

MARXIST THEORIES OF THE POLITICAL PARTY

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

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This thesis is a critical analysis of the theories of leading Marxists - Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Lukács, Gramsci, Stalin, and Trotsky - on the role, organisation and strategy of the Marxist party. The central theme is the way in which theorists have conceived the relationship between the party and the working class. Should the party be a broad organisation embracing all tendencies in the workers' movement, or should it be a narrow elite acting on behalf of the masses, or is a third alternative possible?

The thesis begins by situating the role of the party in Marx's theory of class struggle and shows how Marx, reacting against conspiratorial and utopian forms of organisation, favoured a broad, non-sectarian party. It then traces Lenin's development, in opposition to 'economism' and reformism, of the concept of the disciplined vanguard party, and discusses Luxemburg's objections to this and her emphasis on mass spontaneity. Lukács's Hegelian conception of class consciousness is shown to lead to an elitist and idealised view of the party. In contrast Gramsci's theory of 'hegemony' is seen as adding new dimensions to the Leninist theory of the party. This is followed by an analysis of the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky, in which Stalin is seen as evolving a thoroughly manipulative view of the party whereas Trotsky defended the original aspirations of Leninism. The thesis concludes with an examination of the principal objections to the Marxist party - Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy', and view that Leninism leads to Stalinism - and an evaluation of the relevance of the Marxist theory of the party today.

INTRODUCTION.

Almost all Marxists, provided their commitment to the doctrine is more than academic, have made the political party the main focus of their activity and viewed it as the primary agent for the realisation of their aims. This work is an account and critical analysis of the ideas of leading theoreticians of the Marxist movement on the role, organisation, strategy and tactics of the Marxist political party. Such a study poses a number of special problems, consequently a few words on these and on the methodology of the work seem appropriate as an introduction.

Firstly, no subject in the field of the social sciences, and least of all this one, can be approached without a series of value-laden assumptions, and whether one approaches the creation of Marxist parties and the attempt to lead socialist revolutions from a position of sympathy or antipathy is bound to make an enormous difference not only to the selection of material and the judgements offered on it, but also to the whole style of the discourse. Alasdair McIntyre has written that: "Those for whom the whole project of the revolutionary liberation of mankind from exploitation and alienation is an absurd fantasy disqualify themselves from writing about Communism in the same way that those who find the notion of the supernatural redemption of the world from sin an outmoded superstition disqualify themselves from writing ecclesiastical history." (1) Be that as it may (and it is a statement which omits many intermediary positions), this work is written from a

position of sympathy with the aims of the Marxist movement, and from a Marxist theoretical standpoint. Indeed it is written, for the most part, within the Marxist framework. Only in the last chapter is there any systematic consideration of the views of non-Marxists. This may seem, and in some respects is, an unfortunate limitation but it is one that was unavoidable given my particular purpose. For what I have set out to do is trace the evolution of what is really a single developing theory and to examine the different nuances of opinion among the most prominent Marxists. Consequently I have had to assume on the part of my reader that he or she is in the position of a shepherd to whom all sheep do not look alike.

Another "interest" which I should declare is that I have been concerned primarily with the way in which Marxists have envisaged the relationship between the party and the social class upon which it is based and which it aims to lead i.e. the proletariat. And then, deriving from this, with the relationships between conscious action and spontaneity, and democracy and centralism within the party. The reason why this problematic is regarded as fundamental to the Marxist theory of the party is set out in the first chapter. The selection of this as a central theme has in large part determined which Marxists I have chosen to analyse.

Those included - Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Lukács, Gramsci and Trotsky - are clearly major figures and need little justification, but some of the omissions do require an explanation. The most glaring gaps are German Social Democracy, Stalin and Mao-Tse-Tung, and to a lesser

extent the Castro-Guevara-Debray matrix. In German Social Democracy the theory of the party was largely implicit rather than explicit and so to have analysed it in its own right would have shifted the study too much in the direction of empirical history and away from the critique of theory. Also the omission is mitigated by the fact that the social democratic concept of the party is dealt with through Marx, Lenin and Luxemburg. The same mitigation applies to the ideas of Stalin which appear refracted through those of Trotsky. The justification for this procedure is to be found in the text (see chapter 6). The party of Mao-Tse-Tung, the Chinese Communist Party, was, after its near annihilation in 1927, not based on the working class but on an alliance of declassed intelligentsia as leaders and peasants from the most backward regions of China as rank-and-file. Only 1.6% of the membership were workers in 1930. (2) Moreover it was primarily a military organisation rather than a political party in the normal sense. Consequently although Mao employs the language of Marxism the dialectic of party and class central to this study is in reality absent from his theory and practice. To have explored the complexities of this and fully substantiated the above view would once again have constituted a large diversion from the task I set myself. By and large the same considerations apply to Castro-Guevara-Debray, with the distinction that here was involved a more open break with the Marxist concept of a political party. (3)

The compensation for these omissions is, I hope, that this study constitutes a more or less coherent argument charting the development of the theory of the party through the contributions of outstanding Marxist theoreticians operating with fundamentally shared premises.

The fact that there is no separate discussion of Marxists since Trotsky is not meant to imply that all development of the theory of the Marxist party came to a halt in 1940, still less that we have before us a finished product. Although the subject was for a long time neglected by Marxists the last few years have seen the production of a number of interesting essays by amongst others: Lucio Magri, Rossana Rosanda, Sartre, Ernest Mandel, Monty Johnstone, Chris Harman and Tony Cliff. (4) Nonetheless it is fact that would I think be readily admitted by all concerned that none of these works constitutes a major distinct contribution to the theory of the party in the same way as do the ideas of those Marxists who are discussed here. In so far as their respective insights have influenced me, and also in so far as I have disagreed with some of their judgements and conclusions, this has been incorporated in the text either directly or by implication.

A more specifically methodological problem also deserves mention here. To write the history of a theory requires a view of the relationship between theory and history, or theory and practice (since history is simply the totality of human practice past and present). In this respect I have worked from the premise that theory is neither the product of pure individual inspiration nor of disinterested observation and contemplation, but is derived, in the last analysis, from social practice, from the activity of men in pursuit of their aims, needs and interests. This derivation is often neither direct nor conscious but in so far as a theorist is unaware of it he is unaware of the source of his own views. This does not mean that theory is either the passive reflection

of existing circumstances or the mere rationalisation of selfish interests (though sometimes what passes for theory is precisely these things).

