seriously mistaken. Despite the opaque and repellent nature of the ICC's internal life, the current events, like the splits which took place in 1981, throw into sharp relief the fundamental questions of organisation which confront revolutionaries.

The article in IR 42 "Centrist Slidings Towards Councilism" demonstrates with chilling clarity the validity of every aspect of the critique of the ICC's conceptions and practice, which we have developed at length in the pages of the Bulletin since the original splits in 1981. Despite the claims of the ICC at that time, that the loss of over 40 members and half their British section had left them immeasurably stronger, four years on we can see that, on the contrary, they are faced with a carbon-copy rerun of those traumatic events. At the heart of this, lies a point blank, almost hysterical refusal to recognise or confront the nightmarish monolithism which dominates all aspects of their activity. As a consequence, open and honest debate - the very flesh and bones of the process of political clarification so vital to revolutionary life - is seen as a mortal threat to the ICC's existence. Inevitable and healthy, internal political divergences - the political heterogeneity which is inseparable from the process of clarification - is seen only as dissent, and worse, as the "penetration of bourgeois ideology". In response to this, the ICC has developed authoritarian and substitutionist central organs which function as ideological policemen, crushing open debate in favour of the imposition on the membership of a never-ending flow of rigid and arbitrary positions - the Course of History, the Left in Opposition, the Machiavellianism of the Bourgeoisie etc.

It is the latest of these "vital" positions - the Subterranean Maturation of Consciousness - which is the ostensible reason for the current flare-up. The debate which gave rise to this formulation was on the vital need to assess the the perspectives for the development of the class struggle. As far as we can tell from the little of the debate which has appeared in public, much important ground was covered with valuable contributions from both sides. As always, of course, in ICC debates, it was characterised on both sides by much "kicking of open doors" (to use a phrase much-loved by the ICC) - ie defending at great length and with an air of triumph, a position already held by your opponent - and demolition of straw men - ie demolishing, again with an air of triumph, a position which your opponent does not hold. As to the actual content of the debate we won't comment in detail here (although some of the ground is covered in the article on Class Consciousness in this issue and we will return more directly to the question in future issues) except to point out the sheer complexity of the subject and the difficulty facing revolutionaries in arriving at a theoretical understanding of the dynamic underlying the ebb and flow of the class struggle. This does not mean that revolutionaries are helpless or should remain silent on the issue. On the contrary, all aspects of revolutionary activity, both practical and theoretical, must be buttressed and tested by a constant study and analysis of the class's life. It is precisely via this process that an organisation's orientations and activity undergoes the innumerable changes and adjustments that makes it a living force within the class struggle. However, it is necessary to understand that a large proportion of the work that goes into such conjunctural analyses must necessarily be tentative and provisional and that, by their very nature, many such analyses are incapable of validation, however forceful the arguments in support - eg the ICC's contention that a controlling group of the world bourgeoisie consciously conspire to place the Left parties in opposition, or that the next revolution can ONLY emerge in the capitalist heartlands. Even when the point is reached that the demands of action and intervention force organisational commitment to any particular analysis, the debate itself must be kept open and alive and not frozen in monolithic and sectarian dogma. Only in this way can an organisation provide itself with the ability to adjust to changed circumstances or to cope when any particular analysis is found inadequate or plain wrong.

However, what do we find when we turn to the ICC? Despite the sheer difficulty, complexity and uncertainty of the subject, the debate was crippled very early on by the imposition of a completely false polarity, by the insistence that the essence of the discussion was acceptance or rejection of the formulation - Subterranean Maturation of Consciousness - and that this formulation was a defining position of the ICC. Given the considerable diversity of opinion within the ICC, it might well be asked how an organisational position, not just a majority opinion, but a position, emerged so quickly and so rigidly. Simple. It was the position of the central organs. As in every other discussion within the ICC, the discussion immediately became a matter of them v. us, of others v. the ICC - ie in reality, of the central organs v. their critics. As always in the ICC, whatever opinion is held by the central organs at the beginning of a debate is considered to be the "ICC view", and those of a differing view find that instead of contributing to a debate within their organisation they are in fact considered to be attacking it. From the splits of 1981 onwards, this approach has been taken to its extreme conclusion - that divergent views are not only alien to the ICC, but alien to Marxism and the proletariat.

Thus, we can read in IR 42 that those who

reject the conception of the Subterranean Maturation of Consciousness are in fact guilty of Councilism! The logic, or rather lack of it, which produces this indictment is truly breath-taking. Let us remind ourselves here that Councilism is not just an empty insult but is a specific, well-defined political conception which starts by an absolute rejection of the need for the Party, or indeed for any political organisation of the class other than unitary organs, and continues from there with an appropriate programme with specific types of action and intervention in the class. No attempt is made to demonstrate that the dissenters defend any single element of this. In fact, it is even acknowledged that they specifically reject ALL of it. All that is advanced is the contention that some elements of their arguments might be considered to constitute a poor defence of the Marxist view of the Party and that Councilists also would reject the Subterranean Maturation of Consciousness. As the dissenters point out:

> "....even though subterranean maturation of consciousness is explicitly rejected by both Battaglia and the CWO, for example ... because this is perfectly consistent with the 'Leninist' theory of the Trade Union consciousness of the working class ... and by the theorisations of degenerated councilism ... the ICC decided that the rejection of subterranean maturation of consciousness was ipso facto the fruits of councilism in our ranks."
> (IR 42)

To which the ICC reply with a truly stunning logic.

> "It's enough to reread the above extracts ... to see that the approach behind this ... is quite clearly of a councilist nature."!

To which they have the grace to add:

> "Of course, in order to see this it's necessary not to be the victim of a councilist vision yourself."

In other words: "Our arguments are only convincing to those who are convinced by our arguments."

Unfortunately, the nightmare didn't stop there. As part of the campaign to crush the "councilist" dissenters, yet another ICC position was produced from the top hat, this one stating that "Councilism, and not Substitutionism, is the Greater Enemy of the Proletariat". Since the "proof" of this involved not only the rewriting of proletarian history but also of some long-held ICC analyses, not surprisingly, some members found it difficult to accept. However, the central organs were ready for them. They adopted -

> "... a resolution recalling the characteristics of:
> - opportunism as a manifestation of the penetration of bourgeois ideology into proletarian organisations, and which is mainly expressed by:
> * a rejection or covering up of revolutionary principles and of the general framework of marxist analysis
> * a lack of firmness in the defence of those principles.
> - centrism as a particular form of opportunism characterised by:
> * a phobia about intransigent, frank and decisive positions that take their implications to their conclusions
> * the systematic adoption of medium positions between antagonistic ones
> * a taste for conciliation between these positions
> * the search for a role of arbiter between these positions
> * the search for the unity of the organisation at any price, including that of confusion, concession on matters of principle, and a lack of rigour, coherence and cohesion in analyses."

And according to the central organs, all this applied to the "reservationists" (as they called those members who couldn't completely accept the terms of the crushing of the original "councilists") They were thus found guilty of -

> "... centrist attitudes towards councilism .. in that they:
> - posed as an arbiter between two conflicting positions;
> - came to the aid of the councilist position by refusing to call it by its name;
> - created smokescreens to obstruct the clarification of the debate."

Thus, the "reservationists" were found to be "opportunist", "centrist", "councilist or defenders of councilism" and the representatives of the "penetration of bourgeois ideology". (It has to be said in passing here, that, apart from everything else, all this represents a scandalous destruction of political vocabulary: terms like "councilism", "opportunism" and "centrism" have a definite political and historical specificity - here, they've simply become terms to describe those who can't accept every stroke and dot of the ICC's central organs.) However, the crucial issue at stake here is the problem of debate within the revolutionary milieu and within its organisations. How, using the above criteria, can ANY debate be possible? An extremely complex and demanding issue has been reduced by the central organs, as in every other ICC debate, to a formulation which amounts to no more than a slogan, which all members must accept uncritically. Failure to do so is defined as "councilism" or the "penetration of bourgeois ideology". In the ICC, clarification doesn't emerge from political divergence but rather produces a result which invariably involves complete victory for one side and absolute defeat and submission for the other.

The most fundamental weapon of revolutionary organisation is political clarity. Without that revolutionary energy, commitment, discipline and organisation are simply poured down a drain. To become an effective weapon within the class struggle, an organisation must be founded upon a method of work which facilitates the process of clarification. Clarity is not dogma. It can't be produced by centralised decree nor even by counting heads. It can only be the product of unceasing, open, fraternal and public debate. Not the debate of academics, a mere intellectual exercise where everything is considered equally valid, nor the entirely self-contained debate of

theologians, but rather the debate which is founded upon, derives from and is instrumental in, action. It demands the intransigent defence of the clarity already historically produced and programmatically incorporated AND the ability to incorporate the political heterogeneity which comes from being open to the experience and influence of the class, from being a living part of the class and its struggles.

The task facing revolutionaries is to find a method and structure of organisation which can resolve these two apparently contradictory qualities. The resolution is to be found by knowing WHEN to be intransigent, of knowing where to draw the line which separates revolutionaries from the enemies of the class, and the line which separates one revolutionary organisation from another. We need intransigence about the reality of capitalist decadence, about the bourgeois identity of trade unionism, parliamentarism, reformism and national liberation struggles, on the absolute need for the Communist Party in the revolutionary process and on the absolute rejection of monolithic and sectarian practices within the class's revolutionary minorities. But intransigence on the Subterranean Maturation of Consciousness; the Left in Opposition; factory groups etc; on contingent assessments of momentary aspects of the class struggle or development of the crisis; on every nuance of every position? Never - that's dogma, not clarity. We must be able to distinguish solid bedrock and topsoil from the more transient ebb and flow of the tide which deposits material one tide only to sweep it away the next. In other words, we must know when to take up a position and what the consequences are. On conjunctural and secondary analyses, positions are taken up only when forced by the demands of action or to help orient the organisation and its life. The object is clarification and therefore the debate must remain free, open and public.

However, none of this can be found within the ICC. Instead we find only a Kafkaesque, nightmarish construct of monolithism, where the public expression of internal debate becomes an exercise in imposing discipline, with only a token divergent view published so that the "ICC" can publically demolish it: where Tendencies are "allowed" but their legitimate activities are denounced as "conspiracies" and "secret manoeuvering": where positions emerge in an unstoppable flood, not as the product of the organisation as a whole, but from the central organs alone, and not in order to promote clarity, or as the basis for action (what action follows from the Subterranean Maturation of Consciousness?) BUT AS A MEANS TO SNIFF OUT DISSENT, as a political ducking-stool: where dissent is seen as not only a threat to the organisation but as the intrusion of the bourgeoisie and where absolute submission to the dictates and whims of the central organs is demanded. Genuine debate has become impossible, destroyed by relentless witch-hunting. After the splits of 1981 and after the disgraceful and false denunciation of Chenier as a police agent, we wrote in Bulletin 2:

> "Even within the organisation itself, the burden of such disgusting behaviour will be immense. For every militant there will always be the question:
> How far can I go in this discussion before I am condemned as an alien force, a menace, a petit bourgeois?
> How far can I go before I am regarded as suspicious?
> How far before I am a police spy?"

Today, the question must be even more pressing to the members of the ICC. The comrade who is on the receiving end of the current vituperative campaign and has been revealed as a "centrist" is one JA, who was a founder member of the ICC, who has always been at the heart of the Holy Family which makes up its central organs and who, herself, played a prominent role in hounding out the splitters in 1981 and the political assassination of Chenier. No-one in the ICC can now feel safe or confident about contributing openly to debate.

We must be clear: all this is the product of a SECT, not of a living and healthy part of the class. The comrades of the ICC must ask themselves what the future holds and where the way forward lies. The CBG has argued since its foundation that the life of the ICC is crippled by the weight of a profoundly monolithic and sectarian conception of organisation. Their claims after the splits of 1981 that the problems lay with the splitters and disappeared with them has now been clearly demonstrated as false. Despite this, the central organs, while clearly recognising a continuity with the splits of 1981, are once again insisting that the problem lies with the weaknesses and malice of the dissenters. However, let's be clear. There can be no way out of the ICC's vicious impasse, in which every new position, every tiny nuance is the signal for a new witch-hunt, until the whole question of organisation and centralisation is fundamentally re-examined. The question for those comrades of the ICC who are beginning to realise this, is - can this project be undertaken WITHIN the ICC? For us in the CBG, the weight of past evidence, particularly of the traumatic splits of 1981 which resulted in the total loss of the majority of the dissenters, says overwhelmingly, that the only way to confront the issues clearly without a debilitating and destructive series of false accusations and cul-de-sacs, is OUTSIDE the ICC.

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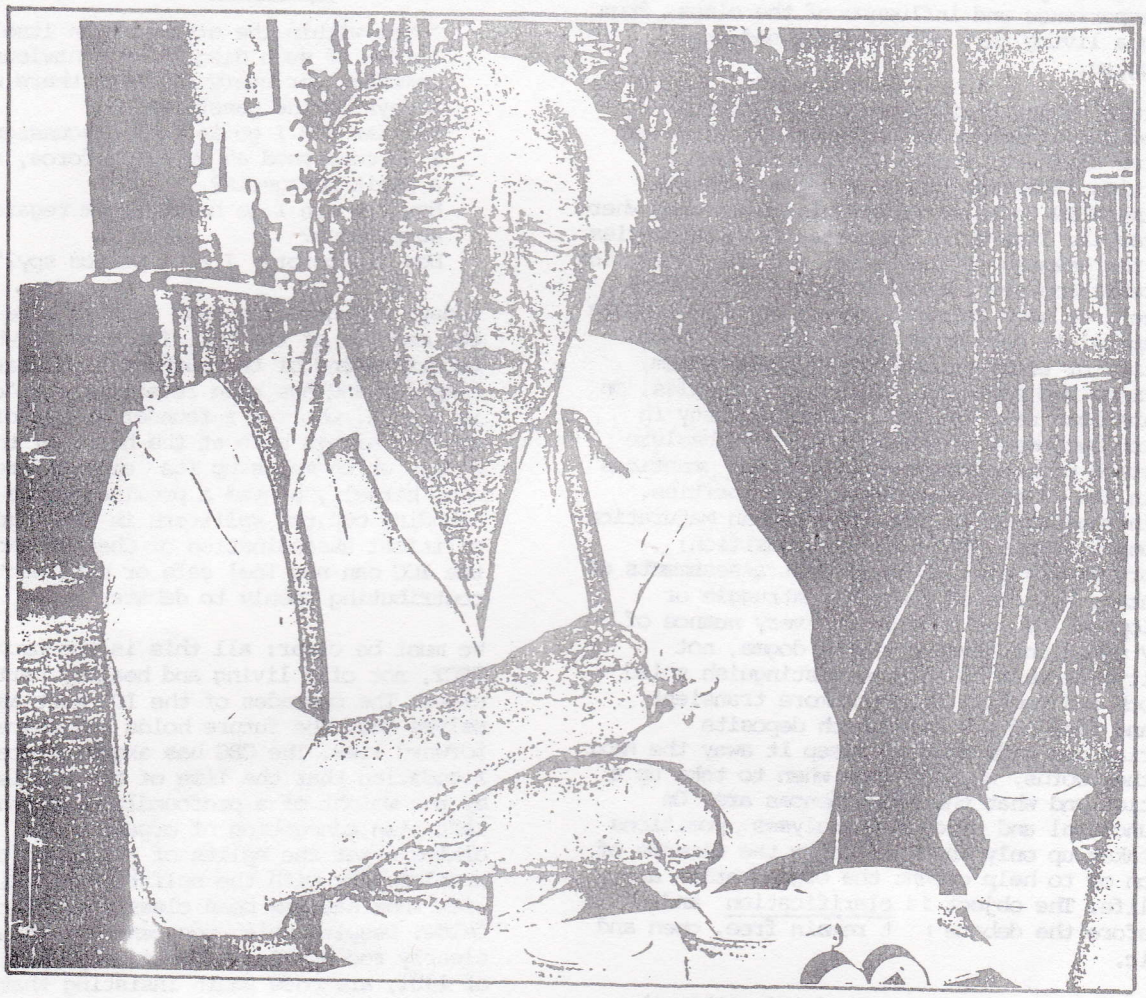
PLEASE SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO OUR GROUP ADDRESS.

box 85 43 candlemakers row edinburgh u.k.

Jan Appel



Introduction.

In early May this year one of the last of the proletarian figures directly involved in the revolutionary struggles after World War One died in Holland at the age of 95.

Born in 1890 in Germany, Jan Appel was a docker in Hamburg during the Great War and was active in the SPD until the wave of strikes which paralysed Germany in the last years of the war forced socialists to reconsider the nature of social democracy and brought the proletarian revolution into view. He joined the Spatakusbund of Luxemburg and Liebknecht and was a founder member of the KPD. Active in the AAUD in Hamburg he was president of the Hamburg KPD until the left wing of the KPD was expelled at the Heidleberg Congress. In the KAPD thereafter he was active in all the struggles of that organisation. Following the Ruhr insurrection of April 1920 in which he participated he was sent along with Franz Jung to Russia to discuss with the Executive of the Comintern and the Russian Bolsheviks. They had to hijack the ship they sailed on, forcing it into Murmansk to get to Russia.

Again in 1921 he was one of the KAPD delegates to the Third Congress of the Communist International and on his return to Germany edited the press of the AAUD Der Klassenkamph until he was arrested in 1923 for his maritime piracy of 1920. Released only in 1925 the political situation forced him to

emigrate to Holland and throughout the long period of counterrevolution he continued political activity under a false name in such organisations as the GIC. He lived undercover throughout World War Two and took part in the attempts to regroup communist forces after the war until forced to give up open political activity under threat of deportation. Nevertheless he kept in touch with the reborn revolutionary fractions which emerged in the late sixties and seventies up until his death.

