

5d) Permanent Revolution and the Transition to Socialism

One of the main features of Trotskyism is the theory of permanent revolution. The analysis of classes in society, the question of stages of development, the nature of the epoch — all these areas have considerable implications for international analysis and the characterisation of post-revolutionary societies. We will initially deal with the theory itself and then go on to discuss its implications, with particular reference to the Soviet Union and China.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

"Insofar as capitalism has created a world market, a world division of labour and world productive forces, it has also prepared the world economy as a whole for socialist transformation. . .

The way out of these contradictions which will befall the proletarian dictatorship will be found in the arena of world revolution." [Trotsky — 'The Permanent Revolution']
Trotsky saw the world as a unified capitalist market. It follows that the only way the development of the forces necessary for the socialist revolution can flourish is on a world scale. Revolution is total or it is nothing. Only two possibilities face the world — socialism or barbarism. The theory fails to recognise the contradictions, at both an international and national level, on which revolutionary struggle grows. As Mavrikakis has said: 'By presenting the world as already unified into a single economic organisation, Trotsky was led to neglect national peculiarities, the specific concrete conditions (determined by history and cultural heritage) of the class struggle and the necessity to isolate the peculiar laws of the revolution in each country. In particular he exaggerated the role of exterior influences without seeing that these can only act through forces within each of these partial totalities.' [On Trotskyism — page 179]

Whilst capitalism dominates the world economy as a whole, inter-capitalist rivalry creates contradictions which aid the struggle for socialism. The growth of revolutionary struggle in Southern Europe is precisely the product of the tendency of capital to develop and underdevelop different economies at the same time. Capitalist development in France, Germany and Scandinavia is accompanied by underdevelopment in Italy, Spain and Ireland. At an international level the 'First World' has only developed at the expense of the Third World. The revolutionary movement, taking advantage of these developments, has succeeded in overcoming capitalism within various nation states, thereby increasing the opportunities for the creation of a socialist 'market' alongside the capitalist market.

But this process is denied by most Trotskyists. For the I.S. : "In most cases the new regime will very rapidly start coming to terms with one or another of the Western imperialist powers. The objective reason exists because if you attempt to take power in your own country, around your own project to overcome the heart of imperialism in one country, whereas imperialism operates on a world scale, inevitably you are forced to exploit your own working class, lower the working conditions of the peasants in order to try and survive in relation to the massive economic powers at the disposal of the metropolitan countries." [I.S. Journal No. 89 — page 1.]

According to this view, revolutions are foregone defeats, only to be rescued by world revolution!

But imperialism is not a uniform phenomenon — it is weak or strong according to the level of class struggle at a national level, and inter-imperialist rivalry at an international level. American imperialism was too weak to win in Vietnam, yet strong enough to win in Latin America. To deny the Vietnamese revolution is to pave the way for Latin Americas. Socialism will grow by attacking capitalism at its weak points, and each successive revolution will increase the chances of further revolutions as the balance of forces tilts in favour of socialism. The theory of permanent revolution fails to recognise this long-term struggle, and with its rigid view of the world — seeing socialism or barbarism as the only two choices, with no intermediate phase — is a recipe for fatalism.

In the pamphlet 'Imperialism, Stalinism and Permanent Revolution', the IMG defend this view by recourse to Marxist methodology: essentially by asserting that in a 'holistic' method, the whole determines the parts, so that the world capitalist economy determines any country's development, even after abolishing capitalism. This is vulgarisation of Marxist method. In developing an analysis Marxism uses the concept of a 'structured totality', giving relative autonomy to the 'parts', or, more precisely, to the superstructure; and admits the possibility of various parts determining the base. The Trotskyist notion is yet one more example of imposing mechanical and fatalistic laws.

'PERMANENT REVOLUTION' AND 'SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY'

After the defeats of the European working class in the early 1920s, the Soviet leadership became increasingly, and realistically, despondent of the possibility of further revolutions, at least in the short-term. Isolation and economic backwardness necessitated drastic solutions. Stalin, under the banner of 'socialism in one country', embarked upon a policy of collectivisation combined with extreme authoritarianism and the use of terror. In 1939 he maintained that the class struggle in Russia was over and that it was now possible to move towards establishing communism in one country, having 'built' socialism. Trotsky fought a lonely battle against Stalinism but his struggle was too often impaired by the abstraction of his political ideas. The theory of Permanent Revolution offered little in the way of concrete ideas to resolve the Soviet predicament. In 1926 Trotsky wrote: "It was clear to us that the victory of the proletarian revolution is impossible without the world revolution." What hope then for Russia? Not surprisingly, Trotsky was ousted from power and Stalin was able to characterise Trotsky's theory as 'permanent hopelessness'. "There is but one prospect left for our revolution: to vegetate in its own contradictions and rot away while waiting for the world revolution" was how Stalin put it

Trotsky in 1928 described the 5 Year Plan as 'reactionary, utopian national socialism. . . To aim at building a nationally isolated socialist society means to pull the productive forces

backward, even as compared with capitalism.' Ironically, Trotsky had advocated collectivisation of the peasantry throughout the early 1920s. By the late 1920s the opposition in the USSR had no effective counter to Stalin's policies.

Stalin's version of 'primitive socialist accumulation' based on an extremely economistic view of what constituted the 'productive forces' decimated the proletariat. Until the Chinese revolution saw the re-recognition that the working class was the greatest productive force, this model of development remained unchallenged. Internationally, 'Socialism in One Country' required the alliance of Western Communist Parties with the parties of the bourgeoisie. The Popular Front advocated by Stalin (via the Comintern) reduced the CPs to ineffectual reformism (and decimation in the case of Germany), and set back the revolutionary movement in Europe by many years.

Caught between the contrasting utopianisms of Permanent Revolution and Socialism in One Country, a new concept of the transition to socialism was needed.

The Trotskyist view is that while the dictatorship of the proletariat can be achieved in one country 'it cannot proceed to a higher stage of socialism. ['Imperialism, Stalinism and Permanent Revolution' — IMG — page 24] As we have seen this can only lead to the fatalistic view that the development of productive forces will be retarded, leading to a bureaucratisation that cannot be solved internally.

Particularly disturbing is the position that is therefore allocated to third world countries that have defeated imperialism. The possibilities of socialism are made dependent on spreading the revolution. In a review of a recent work by Bettelheim the IS Journal had this to say:—

"The priorities of a victorious regime in a backward country must be... to break out of its shells, to foster workers' revolutions in an advanced country as a condition of its survival." [IS Journal No. 89]

What useful advice to the people of Mozambique and Angola! The revolutionary governments have a difficult enough job feeding the people and fighting puppet armies of imperialism without having to foster revolution in Britain, the US etc. even if those unlikely events were possible. This lack of realism is a product of the profound pessimism of an economistic analysis. The same IS article states:—

"In an isolated and backward society, social relations are imposed and sustained by material scarcity, the ruthless division of labour demanded by the task of survival in conditions of backwardness. Scarcity impels the creation of a ruling class capable of maintaining the division of labour."

Here economism and fatalism go hand in hand, ignoring the human factor, conscious action and political leadership. This mechanical notion of base and superstructure gives too much weight to the problems of 'scarcity'. Scarcity does not necessarily lead to internal degeneration. It can and does 'impel' countries like China, Mozambique and Angola to develop alternative models of economic development. They are adapting to their adverse conditions by developing self-sufficiency, building new relations between agriculture and industry and developing alternative technology and work processes.

Of course, they have to live and trade with the capitalist world market and that no doubt makes them do things they have no wish to do, for example Mozambique's migrant workers in South Africa. But trade doesn't inevitably lead to bad politics. China's wrong international policies are not a product of contact with the world market, but a wrong strategy, based on a wrong analysis of the balance of world forces. De-emphasising the problems of economic backwardness can of course lead to idealism, as it has done in the writings of some Maoists who see everything in terms of political leadership. But it is a tightrope that has to be walked, otherwise the concrete problems of building socialism in today's conditions are dismissed in advance, and the revolutionary left

in Europe will have failed to learn important lessons from our comrades in the Third World.

