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# revolutionary strategy today

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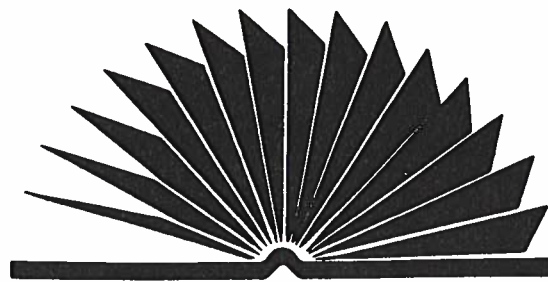
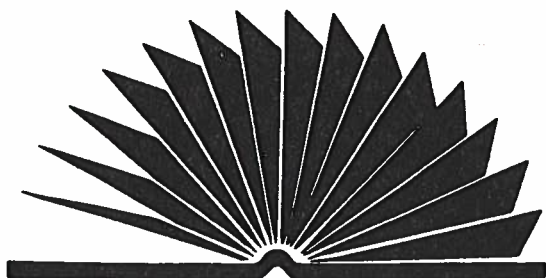
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\* Note: Michael Löwy's *The Politics of Uneven and Combined Development*, (two updated chapters of which make up CER n°4) is available from *New Left Books*, London.

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# Revolutionary Strategy Today

by Daniel Bensaïd

## Foreword to English edition

This lecture was delivered at the 1986 summer school of the French LCR. The goal of the educational conference was to establish a framework for a discussion on how to orient the LCR after five years of Left government in France (1981-1986).

The first session of the school examined the mechanisms, effects and challenges of the present capitalist crisis; the main reports of this session are published in French as *La crise - Les crises - L'enjeu* by C. Verla, M. Dupont, F. Ollivier and A. Taillandier (Paris: La Brèche/Collection Racines, 1987). The second session focused on problems of overall strategy and a third session examined the need for a revolutionary vanguard party and the various possible paths for the building of such a party in advanced capitalist countries. The reports given at the latter two sessions are published in French as *Stratégie et parti*, by Daniel Bensaïd (Paris: La Brèche/Collection Racines, 1987).

The present *Notebook for Study and Research* (number 4) is a slightly edited version of the lecture given at the second session.

This explains the approach used and the limitations of this work.

In the first place, the examples on which the talk is based are taken from Southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s. To obtain a more rounded picture, it will be necessary to broaden the scope of this reflexion to the countries of Northern Europe the structure of whose labor movement is different, being dominated by Labour or Social-Democratic parties. More generally, at some point in the future, a comparison with the different experiences of non-European imperialist countries (in North America and the Pacific) could yield useful insights.

Likewise, the discussion on the trajectory of the class struggle in revolutionary situations is based on specific "classical" and recent experiences. Certain moments of intense mass struggle in other countries, al-

though not in the context of pre-revolutionary situations, may also foreshadow some of the trends of development.

In addition, the question of the social movements, such as the autonomous women's movement, the movements of immigrant workers, the peace and ecology movements, and the relation of these movements to the workers movement, is barely mentioned. The question deserves a full-fledged study of its own and has some implications on the issues raised in this lecture: the sort of demands raised by these movements in the capitalist crisis, their social base, their role in unifying the working class at the grass roots as well as in more formal united fronts, their possible place in the emergence of structures of dual power and socialist democracy.

The national question, which remains a highly explosive issue, notably in Ireland and the Spanish State, is also located outside the limits of this talk.

Finally, sections IV and V, which concern the state and the united front, call for further elaboration in light of new developments. The strategic debate must revive and integrate fully the questions which arise from the failure of the experiences of Left governments and the junking of Keynesian economic policies: what are the working-class solutions to the economic crisis and to the restructuring of whole industries? What is the strategic importance of the idea of self-management? In what terms should one now pose the perspective of the revolutionary rupture? How does the European perspective (the existence of the Common Market, the aspirations towards closer relations between peoples in Eastern and Western Europe) affect these debates today?

Many of these questions are being discussed at the present time and should be the object of public contributions over the next few months.

D. B.  
July 10, 1987

## Introduction

In the mid-1970s, revolutionary strategy was discussed extensively. Its relevance was obvious as several European countries seemed on the verge of a revolutionary crisis. In the early 1980s, by contrast, the whole issue faded, both in the vanguard and broader labor movement. We need now to return to that discussion.

In the wake of May 1968, many in Europe believed that the socialist revolution was perhaps not absolutely necessary (remember that the postwar boom was only beginning to run out of steam), but certainly possible, even easy to accomplish as another good-natured May 68 that would go a bit further than the first thanks to a more developed vanguard.

Nowadays those who face up to the gravity of the economic crisis realize that large-scale social convulsions are in the works not only in Third World countries but here. The need for a new society, another social logic, remains on the agenda. With the threats of barbarism, socialist revolution appears more necessary than ever. But many people now doubt that it is feasible. In France, after the experience of the Left government, merely asserting the need for social change is considered daring; advocating a radical break and thinking about a revolution, frankly pornographic. This has gone so far that the great French revolution of 1789 is threatened with being placed on the Index in the forthcoming bicentennial celebration.

The problem is that one cannot build a revolutionary organization in a developed capitalist country unless one is convinced that revolution is possible in such countries; not just that social explosions triggered by the hammerblows of the economic crisis are likely, even certain on the long run, but that a revolutionary situation leading to victory is possible.

Indeed, without the belief that the working class can take power and the determination to work patiently towards that end, backsliding towards building something else is inevitable. In the best of cases, this something else will be a resistance organization useful for day-to-day problems. More likely though, renouncing the final goal will lead either to pseudo-realistic adaptations in the day-to-day struggle itself or to an organization focused on the distant future, posing as the best fighter against potential bureaucratic degenerations for lack of anything to propose for the present.

When this sort of thing begins to happen, it becomes essential to reassert the strategic guidelines on which one is building a revolutionary organization. Without this plumbline, each and every tactical decision will tear the organization asunder; and it will become more and more difficult to tell what is decisive from what is secondary.

The difficulty is compounded when struggles are in a defensive phase and the gap between the maximum program (socialism on the horizon yonder) and the minimum program (the day-to-day fightback) grows wider. The celebrated bridges between the two (transitional demands) become fragile catwalks and the main causeway (the conquest of political power) is eroded by the temporary deterioration of the relationship of forces.

Whereas it used to seem natural to raise the issue of

workers control (in 1968 in several European countries, or in 1973 in France during the Lip watch factory strike\*), it now sounds maximalist and sometimes perilous.

What do we mean exactly by the importance of preserving a strategic compass? We know that the notion of strategy itself is variable. So what do we mean by strategic?

The building of socialism, of a world federation of councils, the withering away of the state and classes, are strategic in a sense. But strategic on the long, very long run.

For us what is strategic is what defines the basis around which we recruit, organize and educate activists, and this must be a perspective for the overthrow of bourgeois rule. Socialist revolution begins with this political act.

That is not **all** socialist revolution involves, of course. The conquest of political power only inaugurates a process of economic, social and cultural transformations.

Major differences over how to accomplish these tasks (through the international extension of the revolution, certain class alliances, one-party regimes or workers democracy for instance) can have practical consequences on the way we intervene in the mass movement and the sort of internal party life we institute, long before these tasks are posed concretely. For instance, there are now organizations in Latin America which do not agree with our entire program on key international questions but intervene in practice on a permanent revolution line in their own country, under the impact of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. That is, they are fighting sincerely not merely for national liberation but for the overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of socialism. They do so with a certain orientation in their mass work and a certain politico-military perspective.

If our perspective is not qualitatively different, if we have nothing more or better to propose in this respect, we should aim to build a single organization with a democratic internal regime allowing the remaining differences to be discussed and overcome in the light of common experience.

The decisive criterion is agreement on how to conquer political power.

In the proletarian revolution, clarity on the road to power plays a central role. This stands in contrast to the bourgeois revolution in which the concept of strategy (in fact the very word) was not very prominent. Why? There are several reasons, including that military thought was not yet highly developed.(1)\*\* But the most fundamental reason is that proletarian revolution represents a radical departure from bourgeois revolution in that the class struggling for emancipation is a class that is dominated in every field.

It is dominated economically. It must sell its labor-power of course. But the very sale of labor-power creates a vicious circle whereby workers lose control over their

\* For a brief definition of Lip and other terms in this lecture, see the glossary of people, organizations and events on page 32.

\*\* Footnotes begin on page 27.

work, the product of their work and even the content of their work. Wage-earners are mutilated day in and day out, physically as well as morally, by their relation to capital.

The working class is also dominated politically, in that the bourgeoisie has appropriated the apparatus of political rule.

It is even dominated culturally in the sense that becoming a proletarian means losing control over one's tools, work and time and suffering ever more thorough alienation in all fields of social life.

How can a class so thoroughly dominated reverse the situation and vie for political power and the complete reconstruction of society? This is the distinctive challenge faced by the proletarian revolution. The capitalist mode of production began to develop through commercial exchange in the pores of feudal society. The bourgeoisie conquered strong economic, political and cultural positions (such as municipal charters and the time to create its own "organic intellectuals") long before it seized political power. Its conquest of political power was the crowning act of an already substantial change in the relationship of forces in society as a whole.

On the other hand, while capitalist society generates the preconditions for socialism (by developing the productive forces, concentrating production, etc) and produces its own gravedigger (the modern proletariat), it does not allow the socialist mode of production to develop and conquer positions within the pores of capitalist society.

That is the key problem. The only solution is the recognition that the socialist revolution is the first revolution in history that requires that the revolutionary class achieve a certain level of organization and consciousness of the goal prior to the revolution, that is that it develop a genuine strategic perspective.

When Marx and Engels spoke of the transition from the prehistory of humanity to its history, from the reign of necessity to that of freedom, they put their finger on this point. For the first time, social liberation would require a conscious collective effort, from the conquest of power to the mastering of social development through democratic planning.

Consciousness is the way out of the vicious circle of proletarian alienation.

In the case of the conquest of political power, this means a strategic perspective, the marshalling of certain forces for that goal, the definition of a revolutionary party.

Once again, the conquest of political power is only the beginning of a transition towards economic, social and cultural emancipation. The utter novelty of this problem is the reason why the politics of proletarian revolution so often have to borrow from the terminology of military strategy. The idea of a conscious struggle for political power is the strategic thread. This is why it is so difficult for a revolutionary organization to build itself without being convinced to the marrow of its bones that this struggle is urgent and realistic. This does

not mean believing that the revolution will happen in two, or five, or ten years, but that Che Guevara, the tenth anniversary of whose death we will be celebrating next year, was right when he said "the duty of a revolutionary is to make the revolution."

### I. The revolutionary crisis: the key strategic notion

The clearest statement of the terms of the central strategic debate can be found in the polemics of the Second International, in the early years of this century.

The period running from the last few years of the 19th century to World War One corresponded to a long wave of expansion driven forward by shipbuilding and heavy industry.(2) (See the diagram of long waves of capitalist expansion on pp. 6-7.) It led to a massive increase of the working class and its organizations, most notably in Germany. Mass trade unions appeared. Social-democracy advanced in the elections. It published several dozen daily newspapers and organized a powerful network of associations and cultural clubs. In a word, it tended to become what we call a counter-society.

This was the context in which a discussion developed that is, in certain ways, typical of periods of relative prosperity and growth of the working class. Remember, as the main arguments are presented, that this was a discussion about the orientation of a united social-democracy, viewed as the "great single party" of the working class, its organic and ultimate expression. (See the chronology of German social-democracy on p. 10.)

#### 1. "A timeless socialism": Bernstein

Out of this phase of capitalist expansion and growth of labor organizations, a current appeared that has gone down in history as "revisionism;" its key ideas were:

- The idea that the workers movement had embarked on a relentless and unending advance, organizationally, electorally and culturally. This vision of a historic forward march was underpinned by an ideology linking progress, the evolution of humanity and the final triumph of science and reason. It was based on a scientific and narrowly deterministic interpretation of Marxism.(3)

- The state (in line with German thought long haunted by the lateness and divisions of Germany's political structure compared to other modern states) was conceived mainly as the expression of national consciousness and culture. It was not seen as an oppressive apparatus to be destroyed, but as an accomplishment of civilization to be democratized, and therefore taken over and used to the utmost for its civic functions.

- The economy should be allowed to evolve separately, according to its own laws. Eduard Bernstein foreshadowed many features of the "free enterprise socialism" propagated in France today by Michel Rocard: "There is no liberal idea that is not at the same time a socialist idea..." "the smallest factory regulation contains more

socialism than any nationalization...," "wherever the state is less profitable, the private sector should be encouraged..."

- In this sort of perspective, the very notion of strategy had no place.

There was hardly any mention of the goal to be achieved, of the need to take initiatives, since the movement was all. The image was that of "the calm and collected force" marching serenely forward like a Senator on the Roman road of history. In the words of Angelo Tasca, it was "a timeless socialism," lacking any deadlines, targets, discontinuities or changes of pace. But in strategy, time is the exact opposite of a uniform, homogeneous and empty dimension. It is made of clashes, sudden changes and moments to be seized.

During the world war, this resolutely reformist wing of social-democracy was not the most jingoistic; rather, it ended up in the "center" of the party, allied to Kautsky in the current that was to give rise to the Independent Socialist Party (USPD). This was logical since, in its view, the war was an unfortunate parenthesis on the triumphant path of progress, that should be closed as soon as possible. The revisionists were therefore pacifistic: the waste of energy caused by the war had to stop, and fast, so things could resume their previous course. This pacifism had nothing in common with Lenin's internationalist orientation which led not to pacifism but revolutionary defeatism. Lenin's goal was not to close a parenthesis and return the class struggle to some alleged "normalcy," but to view the war as part and parcel of the class struggle and to use it as a springboard for a revolutionary situation. Hence his idea of transforming the war into a revolutionary civil war.

Here we have it: two counterposed views of the world, of history, of the struggle for power, and therefore (as we shall see in the next report) of the party.(4)

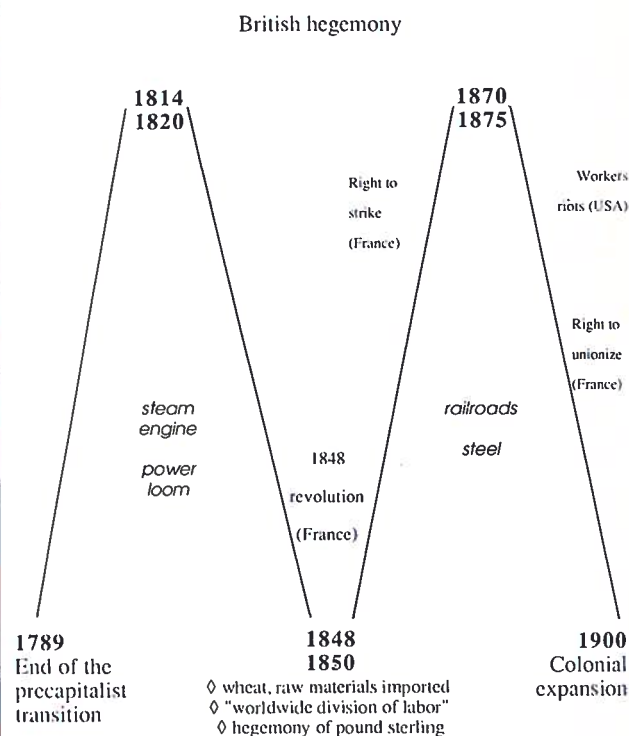
## 2. "Orthodoxy" or "passive radicalism": Kautsky

In the debate of the 1900s, Kautsky appeared as the leading spokesperson for orthodoxy. Remember that Lenin considered Kautsky as the authority. This was not, as we sometimes claim to dodge a bothersome question, a result of inattention or short-sightedness. At any rate, not mainly. Lenin championed careful reading (nowadays, some would say reading "for symptoms"); he tracked down political slips of the tongue relentlessly. Yet the very texts of Kautsky praised by Lenin, such as his famous *The road to power*, contain giant errors that Lenin did not "see." This was no blunder. He read the texts and agreed with them.

Kautsky's famous 1909 work greeted by Lenin as a classic develops an idea that was widespread in the socialist movement of the time: "The socialist party is a revolutionary party. It is not a party that makes revolutions.... We know that our goal can only be achieved through a revolution, but we also know that it is not up to us to make a revolution. Nor is it up to our enemies to prevent it. We therefore do not dream of

## Long waves of

### CAPITALIST EXPANSION



provoking or preparing a revolution. And since we cannot make a revolution at will, we cannot say in any way when and in what form it will occur."