In memory of Jan Appel we wish to recall him as an important member of the German Left, the KAPD as they struggled to come to terms with the period of decadence and the tasks of communists and print below, for the first time in English, one of his interventions at the Third Congress of the Comintern.

Here, under the pseudonym Hempel, he stoutly defended the principles and tactics of the Left against a comintern moving inexorably to the right and a Bolshevik party rapidly turning into a new bourgeoisie. As the KAPD declaration at the end of the Congress put it:

> "We do not for a moment forget the difficulties into which Russian Soviet power has fallen owing to the postponement of world revolution. But we also see the danger that out of these difficulties there may arise an apparent or real contradiction bwteen the interests of the revolutionary world proletariat and the momentary interests of Soviet Russia."

The following intervention followed on the report by Radek on the tactics of the Comintern and, coming after the abortive March Action in Germany gives, given the limitations of the time available to him, the persistent heckling he had to face and the limitations of the stenographic report, a concise statement of communist principles and positions in response to the degeneration of the Communist International. It bears careful scrutiny today when a new generation of communists must take up the torch handed over by such as Jan Appel and carry communist politics into the proletarian revolution that capital's ›rtal crisis has once again placed on the agenda of history.

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komintern

Die elfte Sitzung.
1. Juli 1921. 12 Uhr 40 Min. mittags.

(Diskussion zum Referat Radek. Redner: Hempel, Terracini, Lenin, Michalak, Vaughan.)

DISCUSSION ON THE REPORT BY RADEK ON THE TACTICS OF THE INTERNATIONAL

HEMPEL (1)

Comrades! After hearing the report by Comrade Radek on the subject of the tactics which should be adopted by the Communist International, we can say that we support his opening statements; notably the statement that, in the light of the world economic situation we can predict the collapse of the capitalist mode of production, of which the proletarian revolution will be an absolutely necessary consequence. But, when we come to the question: how will this proletarian revolution be accomplished? what is the form of organisation of this proletarian mass in struggle? - then differences arise. I will try in this short presentation - because I am not allowed much time - to clarify the question. If we consider the period of 1917, the Russian Revolution, the German and Austrian revolutions, all the revolutionary struggles during this period, we find that the form of organisation adopted by the proletariat in struggle in Russia was the Soviets, in Germany we call them Councils. This was the form of organisation of the proletariat, of the masses. We can make the same observation about the small revolutionary struggles which manifested themselves in Italy as factory occupations. The proletariat had its councils, or at least the form of councils. In England the proletariat had, and is building now, in big strikes by miners, shop committees (the real revolutionary leadership coming from the shop stewards). During the movement in Germany after 1918, in all the

revolutionary struggles - small and big - the form of struggle adopted was based on councils, factories, workplaces. This is what we see in the revolution. We must think on this fact and say: if this is the form of struggle of the proletariat during the revolution, we must ourselves as communists, as people who want to and must lead this revolution, examine the organisation of the revolutionary proletariat from this standpoint. This is what we say, we of the KAPD, and this idea was not born, as Comrade Radek thinks, in Holland in the brain of Comrade Gorter, but through the experience of struggle which we have had since 1919. We are workers, we are not theoreticians. We have only the experience arising from struggle. We have split off the revolutionary workers, who really wanted to struggle, from the old forms of the workers' movement, and have given their struggle a new character derived from the forms of the revolutionary movement.

The reasons for this will become clear if one recalls the tasks the old workers' movement set itself, or to be more precise the workers' movement which existed in the epoch prior to the present eruption of open revolution. Its task was, on the one hand, through the political organisation of the working class, the parties, to send delegates to parliament and other institutions where working class representation was allowed by the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy. This was one of its tasks. This brought results and was correct at the time. For their part the economic organisations of the working class were preoccupied with improving the position of the working class within capitalism, with struggling and negotiating when the struggle was over. I have had to say all this briefly. These were the tasks of workers' organisations before the war. But the revolution came: new tasks took their place. The workers' organisations could no longer limit themselves to struggling for higher wages. They could no longer see their principle aim as one of acting as parliamentary representatives and extorting improvements for the working class. This is reformism. Now you will object to this. We, the Communist International, you will say, we don't want that. But we reply: we believe you, you don't want it. But if you set out on the path taken by the old workers' movement, you will have to follow it. You won't be able to do anything else and all the theses in the world won't change a thing. This is proved by experience. It's not for nothing that the old workers' movement had its own particular forms of organisation. What does one need if one is represented in parliament? One doesn't need revolutionary fighters. One needs to be instructed in the workings of the state. One needs people who know how to negotiate, and all one has to do is listen to their reports. No more. What does one need from an economic point of view? One needs an organisation of workers. One chooses men that can be trusted, elects workers capable of negotiating with the bosses and the bosses' organisations. The leaders owe their existence to them. Money is collected to finance a future strike. One builds support organisations, ie trade unions, working class instruments with a clearly defined task: to install themselves within the capitalist order. So when communists believe that this organisation, which is incapable of leading revolutionary struggles, which is an inadequate instrument for revolutionary struggle - when they think they can use it in this way, when they they try to conduct a revolution with these organisations, they are wrong and they will fail. Experience continually teaches us that all workers' organisations which take this path, despite all their revolutionary words, flounder in the decisive struggles. This is the main lesson which we want to draw. Consequently we say: the proletariat must have only one aim in its sights and this aim is: the destruction of capitalist power, destruction of the capitalist state. The proletariat must have organisations specially developed for this aim. The proletariat creates them for itself. We see this when in a workplace - in Germany for example - workers make demands which the bosses cannot now afford to concede: what do the workers do then? They choose trusted men that they know, from their own places of work. From these small beginnings workers are already forced to wage their struggle against the unions. This is what we are taught by the long history of small struggles, of small strikes, and right up to the latest large struggles.

Thus the working class is obliged to organise itself - and is doing so at the moment - in its economic struggles from a revolutionary point of view. And we say: as communists we must recognise this phenomenon. We must recognise that the way of the old workers' movement is false. We need a new way. Revolutionary struggle exists, and this is why we can say that the development of revolutionary struggles has already shown that the workers must organise in this way and we, communists, must take the opportunity that will come to us to lead these struggles. This is why we say communists must tell the proletariat to base its organisation on the factory, the workplace, with a complete dedication to the aim of taking over production, the productive forces, the factories - of conquering all this.

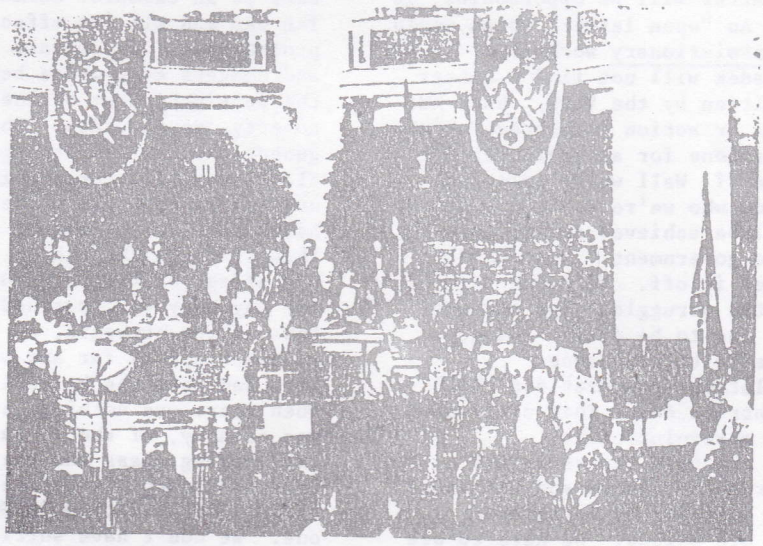
Comrades, I can't go on about this any longer. It's the task of communists to recognise what's needed and get on with it.

We now come to the second point. The form of organisation of the proletariat in struggle and its tasks also determines the methods of struggle. The methods must be revolutionary ones. They are the product, at the present time, of the enemy camp. Today our enemy is taking measures to consolidate its position. This is not new, but such measures are now being applied more vigorously. They aim to maintain our adversaries' grip on power: on the one hand state power, on the other industry and the economy must continue to function to a certain extent. They are not able to set the whole of the national economy moving again. That won't work. But it is possible for them to stabilise a part of the economy, the core, at the expense of other sectors. This is now being done in every country in the world. We communists, we must observe this, and see what will be the results of this policy - the aims of which are quite consciously understood by the capitalists who are carrying it out.

For the proletariat the consequence is that some of their number are secure in firms which remain viable, in the viable sector of the economy. And in all countries we see that this core, the trusts, the super trusts, are uniting on an international level and are predominant. But while a part only of the proletariat is allowed to make a living from these concentrated firms, another part must be eliminated. This is the great mass of unemployed workers, who find no place in the present system and are condemned to

perish. This is the division, the economic split in the working class. The worker who is in the factory, who still has the possibility of drawing a wage, is entrenched there fearful of losing his livelihood. The worker expelled from the factory is the enemy of those who can still make a living. This is the split which is consciously exploited by capitalism and exacerbated by the bourgeois press. This is how the capitalist recovery is being achieved today. We are not talking about a permanent revival of the domination of capital,

launched the slogan: use each struggle, in each workplace, push it forward, extend it, isolate and hem in the capitalists. Develop links between workplaces, bring the struggle to a head. Comrades, we saw that through this, the course of events came to a head in central Germany, and then came the March Action. Following the attacks by Hörsing (3), the storm broke in Germany. We say that this was an offensive (as we conceive it) and it was necessary to launch it. But to suddenly order an offensive without the intermediate stages



HEMPEL (K. A. P. D.). Genossinnen und Genossen! Nach Anhörung des Referats des Ren. Radek über die Taktik, die die Kommunistische Internationale einschlagen soll, kön-

but of a revival for a certain period, a revival built on the corpses of proletarians who have died of starvation. We must recognise this. Also this situation determines the tactics we adopt in the struggle, shows us the way forward. We, communists, must ensu that the proletariat prevents this consolidation of one part of the economy, of one part of the proletariat, from being achieved. Because this would mean the defeat of the proletariat. We must struggle against every stage in the process, on the slightest pretext. We must by all possible means - I say, like Comrade Radek, by all possible means - try to prevent this reconstruction of the economy which is being planned by the capitalists. And for this we must use the enormous, ever growing masses of the unemployed, of starving proletarians - we must unite them. Unite them not to vote in parliament so that they can give their approval to resolutions. Rather, unite them around their vital needs, organise them in councils, with trustworthy workers in the factory. Thus we will create the organisation of the proletariat, the unity of the proletariat in action. We must be continually in struggle. As Radek has stated here, the discussions, the resolutions and the "open letter" (2) are not the foundation of revolutionary proletarian unity - the foundation is constant struggle.

Comrade Radek has talked about the offensive and the defensive. At the start of this year, 1921, we in Germany saw the results of this. We saw how the democratic bourgoisie was supported by all possible means, by the social democrats, the independents, all the parties and parliamentary organisations and by the whole bourgeoisie. This was a secure situation which was how capital needed it. It was necessary to blow it apart. We

is a nonsense. In the same context I would like to explain more fully what the attitide was on the 20th of August last year (1920) when the Red Army was at the frontier of East Prussia, outside Warsaw. (4) This must also be taken into account if we are trying to decide between offensive and defensive. We, the KAPD, in our country, we carried out preparatory work for several weeks, by every means: in public meetings, with leaflets, through propagands in the workplaces, by exploiting the excitement created by the presence of the Red Army at the borders. And when the question arose as to what to do if troops and munitions coming from France passed through Germany, we decided we would stop at nothing, including insurrection. We had prepared methodically in all the regions. On the 20th of August, and the preceding evening - it is only now we can talk about it, because if we had done so previously many comrades would have gone to prison as a result - the following appeal appeared in Rote Fahne and Freiheit (5) and all the provincial journals: "Workers of Germany, beware! Cops and agents provacateurs, vile elements who want to plunge you into a bath of blood, etc..." Today we recognise, and do so publically, that if we ever made a mistake, it was that day, after we tried by every means to call off the action that was about to break out in all the most important zones in Germany. We succeeded in many places and, now, people scoff at our comrades in Vilbert and Köthen for proclaiming a republic of workers' councils. We know that people can scoff at us for this. This doesn't bother us. But the task of communists at that moment should have been to take the offensive. In Germany we will consider this as an offensive; at the international level it was not simply an act of solidarity with our Russian brothers who would have been crushed if the

materials had been delivered. These things must be said if it is a question of choosing between offensive and defensive.

Now we come to the question of partial demands. (6) I will first deal with the question of the "open letter", then the control of production and partial demands. Comrade Radek has spoken about the different types of partial demand which are possible. The "open letter", in Germany, supported by the unions, by the parliamentary party, such an open letter will be opportunist, it can't be denied. (7) An "open letter" which would be supported by the revolutionary workplace organisations. (8) Radek will not find a letter of this kind being written by the VKPD. What has become of the meetings or action committees which were to lay the foundations for struggle, as set out in the "open letter"? Well we've called it all off because we know who we're dealing with, we know that nothing will be achieved except more horse trading with the government. Just words. That's why we've called it off. We agree with every stepping up of the struggle. But one must also think about what has to be done. Things don't just happen - we're talking about preparations for revolution, preparations which have to be actually carried out. This could have been done if we'd had a revolutionary organisation, if over the past two years the leadership of the Spartacist League and the Third International had not decreed: no workplace associations, use the old unions. We have to see things as they are and we have to ask those who are engaged in permanent struggle; they'll tell you how things are. They'll tell you how to struggle. I repeat, I haven't time to explain all this in detail.

Now the question of partial actions. We say, we don't oppose any partial action. We say: each action, each struggle, because it is an action, must be carried through pushed forward. One can't say: we oppose this struggle, we oppose that struggle. The struggle born of the economic needs of the working class, this struggle must be pushed forward by all means. Truly in countries like Germany, Britain and all the bourgeois democratic countries, which have undergone 40 or 50 years of bourgeois democracy and its effects, the working class must first of all become accustomed to struggle. Slogans must correspond to partial actions. To take an example: in a workplace, in several workplaces, a struggle breaks out, and extends over a small region. The slogan shouldn't be: struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. This would be absurd. Slogans must be adapted to the balance of forces, to what one can expect in a given situation. These slogans must also be adapted to the particular characteristics of the struggle. If a general uprising was in progress in the country, the slogan shouldn't be "Everything is at stake". (9)

Now I would like to consider the March Action from this point of view, to show briefly what no-one else here has shown, what can be learned from the experience. The March Action, as everyone says now, was an action which by itself could not have led to the overthrow of capitalist power. We also know this. But despite this, the correct slogan was: overthrow the government. We had to put forward this slogan because in Germany the working class was no longer gaining anything by its struggles. We had to put this slogan forward because there was nothing else for the proletariat in Germany to do. The existing social order meant famine for several million of them, permanent destitution for an ever growing part of the population. Consequently, for the working class which finds itself in this distress, there is nothing else it can do except to aim to overthrow this social order. This had to be the content of our slogans in central Germany. So that the proletariat could be shown for the first time, the way to escape from its distress.

Here is an example: Germany in January 1918. (10) The war and all its effects weighed heavily on the proletariat. In January 1918 munitions workers and dockers everywhere began to struggle against the straightjacket of the war, against hunger, poverty, destitution. They did this by means of a general strike. What happened? The working class, the proletarians in uniform, did not yet understand what the workers were doing. The ice had not yet been frozen. What were the effects of this struggle throughout the country? What was the effect of the persecution of the workers? Of the way they were pursued across the country? News of the struggle, of this workers' class movement spread far and wide. Everyone knew about it. And when the balance of forces had matured, when there was nothing left worth saving of the war economy, of the so-called German empire, then the working class and the soldiers showed that they had learned from the pioneers in January 1918. The situation in Germany today is a similar one. We don't have sufficient means, means of propaganda sufficient to reach every corner of the country. We have had to leave this to the bourgeoisie and its agents, and they do it differently from us. The bourgeoisie persecutes us, it calls us murderers, dogs, etc, it hunts us. The proletariat today insults us in the same fashion. But if the situation develops and ripens, then the proletariat will be ready to travel the same path and will recognise the path. Thus the revolution will surmount all obstacles. This is why we must put forward the slogan and struggle to overthrow the capitalist order, the existing order. This is the most important lesson for the German proletariat, and the International to be learned from the March Action. More important than all the tittle-tattle we've heard here.

Comrades, now I want to turn briefly to the question of how the proletariat should organise itself in struggle. However, I have no illusions on the subject. The proletariat must no longer organise itself in order to secure representation in the capitalist state, in the political and economic domains. It must not organise with the aim of using the democratic bourgeoisie. The proletariat can only organise with the aim of revolution. The experience of revolutions, provided by the Russian, German and Austrian revolutions, and other struggles, must be taken on board by the proletariat. This experience shows the proletariat how to organise. This is why we communists must now set about creating a core, a framework, which the proletariat will be able to build upon when the development of events leads it into struggle. This framework is workplace organisations (11), linked together in a network of workplaces and economic regions. There are not many of them today. (Interruption: And they're getting fewer all the time.) Today it is they who hold the banner high, who maintain the organisational framework. And when struggles break out, there will be more and more of them,

because the proletariat will find it has no choice but to adopt this form of organisation, because it can't struggle through or with the unions. We must recognise this. This must be the basis of the tactics of the Third International, then we'll be getting somewhere. To maintain these organisations, to lead them, to teach everyone about this class organisation, the proletaiat needs a communist party - not a communist party bourgeoisie and its agents, and they do it differently from us. The bourgeoisie persecutes us, it calls us murderers, dogs, etc, it hunts us. The proletariat today insults us in the same fashion. But if the situation develops and ripens, then the proletariat will be ready to travel the same path and will recognise the path. Thus the revolution will surmount all obstacles. This is why we must put forward the slogan and struggle to overthrow the capitalist order, the existing order. This is the most important lesson for the German proletariat, and the International to be learned from the March Action. More important than all the tittle-tattle we've heard here.