Rather theory is an attempt to understand the world in response to the problems encountered in the effort to change it, or to prevent it changing in certain ways. Nor is this process an automatic one. People with shared ultimate aims and political allegiances, and even largely similar experiences, nonetheless frequently respond differently when confronted with a new situation. Witness the divisions between such close associates as Lenin and Zinoviev over the course of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

These general considerations apply with particular force to the theory of the party for here theory is at its most practical, and is most inseparable from historical circumstances. Thus it is possible to discuss Marx's theory of surplus value without reference to the details of nineteenth century history, but not his theory of organisation. Consequently this thesis is a blend of theoretical analysis and historical narrative, though with more emphasis being placed on the historical element in some parts than others. Lukács' ideas, for example, though a product of their times in a general sense, had little connection with any immediate plan of action whereas Lenin's almost always did. This historical approach certainly has its disadvantages since greater clarity would have been achieved if it could have been assumed, for example, that Marx or Lenin each had a single unchanging conception of the party that could be presented without reference to continually changing

circumstances. Unfortunately this would inevitably have led to gross oversimplification and misrepresentation.

Finally I have attempted, as far as possible, to let each theorist speak for himself by the use of a large amount of direct quotation. This has produced a text overloaded with footnotes but seemed the best safeguard against distortion in areas which have long been the subject of controversy and dispute.

CHAPTER I

Karl Marx : Class and Party

A. The Class Foundation.

The foundation of all Marxist approaches to the analysis of political parties (and therefore the foundation of the theories dealt with in this study) is Marx's theory of class struggle. For Marxists the basic explanation for the existence of different and competing political parties lies neither in the existence of various groups of men with different political ideals, nor in the needs of the political system as such, rather it is to be found in the economic structure of society. Political parties come into being, attract support, and continue to function primarily as the representatives of class interests.

Naturally this idea, as is the case with many Marxian principles, becomes a piece of nonsense if it is understood crudely and dogmatically. The thesis that political parties represent class interests does not mean that they necessarily do so in a straightforward one-to-one relationship. It does not mean that at all times one party represents the interests of one class; or that the interests of a class, in the historical sense, can be formulated simply in terms of immediate economic gain; or that the actions of every party can be explained merely by reference to the class on which it is based. In fact history provides numerous examples of every kind of class-party combination: of parties that begin by representing the interest of one class, but end up by serving the

interests of another; of parties that attempt to serve the interests of two or even three classes at once; of parties that serve a section of a class against the interests of the class as a whole; of two or three small parties competing to become the undisputed representative of the same class, and so on.

Thus in Britain today we have three major political parties. The Tory Party, which is primarily the party of the big capitalists but is voted for by many workers and actively supported by large sections of the petty bourgeoisie. The Labour Party, which is based in the organisations of the working class and relies mainly on workers for its votes, but which has a middle class leadership which accepts the continuance of the capitalist system, and is therefore frequently forced to act against the interests of its working class base. The Liberal Party, which is basically a petty bourgeois party, supported by a few larger capitalists and drawing some of its votes from the working class.

None of these examples refute the Marxian thesis, rather they confirm it, for all that is maintained is that the fundamental starting point for the analysis of political parties, as with politics in general, must be the class structure of the society concerned. The numerous complexities we have referred to arise from the fact that classes in society do not simply stand side by side with each other, but one on top of the other in a state of permanent and dynamic conflict, and that political parties play a major role in that conflict. A particular configuration of political parties reflects the relative

stages of development reached by the different classes and the degree of hegemony attained by one class over the others. Thus when dealing with Marxist theories of the party, and above all where Marx himself was concerned, one is concerned not with a narrow and separate theory of organisation, but always with the relationship between party and class. Parties are moments in the development of classes.

To speak of "the development of classes" implies a dynamic rather than a static theory of class. One of the most common misinterpretations of Marx is the view that his theory of class was an attempt at an empirical description of stratification in terms either of levels of income, life styles or subjective evaluations. But this was not Marx's aim at all. Rather the purpose of his theory was to show how men, en masse, would be likely to act, especially at critical moments. As Dahrendorf puts it: "In elaborating and applying his theory of class, Marx was not guided by the question 'How does society in fact look at a given point of time?' but by the question 'How does the structure of society change?' or in his own words 'What is the law of motion of modern society?'. (1) Marx wished to reveal the driving forces of history in order to facilitate the making of history. Thus for Marx classes are not simply static entities, but social groups, which come into being through historical processes and pass through various stages of growth and maturity; above all classes define themselves through conflict. "Individuals form a class only in so far as they are engaged in a common struggle with another class". (2). In

the course of the struggle classes acquire (or lose) cohesion, organisation, confidence and consciousness. Political parties are weapons in the struggle between classes.

In Marx's analysis of capitalism "society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."

(3) It was not that Marx believed that the categories of bourgeois and proletarian covered everyone in capitalist society - to have asserted such as an empirical fact in 1847 would have been absurd. Rather his contention was that the conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat is inherent in and fundamental to the capitalist system. Under capitalism production takes place on the basis of the exploitation of wage labour. The driving force of capitalist production is competition between capitalists and therefore the need of each firm or company to accumulate capital and expand its operations or face going out of business. Capital accumulates through the extraction of surplus value, which is the gap between the wages paid to workers for their labour power and the value of the goods which the workers produce. At any point in time (taking the productivity of labour and the degree of mechanisation as given) the profit of the employer will be higher the lower are the wages of the workers. Thus lodged in the heart of the capitalist economy is a permanent conflict of interest, and this basic conflict conditions every aspect of social life. As Marx puts it in "Capital":

"The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour

is pumped out of the immediate producers determines the relation of domination and subjection as it grows directly out of and in turn determines production. On this is based the whole structure of the economic community as it comes forth from the relations of production, and thereby at the same time its political structure. It is always the immediate relation of the owners of the conditions of production to immediate producers...in which we find the final secret, the hidden basis of the whole construction of society, including the political patterns of sovereignty and dependence, in short, of a given specific form of government." (4)

In the last analysis the various other classes or social strata can act only within the framework of alternatives provided by the two major classes. In the end they must side with one class or the other. Consequently, from a Marxist standpoint, the basic criterion for the assessment of political parties is not simply on which class they are based, but where they stand in the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

But when one speaks of Marx's theory of the party the subject is not political parties in general, but the revolutionary party which has as its aim the overthrow of capitalism - specifically one is talking about Marx's concept of a proletarian political party, because of course it was his view that "the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class"(5). It is worth briefly elaborating on Marx's reasons for this judgement because his view of the proletariat is the essential backdrop to his own and all later Marxists' theory of the

revolutionary party.