CLASS ALLIANCES

The theory of Permanent Revolution also embodied a narrow view of revolutionary vanguards and alliances between various class forces.

THE PEASANTRY

"Within the capitalist system it is inconceivable that the industrial working class remains anything but the decisive revolutionary force. The number, concentration, organisations of the industrial proletariat make it on a *world* scale, the revolutionary class, par excellence."

"The peasantry may supply a major part of, or even the main physical force in the revolutionary process, nevertheless as a *political* force its influence is relatively zero."

[Quotes from the IMG pamphlet on Permanent Revolution — pages 48 and 54]

It is clear from Trotsky's writings that the notion of class alliances derived from the theory of Permanent Revolution are not actual alliances, but the peasantry 'subjugating itself' to the leadership of the industrial workers. This has led to a serious under-estimation of the strength of the peasantry, both as a force for socialism and as a sector whose needs have to be carefully catered for. As a perspective, Permanent Revolution is inferior to Lenin's initial concept of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.' This gave a much better recognition to the necessity for a genuine class alliance with the peasantry.

Trotsky's lack of understanding of the peasantry is indicated by his view of collectivisation in the USSR, which in its emphasis on rapid and forced collectivisation, differed little from Stalin's. Trotsky's view on this again shows the economism involved in his theory. This economism sees power resting *only* with industrial workers, despite the fact that they are a politically ineffective force in many important situations.

At the same time imperialism has drawn the peasantry of the third world right into the centre of the struggle. Monopoly capitalism has in general created new layers of the working masses, who are just as oppressed and often more combative politically, although they do not wield the same economic power as the industrial working class. The revolutions of the post-war period — China, Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, etc. — have all been based on peasant movements. To continue to deny their role shows incredible blindness to historical fact. Isaac Deutscher could only suggest that the Chinese revolution was an extraordinary 'coincidence'. But perhaps more disturbing is the automatic labelling of any peasant based revolution as 'degenerated'. The IMG's view of China is indicative:— 'With a correct policy from the Comintern the proletariat could have seized power in China in 1927. . . Instead, however, not until 22 years later did the Chinese Communist Party, profoundly bureaucratised through being based on rural and not urban class struggle, come to power.' [

[IMG — 'Permanent Revolution' page 49]

This quotation illustrates a recurrent weakness of Trotskyism — sociologism. Political phenomena (degeneration, bureaucracy) are explained entirely in terms of being based on particular social forces, in this case on the peasantry. It is an absurd notion which implies that if the Chinese Communist Party had been based on industrial workers things would have automatically been different. It also is deficient in that the problem of bureaucratisation was not particularly important at this time, given the close links with the masses built during the guerilla and normalised war situations.

The denigration of the peasantry is based on the assertion that it is incapable of posing collective solutions to the agrarian crisis. The I.S. in an article entitled 'The Vietnamese Road to State Capitalism' wrote:— "In most backward countries since the Second World War, the potential revolutionary role of the working class has not been realised, for a variety of reasons, notably the political leadership of the communist parties. The peasantry cannot substitute for it because by its nature it does not pose collective solutions to the problems of society. Crudely, peasants on an estate see their salvation as dividing the land up among themselves; workers on an assembly line can't divide it up, they can only collectively appropriate it." [IS Journal No. 89]

But peasants have in many cases proved their collective tendencies. Although the immediate programme of the Chinese peasantry after liberation was the seizure of the landlord holdings and the division of the land, it soon became evident that only collectivisation of farm tools, then of the land, could solve the agrarian crisis. The process is described by a Chinese peasant:— 'The typical thing in our area is that the heavy soil here requires three horses to pull one plough. But no family that benefitted from land reform got three horses — the average was one per household. So there was a spontaneous tendency right from the start for three or four households to get together, pool their horses and plough each others' land in turn. . . Those who tried to work individually the first season saw the results and sought out work partners for the following season. . . The pooling of several work-teams paved the way for a new development in 1952, when there was a 'land-pooling' campaign in which 30 to 50 households pooled their land, implements and cattle, forming agricultural co-operatives, and planning production according to an overall state plan. . . " [Quoted in 'China: The Quality of Life', by Wilfred Burchett — page 18] The gradual process of collectivisation continued until the establishment of the Peoples Communes in 1958, with the complete absence of the violence and enforcement associated with the Russian campaign.

It is not just in China where peasants have shown this collectivist consciousness. Peru, Chile and many other parts of Latin America, and the South of Portugal are only some of many notable examples..

For many of the countries of the world the industrial working class is a tiny minority of the population, and revolutions must be built primarily on the peasantry. For revolutionaries, the task is to draw into the struggle those strata of society 'that think and feel as the working class'. It is more a question of proletarian consciousness, not whether he or she is a 'worker' in the strict sense. It is also a question of material position in many third world situations. There is an increasingly large sector that is not a landowning peasantry to any significant degree. Many are landless labourers and many switch jobs from the land to industry depending on conditions and availability of work.

For I.S., however, revolutions like that in Mozambique, are largely an irrelevance:— "The importance of Mozambique is that its liberation prepared the way for the creation of revolutionary workers' parties in Rhodesia and South Africa — And, although we support the liberation movements we recognise that now, not in the future, there needs to be the creation of workers' parties in the third world" Debate with Avanguardia Operaia — I.S. Journal No. 84] According to this view the revolutions in Guine-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola had no importance in their own right, but only inasmuch as they destabilised Portugal. It is hardly surprising that the Trotskyist movement has few representatives outside Europe while these ideas prevail.

A final aspect of the above point of view is that the weaknesses of the industrial working class in third world countries is not seen in materialist terms, ie. as due to their

relative lack of weight in the class structure. Instead, failures of the industrial working class to establish itself as the main political reference point is seen by Trotskyism in the idealist terms of 'lack of revolutionary leadership'. It is as if the industrial working class plus Trotskyist leadership is the sole condition for revolution.

SEIZURE OF POWER

The other important weakness of Permanent Revolution in this general context is on the process of seizing power. Briefly, it tends to see the process as too linear and 'uninterrupted', ignoring the problem of phases and stages. In a speech in 1937 ('Let us strive to draw the broad masses into the anti-Japanese united front') Mao Tse Tung wrote:—

"We advocate the theory of the transition of the revolution, not the Trotskyite theory of permanent revolution. We stand for going through all the necessary stages of a democratic republic in order to arrive at socialism. We are opposed to tailism, but also to adventurism and precipitation. We cannot agree with the Trotskyist approach which rejects the bourgeoisie and stigmatises the alliance in the semi-colonial countries simply because of the transitory nature of the bourgeoisie's participation in the revolution."

The Maoist theory goes too far in mechanically separating 'stages', but it does point to two factors which Trotskyism ignores. Firstly, there may be intermediary and distinct stages, which we would call phases, which pose different tasks. An emphasis solely on the uninterrupted continuity of the process tends to telescope the tasks and lead to adventurist short-cuts. Secondly, one stage may still include alliances with the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. The Chinese and other experiences show that they are not always weak and may have a temporary progressive role to play, although this is increasingly unlikely in modern imperialism and its neo-colonialist context. Basically, both Permanent Revolution and the concept of 'necessary stages' pose the process of seizing power in too rigid and universal a way. We must allow for the concrete analysis of particular conditions to see what kind of phases and alliances are necessary.

Trotsky also differed with Lenin over this question. He criticised Lenin's slogan of the 1905 Revolution — 'the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry'. For Trotsky, this slogan implied the submission of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. But for Lenin the slogan flowed from an analysis of the concrete possibilities of the time. The workers' movement was inexperienced and barely organised and the peasant movement was equally backward. The demand for immediate socialism would have been adventurist and utopian. Yet 'democratic' demands had the possibility of winning certain sections of the bourgeoisie and thereby aiding the downfall of the aristocracy. The 1905 revolution gave the workers' movement vital space in which to develop. By 1917 that movement had created its own organisations (the soviets) and the seizure of power had become a reality. This new set of conditions required new programmes. Lenin's slogan, dropping the 'democratic' tag, became the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Trotsky then maintained that Lenin had learnt his lesson! Not so. For Lenin, correct demands arose from an analysis of the balance of forces at the particular historical conjuncture. For Trotsky, the formula became a historical dogma — abstracted from the realities of the situation.