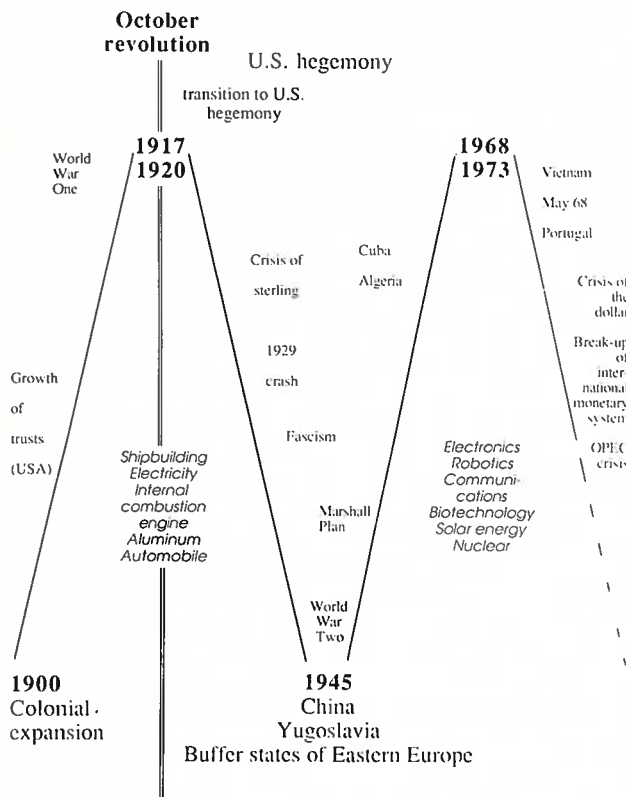
Here Kautsky states something which is common-sense: that the class struggle has its own logic, that struggles can break out in unpredictable ways, that they cannot be summoned by decree. This is the grain of truth so dear to all reformist bureaucrats. But he adds something else, even dearer to all past and present bureaucrats: that the revolution is a kind of objective phenomenon: "it comes," "it happens." Not only can revolutions not be provoked, but they cannot be "made." They therefore need not be "prepared."

The consequences of this approach are several (unless of course this "theory" of revolution is merely window dressing on pre-existing political choices):

a) On the question of the state. Kautsky believes the revolution is limited to "a displacement of forces within the state." It is only the "conquest of public powers." The dictatorship of the proletariat (an idea he could not do away with due to the still direct continuity with Marx) was reduced to "a dominant position within the state" and to "the expression of the political hegemony of the proletariat." When all was said and done, the conquest of power was nothing else than a take-over of the existing state and institutions. The idea of destroying the state was not only absent, but inconceivable in his outlook. Note then, that Lenin read and approved all this.

## capitalist expansion

## ERA OF HISTORICAL DECLINE



b) Unlike Bernstein, Kautsky was one of the thinkers who introduced analogies with military thought into the labor movement. He used the distinction between a war of attrition and a war of annihilation (a distinction later revived by Gramsci as the counterposition of positional warfare and moving warfare). The point, for Kautsky, was to wear down the enemy, to weaken it, to conquer positions, to gain legitimacy by striking a posture of self-defense. Strategy was present in his thinking, but its main concern was to avoid any actual battle at any time.(5)

Of course, the acid test of this outlook was the question of the general strike which arose in the wake of the 1901-1902 Belgian general strikes for universal suffrage, and more directly of the 1905 Russian mass strikes. The outbreak of mass workers strikes, unplanned, uncontrolled, outside the field of parliamentary struggle, made the extra-parliamentary road to revolution conceivable. It generated the concepts of crises, metamorphoses of the masses and sudden accelerations of history. The working class moved and speculation stopped. The mass struggle created the forms of organization that contained part of the answer (strike committees, councils, soviets) to the question of the struggle for power.

The mass strikes of the early part of the century put strategic debate on the agenda much as May 1968 in France, the Italian Creeping May, and the strikes against the Burgos trial in Spain, put it on the agenda in the early 1970s. What did the 1905 tremor reveal?

Rosa Luxemburg understood first and best that these events revealed the existence of an accumulation of social energy that could sweep aside the social-democratic apparatus's conservative routine and inertia. Unlike the labor skates, Kautsky took a middle position in this debate. When the issue came up, he voted for including the general strike in the arsenal of possible methods of struggle by the party.

At the same time though, he introduced a distinction between what he called "coercive" and "demonstrative" general strikes. In countries deprived of democratic freedoms such as Russia, the general strike would take on an offensive, "coercive," form to wrest new gains. But in countries where parliamentary democracy and a powerful bourgeois army existed, the general strike would be merely the final "demonstrative," defensive move to defend accumulated democratic gains against any coup attempt. Kautsky thought some bourgeois sectors might be tempted to scuttle the existing institutional rules which spelled doom for them because they required submitting to the electoral will of the majority, a proletarian majority that was already a numerical fact in German society and growing steadily more conscious of its real interests.

His basic idea was of course that the proletariat could not lose in the game of democracy. Only if the bourgeoisie tried to change the rules should the general strike be used in self-defense.

Kautsky had another worry—that tampering with general strikes might set in motion the deep, most elemental and least organized forces of the working class. He believed it was dangerous to tamper with the instincts and impulses of the working class. In his mind, civilization was reason. The reason of the class was the party. The unorganized and uneducated were primitive. The party was first and foremost the great teacher.

This is a rather coherent and systematic position: one does not make or prepare revolution; it happens; it consists mainly in the conquest of public powers; its strategy is the war of attrition in which the general strike may be used as a last resort. The road to power is a good old road; one travels in the direction of history and is guaranteed to reach the Promised Land.

Provided one avoids terrible provocations, refrains from unleashing the primal instincts of the masses, avoids being outflanked or forced to commit foolish moves, and allows things to run their course, victory is written in the orderly unfolding of history.

The paradoxical conclusion of Kautsky's apparent orthodoxy was: neither to provoke (don't tempt fate or the devil) nor to collaborate. He came out against Millebrand's entry into the bourgeois government in France. Here too, formal logic was on his side. Since victory was inevitable as the electoral expression of the proletariat's growth, it would come in due time; there was no need to compromise oneself in bourgeois cabinets. The day the proletariat became a majority, it would be a majority by itself, without compromises or alliances.

This is the sort of abstract logic that could reconcile consistent reformism with formal orthodoxy.

### 3. Rosa Luxemburg and Pannekoek sketch the outlines of an answer

Rosa Luxemburg understood very early the importance of this debate, in fact since 1898, when she polemicized against Bernstein in *Reform and Revolution*. She saw that social-democracy was slowly gaining ground and accumulating partial conquests, but also that it was simultaneously secreting a heavy bureaucracy. Although she did not state things in that way, she was the best prepared to understand the August 1914 capitulation of the SPD and to answer it in her pamphlet on *The crisis in the German Social-Democracy*. Already at the turn of the century, she sensed that party discipline was not only an expression of proletarian virtue, of workers' solidarity, but also the reflection of the discipline of the barracks and administration of a developed state.

That is why she felt involving new sectors of the class in struggle was not a danger but a source of regeneration of the movement. In her words, "1905 opens a new epoch in the history of the workers movement." She saw it as a break, the emergence of a qualitatively new element, "the manifestation of the proletarian struggle in the revolution." The general strike could therefore not be subsumed entirely in the concept of legitimate self-defense.

It represented an outburst that made revolutionary strategy conceivable.

We should note that here too Lenin sided with Kautsky against Rosa Luxemburg in the case of Germany. There is a logical connection between this practical position and his approval of the theses of *The Road to Power*, which shows just how far his own thinking had gone on the eve of the war. He still basically upheld the distinction between East and West, so dear to Kautsky, and therefore the distinction between "Russian" general strikes and "Western" general strikes. This explains why the collapse of August 4, 1914, caught him by surprise and why he decided to substantially readjust his views.(6)

In this debate on the general strike, then, Luxemburg put forth the beginning of the answer to the strategic question: under what circumstances could the proletariat break out of its straightjacket of oppression and alienation. What was still missing in her answer? She understood quite well that unleashing the energy of the masses allowed for a radical and sudden change in the relationship of forces and for posing questions in new terms. But she did not conceive this mass struggle in relation to the destruction of the bourgeois state. And she did not choose to focus her polemic against Kautsky on this point. Being consistent she did not link the idea of general strike to the idea of dual power.

The one who caused a real scandal in the 1912 discussion was Pannekoek, when he blurted out that the point with the state was not to conquer public powers, first the ministry of education, then the ministry of transports, but to destroy it fair and square.

This idea is now familiar. But in 1913, stated in such crude fashion, it was not obvious to all, particular-

ly not in the homeland of Bismarck and Lassalle, Fichte and Hegel. It may not be accidental that it behooved a Dutchman to resurrect Marx on this issue. Kautsky was outraged, called the proposition an absolute scandal, an outburst of primitive anarchism; Pannekoek answered that not he, but Marx, had invented this monstrous idea.

### 4. Revolution in the revolution: Lenin and revolutionary crisis

In thinking over this debate, Lenin understood and laid out something that remains crucially important for us. He endorsed of course the idea of destroying the bourgeois state. But this state could not be destroyed under any and all conditions. Stopping at such a timeless call would simply amount to justifying ultraleft voluntarism: if the question of power were posed permanently, the decision to move from the accumulation of trade-union and parliamentary forces to the accumulation of military forces would depend strictly on the political will of the party. It would only be a matter of declaring war on the state.

All this might seem elementary and commonsensical. But there are plenty of examples in the more or less distant past, in Europe as well as Latin America, where this commonsense was lacking.

In Argentina, the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), which the Ninth World Congress recognized as the section of the Fourth International in 1969, proclaimed itself in a state of war against the Argentine state. Its leadership included experienced revolutionary Marxist activists. Some of its members had lived through May 68 in France and the foundation of the Communist League in which the notion of revolutionary crisis was thoroughly discussed. This was the ABC of strategy, yet it was forgotten. We will examine the logic of their position later, bearing in mind that these were revolutionary militants who were willing to put their deeds in line with their words, and suffer the consequences. Their mistakes notwithstanding, they deserve our respect.

Lenin perceived the danger in this sort of shift from parliamentarism to leftism. There was perhaps a logic to Pannekoek becoming one of the theoreticians of council communism during the first years of the Communist International. Pannekoek explained that the working class had a childhood, adolescence and adulthood in a completely evolutionist perspective. A particular form of organization corresponded to each of these ages: the First International parties to its formative years; the trade unions for mass experience to its adolescence; and to its adulthood, the councils, whose function was both economic and political, a synthesis and supersession of the old parties and trade unions. This was independent of cycles of the class struggle. A similar outlook developed in the European far left in the 1970s.

It was Lenin who drew out most clearly the idea of "revolutionary crisis," the key to strategy. There exist particular and relatively exceptional circumstances in



which the state becomes vulnerable and destructible. They do not occur out of the blue. The class struggle has a rhythm, breaks and discontinuities, that must be grasped in terms of crises.

We will come to this idea again when we discuss the party and its role. Rosa Luxemburg understood the potential of the general strike, but failed to integrate it into an overall perspective for the destruction of the state, the emergence of dual power and the establishment of a revolutionary regime. Her decisions on how to wage her fight within German social-democracy, and whether or not to take it to its ultimate organizational conclusions, was probably linked to that approach.

Lenin's concepts underwent a qualitative leap towards systematic consistency under the blow of August 1914. Over the next two years, several themes emerged in his thinking:

- The realization of the *Collapse of the Second International* and an interpretation of its causes (labor aristocracy and bureaucratization);

- A further working out of the nature of imperialism (*Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*);

- And most importantly, a turn on the question of the state, reflecting a deep-going break with Kautsky's outlook in *The Road to Power*. One should not be fooled by the didactic imagery of *October*, the film showing Lenin feverishly writing *State and Revolution* during his exile in Finland after the July Days, as if he was a genius giving birth. The truth is that this very classical document based on a systematic rereading of Marx's writings on the issue was no improvisation. It was the end-product of a two-year discussion in which Lenin had initially defended Kautsky's classical position against Bukharin. Lenin radically changed his own position in the course of his refutation of Bukharin's leftism on the state. This is not to imply that he was reformist before 1914. But the problem he had tackled previously in the framework of the struggle against Tsarist autocracy, was different. This also explains the ambiguity of his formulas on the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," which expressed a deeper ambiguity on the question of the state. Incidentally, recent discussions which attempted to deal with this issue on the basis of quotations, independently of the evolution of Lenin's thought, were somewhat anachronistic; in reality his early thinking on the subject was unfinished (to claim otherwise would be a challenge to the most elementary materialism) and evolved as he attempted to grapple with the movement of history.(7)

As usual in such momentous situations, his turn had a methodological aspect linked to the drafting of his *Philosophical Notebooks* based on his reading of Hegel's *Logic*. Marx had a similar moment when he wrote the *Grundrisse* in 1857-58. But that is another story.(8)

In 1915 then, Lenin outlined and systematized the notion of "revolutionary crisis" in his *Collapse of the Second International*. This idea would remain in the forefront throughout 1917. It reappeared after the revolution, particularly in *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*. It is the notion that makes it possible to con-

ceive that a class as thoroughly dominated as the proletariat can seize power.

The description of the revolutionary crisis as it appears in *The Collapse of the Second International* is well-known: when the rulers can no longer ...; when the ruled will no longer ...; when the middle elements hesitate and go over .... The three aspects must be considered together. It is not enough for the ruled to take it no longer, explode and revolt; the rulers must also no longer be able to rule. In other words, the revolutionary crisis is not inherently on the agenda in every economic struggle or even every mass strike for immediate demands. It involves a crisis of the power structure with a political dimension from the start.

Moreover Lenin's views on the nature of politics, the party and political action were quite novel compared to those of traditional social-democracy. For him then, the revolutionary crisis was:

- an overall crisis of social relations;

- a national crisis (the formula appears several times): the state as a system of rule is shaken. If you keep in mind the overall pattern of long waves of the economy in the 19th and 20th centuries, you will see that with every major reversal of the trend there was a genuine crisis of the state system of the central capitalist states, sometimes even a shift of the imperialist epicenter: with 1848 came the extension of the revolutionary wave throughout the European continent; with 1870, the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune; with 1914, the European war, the Russian revolution, the rise of US hegemony and the reshaping of the entire central European state system; with 1937, World War Two and a new reshaping of Central Europe then the partition of Germany. (See diagram of long waves on pages 6-7.) Without being mechanistic, one should note that each major turn induced a radical revamping of the state system in Europe.

What does this notion of "national crisis" add to that of "revolutionary crisis" that is so important?

The idea of dual power expresses the clash of two irreconcilable powers. The bourgeois state must be destroyed; but what should be put in its place? This is where the national crisis comes into play. Dual power is not initially a problem of consciousness. In other words, the workers do not consciously begin to build their own state because we have convinced them that the other one is bad and should be gotten rid of. The vanguard party may know this. But that is not how the masses view the problem.

In practice, dual power (which presupposes that broad masses move into action) is possible only if new instruments emerge that can fulfill certain functions better or in other ways than the old state apparatus suffering from paralysis or dislocation. Certain vital functions of the state must break down before new instruments, that are not only more democratic, but able to take charge of these no longer performed but socially necessary tasks, can emerge.

This was the case in every genuine revolutionary situation. The tasks to be performed can be very diverse. In Chile, it was the question of food supplies; in Portugal, the running of factories abandoned by seditious owners. The starting point and forms of organization are unpredictable: local committees, neighborhood or workplace commissions, old trade-union structures transformed by mass action.<sup>(9)</sup> There are no norms or models in this respect.

Lenin described three characteristics of a revolutionary crisis. But a fourth one is necessary for the crisis to lead to victory: a perspective carried by a conscious force. A revolutionary crisis can break out and end in defeat. Only a conscious intervention can insure a positive outcome. The party is not merely a teacher or a reflection of the various social movements. It is not simply a vessel for ideas. It is the center piece in the strategic array of the proletarian revolution.

Indeed, once you have said strategy, you must say decision and initiative, and therefore plan, strongholds and relationship of forces. Education is part of all this, but only as one dimension of party activity. Strategy also means battles and battles are moments when time counts twice or three times as much, when the outcome depends on the decisionmaking ability of the fighters. Of course, in a social revolution, the masses are in action. So we are not talking about the maneuvers of a general staff. The party does not decide alone or arbitrarily. But while the revolution is first and foremost a matter for classes, its fate is decided finally on the military plane, by the insurrectional act. The October revolution showed this: it was an action decided rapidly in which each day, each hour counted.

You must therefore have something built beforehand that enables you to make decisions with the utmost reliability. The October insurrection is an excellent example. The choice of the moment was based on a judgement of the political legitimacy of the action in the entire mass movement, not just the evolution of the relationship of forces in the congress of soviets, but also the whole trend of developments in the trade unions, city councils, and regiments from July to October. All this was analyzed and known in minute detail, but there still remained to seize the strategic moment, the opportunity that could tip the balance and would perhaps never recur. All the notes and telegrams from Lenin to the Central Committee on the eve of October express the anguish of this understanding.

At that point, what makes it possible for the party to decide and act, is not only the accumulation of forces and educational work, but the strength of the party's links with the mass movement, the political and moral authority it has gained beyond its own membership; this is what creates understanding and willingness to follow its decisions.

You see that a revolutionary strategy focused on the idea of a national crisis implies a conception of the party radically opposed to Kautsky's: its point is precisely to prepare the revolution. You cannot decide the begin-

## Germany: From SPD to KPD

**1864:** Foundation of Allgemeine Deutscher Arbeiter Verein, ancestor of Social-Democratic Party (SPD)

**1890s:** rapid growth of SPD and trade unions

**1899-1902:** Revisionist controversy initiated by Eduard Bernstein

**1912:** Kautsky polemic with Pannekoek

**1914 August:** SPD votes for war credits in Reichstag

**1915:** Foundation of Gruppe Internationale

**1917:** Foundation of USPD, left split of SPD

**1918:** Foundation of KPD from Spartakusbund and others; insurrections in Kiel, Berlin and other towns overthrow Kaiser; SPD helps to create Weimar bourgeois republic and Free Corps

**1919:** SPD leadership suppresses Spartakusbund

**1919-1923:** workers councils continue to exist, but more and more confined to internal factory functions

**1920:** Attempted putsch by general Kapp is thwarted by a general strike; fusion of KPD and USPD majority

**1921:** "March action", an uprising focused on Leuna (near Halle)

**1923:** French troops invades Ruhr, inflation skyrockets.

SPD left wing forms provincial government in Saxony under Zeigner, with KPD support.