Comrades, now I want to turn briefly to the question of how the proletariat should organise itself in struggle. However, I have no illusions on the subject. The proletariat must no longer organise itself in order to secure representation in the capitalist state, in the political and economic domains. It must not organise with the aim of using the democratic bourgeoisie. The proletariat can only organise with the aim of revolution. The experience of revolutions, provided by the Russian, German and Austrian revolutions, and other struggles, must be taken on board by the proletariat. This experience shows the proletariat how to organise. This is why we communists must now set about creating a core, a framework, which the proletariat will be able to build upon when the development of events leads it into struggle. This framework is workplace organisations (11), linked together in a network of workplaces and economic regions. There are not many of them today. (Interruption: And they're getting fewer all the time.) Today it is they who hold the banner high, who maintain the organisational framework. And when struggles break out, there will be more and more of them, because the proletariat will find it has no choice but to adopt this form of organisation, because it can't struggle through or with the unions. We must recognise this. This must be the basis of the tactics of the Third International, then we'll be getting somewhere. To maintain these organisations, to lead them, to teach everyone about this class organisation, the proletaiat needs a communist party - not a communist party which can't be led by all its members but only by a leadership that leads by giving directions. (12) The proletariat needs a highly organised vanguard (13) party. This is how it must be. Each individual communist must be unimpeachable - this is our aim - and must be able to be a leader on the ground. In all that he does, in the struggle which he is plunged into, he must hold fast, and what enables him to do this, his anchor, is the programme. He acts according to the decisions taken by communists. Here the strictest discipline reigns. Disobedience will result in punishment or expulsion. The party we are talking about is a vanguard, knowing what it wants, solid as a rock, proved in combat, which no longer negotiates, but is engaged in continual struggle. Such a party cannot be born until it is thrown into the struggle, until it breaks with the traditions of the parties and unions of the old workers' movement, with the reformist methods of the unions, with parliamentarism. Communists must break with all that: with these methods others have barred the way to revolution. This is not simply the objective result of using the methods I have just mentioned. It has been done willingly by using the means made available to them, by the bourgeoisie to lay traps to capture and transform the revolutionary energy of the proletariat. And this must be banned from the ranks of the communists, and, purified, they will get on with their work alone; they will be drawn into revolutionary activity. This explains - as fully as my time allows - what the line of the Third International should be, because it must take the lead.

If one looks at things from an international standpoint one can see that the forces exist upon which this edifice could be based, from which the revolutionary organisations, this revolutionary international could be built. In France, Spain, Italy, also America, there are syndicalists and anarchists. Perhaps you will say: there you are, you're an anarchist, a syndicalist! But wait a minute. One must recognise: over the years it has been here that one has found the most revolutionary elements of the working class. We know that they are not experienced in class struggle, organised class struggle. Comrades, they lived too early in history, their tactics were several decades ahead of their time. The method of the old German movement was correct but now, at the hour of confrontation, direct action is necessary. These workers, these anarchists and syndicalists have no experience of the collective unity of the working class. Communists must go to their aid, and teach them how to struggle, to regroup their forces; they must give them a form of organisation which can unite them and can adapt itself to them. These elements demand above all that there is a break with all bourgeois traditions, never to return. Any workers who have gone over to the syndicalist camp (ie, revolutionary syndicalist, FAUD in Germany), or the anarchist camp, have gone there because of the betrayal of the parliamentary leaders. This is a recognition of just how serious the faults of the parliamentary workers' movement are. We have to draw them back from where they have gone, and for communists this means making quite sure we have nothing to do with parliamentarism. Rejection of parliament and unions are not principles for communists, they are practical questions and today this is what we should do. If one looks at things in this way, one sees large workers' movements in America and western Europe which demand anti-parliamentarism and a break with the trade union movement. Now the question is: how will the Congress decide? If it takes the line of the old workers' movement, then it will tread the path of this movement. If it resolutely moves towards union with the elements of the left, who are in Moscow today, then the revolution will receive a fresh boost from the Third Congress of the International. If it takes the other path it will be sunk. It is up to the Congress to take the decision. It is on this basis that we will consider our adherence to the Third International. (14)

Notes

(1) Pseudonym of Jan Appel

(2) The "open letter" tactic adopted by the Communist party (VKPD) in January 1921. With

several thousand members (the left wing of the USPD) this party launched a political campaign which was a classic example of "united front" tactics. The central committee of the party sent a letter to all 'workers' organisations" (parties and unions, from the reactionary unions to the AAU) calling on them to "struggle together against capitalism". The basis of this tactic was as follows: "if these organisations accept it is a victory for the VKPD for having taken the initiative. If they refuse it is also a victory since they have been unmasked in the eyes of the masses." This was a strict application of the principles explained by Lenin in Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder, on the tactics to adopt to "win over the masses" which later became known as the tactic of the "united front". Moreover Lenin fully approved this tactic at the Third Congress of the Communist International. Hardly two months later, the VKPD abandoned this tactic and called for insurrection in support of the March Action.

(3) Hörsing: Oberpräsident of the province of Saxony who took the initiative to send in the security police to put an end to the troubles in central Germany, thus provoking the March Action.

(4) This was during the Russian-Polish war. The Red Army had pushed the Poles back to the gates of Warsaw. The Entente powers (above all, France) decided to come to Poland's aid in the form of large consignments of arms and munitions. These had to pass through Germany. The KAPD, the AAU and the FAUD devised a master plan to sabotage the transport of the weapons, along with the seizure of power in certain regions, with the aim of a generalized proletarian insurrection in Germany. These plans were denounced just as they were about to be implemented in the press of the KPD and the USPD. The KAPD called off the actions. Nevertheless a number of sabotage actions took place.

(5) Official publications of the KPD and USPD respectively.

(6) As opposed to revolutionary demands.

(7) Radek in his support of this tactic had used the example of the "open letter" of the VKPD in January 1921 to formulate a procedure general for application.

(8) That is the AAU.

(9) Es geht aufs Ganze: formula frequently used by the left communist press. However it doesn't make sense here. There are other examples of phrases which don't make sense in the interventions of the KAPD at the Third Congress. Excluded from the Comintern, the KAPD were never able to correct the transcripts of their interventions, which were often delivered over a hostile hubbub from the other participants at the Congress.

(10) The most important strike wave of the war.

(11) That is the AAU.

(12) That is a mass party of the Social Democratic type.

(13) In French: "parti-noyau ultra-forme", in German: "Kernpartei".

(14) The question of the adherence of the KAPD to the Third International.

These notes come from the french translation of the original German text of the minutes of the Congress.

TRANSLATE?

The C.B.G. desperately needs the services of translateors.

We would like to make our material available to non-speakers of English, we would like to be able to have some of the material being produced by fractions of the proletarian movement in other languages accessible to us and, in our attempts to learn from the experience of the revolutionary movement of the past, we would very much like to be able to have much of the material that exists in French German, Dutch and especially Russian translated into English.

If any reader feels he can help us in thistask we would urge them to contact us at our group address.

CONSCIOUSNESS: CLASS & PARTY

Introduction.

The following article is a contribution to the debate on the question of organisation. Whilst it is an "individual" text in that it opens up subsiduary areas of discussion it also reflects the general positions of the C.B.G. on the problems of class consciousness. The article unequivocally asserts the marxist and revolutionary nature of the German Left. Using the specific example of the CWO it illustrates how the degenerative force of sectarianism can lead today's revolutionaries into not simply disagreeing with major proletarian forces of the past, but to dismissing them completely. In doing this the CWO are guilty of employing an a-historical approach to Marx and the revolutionary tradition, and also, as part and parcel of this, they are forced to falsify the history of the German Left.

This is not an academic discussion of textual exegesis and philosophical method. The way in which revolutionaries appropriate the past in general and the communist traditions in particular bear upon the way they relate to the revolutionary movement today. A-historicism and falsification are ways of legitimizing sectarianism. To begin to correct one side of the equation is to alter the other. Sectarianism today manifests itself, among other ways, as a claimed irreconcilable split between the "partyism" of Lenin and the Italian Left and the "spontaneism" of Luxemburg and the German Left. We see both traditions as marxist and as such must be debated and defended in an open and honest fashion within today's revolutionary milieu. Without this the communist movement risks blowing itself apart in internecine struggles which ape those of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Only capital can gain from this.

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It is no secret that the CWO's attitude towards the CBG is one of open hostility legitimized by the "theory" of 'pseudo-groups' which in their eyes justifies ignoring our existence. Like Galileo's contemporaries who rejected Copernicanism, the CWO denies the reality of our existence. However, just as we do live in a heliocentric system, so the CBG does exist and does occupy a specific and definable political space.

We are well able to defend ourselves from the misbegotten theories of the CWO; less able are those organisations which were once part of the revolutionary milieu and who now no longer exist. The CWO's penchant for character assassination and political misrepresentation is as broad as it is wrong. It's breadth has now been extended to take in, digest and spit out the revolutionary political organisation of the German Left. In this article we intend to explore and refute the claims now being made by the CWO, namely that the tradition of the German Left was not marxist and as such warrants neither defending nor extending.

The most recent and certainly the most virulent expression of this opinion is to be found in Revolutionary Perspectives 22, but the general approach has been getating for at least the past five years. For example in RP18, in an article which was a so-called"contribution to a debate" on the KAPD and the Party, the writer tentatively tested the water,dipped one foot in and moved towards total immersion in the anti-German Left position. In the articles the author made sure that he differentiated between that faction in the KAPD which centred on the ideas of Otto Ruhle and the KAPD as such. Ruhle's faction is isolated as the worm in the bud which, it was said, was "most sympathetic to ideas of a semi-syndicalist nature".
Note, Ruhle's faction was not syndicalist but merely "sympathetic" to "semi syndicalist" ideas. The author of the article does not dismiss the German Left; he in fact acknowledges "crucial texts" published by the KAPD and notes the "positive contributions" made by the German Left to revolutionary clarity. He also records that Otto Ruhle's "semi-syndicalist" response to the 21 Conditions of the Comintern in 1921 was criticised as a "grave fault' by the Executive of the KAPD and in fact it eventually expelled the Ruhle faction from the organisation.

The text goes on to trace the evolution of the

KAPD towards "councilism", this evolution was not a "logical result of the inadequacies of the political positions" of the German Left.(op cit p.16) Rather the writer is of the opinion that the fall towards councilism was a product of the "original position of the tendency" within the broad determining context of the "defeat of the class". Decline was not inevitable, "the KAPD could have and indeed was in the process of advancing to clear positions of an organisational nature, but defeat nurtured initial mistakes, and helped produce collapse". In other words, the nature of the KAPD was revolutionary, it had opposed the "semi-syndicalism" of Ruhle and it had made a positive contribution to revolutionary thought and action.

In this way the water was tested. The CWO found its growing anti- German Left stance to its liking and decided to take the plunge, attach itself to the Italian traditions and purge itself of the poison of the KAPD. How far this has produced a CWO which is a good swimmer in a clear sea or an organisation drowning in a welter of confusions and distortions will become clear in the rest of this text.

Some two years later we find the CWO happily splashing up to its neck in anti-KAPDism. In RP19 the CWO (as opposed to a "contributor") set about attacking the KAPD with some relish. Recognising that a new political orientation could not be justified on empirical grounds alone they are forced to look for the chink in their theoretical armour and explain why they had been taken in by the "councillist" tradition. The CWO discovered that all along they had been working with the wrong "method", one which was "formalist", henceforward they committed themselves to employing a "more dialectical approach". This new method was to be the guarantee of correctness.

Early on in the article "The Italian Left and the Permanent Need for the Party" the CWO very clearly states its basic priorities: as an organised expression the German Left was without merit and was wholly wrong. In an extremely generous manner they do admit that "whilst not denigrating the contribution of individual communists from the German Left" they are, however, forced to the "conclusion that only the Italian Left tradition can provide the theoretical and organisational starting point for revolutionary marxist work today." (op cit p.11) The CWO makes clear why.

The KAPD, it is said, completely failed to understand the class demands placed upon the revolutionary organisation in the context of the retreat of the revolution. Consequently the KAPD was unable to appreciate the importance of fighting for its positions within the decaying Comintern and succumbed to localism and sectarianism. (op Most of all the Germans did not recognise the "overriding need for an international revolutionary party.

Of course it is problematic as to what extent this "overriding need" is pursued in the face of class collaborations etc. Irrespective of this problem the CWO agree that the oppositional stance taken up by the KAPD led to decay, isolation, councilism and finally to dissolution. Unlike the Italian Left the German was not able to maintain organisational presence and continuity through the days of revolution, to the counterrevolution and on to the present. This is evidence, say the CWO, of the total bankruptcy of German left communism. Mark, this article in RP 19 is unsigned and presumably the position of the CWO, unlike the one in RP 18 which was from a "contributor".

The German Left was horseshit. This is one of the conclusions of the article "Cleaning the Augean Stables" in RP 22. It is in fact a review of a review, a reply to the ICC, but apart from attacking the ICC the CWO takes the opportunity to display the fruits of its "dialectical method" and affirm the total historical failure of the left communists in Germany. And, believe it or not the German Left failed because it employed the wrong political method. (of course since the CWO adopted the new method it is better able to recognise methodological failure). The method of the revolutionary, as we all know, is dialectics and historical materialism. This is the essence of Marxism. This method, as our methodological pedagogues would have us believe, the German Left lacked. Contrasting the position of the Italian and German left communists the CWO write that "their own disagreements were fundamental and stemmed from different political methods (anarcho-syndicalism and marxism)". And from this they conclude that "There is no way that revolutionary groups can engage in the restoration of a marxist theory and the reconstruction of the proletariat whilst they carry round with them the the lumber of the German Left. This lumber is summed up by the CWO:

> "in fact the KAPD critique of the unions was flawed by a structuralist approach that was quite compatible with their support for 'red' unionism and anarcho-syndicalism, as well as their own semi-unionist 'Unionen' conceptions."

We assume that the CWO use the term anarcho-syndicalist in an historically precise manner. We might be wrong but our understanding of this particular political tradition, unlike classical anarchism, takes as its subject the industrial working class. Thus far it engages with marxism and is clearly separate from the petit bourgeois theory of anarchism which grew out of radical bourgeois philosophy located within a beleaguered and declining artisanal milieu. Like anarchism however, it rejects "political" work in the sense of a centralised party activity oriented towards parliamentary activity. Anarcho-syndicalism turns upon the assumption that unions are both instruments of economic defence and revolutionary change. The "general strike", organised by the revolutionary unions and independent of (and hostile to) political parties, both marxist and bourgeois, is the means of social transformation. The theory assumes that the proletariat can take power through the mechanism of the general strike and that "political" action is either totally irrelevant or a positive barrier to the working class. This theory obviously entails certain assumptions about the nature of state power the dictatorship of the proletariat and class consciousness. These assumptions are largely at variance with those of marxism.

The historical reasons for the penetration of syndicalist ideas and syndicalist modes of action within the proletariat can easily be understood: failure of existing reformist unions to come up with the goods, the changing structure of capitalism in the late 19th Century and the emergence of

imperialism. These were the material reasons which underpinned certain sections of the class turning to syndicalism as the answer to their prayers. This is not to argue that syndicalism was in any way a realistic answer. Its collapse in 1914 and its inability to oppose imperialism, the role of the Spanish CNT in the inter-imperialist Civil War all testify to its bankruptcy as a theory of proletarian revolution. Nevertheless it is important that we understand the reasons for the emergence of syndicalism for it bears on the history of the KAPD, but not in the manner that the CWO would have us believe.

Does the historical record demonstrate. as the CWO claim, that the KAPD was anarcho-syndicalist Textual refutation and historical contextualising will show that the CWO was not anarcho-syndicalist and that it was in fact an organisation which made a profound contribution to political theory. a fact which the CWO itself believed once.

KAPD and the PARTY

In 1921 Herman Gorter wrote and had published by the KAPD "The Organisation of Proletarian Struggle" (collected in Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism ed. D.A.Smart.) In this work Gorter rejects trade unions as a revolutionary form of organisation:

> " Historical materialism shows that the trade unions are not the organisations which the proletariat needs to achieve victory." (Smart p.55)

He goes on to say that the point for mass revolutionary organisations is the "factory organisations" and that this is applicable in "Western Europe and North America".

Gorter goes on to ask "whether this organisation is sufficient, whether a political Communist Party is also necessary" (Smart p.158) This is not simply a rhetorical flourish. Gorter argues at some length that the material situation of the working class acts as a limiting factor on the consciousness of the proletariat. Consequently, he says, a large section of the working class will lack the clarity to see the necessity and content of the final goal and as a result will fall into the ideological trap of reformism. In other words "economism" threatens to overwhelm and undermine the revolutionary will of the proletariat. Gorter recognises that in this situation there is an absolute need for a sure and steadfast guide: this is the Communist Party:

> " This section of the proletariat, their party, forsees the whole struggle, locates and establishes tactics, exercises persuasion over the remainder of the proletariat, and in the first instance the union; it seeks revolution alone, regards everything from this perspective, always puts the general cause of revolution above all other interests both in the national and international struggles." (Smart. p.163)

In his "Reply to Lenin" Gorter delineated the differences between Western Europe and Russia, and from these differences he concluded that the tactics of communists in Europe differed from those which were used by the Bolsheviks in Russia. For Gorter the necessity of greater clarity among the mass of the class was one of his conclusions. But this did not invalidate the party. The party was in fact the instrument which struggled to lead the class towards consciousness. Communist Parties, he said,

> " strive, above all, to raise the masses as a whole, and the individuals to a higher level, to educate them one by one to be revolutionary fighters by making them realise (not by theory only but especially by practice) that all depends on them, that they are to expect nothing from foreign help, very little from leaders, and all from themselves."