The mistakes of Trotsky on these questions are often repeated by modern Trotskyists. A recent article by Mandel ('On the Current Stage of the World Revolution' — *Imprecor*, 10th June 1976) had this to say:—

"From a programmatic standpoint, the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe has now been superseded by the need to fight for the Socialist United States of the World."



Otelo's campaign helped build working class power.

This unfortunately continues the weaker strand in Permanent Revolution of metaphysical internationalism, ignoring national peculiarities in the process of seizing power. One example is that Trotskyists characterise the demand for *national independence* as ultra-leftism and a betrayal of the international revolution. Thus Otelo de Cavarhlo's campaign in the elections of summer 1976 in Portugal was attacked for not putting forward 'principled' socialist positions and, in particular, for raising the slogan of 'national' independence. Of course, aspects of Otelo's programme must be criticised, particularly the 'non-partyism', but this is secondary to the point. The importance of his campaign was its ability to mobilise a substantial mass of the Portuguese proletariat around a left programme, to revitalise the movement and give it confidence and space to develop in a period of right-wing offensive. The fact that more than 20% voted for the left platform certainly restricted the plans of the bourgeoisie. A vote of 5% for a so-called 'principled' platform would surely have been a defeat. That is why all the revolutionary groups in Portugal (UDP, MES, PRP etc) with the exception of the LCI (4th International) supported Otelo. It is worth recalling Marx's advice to the European communist movement in the Critique of the Gotha Programme — 'one step of real movement is worth a dozen programmes'. The role of revolutionaries is to analyse the balance of forces between proletariat and bourgeoisie and to raise slogans and demands which meet the needs of the situation.

The point about such 'principled programmes' is that they

are often abstractly imposed on the situation. Even if people did fight for them it would tend to result in confusion and demoralisation.

For us, national independence can be an element in the strategy for socialism under particular conditions. Revolutionary movements and governments are faced with real political and economic survival problems. National independence in such circumstances is aimed at finding the space for the proletariat of that country to move against the vestiges of the bourgeoisie and to avoid dependence on international imperialism by fostering links with progressive countries. Trotskyism tends to deny this phase of internal strengthening and consolidation. Permanent Revolution only recognises the two extremes of world capitalism and world socialism. It has little to say about the long period of transition between the two and specifically rejects the possibility of a socialist 'bloc' existing alongside a capitalist one, before finally overcoming it: as this quote reveals:—

"The opportunist concept that capitalism can be overthrown gradually, first on one sixth, then one third, then one half of the world's surface. . . and so on. . . is nothing more than an updated extension of the Stalinist concept of 'socialism in one country'."

(Mandel— "On the Current Stage of World Revolution")

We are left with nothing but the cataclysmic vision and exhortations to build the world revolutionary party that the theory of Permanent Revolution has become.

Problems of Transition

The Chinese have constantly stressed that the class struggle continues in post-revolutionary societies, and that it may continue for many generations. Vestiges of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes still remain; new class forces may develop. Without recognition of this and constant vigilance and struggle against it, the dictatorship of the proletariat will inevitably weaken. The revolution, involving the initial transfer of power to the proletariat, provides the precondition for socialism but not the guarantee. Capitalism and communism are separated by a whole historical epoch. The dictatorship strives to establish socialism and thereby pave the way for communism, which is only possible on a world scale. This section will focus on stage of transition to socialism in its full sense which must involve the total transformation of social relations. This will mean:—

1. The abolition of the private ownership of the means of production.
2. Elimination of competition and production for exchange value and its replacement by democratic planning and production for use.
3. Workers' and people's management of the economy and society.
4. The institutionalisation of mass forms of democracy, freedom of association and criticism for all progressive classes. A genuine proletarian state not party substitutionism.
5. Elimination of the power of the old classes and struggle against the growth of new elites in party and state structures.
6. Progressive elimination of differences between manual and mental labour, town and country, men and women and between different races.
7. Movement towards egalitarian distribution of rewards and knowledge.

If these tendencies are successful, communism will then be based on:—

1. The abolition of wage labour.
2. The elimination of classes.
3. The disappearance of the state.
4. Full socialist development of the productive forces in the context of world communism.
5. From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.

CLASS AND THE TRANSITION

The above points are intended to be a methodology for judging experiences in different countries. Characterisations of Russia, China and the other post-revolutionary societies can vary enormously, from socialist, state capitalist, to new class societies. All these descriptions involve a particular understanding of the Marxist concept of class.

Lenin defined classes as 'large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimension of social wealth which they dispose of and the mode of acquiring it.' The means by which a ruling class holds power, exploits and dominates the subordinate classes varies from society to society, according to the mode of production (feudalism, capitalism, Asiatic mode etc.)

So class society is not specific to capitalism, nor does the abolition of private property necessarily imply the abolition of class society. Too often the left has fallen into the trap of associating the abolition of private ownership and its replacement by a nationalised economy as the key process in

establishing socialism. Certainly this step is an absolutely necessary prerequisite of socialism but it is not the final act. The abolition of private ownership only guarantees the abolition of the *capitalist* social system and the *capitalist* ruling class. It does not guarantee the abolition of classes per se. The overthrow of capitalism can therefore result in three options:

1. The transition to socialism.
2. The re-introduction of capitalist methods of production.
3. The development of a new type of class society.

It is the contention of this pamphlet that the Soviet Union has developed into a new form of class society. The new ruling class controls, not through the ownership of property, but rather by virtue of its control over the state apparatus and its ability to determine the production and distribution of the social surplus. This position will be expanded at a later stage.

PRODUCTIVE FORCES

There are a number of reasons why the analyses of the transition to socialism and the nature of Russia etc. are inadequate. One of the most important is an economic perspective that sees the 'productive forces' as neutral. In the 'Permanent Revolution' Trotsky wrote: 'Soviet forms of property on a basis of the most modern achievement of American technique transplanted into all forms of economic life — that indeed would be the first stage of socialism.' Both Stalin and Trotsky stressed the necessity to develop 'industrial plant' in the belief that a higher level of productive forces provided the material basis for socialism. For Trotsky, the revolution could only be sustained in societies based on a high level of productive forces. Faced with the defeat of the European revolution and isolation from the more advanced countries the problems became how to extract enough surplus out of the countryside to build industry. This strategy has been traditionally called 'primitive socialist accumulation'. It is based not simply on the idea of neutral productive forces, but on a mechanical subordination of the countryside to towns and a fetishisation of large scale production. This model of accumulation is most seriously flawed for its failure to recognise that capital is not a thing but a relationship between persons'. (Marx. Capital Vol1). Socialist society can only be built on the transformation of *social relations* of production. Viewing the productive forces as neutral is to deny the role of the working class itself which Marx identified as 'the greatest productive force of all'. As Mavrikis pointed out, 'they (Trotsky and Stalin) did not see that after the abolition of the individual ownership of the means of production the essentials remained to be done: the revolutionising of the relations of production and social relations connected to them'. [page 53] As a result the increasing exclusion of the workers and the peasants from the decision making process could be justified only in terms of the need to build 'industrial capital'. But productive forces are not neutral. The working class, as the primary productive force, will determine the productive capacity of society. Machines, technology, raw materials, are all *factors* in the struggle for production — but not *determinants*. Technology is no more the base for socialism than the planned economy. Much of the revolutionary left today remains dogged by their elevation of 'capital' (ie. machines, technology etc) to the status of a primary productive force. For the Socialist Workers Party (I.S.) the lack of 'capital' led inevitably to the degeneration of the Russian revolution — 'It is precisely because the Soviet Union was backward and isolated from the goods and skills available in the more advanced countries that the government was compelled, as the condition of its survival to re-create, or to tolerate the re-creation of a hierarchy of privileges'. This vulgar materialism leads to

a totally fatalistic view of revolutions in backward societies. We do not try to deny the extreme difficulties facing post-revolutionary societies with a weak industrial base, but rather suggest that there is an alternative model of development. The Chinese have gone a long way towards challenging the traditional notion of primitive socialist accumulation. By re-asserting the creativity of the masses and attempting to revolutionise the social relations of production under the slogan, 'Make the revolution, promote production', they have achieved a considerable increase in GNP from an even lower industrial base than the Russia of the 1920s. Bettelheim writes:— "What has happened in China demonstrates in effect that the 'low state of development of the productive forces' is not an obstacle to the socialist transformation of social relations and does not have the necessary result, arising from the process of primitive accumulation, of aggravating social inequalities". (Class struggle in the USSR 1917-23. Page 40) The Chinese have put particular stress on encouraging medium and small scale production and an organic link between town and country.