Marx's assessment of the revolutionary nature of the proletariat was not, as is often thought, based on the extreme misery and oppression which it suffered - misery and oppression have existed through the ages - but on the positive qualities which distinguished it from all other oppressed classes. In the first place there is the fact that the proletariat is the unique child of capitalism. "The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product." (6) The tradesman, the artisan, the small farmer, the peasant, are all undermined by the expansion of capitalism, but the proletariat is augmented. "In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e. capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed." (7) The scale of production increases and so workers are drawn together in larger and larger units. "With the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels its strength more." The proletariat therefore stands at the centre of the economic structure, not its periphery. Potentially it is the most powerful exploited class in history. This power gives the proletariat the capacity for self-emancipation rather than dependence on philanthropy from above, which is a vital element in Marx's theory of revolution (8). The second and equally important factor in Marx's assessment of the proletariat is his view that the proletariat is the first class whose victory would result not in a new form of class

society, but in the abolition of all classes. This view was based on the necessarily collective nature of the proletarian struggle. Odd exceptions apart, the individual worker cannot approach his employer and ask for a wage increase with any chance of success; he is forced to combine with his fellows. The worker has no property in the means of production and he cannot obtain it as an individual, for modern industry cannot be divided up and parcelled out in millions of pieces. To capture the means of production the working class must do it collectively, through social ownership. "They have nothing of their own to secure and fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property." (9)

Marx's insistence on the proletariat as the only revolutionary class and his reasons for it are well illustrated by his attitude to the other most obvious candidate for the title, the peasantry. In Marx's day the peasantry formed the vast majority even in most European countries and they were at least as poor and down-trodden as the proletariat. Moreover, there was a long tradition of violent peasant revolts. But Marx discounted all this because of the individual and fragmented nature of the peasant way of life.

"The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse... In this way, the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple

addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes. In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organisation, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented." (10)

The capacity of the proletariat, as against the peasantry, (11) for self-representation and therefore self-emancipation ~~is~~ is crucial, not only for its status as revolutionary class, but also for our main concern in this study, the question of the revolutionary party. It is the ability of the proletariat to represent itself which makes possible the creation of the genuinely class party, the party of and for the working class, in contrast to the impossibility of creating a genuine peasant party (12). But there is also another side to this coin. If the creation of a proletarian revolutionary party is predicated on the revolutionary potential of the proletariat, it is because of the problems involved in realising this potential that there is no need for such a party. For Marx, despite his immense enthusiasm for the

proletariat, did not confuse potential with empirical actuality. He was aware of the gap between the proletariat as a class "in itself" and the proletariat as a class "for itself" (13), and the long road of struggle that lies between the two. Nor did Marx fail to see the debilitating effects of competitive bourgeois society on the organisation and unity of the working class.

"Competition separates individuals from one another, not only the bourgeois but still more the workers, in spite of the fact that it brings them together. Hence it is a long time before these individuals can unite... Hence every organised power standing over and against these isolated individuals, who live in relationships daily reproducing this isolation, can only be overcome after long struggles. To demand the opposite would be tantamount to demanding that competition should not exist in this definite epoch of history, or that the individuals should banish from their minds relationships over which in their isolation they have no control." (14)

He recognised also the power of bourgeois ideology. "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it." (15)

The formation of a workers' political party was therefore necessary in order to combat these powerful tendencies towards fragmentation and to establish the independence of the proletariat as a

class. Indeed Marx often suggests that the workers cannot be regarded as a class in the full sense of the word until they have created their own distinct party. Thus we find in "Communist Manifesto" that "The organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves" (16), and in the Decision of the London Conference (1871) of First International that "the proletariat can act as a class only by constituting itself a distinct political party." (17) This basic idea remained central to the theory and practice of Marx and Engels from the mid-1840's to the end of their lives.

B. Communists and Proletarians.

This now brings us to the fundamental problem of the Marxist theory of the party. Marxists believe that the class struggle is the motor of history and that "the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class themselves." (18) At the same time they wish to create a political party to represent the historical interests of the class as a whole. What then is to be the relationship between this party and the mass of the working class? Marx addressed himself to this problem in the section of the Communist Manifesto entitled "Proletarians and Communists."

"In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties.

They have no interests separate and apart from the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other working class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." (19)

These few dense and brilliant paragraphs contain both the germ of the solution to the problem of the party/class relationship, and a series of broad guidelines which have shaped the practice of the

Marxist movement down to the present day. In the first place, absolutely ruled out is the conspiratorial view of the role of the party as a small band of adventurers acting on behalf of, but apart from, the class. Also ruled out are the authoritarian view of the party handing down orders from above to be obeyed by the essentially passive masses, and the purely propagandistic view of the sect merely preaching its doctrines until the rest of the world is won over. Firmly established is the concept of leadership won on the basis of performance in the class struggle in the service of the working class, and the principle of raising, within the everyday economic and political struggles of the workers, the overall aims of the movement.

Foreshadowed in these lines are the Marxist strategy of the united front (20), the policy of working within trade unions while recognising the limitations of trade unionism, and the defence of democratic rights while striving to go beyond bourgeois democracy.

But for all its importance, Marx's formulation contains definite limitations and lacunae. It is written at a high level of generality and nowhere deals specifically with the organisational form to be adopted by Communists. Indeed it contains no clear indication of what is meant by a party. It is this original imprecision which lies behind the only proposition in the passage to have been clearly invalidated by subsequent events, namely that "Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties." This makes sense as a general principle only if it is taken to be almost identical in meaning to the statement that "they have no interests separate and

apart from those of the proletariat as a whole." Nor is this vagueness in the use of the word "party" an isolated case confined to the Communist Manifesto. Throughout his work Marx uses the term party in a variety of ways (Monty Johnstone has identified at least five major "models" (21)) to refer to such widely different phenomena as the extremely broad and loose Chartist movement, his own small group of associates and followers, and the general revolutionary cause. Thus Marx could write to Freiligrath that "The [Communist] League, like the Society of Seasons in Paris and a hundred other associates, was only an episode in the history of the party which grows everywhere spontaneously from the soil of modern society... Under the term 'party', I understand party in the great historical sense of the word," (22) and to Kugelmann that the Paris Commune was "the most glorious deed of our Party since the June insurrection in Paris [1848]." (23)

Because of Marx's vagueness on this point it is not possible to construct or reconstruct any single or systematic theory of the party from quotations taken out of their context, as for example Dahrendorf has attempted to do in relation to the concept of class (24). The only possible procedure is to examine the actual development of Marx's political activity and to interpret his various comments on the question of the party in their historical context (25). In doing this one central fact has constantly to be borne in mind. Marx's lack of a clear definition of the political party is neither accidental nor

the product of laziness of thought. Rather it reflects the fact that for a large part of Marx's career political parties in the modern sense of the term did not yet exist, either for the bourgeoisie or for the proletariat. The modern mass party with its clearly defined membership, organisation and constitution is a recent phenomenon. It came into being primarily to meet the challenge of universal suffrage and fully developed bourgeois democracy, and it presupposed a substantial network of communications, mass media and literacy. Prior to this the modern political party was not required by the relatively primitive political system. All that was necessary were either loose and informal associations based on a network of local notables (usually landowners), or else small gatherings, in clubs and salons, of influential intellectuals. On this point Antonio Gramsci comments: "Marx was not able to have historical experiences superior (or at least much superior) to those of Hegel; but as a result of his journalistic and agitational activities he had a sense for the masses. Marx's concept of organisation remains entangled amid the following elements: craft organisation; Jacobin clubs; secret conspiracies by small groups; journalistic organisation."