October: Hamburg insurrection of KPD

ning and course of a revolution, but to orient it and determine its outcome, you must have prepared it. In this perspective the party is always acting. It creates. It acts politically and socially. It is not a pure and simple record of the organic force and maturity of class consciousness. It takes initiatives, tries to codify relationships of forces, strikes the necessary alliances.

It is in the business of politics. Its politics include defending firmly the independence of the working class and posing the problem of which alliances can help change the situation. We'll come back to this point.

To conclude, note that Lenin's approach was not ultra-left and differed radically from the theory of the offensive fashionable in certain sectors of the Communist International shortly after its foundation. Supporters of this theory believed that the world had definitively entered the era in which revolution was permanently on the agenda in the most immediate sense. Their argument was no longer based on cycles, advances and retreats. In the end they reduced all strategy to the offensive on the organizational, political and even military plane. This is what transpired in the March action in Germany in 1921, or the Reval insurrection (now Tallinn, Estonia) (10).

On the organizational and political planes, the point was to replace the obsolete instruments evolved in the pre-revolutionary era of the workers movement, with the instruments of the new revolutionary era, combining a political and trade-union dimension—the councils. Variants of this view were upheld by the Dutch Left (Gorter and Pannekoek), Bordiga and the German KAPD.

This is not a purely historical question, confined to the feverish enthusiasm of the 1920s. Similar arguments surfaced again in the early 1970s. In Italy, in the name of an imminent revolutionary crisis, many counterposed what they saw as the soviet vocation of the shop stewards' councils created in the 1969-70 wave, to the perspective of their "cooptation" into the trade unions. True, in 1972-75 the various trade-union leaderships strove to institutionalize these councils in the structure of the trade unions themselves. But since no immediate revolutionary solution existed, this integration also meant the penetration and massification of trade unionism inside the workplace, on the basis of organs born in struggle and solidly linked to the rank-and-file. This was the source of the great resilience demonstrated by the Italian workers movement in its struggle to defend the sliding scale of wages in 1984.

We could have made a similar mistake in Spain. In the introduction to his anthology on workers control, Ernest Mandel dwells emphatically on the prospect that the workers commissions, instruments of struggle born in the underground outside any institutional control, would be transformed rapidly, as the dictatorship fell, into the backbone of a dual power system. This was indeed a possibility.

But the situation after the death of Franco did not evolve into a revolutionary crisis—thanks in great part to the role of the traditional workers parties—but towards a "democratic" institutionalization (which failed to dismantle the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship). The question then was no longer the transformation of the workers commissions into soviet-type organs, but the building of a powerful united and democratic trade-union movement. In this event, we were able to adjust our fire correctly.

The issue always involves a question of political judgement. The reverse was true in Chile. In the winter 1973, there was an intense discussion on the role of the "industrial cordons" that emerged to resist the October 1972 and June 1973 coup attempts. These cordons were basically territorial coordinating committees of workplace-based trade unions in the suburbs of the large cities. They could have either broadened, begun to centralize the other forms of popular mobilization and taken charge of self-defense, or gone the other way towards a mere reform of trade-union structures. The former option was probably the correct one. The Communist Party fought for the latter fiercely. The MIR accepted this (we shall see why later). Here too, the heart of the matter was one's judgement on the political situation and deadlines.

## II. Strategic "models" and perspectives

The point is not to imagine and gamble on a particular scenario or prophesize that a revolutionary crisis in contemporary developed capitalist countries will take this or that form. All we can do is draw the general lessons of existing experiences, whether victorious or defeated. This means extracting what is universal from the great tests of the interwar years (Germany, Italy, Spain, the popular fronts), the period of anti-Nazi resistance and Liberation (France, Italy, Greece) and the postwar period (May 68, the Italian creeping May, Spain, Portugal, the British strikes...) (See the chronology of the European class struggle in the 1960s and 1970s on page 18.)

Beyond that, we can only try to outline the shape of future crises and suggest a few conclusions. Few would dare predict the actual forms that the crisis of modern developed capitalist states will take. That experience is still before us. At any rate, not even the Bolsheviks had a detailed scenario, beyond a few guidelines, before accumulating their own experiences.

### 1. East and West

First a few words on the old discussion which appeared in Kautsky's writings as the contrast between Russia and Europe, and in Gramsci's between East and West. The counterposition of archaic states, with strong autocratic and precapitalist features, and modern states, with democratic rights and parliamentary representation, has an ancient lineage.

When the Communist International was founded, a debate quickly developed over the applicability of the Russian revolution: was it a product of Eastern particularities or a "model" of universal scope? In *The Renegade Kautsky* as well as in *The Infantile Disorder*, Lenin stressed the universal features and lessons of the first victorious proletarian revolution. But he was careful not to make it into a model.

For what could such a model embody? The sequence from February to October 1917? But can one explain the form of the 1917 crisis without 1905 and its soviets, without the subsequent military experiences (including guerrilla warfare in the Urals) and the world war?

At the same time, very early on, Radek, Paul Levi and Gramsci, faced with new experiences through the International, tried to identify the specificity of the socialist revolution in a society and state more developed than pre-1917 Russia. They sought a strategy that could take on a complex, ramified and omnipresent state, as opposed to a state with little legitimacy whose repressive function was manifest.

The problem is not just the existence of universal suffrage and a parliamentary system. For this system can exist only when the state derives additional legitimacy from providing particular services in society. This role already existed when these early Comintern discussions took place; it developed much further during the postwar

boom and half-century of welfare state, with interventions in the fields of credit, health, education, urban planning, etc.

In the 1920s controversy, the contraposition of East and West focused on the nature of the state itself: either a hard-core band of armed men with the role of gendarme and night watch; or a more articulated network deployed over wider functions. The two models involved a different dosage of coercion and consensus. The discussion is ably summarized in Perry Anderson's article on Gramsci.(11) Ernest Mandel in his 1977 *Critique Communiste* interview about revolutionary strategy in Western Europe, locates and stresses stresses another difference: the different types of workers movements, the "Western" being more massive, concentrated and skilled.(12) On the long run, this means more favorable conditions for struggle. Lenin and Trotsky expressed a similar idea when they said that power would be harder to take in the "West" than in the "East," but easier to keep.

In the end, whether seen from the angle of the state, or of the workers movement, the problem is basically the same: the stronger state and more developed working class are two facets of the same situation. They are inter-linked.

This means that one cannot imagine a revolutionary, national crisis unless the working class has previously announced, through its activities and forms of organization, that it is a candidate for the role of reorganizer and manager of **all society**. This is the question raised by Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The working class's activity must make explicit its aspiration to resolve all the vital problems of society. The precondition for this is, of course, that it struggle for its own demands and defend its own rights. But that is not enough.

## 2. Two hypotheses raised by Trotsky

In his writings on Germany in the 1930s, Trotsky put forward two hypotheses on revolutionary crises in developed capitalist countries. Note that this firm defender of the universal relevance of the "lessons of October" did not turn the Russian revolution into the only possible model. He considered on the one hand, the possibility of a sudden collapse of the national state followed by the appearance of a political vacuum thirsting for some new content. On the other hand, the possibility of a slower, longer crisis, with rising levels. Thus, in Germany, the crisis lasted from 1918 to 1923; in Spain (though not properly speaking a developed capitalist country at the time), from 1931 to 1937 or 1939.

In the latter case, there was an accumulation of critical experiences and a maturation of the revolutionary forces in the course of the crisis before the outbreak of an open revolutionary crisis and dual power. Thus, workers control, contrary to what the Stalinists claimed at the time to explain their general reluctance to raise transitional demands, is not reserved for clear-cut dual power situations. Partial experiences of workers control can develop before such situations, locally, in a context of conflict and disequilibrium; stated otherwise, the power

of the employers can be challenged in the workplace some time before the political power of the bourgeoisie is challenged at large.

The possibility of such a protracted crisis (as opposed to a collapse-type crisis) led some participants in the Comintern discussion to consider the possibility of a **workers government** that would, at least partially, still exist in the framework of bourgeois state institutions. Indeed such a crisis might well develop without **all** the branches of the modern, complex, ramified state collapsing suddenly and homogeneously, across the entire territory. The state might merely be shaken loose by repeated shocks or an enduring social and economic crisis in which the workers movement could begin to present its own solutions and bid for leadership of the nation.

More generally, the latter perspective makes the united front and transitional demands approach particularly important. In retrospect, one cannot claim that this approach was a clear and unchallenged legacy of the first years of the Communist International. Quite the contrary, the discussions on the program of the Comintern between the fourth and sixth congresses, Bukharin's and Thalheimer's counter-reports on this issue, show that the collapse hypothesis predominated at that time; hence the widespread misunderstanding of the united front and transitional program.(13)

## 3. Concerning a supposition of Andreu Nin

Ideas do not determine the course of concrete politics. Many other things come into play: class pressures, the relationship of forces, circumstances. But a working hypothesis is a means to educate and prepare: it implies that certain choices are easier and closer to reality than others. Thus, in the name of the structural differences between East and West, Andreu Nin, who knew the Russian revolution first hand, served as a leader of the Red International of Labor Unions and wrote a good little pamphlet on soviets(14), told his followers this: be careful, Spain is a politically and socially more developed society than Russia; what made the emergence of soviets as a united and massive form of self-organization possible in Russia, was the weakness of the underground political and trade-union organizations and of the workers movement as a whole; in Spain, there already exists a complex organized labor movement, with several parties (PSOE, PCE, FAI, POUM...), several trade unions (UGT, CNT, ...); when the working class is already organized so massively, it is hard to see how new forms (soviets or councils) could emerge with a higher degree of unity and organic roots than the existing organizations. His conclusion: the form in which the working class can announce its candidacy for power is a regroupment, or cartel, of the existing organizations, patterned after the Workers Alliances (UHP) that emerged in Asturias in 1934.

While ideas do not guide the world, they are important in preparing the vanguard for its tasks. Nin ap-

proached the coming revolutionary situation with those ideas. When push came to shove and the government of the Generality of Catalonia was formed in September 1936, the POUM entered it (including Nin himself, as Minister of Justice). Since the great bulk of the workers parties and mass organizations were represented in this government, it was only logical for Nin to believe that the problem of power had thereby been resolved.

Of course, there still was the notorious "shadow" of the bourgeoisie, in this case the nationalist Catalan Left. But in the case of Catalonia, Trotsky never made this the central practical question, and, in any case, the situation was further qualified by the existence of the national question. On the other hand, if one believed the government of the Generality represented the already achieved form of revolutionary power, then this government, with its own revolutionary legality, had to be counterposed to the council of militias and forms of self-organization born outside the state in the July 1936 uprising. The latter had to be considered a sort of "anarcho-populist" vestige (the epithet used by Mario Soares, some forty years later).

There is a logic to all this. The POUM entered the government and supported the dissolution of the organs of self-organization, particularly their coordinating committee, that is, precisely what could enable them to pose as an alternative power.

This is a general problem. In every revolutionary crisis, revolutionaries must seek the best form of mass organization: the one that expresses the balance of forces most directly and clearly, that allows relations between the masses and their traditional organizations to change most easily, and that enables the masses to break from their old leadership with the least divisive impact on the mass movement. In other words, a framework where unitive aspirations have the greatest weight and where the radicalization of the rank-and-file, which develops much faster than that of the apparatuses in such circumstances, can be reflected most faithfully.

About a year later, in May 1937, POUM militants and many Anarchists were driven to fight the Stalinists and others in the insurrection of Barcelona. But by that point, there no longer existed a unitive melting pot that could have counterposed to the policy of the CP and FAI leadership its own greater legitimacy, that of unitive organs and of authority earned in struggle, because the potential melting pot had been broken eight months earlier.

Once again, no schema can substitute for a concrete analysis of the situation. The Lip watch factory action committee in 1974 was not the forerunner of an extensive process of mass self-organization. Dual power requires that the unitive forms of self-organization have greater legitimacy than the parties and currents present inside them. The united front can be an important lever to achieve that goal. But the lever should not be confused with the goal. The goal is to enhance the birth of a power whose legitimacy will undermine that of the state institutions to be destroyed. In the case of Catalonia, history is concrete. What was happening was not simply

a counterposition of the Generality government to the central council of the militias, but also an effort to rebuild municipal institutions against the insurrectional organs, and return to the former the prerogatives they had lost to the latter.

### III. The major strategic hypotheses

The main revolutionary experiences, whether victorious or defeated, indicate two possible strategic patterns:

- That of the insurrectional general strike, which corresponds to a certain type of confrontation between the bourgeois state and workers movement: the conflict-ridden coexistence of antagonistic social forces and institutions in a predominantly urban space. This implies the issue is settled quickly—a weakened but not dislocated bourgeois state cannot coexist for very long with a nascent revolutionary power, without one or the other winning. So the ability of both sides to take initiatives is decisive. This is illustrated, in different ways, by the course of the German and Russian revolutions.

- The other hypothesis is that of lasting territorial dual power, beginning with liberated zones. Variants of this pattern appeared in China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam. The reasons for this strategy were laid out by Mao as early as 1926 in his article *Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?*: mainly a weak and ill-centralized bourgeois state, vast geographical spaces and an acute land problem.(15) Hence the idea of liberated zones which the official army could not reconquer without great effort.

#### 1. Protracted people's war

These liberated zones existed in the early 1930s in central China, then from 1937, around the Republic of Yan'an. They constituted little states, with their party, red army, and nascent self-contained self-administered economy; altogether their population was far larger than that of Nicaragua today.(16)

This experience is probably the clearest. But if you consider China, Yugoslavia or Vietnam, there is one common characteristic beyond the obvious differences: namely, that the decisive phase of the revolutionary process was combined with a national liberation struggle. That is fundamental: the social revolution coincided with a genuine liberation struggle—against the Japanese occupation in China, the German in Yugoslavia, the French then the American in Vietnam.

This strategic aspect has major implications: a different sort of support from the population, possibilities for alliances, military struggle against a foreign enemy. These observations are banal. But they were not fully understood by the Argentine PRT in the early 1970s or the Sandinista Front at least until 1974.

The Argentine PRT had elaborated a false but coherent strategy that did not involve "armed struggle" alone. Armed struggle per se is a generality. The PRT strategy aimed to create a situation of territorial dual power in the country, to establish liberated zones, particularly in the Tucuman region in the North. For that, it needed an army. Hence the decision of the fifth congress (January 1970) to create the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). The next step was to obtain recognition as a belligerent force from international institutions; hence the effort to capture prisoners of war. The liberated zones had to be protected from attacks by the regular army; hence the large-scale operations against army barracks to seize heavy equipment, anti-aircraft weapons, and so on and so forth.

All this obviously determined how the organization was built. It intervened in factories and recruited workers; but its factory activists, since this was a state of war, were mainly soldiers of the shadows; their activities in the workplace were self-limited to avoid being spotted as agitators or trade unionists.

The underlying idea was that any revolution in a dependent country, even in a country as developed as Argentina, would inevitably have to face a direct intervention of US imperialism. Remember that US marines had landed in the Dominican Republic as recently as 1965. So the struggle was conceived both as a social revolution and liberation struggle. It started from the outset as a liberation struggle by virtue of the fact that the PRT was convinced that there would be a foreign intervention in the future.

This sort of schema was quite widespread among Latin American revolutionary organizations at the time. If you read Sandinista writings of that time, you will see that this outlook prevailed in Nicaragua too at the beginning.(17) After the failure of the first guerrilla experiences from 1962 to 1967, the FSLN stood basically on a protracted revolutionary warfare line inspired more by the Vietnamese model than the focoists. Why? Because there existed an old tradition of US military intervention in Nicaragua.

So social revolution and national liberation were closely intertwined in the thinking of the time: the final victory would require the defeat of both the dictatorship and the invader. This is the origin of the protracted warfare line.

But in 1974, a major discussion and reorientation occurred, initiated by Carlos Fonseca it seems. It is one thing to fight an enemy or occupation army that is physically present, quite another to organize against an enemy who, however likely foreign intervention may be, is still only virtual. The strategy was therefore corrected:

- the present enemy was the dictatorship and an insurrectional uprising had to be prepared to put an end to the tyranny;

- however, to defeat imperialist intervention, social revolution would be necessary and would succeed only after a protracted war.