It is clear from this that either Gorter was self-contradictory when he first noted the need for Communist parties and then went on to say that the working class could only expect something from itself, either Gorter was contradicting himself or was trying to emphasise the very particular nature of class struggle in the West. A careful reading of Gorter's work shows that he was not muddled, but was attempting to convey the complex, and dare we say, dialectical relationship between party and class. He was not rejecting the need for the party.

It cannot be argued that Gorter's position on the party was either an individual aberration or wholly unrepresentative of the KAPD's position. Gorter accurately reflected the dominant position within the German Left in the first few years of its formation. In 1921 the party published its "Theses on the Party" This document was both a point of orientation and moment of definition. In it the German Left indicated the way in which the party would actively relate to the working class and in doing this the KAPD stated the theoretical presuppositions which underpinned their activity. And, a central presupposition was that of the need for the party, and also for the existence of unitary class organs. In the Sixth thesis the KAPD stated:

> " The political workers councils (Soviets) are the historically determined, all embracing form of proletarian power and administration"

This,however, does not tell all the story, soviets are not enough. A clear political point of reference distinct from the soviets is also needed.Thesis 7:

> " ..the historically determined form of organisation which groups together the most conscious and prepared proletarian fighters is the Party.. The communist party must have a thoroughly worked out programmatic basis....it must be the head and weapon of the revolution."

And at Thesis 8 the KAPD makes clear why there is a need for the party:

> "The main task of the communist party, just as much before as after the seizure of power, is in the confusion and fluctuations of the proletarian revolution, to be the one clear and unflinching compass towards communism. The communist party must show the masses the way in all situations, not only in words but also in deeds. In

all the issues of the political struggle before the seizure of power it must bring out in the clearest way the difference between reformism and revolution, must brand every deviation to reformism as a betrayal of the revolution, and of the working class."

Thesis 10 reiterates the point:

"The communist party,as the organisation of the most conscious elements, must itself strive not to succumb to these vacillations, (which hit the class at large), but to put them right. Through the clarity and the principled nature of their slogans, their unity of words and deeds, their position at the head of the struggle, the correctness of their predictions, they must help the proletariat to quickly and completely overcome each vacillation. Through its entire activity the communist party must develop the class consciousness of the proletariat, even at the cost of being momentarily apparently in opposition to the masses. Only thus will the party, in the course of the revolutionary struggle, win the trust of the masses, and accomplish a revolutionary education of the widest numbers."

Even if we take Theses 12 to 16, which deal with the unitary organs of the class as in fact describing trade or industrial unions (a wholly inaccurate assumption - see next section) there is no way that the KAPD's statements on the party can be easily assimilated into an anarcho-syndicalist vision. The class, organised at the level of the workplace was not of itself capable of the clear and final destruction of capitalism. Moreover the party does not enter the unitary organs and thereby dissolve itself. It enters the unitary organs of the class but retains its distinctiveness. The fact that the KAPD rejected as untenable the social democratic notion of the mass party, and in its place put the idea of the minority organisation of revolutionaries does not invalidate this. Indeed it is clearly obvious that the very conception of a minority party as opposed to the mass form of social democracy, entails a notion of the ability of the working class to "spontaneously" destroy and replace the capitalist mode of production with the dictatorship of the proletariat wholly at odds with the CWO's representation of the KAPD.

"To be the one clear and unflinching compass towards communism."

It is, in fact, ironic that the "partyists", from Lenin through to the CWO, choose to misrepresent the KAPD's party orientation for the rejection of the "opportunism" of the Third International was predicated upon the ideological specificity of the Western European working class. Today's revolutionaries might take issue with this but a corollary of this was the need for the party to exist to fight against the domination of bourgeois ideology. Hence the inevitability of a minority party which must "lead" the class to "spiritual" liberation, ie. to class consciousness:

" The KAPD wishes to form parties in every country which consists of communists only, and formulates its tactics accordingly. Through the examples of these parties, small at the beginning, it will turn the majority of the Proletariat viz. the masses into Communists."

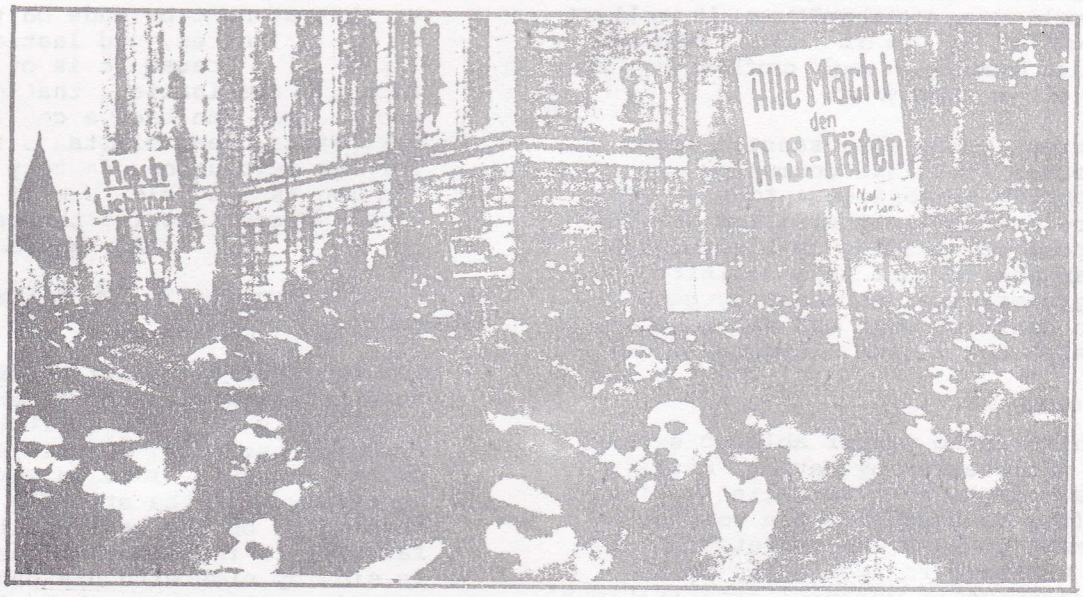
This is from the KAPD's "Manifesto" of December 1920/January 1921 (reprinted in Workers Dreadnought January 29th 1921).

FACTORY ORGANISATIONS

Among today's revolutionaries it is a truism that trade unions are organs of the bourgeoisie. They are constituted upon particular political and economic programmes which restrain and define the way in which they operate. Irrespective of the "socialist" rhetoric of elements within the unions their general political stance dictates their bourgeois functions: committment to reformism, to national capital (which might or might not be strongly committed to statification) and to the need for the class to subordinate its demands to the larger needs of the nation. The ideological domination of the bourgeoisie and the material constraints of capitalist society makes the unions the last bulwark of capitalist power. When the proletariat begins to realise the anti-proletarian nature of unions and organise themselves outside of and against them then a truly revolutionary step has been taken. Communists struggle against the stranglehold of unions, at times literally, but not politically, within them, with the aim of encouraging and leading the class from this capitalist deathtrap.

These political positions and the theoretical analysis which underpins them are now part of

the everyday baggage of revolutionaries; they were, however, hardwon. It has taken over seventy years of theoretical reflection and millions of dead workers to clarify the reactionary role of trade unions. In this struggle for understanding revolutionaries have put weaker or stronger



"Through the clarity and principled nature of their slogans."

explanations concerning the bourgeois nature of trade unions. From the vantage point we hold today we must recognise the great difficulties which faced past revolutionaries. It is no use looking at their errors and seeing them as poor misguided fools, "country cousins", who were not quite up to the mark. The errors which past revolutionaries encompassed are evidence of the problem of achieving clarity. It is not reached once and for all, rather it is struggled for, with greater or lesser success.

The point of this preamble is to establish that we do not disdainfully dismiss the proletariat's past because it does not live up to an ideal, abstract programme. We recognise that errors are made, that set-backs do occur. The ability to grasp this fundamental point establishes not only the legitimacy of past actions but also the nature of today's revolutionary milieu.

There is no denying that the German Left spent a great deal of its time in defending "factory organisation" and calling for the building of a revolutionary "union". The CWO would have us believe that this was an expression of their anarcho-syndicalism, obviously any organisation which calls for the revolutionary unionism of the working class must be unmarxist and pro-syndicalist. This is the simple logic of the CWO. History, however does not follow this simple formula. A classic method of bourgeois history-philosophy is to employ trans-historical categories, hence whenever an historical situation appears which nominally identifies with that of an earlier period it is collapsed into one. In this scenario war is war is war, production is production is production, and moral good is moral good is moral good. Not a very enlightening approach, other than telling us something about those who employ it. It is certainly not an historical method. Unfortunately the CWO appear to have strayed from the historical approach when they say a union is a union is a union. For some reason, the blinkers of partizanship, they now completely fail (though not in the past) to grasp the context of the KAPD's stance on "unions" and as a result dish up an a-historical idealism.

Firstly let us clarify what the KAPD said on trade unions. In his 1921 text "The Organisation of the Proletariat's Class Struggle"

Gorter asked the question, what mass organisation of the class is required for a revolutionary transformation? Historical materialism said that:

> "trade unions cannot accomplish the task. For in the first place they are old-fashioned weapons dating from the period of evolution....they do not make the proletariat, proletarians, the millions and millions of workers into the uninhibited militants, the conscious communists that the proletariat needs. For the entire structure of these organisations, which were the right ones for the period of peaceful development, makes the workers into the slaves of a clique of leaders and of trade union relations. Uninhibited, courageous militants are still stifled in the trade unions, they cannot exist in them....historical materialism shows that trade unions are not the organisation which the proletariat needs to achieve victory."
>
> (Smart p 155)

A year earlier Pannekoek had also examined the question of the revolutionary potential of trade unions, specifically those advocated by syndicalists. He identified the syndicalist conception as being one which assumes the trade union movement to be the:

> " natural organisation of the proletariat which governs itself within it and which will go on to govern the whole

of the work-process." (Smart p.125)

This, Pannekoek says, fails to understand that the dictatorship of the proletariat is not simply a technical question of staying in the factory. Rather it requires the total domination of society, which means economic, political and intellectual life. Pannekoek concludes that whilst such "radical" unionism would alter social relations it would not and could not lead to communism. Indeed such a syndicalist formulation would conflict with the class aims of the proletariat:

> "a current which will sanction such measures not, like communism, as a temporary transitional form at most to be deliberately utilised for the purpose of building up a communist organisation, but as a definite programme, must necessarily come into conflict with and antagonism towards the masses" (Smart p.127-8)

Pannekoek continues:

> "When it is no longer able to deceive the proletariat by having 'workers' in a bourgeois or socialist regime, it (the bourgeoisie) can only attempt to keep the proletariat from its ultimate radical goals by a 'government of workers' organisations' and thus in part retains its privileged positions. Such a government is counterrevolutionary in nature....The struggle of communists may at present often run in parallel with that of radical trade-unionism; but it would be dangerous tactics not to clearly identify the differences of principle and objective when this happens."
> (Smart p.129)

Here the only concession which Pannekoek makes to syndicalist trade unionism is that its course may "run parallel" with that of communists. This is immediately clarified and nullified in that the "parallel" line of travel is not identical with that of revolutionaries as the objective they seek and the principles which they defend are in opposition to those of "radical" trade unionism. Like Gorter, Pannekoek recognised the bourgeois nature of trade unionism.

In the place of trade unions the German Left advocated the unitary organisation at the level of the factory. Once again Gorter:

> "it is no longer trades but factories which exercise power and enjoy strength in the new society of today. And which therefore confer strength on the proletariat when it organises within them" (Smart p. 155-156)

In other words the material productive structure of capital has socialised labour in the factory, where the skill of the labourer is generalised and the trade boundary is broken down. This gives the material condition for class solidarity and revolutionary consciousness. From this observation Gorter concludes that:

> "the factory organisation is the organisation for revolution in Western Europe and America...because factory organisation is the organisation of the most modern form of capitalism, because capitalism in its bankruptcy particularly organises itself by factories and seeks to found a renewed existence upon them, because the revolution itself teaches us that it must be made on the basis of factories, and last and most important because it is only in the fact of organisation that the entire proletariat can become conscious communists, real militants fighting for the revolution, factory organisation is the sole form of organisation appropriate for the revolution."
> (Gorter op.cit. p.157)

In the KAPD's Programme of 1920 we find the following:

> "The proletariat cannot be organised for the remorseless overthrow of the old society if it is split up into trades outside the actual terrain of the struggle. That is why it is necessary that the struggle be carried on on the basis of the factory. It is here that the worker is side by side with his other class comrades, it is here that all of necessity have equal rights. Here the class is itself the motor of production, which it is ceaselessly forced to master, in order to be able to carry it out itself...In general, the factory organisation has a double aim. The first task is to destroy the trade unions, and the totality of the anti-proletarian ideas which they represent...The second great aim of the factory organisations is in preparing for the construction of the communist society." (quoted in RP 4. pp51-52)

And again in the Theses on the Party sections 12 and 13:

> "communists must therefore seek to unite the revolutionary workers (not only members of the communist party) to come together in the factories, and to build up the factory organisation which will unite into Unions and which will prepare for the taking over of production by the working class. The revolutionary factory organisations (Unions) are the soil from which action committees will emerge in the struggle, the framework for partial economic demands and for the workers fighting for themselves. They are forerunners and foundation of the revolutionary workers councils." (in RP 41)

These were the views of the German Left on the need for factory organisations which they termed "unions". It seems that the CWO have had a knee-jerk response to the word union and the notion of factory organisations: syndicalists believe in factory organisations; so did the KAPD ergo the KAPD was syndicalist. Apart from being disastrous marxism this is not even good formal logic. As we have shown with Pannekoek the German Left explicitly

rejected not only trade unionism but also the radical unionism of the syndicalists.

It is no use the CWO pointing to the KAPD's relationship to the factory organisations which emerged in 1919 and using this as evidence of syndicalism. Far from being this, this relationship was a brave attempt by the German Left to discover a revolutionary modus vivendi with the organised working class.

With the defection of Social Democracy and the trade unions to the side of the bourgeoisie in 1914 and their subsequent evolution through the period of the war up to the revolutionary days of 1918 the German working class found itself confronting a new implacable enemy. With the "victory" of the "socialist" republic in 1918 the proletariat found that far from ushering in a golden age it was faced with a new set of butchers. Embrionic councils were still-born, stifled by the repressive apparatus of the state on the one hand and the ideological confusions within the class and the revolutionary milieu on the other. The legalisation of the "workers councils", the Stinnes-Legien agreement consolidated the position of trade unions and demonstrated to a large section of the working class their anti-proletarian nature. In the face of these attacks the class "spontaneously" generated new organs of struggle Taking up a cry which had appeared during war time, "out of the unions", workers banded together in "unions" which rejected the demands of Social Democracy for civil peace and restraint in the factories. The new class forms asserted the right of the class to fight on its own political terrain and against the "socialist" bourgeois republic. Reflecting the momentary reorientation of the class, this factory organisation at its birth was atomised to the extent that no central coordinating structure existed. This is hardly surprising. Workers immediately responded to the changed circumstances of 1918, the organisational form which they had previously attached themselves to was cast aside and the "natural" point of re-orientation was their place of work and district. This is always the point at which the class comes together.

The German Left Communists recognised the potential of the factory organisations and those in Bremen and Hamburg played a major role in uniting their various elements and in writing the political programme which underpinned the movement. This gives the lie to the CWO's anarcho-syndicalist claims.

"A new set of butchers."

The German Workers Union (AAUD) was founded in February 1920. Its Programme was not simply for economic struggle, it had a revolutionary political dimension which not only differentiated it from Social Democracy but put it in direct opposition to it:

> "(4) The AAU rejects all reformist and opportunist methods of struggle.
> (5) The AAU is against all participation in parliament for it signifies the sabotage of the idea of the councils.
> (6) In the same way the AAU rejects all participation in the legal factory councils as a dangerous collaboration with employers.
> (7) The AAU is against syndicalism to the extent that the latter is against the idea of the councils.

(8) But in particular the AAU is most strongly opposed to the trade unions because they are the principal barriers against the continuation of proletarian revolution in Germany. They are the main obstacle to the unification of the proletariat as a class." (quoted in RP 7 pp. 17-18)

This organisation, not surprisingly, the KAPD strongly related to and saw it as the vehicle for mass revolutionary activity. In 1920-21 at the AAUD's height over 150,000 workers were members, not an insignificant number when one considers the political programme promulgated by the new union. Gorter saw the AAUD as the mass revolutionary form:

"It goes without saying that the factory organisation of a locality, a municipality, a district, a region must unite. It will also be useful to make further sub-divisions according to industries. We need not go into details here. Nor do we need to go into the consideration that soviets will readily arise out of these factory organisations.

Philipp Scheidemann Gustav Noske

'The deadweight of generations of Social Democratic ideology..."