(26) This does not strictly speaking do justice to Marx for, as we have seen, he had theoretically progressed beyond the notion of the secret conspiracy, but the main point, that it is unreasonable to expect of Marx conceptions which go beyond the experience of his times, is a valid one. This is especially true as it is much harder to see

ahead in the sphere of concrete forms of organisation than it is in the sphere of general economic and social development.

For the purpose of charting the evolution of Marx's concept of the party his political life can conveniently be divided into four main periods: (1) 1847-1850, the period of the Communist League; (2) 1850-1864, the long interlude in the class struggle; (3) 1864-1872, the International Working Men's Association; (4) 1873 onwards, the beginnings of mass Social Democracy.

C. The Communist League

In 1846 Marx and Engels had established Communist Correspondence Committees based on Brussels and maintaining links with Britain, France, and Germany. It was through these committees that they made contact with the League of the Just, an international secret society composed mainly of German artisans. By 1847 the League's leaders had been won over, and Marx and Engels were invited to join. This they agreed to do on condition that the old conspiratorial forms of organisation be scrapped. The League of the Just then changed its name to The League of Communists and held a reorganisation congress in which Marx and Engels participated. The main points of the congress were the achievement of a "thoroughly democratic" structure "with elective and always removable boards" and the struggle against "all hankering after conspiracy." (27) Marx and Engels fought for a turn towards open propaganda of Communist ideas within the working class. We see

therefore by 1847 the coming together of a number of key ideas for the Marxist theory of the party. Firstly the need of the proletariat, wherever possible, for an international organisation. Secondly the link between the class struggle, the self-emancipation of the proletariat, and the need for an internally democratic organisation which openly proclaims its aims.

The League called itself, alternatively, an international body and the "Communist Party of Germany", but in reality it was too weak to be either a forerunner of the 1st International or a genuine national party. Rather, with only 200-300 members (28), spread over several countries, it cannot be regarded as more than the embryo of a party or, to borrow a term from Paris 1968, a "groupuscule". Initially the strategy adopted was for Communists to work as far as possible inside already existing movements in the different countries. Thus in Britain Ernest Jones operated within the Chartist movement and in France the League's members joined the Social Democrats of Ledru-Rollin and Louis Blanc. The weakness of the League was immediately shown up when it was plunged in the all-European upheaval of 1848. As Engels notes, "the few hundred League members vanished in the enormous mass that had been suddenly hurled into the movement." (29) This is not to say that the League's members had nothing to offer. On the contrary, as individuals they played an important part in the development of the revolution. As Stephan Born put it to Marx, "the League has ceased to exist and yet it exists everywhere." (30)

This combination of no viable organisation as a base and an as yet small and politically immature working class with an extremely revolutionary situation led Marx to depart somewhat from the main Schema set out in the Communist Manifesto. Instead of coming forward as the clear advocate of proletarian revolution and the representative of an independent working class party, Marx was forced to act through the "Neue Rheinische Zeitung" as the extreme left-wing of radical democracy, working to push forward the bourgeois revolution to the point where the contradictions would open up beneath its feet. Clearly this ambivalent and somewhat individualistic position would have been rendered simultaneously unnecessary and impossible by the existence of a substantial proletarian party.

Marx was of course aware of the problems inherent in his position and in April 1849, when German bourgeois radicalism had demonstrated its inability to carry forward the revolution, he and his associates, Wolff, Schapper and Becker, resigned from the Rhineland District Committee of the Democratic Associations. "In our opinion," they wrote, "the present form of organisation of the democratic associations embraces too many heterogeneous elements to make possible any useful activity in furtherance of its aim. In our opinion a closer association of workers organisations will be more useful because these organisations are composed of more homogeneous elements." (31) In 1905 Lenin commented on this episode

as follows: "It was only in April 1849, after the revolutionary any newspaper had been published for almost a year... that Marx and Engels declared themselves in favour of a special workers' organisation! Until then they were merely running an 'organ of democracy unconnected by any organisational ties with an independent workers' party. This fact, monstrous and incredible from our present day standpoint, clearly shows us what an enormous difference there is between the German workers' party of those days and the present Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party." (32) But from this point on the struggle for the independent political organisation of the working class became central to the theory and practice of Marxism.

The rapid collapse of the German revolution prevented the immediate practical realisation of this perspective, but in the autumn of 1849 Marx, now in exile in London, reconstituted the Central Committee of the Communist League and began its reorganisation in Germany, this time, of necessity, as a secret centralised party. In March 1850, in "The Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (commonly known as the March Address) Marx summed up the experience of the past period and the organisational lessons to be drawn from it:

"At the same time the former firm organisation of the League was considerably slackened. A large part of the members who directly participated in the revolutionary movement believed the time for secret societies to have gone by and public activities alone sufficient.

The individual circles and communities allowed their connections with the Central Committee to become loose and gradually dormant. Consequently, while the democratic party, the party of the petty bourgeoisie, organised itself more and more in Germany, the workers' party lost its only firm foothold, remained organised at the most in separate localities for local purposes and in the general movement thus came completely under the domination and leadership of the petty bourgeois democrats. An end must be put to this state of affairs, the independence of the workers must be restored...

Reorganisation can only be carried out by an emissary and the Central Committee considers it extremely important that the emissary should leave precisely at this moment when a new revolution is impending, when the workers' party, therefore, must act in the most organised, most unanimous and most independent fashion possible if it is not to be exploited and taken in tow again by the bourgeoisie as in 1848." (33)

In some respects it is in the "March Address" that Marx makes his closest approach to Lenin's concept of a vanguard party (though of course there are still major differences). The key to these organisational proposals is that they are the product of the most direct involvement in revolutionary action that Marx was ever to experience, and that they are designed as a guide to action in a situation in which it is assumed that "a new revolution is impending".

The plan to tighten the organisation of the League and strengthen its independence does not stand on its own as an isolated organisational device, but is an integral part of a perspective of dynamic revolutionary action in which the working class is to assume leadership in the democratic revolution and push it in a socialist direction. "Alongside the new official governments they must establish simultaneously their own workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal committees and municipal councils or in the form of workers' clubs or workers' committees... Arms and ammunition must not be surrendered on any pretext; any attempt at disarming must be frustrated, if necessary by force. Destruction of the influence of the bourgeois democrats on the workers, immediate independent and armed organisation of the workers and the enforcement of conditions as difficult and compromising as possible upon the inevitable momentary rule of the bourgeois democracy -these are the main points which the proletariat and hence the League must keep in view during and after the impending insurrection." (34) Thus the similarity between Marx's concept of the party at this point and Lenin's fifty or more years later derives in large part from the parallels in their situation. It is no coincidence that it was from "The March Address" that Trotsky derived his theory of "Permanent Revolution" and that it is from Marx and Engels' writings of this period that Lenin most frequently quotes when looking for textual support for Bolshevik tactics in the two Russian Revolutions.