What was immediately on the agenda then (for two of the three FSLN currents) was the insurrectional over-

### France: 1960-1986

- 1958: De Gaulle takes power in coup d'Etat
- 1962: Algeria wins independence from France
- 1963: miners' strike heralds revival of strikes
- 1968: May 1: united May Day demonstration
  - May 1-12: student protests
  - May 13: trade-unions call one-day nationwide strike against repression
  - May 14: strike continues and spreads to 10 million workers
  - May 30: De Gaulle leaves Paris, visits French troops in Germany
  - June 4: general strike begins to crumble
  - June 23: De Gaulle wins elections
- 1968-74: high level of strikes and growth of trade unions
- 1969: foundation of Communist League, later to become LCR
- 1971: Epinay congress of SP charts course for united Left electoral victory, Mitterrand joins SP
- 1972: Union of the Left: agreement between CP and SP around Common Program which projects a gradual road to socialism through nationalizations
- 1973: Lip clock workers take over their factory
- 1977: 22nd congress of PCF formally abandons dictatorship of proletariat, endorses self-management and proposes to amend Common Program to add more nationalizations
- 1977-1981 Disunity of the left
- 1981: May 10: Mitterrand, elected president
  - May 24: SP and CP win majority in parliament; CP and SP agree to govern jointly
- 1981-84: PCF has four ministers in joint SP-CP government of Mauroy
- 1984: PCF leaves SP government
- 1986: March 16: Rightwing parties win elections to national assembly; Chirac government formed

throw of the dictatorship; only later would the war against foreign intervention begin. This rectification had many practical consequences. For the so-called proletarian tendency, an insurrectional perspective meant giving more importance to urban activity and mass work in various social sectors and the trade unions. For the "tercerista" tendency, really preparing for a mass insurrection meant undertaking military initiatives to undermine the cohesiveness of enemy forces, and political initiatives, particularly in the field of alliances, to divide and weaken the bourgeois opposition and take the initiative away from it.

This was the context in which it was decided to set up the "Group of the Twelve" and assign it its particular function.

The paradox—in reality, only on the surface—was that the currents who held the historical perspective of a long-term protracted war with victory being won by a final desperate effort, were the toughest ones on the ques-

tion of alliances. The perspective of the ultimate annihilation of the enemy made that question relatively secondary. By contrast, those who hoped for a rapid solution were forced to try and take more initiatives on the political field. The same line-up occurred in the debates inside the Salvadoran organizations.

All this may seem relatively distant and exotic. The important point is simply that when a revolutionary organization takes the strategic hypothesis it has adopted seriously, the consequences do not concern only the final moment. They concern all aspects of party-building and day-to-day activity.

Do not forget that in the 1970s, however strange or childish this may seem today, certain Western European organizations adopted ideas borrowed from protracted warfare strategies. An organization like Lotta Continua, in Italy, with its several thousand members and daily newspaper, had a working hypothesis that contributed to its final blow-up in 1976-77—this was, of course not the only reason. Its January 1976 congress adopted the position that a situation of "protracted revolutionary crisis" existed with open and prolonged clashes with the bourgeois state. In practice, this meant it was acceptable to vote for a democratic or left government (with no further qualification) as a lesser evil, since the main problem was to broaden the space for autonomous action by the working class, to build the backbone of proletarian power and to engage in partial experiences of violent confrontation.

It was no accident that one of the factors which triggered Lotta Continua's crisis—along with the change in conjuncture of 1976 and the explosive impact of the women's liberation question on a very hierarchical organization—was the growing autonomy of its defense guard. The official political line encouraged different sectors to acquire a separate dynamic and extend it to its logical conclusion. Besides being mistaken on the actual concrete situation, the strategic hypothesis of "prolonged revolutionary crisis" called for an accumulation of military forces.(18)

## 2. Insurrectional general strike

If this strategic hypothesis is taken as a guiding thread, it does not necessarily mean that a general strike, or an insurrection, or both, will happen before power is taken. History is always richer than hypotheses.

We already indicated that the unprecedentedly massive general strike of May 68 put back on the agenda the possibility of a revolutionary crisis in developed capitalist countries reaching the end of an era of prosperity and stability. There is a clear-cut difference between the terms of the strategic debate in Western Europe before and after May 68. This debate spread beyond the far-left organizations. It was lively in the trade unions (the CGIL in Italy, the Workers Commissions in Spain, the CFDT in France) and to a certain extent in the traditional parties (Eurocommunism, the Labour Party left...)

The debate was based on real and weighty events: not just the French general strike, but the 1969-70 strike

wave in Italy, the British miners' strike which overthrew the conservative government in 1974, the strike wave against the Burgos trials and the series of general strikes, particularly in the Basque Country, in Spain.

This culminated, of course, with the Portuguese revolutionary experience in 1974-75. In this respect, we should dispel a widespread mistaken impression: while the May-June 1968 movement with its ten million strikers was unequalled, the level of struggles between 1969 and 1976 was far higher in Italy, Britain and Spain than in France.

We should take this reality which expressed a qualitative change in the relationship of forces to the advantage of the working class as our starting point. How then is a strategic hypothesis of insurrectional general strike functional in this context?

We will take three examples briefly: Chile, France and Spain. Of course, Chile in 1970-73 was not a developed, but a dependent capitalist country. But it is relevant for several reasons: the structure of its labor movement (strong Communist and Socialist parties and a significant revolutionary organization), and the fact the Chilean experience had a big impact on strategic thinking in Europe in the mid-1970s (Berlinguer argued the need for a "historic compromise," and certain far-left circles concluded small independent revolutionary organizations were powerless, all on the basis of a balance sheet of Chile).

In the case of Chile under the Popular Unity (UP) government (1970-73), the practical consequences of a strategic hypothesis for a revolutionary organization are clear. In a nutshell, before the electoral victory of UP, the MIR worked on the perspective of protracted people's war with liberated zones in the countryside and mountains. It saw Allende's victory in the elections as a parenthesis, an interlude, to be used to gather new support, bases and forces. The implicit assumption was that the experience would probably end in a partial but limited defeat that would have a clarifying effect, sweep away illusions in a reformist road and put more serious business on the agenda.

The consequences of this approach were apparent on several levels:

a) In 1972 and 1973 the MIR failed to carry on systematic propaganda and agitation to make general strike the almost instinctive and spontaneous response of the masses to any reactionary offensive. When a reactionary coup is looming (as the Kapp putsch in Germany in 1920, the various attempts in Chile in 1972-73 and Portugal in 1974-75), rehearsing massive actions can be decisive to prepare the workers to fight back with a general strike. The idea of a general strike implies more than the mere paralysis of production. When Pinochet's coup came, Allende, although besieged in the presidential palace, still could use the radio; but his last instructions urged workers to remain in their workplaces and not to move. They failed to define any other means of resistance. In truth, the general strike must be conceived as a call to action, not the mere acknowledgement of an ex-

isting situation, and therefore requires a form of centralization of the struggle.

b) The MIR perspective offered no incentive to systematize embryonic elements of dual power towards a general uprising. This was one of the reasons for its position in the debate on the vocation of the industrial cordons. Instead of urging that their purview be enlarged to become the focus of an alternative popular power (as certain left socialist sectors argued), it accepted to limit them to a trade-union role, believing that the tasks of military preparation properly belonged to the party, that is to itself.(19)

c) In a general strike and mass self-defense perspective, the question of arming the people, even if only in its most rudimentary form (pickets), should be organically linked to the mass movement. The goal should be to do everything that can accumulate experiences of this sort in trade unions and neighborhoods. Instead, every time there was an alert or the rumor of a coup, the MIR prioritized its own party operational system, called its militants to "the barracks" and organized its own patrols.

d) If the point is to prepare for a confrontation, work among the army should aim to split it, by massively organizing soldiers to side with the workers movement on the basis of material or democratic demands. Conversely, if the perspective is a limited defeat, that will be only one of many ups and downs, the main focus is conspiratorial, infiltration and intelligence work, not to act immediately but to prepare the fights of the future.

These four items clearly show how a strategic option is reflected in practice. Overall, the MIR's strategy meant preparing for hypothetical tasks of the future at the expense of the tasks of the day. This is one of the reasons (obviously not the only one, since the MIR had only very limited influence) why the workers' strikes and unarmed resistance lacked centralization and perspective. As a result, the army coup defeated relatively easily (compared to other similar historical experiences) a mass movement that was still powerful. The MIR's revolutionary will and sincerity are not in doubt. But, because its perspective was wrong, it was not only partially paralyzed when the test came, but also ill-prepared for the sort of defeat and the new conditions of struggle which emerged.(20)

We mentioned that a strategic general strike perspective involves more than a mere generalization of strikes. It poses a two-fold question of legitimacy and centralization: the social legitimacy of its leadership as compared to state institutions, and the centralization of the forces it sets in motion. Even an apparently powerful social movement can be defeated suddenly if the state still retains unchallenged legitimacy and a few faithful and resolute forces with which to take the initiative. The bourgeoisie appreciates fully, from past experience, the value of special bodies that enable it to regain the initiative in critical situations. Already in 1919, in Germany, it organized its notorious "Free Corps" to fill the gap left by the decomposition of the regular army. In Portu-

gal, the Amadora commandos, which numbered only a few hundred determined soldiers, enabled the bourgeoisie to win a decisive (albeit more political than military) victory on November 25, 1975.

The true function of the general strike can be illustrated by the case of **May 68 in France**. Rather curiously at first sight, the French trade unions never called this general strike. They merely noted that the strike had generalized. Since the strike was generalizing, why should they call for a general strike? Nevertheless, this would have made a difference, and a sizable one. If the CGT, or the CFDT, or a joint trade union front had issued the call for a general strike:

a) They would have had to define a joint national platform, for the strike could no more be stopped one factory at a time than it had been started one factory at a time. The goal of the struggle would have had to be centralized so that all could struggle for it. De Gaulle's departure could have been posed as a precondition for negotiations. Indeed, as soon as it is centralized, the general strike becomes political. It stops being a sum of strikes for economic demands.

b) They would have had to define on the basis of what gains the general strike could stop, rather than have it crumble away on the basis of local negotiations alone.

c) Finally the centralization of the strike poses the question: who leads? Is it the regular existing leaderships, or an elected central strike committee, or a mixture of both?

The point then is not to make the general strike a fetish or a gadget, but an approach with many strategic implications. In **Spain**, the slogan of revolutionary general strike against the dictatorship was the guideline of the LCR comrades **between 1974 and 1976**. In retrospect it may seem debatable, but I think it was correct. The mistake lay elsewhere: namely the prognosis that the fall of Francoism would signal the immediate opening of a revolutionary crisis. This wager was based on a more general analysis of the imminence of an explosive situation on a continental scale. But the practical problem of orientation consisted in creating the conditions of overthrow of the dictatorship most favorable to the workers movement, whatever the subsequent evolution of the situation might be.

What was the most desirable outcome? What actually happened, that is the slow death of the dictator and a controlled transition which restored democracy, under the aegis of the restored monarchy, without touching one hair on the repressive apparatus? Or what was indeed perfectly conceivable, namely the overthrow of the dictatorship by mass action? This is not an abstract idea. When you have had the mass mobilizations against the Burgos trials, frequent regional strikes, and the biggest strike upsurge in Europe in the first semester 1976 (outside of May 68), such an outcome really is possible.

The fact that things did not turn out that way does not mean that the line on this issue was wrong. The very real mistakes that were made did not necessarily



flow mechanically from this fight for the revolutionary general strike that would have made it possible for the workers movement to deal with the post-Franco period from a stronger position.

On the other hand, the mistaken prognosis did have some consequences, particularly if one tended to deduce a practical line from it. If you suppose that a revolutionary crisis is almost certain on the short run (one thing is fighting for a general strike to happen, another believing it will actually happen and lead to a revolutionary crisis), then democratic and national demands are given less emphasis, or even considered as a diversion from the preparation of the struggle for power in the country as a whole.

### 3. Why insurrectional?

In an open revolutionary crisis the idea of general strike is closely linked to that of insurrection. This is not true of every day of action which involves a nationwide strike, but of critical situations. We are therefore not talking about the problems we face most often. But in extreme situations, it is difficult to have the one without the other.

One of the reasons the general strike failed in El Salvador in January 1981, is that when you have a situation that has already developed to the point of open confrontation, the workers hesitate to run the risks of a political general strike without the guarantee that they will be able to protect themselves against repression.

Conversely, an insurrection without a general strike (or general mass mobilization) will challenge the state from a very unfavorable position.

In this regard, the various accounts of the Hamburg insurrection of October 1923 are quite eloquent and pathetic.(21) For three days, the party activists fought in the streets and neighborhoods while most workers continued to go to work. Although it felt solidarity beyond its own ranks, it was the party who did the fighting.

The same thing happened during the insurrection of the Schutzbund in Vienna in 1934. In 1927, the Austrian social-democracy let the opportunity pass to call a general strike and take the initiative against a still weak far right. According to Ernst Fischer's account, everything was ready but the leadership left the headquarters through a secret passageway while the electrical workers came up the main stairways to get instructions.(22) In the meantime, the armed workers militia was involved in its regular Sunday practice. By contrast, in 1934, in a last attempt at saving themselves, the Schutzbund fought, but like a fish outside water. There was no general strike. Uncoupling the two spells defeat.

This partly unavoidable gap between the mass movement and military preparations is a crucial problem. Listen to what Clara Zetkin said in 1924, at the fifth congress of the Comintern, about the shortcomings and mistakes committed during the preparation of the German October (1923):

"I see the causes of the October defeat in a series of facts that call for severe criticism of the previous attitude

of the party. The occupation of the Ruhr made the situation revolutionary. The party should have taken the leadership of the revolutionary forces that were emerging to lead them towards the struggle for the seizure of power. But it failed to understand the situation in time. It should have acted in Parliament, in city councils, in meetings, in demonstrations, in factory councils. It should have assigned the factory councils a political role and made them the base for mass action, like a few years earlier. When the leadership realized its mistake, it began to organize the arming of the party feverishly. But actual arming must go hand in hand with the consciousness of the need for armed struggle. The moral factors must compensate the inadequacy of weapons. In the struggle, the proletariat will realize the need for better armament to defeat the enemy. The party did very little to explain this. It did not link its policy and activity to the masses. This is why the government in Saxony was a terrible mistake. A workers government only makes sense as the crowning act of a mass movement based on organs of the proletariat, outside Parliament, that is factory councils, assemblies of workers, armed forces of the working class. Instead, the idea was that the workers government would be the starting point of a mass movement and the arming of the proletariat. This is how a number of mistakes were made in the application of the united front tactic. The result was: neither people nor weapons. It has been said here that the party's orderly retreat did not correspond to the revolutionary aspirations of the mass and party. This is incorrect. The masses were not prepared. The party did not find the way to use the revolutionary frame of mind. Even the Hamburg insurrection demonstrates what I am saying. All my admiration for the hundreds of heroes who fought in Hamburg cannot stop me from observing that neither the other party members nor the rest of the Hamburg proletariat asserted their solidarity. Yet there were 14 000 Communists in Hamburg."(23)

In this case, once the party decided on insurrection, it held its breath, as it were, alerted and put away its best militants in preparation for D-day, put a brake on the spontaneous dynamic of on-going struggles to avoid losing the initiative, and organized the party militia separately without any organic links to the mass organizations.

All these experiences and their lessons are part of our inheritance. Obviously, a lot has changed since then in terms of state forms, military apparatuses and the weight of international factors. Future crises will produce novelties. But to avoid setting out on the journey without so much as a compass, one must recognize that all thinking about revolutionary strategy must begin not with speculation about the future, but from existing experience, even if that means correcting, amending and enriching it along the way. Granted the relationship between this strategic thread and our day-to-day tasks is in our case quite tenuous, but it is there. The fact is that resolutely pursuing a revolutionary perspective requires establishing some connection between the final goal and the movement, even when the mediations between the

two are many and complex. It is this connection that defines the common framework of a revolutionary organization and should enable it to overcome inevitable differences over tactical questions.

We shall now return to two different questions that are closely linked to these discussions on revolutionary strategy. The first is the question of the state, the main argument used by those who believe the transformations of the modern state have cast past revolutionary experiences into a dark prehistory of no use for the present. The second is that of the united front, the keystone of the strategic and tactical questions that we face permanently.

### III. Once again, State and Revolution

For Marx and Lenin, the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat had a strategic function. The Communist Parties tried to hide this aspect when they dropped the dictatorship of the proletariat from their program; the truth is that they were not just changing a name, but theorizing their abandonment of the perspective of destroying the "really existing" bourgeois state. They were ratifying the reformist policy that they had been carrying out in practice for a long time.

#### 1. The great divide

This was precisely the main line of demarcation between the Second and Third Internationals—the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat as put into practice by the Russian revolution. The polemics between Lenin and Kautsky, between the Bolsheviks and Austro-Marxists, the documents of the first two congresses of the Comintern, are perfectly clear on this point. The Russian revolution opened the era of the practical relevance of socialist revolution. Thereafter, there was a key question on which clarity was essential, that of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

All the great splits of the workers' movement, at Tours, Halle, Livorno and at the extraordinary congress of the PSOE, revolved ultimately around that. To remove the slightest ambiguity about it, Lenin waged a fierce struggle against the idea of mixed or combined democracy put forward by left Austro-Marxists like Max Adler. Yet compared to the left social-democrats we meet today, these people were eagles nurtured on classical Marxism.

They had already developed a set of arguments which the most sophisticated Eurocommunists are now serving up again, in a spiceless warmed-over version.