So, destruction of the trade unions, these seed beds of slavery, and in their stead the establishment of factory organisations, industrial federations based upon these, and in taking in the whole, a union like the General Workers Union, the AAUD, and finally the unification of the unions in an international league - this is the way to revolution, to victory."
(Smart pp.157-158)

How can the CWO in all seriousness characterise this as anarcho-syndicalism. The attention given to the factory organisation of the AAUD must be put into context. For a start there is the background of the KAPD's own existence as a distinct political party, premised upon the inherent difficulty confronting the proletariat of developing a revolutionary political consciousness. The fact that the KAPD saw a need for party organisation indicates that it did not believe organisation at the factory place was enough to guarantee victory. And on the broader plane the organisation of the elements of the class in the AAUD was, rather than being a regression to a syndicalist form, in fact a major leap forward by the proletariat. Irrespective of the fact that many members of the AAUD had been, or were also members of the syndicalist union FAUD this factory organisation of the class was an attempt to reestablish a genuine proletarian direction amidst the confusions of 1918-19. The German proletariat had not managed to overthrow the bourgeois state nor had it developed a system of revolutionary councils. An attempt had been made but had been smashed by Social Democracy. Confusions within the class were inevitable. But the important thing is that the most militant and class conscious elements recognised the need for a new organisation which could express their revolutionary aims. The AAUD was that organisation. It was the unitary organisation of the class which aimed at the destruction of the bourgeois state and the institution of a council system which could be the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the context of the success of the soviets in Russia, of the counter-revolutionary nature of Social Democracy, of the expulsions of the left from the KPD and the subsequent opportunist policies of the Third International, in this context the KAPD looked to the factory organisations as the genuine voice of proletarian struggle rather than the organs of the trade unions etc. The German proletariat, unlike that of Russia, had the deadweight of generations of Social Democratic ideology to get rid of. This was a material force, as Gorter recognised, of major significance. It is certainly true that we can speak about the global-universal condition of the proletariat and the global necessity of socialism. But it is in the particular historical situation that this condition and necessity is realised. Each national proletariat and indeed its various sections face particular and unique problems in achieving a revolutionary consciousness. Recently the ICC has argued that the system of factory organisations was "not the expression of the growing force of a class recovering after the massacre of January 1919, but the product of an enormous weakness of a terrible disorientation" (IR 40 p.17) Rather than saying that the KAPD was syndicalist the ICC add the twist that the German proletariat was in fact councilist. Using the logic of this argument the Russian proletariat presumably was "substitutionist" This mistaken characterisation will be dealt with in the next section. In Germany the KAPD recognised the AAUD as the starting point to solving these problems. Members of different political organisations were found in the AAUD from the USPD through to the political supporters of Otto Ruhle. Nonetheless it

was still revolutionary. It was not to be expected that a single homogeneous mass of workers was to be found, activity is often ahead of consciousness. The Russian soviets are evidence of this.

The CWO and the "New Method"

Why and how has the CWO made such a fundamental error in its assessment of the KAPD? It could simply be the dazzling rhetoric of Lenin (if not his accuracy) in Left Wing Communism. There is little doubt that the CWO is moving towards absorption of and agreement with Lenin's critique of the KAPD, but the CWO's failure stretches back to the days when it defended the German Left Communists.

The CWO has attempted to justify their swing towards the Italians on the basis of a new historical method. In RP 19 they announced to the world that they had previously been guilty of employing what they called a "formalist method", but that henceforward they pledged themselves to use a "more dialectical approach". In the following RP the CWO said that the defence of the Italian tradition was based on the:

> "fruits of a more dialectical method on the part of the CWO;a method which sees events in their historical context, as a process full of contradictions, and not in an abstract formal way." (RP 20, p.7)

In RP 20 a number of "debating" texts are printed some of which represent the new "dialectic" of the CWO (texts 3,6 and 7 in particular). What is noteworthy in these writings is the repetition of phrases such as "dialectical","undialectical", "process" and "one sidedness". At times they are used in much the same way as a mantra, but repetitious incantation is not enough to prove the worth of the CWO's new method. Its correctness is only demonstrated in practice. As we shall see, when the CWO "dialectically" examine the contribution of Marx on the question of the party and class consciousness we find that rather than being new born "dialecticians" they are, in fact, the old CWO with new heroes.

An examination of the history of the CWO clearly illustrates that, irrespective of its erratic trajectory, there is in fact an underlying coherence, namely the static methodology they employ. This takes the general form of dividing the social world into simple discrete packets where no process is found. A consequence of their methodology is that, depending on the particular political strain it is defending at the time, the CWO tends to write proletarian history in terms of either "all good" or "all bad". Thus, when they defended the KAPD they did so by denigrating the Italian Left and by pledging their allegiance to the German tradition. The CWO has now become intoxicated with the Italian tradition and, bleary eyed, a new distorted reality confronts it. The once heroic KAPD now appears as horseshit which must be cleared from the "stables". Mirroring their earlier pronouncements on the Italian Left the CWO now say:

> "There is no way that revolutionary groups can engage in the restoration of the proletarian party while they carry around with them the lumber of the German Left." (RP22. p.31)

If marxism has taught us anything it is that the social world is not made up of singular fixed moments. Change and interaction are the basic constituents of the world. A consequence of this is that theoretical clarity about the world is achieved historically and not via a-priorism or "genius". It would seem that the CWO does not accept these presuppositions. Hence, when they come to write of "Class Consciousness in the Marxist Perspective" they mean precisely what

The real Marx?

they say: it is not "a" Marxist perspective; in their vision marxism is a monolithic theory which is not open to a number of explanatory choices rather it has only one truth and this the CWO has identified as residing in the analysis of the Italian Left. It should be remembered of course, that the CWO had previously identified the real truth as that of the KAPD. It would seem that their "dialectic" has simply rejected one absolute for another.

Chasing after historical legitimisation the CWO dredge the writings of Marx to demonstrate that their positions on class consciousness are to all intents and purposes the same as that of Marx. Their intention is to show that Marx argued the same position on the Party as the Italian Left; that Marx being the founder and most important figure in the development of historical materialism,his position on this question is the marxist one. In short they want to prove that their absolute on the party was defended at the moment of the birth of scientific socialism. Given the complex

history of class struggle: lesser mortals might think that some important historical events occurred between the 1840s and the early Twentieth Century and that these would prima-facie make it unlikely that a simple coincidence of Marx's and Lenin/Bordiga's ideas on the party is to be found. The CWO do in fact give a nod to the historical difficulty of demonstrating such an equation:

> "We must analyse what Marx wrote dialectically, ie. in terms of the context of the period, of what Marx did, and of what his general views on consciousness were. In the context of his time, as the proletarian class was in the process of formation, and as the problem of the conquest of power was not concretely posed, it is understandable that Marx's utterences lack a certain precision." (RP 22, p.16)

To make the point that contextualisation is all important the CWO write that:

> "the framework for the evaluation of his (Marx's) utterances on class consciousness is clarified in a way that escapes the quotes of scripture." (RP 22. p.16)

Nonetheless they decide that a bit of scripture will not go amiss. They quote from the Communist Manifesto, the point at which Marx and Engels write of a section of the nobility going over to the side of the bourgeoisie during the bourgeois revolutions and further, that a:

> "portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole"

The CWO make much of this. This they say "in a nutshell is the materialist conception of class consciousness" (RP 22. p. 17) The CWO are not simply repeating the much quoted notion of Marx that social being determines consciousness, they go further than this. Marx, they would have us believe, was defending the idea that the spontaneity of the working class was not enough to generate a revolutionary class consciousness; it would merely lead to "class identity" which was manifest in the proletariat's recognition that it was a "class-in-itself". Revolutionary consciousness is more than this, it is the recognition of the proletariat as a"class-for-itself". Marx, the CWO claim, was defending not only this but also the idea that the recognition of a "classfor-itself" could only be "formulated outside of the class struggle" (RP 21. p.17) We assume that the CWO mean here the theoretical work carried out by disaffected "bourgeois ideologists". For the CWO no problem exists regarding the position held by Marx on the nature of class consciousness and the question of the role of the party. By 1848 Marx was already aware that spontaneous struggle could not be revolutionary, that not only was there a need for a communist party but that this party had to assume (and only it could do this) the role of bearer of class consciousness. By 1848, the CWO would have us believe, Marx had the final substantive theory of class consciousness lacking only certain "precisions"; this despite the fact that the proletariat was in the "process of formation" and that the question of power had never been "concretely posed". Genius indeed.

We are not calling into question the "softer" claim that by 1848 Marx had delineated broad parameters for the study of and intervention in the class struggle. But we do reject the attempt by the CWO to present Marx's theory of class consciousness in an unproblematic, and ultimately unhistorical manner.

As is well known the Hegelian dialectic of transcendental idealism was formally adopted by Marx and set within a materialist framework. Similarly,he critically evaluated political economy, especially in the works of Smith and Ricardo, and historicised its categories. Very early on Marx recognised that the proletariat was the agent of revolutionary change and that through its material position in society and its subjectivity as a revolutionary class, humanity could be emancipated. In 1844 Marx had set this idea within an Hegelian framework:

> "By heralding the dissolution of the hereto existing world order the proletariat merely proclaims the secret of its own existence, for it is the actual dissolution of that world order. By demanding the negation of private property the proletariat merely raise to the rank of a principle of society what society has raised to the rank of its principle, what is already incorporated in it as the negative result of society without its own participation." (from "Towards the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.")

In his jottings known as the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, also 1844, Marx makes the same point:

> "the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation - and it contains this because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of worker to production, and all relations of servitude are but modifications and consequences of this relation." (p.78).

"In a nutshell" Marx argued that the proletariat's relationship to the means of production, existing as capital and private property, was such that in the struggle against the imperatives of property it would at one and the same moment realise not only its own particular class needs but also the universal historical need of human liberation. Whilst being theoretically-philosphically rooted this argument was empirically verifiable. For Marx the emancipatory nature of the working class was evident in the class struggles of the period: trade unionism, Chartists etc. The way in which the working class acted indicated, when mediated through historical materialism, its revolutionary potential. This was a general theory of human liberation which specified the particular/universal class charged with the task of freeing mankind from

the bondage of property and capital. The only extent to which these early works indicate the relationship of the party to the class is where Marx writes of the role of "philosophy". This does not express a final communist orientation in that Marx was still working with a model of realisation which had not stepped beyond the language and categories of Hegelianism in that, although Marx recognised the material rootedness of "philosophy" he was ambiguous on whether this was a separate collective entity. In Hegelianism philosophy is transcendental; in Marx it appears at times as the general historic goal of the class. When the CWO quote Marx to the effect that "Philosophy cannot realise itself without transcending the proletariat, the proletariat cannot transcend itself without realising philosophy." (in RP 21,p.16) they use this to substantiate the claim that "the experience of the class was not a sufficient condition for its emancipation, and that it was necessary for consciousness ("philosophy") to penetrate the class." For the CWO this means consciousness coming from the outside. But this is to go far beyond both the content and intent of Marx.

In the 1844 Manuscripts and in the Critique Marx was in the process of breaking from the idealistic structure of Hegel's philosophy. In neither work does he show that "philosophy" is the property of only a limited number of "philosophers". And similarly, Marx does not detail the final limits placed on proletarian activity in its struggle to realise the goal of universal liberation.

And again when the CWO try to equate "class identity" (RP21,p.16) with "philosophy" they either fail to realise or deliberately obscure the fact that philosophy in the early works is, in part, transcendant of class society and has teleological overtones.

With the composition of the German Ideology in 1845-46 the historical applications of Marx's and Engel's materialism becomes clearer. In this work the two men examined, among other things, the formation of ideology and the way in which it penetrated the working class. They observed that "generally speaking the ideas of those who lack the means of material production are subject" to the ideology of the ruling class. Obviously, if Marx and Engels had maintained that the ideas of the ruling class absolutely dominated subsiduary classes then they would have been faced with the dilemma of how revolution was possible, if revolution was conceived of in terms of a conscious repudiation of capital and the posing of an alternative reality. Marx's and Engel's materialism gave a mechanism for breaking away from bourgeois ideology, namely productive life:

> "The contradiction between individuality of each separate proletarian and labour, the condition of life forced upon him, becomes evident to him himself, for he is sacrificed from youth upwards, and, within his own class, has no chance of arriving at the conditions which would place him in the other class....they find themselves directly opposed to the form in which, hitherto, the *individuals of which society consists*, have given themselves collective expression, that is, the State."
> (German Ideology. 1.d.)

And, summing up, they wrote that from the proletariat there,

> "emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution the communist consciousness, which may, of course, arise among other classes too through the contemplations of this class."

This is not an Italian Partyist notion, that is in the sense of the very particular theory enunciated by Lenin and later developed by Bordiga and his followers. Through contradictions and conflict "communist consciousness" emanates from within the proletariat. Further, although Marx and Engels indicate that this consciousness "may arise among other classes" this does not imply and it certainly does not claim that members of "these other classes" will assume the role of leaders of the class and that they will bring communist consciousness to the working class. Indeed Marx and Engels claim that it is in the revolution that communist consciousness is generated, in other words it is not contemplative emplacement (unlike the situation for members of other classes who go over to the side of revolution) which leads to realisation of a "class-for-itself" rather, it is practical activity Through practice and self-action consciousness develops which in turn guides practice and action:

> "for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."
> (German Ideology 1.d)

It might appear that we are playing the "scriptural" game, quoting Marx to legitimize our views on class consciousness. This is not our intention. Marx was not a victorian Gorter but he was a communist whose appreciation of the possibilities of class struggle was historically derived and open to change as the struggle changed. The only extent to which our use of Marx legitimises our view on class consciousness is that we use him as evidence of the difficulty of arriving at a position on the class and party. The CWO, on the other hand, have used Marx in a blinkered and self-serving fashion which leads to an interpretation which is simply wrong.

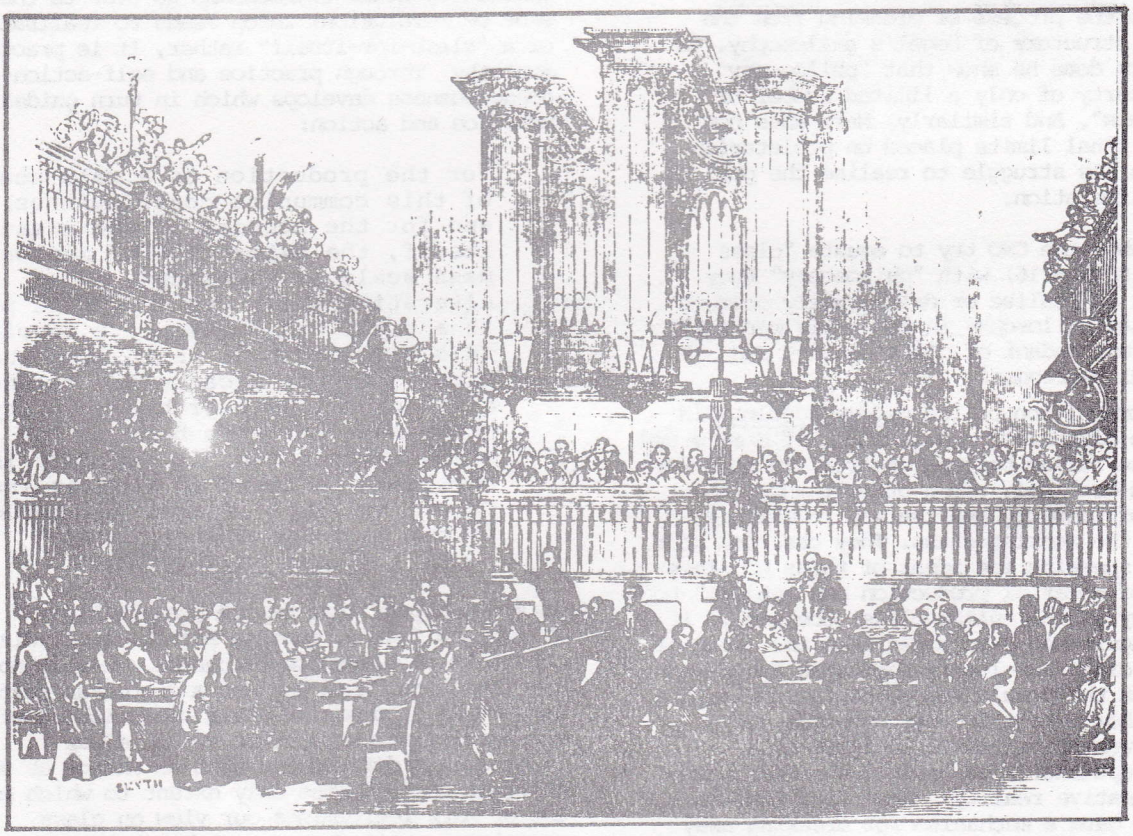
The CWO claim that a dialectical understanding of Marx's theory of class consciousness requires contextualiising but despite this they make no serious attempt to do this. For example, when they discuss the possibility of the mass of the working class achieving communist consciousness through *political organisations which it has* directly formed as opposed to a party formed by "bourgeois ideologists", they ignore Marx's remarks on the movements of the class in the

1840s. In his attack on Proudhon he wrote that:

> "The organisation of strikes, combinations, trade unions, march simultaneously with the political struggles of the workers, who now constitute a great political party under the name of Chartists...the combinations, at first isolated, have formed in groups, and, in face of constantly united capital, the maintenance of the association becomes more important and necessary for them than the maintenance of wages...In this struggle - a veritable civil war - are united and developed all the elements necessary for a future battle. Once arrived at that point, association takes a political character...In the struggle of which we have only noted some phases, this mass unites, it is constituted as a class for itself. The interests which it defends are the interests of its class. " (Poverty of Philosophy, ll.v)

political organisations of the proletariat who had formed themselves into small political fractions. These fractions are, says Marx, differentiated from the class but not separate. Differentiation is founded upon the relative theoretical-historical clarity which they possess: "they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole" (Manifesto ll) In contrast the proletariat does not continuously have this communist consciousness. Given this situation, Marx says, communists are charged with the task of instilling "into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat." (Manifesto lV) As for the proletariat, it struggles to achieve a revolutionary class position but this is hampered in emerging by the material relations within capitalist society:

> "This organisation of the proletariat into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset by the competition between workers themselves." (Manifesto l)



"Association takes a political character...the Chartists."