But Marx never made a fetish of any particular organisational form or indeed of any particular party. As conditions changed so did his attitude. Consequently when, during the summer of 1850, it became clear that the perspective on which the organisational plans of the Address were based was false, and that there would be no early outbreak of the revolution, Marx rapidly abandoned his proposals. Almost inevitably this led to a split in the Central Committee of the League between those who recognised the ebb of the revolutionary wave and those who refused to face reality. The latter faction, led by Willich and Schapper, wished artificially to precipitate the revolution and became involved in all sorts of adventuristic emigre schemes, such as a plot for the armed invasion of Germany. This split effectively put an end to the Communist League as a meaningful organisation, and although an attempt was made to save it by transferring the Central Committee to Cologne, Marx soon resigned and shortly afterwards the League itself was dissolved.

D. The Years of Retreat.

At this point Marx began a period of his life devoted, apart from the necessities of earning a living, almost entirely to his economic researches. He summed up his perspective for the coming years in the last issue of the "Neue Rheinische Revue" in November 1850. "In view of the general prosperity which now prevails and

permits the productive forces of bourgeois society to develop as rapidly as is at all possible within the framework of bourgeois society, there can be no question of any real revolution... The various squabbles in which the representatives of the individual fractions of the Continental order are now indulging and comprising themselves will not lead to any new revolution. On the contrary, they are only possible because at the moment the basis of prevailing relations is so secure and, a point on which the reaction is ignorant, so bourgeois... A new revolution will be made possible only as the result of a new crisis, but it is just as certain as is the coming of the crisis itself." (35) Emigre circles have always been notorious for their petty squabbles, scandals and interneccine strife, therefore it was essential for Marx's psychological survival and the success of his theoretical work that he withdrew from this debilitating milieu.

Marx and Engels greeted this rest from party politicking with heartfelt sighs of relief. "I am greatly pleased," Marx wrote to Engels "by the public, authentic isolation in which we two, you and I, now find ourselves. It corresponds completely with our position and our principles." (36) To which Engels replied: "At last we have again - for the first time in a long while - an opportunity to show that we do not need any support from any party of any land whatever, and that our position is totally independent of such trash." (37) Franz Mehring warns against taking these off-hand and private remarks too seriously (38), but some commentators,

notably Betram D. Wolfe (39) and Shlomo Avineri (40), have sought to present them as being Marx's "real" views on the party. But this attempt involves taking these expressions of irritation out of both their overall historical context and their immediate context (i.e. that of private letters between close friends) (41), and setting them against statements that are clearly more weighed and considered and are written for public consumption. Taken literally, these and other comments by Marx and Engels could be held to imply opposition to all political activity, which is evidently ridiculous. Even during the fifties and sixties, when Marx was most deeply engrossed in "Capital", he never completely withdrew from political life, continuing to contribute to the Chartist newspapers and keeping a watchful eye on Ernest Jones who, in 1857, he said should "form a party, for which he must go to the factory districts." (42)

What then were the main factors involved in Marx's twelve year absence from any political party? Firstly, there were, as already indicated, his view that bourgeois society had entered a prolonged period of stabilisation and expansion. Secondly there was the great importance he attached to his theoretical work. When approached by a German emigre in New York to revive the Communist League, Marx retorted "[I] am deeply convinced that my theoretical labours bring greater advantage to the working class than participation in organisations the time for which has passed." (43) Thirdly, there was the great gap which separated Marx's conception

of the revolutionary movement from that of the overwhelming majority of revolutionaries around at that time.

Since for Marx the driving force of history was the class struggle and his aim was the self-emancipation of the working class, the function of a party was to lead and serve the proletariat in its battles and not to "set up any sectarian principles of their own by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement." The revolutionary movement of the mid-nineteenth century, however, was dominated by completely alien conceptions and traditions. The dominant trends of the time were either hangovers from the conspiratorial Jacobin tradition of the French Revolution, or petty-bourgeois utopian socialists who believed in reconciling capital and labour on the basis of their own enlightened ideals. Both were equally elitist in their attitude to the working class, the former wishing to act behind the back of, and on behalf of, the class, the latter demanding that the class remain passive until all men of goodwill had been persuaded by the force of reason. Marx had long since rejected these positions and whilst he was prepared to do battle with them in the context of a living working class movement, outside such a context, in tiny and irrelevant clubs and societies, he considered he would be wasting his time if he were to get involved with them in any way.

The question remains, however, should not Marx have attempted at this time to form a small, but principled, communist

organisation, the embryo of the future communist party.

Unfortunately Marx's following was too small for even this modest

course to be pursued. During these years Marx's associates never

numbered more than a dozen or so, and with the benefit of hindsight

we can see clearly that there was practically no one except Engels

who had a firm grasp of even the basic principles of Marxism. A

clear illustration of this is the case of Ferdinand Lassalle.

Lassalle was an organiser and revolutionary agitator of enormous

talent, and he considered himself to be a disciple of Marx. Yet

Lassalle found it possible to: promulgate a theory of "the iron

law of wages"; advocate a programme of State aid (from the State

of Bismarck) for productive associations of workers; describe the State

as "a unity of individuals in a moral whole" (44); write that "He

who invokes the idea of the workers' estate as the governing

principle of society... utters a cry that is not calculated to split

and separate the social classes; he utters a cry of reconciliation

which embraces the whole of society." (45); and in practical

politics to conduct a series of negotiations with Bismarck with the

aim of making an alliance between the proletariat and the Prussian

State against the liberal bourgeoisie. And Lassalle was, as they say,

probably the best of the bunch. Another example was Ernest Jones,

whom Engels once described as "the only educated Englishman who was,

at bottom, entirely on our side." (46) Jones spent the late 1850's

trying to hatch an alliance between the Chartists and bourgeois

radicals, and Marx was forced to break off relations with him. (47)

Thus, had Marx attempted to build his own organisation, it would almost certainly have come to nothing, and the world would have been deprived of "Capital", but the consequence of this option being closed to him was that Marx was not forced to clarify his ideas on the role and nature of a specifically communist party, or to develop them beyond the stage reached in "The Communist Manifesto".