THE NATURE OF SOVIET SOCIETY

As we indicated in the earlier part of this pamphlet, the initial seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in 1917 provided the political/legal conditions for the socialist transformation of society. The key failure was not to go further by transforming the social relations of production and society: the process stopping at nationalisation and a planned economy. Because of these limitations and in the difficult material conditions, the power of the workers and their organised expressions (soviets, factory committees etc.) was gradually eroded. After a considerable battle inside the Bolshevik Party a bureaucratic elite consolidated its power. Not only did this elite, focussed around Stalin, fail to advance the early gains of the revolution: it started to erode them. It encouraged an increasing hierarchy of privileges with stress on wage differentials and material incentives. The Party was no longer at the service of the masses, but over their heads. By the 1930s Stalin had come to characterise the ideal of equality as "reactionary, petty-bourgeois absurdity, worthy of a primitive set of ascetics but not a socialist society organised on Marxist lines". In the fields of womens' rights, education and many others the earlier revolutionary laws and practices were gradually rolled back.

The key aspect of this question is not to frantically search for the date of this degeneration, but to see it as a process inherent in the failure to go beyond the transformation of the ownership of property to all social relations. This is not to conjure up a linear development or political fatalism. In fact, the creation of new class hierarchies needs a specific type of bureaucratic political formation, characterised by Stalinism, that fuses power in the state-party machinery. While Trotsky and the Left Opposition fought and correctly criticised many of the ways Stalinism was shaping Russia, they were limited by a key factor dealt with earlier— the fact that Trotsky saw the basis for socialism as the abolition of private ownership rather than wider changes in social relations. Hence, any degeneration was seen as super-structural in character. This lies at the root of the failure of Trotskyism to break with definitions of Russia as a 'workers' state' (albeit degenerated). These definitions are not sufficiently distanced from those held by the Communist Parties that Russia is 'socialist'. In a recent Communist Party pamphlet [1] David Purdy asserted that despite many difficulties Russia was socialist because "the mode of production dominant within it is socialist". (p.22) This only stands if (i) the mode of production is identified solely with nationalised property relations and not wider relations of production and political power. (ii) the party, state and trade unions are collapsed by an institutionalised analysis into an automatic identification with the working class. So Purdy says:—

"What is at stake is how decisions about investment are taken: by whom, with what criteria, for what purposes and with what social and economic consequences." (p.29)

Quite right, but he then concludes that as decisions are taken centrally (and not by separate competing enterprises as in 'capitalism') then it is socialist. It is different from capitalism, he says, because the worker under capitalism "lacks directive power and control over the process of production". (p.25) Trotskyism has been able to show that this is simply not the case and that workers' power is at best a legal fiction. This criticism is part of the excellent super-structural critique that has characterised the Trotskyists' analysis of Russia and Stalinism. But they too are stuck in condemning the 'inadequacies', rather than a critique of the 'economic' base. In effect, the CP and Trotskyist definitions of the basis for a 'workers' state' are quite similar. For instance, Trotsky said that a workers' state "stands or falls with the planned economy". ('Class Nature of the Soviet State' p.122)

The argument becomes whether or not there has been a political degeneration (including economic decision-making) — as the Trotskyists say— or a few mistakes— as the Western C.P.s say — or perfect socialism — as the old-style Stalinists say.

STATE CAPITALISM?

It is the limitations of such analyses that provided the impulse for theories that Russia was 'state capitalist'. There are many versions of this from the traditional line of the semi-Trotskyist SWP (IS) to the newer Maoist versions of Bettelheim etc. [3] While we recognise that the theories enabled important breaks to be made with traditional analyses and provided a fresh critique, they are fundamentally mistaken.

Firstly, the theory of state capitalism maintains that the external operation of the predominantly capitalist world economy forces the 'law of value' to operate inside Soviet society. This is a complete misunderstanding of the relationship between internal and external factors. External factors may be the condition of change, but internal factors are the basis. To be more precise, the fact that the Russian economy as a whole competes on the world market in no way forces generalised competition, exchange value or any other feature of capitalism to operate internally in Russia. The characteristic features are absent as we will argue in more detail later.

Secondly, Marx defined capitalism as a mode of production based on *generalised commodity production*. All products and elements in the labour process are commodities. Goods and services are produced for exchange on the market, rather than for their use by the population. The result is that capitalist production is production for *surplus value* (commodities in relation to exchange value represent more value than that advanced for their production in the form of commodities and money).

Generalised commodity production and surplus values can only exist when regulated by a market economy and competition between capitalist enterprises. As Marx put it:—

"By definition competition is the internal nature of capital. Its essential characteristic is to appear as the reciprocal action of all capital: it is an internal tendency appearing as imposed from outside. Capitalism does not and cannot exist except divided into innumerable capitals: for this it is conditioned by the action and reaction of one upon the others." (Marx — 'Grundrisse' p.414)

The fact that modern monopoly capitalism necessitates state-intervention, planning (and even nationalisation) to survive and function efficiently is not in itself enough to change the system. For such planning is done precisely to ensure the survival of capitalism *within* a competitive market structure. [4]

In Russia the elimination of private ownership of the means of production have ended a competitive market economy and exchange value based on generalised commodity production. Advocates of a theory of state capitalism are therefore destroying any consistent Marxist definition of capitalism. There can be state capitalist societies or sectors, but only in the sense specifically identified by Lenin and Trotsky. Lenin pointed out that in the early 1920s (via the NEP etc) Russia had a partially state capitalist economy because the state needed the existence of an element of private capital and petty bourgeois commodity production to develop the economy. But the precise definition rests on a *workers' state and dictatorship of the proletariat* subjecting elements of capitalist enterprise to their control. The theory of state capitalism, therefore, put forward by the SWP etc does not enable us to differentiate between different forms of society. Another example of a genuine form of state capitalism is given by some Third World countries which have state control of capital but have not destroyed the bourgeoisie and installed a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Russia does not fit this picture as the state monopoly progressively eliminated private ownership and competition. Even those residues of private ownership, small units of agricultural production and small artisan production operate within determined limits of the central plan. As Carlo [5] points out: such are the power relations that the kolkhoz must give to the state what it orders it to produce. The prerequisites of even mercantile exchange (passage of property between independent producers) are completely lacking.

Other factors pointed to by state capitalist theorists like the privileges of the ruling 'bureaucracy, exploitation, alienating work etc. may be enough to differentiate Russian-type societies from socialism, but not enough to identify it with capitalism. Such factors can exist within different class societies. As we have said that we consider Russia to be a new type of class society, we must now turn to looking more closely at its inner mechanisms.

ECONOMY AND CLASS

By 1927 the crisis of the proletarian dictatorship had been resolved, but unfortunately in the wrong way. The proletariat was numerically weak and its vanguard decimated and the peasants distrustful of Bolshevism. The Party, increasingly cut off from its roots had a monopoly of politico-economic power. The Left and Right Oppositions had been crushed. *Forced and rapid industrialisation* (including collectivisation of agriculture) became the centrepiece of economic development under Stalin. The bureaucracy feared that without such rapidity it would lose out to the power of the Kulaks and the remaining entrepreneurs ('NEP-men'), or be crushed by external capitalist forces.