In the context of the period no straightforward reading of this text is possible. Irrespective of Marx's committment to political organisation and his work in political fractions it remains both unclear and uncertain what exactly his position on how the question of mass revolutionary organisation develops and what debt this might owe to smaller pre-existing political movements.

Moving on to the Manifesto. within which the CWO find the unambigious Italian Marx, does this in any way validate the extravagant claims they put forward? Marx examines the position of "communists", those distinct from the mass

Marx does, however, go on to state that the organised proletariat (as distinct from communists) "ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier." (Manifesto.l)

How far this progressivist view of mass organisation is simply rhetoric is open to question. Perhaps, significantly, the section at which Marx writes of "bourgeois ideologists" going over to the working class he emphasises that this is at the moment of revolution:

> "at times when the class struggle reaches the decisive hour ...a small section of the ruling class

> casts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands."
> (Manifesto, 1)

This leaves open both theoretically and empirically the problem of class consciousness and the party. Marx's understanding of how far the proletariat might push forward and the forms this push might take was circumscribed by his historical experience of class action. His philosophical parameters could be used to assimilate the events and process of social action but they could not a-priori set out the material-conscious content of future proletarian struggle. Marx worked with the limitations of a proletariat being historically formed, a formation which carried with it older modes of struggle and understanding drawn from both the radical petit-bourgeoisie and the revolutionary bourgeoisie. Undoubtedly the class was making great strides in mapping out its own method of struggle - trade unions etc. - but the process of formation marked both the class en-masse and its political fractions.

The events of 1848 provided further evidence of the nature of proletarian action, but by and large, this experience was of the kind which hammered home the necessity of the working class defending independent terrain and the need for it not to be duped by the democratic bourgeoisie. For Marx, 1848 illustrated the importance of and the need for the class to put forward its own demands in opposition to those of the bourgeoisie and by doing so rally other social classes to its banner. But even in his detailed examinations of the events of 1848 (The Class Struggle in France) it remains unclear as to what the final limits on class action might be. Marx argued that the political clubs of the proletariat should formulate the correct political programme and push for its adoption; and further that the actions of the politically organised workers had been a tremendous lesson to the working class as a whole:

> "The Luxemburg Commission, this creation of the Paris workers, must be given the credit of having disclosed from a European wide tribune, the secret of the revolution of the nineteenth century: the emancipation of the proletariat."
> (Class Struggle, 1)

He also noted however, that in at least one sense the proletariat could be divided by the systematic machinations of the bourgeoisie, in the formation of the "Mobile Guards", drawn from the "lumpenproletariat". This tactic of the bourgeoisie was effective in that the working class regarded this Guard as proletarian. Similarly Marx noted that the formation of "ateliers" (workshops) was yet another tactical ploy aimed at emasculating the working class and one which had some success. This covert form of counterrevolution finally broke into the open in June when the class rose up against bourgeois "order". This rising Marx described thus:

> "It is well known how the workers, with unexampled bravery and ingenuity, without leaders, without a common plan, without means, and, for the most part, lacking weapons held in check for five days the army, the Mobile Guard." (Class Struggle, 1)

What we might call spontaneous, elemental struggle. Clearly such bravery was not (and is not) sufficient for the working class to come to power. A political programme of action was needed which would not only physically confront the forces of the bourgeoisie but also oppose it with class alternatives. Marx's work within the Communist League, his writings on the struggles of 1848, point to the importance of this but yet again in the midst of these struggles no definitive solution is given, either in class actions or in Marx's writings, to the problem of class and party.

Marx's letter to Bolte in November 1871, in the aftermath of the Paris Commune, gives some insight into the ambiguities present in the communist milieu of the Nineteenth Century:

> "The political movement of the working class has as its ultimate object, of course the conquest of political power for this class, and this naturally requires a previous political organisation of the working class developed up to a certain point and arising precisely from its economic struggles.
>
> On the other hand, however, every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and tries to coerce them by pressure from without is a political movement...out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say a movement of the class, with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general socially coercive force. While these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisations, they are in turn equally a means of developing this organisation.
> (our emphasis)

Spontaneists could easily use this letter to justify their position. But in the light of Marx's lifelong attachment to political work, his association with the International and the general body of writings this would obviously be wrenching Marx from context. However the way in which Marx posed the problem in 1871 is indicative of the deep-seated uncertainties of the period.

ATTAQUE DE LA BARRICADE PLACE MAUBERT

When the CWO call upon the works of Marx to legitimize their positions they do so in a way which denies process in history. They do not recognise that the struggle of the working class adds immeasurably to the way in which revolutionaries recognise the existing limits on class consciousness. This is not simply a question of "precision". The actions of the proletariat mature historically and in this maturation it alters the perceptions of both revolutionaries and the class. Writing of Lenin's theory of class consciousness the CWO say:

> "The party is not therefore separate from the class but an element in a dialectical process towards communist consciousness which is directly derived from material reality."
> (RP 21,p.18)

This gloss, the CWO might argue, does allow for historical process. But this would be to miss the point. It is not simply that communists reflect upon the class struggle using "scientific method" and arrive at a more "precise" class consciousness which can be taken back to the class. Yes, philosphical reflection happens, but so also do alterations in the historic context of actions and consciousness of the working class. As the class struggle matures new forms are thrown us which redraw the lines not only at the large level, between proletariat and bourgeoisie but also between the proletariat and communists.

Marx did not live to see the total collapse of Social Democracy as a movement of the working class; he did not live to see the way in which imperialism and the workers' movement coalesced to form a solid bloc opposed to the working class; nor did he live to see the rise of soviets and factory organisations which marked a definitive leap by the working class as it created organs appropriate to its revolutionary class nature and which radically altered the ground within which discussions about the party grew. The way in which the CWO ignores and sidesteps the historical problems inherent in marxism in general and Marx's writings in particular is a manifestation of their static methodology. This treats history and political fractions of the working class as so much ammunition in the battle to destroy those in the proletarian camp with whom they disagree. In setting about their task the CWO ignore the specificity of political fractions. All that they are capable of seeing in history are either proto-Italians or those who assumed the working class to be a class capable of self-emancipation independent of political fractions.

Class Consciousness.

The way in which the CWO have lied about the anarcho-syndicalist content of the German Left and the misappropriation of Marx is not simply of academic interest. We do not criticise the CWO for the sake of abstract debate. The mistakes of the CWO are important because they effect the way in which they perceive the class struggle today. As a result they materially affect their activity which in the end can only be detrimental to the development of class struggle. The CWO in their struggle to identify absolute certainties and to pinpoint the central factor in revolutionary consciousness have dulled their sensitivity to the historical process in general and the struggle of the proletariat in particular.

The way in which the CWO now cling to the "strong party" theory of class consciousness means that they have built a dogmatism which, if taken to a logical conclusion, must deny the revolutionary nature of the proletariat. Central to the party positions of the CWO are the theoretical propositions elaborated by Lenin in 'What Is To Be Done?' We reject these. However, it is important to say that we recognise this work of Lenin as an important contribution to the revolutionary movement. We do not isolate his statements from the context within which they were made namely, the emergence of Bernsteinism and Opportunism within Social Democracy. Lenin's critique of "economism" was a rejection of these counterrevolutionary tendencies and a reassertion of the validity of Marxism. Opportunism, which took a number of guises, rejected the central premises of Marxism: that capitalism was a crisis ridden society, that class struggle and revolutions were essential elements of communist theory. In the stead of these positions, opportunism looked to natural evolution and the gradual transformation of the capitalist economy into a socialist one. 'What Is To Be Done' blasts such notions. Lenin's attempt to understand and elucidate the role of the party in the revolutionary process was part of his complete rejection of opportunism. One aspect of opportunism focussed upon the role of the class in its daily trade union struggle believing that the economic struggle of the class, in the context of the institutionalisation of capital, would most surely lead to socialism. The simple accretion of victories would, by itself, transform capital. Lenin's attempt to understand the limits of working class "spontaneity" was an attack upon these ideas. Lenin was wrong in his conclusions but right in his class instincts. Just as the outbreak of World War One demanded that revolutionaries stand against it and for class struggle so the emergence of opportunism also demanded that revolutionaries stand up and be counted.

Lenin's theory of the party is anathema to all those who oppose revolutionary organisation. The reason being that he raises the role of the party to that of the primary subjective element in the class struggle and the transformation to communism. The working class as a mass is assigned a role but it is very much a subsiduary one when it comes to the problem of willing and guiding socialist ends. In its most essential form Lenin states his theory thus:

> "The history of all countries shows that the working class exclusively of its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness ie. it may itself realise the necessity for combining in unions, for fighting against the employers and for striving to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation etc. The theory of socialism, however grew out of the philosophical, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals ....Marx and Engels belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. Similarly

in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social Democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the Labour movement."
(Selected Works vol.2,p.53.)

As is well known Lenin's theory owes much to Kautsky whom he quotes approvingly to the effect that:

"Many of our revisionist critics believe that Marx asserted that economic development and the class struggle create not only the conditions for socialist production but also, and directly, the consciousness of its necessity.... socialist consciousness is represented as a necessary and direct result of proletarian struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, socialism, as a theory, has its roots in modern economic relationships just as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and just as the latter emerges from the struggle against the capitalist created poverty and misery of the masses. But socialism and class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can only arise on the basis of a profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern technology and the proletariat can create neither the one or the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicles of science are not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia; it was in the minds of some members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who in their turn, introduced it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without, and not something that arose within it spontaneously."
(Selected Works. vol.2,pp.61-62)

This statement by Kautsky, Lenin described as being "profoundly true and important". For Lenin, if left to itself, the spontaneous class struggle could only finish in bourgeois ideology. He said:

"the spontaneous development of the labour movement leads to it becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology.. ..the task of Social Democracy is to combat spontaneity."
(Selected Works. vol.2,p.62.)

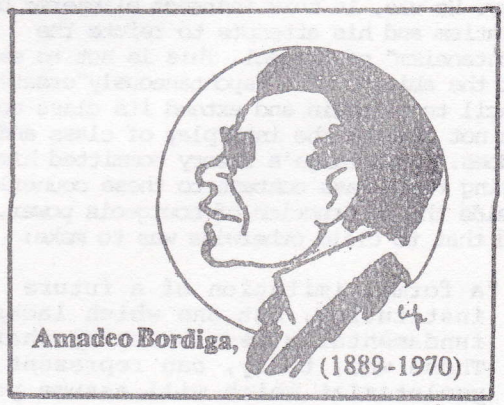
In 1921, in the text Party and Class. Amadeo Bordiga defended the basic Kautsky-Lenin position on class consciousness. Like them he believed that the working class was incapable of directly achieving class consciousness. Indeed, Bordiga held to the notion that the class could not even achieve a unity of itself. Unity,

Kautsky

(an obvious necessity for revolutionary action) had to be injected from the outside by communist minorities.

"Only an advanced minority can clearly see how the collective struggle can overturn the whole social order, which is the final goal of the whole class. These groups, these minorities, are precisely the party. When the development of this party has reached a positive stage - and to be sure it can never develop without internal conflict and criticism - then can we speak of an active class. Although the party is composed of a minority of the class, it alone can give the movement of the class its unity, just because it regroups each element which are spread out over different places and occupations and can perceive and represent the class as such."

Bordiga does not claim that only a bourgeois intellegentsia can form the core of the revolutionary party but he is in direct continuity with the Lenin of What is to be Done insofar as he denies that the class is of itself capable of achieving class consciousness. He says that the class is only "active" when the party exists. This is to claim that all actions of the proletariat outwith those of the revolutionary



Amadeo Bordiga, (1889-1970)

faction cannot be said to be genuinely revolutionary or even in any meaningful sense proletarian. It should be remembered that this was written not only in the aftermath of the revolutionary surge in Russia but during the period when workers' councils were emerging in Italy. Bordida's theory, if held fast to, entails rejecting these as being in any substantive way, proletarian. They cannot be accepted as the expression of an "active class" because they were not the product of the revolutionary party. Irrespective of the fact that Bordiga sees the party as only a "faction of the class" it is clear that he envisages a separation between the party and the spontaneous class which is equivalent to that theorised by Lenin. The spontaneous class, the class of the workers' councils, is like an inchoate cadaver awaiting the revolutionary implant. A bit like Frankenstein's monster, the working class does come to life but owes its life entirely to its creator, the party:

> "If you grasp that in this great mass the individuals have no consciousness and no class will, but only live for their own egoism, or for the categories of village or nation, then you grasp that the united action of the class as a historical movement has the need of an organism which it - literally - incorporates. Then it can be grasped that the party is in reality the living kernel without which the remaining mass has no more cause than to be considered a bundle of cooperating workers."

In contrast to this "bundle" stands the party:

> "As long as political power remains in the hands of the capitalist class a representation of the genuine revolutionary terests of the proletariat can be achieved on the political terrain, in a class party which gathers the personal allegiances of those who, by committing themselves to the revolutionary cause, have transcended egoist interest, craft or trade interest, in the sense that the party will admit deserters from the bourgeois class who support the communist programme." (Il Soviet. Jan/Feb 1920, quoted in New Edinburgh Review."Gramsci 11".p.86)

In the midst of these debates with Gramsci's factory councilism Bordiga was led to the conclusion that (in contradiction with empirical reality) councils could only be created by the party. He was, in this instance blinkered by his dogmatism and his attempts to refute the "spontaneism" of Gramsci. This is not to say that the ability of a "spontaneously"created council to maintain and extend its class content does not require the interplay of class and party, it does. But Bordiga's theory committed him to denying real class content to these councils outside the destruction of bourgeois power. He said that to claim otherwise was to make:

> "a formal imitation of a future institution, but one which lacks its fundamentally revolutionary character. Those who, today, can represent the proletariat which will assume power tomorrow, are the workers who are fully conscious of this historical perspective, that is to say, workers inscribed in the communist party. The proletariat which struggles against bourgeois power is represented by its class party, even if this is only an audacious minority. The soviets of tomorrow must have their genesis in the local sections of the communist party." (in N.E.R., p.85)

Since the foundation of Bordiga's views the tradition of the strong party theory of class consciousness has been taken up and developed by groups born directly from the Italian tradition, most notably by the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Communista). One significant modification is that Battaglia reject what they call the "metaphysical entity" of the Bordigist party. We take it that they mean by this the notion that the party exists as a found and closed programme which can be called forth at any appropriate moment in history. This general approach (which we think is at times echoed in the politics of the CWO) has become known as the invariant programme. In opposition to this, Battaglia argue that the party, if it is to be a genuinely revolutionary force, must remain active and must be able to assimilate the lessons of the class struggle and in doing so develop the revolutionary programme. For Battaglia the programme was not found once and for all in the mid 19th Century. Nonetheless, their theoretical presuppositions tie them to those of Bordiga and Lenin before him.

Battaglia reject the claim that "the proletariat can spontaneously come to consciousness" (Texts and proceedings of the International Conference April-May 1977.p.49) and hold that "Class consciousness and its science live in the party" (Texts p.23). and:

> "For us, as long as capitalist relations of production exist, the working class cannot arrive at a revolutionary consciousness without the intervention of the party." (Texts.p.49)

The party, to use Battaglia's term, "implants" consciousness in the class. This means, as Battaglia correctly pointed out to the ICC, that it is not the "class and the party which can be identified" rather, "it is class consciousness and the party which can be identified". (Texts p.63) Like Bordiga and Lenin before them Battaglia reject the idea that the working class will spontaneously achieve a revolutionary consciousness. This limitation they correctly situate within the material structure of capitalism. Only the party can, within capitalist relations, grasp the historic goal of the proletariat and formulate a programme around it. This is communist consciousness and this is taken by the party and given to the working class. Although it differs in specifics (the question of the bourgeois intelligentsia) from the theory of What is to be Done? it is essentially the same doctrine promulgated by Lenin.

In Lenin's day the mass labour movement had direct connections with revolutionaries. Even in the darkest days of reaction after 1905 the Bolsheviks had some contact with the proletariat

in Russia and the European movement. Thus we can understand that, although a theoretical separation of consciousness existed for Lenin it was not difficult for him to see this separation being, in a certain sense, transcended in the working of revolutionaries inside the labour movement. Decadence and the profound defeat of the working class has changed all this. Revolutionaries no longer work, in a political sense, with and within reformist organisations. On the other hand the inability of the working class to find and keep a revolutionary consciousness has meant that communist minorities are not only theoretically separate from the class but also organisationally. A vast gulf separates the working class from its political expressions. As Battaglia are aware it is no good the revolutionary "class consciousness" known as the party existing if it cannot influence the working class. This particular separation between class and party they resolve by the call for factory groups to be built. This has provoked a considerable debate within the revolutionary movement, for the moment all we are concerned with here is the fact that this ad hoc solution is made necessary by Battaglia's party theory in the context of decadence and defeat.

For Battaglia the factory group is not an organ which develops of its own accord within the proletariat. It is the organisational "implant" of the party which takes consciousness to the working class. The fact that they posit class consciousness being born outside of the class and crystallized in the party allows Battaglia to claim that:

> "It is a definitively acquired revolutionary principle that there must exist intermediary organs between party and class for the entire period before and after the revol tionary offensive."

(2nd Conference of Gro of the Communist Left. Texts. Vol.1, p.29)

Factory groups are these "intermediary organs" and they "transmit to the class the general political principles of the party". (2nd Conf. p.29) There is no dialectical relationship between the class as an active and creative force and these factory groups. The relationship is like linear cause and effect. Battaglia describes these groups as "transmission belts" which as we all know are mechanical tools for moving objects from A to B. The party of Battaglia quite coherently realises that it must move consciousness from itself to the proletariat. The simple mechanical institution of factory groups resolves this problem.