What they advocated for "modern" states that were more complex than the Tsarist autocracy, was a combination of direct democracy (soviets, councils, etc) and parliamentary forms. Beyond the abstract debate about how much of the one and how much of the other, the actual practical question is which is to be dominant. This

### Some events of the 1960s and 1970s in Europe

- 1960-61: winter general strike in Walloon, Belgium
- 1963: Italian strikes against "tough" Christian-Democrat Tambroni government
- 1968: general strike in France
- 1968-1969: "creeping May" in Italy
- 1970: protests against trials of Basque militants in Burgos, Spain
- 1971: Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland
- 1974: fall of the Greek colonels' dictatorship  
fall of the dictatorship in Portugal; rise of "commissions"  
British miners' strike brings down Tory government of Heath
- 1973-75: regional general strikes in Spain
- 1974-75: coup attempts by generals Spínola, etc, in Portugal
- 1975: September: commandos of Amadora barracks arrest rebellious left-wing troops in Portugal  
Italian CP proposes "historic compromise" with Christian-Democrats
- 1976: first semester strike wave in Spain reaches unprecedented level  
Suarez made prime minister, legalizes parties and announces elections in Spain  
conference of Eurocommunist parties in East-Berlin
- 1974-79: Labour government of Callaghan in Britain
- 1969-1982: Brandt, then Schmidt (1974) SPD governments in Germany
- 1976-1977: Socialist government under Soares in Portugal
- 1981-1986: Left government in France
- 1981: Papandreu forms PASOK government in Greece
- 1983: formation of Gonzalez SP government in Spain

is where the ritualistic objection comes up: a system based on a pyramid of direct democracy (local, regional and national councils) can only add up partial and corporate standpoints that cancel each other out, not produce a real synthesis of the general will. Either chaos or a mediocre compromise will ensue, and a bureaucracy will cap this ineffectual system. Rocard had proposed a similar formula: Parliament + self-management. Self-management for the details, Parliament for the essential. In the end, only Parliament counts: the coed democracy turns out to be unisex.

Lenin dotted the "i"s on this matter, and not just with respect to "Eastern" countries, when he said that the nub of the issue was not the ideal model of democracy, but the actual replacement of one class state by another. **Once that is achieved**, all sorts of complicated problems can arise, as for instance, in Poland the question of the two chambers, or in Nicaragua the question of the relations between the state council represent-

ing social organizations and the national assembly. But in both these cases, the backbone of the bourgeois state had already been destroyed.

In his already mentioned interview in *Revolutionary Marxism Today*, Mandel suggested that in countries with long-standing parliamentary traditions, structures of national representation on the assembly-model could survive with limited prerogatives. The truth is that there is no norm for the proletarian state; anything can be imagined and, even then, things that have not been imagined will emerge. But there is a precondition which must be fulfilled in all cases: the destruction of the old machinery built by the bourgeoisie for its own purposes.

## 2. Social utility of democracy

The 1970s discussions on "direct" versus "representative" democracy have perhaps added more confusion than clarity on this matter. We, ourselves, have not always avoided the trap. One of the main objections to direct democracy was that it operated on the principle of binding mandates and this system could only produce an addition of partial viewpoints and paralyze genuine choices on major options. But nowhere, not even *State and Revolution*, is it said that soviet-type democracy should function on the basis of binding mandates.

Elected representatives are subject to recall. This means increased control by electors over the elected. But the right to recall does not mean binding mandate. Assemblies of delegates have deliberative and decisionmaking powers. Delegates subsequently account for the positions they took after they listened to a real debate. They can be disavowed. But they are not simply the bearers of binding mandates.

In addition, imagining a "pyramid" of councils as a straightforward stack of local regional and national structures is an oversimplification. For its intermediate levels can be territorial structures with real prerogatives, the right to object, or even a veto over the decisions of higher organs (in the case of nationalities, for instance); they can be based on representatives of social movements (women, immigrants, renters, parents, etc), not just workplace delegates, although the latter are the backbone.

Whatever the system, there is some form of delegation of power and representation. But what is decisively smashed is the separation of one's political citizenship from one's social existence. Socialist democracy is a direct expression of the "associated producers;" it is rooted directly at the point of production and therefore overcomes the split in the life of the worker as a person and a citizen. That is the basic idea. Once that is accepted, any number of hypotheses are possible.

The third clarification concerns everything that is connected with the recognition of political pluralism as a right. This is not a concession to surrounding liberal pressures, but the profound lesson of the Soviet experience and the struggle against Stalinism. This right flows from the fact that the working class itself is not homogeneous or monolithic for a long time during the period

of transition. For both social (survival of the division of labor and "bourgeois" norms of distribution) and international reasons. This means that recognition of democratic rights inside the party (including the right to form tendencies) cannot be separated from the right to separate, that is to form a separate party. Any party that bans party pluralism will end up banning tendencies in its own ranks.

This is, in fact, also a matter of efficacy. If regional and national councils of delegates are to take a stand on major societal options and big international problems, these options must be the product of partial syntheses already put together and disseminated by parties, currents within parties or social organizations. This is the basis for fruitful interaction between the general and the particular.

The experiences of Stalinism and the workers states have compelled us to be more precise on these questions. But the social and economic usefulness of democracy is not a recent discovery. Lenin was already very explicit in *State and Revolution*. He praised Engels for avoiding the pitfall into which other Marxists had fallen on the issue of democracy. The latter wistfully argued that while capitalism made the right of nations unrealistic, socialism made it superfluous:

"This supposedly amusing but in reality mistaken argument could be applied to all democratic institutions, since rigorously consistent democratism is unachievable under a capitalist regime, and under a socialist regime all democracy will eventually become extinct... developing democracy to the utmost, finding the best forms for this development, putting them to the test of practice, this is one of the essential tasks of the struggle for social revolution. No kind of democratism can produce socialism on its own; but in real life, democratism will never be taken separately; it will be taken as part of a whole; it will also exercise an influence on the economy whose transformation it will stimulate...." (24)

Socialist democracy therefore does not make political democracy "superfluous." It gives it another content. Lenin only foresaw the end of political democracy as the end of a state form that still required the submission of the minority to the majority.

## 3. New state, new strategy: has the reform/revolution divide become obsolete?

These debates on the state rebounded in the 1970s. This was logical: since thinking on revolutionary strategy revived, the state became the sore spot again. Some, like Norberto Bobbio in Italy and Rosanvallon in France, tried to update the apology of parliamentary democracy as the only answer to the "totalitarian" dynamic of experiences of direct democracy. Others, like Ingrao in Italy and Poulantzas in France, put forward a different argument based on history. (See Appendix B, page 29.)

What did they argue? That in the days of the Communist International, the idea of two well-defined powers engaged in a life-and-death struggle through a dual power situation corresponded to reality. This was no longer

true. There used to exist an essentially repressive bourgeois state, that could be clearly identified as the enemy, and a workers movement that was outside it, that camped, as it were, outside the gates of the city. This proletariat had been formed recently, from the countryside, and was penned into peripheral suburbs with no protection or recourse other than class solidarity, no leisure or culture other than its own activities. Hence a proletariat with little integration in the state and a large degree of autonomy. The idea of dual power was a logical extension of this sort of counter-society which gave itself a political expression in times of crisis.

Henceforward, though, there would be complex interpenetration, rather than externality, of the state and working class, or more accurately, the omnipresence of the state in all fields of social activity.

Poulantzas, for example, deduced from that, that the emphasis should now be put on penetrating the inner mechanisms of the state, on conducting political work within these institutions. This is another tangled up issue on which tactics and strategy are often confused. We do not make a virtue of necessity or claim that total externality from institutions is a matter of principle.

As a revolutionary organization grows, it gets elected to city councils and parliaments. It can use these institutions as forums for agitation. This is the traditional formula. The speeches and agitation in this forum can be effective if they are backed up by practice. Elected officials can do good work in the framework of their mandate; we are gaining a little experience in this respect (some in Peru, Mexico and now Brazil).

We should also note that not all institutions are on the same level. Each has a different relation to the central state apparatus. We have no principle against sitting in workplace committees (the French *comités d'entreprise* whose election is organized by the Ministry of Labor) and university councils. We can decide to boycott a particular institution when it is directly counterposed to self-organization, and later decide to participate in it because the situation has changed.

The important thing is that all such decisions be guided by the will to strengthen the autonomy of the social movement from the state, and that democracy and openness be maintained: the social movement must have the right to know and control what happens regardless of the secrecy and pledges of discretion that enshroud the state's preserves.

The deepening of the economic and social crisis has had a two-fold effect. On the one hand, the speechifying about the need to cut back the state, and the actual neo-liberal measures taken (privatization) tend to reveal more starkly the hard core of the state, its security and military aspect. Thus Reagan's attempts to trim state expenditures has left the military budget standing out like a giant skyscraper in the middle of the desert. On the other hand, this neo-liberal trend highlights the need for the workers movement to reconquer its social autonomy from the state in many different fields.

We are not speaking here of alternative restaurants and repair shops, but of an overall problem. Right now,

the relationship of forces makes it difficult to think through the practical relevance of workers control and transitional demands. Moreover, these demands are not a clear legacy of the Communist International. They are not the maximum program but a bridge between immediate demands and the question of power. What we have is incomplete. In his *Discussions on the Transitional Program*, Trotsky stated that he had only dealt with the beginning of a transitional program, the developments on the question of arming the people and militias were still missing. That is not so insignificant.

A risk therefore exists that in the current unfavorable relationship of forces, we could skid off course and put forward separately our minimum program (staunch defense of immediate demands) and our general propaganda about socialist democracy. When that happens, the gap between the two tends to be filled simply by a reflex implanted by a half-century of welfare state: delegating power to the state, "let the state pay, let the state find the solution, etc."

A kind of statist culture has developed which stands at the exact opposite of what Marx stood for. We often hear discussions about how the workers parties no longer actually represent the workers, are reduced to electoral machines and about the crisis of trade-union activism. This crisis expresses, at least in part, the loss of substance of these organizations, the transfer of some of their key functions, and therefore of their legitimacy, to the state.

But a revolutionary national crisis with massive self-organization, workers control and self-management, will not happen out of the blue, without some prior experiences. Before it can happen, the workers movement must reconquer some of that legitimacy, take charge of some day-to-day social functions again, and assert its own social and moral authority counterposed to that of the state. The revolutionary party itself cannot be simply the party of the general strike and insurrection.

There is, of course, a danger of falling into social work, teaching how to cope with shortages, charity. But whoever seriously postulates to the leadership of the nation in overcoming a deep societal crisis cannot avoid this test; in the poor neighborhoods of Brazil and Mexico, one can demand that the state provide running water, credits for medical centers, training for jobs, etc; at the same time, though, when popular movements take charge of these tasks they earn real political and moral authority. This is one of the secrets of the support enjoyed by the Christian base communities in Brazil.

Granted we are in Europe. The situation is different. But as the crisis advances, similar problems will arise with respect to organizing the unemployed, youth, women's centers. As poverty returns, social solidarity will either be manipulated by the media with operations like the French "Restaurants of the Heart," or taken over by the workers movement.

This is not a new idea. When they were founded, the French Bourses du Travail (central city labor exchanges) were not just real exchanges for job-seekers but also centers for education and literacy, in other words

People's Houses.(25) We want to revive this idea: let the soldiers' movement, women's associations, immigrant committees have their place in trade-union headquarters.

The trade-union movement has lost much of its original dimension as a social movement and gotten bogged down in workplace grievances at one end, and top-level management and partnership at the other. This was the deliberate policy of the bureaucratic leaderships. But it was also the result of the evolution of bargaining procedures and trade-union functions since the great depression of the 1930s. This situation is not irreversible.

The question of the social security system and how to defend it, is related to this issue: should it be the workers' general mutual aid society, to be managed by their delegates, without representatives of management sitting on its administrative boards; or a para-state protection system subject to decisions on the national budget? Our answer is that the social security system represents a mutual aid society of the workers, a social way of saving their indirect wages; that it embodies their gains in the field of the right to health; that it therefore cannot be dependent on taxation and is incompatible with integration into a state budget, as an item subject to the vote of parliamentarians deciding how much should be spent on health that year.

We have the same position on education. We are opposed to privatizing the schools and basing education on the criteria and demands of private interests. We defend the right to free public education for all ending with a diploma valid nationwide because this is a democratic right that strengthens workers ability to negotiate collectively the sale of their labor power. But we are also opposed to the bourgeois state being the teacher. The labor movement could challenge the state monopoly on the content of education and demand public funds to give its own courses. At any rate, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx recommended that, contrary to what the Lassalleans advocated, no confidence should be given to the state in this area. More generally, he urged that it be delegated as few social functions as possible.

Marx did not put forward this approach in some libertarian or anti-statist phase. He held to it with constancy because it derived from strategic considerations on the question of the state.

#### 4. The 1960s controversy: revolution in the postwar boom

The best way to examine the terms of this debate as it is posed today, is to pick up its threads in the discussions of the early 1960s. This was a period when people felt that the labor movement was beginning to mobilize again (as evidenced by the Belgian general strike of 1960-61, the 1963 strikes in Italy, and the miners' strike in France) but May 68 had not yet put centralized confrontations with the state on the agenda. This was the time of the controversies on *Neocapitalism and Labor Strategies* (to use the title of Gorz's famous book) and "anticapitalist structural reforms", a theme developed in Mandel's articles.(26) (See Appendix A, page 28.)

Some of the participants in this debate, in the Italian CP, the French PSU and the Italian PSIUP, argued correctly that conditions had changed; that the new proletariat, with its large contingents of educated and skilled white collar workers, could build up positions of power gradually within capitalist society, somewhat like the bourgeoisie had within feudal society. Lucien Goldmann had even made this analogy explicitly in one of his articles.(27)

André Gorz replied in *Le Socialisme Difficile*, (1967) that "there is not and cannot be a gradual, imperceptible transition from capitalism to socialism... What can and must be progressive and gradual in a socialist strategy, is the preparatory phase that sets in motion the process leading to the threshold of the crisis and "final showdown" (p. 71). Since there was no catastrophic crisis of the system, the central strategic problem shifted to the conditions needed to prepare the conquest of power, "the need to create the objective and subjective conditions, to prepare the social and political strongholds from which the conquest of political power by the working class would become possible."

Gorz pursued the argument by advocating a perspective of "workers and people's powers," of "creating centers of social management and direct democracy (in the large industrial corporations and production cooperatives)," of conquest of "positions of strength in the representative assemblies," and of "placing products and services that answered collective needs outside the market." Twenty years later, reading this gives the impression that history repeats itself.

Or does it really? Gorz emphasized the conflict-ridden nature of these forms of organization and warned against the danger of institutionalization and integration; his guiding thread was the autonomy of the workers movement. He sought the path of a transitional approach clearly distinguished from a simple reformist policy: "Suppose a popular front coalition came to power on the basis of agreement on a minimum common program including a few partial reforms but excluding, in the very terms of the pact, truly reforming actions going beyond the limits of this program; the fate of this coalition and government would be clear from the outset. The very essence of a minimum program is that unlike a transitional program or a strategy of reforms, it forbids socialist forces, under penalty of violating the pact, to take advantage of the dynamic process triggered by the initial reforms and even simply to unleash a counter-offensive against the capitalist offensive." (p.76)

Mandel started from similar premises: the fact that neither a nuclear war nor a "catastrophic" crisis on the 1929 pattern was likely in the next ten years ("Une stratégie socialiste pour l'Europe occidentale," *Revue Internationale du Socialisme*, 1964). But he stressed the reality of the class struggle in a period of relative prosperity and tried to justify a socialist strategy in such a period: "This is where we come to the real difference between the objective conditions that we are experiencing today and those of the 1930s, for instance. When neither hunger nor poverty drive workers irresistibly towards anticapital-

ist action, such action is no longer an automatic result of their day-to-day experience. It can become so through the consciousness-raising caused by the actions of the workers movement."

Preparing what was then called the subjective factor was the decisive priority, as it was for Gorz. This was the framework in which the anticapitalist structural reforms were taken up: "The strategy of structural reforms initiated by the left of the Belgian labor movement, and gradually being adopted by left labor movements in all European capitalist countries, is mainly intended to bring about an integration between the immediate aspirations of the masses, and goals the struggle for which objectively calls into question the very existence of the capitalist regime." It is not counterposed, Mandel specified, to the familiar demands for wages or shorter hours. What it sought to prevent, was the dissociation between these immediate demands and abstract propaganda about the virtues of socialism and the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat. It "meant that the workers movement should combine in its daily struggle the fight for immediate goals with the fight for transitional goals. This was the way to raise questions of nationalization, of the hierarchical structure of the workplace, of the abolition of commercial secrets, of workers control bound by no illusions in the possibility of institutionalization...."

#### 5. Self-management: the new strategic concept?

If one remembers this discussion, one could say that the post-68 discussions on self-management were to a large extent a resurgence of this earlier debate. For self-management became widely accepted in the labor movement after 1968. The French Socialist Party claimed it as its own at its Epinay congress in 1972, and defined its understanding of it in the fifteen theses adopted in 1975. The French Communist Party introduced it into its documents in 1977, at its 22nd congress, at the very moment it abandoned the dictatorship of the proletariat and chose the divisive course that would fracture the Union of the Left. (See the chronology of France in the 1960s and 1970s on page 14.)

We began to make it an explicit reference in the documents of our 1974 congress, which was marked by the struggle of the Lip workers.

This brief and incomplete enumeration (since it leaves out the PSU and CFDT) should suffice to show that the reference to self-managed socialism alone is not a sufficient criterion to clarify the contending orientations and strategies.