Such a programme was directed in the context of a rigid centrally-controlled bureaucratic plan. The pre-condition for such a plan was the party/state monopoly of power and economic control and the exclusion of the masses from any aspects of decision making at factory or social level. The powerlessness of the masses was a pre-condition for their mobilisation in total subordination to a plan not of their making. The state could and did control movement of labour, shifting of population etc. This necessitated a reduction in effective legal rights at the same time as the state was producing a model constitution in 1936. Hierarchies of skill, specialisation and authority and income were encouraged as part of this economic development. For instance, income differentials gradually widened so that even on official estimates they had reached 1 to 10 and by unofficial estimates much more. [6] While complete income equality is impossible under socialism the Russian situation compares unfavourably with the 1 to 5/6 spread in China noted by Bettelheim, Blumer and others. This is particularly the case as there is every indication of them widening further. Russian econ-

omists (Lieberman etc) have admitted that the 1965 reforms widened differentials.

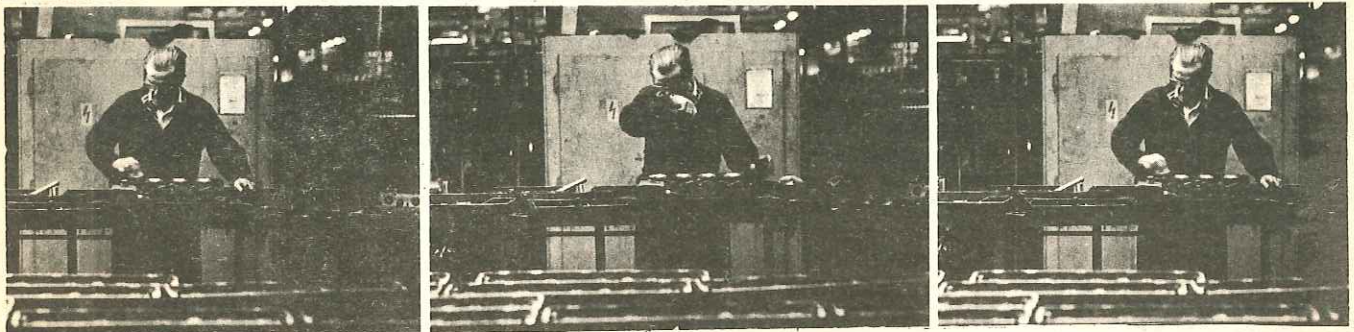
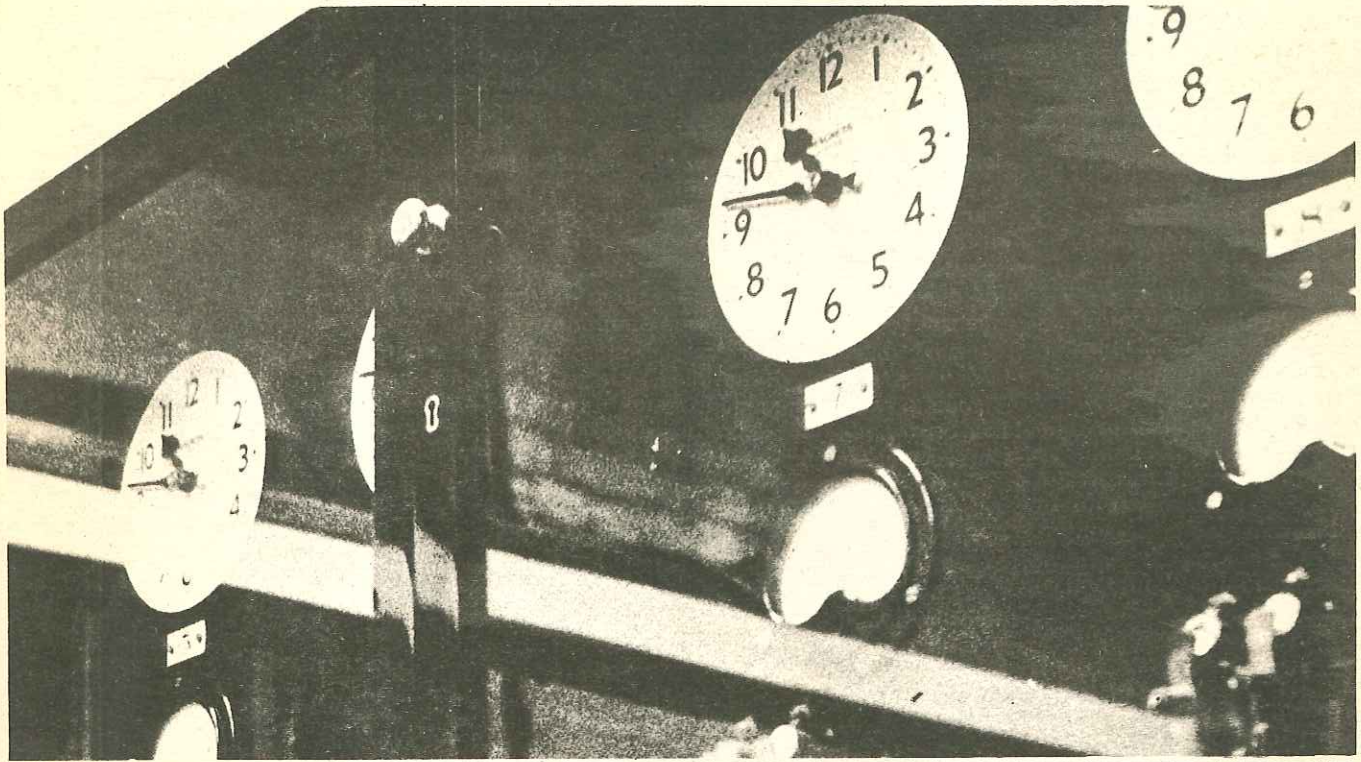
The collectivised state control enabled the economy to develop by excessive concentration on the primary (capital goods goods) sector. While concentration on the primary sector is characteristic of development, in Russia this reached dangerous dangerous proportions (eg. in 1963, 81% of all industrial resources), which entail a suppression of the needs of the masses. This is not the only crisis-producing contradiction. Such a bureaucratically centralised plan cannot possibly realise its goals and co-ordinate all aspects of development. It simultaneously estranges both managers and workers through non-involvement in fundamental decision making. The consequence is the high proportion of waste and low labour productivity with low quality products that many economists have noted. Such was the hierarchy of centralisation that the local representatives and beneficiaries of the bureaucracy were unable to influence the setting of absurd quotas, wage and price levels etc. The managers, therefore contented themselves with pushing for more privileges for themselves and their enterprises (tax exemptions, investment credits, special subsidies etc.) while accepting their lack of power. In such a situation, backed by bureaucratic terror, workers could only resist in the traditional passive way, by depressing work output. The trade unions had ceased to be anything but conveyor belts for exhortations to work harder. This position of the working class alone indicates the character of the Russian class society. As Carlo observes:—

"The free, conscious and integrated participation of the masses in the productive process is the productive force absolutely indispensable for building socialism. The high labour productivity and the good quality of the Chinese products (relative to the level of the economy) is as well known as the poor quality of the Russian products. In a typically politicised and participatory Chinese factory, it would be rather difficult for a manager to produce oversized or undersized parts, enormous tractors, glaring light bulbs etc." (p.61 op cit)

The point is that the waste, inefficiency and low productivity are neither 'abuses' nor deformations as apologists for Russia claim, nor a conflict between a non-capitalist mode of production and a bourgeois mode of distribution, as the Trotskyist Mandel claims. [7] The latter maintains the fiction of a 'socialist' economic base in a context where Russia is still claimed to be a society in transition between capitalism and socialism. In fact, as Rakovski shows [8] such factors are generic to a new class system and mode of production. It is clear that under Stalin Russia had evolved to such a system that was neither capitalist nor socialist, nor in a state of transition. Instead it is, as Carlo describes:—

"A new antagonistic system with its own specific dynamic in which elements similar to other systems acquire a new function". (p.44 op cit) [9]

The dynamics and crises of this new mode of production are conditioned by the state monopoly of ownership and decision making. A new ruling class (based on top party, state and managerial strata) dominates and exploits the workers and peasants. Factors characteristic to class societies in general are present in a different form. Workers are both exploited and alienated in the process of production. Exploitation does not necessarily depend on the capitalist wage-relation and the extraction of surplus value. In Russia it emerges in the form of a dominant class appropriating the surplus labour of subordinate classes. The working class has no say in the production and distribution of the surplus. Neither, as we have indicated, does it have any say in production in general. There has been a diminishing struggle to abolish wage labour — the social relation in which workers' labour power is purely a commodity exchanged for a wage. The following extract from a description of the work process in a Hungarian factory [10] echoes Marx's classic description of alienation under capitalism.