E. The First International - practice and theory.

What finally drew Marx out of his self-imposed isolation was an invitation to the founding meeting of the International Working Men's Association held at St. Martin's Hall on September 28, 1864. The International was neither founded by Marx nor Marxist in inspiration. Rather it grew out of the general rise in the economic struggles of the European working class, and working class interest in such international questions as support for the North in the American Civil War, the cause of Polish independence, and the unification of Italy, and one of its most important practical activities was preventing the use of immigrant labour to break strikes. The immediate initiative for the St. Martin's Hall meeting came from trade unionists in London and Paris. But it was precisely this authenticity and spontaneity which attracted Marx. "I knew," he wrote to Engels, "that this time real 'powers' were involved both on the London and Paris sides and therefore decided

to waive my usual standing rule to decline any such invitations...
for a revival of the working classes is now evidently taking
place." (48)

Inevitably these positive features had their negative side in extreme theoretical and political heterogeneity and confusion. Among those participating in the International were followers of Mazzini who were essentially Italian nationalists, French Proudhonists who wanted to reconcile capital and labour, Owenites like Weston (49) who opposed strikes, and secret societies, outwardly of masonic form, such as the Philadelphians (50). In order to work with this amorphous body and steer it along the lines he wanted Marx was obliged to operate with great tact and not a little deviousness. Having manoeuvred himself into the job of drawing up the International's Rules, and managed to slip in his own "Inaugural Address" (51), a considerable amount of compromise was needed to avoid alienating the other participants. "It was very difficult to frame the thing so that our view should appear in a form acceptable from the present standpoint of the workers' movement. In a few weeks the same people will be holding meetings for the franchise with Bright and Cobden. It will take time before the reawakened movement allows the old boldness of speech. It will be necessary to be fortiter in re, suaviter in modo." (52)

Marx's method was to stress the class character of the movement and its internationalism, with emphasis on the then

popular theme of self-emancipation (53), without being specific as to revolutionary aims or methods. Thus the Rules state that "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves," and that "the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means," and that "the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists," (54) but do not mention collectivisation of the means of production, which would have upset the Proudhonists, or revolution, which would have frightened the English trade unionists. This strategy worked very well. The International avoided becoming, in Mehring's phrase, "a small body with a large head" (55), but at the same time Marx, by virtue of his superior overall view of the movement, gradually established his intellectual hegemony on the General Council. As the International grew in strength, benefiting particularly from the wave of strike struggles precipitated by the economic crisis of 1866 - 7, so Marx persuaded successive congresses to adopt progressively more socialist policies. The Congress of Lausanne (1867) passed the resolution: "The social emancipation of the workmen is inseparable from their political emancipation." (56) The Brussels Congress (1868) saw the defeat of the Proudhonists over the collective ownership of land, railways, mines and forests; and the London Conference (1871)

decided to add to the Rules the statement that:

"In its struggle against the collective power of the possessing classes the proletariat can act as a class only by constituting itself a distinct political party opposed to all the old parties formed by the possessing classes.

This constitution of the proletariat into a political party is indispensable to ensure the triumph of the Social Revolution and of its ultimate goal : the abolition of classes." (56)

But despite these advances the International remained an amalgam of too many divergent tendencies for it to become anything approaching an international communist party, nor did Marx ever attempt to impose such a conception on it. Rather he accepted that the International could be no more than a broad federation of workers' organisations and parties in different countries and that it should "let every section freely shape its own theoretical programme." (57)

This very looseness, which was the International's strength in that it enabled Marx to hold together its various factions while at the same time providing general guidance, was also its weakness in that it made the International an easy target for infiltration by Mikhail Bakunin and his anarchist International Brotherhood, which, in the guise of the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy, entered the International in 1868, and which proved to be a major factor in its eventual collapse. Bakunin was

a romantic adventurer and conspirator rather than a theorist, and the programme he put forward was naive and confused. He advocated the "equality of classes", the immediate abolition of the State, the abolition of the right of inheritance as the principal demand of the movement, and above all, complete abstention from politics. Marx viewed these ideas with contempt ("a hash superficially scraped together from the Right and from the Left... this children's primer... the mess he has brewed from bits of Proudhon, St. Simon and others" (58), but did not deny the anarchists the right to argue their case within the International. It was a dispute, not about doctrine, but about the kind of organisation the International was to be which lay at the root of the damaging conflict between Marx and Bakunin. Bakunin, exploiting the numerous tensions and divisions in the International, launched a campaign against the "authoritarianism" of the General Council which was calculated to gather the various malcontents around it. But within the framework of this "anti-authoritarianism" Bakunin sought to realise the unelected "collective and invisible dictatorship" (59), of his own secret societies and conspiracies. The real issue was, as Monty Johnstone says, "whether the International should be run as a public democratic organisation in accordance with rules and policies laid down at its congresses or whether it should allow Bakunin to 'paralyse its action by secret intrigue', and federations and sections to refuse to accept congress decisions with which they disagreed." (60)

The activities of Bakunin assumed the importance they did because they intersected with the other major factor in the demise of the International, the Paris Commune. Marx's passionate vindication of the Commune in "The Civil War in France" led to the identification of the International with the Commune, and hence to a massive red scare and witch-hunt against the International throughout Europe. At the same time this appearance of the social revolution in reality, and the consequent clarity with which political questions were posed, inevitably shattered the flimsy unity on which the International was based. In 1874 Engels wrote to Sorge on the fate of the International: "It belonged to the period of the Second Empire, during which the oppression reigning throughout Europe prescribed unity and abstention from all internal polemics to the workers' movement then just re-awakening... The first great success was bound to explode this naive conjunction of all factions. This success was the Commune, which was without doubt the child of the International intellectually, although the International did not lift a finger to produce it, and for which the International to a certain extent was quite properly held responsible. When thanks to the Commune, the International had become a moral force in Europe, the row at once began. Every trend wanted to exploit the success fro itself. Disintegration, which was inevitable, set in." (61)

To deal with this situation Marx, at the London Conference,

asked for and obtained increased powers for the General Council, but this in turn threw those who resented the "interference" of the General Council into the camp of Bakunin's anti-authoritarianism. By 1872 Marx, it is clear, had decided that the International had had its day (though he did not care to say so publicly). At the same time he was determined that it should not fall into the hands of conspirators, either Bakuninist or Blanquist, who would compromise the positive achievements of the International with pointless adventures. These aims Marx achieved at the Hague Congress by securing the expulsion of Bakunin (on a rather dubious basis (62)), and by having the seat of the International transferred to America where it passed away peacefully in 1876.

The International Working Men's Association was undoubtedly the most important practical political work of Marx's life. It gave a great impetus to the development of the movement everywhere. It created a much more widespread awareness of at least some of Marx's basic principles than ever existed before. Above all it established the tradition of internationalism and of international organisation at the heart of the working class socialist movement. These were great achievements, but it is also evident that the International contained the seeds of its disintegration in the basis of its foundation. From the point of view of assessing Marx's concept of the party it is necessary therefore to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical ideas which underlay his work during this period.

Since for Marx the party was always considered in relationship to the working class, and the working class is defined basically by its economic situation, the key theoretical problem was the nature of the relationship between economics and politics, and specifically between the economic struggles of the working class and the development of its political consciousness and organisation. There are various texts of the period which show that, essentially, Marx held the view that political consciousness arises spontaneously from the economic circumstances and struggle of the workers. Thus in a speech to a delegation of German trade unionists in 1869 Marx said:

"Trade unions are the schools of socialism. It is in trade unions that workers educate themselves and become socialists because under their very eyes and every day the struggle with capital is taking place... The great mass of workers, whatever party they belong to, have at last understood that their material situation must become better. But once the workers' material situation has become better, he can consecrate himself to the education of his children; his wife and children do not need to go to the factory; he himself can cultivate his mind more, look after his body better, and he becomes socialist without noticing it." (63)

While some of the more extreme statements here need not be taken too literally, Marx repeated essentially the same theoretical conception in a key passage in a letter to F. Bolte in

1871:

"The political movement of the working class has as its ultimate object, of course, the conquest of political power for this class, and this naturally requires a previous organisation of the working class developed up to a certain point and arising from its economic struggles.