It expresses a powerful democratic and antibureaucratic aspiration. The renewal of the working class and the formation of new skilled layers within it have undeniably contributed to the rise of this aspiration. It is probably motivated by the desire to bridge the widening gap between political democracy and social democracy in developed capitalist society.

But the content of self-management is at best ill-

defined by the currents that identify with it. Is it a model for the democratic management of a future society, based on sovereign workplace committees and associations, on a local and regional basis, in the framework of a democratically planned economy, that is after the overthrow of bourgeois rule? Or is it a democratic way of organizing the struggle, a way of training the masses for direct democracy in action, including experiences inside existing institutions. Or is it a strategic approach for the struggle against the bourgeois state and society?

Should it emphasize acquainting the masses with superior forms of democracy through struggles in which the workers pose concretely their candidacy to lead all society, without denying that a revolutionary trauma will arise, a rupture whose necessity Gorz upheld? Or is it a modernized gradualist approach based on a progressive penetration and internal subversion of the state and economic mechanisms?

Is it designed to systematize by the use of an innovative term actual experiences of self-organization and workers control of production, and people's control over the city and environment? Or is it designed to expand experimentation with social, cooperative and associational endeavors to compensate for the deficiencies of capitalism in crisis?

Is the point to stress that the workers and people's movement must reconquer its autonomy from state handouts and tutelage? Or is the point to correct the shortcomings of the state in the field of urban planning, regional development and social protection?

These different and on the long run contradictory approaches overlap in many arguments. It is often difficult to unravel the concern to create proletarian hegemony, which according to Gramsci did not exclude but prepared the revolutionary showdown, from the most insipid reformist approach. While the guiding criterion remains the need to strengthen the independence and democratic organization of the mass movement, this should not be understood to completely exclude work in existing institutions or experiments in management, including partial responsibility, when the relationship of forces allows it.

Nevertheless, two points should be emphasized:

- the generalization of commodity relations (on a scale incomparably greater than before the war) has reduced the space for experimental management on the margin of the system;

- the international dimension of the crisis has reduced the space for partial corporation-wide or industry-wide counterplans (for instance for the steel or shipbuilding industries). The Lip watch factory struggle was exemplary, but can sectoral counterplans be answers to disasters like those in steel and shipbuilding, while at the same time avoiding the pitfall of a protectionist defense of national production? The other risk is to allow an erosion of the gains achieved in terms of jobs and working conditions in the name of realistic management.

None of these ideas have an intrinsic strategic value. Their content is defined by their role in concrete political situations. The idea of self-management is tainted

## V. Hegemony and the united front

by the ambiguities of those who identify with it. For Edmond Maire, its purpose is merely to extend civil democracy to industrial relations. For Michel Rocard, the goal is to self-manage a piecemeal utopia, on a local basis, while leaving the more serious business to the good old parliament and president.

While the idea of self-management contains a positive emphasis on autonomy, mass democracy, control and dissociation from the omnipotent state, it says nothing about the state, its function, dual power and the revolutionary showdown. When Anicet Le Pors talked about "national self-management," he was obscuring the problem of the relations between the state and local levels. But he put his finger on the overall nature of power relations. Likewise, when Jean-Claude Delaunay waxes ironic about the "D-day of self-management," he pinpoints a real problem. But he has no answer.(28)

Discussions on this point must continue. Only new experiences can help move the various positions. For anyone who seriously identifies with a socialist self-management perspective should start with an unreversed commitment to participate in all experiences of self-management such as sovereign general assemblies, the election of unitive struggle or strike committees when struggles break out, the election of mandated and recallable delegates. On the basis of these tests, the various advocates of self-management should be able to find a common language.

As far as we are concerned, the workers movement should take advantage of these mobilizations to ferret and intrude everywhere, in all the closed institutions and reserved areas, in the field of health and education, the army and civil service, everywhere there is an administrative or state secret.

This approach is difficult to apply in a defensive context. When you do not have a favorable relationship of forces, you run the risk of making constructive counter-proposals, then lowering your sights and limiting the struggle. Sorel understood that the great legislative utopias were the shortest path to reformism because these abstract constructions could then be sold retail, in little pieces, whereas the revolutionary mobilization, the general strike, had an overall focus bringing everyone together and centralizing the struggle.

Conversely, one should not use the excuse that the relationship of forces is conjuncturally unfavorable, to confine oneself to struggles for immediate, spontaneous demands, and keep quiet about transitional demands, even in one's propaganda. Propaganda is often given short shrift on the grounds that it is an ideological luxury. In the classics, though, it has a full-fledged place, next to agitation, not below it.

To conclude on this topic, we should add that the interpenetration of the state and society cuts both ways. On the one hand, it helps to make the state more complex and legitimate, but on the other, it makes it more vulnerable.

Capitalism does not create a united working class spontaneously. To the contrary, it generates divisions and competition, particularly in times of crisis. Unifying the working class socially and politically is therefore a permanent strategic goal.

In this respect, the united front approach, which aims to unite the working class through the united action of its trade unions and parties, has a strategic dimension. There is, indeed, no way to unite the class if one bypasses or ignores the parties with which broad currents of workers identify.

The united front can appear under elementary forms, such as a one-shot or ad hoc united action, or the coexistence of several political currents in a trade union, or "higher forms" such as forms of self-organization (strike committees, councils, soviets).

Problems with the united front do not arise from its general perspective and definition, but from its application in practice, which always involves a judgement on the relationship of forces.

1) Unity has undeniable virtues. When division is raging, it can become rather than a simple means to the end, the first goal to be achieved. This was true in the early 1930s, when the third period of the Comintern and the theory of social-fascism disarmed the labor movement against the rise of Nazism. It was true between 1977 and 1981 in France, when unity was the first condition to defeat the right and dump Giscard.

But on the long run and in general, unity has no intrinsic value independently of its goal and content. Unity is unity for something, for action, for goals. Thus, when unity materialized in 1935 in the form of the popular front and a pact between the Socialist and Communist leaderships, or when it reemerged in 1981 in the form of agreement to govern together, it was in fact a bureaucratic unity against the mobilization and democracy of the mass movement. In such cases, the key question becomes "to fertilize the united front with a revolutionary content."

That is when the real relationship of forces becomes decisive: how to position oneself inside the united front; or better yet, how to build the sort of relationship of forces that allows revolutionaries to play an active, full-fledged role in a unitive dynamic rather than adapting from the outside to the unity of the bureaucratic apparatuses.

With this question, we have entered the area of tactics. The point is no longer only to demand unity, but to impose it in reality. Several levers can help achieve that goal: partial unity, on a local or regional basis, with activists or sections of mass organizations whose leadership rejects unity; initiatives of significant sectors of a trade-union opposition, in their own name; a convergence of revolutionary forces, etc. Thus, in the Spanish state, the anti-NATO campaign was initiated by minori-

ty organizations like the LCR and MC. As the mobilization grew more successful, the Communist Party joined it.

2) There is another, more fundamental reason why the united front is always a tactic, namely that the reformist organizations are not reformist because they are confused, inconsistent or lacking in will power. The reality is that they express crystallized material and social positions which, faced with mass pressure will not concede but side with the counter-revolution: what German social-democracy did in 1918 is the most notorious instance.

So the reformist leaderships can be tactical political allies when the point is to unite the class. But in strategic terms, they remain powerful enemies.

The united front is designed to create the conditions for the broadest masses to break with these leaderships on the most favorable basis when the chips are down.

Thus, in May 1937 in Barcelona and in September 1975 in Portugal, believing one could drag the Communist Party willy-nilly into a revolutionary dynamic was a dangerous illusion. The real problem was having the sort of unitive organs through which Communist rank-and-filers could break with their party in the course of the confrontation.

3) We should realize that our extensive discussions about our government formula have little to do with the question of the workers government as it was posed in the first congresses of the Comintern. It was posed, at the time, in a developing revolutionary situation. A lot of famous people were involved in that discussion, as late even as the fifth congress in 1924. Some turned out pretty rotten, but we do not believe in predestination.

This fifth congress was the one which began the normalization of the Comintern, in the name of Bolshevikization. But the revolutionary tradition was still very much alive. So we are dealing with the cream of the revolutionary movement discussing with each other, perhaps for the last time. On the agenda was an item on lessons of the defeat of October 1923 in Germany and of the Czechoslovak experience.

Bordiga upped the ante on Zinoviev's report by defining the workers government as a mere pseudonym of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Radek answered that if it was a mere pseudonym, then it was a useless and ridiculous one, since it boiled down to saying: my name is joe blow, but people really call me Jones.

So, it was not meant to be the dictatorship of the proletariat properly speaking, but a parliamentary beginning of the revolution, while the institutions of the old state apparatus were not yet destroyed.

They were talking concretely. The discussion concerned the Zeigner government formed by the Communist and Socialist Parties in Saxony in 1923. In that case, the legitimacy of the state really had been shaken. The CP decided to join the government. It asked that Brandler be given the Ministry of the Interior. Its social-democratic allies, although left-wing, were still reform-

ist, and refused. Nevertheless, the hope remained that faced with an attack by the federal army, this government as it stood then might call the masses out on a general strike and arm them. But when the government refused, there was no real dual power, no alternative authority, to which one could appeal against the government's side-stepping of its responsibilities, with the backing of the Socialists, to regain the initiative.

In light of that experience, Bordiga urged that the very notion of workers government be given a "third class funeral" since it could only create confusion. This was consistent with his generally leftist position that rejected any kind of transitional demand.

The real problem probably lay elsewhere. This government could have been an instrument. But the only guarantee that would have made it acceptable for communists to join it, would have been the existence of a body of self-organization, independent of the official institutions, endowed with a higher legitimacy than them, and capable of directly representing the frame of mind of the masses. From a strategic standpoint, this was the key to the situation. The experience of a workers government could be attempted in that framework.

But we should recognize that all this has very little to do with our habitual discussions about SP/CP governments in France today. What we are dealing with today is a tactical unitive slogan, to be put forward depending on the conjuncture, but devoid of any role as a transitional demand in the framework of a developing revolutionary situation.

The strategic debate which the European left and far-left revived after May 68, has died out. The harsh reality of the crisis brutally upset the utopias of a quiet transformation in the midst of prosperity. The experience of left governments showed the limits which respect of the laws of the market, international pressure and state institutions, impose on attempts at social change. The various reformist options have run out of ideological fuel.

Strategic thinking will resume only on the basis of new mobilizations. In France, the Union of the Left and Common Program for government, despite the quarrels and reunions of the CP and SP, have been the strategic horizon of a majority of workers for nearly fifteen years. Now the noose of the long international economic depression is getting tighter. Employers are attacking jobs, wages, social security and democratic rights with greater vigor. Answering every blow, holding on to every gain and right, resisting inch by inch, is now an urgent day-to-day matter.

But to achieve the greatest resoluteness and efficacy such resistance must have the perspective of reversing the current relationship of forces and launching a victorious counter-offensive. Otherwise, its only choice is either to accept a clockwork alternation of a nicely liberal left and an aggressively liberal right, or a rerun the Union of the Left government, and the unavoidable ensuing disenchantment.

That experience is too recent and the damage still too obvious. Those who believed in the Union of the



Left and those who never believed in it can agree at least that they will not be caught at it again.

Anyway, the Socialist Party leadership has buried the idea of unity of the Left for a long time. It is laying the ground for a center-left majority, to be established on the medium-term. This would be the final stage of the perspective defined by François Mitterrand in 1969 in his book *Ma part de vérité*.

In the meantime, the party has done away with all talk of "self-management," "class fronts," "breaks with capitalism," "minimum threshold of nationalizations needed for effective planning" and other notions like "priority for job-creation"... In a word, all potentially objectionable ideas and commitments to a new society are out. It no longer mentions the need to "change life;" only the daring prospect of "living better" is sometimes timidly suggested. The program has fallen to level zero.

On the other hand, the Communist Party has curled up around its apparatus. It has entered a period of hibernation with no ambition other than denouncing the felony of the Socialist Party and the "rightward shift of all society." Since everything around it is sliding right, its electoral losses are presented as a courageous exercise in ascetics. Its refusal to choose between "two right wings" means that its much-touted "majority people's rally" is reduced to virtuous solitude. On the doctrinal level, its abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat was less a way of rejecting a repugnant form of bureaucratic state than the confirmation that it had renounced any revolutionary perspective. After its experience in the government from 1981 to 1984, the perspective of "advanced democracy" is out; all that remains is a timeless and aimless crispation on its apparatus.

The question, then, remains unanswered: how can we create a social and political force that can radically transform society? Should it be a social majority, or an electoral majority? What are its contours?

This poses the need for an honest and serious balance sheet of the Union of the Left. Its failure highlights not so much a lack of will or ability, but the inadequacies of a political perspective.

In the first place, the Common Program did not express a genuine perspective of social transformation carried forward by a mass mobilization. It was born as the reformist leaderships' answer to the May 1968 mobilization, in an effort to channel energies on a strictly electoral plane. While the Communist and Socialist Parties mentioned the need for "change" and a "break" in their documents, they did nothing to enhance the unitive dynamic of the rank-and-file, to root these imperatives in mobilizations. The debate over the number of corporations the Common Program should plan to nationalize, which served as the pretext for the division of 1977, stands out as a beautiful example of the headquarters quarreling behind the back of those most concerned by the issue. Likewise, everything was done to convince the social movement to hold its breath, from one well-rehearsed day of protest to the next, from cantonal elections to municipal elections, in expectation of the great electoral D-day.

But this suppressed fervor was needed to stand up to the employers' sabotage and to the blackmail of "international pressures" which emerged after the victory of May 10, 1981, assuming the will to do so existed; it was needed to take the energetic measures that could really improve the job situation. A government that would have merely begun to reverse the trend of unemployment in France would have gained the political and moral authority among the workers and public opinion of France to face many challenges.

But neither the CP nor the SP had prepared the ground for this. In 1981, for instance, a genuine revolutionary party, that had waged a consistent battle for unity, would not have found it necessary to bargain for concessions before agreeing to support without preconditions the candidate that could defeat the right in the second round of the elections; and later to accept to participate in the government almost without conditions. It would have given an impulse to all mobilizations, supported the government measures that served the interests of the workers, stood in the first ranks of the fight against the maneuvers of the right, but without renouncing its independence and freedom of action.

What was missing was a genuine unitive cement among the rank-and-file, in the form of united mobilization committees in the workplaces and neighborhoods. Such committees would have allowed the real class relationship of forces to influence the outcome directly and would have made it possible for the people's vigilance to control and, if necessary, disavow its elected representatives. If these representatives had been compelled to account for themselves before such a force, the petty game of "unity without fight" or "fight without unity" would have been far more difficult to pull over. The phoney quarrels about the number of nationalizations in the Common Program could have been reduced to their real significance, and settled openly by those concerned.

Finally, what was missing was a fully unitive and resolutely revolutionary pole. Such a pole should be able at once to promote unity in a powerful way, and fertilize this unity with revolutionary content. We believe that such a current cannot arise from the ranks of the Socialist Party alone, or from a regenerated Communist Party. The key will be the questions and forces which arise from experiences and struggles; these will bring out the potential elements for a new revolutionary party.

## VI. Three concluding remarks

1) Keeping in mind the old traps laid by ultraleft demons, it must be recognized that building a revolutionary organization means being obsessed with the struggle for power. Not in a narrow and strictly political sense, or in the psychological sense of desiring power, but because it is the key to social emancipation. Unfortunately, this is not the dominant tradition in our ranks. For easily understandable historical reasons, we have been marked by an exacerbated distrust of power. We often ex-

perience ourselves as a preventive organization for the antibureaucratic struggle, rather than as an organization for the struggle for the conquest of power. But the latter is the first problem. Dealing with it seriously requires the frame of mind of a political majority (not in the electoral sense); a frame of mind that does not just differentiate but brings together. There exists a "minority" personality that has strengths but can become an obstacle. Lenin was obviously obsessed with the struggle for power. That is what guided his focus in organizational and tactical questions and made him superior in many ways. With a party built on solid foundations it is possible to correct tactical errors, and even more fundamentally wrong orientations. The party is the mediation between theory and practice. Without a party, nothing can be proved or corrected. Given our size and the time-scale before us, posing the question of power may seem a wee bit ridiculous, and could open the door to various dangers and megalomaniacal illuminations. But it is a fundamentally necessary frame of mind: taking oneself seriously so that others will take one seriously, feeling responsible while remaining modest.

2) The question of the state in developed capitalist countries is often at the core of current questions about revolutionary strategy. The issue is not new. It was already the focus of the discussions of the European "New Left" in the 1960s, and of the debate with Eurocommunist circles in the 1970s. Ernest Mandel's writings, for instance, always recognized the existence of a state far more complex and ramified than at the beginning of this century; but he countered that with another consequence of capitalist development: the existence of a highly skilled and concentrated working class with such organic strength that it could settle the question of the state in passing, at the lowest cost. The revolution he foresaw in his writings of the 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by what we could call the "overripeness" of the subjective and objective conditions. The social and cultural strength of the proletariat made the preconditions for a change in the relationship between reformist and revolutionary currents inside the labor movement less demanding. The more the class developed its spontaneous ability to self-organize, control and manage, the less the revolutionary party would have to take on, and the greater the likelihood that its proposals and initiatives, made at the right moment, even by a very small minority, would correspond to the aspirations of the masses. This vision (presented here in a greatly simplified version) has an undeniable element of truth, but it tends to downplay the complexity of revolutionary strategy in developed capitalist countries.