Alienation, East and West.

"Ultimately the only thing that helps is if I turn into a machine myself. The best workers excel at this. Their eyes are veiled whatever the work, as if they wore impenetrable masks on their faces, yet they never miss a thing. Their movements don't seem to require any effort. They follow the unflinching trajectories of magnetically controlled emotionless bodies. They average the fastest possible pace over the day as a whole, as they do not rush at things when they are still fresh and do not slow down when they are tired. Truly, just like machines."

The Russian work process in no way embodies socialist social relations. All the familiar facets that workers face fragmentation, hierarchy, boredom, de-skilling and repetition. One sad instance is the worship of 'American technique' (Taylorism and Fordism) indicated in the building of so-called 'modern' plants in Russia like FIAT, with their mass, line method of production.

Under Stalin, this new class system was accompanied by terror and extreme authoritarianism. While this had a certain functional usefulness to the system, it was not inherent in it. In fact, the true functioning of the system was distorted by the fear and waste it produced. Russian society only 'normalised' after Stalin's death. To say such things and to point to a kind of 'worsening' of things *after* Stalin has been sufficient to bring down the rage of Trotskyists and accusations of pro-Stalinist apologetics. [11] It is, however, nothing of the sort. Rather it is a sober assessment of the necessary evolution of the new class system. As Rakovski says of Stalin's rule:—

"When the witch hunt becomes so general and the danger signals so vague, no social group can feel safe, then it only needs a momentary weakness in the system for the fraction in power itself to put an end to the use of mass terror. The death of Stalin led precisely to this situation. Once under way, the ebbing of the terror had just the same cumulative dynamic as its growth. To secure its own safety, the fraction in power had to permit a certain de-centralisation and demobilisation of the whole society." (p.97 op cit.)

Before we examine whether any of these modern 'reforms' have essentially altered the nature of the system, we must turn to our analysis of classes in Russia to back up our characterisations of the society.

FROM BUREAUCRATIC ELITE TO CLASS

Trotsky and modern Trotskyists (with the exception of state capitalist theorists) have always denied the existence of a new ruling class, preferring the concept of a parasitic bureaucracy. Firstly, let us deal with whether a ruling class is possible in general. The Trotskyist, Isaac Deutscher wrote in 'The Unfinished Revolution' that:—

"What this so-called new class lacks is property. They own neither the means of production nor land. . . they are not able to turn any part of their income into capital, they cannot save, invest or accumulate wealth in the durable and expensive form of industrial stock or large financial assets. They cannot bequeath wealth to their descendants, they cannot, that is, perpetuate themselves as a class." (p.55)

This confuses classes under capitalism with classes in general. Ownership of the means of production should not be seen in such narrow legal terms. The Russian ruling class, through



Czechoslovak youth give their verdict on the Russian system.

their control of the political-economic apparatus, effectively perform an 'ownership' function, determining the production and allocation of the social surplus. Through their monopoly of power they also acquire a disproportionate share of social wealth and means of disposing of it (special privileges — cars, shops, second homes etc.). While these class privileges are not in the capitalist form of stocks and shares, they are nevertheless materially real and can be used as a means of reproduction and perpetuation of themselves as a class.

While the ruling class is not as durable and self-reproducing as capitalist equivalents, and probably never can be, it *is* growing in its power to perpetuate itself. It is worth quoting Rakovski in some detail:—

"There are basically three channels for selecting members of the dominant class: the distribution of opportunities for higher education, activities in the organisations. . . (party etc. [our addition]) and the system of informal relations within the dominant class. In Soviet societies the chances of acquiring a higher qualification are determined by a more or less formal system of privileges. In the Stalinist period, these privileges were extended to some layers of the working class. But with steadier industrial development the dominant class has been able to fill management positions by internal reproduction, and this has changed the relations between the three selection mechanisms. Whereas in the Stalinist period it was often sufficient to pass through one of the channels, in the post-Stalinist period, it is generally necessary to pass through all three at once. As a result, mobility between the two classes has been sharply reduced.)p. 101 op.cit.) [12]

Other commentators have also noted a decline in the rate of social mobility and the use by the ruling class of its wealth and status to re-produce itself eg. by buying extra tuition

for their children in the fiercely competitive education system.

So the objective basis for a ruling class emerged and developed during Stalin's rule. It took the stabilisation after his death to allow the various strata to normalise their operations and co-alesce into a ruling class, fully conscious of its interests. Before this a bureaucratic elite (as class-in-formation) existed, based more on the party, who could not effectively combine with other strata because of the terror and the lack of solidity of ruling positions. This ruling class has grown generically in relation to the new class system.

There is an inbuilt tension and to some extent conflict of interests between various strata in the hierarchy. Managerial and technocratic layers, because of their position in implementing the central plan, want a loosening of bureaucratic control: normally residing in the hands of Party and state functionaries[13]. This tension existed under Stalin, but managerial/technocratic resistance was limited by Stalin's methods of administrative or physical elimination.

In the 1950s the managerial/technocratic strata tried to resolve this conflict between the plan and their power within individual enterprises by pushing for 'reforms' to give them rights in relation to implementation of the plan. These demands included some power over investment, pricing, labour mobility, distribution of the product and, of course, quota targets. Their scope, however, was limited by their effective exclusion from key aspects of central planning.

"Their behaviour (managers') is conditioned by the fact that they do not own the productive apparatus and are therefore forced to pursue their aims by exploiting whatever cracks appear in the bureaucratic plan." (Carlo op.cit. p.60)

Nevertheless, a series of economic reforms in the late 1950s and 60s indicated the growing power of these strata and their more effective integration into the ruling class. A chief spokesman for the managerial/technocrats, the economist Liberman, argued in 1962 for significant changes meaning a reduction in central planning and bureaucratic control. These included — business autonomy, profit, self-financing, material incentives, price flexibility — all in the context of introducing competitive 'market' elements.

Reforms in 1965 certainly moved in this direction. There was administrative decentralisation, with managers given considerable power concerning the number of employees, work norms and internal distribution of wages within the total basic wage fund set by the state. Also enterprises have the right to refuse useless and excessive supplies of goods, by giving a ten-day notice to the supplying enterprise. The reforms also allow them to sell products not distributed within the planning framework.

The reforms in Russia and Eastern Europe are not aiding the working class. They are giving more power to managers, corresponding to a decline in certain aspects of bureaucratic control. As Bettelheim indicates: economic planning is:—

"Characterised by the growing role of enterprise associations and a diminishing number of planned indices. In current Soviet decentralisation power is shifting to the managers rather than the workers". ("Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organisation in China" p.50)

So, what are the conclusions of these tendencies for the character of the system and the classes within it?

CONCLUSION

The reforms made, including the so-called 'liberalisation' measures, have tended to reinforce the existing class structure system that we call *state collectivism*. [14] As Carlo says:—"The reform does not challenge the economically dominant position of the plan." (p.43 op. cit.) While a collectivised economy exists under state control, managers can only exercise their power in its interests. The elements of controlled competition and enterprise autonomy that have been introduced are not as Bettelheim and others claim, a return to capitalism. There are still none of the essential characteristics of generalised commodity production with a competitive market. Rakovski shows this when he says:—

"The market can only regulate enterprise behaviour if the enterprises are not prevented in advance by the form of organisation of the economy from seeking to exploit their market possibilities to an optimal extent. Clearly this condition cannot be met in Soviet economies". (p. 90, op.cit.)

Nevertheless, some movement towards reintroduction is clearly not impossible. This possibility is inherent in the conflict of forces between plan and enterprise, central political bureaucracy and managerial strata that characterises a state collectivist society. At the moment the managerial/technocratic elements are content to fight for reforms within the existing context.