On the other hand, however, every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and tries to coerce them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular factory, or even a particular trade, to force a shorter working day out of individual capitalists by strikes, etc., is a purely economic movement. On the other hand, the movement to force through an eight-hour, etc., law, is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say, a movement of the class, with the effect of enforcing its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general socially coercive force" (emphasis in the original) (64)

The strength of Marx's conception lies in its materialism, its emphasis on learning through experience and struggle; its weakness lies in its economic determinism and optimistic evolutionism. History has demonstrated not only the process of development outlined by Marx, but also a wide range of counteracting forces serving to block the transition from trade union

consciousness to socialist consciousness. In particular the ability of economic gains, even including those won through struggle, to serve as palliatives, not stimulants, and the grip of bourgeois ideology on the proletariat, and its consequent ability to divide and fragment the movement, were both seriously underestimated by Marx. In 1890 Engels commented that "Marx and I are partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle vis-a-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place, or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction," (65) and the question of the development of socialist consciousness is one on which Marx was most guilty of overemphasising "the main principle" at the expense of "other elements involved in the interaction."

It was on this oversimplified and overoptimistic view of the transformation of the working class from a "class-in-itself" into a "class-for-itself" that Marx based his ideas on organisation and his activity in the International. For Marx the main problem was to establish a political organisation based on the idea of class struggle and involving wide layers of workers. This achieved, he believed the organisation would evolve in a revolutionary direction of its own accord. Splits and internal conflicts within the working class movement were seen simply as reflections of

immaturity, as hangovers from the period before the proletariat had begun to move as a class. Thus:

"The first phase in the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie is marked by sectarianism. This is because the proletariat has not yet reached the stage of being sufficiently developed to act as a class... In fact we have here the proletarian movement still in its infancy, comparable perhaps to the time when astrology and alchemy were the infancy of science. For the founding of the International to become a possibility, the proletariat had to develop further.

In comparison with the fantastic and mutually antagonistic organisation of the sects, the International is the real and militant organisation of the proletarian class in every country, linked together in common struggle against the capitalists, and their class power organised by the state. Thus the Rules of the International only speak of workers' societies, all seeking the same object, and all accepting the same programme - a programme limited to outlining the major features of the proletarian movement, and leaving the details of theory to be worked out as inspired by the demands of the practical struggle, and as growing out of the exchange of ideas among the sections, with an equal hearing given to all socialist views in their journals and congresses." (66)

And also:

"Do not let him [Verlet] give any sectarian name - whether communist or anything else - to the new section that he wants to form. We must avoid sectarian 'labels' in the International Association. The general aims and tendencies of the working class spring from the real conditions in which it finds itself. Therefore these aims and tendencies are present in the whole class although the movement is reflected in their heads in widely different forms, more or less imaginary, and more or less in accordance with the conditions. Those who best understand the hidden meaning of the class struggle unfolding before our eyes - the Communists - are the last to commit the error of agreeing to or furthering sectarianism." (67)

There is, therefore, a strong element of fatalism in Marx's attitude to the formation of the party. The struggle of ideas and tendencies within the working class movement will sort itself out as the class tendencies of the workers assert themselves, and communists can remain relatively aloof from the process. It was not that all internal struggle was excluded from Marx's perspective. As he wrote in 1871, "the history of the International was a continual struggle of the General Council against the sects and amateur experiments." (68) But it was simply a struggle for the present stage of the movement against the legacy of the past; Marx did not see the need to prepare organisationally and in the present for the future tasks of the movement, soas to ensure against the collapse

of the party or organisation into simply representing the immediate interests of the proletariat, and not its long term historical aims. The basic problem was that Marx failed to grasp the possibility of working class political reformism (i.e., what we now call social democracy or labourism) taking a serious hold on the movement in such a way that it would not simply transform itself or make way for revolutionary action when its time was passed, but would constitute a major obstacle blocking the road to revolution. Because he did not see the danger, Marx also did not see the means of combating it - the creation of a relatively narrow and disciplined vanguard party.

F. Social Democracy and the problem of reformism.

From 1872 onwards Marx and Engels were never again directly involved in, or members of, any organisation or party, but they nonetheless regarded themselves as having "special status as representatives of international socialism" (69), and in that capacity dispensed advice to socialists throughout the world. It was largely Engels who was active in this role, rather than Marx whose health declined and who concentrated on his studies, but it seems reasonable, in this sphere at least, to regard Engels' views as broadly representative of Marx's.

The most important phenomenon of this period was the rise of social democratic workers' parties in a number of countries, and

especially in Germany. These organisations combined ... an openly socialist programme with a mass following in the working class. Observation of this development, combined with the experience of the International, seems to have led to a certain reappraisal, or at least a change of emphasis, in Marx and Engels' views. Thus in 1873 we find Engels warning Bebel not "to be misled by the cry for 'unity'... a party proves itself victorious by splitting and being able to stand the split," (70) and in 1874 predicting to Sorge that "the next International - after Marx's writings have produced their effects for some years - will be directly Communist and will proclaim precisely our principles." (71)

In Britain and the U.S.A., where there were very strong working classes but the workers were politically subordinate to the ruling class parties and the socialist currents were extremely weak, Marx and Engels continued with their old line of advocating the formation of a broad independent workers' party without worrying about its programme or theoretical basis. Engels wrote a series of articles to this effect in "The Labour Standard" in 1881, arguing, in an anticipation of the way the Labour Party was to arise, that "At the side of, or above, the Unions of special trades there must spring up a general union, a political organisation of the working class as a whole," (72) and in 1893 he urged all socialists to join the Independent Labour Party. In relation to America Engels argued that "The great thing is to get the working class to move as

a class; that once obtained they will soon find the right direction... To expect the Americans to start with the full consciousness of the theory worked out in older industrial countries is to expect the impossible... A million or two working men's votes next November for a bona fide working men's party is worth infinitely more at present than a hundred thousand votes for a doctrinally perfect platform... But any thing that might delay or prevent that national consolidation of the working men's party - on no matter what platform - I should consider a great mistake." (73)

But where France and Germany were concerned, where the movement was much more advanced, Marx and Engels' attitude was very different. Here they saw the possibility, for the first time, of the creation of substantial Marxist parties in the shape of the Parti Ouvrier Français, and the German SDAP, and so as to realise that possibility paid particular attention to questions of theory and programme. Thus when in 1882 the French party split between the Marxists led by Guesde and Lafargue and "possibilists" led by Malon and Brousse (anarchists turned reformists) Engels welcomed the event as "Inevitable" and "a good thing", maintaining that "The sham St. Etienne party [the possibilists] is not only no workers' party but no party whatever because in actual fact it has no programme," (74) and commenting "It seems that every workers' party of a big country can develop only through internal struggle, which accords with the laws of dialectical development in general." (75)

But above all it was in their dealings with German social democracy that Marx and Engels^{maintained} the highest degree of theoretical rigour.