3) Underlying all this is a problem of periodization. We have discussed the economic crisis, its social effects, the vanguard party, the general strategic line of march. (29) But all these questions have to be inserted in real time.

What happened after the long wave of expansion running approximately from the war to 1967/73? The

previous comparable wave of expansion that began in 1893/1895 with the rise of modern imperialism, ended with a general political explosion, with the war and Russian revolution. Then came the long depression, marked by the crash of 1929 and the generalized crisis of the 1930s, ending in the second world war. But why did what happened at the end of World War One in the labor movement of developed capitalist countries under the impact of the Russian revolution, not recur in 1945?

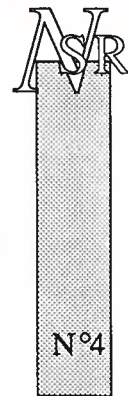
Trotsky's prognosis, when the Fourth International was founded, was that the phenomenon would be repeated, or that the movement would resume where it had left off: the fall of Stalinism in the USSR and the revival of the German revolution. Many things did happen: the actual extension of the revolution in China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam...; the blatant betrayal of the revolutionary potential in Greece, Italy, France... But this only begs the question: why did these crass betrayals in the days of the Liberation not cause the same massive fractures in the mass social-democratic and Stalinist parties that similar betrayals did in German social-democracy in 1918?

The question is not why this potential was betrayed, but why the masses did not react to these betrayals otherwise.

Mandel offers a historical answer in his book *La Longue Marche de la Révolution*. In the case of World War One, the revolutionary process of 1917-1923 was a direct extension of a phase of accumulation of social, trade-union and parliamentary forces only briefly interrupted by the betrayal of August 1914 and the ensuing disorientation. The labor movement reorganized very rapidly, as early as 1915 or 1916 in the strongholds of the metal industries, with the appearance of the shop stewards in Britain, the trusted men in Germany, the councils in Italy, etc. By contrast World War Two came after an accumulation of defeats (Germany, Italy, Spain, Stalinization,...) that had undermined the social cohesion and self-confidence of the workers movement.

Stalingrad was certainly a historic victory over Nazism, in which we can still detect the dynamic force of the Russian revolution; but it also represented the completion of the national bureaucratic state (on this, see *Vie et Destin*, by Vassili Grossmann): military victory consolidated the Soviet state and by the same token the domestic and international legitimacy of its bureaucratic leadership.

Moreover, while the revolutionary potential of the Liberation was sacrificed on the altar of Yalta, international considerations led to the creation of an unstable equilibrium in class relations in each country based on the bourgeoisie's fear of an extension of the revolution. In most countries the ensuing relations between labor and capital bore the mark of a compromise: what some call the "Fordist compromise" was also the price paid by the ruling classes out of fear. Once set in motion, this negotiated relation brought, in the context of economic expansion, real improvements in the living conditions of the proletariat. As a result, it became simplistic to view the relations between the aspirations of the masses and the policy of the reformist apparatuses as a perma-



ment and open conflict. For certain sectors, on the contrary, there was a correspondence between the two, even though the tendency towards conflict remained and could undergo sudden explosions as in May 68 in France and the creeping May in Italy.

The reversal of the long wave of expansion was marked by a major trauma between 1968 and 1976, much as in all previous turning points of the long waves (1814-15, 1848, 1867-73, 1914-23, 1940-45): strike waves in Europe (France, Italy, Britain), fall of the dictatorships in Greece, Portugal and Spain, victory of the Vietnamese revolution. But there was no social trauma so decisive that it upset the balance of national states and political landscape established after the war. A proper revolutionary crisis, though, must also be a national crisis. The corollary is that there was no traumatic backlash either: the bourgeoisie returned on the offensive and the proletariat on the defensive in the late 1970s, but without having suffered political and social defeats comparable to those of the 1930s.

The point then is to use this sequence of experiences to preserve a relationship of forces, to memorize the lessons and continue to accumulate forces.

A revolutionary crisis is a crisis of a system of domination that is no longer operative. The working class then presents its candidacy to power by resolving its own problems and those of the national state as a whole. There is good reason to believe that when such a crisis begins, by necessity in a given country, it will have something to do with the question of Europe from the start.

The depth of the crisis and the high degree of internationalization of production will necessarily put the state system created at the end of the war to the test.

of a collapse of the system when imperialism would reach the absolute limit of its development, that is, when the last peasant of the last colonial country would have been absorbed by wage earning relations.

(7) An interesting article by Marian Sawer traces the genesis of *State and Revolution* on the basis of Lenin's correspondence. Lenin originally joined the polemic to refute what he called Bukharin's quasi-anarchist positions, and defend Kautsky. He radically changed his own position as he reread Marx's works. See Marian Sawer, "The Genesis of *State and Revolution*," *Socialist Register*, London: Merlin, 1972.

(8) See Michael Löwy's *De la grande logique de Hegel à la gare de Finlande à Pétrograd* published in *L'Homme et la Société*.

(9) See the study of the origin of the soviets in Oscar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Councils-1905-1921*, New York, 1974.

(10) A. Neuberger, *The armed insurrection*, London: NLB.

(11) See Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Gramsci," *New Left Review* 100, Nov. 1976-Jan. 1977.

(12) An edited English translation of this article is available in Ernest Mandel, *Revolutionary Marxism Today*, London: NLB, 1979.

(13) On this, see Ernesto Ruggione, "Le programme de l'Internationale Communiste," *Cahiers d'Histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*, n° 22, 1977. See also Pierre Frank, *Histoire de l'Internationale communiste*, Paris, 1979, and Giacomo Marramao, *Critica del capitalismo e ideologias de la crisis en los años 20 y 30*, Pasado y Presente.

(14) A slightly abridged version of Nin's pamphlet was published in Paris by *Cahiers de la Taupe* in 1977.

(15) See Mao Zedong, "Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?" *Selected Works*, vol. I, Peking.

(16) See Pierre Rousset, *The Chinese Revolution-Part I: The Second Chinese Revolution and the Shaping of the Maoist Outlook, Part II: The Maoist Project Tested in the Struggle for Power*, Paris: Notebooks for Study and Research n°2 and 3, 1987.

(17) Jaime Wheelock makes a nice summary of them in Pisani's book, *Los Muchachos*. For further detail, see the forthcoming collection *La révolution nicaraguayenne par les textes*, to be published by La Brèche, Paris.

(18) Concerning Lotta Continua's strategy, see D. Bensaïd, "Les avatars d'un certain réalisme: à propos d'un congrès de Lotta Continua," *Quatrième Internationale*, n°20-21, spring 1975.

(19) See the documents collected in *Le Chili est proche*, Paris: Maspéro.

(20) This is perfectly clear in Carmen's Castillo's book, *Un jour d'octobre à Santiago*, Paris: Stock.

(21) On the Hamburg insurrection see Jan Valtin's *Out of the Night*, A. Neuberger's *Armed insurrection*, and our comrade's George Junglas's recollections in French in *Quatrième Internationale* and in German in his book.

(22) On the 1927 Vienna incident see Ernst Fischer's *Le grand rêve socialiste* and Yvon Bourdet's "Presentation" in *Otto Bauer et la révolution*.

(23) Clara Zetkin's speech to the Fifth Congress of the Communist International is retranslated from the Spanish version published by Pasado y Presente Editores.

(24) Lénine, *Œuvres*, volume 25, p. 489.

(25) See Fernand Pelloutier, *Les Bourses du Travail*, Paris.

(26) See André Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, Boston, 1964 and *Socialism and Revolution*, New York, 1973. For Ernest Mandel's views, see his articles on problems of the labor movement in *Les Temps Modernes*, 1964, on the lessons of May 68 in *Les Temps Modernes* (in English published as an IMG pamphlet), and the interview to *Critique communiste* reproduced in *Revolutionary Marxism Today*.

(27) Lucien Goldmann, "Socialisme et humanisme," in *Marxisme et Sciences Humaines*, Paris: Gallimard, 1970: "In Western capitalist societies, the only realistic socialist program that has a chance of success, is now a program of "structural reforms" which makes an unsparing analysis of the situation which we have just sketched and tries to convince the workers that it is in their interest to demand first the right to control, then the right to manage their firms; these rights are the only ones that can guarantee, in addition to more or less substantial economic advantages, effective participation and responsibility in the major decisions of economic, social and political life, and the possibility to partake in the development of a genuine humanist culture. We are led thus to a conception of the road to socialism similar to that followed by the bourgeoisie in feudal society, a road along which gradual and peaceful (albeit conflict-ridden) economic transformations precede a possible political revolution, which may, incidentally, no longer be inevitable (see the case of the rise to power of the bourgeoisie in Germany in the 19th century). (pp. 298-299)

(28) Jean-Claude Delaunay, "Le grand soir de l'autogestion," *Revue "M"*, Paris, June 1987.

(29) These problems are the subject of the three sessions of the 1986 summer school of the LCR. The other two are available in French as *La crise-les crises-lenjeu* and *Stratégie et Parti*, in La Brèche's collection Racines.

## Footnotes

(1) See Edward Meade Earle, *Masters of Strategy*.

(2) On this topic, see C. Verla, et al., *La crise-Les crises-L'enjeu*, Paris: La Brèche/Collection Racines, 1987.

(3) This scientific conception of Marxism was present both in the Second International and in "diamat" (dialectical materialist theory) which Stalinism made into a state ideology. This is grasped perfectly by Walter Benjamin in his *Thèses sur le concept d'Histoire*. On this, see also Georges Labica, *Le marxisme-léninisme*, Paris: Bruno Huisman ed.

(4) See the lecture on the revolutionary party, which follows the present lecture, in Daniel Bensaïd, *Stratégie et Parti*, Paris: La Brèche/Collections Racines, 1987.

(5) See the articles on von Schlieffen, Moltke and Delbrück in E. M. Earle, *Masters of Strategy*. These provide a useful insight on the sort of military thought to which Kautsky could refer most readily.

(6) Lenin's reticence towards Rosa Luxemburg was probably partially inspired by their disagreements over the question of the accumulation of capital and imperialism. Luxemburg's theses seemed to suggest the objectivistic perspective

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## Appendixes

### A. Lessons of May 1968

by Ernest Mandel

(Extract from Ernest Mandel, *The Lessons of May 1968*, London: IMG Publications, 1971 (31 pp), pp. 16-19)

The objection has often been made to the strategy of anti-capitalist structural reforms, to the transitional programme strategy which I advocate, that it is only effective if applied by the great working-class organizations, both industrial and political, themselves. Without the protective barrier that only these organizations are capable of erecting against the permanent infiltration of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology into the working class, the latter, in this view, is at present condemned to confine itself to struggles having immediate economic aims. The experience of May 1968 has totally invalidated this pessimistic diagnosis.

Certainly, the existence of mass unions and parties unintegrated into the capitalist regime, educating the workers ceaselessly in a spirit of defiance and of global contestation vis-à-vis that régime, would be a potent trump-card in accelerating the maturation of revolutionary class consciousness among the workers. This would be true even if those unions and parties were not adequate instruments for the conquest of power. But the experience of May 1968 has shown that in the absence of a mass revolutionary vanguard, the proletariat ends up by generating that class consciousness all the same, because it is nourished by all the practical experience of the contradictions of neo-capitalism which the workers accumulate daily, throughout the years.

Spontaneity is the embryonic form of organization, Lenin used to say. The experience of May 1968 permits one to verify the present relevance of this observation in two ways. Working-class spontaneity is never a pure spontaneity; the fermentation among the workers brought about by vanguard groups—sometimes by just one experienced revolutionary militant—is an operative factor: their tenacity and patience are rewarded precisely at such moments, when social fever attains its paroxysm. Working-class spontaneity leads to the organization of a larger vanguard, since in the space of a few weeks thousands of workers have understood the possibility of a socialist revolution in France. They have understood that they must organize to that end, and with a thousand threads they are weaving links with the students, with the intellectuals, with the vanguard revolutionary groups which little by little are giving shape to the future revolutionary mass party of the French proletariat, and of which the JCR already appears to be the most solid and most dynamic nucleus.

I am not a naïve admirer of working-class spontaneity pure and simple. Even if the latter necessarily acquires a new validity faced with the conservatism of the bureaucratic apparatuses, it shows obvious limitations when confronted with a state apparatus and a highly specialized and centralized machinery of repression. Nowhere has the working class as yet spontaneously overthrown the capitalist régime and the bourgeois state nationally; it will doubtless never succeed in doing so. Even to ex-

tend organs of dual power over an entire country the size of France is, if not impossible, at least made far more difficult by the absence of a vanguard already sufficiently well implanted in the factories to be able swiftly to generalize the initiatives of the workers in a few pilot plants.

Furthermore, there is no advantage in exaggerating the scale of the spontaneous initiative of the working masses in May 1968. This initiative was everywhere *potentially* present; it only became a reality in a certain number of limited cases, whether on the level of decisions to occupy the factories or on that of the above-mentioned initiatives towards establishing a duality of power. The students when in action, in their vast majority escaped all efforts to channel them in a reformist direction; the majority of the workers on the other hand once again allowed themselves to be so channelled. This should not be held against them. The responsibility lies at the door of the bureaucratic apparatuses who have striven for years to smother within themselves all critical spirit, every manifestation of opposition to the reformist and neo-reformist line, every residue of working-class democracy. The Gaullist political victory of June 1968 is the price which the working-class movement is paying for the fact that it has not yet reversed these relations between vanguard and mass within the French proletariat.

But if May 1968 has demonstrated once again the absence of an adequate revolutionary leadership, and the inevitable consequences for the success of the revolutionary upsurge which flow from this fact, the experience also makes it possible to glimpse—for the first time in the West for over thirty years—the real dimensions of the problem and the ways leading to a solution of it. What was lacking in May 1968, if a first decisive thrust towards dual power was to be made, if France (with all necessary qualifications) was to experience its February 1917, was a revolutionary organization no more numerous in the factories than it was in the universities. At that precise moment and at those particular points, small nuclei of articulate workers, armed with a correct political programme and analysis and able to make themselves understood, would have been enough to prevent the dispersal of the strikers, to impose mass occupation and the democratic election of strike committees in the principal factories of the country. Of course, this was not an insurrection or a seizure of power. But a decisive page in the history of France and Europe would already have been turned. All those who believe that socialism is possible and necessary should act so that it will be turned next time.

#### Participation, Self-Determination and Worker's Control

For a conquest of power, there must be a revolutionary vanguard that has already convinced the majority of wage-earners and salaried staff of the impossibility of reaching socialism by the parliamentary road, that is al-

eady capable of mobilizing the majority of the proletariat beneath its flag. If the PCF had been a revolutionary party—that is, if it had educated the workers in this spirit even in periods when revolution was not on the immediate agenda; even, as Lenin put it, in counter-revolutionary phases—then, in the abstract, such a seizure of power was possible in May 1968. But then many things would have been at least very different from the reality of May 1968.

As the PCF is not a revolutionary party, and as none of the vanguard groups as yet has at its disposal a sufficient audience in the working class, May 1968 could not terminate in a seizure of power. But a general strike accompanied by factory occupations can and should terminate in the conquest of anti-capitalist structural reforms, in the realization of transitional demands—i.e. in the creation of dual power, an empirical power of the masses opposed to the legal power of Capital. To realize such a dual power, a mass revolutionary party is not indispensable; all that is necessary is a powerful spontaneous thrust by the workers, stimulated, enriched and partially coordinated by an organized revolutionary vanguard which is still too weak to dispute the leadership of the workers' movement directly with the traditional organizations, but already strong enough to outflank it in practice.

## B. The State and Dual Power

by Nikos Poulantzas

(Extract from Nikos Poulantzas interviewed by Henri Weber, *The State and the Transition to Socialism*, "International", Vol. 4, N°1, Autumn 1977, pp. 3-12)

**N. P. :** Anyway, what is certain is that within the Third International, I think, there was a tendency to view the state as an instrument that could be manipulated at will by the bourgeoisie. Even if they recognised that certain contradictions existed within it, the idea always persisted that no proper revolutionary struggle could be led in the heart of the state on the basis of these contradictions.

Now, on the other hand, we have the position of the Italian leaders, illustrated by Luciano Gruppi's latest article in *Dialectiques* on the contradictory nature of the state. This is totally different from what I am saying. According to this theory of the contradictory nature of the state, which has also been taken up in the French CP, one section of the state corresponds to the development of the productive forces, as a result, it embodies neutral, even positive functions of the state, because they correspond to the socialisation of the productive forces. In other words, there are two states: a 'good' state, which ultimately corresponds to the growth of the popular forces within the state itself, and a 'bad' state. Today, the 'bad' state dominates the 'good' state. The super-state of the monopolies, which is the bad side, must be destroyed; but the section of the state that corre-

sponds to the socialisation of the productive forces and the popular upsurge must be preserved.

This is a completely false conception. I agree with you: the whole of the present state and all its apparatuses—social security, health, education, administration, etc.—correspond by their very structure to the power of the bourgeoisie. I do not believe that the masses can hold positions of autonomous power—even subordinate ones—within the capitalist state. They act as a means of resistances, elements of corrosion, accentuating the internal contradictions of the state.