Even within these strata there are differences between those who simply want a more efficient hierarchy within a highly centralised system and more liberal elements who favour political, economic and cultural decentralisation. Both, however, as Rakovski indicates, have learned the lessons of the 1960s reforms that fundamental institutional change is not on the cards. Instead, they pursue practical changes and a further extension of economic and social privileges. These 'reforming' elements, although not challenging the state collectivist system, are still usually opposed by the central political bureaucracy (party-state functionaries, elements of the military etc.). Any reforms are interpreted by the latter sect-

or (correctly) as a loosening in their power of control over planning and distribution. This explains the superficially greater 'anti-capitalist' stance of sections of this stratum in domestic and international issues. The military, of course, have a direct interest in the maintenance of 'ideological warfare' with the capitalist world.

No sector of the ruling forces represents any genuine communist tendency. Despite resistance and surviving elements of socialist consciousness, the working class is too powerless and depoliticised to pose a real challenge. State collectivist societies are going to be with us for some time to come [15] and it would help if the left could come to terms with the new type of class system.

THE NATURE OF CHINESE SOCIETY

By placing the transformation of the social relations of production at the core of their strategy the Chinese embarked on a very different path of development. In 1966 Mao wrote:—"In China, although in the main socialist transformation has been completed with respect to the systems of ownership and although the large-scale and turbulent class struggles of the masses, characteristic of the previous revolutionary periods, have in the main come to an end, there are still remnants of the overthrown landlord and comprador class, there is still a bourgeoisie and the remoulding of the petty bourgeoisie has only just started. The class struggle is by no means over. . . the proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world outlook and so does the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the question of which will win out, socialism or capitalism, is still not really settled."

The continual struggle against the emergence and re-emergence of class formations new and old has been an ever-present feature of Chinese society. The recognition of the necessity to keep alive the relationship of 'masses to party to masses' has ensured a much higher degree of mass participation in decision making than in Russia. The radical shake-up through all levels of the party structure during the Cultural Revolution, through the factory committees and through the commune structure, re-asserted the power of the masses against the stagnating bureaucracy, at least temporarily.

These are some of the reasons why we regard China as in the process of building socialism. However, we stress, as they do, that it is not a linear process. The class struggle will continue for a long time and determine whether a full transformation to socialism happens. The likelihood of a truly socialist society is held back by a number of contradictions that still exist in China.

The current conflicts following the death of Mao indicate a continuing battle over which direction the country should go. While there are substantial forces in the Party, state and society who want a Russian-type model, with more hierarchy and differentials, the problems in China cannot be reduced, as they and some of their apologists do, to 'capitalist roaders versus revolutionaries'. There are structural defects in Chinese society.

These arise primarily from a failure to institutionalise mass democracy and decision making at all levels. Because the Party is automatically identified as the means by which proletarian interests are expressed, it retains a monopoly of power and initiative. Although this is far more true at the national level than the local ones. We can see some of these contradictions at work in the economic field. They have embarked on a policy of decentralisation at a local level. Workers are involved in planning and decision making through 'workers management teams'. However, real power appears to rest with the 'Revolutionary Committees' which are clearly Party-led. The best then that can be said is that they are accessible to and interact on a real day to day basis with the workers. [16]

Despite contradictions, tremendous achievements have taken place which pose a positive alternative not only to the Russian model, but also to traditional definitions of socialist development. The decentralisation of management of state enterprises to a local level is an important change in power relations which involve the masses in planning. It is also done without the disadvantages of the Russian attempts to give managers more autonomy at the local level; as the Russian version involves a reduction in national planning and a further exclusion of workers from decision making.

Local planning in China takes place in the context of tight central control of prices and other factors within the overall national plan. Distribution of consumer goods is also controlled by state agencies of commerce, with no 'market' elements. Surplus from the enterprises is placed at the service of overall economic development. But the policy is not to make a profit on essential goods, which are state subsidised. The main point is that planning and production are based on workers' initiative with profit not the dominant goal. Social need, i.e. the pursuit of use value, presupposes a radical transformation of social relations.

Some aspects of this include 1) The replacement of material by moral incentives 2) Enterprises being responsible for anti-pollution measures 3) The ending of divisions between administrative and performance tasks, struggling against the power of specialists and mental/manual separateness. The Chinese didn't make the mistake of the Bolsheviks in admiring and thinking of as neutral, capitalist work methods. They have laid great stress on revolutionising the mode of work. This means integrating individual work into collective tasks, going against fragmentation of labour by modifying conditions to enable workers to master wider production processes. Part of this process is the de-mystification of science as neutral and unchangeable.

"Machines are no longer viewed as immutable objects, but as subject to modification by the workers themselves". (Bettleheim - "Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organisation" p.81)

We have already mentioned the encouragement of smaller-scale production. One of the further advantages is that it enables workers to exert a higher degree of control over the labour process and a better integration into the local community.

Such changes in China have necessitated important alterations in the education system. The less hierarchical and specialised occupational structure requires similar processes in education. Two particular aspects include, firstly, the discouragement of 'intellectualism' by requiring a compulsory two-years work before university and, once there, particular periods spent working alongside peasants and in factories - with workers and peasants taking on some teaching tasks. Secondly, the allocation of higher education places on a quota (per commune, factory etc.) basis, instead of through competitive selection; again designed to avoid formation of new elites.

Many people reading this will say - yes, but what about Chinese foreign policy? It is true that it's largely mistaken and on occasions counter-revolutionary, as in Angola etc. But this should not be used to shut our eyes to the many fruitful developments, with all their contradictions, that have happened inside China, as many comrades do. The mistakes of Chinese foreign policy are not a product of the internal social relations, nor even primarily of China's comparative isolation, though this is a factor. It is based on a wrong notion of the world being divided into equally dangerous imperialisms.

China is neither perfect in itself, nor a model for our type of society, but we have dealt with it because it illustrates not only the problems of a transition to socialism, but a challenge to the mechanical and fatalistic concepts that Trotskyism has been part of.

NOTES

1. David Purdy - 'Soviet Union - Socialist or State Capitalist?'
2. Mandel's pamphlet 'The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism' effectively demolishes this argument.
3. The Chinese Communist Party characterise Russia now as a capitalist system. Bettleheim, as one of their most sophisticated interpreters attempts to give a more polished gloss to this. While much of his empirical material is useful, he nowhere establishes the theoretical basis for the existence of capitalism.
4. It does show, however, that capitalism cannot any longer be identified solely as anarchic and anti-planning as some of the left continues to do.
5. Antonio Carlo - 'The Socio-economic Nature of the USSR' in *Telos* Nov. 1974)
6. Carlo - *ibid* p.5 - He mentions that Soviet ministers can earn a hundred times more (plus routine privileges) than the average manual worker.
7. Mandel - 'Marxist Economic Theory' Vol.2 p.593
8. Marc Rakovski - 'Marxism and the Analysis of Soviet Societies' In 'Capital and Class' No.1. . . Rakovski is a leading Eastern European Marxist dissident.
Carlo calls this system 'Bureaucratic collectivism'. The basic analysis is similar to our own, although we prefer 'state collectivism'. (See note 14)
9. The concept of a new non-transitional society is also supported by Rakovski in the above article. He argues that such a party/state monopoly produces a society that is uniquely characterised by the absence of any formally autonomous institutions. The unity of the single all-embracing hierarchy is maintained through its own dependent relation to the Party.
10. From 'Piece Rates' by Miklos Haraski - *New Left Review* 91. He is a Marxist sociologist jailed by the Hungarian regime for publishing a book on alienation based on his experiences of work in a factory from which the above quote was taken.
11. The Chinese Communist Party officially date the 'revisionist degeneration' from this point. In fact, their critique of Stalin and the limitations of the Russian Revolution go deeper, (eg. in some of Mao's writings) but for historical and political reasons linked to the relations with Russia before and after the split, they officially maintain the fiction that 1956 was the key date (with Khrushchev's speech etc.)
12. Rakovski believes that classes do not exist in the historical sense (development of conscious interests and means of fighting for them) because of the lack of autonomous institutions. Conflicts of interest do, however, exist, so he maintains they exist in a sociological sense. Our point is that despite a relative lack of solidity, Russian-type societies increasingly provide the structural basis for ruling classes to become more permanent and conscious.
13. This group is called 'the central political bureaucracy' by the Polish Marxists Kuron and Modzelewsky. See their 'Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto'. Other studies examining the nature of a new ruling class (particularly stressing the growing power of managers/technocrats) include Djilas' 'The New Class' and Burnham's 'The Managerial Revolution'. Both books suffer from defects well criticised elsewhere.
14. We are not interested in fetishising one term, or finding a new one. We prefer 'state collectivism' because it seems to us that the character of such societies resides in the collective 'ownership' and control of economic resources through a fused party/state apparatus. The term 'bureaucratic collectivism' does not lay enough emphasis on a new ruling class formed by its monopoly control of state/party power.
15. We have not mentioned other Eastern European societies in any detail. Some of them (Hungary etc.) have taken the 'reforms' even further than the Russian changes. Yugoslavia has to be treated as a slightly separate case. Their open use of market elements has laid the basis for a return to capitalism, despite their more interesting political structures (elements of 'workers' control' etc.)
16. Bettleheim reports that an investigation into Shanghai factories showed that 70% of party committee members are also members of revolutionary committees, and that 49% of revolutionary committee members are party members. Bettleheim's analysis (along with some other pro-Chinese writers) is dangerously blind to the dangers of party power. They attach a great deal of importance to good members of the party with correct ideas being the basis of the struggle against revisionism and new elites. Bettleheim's statement that 'The dominant apparatus of proletarian state power therefore is the Marxist-Leninist party and not the state apparatus' (from 'Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organisation in China') is glib and dangerously substitutionist.