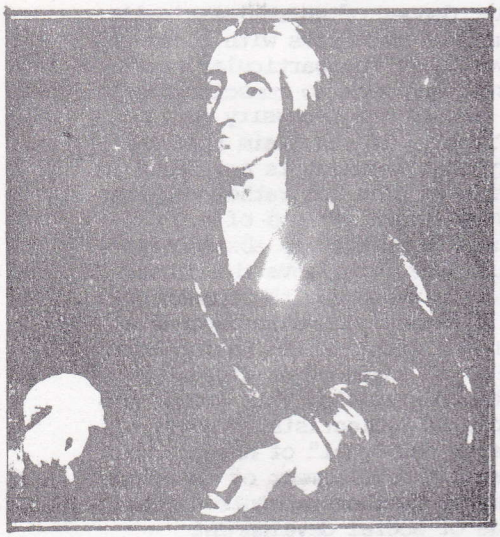
We reject, not the problems pinpointed by Lenin et alia. But the way in which they formulate answers to them. (of course we are not claiming that Lenin's positions rigorously held fast to What is to be Done?, this would be wrong; we are simply rejecting a particular set of theoretical propositions which have found a number of expressions in the past eighty years.)

Central to our critique of Lenin's position, and that put forward by the German and Dutch Lefts, is the question of revolutionary subjectivity and the role of the working class in the transformation to communism. We would argue that if the separatist position is strictly and logically held to, this negates the idea of a revolutionary working class and the historical-class necessity of socialism. For the hard party Lenin revolutionary class consciousness is a scientific consciousness which is a product of the bourgeois intelligentsia. In this scenario communist consciousness stands as a privileged form of contemplative knowledge open only to those who have the requisite time available for study and committment and intellectual training. This conception of proletarian revolutionary consciousness is a mirror image of the standard model of bourgeois natural science wherein the natural scientist, using the correct theoretical model, succeeds in discerning the laws of the natural world. The way in which Kautsky et alia. wished to validate the science of communism by employing a structure which was analagous to that claimed by bourgeois natural science is an indication of the profound impact the latter had in the 19th Century; this appeared in the revolutionary movement as various types of positivism.

The strong scientistic approach has particular inherent dangers not to mention the particular danger of unproblematically equating "natural" processes with those of the social world. At the particular level the scientistic approach to consciousness negates the idea of the necessity of socialism. Firstly, if the claim that the revolutionary consciousness is not found in the proletariat as such but rather resides in the minds and organisations of a "bourgeois intelligentsia" is absolutely held to, where does this leave the class necessity of revolution and the communist goal? In this theory communism becomes a wholly contingent affair which is dependent upon the whims and angst of an alienated section of the bourgeoisie. This group, who assume the role of "scientists of revolution", perceive the "goal" of history to be the progressive development of the means of production. It further recognises that the next stage of social development requires that the working class be freed from the domination of of capital. But the class, according to this theory, is not of itself revolutionary but only contestationist. This is obviously the basis upon which the revolutionary intelligentsia connect with the working class. However, at the end of the day, because socialist consciousness, as opposed to trade union consciousness, is not at all found in the proletariat, this means that socialism depends not upon the class-historical presence of the class but the scientific training of of a bourgeois intelligentsia. Even if it is argued that the revolutionary break grows from the material and moral, given the need for an alienated section of the bourgeoisie to be the consciousness of the revolution, contradictions of capital, this does not remove the difficulty. There is no necessary reason why this intelligentsia should move towards communist consciousness, it might just as easily end

up in mysticism. If the necessity of communism is to be located within the notion of class"self-emancipation" it is essential that class consciousness be in some way attached to the reality of proletarian action, not as a gift from some other class but endemic in its own actions. To call for this is not to argue that the class will spontaneously achieve communist consciousness but it is to say that we must recognise the political content of proletarian struggle which is greater than simply "trade union consciousness". In other words we must move away from the idea that communist consciousness is simply something "in the minds" of the bourgeois intelligentsia and towards the comprehension that it is to be found in the actions of the proletariat and it is subject to development and regression.

The very mechanics of the scientistic vision purveyed by "scientists of revolution" mitigates against any recognition of the class as an active and creative agent. One part of the scientistic vision so beloved of bourgeois science is the acting,conscious and willing scientist confronted by a non-subjective world. The scientists faces a pre-determined objective world which functions according to natural laws and



Locke

is without consciousness. The natural world cannot change itself as an act of will. In contrast, scientists,because of their privileged knowledge, are able to identify natural laws and, on the basis of this, make predictions about the future course of events; additionally they can intervene in the world and alter its course within the parameters of natural laws. In its most logical and rigorous form the Kautsky-Lenin vision become the equivalent of this: the revolutionary scientist is the conscious ingredient who evaluates how and when to manipulate the social-atoms. The proletariat has no more an active and creative role to play in change than does the newtonian idea of matter. God, in the newtonian world, gave meaning and purpose to the world: the party takes consciousness to the proletariat and guides it to "its" goal. The CWO give one expression of this view when they write that:

> "the historic role of the working class (was) to a certain extent independent and even contrary to its consciousness." (RP21.p.18)

We would understand and agree if all that the CWO proposed was that the objective organisation or social classes produces a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts and that the essential class meaning of actions is usually hidden from individual actors. But they are saying more than this. For them (it would seem) the role is not just hidden but "independent" and "contrary" to the understanding of the proletariat. In the context of the CWO's defence of What is to be Done? this is surely an attempt by them to identify with the hard party view. Significantly, Lenin in the light of the 1905 experience in Russia modified his views on on the consciousness of the class to claim that "the working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social Democratic." Certainly Lenin does note that:

> "more than ten years of work put in by Social Democracy has done a great deal to transform their spontaneity into class consciousness." ("Reorganisation of the Party" in Selected Works vol 3 p.459)

This is some way from the crude view of What is to be Done? and is at odds with the view of the CWO.

We take as our starting point for understanding class consciousness the general approach elaborated by Marx: the way in which he identified the material realities which separated the proletariat from the bourgeoisie and the way this entailed fundamental differences in their respective roles in revolutionary change. We take it that class society is so composed that mystification, most profoundly experienced as the fetishization of commodities, is a necessary part of class relationships. A consequence of this is that the bourgeoisie like all exploiting ruling classes, is incapable of completely penetrating the veil which obscures the realities of exploitative systems. At its most revolutionary the bourgeoisie succeeded in making a critique of redundant historical formations which was full of profound insights. The a-priorism of Descartes and the empiricism of Locke (much maligned by the CWO) were elements in the revolutionary consciousness of the bourgeoisie as was the later political economy of Smith and his contemporaries. In 1789 these and other intellectual strains provided the ideology for the assault on the Ancien Regime. The works of the philosophe et.al. did not cause the French Revolution but they helped provide the intellectual coherence necessary for such an assault upon the old state power. In a very real sense the ideology from this heady mix of rationalism and empiricism was the revolutionary consciousness of the bourgeoisie. This consciousness grew out of social-material

relations, but the ability of the bourgeoisie to instal itself as the dominant political class was tied to the extent to which it could articulate an ideology which identified its needs as those of society as a whole. The intellectual currents of the 18th Century were a "material force" in the revolutionary transformation. In this transformation it was not necessary for the bourgeoisie en-masse to achieve the clarity of its ideologists. The capitalist framework functions according to the "independent" law of value: therefore to a great extent the economic ordering of society could be left to "nature". At the political level large sections of the bourgeoisie could and did mobilise but this was transitional to the extent that once the old state power was overturned and a bourgeois state built, capital was freed and in a sense was automatically regulated. The political-material reality of the bourgeoisie did not require that it be a constantly active class with a high degree of clarity at a mass level. This could be left to a minority of the bourgeois class.

In the process of overturning political and intellectual restraints of dying historical formations, bourgeois ideology "naturalised" exploitation and class divisions; this was an essential part of the revolutionary thrust. Once this naturalisation had occurred the bourgeoisie had at its disposal a powerful weapon for maintaining its domination. The normal way of understanding reality was in terms of natural process and the constraints of "objective" logic. Although this ideology has powerful instrumental force it should not be thought that it was created simply to dupe other social classes. Rather its creation reflected the realities of the bourgeois world. It did seem that the world is governed by forces independant of the wills and actions of men, this explains why some of the most revolutionary intellectual contributions of the bourgeoisie employ the fetishized categories of the "invisible hand" and "reason". To a large extent it is not necessary nor is it possible, that the bourgeoisie go beyond these objective limits, all that is required is their acceptance. As Lukacs said: "the objective limits of production became the limits of class consciousness of the bourgeoisie."

The class historical situation of the proletariat differs profoundly from that of the bourgeoisie. Unlike the bourgeoisie the proletariat is not an exploiting class and as such it cannot revolutionise the material world within the constraints of exploitative relations. To free itself the working class must transcend-destroy the basis for its economic and political subjection, namely, the law of value in particular and class society in general. In the act of doing this, exploitative society is abolished. This theoretical proposition (which must be situated within the question of material level) has certain entailments which centre upon the nature of the proletarian revolutionary act. Centrally, it entails that in abolishing the law of value and building a non-exploitative social system the proletariat must rise above the "objective limits" of bourgeois production. This means that there must be a conscious recognition of the reality of the constraints which regulated the capitalist world. In other words, the so-called "natural laws" of economics must be rejected. This is imperative in the act of

"..only from the moment of revolution."

destruction of the bourgeois world as it implies a transcendance of bourgeois ideology. There must however be a second part to this process, the working class must also build a society which is regulated according to the conscious decisions of men, it must have a conception of its historic goal and must act accordingly.

Unlike the bourgeoisie which can leave its its revolution, to an extent, to happen according to "natural" processes, the proletariat's must be conscious as the communist mode of production cannot naturally evolve within capitalism. Unlike other social-economic revolutions which occurred according to the prior development of material relations of exploitation inimical to the existing and older form, that of the proletariat involves a profound rupture. The organisation of society according to the needs of the proletariat happens only from the moment of revolution. For us this is the starting point for understanding class consciousness.

It is from this general theoretical position that we evaluate the actions of the proletariat and the activity of revolutionaries.

But this is only a beginning for it leaves unanswered the question of how the proletariat achieves class consciousness. If, as we have said above, the communist revolution is to have a basis in the class organisation of society and to be a goal which is implicit and necessary according to the situation of the proletariat within capitalism then class consciousness must be seen as in some way endemic to the proletariat's actions and thought. Without this, revolution becomes a question of chance and intellectual-moral angst.

"..a basis..in the actions of the proletariat."

History has demonstrated that the working class as a result of its communal nature in the productive process, bands together to fight against the exploutation of capital. The proletariat's "universality" depends upon its common conditions of exploitation. However, this is the general condition of the working class in the concrete world and this generality takes particular forms which fragment the tendency for the proletariat to be a class united by its common condition. The material reality of capitalism divides workers along sexual, craft, ethnic and national lines. This results in the working class being divided by the competitive categories of the bourgeois world. Workers who occupy and live within the competitive space within capitalism perceive their needs and ends through these categories: this makes them prey to the ideology of their mortal enemy, the bourgeoisie. Thus the structural relations of capital undermine the ability of the working class to unify itself around class goals.

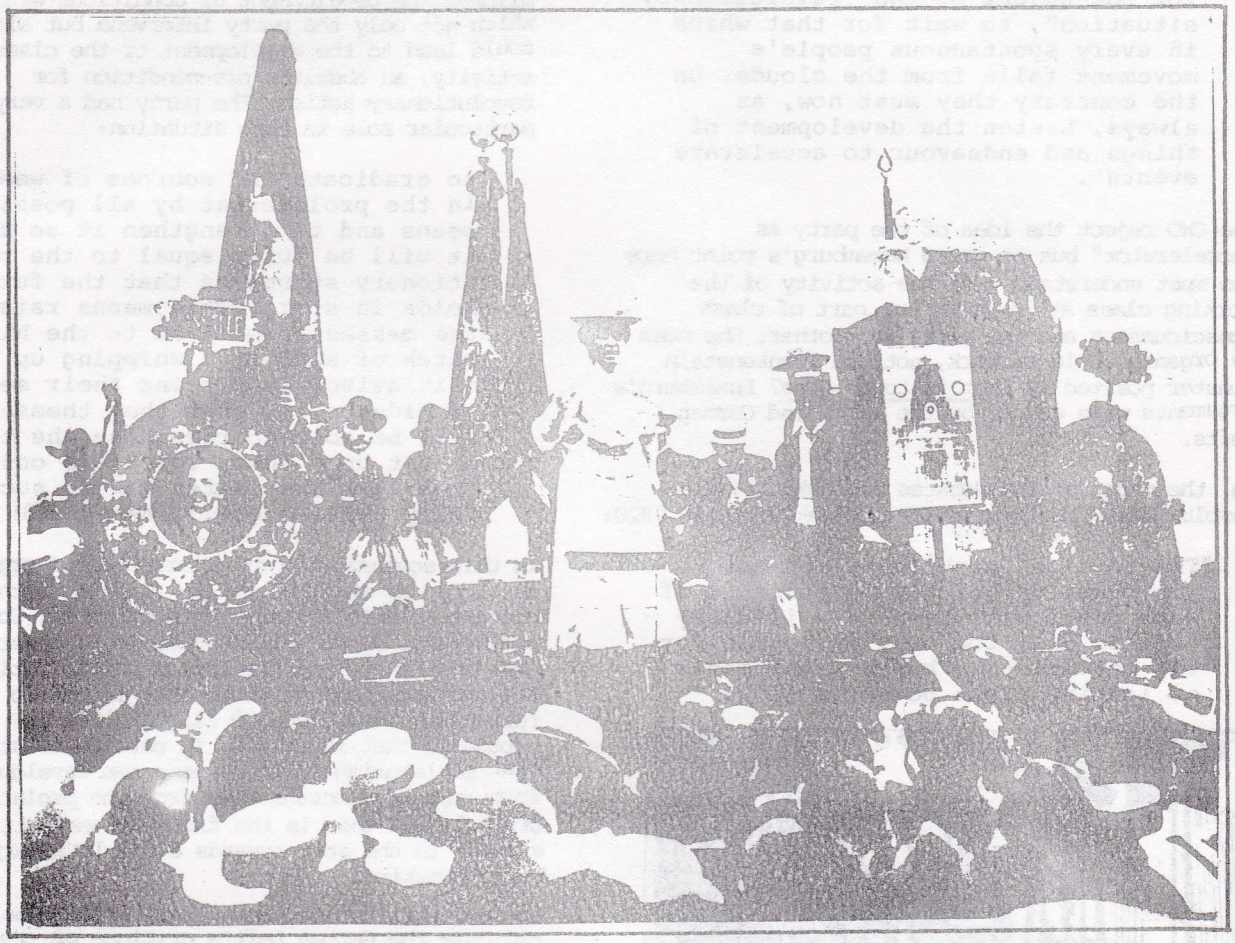
On the other hand history has also demonstrated that over time revolutionary groups have emerged which elaborated and defended the programme of the proletariat. At times these have had their sociological origins among the bourgeoisie and at other times they emerge from the working class. Why these groups have emerged is explained, in part, as Lenin says, by the reflective action of bourgeois intellectuals. The works of Smith,Hegel etc. are part of the foundations of Marxism. Marx's philosophy could not be spun from nothing, it required the prior work of bourgeois thinkers. But it could not simply be spun from these thinkers, it also had to have a basis in empirical reality, in the actions of the proletariat. What revolutionary groups have in common are their struggles to understand the nature of the class struggle and to intervene in it with the intention of helping destroy capitalism. They take as their subject the proletariat. They are able to keep to the forefront the historical goal of communism and are less likely to fall prey to the competitive divisions which so frequently tear the working class apart.

The historical problem of class consciousness centres upon questions of how the class will transcend the divisions of capital and how will the revolutionary group relate to this process. The work of the German Left centrally confronted this problem and refused to accept the easy answers of What is to be Done? and Bordiga. It worked from the assumptions that proletarian revolution required the active and creative participation of the proletariat. No

organisation could usurp this role as this would undermine the revolutionary process.

The German Left's disavowal of Lenin's early views on the party stretches back to Rosa Luxemburg who, in "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" emphasized the necessity of the revolutionary subjectivity of the working class. In this article Luxemburg rejected what she called the Blanquism-Jacobinism of Lenin, ie. the situation where a minority takes upon itself the tasks of the class as a whole. She argued that although

prior to 1905, for example in the work of 1904 when she berated Lenin for his "nightwatchman spirit" and for him wanting to "control" the party which she believed would stifle the activity and hence the consciousness of the working class. In opposition to Lenin she argued that the "most important and most fruitful tactical turning points" perceived and made by Social Democracy were not a product of the intellectual power of the tightly centralised party, rather they were "in each case the spontaneous product of the unfettered movement itself." Luxemburg was not



Rosa Luxemburg

centralisation was basic to Social Democracy it "cannot be based upon blind obediance". In other words the revolutionary consciousness did not reside in a minority of individuals, rather it was part of a larger organic whole. Essential to this position was her belief that there was no "absolute partition" between the levels of class consciousness. Luxemburg's critique of Lenin was a product of her theoretical appraisal of the nature of the proletariat as a class. The CWO are simply being slanderous when they say that she was "unable to go beyond empiricism to a scientific outlook" (RP 21.p.19) As proof of this they point to her positions on the 1905 Russian Revolution where she defended the idea of a creative and revolutionary working class. The logic of the CWO's claim is: Luxemburg saw the Mass Strike of 1905, recognised that it went beyond trade unionism and applauded it; thus from one empirical event she drew the conclusion that the spontaneous working class could attain class consciousness. Unhappily for the CWO Luxemburg had formulated this general position

an empiricist as the CWO claim; on the contrary she had a belief which was grounded in theoretical propositions on the nature of the working class which could only be held if one employed a philosophy which looked beneath the phenomena of capital. The events of 1905 were used to confirm a theoretical position. Activity was the forcing ground for the emergence of class consciousness. Unlike Lenin she refused to make a hard separation between economic and political struggle. For her 1905 exemplified how there is only:

> "one class struggle, which aims at one and the same time at the limitations of capitalist exploitation within bourgeois society, and at the abolition of exploitation altogether with bourgeois society itself."
> (The Mass Strike)

The task of Social Democracy in this situation was not the "technical preparation and direction of mass strikes, but, first and foremost, in the

political leadership of the whole movement." Luxemburg had both a theoretical understanding of the need for the class en-masse to reach class consciousness and a faith in its ability to do just this. But she also held that direct political intervention was part of the process:

> "The Social Democrats are the most enlightened, most class conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They cannot and dare not wait, in a fatalist fashion, with folded arms for the advent of the "revolutionary situation", to wait for that which in every spontaneous people's movement falls from the clouds. On the contrary they must now, as always, hasten the development of things and endeavour to accelerate events".