This allows us to escape from the false dilemmas in which we are presently stuck: either viewing the state as a monolithic bloc (I am being schematic here), and thus considering the internal struggle as a totally secondary problem—with the main if not exclusive objective being the task of centralising popular power, the construction of the counter-state to replace the capitalist state; or else seeing the state as contradictory and therefore considering that the essential struggle has to be mounted within the state, within its institutions—thus falling into the classical social-democratic conception of a struggle contained within the state apparatuses.

I believe, on the contrary, that it is necessary to develop some coordination between them:

- on the one hand, a struggle within the state. Not simply in the sense of a struggle enclosed within the physical confines of the state, but a struggle situated all the same on the strategic terrain constituted by the state. A struggle, in other words, whose aim is not to substitute the workers state for the bourgeois state through a series of reforms designed to take over one bourgeois state apparatus after another and thus conquer power, but a struggle which is, if you like, a struggle of resistance, a struggle designed to sharpen the internal contradictions of the state, to carry out a deep-seated transformation of the state.

- on the other hand, a parallel struggle, a struggle outside the institutions and apparatuses, giving rise to a whole series of instruments, means of coordination, organs of popular power at the base, structures of direct democracy at the base. This form of struggle would not aim to centralise a dual power type of counter-state, but would have to be linked with the first struggle.

I think we have to go beyond the classical strategy of dual power without falling into the trap of the Italian CP's strategy, which is, in the last analysis, a strategy located solely within the physical confines of the state.

### The state and dual power

**H. W.:** Let us just concentrate on this aspect of the question, and then perhaps we can come back to the state via a detour. I am convinced that we have to lead a struggle within the institutions, to play as much as we can on the internal contradictions of the state, and that, in the present context, every battle for the democratisation of the institutions and the state is a decisive battle. Also that such a struggle within the institutions must link up with a struggle outside to develop mechanisms of popular control and to extend direct democracy. But it seems to me that what is missing from your position,

## People, organizations and events cited

**Adler, Max (1873-1937):** Austrian sociologist, ideologue of Austro-Marxism in inter-war period, author of *Democracy and workers councils*.

**Allende, Salvador (1908-1973):** Chilean socialist, elected president of the Republic in 1970; killed in September 1973 military coup.

**Asturias insurrection (Spain):** October 1934, general strike and uprising based on UHP (Proletarian Solidarity Unions) committees.

**Austro-Marxists:** left social-democratic current based in Austria in the interwar period; tried to establish a Second and a Half International; main leaders: Otto Bauer, Karl Renner.

**Barcelona insurrection:** May 1937 armed resistance of left Anarchists (Friends of Durruti) and POUM triggered by the attempt of the Generality of Catalonia to recapture telephone central.

**Berlinguer, Enrico (1922-1984):** Italian communist, general secretary of PCI from 1972; proposed the "historical compromise" with Christian-Democracy.

**Bernstein, Eduard (1850-1932):** German socialist, edited *Sozial-Demokrat* 1881-1890; initiated the Revisionist current; a "centrist" during WWI, he joined the USPD in 1917 and rejoined the SPD in 1918.

**Bismarck, Otto von (1815-1898):** conservative Prime Minister of Prussia, then Germany, 1862-1890.

**Bolshevik Party:** created from the left-wing faction of the prewar Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, it led the soviet insurrection of October 1917 and subsequent Soviet governments.

**Bolshevization of the Comintern:** the normalization of the Comintern launched by Zinoviev in 1924.

**Bordiga, Amadeo (1889-1970):** Italian socialist, a founder of the PCI; opposed united front tactic in 1922; expelled from PCI in 1930, as a left critic of Stalinism.

**Bourses du Travail:** headquarters of city-wide trades councils created in France in the 1880s.

**Brandler, Heinrich (1881-1967):** German socialist and trade-union leader; joined the Spartakusbund, USPD, then KPD; a leader of the KPD "right" with Paul Levi. The KPD asked the SPD to give him the post of Minister of the Interior in the Zeigner government of Saxony, in 1923, but he was given only that of Secretary of the Chancery.

**CFDT (Confédération française démocratique du travail):** French social-democratic trade union confederation of Christian origin; it channeled the militancy of young workers after 1968, until it was "recentered" by its leader Edmond Maire in the late 1970s.

**CGIL (Confederazione generale italiana del lavoro):** main Italian trade-union confederation, dominated by the PCI.

**CGT (Confédération générale du travail):** main French trade-union confederation, dominated by the PCF.

**CNT (Confederación nacional del trabajo):** main Spanish trade-union confederation until the end of the civil war; dominated by Anarchist currents.

**Comintern:** Communist (or Third) International, founded in 1919; dissolved in 1943.

**Creeping May:** wave of massive and militant strikes in Italy in 1968 and 1969.

**"Czechoslovak experience":** refers here to the parliamentary interpretation of the workers government slogan given by Czech CP leader, Smeral Bohumir, in negotiations with Czech SP in early 1920s.

**De Gaulle, Charles (1890-1970):** French general, established Free French movement in London (1941-44), formed Provisional government in 1944, resigned in 1946; led a coup in 1958; president of France from 1958 to 1969, when he resigned following defeat in a referendum.

**ERP (Ejercito revolucionario del pueblo):** the armed wing of the Argentine PRT in the early 1970s.

**Eurocommunism:** a current of Western CPs advocating greater independence from Moscow; culminated at East Berlin conference in 1975.

**Extraordinary congress of PSOE (birth of PCE):** in April 1921, the PSOE congress heard a report from its delegates returning from Moscow; the majority rejected affiliation to the Comintern and the minority split and formed the PCOE.

**FAI (Federación anarquista ibérica):** underground Anarchist organization within the CNT, formed in 1927.

**Fichte, Johann (1762-1814):** German philosopher, argued for German unification from his chair in Berlin University.

**Focolists:** leftists who argued that guerrilla bases should be the backbone of the revolutionary movement in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s; Régis Debray systematized the strategy in *Revolution in the revolution*.

**Fonseca Amador, Carlos (1936-1976):** born in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, he joined the CP (PSN) in 1955; inspired by the Cuban revolution, he founded the FSLN in 1961; assassinated by the Somoza dictatorship.

**Fordism:** the economic system of mass production for mass consumption which superseded Taylorism after the Great Depression of the 1930s and implied certain wage concessions, according to the regulationist school of Aglietta and others.

**Fourth International:** worldwide revolutionary socialist organization founded in 1938 in opposition to Stalinism and Social-Democracy; grew in the 1960s and 1970s radicalization.

**Francoism:** the regime of Francisco Franco (1892-1976), the general who led an army coup in 1936 and established a fascist regime in Spain through the Civil War (1936-1939); he ruled until his death.

**Free Corps:** German paramilitary organization established by the Weimar Republic in December 1918.

**FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional):** formed in July 1961 by a split from the CP (Partido Socialista de Nicaragua) in favor of armed struggle and the Cuban model, and others. It split into three factions in 1975-76: the

**Proletarian Tendency, the Protracted People's War Tendency, and the Tercerista Tendency;** these fused in March 1979; the front led the insurrection of July 1979 and subsequent Nicaraguan governments.

**Generality of Catalonia:** the autonomous government of Catalonia in the 1930s, within the Spanish state.

**Giscard d'Estaing, Valéry** (born 1926): French politician, leader of non-Gaullist center-right, president of France 1974-1981.

**Gorter, Herman** (1864-1927): Dutch poet and socialist, then communist.

**Gramsci, Antonio** (1891-1937): editor of *L'Ordine nuovo* in 1919, a founder of the PCI; arrested in 1926 and jailed until 1937.

**Group of the Twelve (Nicaragua):** encouraged by the FSLN Tercerista tendency, twelve well-known economic, religious and cultural figures published an appeal against Somoza in *La Prensa* in November 1977 and joined the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) in July 1978.

**Halle, congress of:** USPD congress held in 1920, at which the party split, the majority deciding to fuse with the smaller KPD.

**Hegel, George W. F.** (1770-1831): German philosopher, author of *The Science of Logic*, replaced Fichte at Berlin University.

**Ingrao, Pietro:** Italian Communist, a leader of left current in PCI in 1960s and 1970s.

**KAPD (Kommunistische Arbeiter Partei Deutschlands):** German "ultra-left" party, founded 1920, admitted to Comintern as "sympathizer party".

**Kautsky, Karl** (1854-1938): German socialist, editor of *Neue Zeit* (1883-1917), joined USPD in 1917; returned to SPD in 1920.

**KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands):** founded December 1918-January 1919, fused with USPD (left) in December 1920 to form VKPD (united).

**LCR (Spain) (Liga comunista revolucionaria):** revolutionary Marxist organization in the Spanish state, founded in 1971, from "Grupo Comunismo"; fused with ETA-VI in 1973.

**Lenin, Vladimir** (1870-1924): Russian socialist, leader of Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, then Bolshevik Party, chairman of Council of People's Commissars in 1917; initiated and led Comintern.

**Le Pors, Anicet:** French Communist leader, one of four PCF ministers in 1981-84 government; later a dissident.

**Levi, Paul** (1883-1930): German socialist, lawyer for Rosa Luxemburg, member of Zimmerwald Left and a founder of KPD where he fought ultra-leftism; expelled in 1921 for denouncing the "March action" publicly; then a leader of SPD left.

**Liberation (France, Italy, Greece, etc):** the period in which German troops were defeated by insurgent movements and allied troops, and its aftermath (1943-

47).

**Lip strike:** in 1973, the workers of a French watch factory in the Jura threatened with closure, occupied and ran their plant with nationwide support for over a year.

**Livorno, Congress of:** congress of Italian SP in January 1921, at which the left minority under Bordiga formed the PCI, without the support of Serrati's center-left.

**Lotta Continua:** Italian far-left spontaneist organization formed from a split of Potere Operaio in the late 1960s; imploded in 1977.

**Luxemburg, Rosa** (1870?-1919): leader of Polish SP and German SPD; founded Spartakusbund in 1914, then KPD in 1919.

**Maire, Edmond** (born 1931): French trade-unionist, leader of CFDT; an advocate of self-management, he moved right in the late 1970s.

**May 68:** French general strike of about 10 million workers for several weeks; triggered by student protests, it signaled a period of widespread radicalization.

**MC (Movimiento Comunista):** Spanish state far-left organization; its origins lie in expulsions from ETA in 1966-67 and a series of fusions leading to MC in 1972; it evolved away from its original Maoist ideology beginning in 1977.

**MIR (Movimiento de la izquierda revolucionaria):** Chilean far-left organization founded in 1965.

**Mitterrand, François** (born 1916): French left-wing politician; joined SP and became its leader in 1971; elected president of the Republic in 1981.

**Nin, Andreu** (1892-1937): Catalan leader of Socialist Youth and CNT; elected to the secretariat of the Red International of Labor Unions in 1920; a member of the International Left Opposition, he founded the POUM; minister of Justice in the Catalan government in 1936, assassinated by the GPU in 1937.

**Pact of Unity of Action SP-CP (1935):** agreement between the French CP and SP which preceded their 1936 agreement with the Radical Party to form the Popular Front.

**Pannekoek, Anton** (1873-1960): Dutch socialist, founder of Dutch CP, theoretician of KAPD.

**PCE (Partido Comunista de España):** CP of Spain, formed in 1921 by fusion of PCE (ex-Socialist Youth Federation, founded 1920) and PCOE (minority of PSOE); became a mass party during civil war and reemerged in 1970s at the head of Workers Commissions.

**PCF (Parti communiste français):** French CP, founded in 1920; majority party of working class from 1936-38 to the late 1970s; leads CGT.

**PCI (Partito comunista italiano):** Italian CP, founded in 1921; leads CGIL; main opposition party to Christian-Democrats from 1943 onwards.

**Pinochet, Augusto** (born 1915): Chilean military, commander of armed forces under Allende, led coup of September 1973 and established dictatorship.

**Popular Front line:** policy adopted by the seventh congress of the Comintern in 1935 advocating the limitation of workers' social demands to facilitate an alliance of the USSR and bourgeois forces against Hitler.

**Popular Unity (Chile):** a coalition of the SP, CP and other minor left parties formed in late 1960s; it won the elections of 1970 and formed the government under Allende.

**POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista):** founded in September 1935 by a fusion of Nin's Communist Left and Maurin's Workers and Peasants' Bloc; mainly based in Catalonia.

**PRT-Argentina (Partido revolucionario de los trabajadores):** far-left organization, section of the Fourth International 1965-1972; adopted a strategy of protracted people's war in 1969, to be carried out by ERP.

**PSIUP (Partito socialista italiano de unificazione proletaria):** Italian far-left parliamentary organization in the 1960s.

**PSOE (Partido socialista obrero español) :** the Spanish SP; emerged as a strong electoral force after the end of Francoism; formed government under Gonzalez in 1983; leads UGT.

**PSU (Parti socialiste unifié):** anti-colonialist split from French SP during the Algerian war; grew after May 1968; its majority under Rocard reunited with SP in 1974; the minority continued as far-left organization; it split again when its new leader, Huguctte Bouchardeau, became Minister of the Environment in SP government in 1984.

**Radek, Karl (1885-1939):** Polish socialist, active in Poland, Russia and Germany; joined Bolsheviks in 1918; a leader of the Comintern, he was assigned to German affairs in the early 1920s.

**Reagan, Ronald (born 1911):** conservative Republican politician, elected president of the United States in 1980 and 1984 on a program of cutting back social expenditures to balance the budget.

**Restaurants of the Heart:** French network of free meals launched by actor Coluche with appeals to charity and media support, to feed the growing number of hungry poor in 1985.

**Rocard, Michel (born 1930):** French socialist, adept of self-management, leader of PSU 1967-1973; joined SP in 1974; minister in SP-CP government 1981-84.

**Schutzbund:** League of Republican Defense, a paramilitary workers' organization centered in Vienna and used by the Austrian Socialist Party from 1918 to 1934.

**shop stewards' movement:** the upsurge of rank-and-file workers in British factories during and after World War I.

**Soares, Mario (born 1924):** leader of Portuguese SP during 1974-75 revolution, advocated the supremacy of the legislative assembly over the various "commissions"; prime minister 1976-78, president 1983.

**Social Security in France:** this system of health and retirement benefits, established in 1930s and 1940s, integrated pre-existing mutual aid plans into a single network

which covered almost all wage-earners; later expanded to non-wage-earners; in 1967, De Gaulle imposed tri-partite (union-employer-state) management of its funds despite workers' opposition.

**Sorel, Georges (1847-1922):** French sociologist, articulated revolutionary syndicalist ideas, notably on the general strike.

**SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands):** founded 1864, main party of German working class; splits from the SPD during and after World War I led to the formation of the KPD; the SPD led early governments of the Weimar Republic; banned by Hitler, it resurfaced in 1945; it governed the German Federal Republic under Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt in the 1970s.

**Stalingrad, battle of:** (1943) turning point of World War II, the Soviet army encircled and defeated the invading German troops.

**Tasca, Angelo (1892-1960):** Italian socialist, a leader of early PCI, expelled in 1929 for advocating united front against fascism. Pseudonym "Angelo Rossi".

**Third period of the Comintern:** from 1928 to 1934, the Stalinists gave an ultra-left interpretation of the united front tactic, predicting imminent capitalist crisis and war.

**Tours, Congress of:** French SP congress in 1920 at which the majority voted to affiliate to the Comintern and changed the party's name to PCF.

**Trotsky, Leon (1879-1940):** Russian socialist, leader of Petrograd soviet in 1905, joined Bolsheviks in 1917; in Soviet government and Comintern affairs 1917-1922; founder of Left Opposition and Fourth International.

**UGT (Union general de los trabajadores):** Spanish trade-union confederation influenced by the PSOE.

**USPD (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands - Independent Social-democratic Party of Germany):** founded in April 1917, as large antiwar split form SPD; its majority fused with KPD in 1920, the minority returning to the SPD.

**Workers Commissions (CCOO: Comisiones obreras):** emerged as underground action committees and trade unions in the Spanish miners' strike of 1962; became a formal trade-union confederation dominated by PCE after 1976.

**Yalta conference:** held in February 1945 in Crimea; Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed to outline their respective spheres of influence in the world.

**Zetkin, Clara (1857-1933):** German socialist, editor of *Gleichheit*, a founder of Spartakusbund, joined USPD and KPD; supported Levi and Brandler in 1923 crisis.



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Since the rise of capitalism, socialists have faced certain deep-seated obstacles: the hostility of the bourgeois state, the fitful curve of proletarian class-consciousness, the inertia or active opposition of apparatuses originally built by the workers for struggle. Bensaïd reviews the answers given in the "classical" period of the Marxist movement and examines them in light of events in Southern Europe and Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, including the growth and diversification of the state, the growing aspiration to self-management, the multiple forms of dual power, the experience of left reformist governments.

Daniel Bensaïd was born in 1946. He was active in the French student and anti-imperialist movements which led up to May 1968. Drawing the lessons of the failure of the general strike, he emerged as one of the main advocates of building a revolutionary workers party and International. Since then he has played a leading role in the French LCR. He teaches sociology at the University of Paris and is a regular collaborator of the IIRE. His published works include: *Mai 68: une répétition générale* (1968), *Portugal: la révolution en marche* (1975), *La révolution et le pouvoir* (1976), *L'Anti-Rocard* (1980).

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