Selected Readings

Trotsky: main works

The Revolution Betrayed
History of the Russian Revolution (3 vols)
The Permanent Revolution
The New Course
The Transitional Programme

Other works are shown in the text.

OTHER WORKS

Charles Bettelheim: Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organisation in China (Monthly Review 1974)
Economic Calculation & Forms of Property (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1976)
Class Struggles in the USSR 1917-23 (Monthly Review Press 1976)

Wilfred Burchett: China—The Quality of Life (Penguin 1976)

Antonio Carlo: The Socio-Economic Nature of the Soviet Union (Telos, Nov. 1974)

Fernando Claudi: The Communist Movement — From Comintern to Cominform. (Penguin 1975)

Tony Cliff: Russia — A Marxist Analysis (Pluto 1970)

Lucio Colletti: The Question of Stalin (NLR 61)

Regis Debray: Prison Writings (Penguin 1975)

Isaac Deutscher: The Prophet Armed (OUP 1954)
The Prophet Unarmed (OUP 1959)
The Prophet Outcast (OUP 1963)

Richard Hyman: Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism (Pluto)

Geoff Hodgson: Trotsky and Fatalistic Marxism (Spokesman 1975)

Michael Kidron: Western Capitalism Since the War (Penguin 1970)

Nicolas Krasso: Trotsky's Marxism (NLR 44)

Kuron & Modzelewski: Revolutionary Marxist Students in Poland Speak Out. (Pathfinder 1972)

International: Vol.2 No.1 The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe.
Vol.2 No.2: Revolutionary Perspectives in Britain

International Socialism:

No.84 — Avanguardia Operaia & the I.S. — a debate
No.48 — The Trade Union Bureaucracy in Britain
No. 89

League For Socialist Action:

The Labour Party — Which Way?

Ernest Mandel:

A Socialist Strategy for Western Europe
The Mystifications of State Capitalism (International Vol 1 No 2)
The Leninist Theory of Organisation (IMG)
Workers' Control (International Vol 2 No 1)
On the Current Stage of the World Revolution (Imprecor 10.6.76)
On Bureaucracy (IMG)
Marxist Economic Theory (Merlin 1968)

Kostas Mavrakis:

On Trotskyism: Problems of Theory and History (R & KP 1976)

Ralph Miliband:

Bettelheim and Soviet Experience (NLR 91)

Michel Pablo:

On the Political Organisation of the Vanguard (International Marxist Review No 1 1971)

Tony Polan:

Why the Socialist Labour League is not Marching

David Purdy:

The Soviet Union — State Capitalist or Socialist? (Communist Party 1976)

Marc Rakovski:

Marxism and the Analysis of Soviet Societies (Capital and Class CSE 1977)

Revolutionary Communist:

No.1 Our Tasks and Methods (RCG)
No. 2 The Question of the International

John Robens:

Imperialism, Stalinism & Permanent Revolution (IMG)

Victor Serge:

Memoirs of a Revolutionary (OUP 1967)

Paul Sweezy:

On Studying the Transition Process (Monthly Review Vol.23 No.9 1972)

Sweezy & Bettelheim:

On the Transition to Socialism (Monthly Review Press 1974)

Workers Socialist League:

The Battle for Trotskyism — Documents of the opposition expelled from the WRP in 1974 (Fulrose Ltd. 1976)

GLOSSARY OF EXISTING TROTSKYIST GROUPS

RSL: Revolutionary Socialist League

Deep entrism group, emerged in the 1950s. Leader, Ted Grant. It was the official 4th International Group but was removed in the early 1960s. Most influential entrism group, controls Labour Party Young Socialists. Officially does not exist. Organises under the label of the 'Militant' paper. Journal: 4th International.

IMG: International Marxist Group

Emerged from deep entrists. Became official group of the 4th International in mid-sixties. Built out of student struggles. Recently it partly entered the Labour Party again. Most important political current of mainstream Trotskyism, though smaller than WRP. Paper: Red Weekly. Journal: International.

WRP: Workers Revolutionary Party

Main split from official 4th International. Has its own version of the International, but it's not very international as they have successfully split from most of their allies. Claims membership in thousands, but exists mostly on paper. Took over Labour Party Young Socialists in early 1960s, was expelled and now controls Young Socialists as junior junior WRP. Paper: Newslime (daily).

SWP: Socialist Workers Party.

Previously the International Socialists. Small group in 1950s, became semi-Trotskyist because of its 'state capitalist' position on Russia. Became largest group through more open approach, but now more sectarian and bureaucratic. Move to the SWP seen as building the party. Paper: Socialist Worker. Journal: International Socialism. Controlling influence in the 'Rank and File Movement'.

ICL: International Communist League

Smaller group formed mainly from two expelled Trotskyist tendencies from I.S. — Workers Fight and Workers Power in 1970s. Has since split, with the Workers Power faction leaving. ICL paper: Workers Action. Workers Power Journal: Workers Power.

WSL: Workers Socialist League.

Grouping formed from people expelled from WRP, led by Alan Thornett, in 1975 for daring to question the line. Some industrial base, but still bears the imprint of WRP's dogmatism. Paper: Socialist Press.

WL: Workers League

Grouping formed from people expelled from IS, for instance, for wanting to support Broad Left candidates in some union elections. Contains some ex-leaders of I.S. Small, mainly Midlands based, open and have criticisms of orthodox Trotskyism. Paper: Workers News.

RCG: Revolutionary Communist Group

Another small Trotskyist opposition expelled from I.S. in the early 1970s. Highly theoretical, they don't even have a newspaper. Journal: Revolutionary Communist. Recently had an obscure split with a minority leaving to form the Revolutionary Communist Tendency.

LSA: League For Socialist Action

Small split from IMG, including people who support the SWP (American) faction in IMG.

RMC: Revolutionary Marxist Current

Very small group split from IMG in early 1970s. Open and non-sectarian. Soon to produce a journal as successor to their paper 'Spectre'.

Chartists

Originally split from RSL. Another deep entrism group in the Labour Party. Paper: Chartist.

Marxist Worker

Ex-local branch of Workers Fight. Refused to enter ICL. Strong local base in Bolton.

RWP: Revolutionary Workers Party

Tiny group supporting Posadas in 4th International disputes. Entrists, but no-one knows where they entered, so they could have disappeared.

RMT: Revolutionary Marxist Tendency

Very small, semi-entrism group, but open and critical of Trotskyist tradition. Followers of Michael Pablo, ex-leader of 4th International. May be disbanding.

TROTSKYISM IN BRITAIN