The CWO reject the idea of the party as "accelerator" but to grasp Luxemburg's point here one must understand that the activity of the working class at large is one part of class consciousness and the party is another. She sees an organic whole at work, not the Frankenstein monster posited by What is to be Done? Luxemburg's arguments were echoed by the Dutch and German Lefts.

In the midst of the debates over whither the revolutionary proletariat, Pannekoek wrote in 1920:

> "The tactical problem is not how to win power as quickly as possible if such power will be merely illusory - this is only too easy as option for the communists - but how the basis of lasting class power is to be developed in the proletariat. No "resolute minority" can resolve the problems which cannot be resolved by the action of the class as a whole."
> (in Smart ed. p.107)

Like Luxemburg before him Pannekoek believed that revolutionary consciousness was not the property of a minority of revolutionaries but was to be found in the totality of class and party. The class' activity, which at times was more that the perceptions of workers involved, allowed the development of conditions within which not only the party intervene but also could lead to the development of the class' self-activity, an absolute pre-condition for revolutionary action. The party had a very particular role in this situation:

> "to eradicate the sources of weakness in the proletariat by all possible means and to strengthen it so that it will be fully equal to the revolutionary struggles that the future holds in store. This means raising the masses themselves to the highest pitch of activity, whipping up their initiative, increasing their self-confidence, so that they themselves will be able to recognise the tasks thrust upon them, for it is only thus that the latter can be successfully carried out." (Smart p.108)

In this scenario the structure-form of organs developed by the proletariat is part of the content of revolutionary consciousness. Councils and Soviets by definition must be so constituted that they encourage the active participation of the working class in them. This is not to fetishize "form" (see RP 21,p.21) but to recognise that it is only in particular structures that proletarian consciousness can develop. The form emerges spontaneously from the proletariat's struggle and this is the first and essential element in the step towards a revolutionary transformation.

The CWO fail to understand this. For example they ridicule the German Left's critique of trade unionism as "structuralist" (RP 22.p.30) The CWO are generally guilty of opaque and imprecise formulations, in this instance we assume they are criticising the KAPD for its critique, which amongst other things, looks at trade unions as a combination of "leaders and led". In other words that the way trade unions were constituted as opposed to their "political programme" defined them as non-proletarian. Pannekoek wrote that:

> "trade unions....democratic forms notwithstanding, the will of members is unable to prevail against the bureaucracy; every revolt breaks on the carefully constructed apparatus of orders of business and statutes before it can shake the hierarchy.. the organisation is not simply a collective organ of the members, but as it were something alien to them...workers do not control their union...it stands over them as an external force against which they can rebel." (Smart p.114)

Pannekoek's point, and the German Left in general, is that the organisational structure of trade unions reflect the politics of reformism

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which centre upon parliamentary tactics. These tactics were acceptable in the period of reform as a minority could negotiate within the democratic institutions of capital (with the weight of the class behind it) for reforms. In the period of revolution this is no longer possible as the framework which is both explicit reformism and an organisational form is appropriate to reformism, not only restrains the class but is in fact counterrevolutionary. This Pannekoek and his comrades in the KAPD clearly recognised; unfortunately less clarity was found in the Bolsheviks and the Italian Left. The CWO in their haste to call the KAPD horseshit seem to be denying that the structure of an organisation has any connection to its political programme. If it really believes this then why has it called for the class to set up organs with revokable delegates etc.?

The way in which the KAPD related to the revolutionary unions of post 1919 in Germany can only be understood in the context of their view of class consciousness as necessarily involving self activity of the proletariat. The new organs represented a fundamental break from the reformist dominated unions. Inside the new organs workers struggled to come to grips with the crisis which faced them. Inevitably there was no sudden absolute clarity within the revolutionary unions. Workers entered them with the recognition of the failures of the old social democratic unions and of the imperial state power. The KAPD looked at them as the point at which the German working class would break from the ideology or "spirit" of the bourgeoisie. It was on this basis that they entered them and propagandised. What we might ask would the CWO have done in such a situation? Ignored them as Battaglia want such organs to be?; or denounced because they used the term "union".?

The CWO denounce the KAPD for this stress on factory organisation which they say is merely "existential angst" about guarantees against "substitutionism" (RP 21.p.22) This approach, they say, assumes that "forms of struggle" will "magically solve the problem of consciousness without the leading role of the party" (RP 21, p.22). It is true that "magical" solutions to the problem of class consciousness are to be found in the revolutionary milieu, and at certain moments in the German Left. The CWO, however, is an organisation which has itself attached itself to a magical theory when it accepts the theory of class consciousness as defended in What is to be Done? The problem of revolutionary consciousness is simply resolved by the existence of the party. Thus its mentor reduces the question of the success of the Russian Revolution to simply the existence of the Bolsheviks and conversely the failure in Germany to the failure of Luxemburg to be Lenin:

> "Luxemburg did not understand the necessity for the party; Lenin did and this is what allowed the Russian Revolution to take place. Luxemburg realised this too late, when the workers were already at the barricades."
> (Proceedings. p.65)

With a wave of the partyist wand the problem is solved. Its funny how when it comes to the defeat of the revolutions the "objective" factors are usually trotted out to explain it, whereas in the victory its all down to the rigour of the Bolsheviks. One thing which the German Left tried to get across to Lenin (and obviously which has not penetrated Battaglia) were differences between the industrialised West and the less developed East. The KAPD argued that the structure of capital, the weight of bourgeois ideology, the reformist tradition and parliamentary politics had a direct bearing upon the ability of the proletariat in the West to move towards revolutionary consciousness. We think that the KAPD was wrong in the hard and fast division it made between the proletariat in the west and in the east. We would argue that the general "tactical" approach must be the same for all sectors of the working class as no matter where the class is situated its tasks are the same as is the manner in which its self-consciousness is to grow. But the German Left was correct to point out the differences between the east and the west because they did have a bearing on the course of the revolution. The collapse of the Russian state and the victory of the proletariat was not simply because the party was there (which in any case was not active in the way that the "Leninist" myth would have us believe) but was connected to the very immediate class relations of Russia. The fact that it was autocratic gave it great inflexibility; it had a massive land-hungry peasantry; it had a proletariat which had some familiarity with the Bolshevik party and which had the tradition of 1905 behind it; as well as this the proletariat was not weighed down by decades of liberal bourgeois ideology. It was into this explosive mix that the Bolshevik party inserted itself. We do not deny the activity of the Bolsheviks but we question the simple answer of Battaglia etc as to why

With a wave of the partyist wand?

revolution in Russia. In many ways the tasks of the Bolsheviks were simpler than those of the parties in the West. The brittleness of class relations and the lack of a clear ideology of recuperation tilted the scales in favour of the Bolshevik solution. In the west however, the proletariat did have the "dead weight" of Social Democracy and parliamentary politics pressing down on it. The western capitalist nations had more flexibility than their counterpart in the east. Luxemburg was, to say the least, hesitant about the formation of a revolutionary communist party in Germany and this almost certainly materially affected the course of events in 1919. But to move from this to say that it was simply a question of the party is to go for a wholly simplistic view of history.

CONCLUSION.

There are no easy answers to the problem of class consciousness. The working class' spontaneous actions do implicitly challenge capital. The organisational forms they adopt are part of the political programme of revolutionary action, they cannot be dismissed. Thus the spontaneous expressions of the class are elements in class consciousness and through them the working class has the capacity to move forward to the higher plane of self-perception, towards a class-for-itself position. But this does not grow automatically out of the immediate class struggle. In this Lenin and the KAPD were absolutely correct. Whether the working mass moves forward depends upon a number of material factors. On the large objective level there are the class relations and traditions of nation, trade, race etc. while at the subjective level the party stands paramount. We believe that the role of the party is essential. It is one part of class consciousness. It goes to the proletariat with the wider understanding of the revolutionary goal. The proletariat has demonstrated that in spontaneous action it is capable of organising itself to take over, expropriate, capitalist enterprises. It has also shown that its collective struggle can transcend the limits of the factory, the trade and the nation. To this extent it moves towards an understanding of the imperatives of revolution. Unfortunately there are two paths which the proletariat might follow in taking spontaneous action; one in the bourgeois mode and the other is revolutionary. Thus when mass class battles erupt they do not necessarily lead on to a higher stage, if this were the case socialism would surely have been brought into existence long ago. In this situation the party intervenes and in one sense it is the "accelerator" in that it attempts to draw out the class positions imperative in certain class actions. On the other hand it acts as a catalyst insofar as in attempting to draw out those positions it alters, or hopes to in a qualitative fashion the content of class battles. This is done by putting forward demands by being active in class struggle and by keeping to the fore the socialist goal.

No doubt the CWO will accuse us of vagueness, eclecticism etc. Yes, it is vague to the extent that the problem of revolutionary consciousness does not provide the sure answers demanded by the CWO. This lack of certainty must not provoke revolutionaries into a failure of nerve. To an extent the degeneration of the German and Dutch Lefts critique into "councilism" was just such a failure. Like Lenin of What is to be Done?, Otto Ruhle, Pannekoek etc were appalled by the apparent incoherence and lack of consciousness found among the working class. Lenin opted for the party as the answer; on the other hand the councilists went to the opposit end of the spectrum and put all the deficiencies of class consciousness down to the domination of bourgeois ideology which included the existence of political fractions outwith the immediate class struggle. The German Left's degeneration was not the "logical" extension of the ideas of councilism. Certainly it could be extrapolated from one element of the KAPD's programme, namely the stress given to the self-activity of the working class. But to become councilist a new qualitative ingredient was required. This was the perception that the proletariat had been destroyed by the forces of the bourgeoisie in the guise of socialists. It needed the defeat of the proletariat in Russia to supply this qualitative change. Elements of the KAPD saw that the policies of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern were totally inimical to the interests of the proletariat. This was the backbone of their critique of the Third International. As the working class retreated in Russia and isolated the Bolshevik party, leaving it as the state so there emerged a critique which pinpointed the "substitutionist" activities of the Bolsheviks as a major cause of degeneration. The way in which the "hard" Leninist view of the party was pushed forward only served to confirm interpretations of the party as a bourgeois form. There was no more logical (or historical) necessity for the KAPD to become councilist than there was for the Bolshevik party to become Stalinist. Both had within themselves theoretical baggage which could be mobilized for these positions, but for the degeneration to occur a larger set of objective factors were required.

Councilism is a danger, this we do not contest. As we say, the working class is prone to fall back into the ideology of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand it also acts in such a way that it itself helps promote material conditions for the leap necessary for an assault on capital. In other words, the working class has historically shown itself able to build organisations which prefigure those necessary for a revolutionary transformation of capital. But, just as the strong party thesis threatens to undermine the activity of the working class by its tendency to abrogate consciousness to itself so councilism is a threat in that it leaves the class to the vagaries of its own spontaneity.

We believe that the CWO falls towards the former of these two positions. Their mistake, however, extends beyond this. Hard partyist orientations can radically alter in the face of class struggle. Lenin's position is the most notable example of this as he modified his understanding firstly in the light of 1905 and later in 1917. This is not to claim that he wholly gave up the Kautskyite view but it is to say that where the class is taking the initiative many of the formulations in What is to be Done? are found to be redundant. The CWO might well move towards a better grasp of the mechanics of class consciousness in the face of a wave of class struggle. Unfortunately, the way in which they have held to an a-historical dogmatism makes it more difficult for them to deepen their understanding of the heterogeneity of the revolutionary milieu. This has a twofold effect, on the one hand they are unable to see that the divisions over the questions of party and class which were to be found before and during the revolutionary period were not antagonisms of hostile class positions. Both were part of the marxist revolutionary milieu.

Apart from this it means that the CWO constructs a false polarity between those who accepted Lenin's hard theory and those who opposed it. The fruit of this polarity is to be found in the CWO's notion of"pseudo-groups" (what we might well call a pseudo-theory).

The CWO wish to pick and choose in history. If organisations do not meet with the standards they demand then they are consigned to the dustbin. They cannot see that the marxist movement is broader that that simply defined by Kautskyist ideas of the party. They cannot allow that mistakes might be made and alternative analyses put forward which oppose those of the Italian Left. The only flexibility the CWO has is within its new horizons. Only the Italian Left can make mistakes and still remain within the marxist movement. The arguments in RP 22 simply drip with special pleading. Comically because the ICC is the CWO's bete-noire they resort to a hierarchy of special pleading for the Italian Left itself. Bilan is associated with the ICC but as it is undeniably from the Italian Left the CWO must accept that it is part of the marxist movement. This is done grudgingly and, to implicate the ICC in the weaknesses of Bilan, they show that the PCInt had a stronger grip of political reality than did the progenitors of the ICC; specifically that the Internationalist Communist Party had a better appreciation of the "class nature of Russia, the key issue for communists." (RP 22,p.31). But just to show their openness they also say that Bilan "is part of our tradition" and as such they have "the duty to criticise its weaknesses" (p.31) Even through the blinkers the CWO recognise that the Italian Left had some weaknesses, but unlike the weaknesses of the KAPD, these were mistakes made by marxists. Or rather they do not see mistakes in the PCInt, simply that "some of the early formulations of the PCInt were badly formulated and even opportunist." (p.31) They do not tell us how to differentiate between inadequate formulation of a formula and opportunism. Presumably the CWO's new method helps here. Not that it matters for the CWO confidently tell us that the PCInt recognised its weaknesses and the "party corrected them and rooted them out." (p.31)

The CWO admit that the Italian Left had great difficulty in understanding the capitalist nature of Russia, they were confused on the nature of national liberation, misunderstood the class content of the Communist Parties, got the "course of history wrong" and participated in the inter-imperialist struggle in Spain. (see also RP 21.p.30-32) But these are simply errors of marxist groups. And here the CWO introduce special pleading: all these weaknesses were a sign of the willingness of the Italian Left to confront the problems of the real world. This committment brought the danger of a "real possibility of error."(RP 22,p.31)

In other words, if communists are to be at all effective they must intervene in the class struggle rather than stay in the world of ideal abstraction. This, says the CWO, makes the emergence of errors a real possibility. We agree wholeheartedly. Yes the class struggle is complex and yes we must intervene in it. Marxism does not supply beforehand definitive answers to every social-historical problem which confronts the class. Marxism is both a general and a particular guide through the labyrinth of capitalist society. What it is not is a theory which guarantees correct answers to every momentary event. The social world is far too complex for every situation to be predicted beforehand. Revolutionaries are confronted by actions which take them by surprise: from flying pickets to the defection of Social Democracy to the side of the bourgeoisie. Confronted with these situations, revolutionaries come up with varied analyses and tactical proposals. This is the origin of the revolutionary milieu's heterogeneity. Just as the proletariat are limited in their consciousness so also are communists, in particular by traditions and experience. New situations call forth new answers. So, yes, the CWO are correct the mistakes of the Italian Left do not push them beyond the pale. But this is largely a worthless gesture on the part of the CWO because they make it from the barren terrain of an organisation more concerned with legitimizing a dogmatism, a prejudice, than an insight into the nature of the revolutionary movement.

History is full of ironies. The CWO's politics is one of them. They are an organisation which spend a great deal of time and energy demonstrating the extent to which the proletariat is a victim of bourgeois ideology and is unable of itself to achieve a communist consciousness. By contrast they present the party and their organisation as the beacon in an otherwise dark firmament. Their consciousness cuts through the black unconsciousness, lighting up the path to revolution. They are so certain, smug in their self-assuredness that finally they have reached communist consciousness.Ironically, at the very moment they highlight the extent to which the proletariat succumbs to bourgeois ideology, they themselves become prey to it. They use a method and take up a posture which owes more to bourgeois positivism than it does to a dynamic marxism. They seek certainties and guarantees which are not to be found in history. It would be comic if it were not for the tragic implications of their quasi-religious search. The lack of consciousness of the CWO acts as a barrier to the development of the proletariat, not because it has deep roots in the class, it does not, but because it (as well as organisations such as the ICC,Battaglia and Wildcat) is so intent upon crushing or ignoring contrary opinions that it fails to understand the existence of a real common interest in the revolutionary milieu. This common interest is primary in that if we fail to accept it (for whatever reason) then we directly contribute to the disintegration of proletarian forces. Energies are doomed to be wasted in the battle for supremacy. Of course opposing views must be put forward and of course we must defend theoretical propositions which we hold to be correct. But this can and must be done within a broad movement which encompasses both the scientistic theories of Lenin and the spontaneism of Luxemburg.

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Flett

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 excep 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.