When, in 1875, the SDAP united with the Lassallian ADAV to form the German Social-Democratic Workers' Party (SAPD, later SPD), Marx and Engels opposed this move as "precipitate on our part" (76) and involving theoretical concessions. Marx immediately subjected the unification programme to a devastating critique (77), exposing not only the reactionary implications of Lassallean formulations such as the "iron law of wages", "equal rights to the undiminished proceeds of labour" and "producers' cooperatives with state aid", but also taking up the whole question of the class nature of the state in opposition to the call for a "free people's state", condemning the programme for its lack of internationalism, and complaining that "There is nothing in its political demands beyond the old and generally familiar democratic litany: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular justice, a people's army, etc." (78) In 1877 Engels, to preserve the hegemony of Marxism in the German movement, undertook the huge "Anti-Dühring" project, and in 1879 Marx and Engels dispatched a "Circular Letter" to party leaders protesting in the strongest possible terms at the emergence within the party of non-proletarian tendencies who rejected the class struggle and hence the class nature of the party, and "openly state that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate

themselves and must be freed from above by philanthropic big bourgeois and petty bourgeois." (79) Also in 1879 they objected to "Liebknecht's untimely weakness in the Reichstag" (80) in the face of Bismarck's anti-socialist law, and to the opportunistic support of Bismarck's protectionist tariff policy by the SAPD parliamentary group, in response to which Marx declared, "they are already so much affected by parliamentary idiotism that they think they are above criticism." (81)

But this continuous stream of criticism should not deceive. It reflected not hostility to German social democracy but Marx and Engels' exceptional interest in and concern for the organisation which they repeatedly refer to as "our party". Despite their vehement attacks on every open manifestation of reformism and capitulation to bourgeois democracy Marx and Engels remained attached to the German party by "bonds of solidarity" (82) and so, with their blessing, it became for the rest of the world the model of a Marxist party. What Marx and Engels failed to grasp was that the main danger lay not in what the party said, but in what it did, in what it essentially was. This problem was highlighted a few years later in the so-called "revisionist debate" when Bernstein demanded that the party adopt an openly reformist stance. In a very perceptive letter the Bavarian socialist, Ignaz Auer, wrote to Bernstein: "My dear Ede, one doesn't formally decide to do what you ask, one doesn't say it, one does it. Our whole activity - even

under the shameful anti-socialist law - was the activity of a Social Democratic reforming party. A party which reckons with the masses simply cannot be anything else." (83) The root of the problem lay in the conception of the relationship between the party and the working class, a conception which neither Marx nor Engels ever clearly challenged; i.e., that of a broad party steadily and smoothly expanding, organising within ever wider sections of the proletariat, until at last it embraced the overwhelming majority.

As Chris Harman has written: "What is central for the Social Democrat is that the party represents the class." (84) If the party represents the class then it must contain within it the different tendencies existing within the class, and Marx and Engels, though they strove for the dominance of Marxism, accepted this. Thus Engels wrote in 1890: "The Party is so big that absolute freedom of debate inside it is a necessity... The greatest party in the land cannot exist without all shades of opinion in it making themselves fully felt." (85) If the party represents the class during a period of capitalist expansion and stability in which the mass of the working class is reformist, then the party must be reformist too, even if it does not openly admit it. But reformist workers and reformist political leaders are not at all the same thing. The consciousness of the average worker is a mixture of many, often contradictory elements and so under the stimulus of his material needs, his

direct involvement in the struggle, and dramatic changes in the political situation, it is possible for his consciousness to change very rapidly. The consciousness of the leader, however, is much more definitely formed and coherent (it is this which makes him a leader), and therefore much more resistant to change; moreover the leader is not subject to the same material pressures as the worker, but rather is likely to have carved out for himself a position of privilege (e.g., as M.P. or trade union leader). The consequence is that the relationship of representing the working class in its reformist phase turns into opposing and betraying it in its revolutionary phase. To be with the class in a revolutionary situation the party has to be somewhat ahead of it in the pre-revolutionary period. The party does not cease to represent the interests of the class as a whole but to do this it has to restrict its membership to those for whom the interests of the class as a whole predominate over individual, sectional, national or immediate advantage, i.e., to revolutionaries.

That Marx never fully developed or articulated this idea, really the essential starting point for a theory of the revolutionary party, is rooted in what we called earlier the 'optimistic evolutionism' of his view of the growth of working class political consciousness, which he saw as rising relatively smoothly and evenly, roughly in proportion to the development of capitalism. That Marx did not progress beyond this view is not, however, surprising, or

something for which he can be blamed. For the greater part of Marx's life the problem of reformism had not emerged as in any way a major threat; the main tasks were overcoming the petty bourgeois, sectarian, conspiratorial and utopian socialist traditions of revolutionary organisation inherited from the French Revolution, and establishing the political independence of the proletariat. Marx's contribution to the achievement of these tasks by the proletariat in most European countries was immense. If in the course of the struggle he "bent-the-stick" in the direction of economic determinism, then this is perfectly understandable. But it is also necessary to understand that in the sphere of his theory of the party, the legacy of Marx's work, whatever its positive achievements, was something that had in time to be overcome by the Marxist movement if capitalism were to be overthrown.

CHAPTER 2

Lenin and the birth of Bolshevism

Although Marxism in general, is as Gramsci put it, a "philosophy of action" and thus hostile to fatalism, Marx himself as we have shown, owing to the prevailing conditions and his determination to avoid sectarianism, never fully emancipated himself from a fatalist conception of political organisation. The political party of the proletariat would emerge gradually, spontaneously, from the broad struggle of the working class. In Social Democracy this fatalist tendency thoroughly consolidated itself in the sphere of organisation and then extended itself to the theory of capitalist development, the proletarian revolution, and the nature of human activity itself. The practice of Bolshevism and the organisational ideas of Lenin marked a break with this fatalism and thus constituted a tremendous step forward for Marxist theory not only in relation to Social Democracy but also in relation to Marx. Only with Lenin was the concept of a broad party that represents, or is, the working class replaced by that of a "minority" party (in the pre-revolutionary period) which is the vanguard of the class and which since it is the organisational embodiment of the socialist future of that class has a duty to defend itself from, and struggle against, all manifestations of opportunism.

A. The Background to Bolshevism.

Bolshevism was no "Venus" born fully grown from the waves, it developed and grew through a host of struggles, internal and external. Nor can it be seen simply as the product of Lenin's organisational genius, undoubted though that may be. The idealisation of Lenin that is general in Marxist circles combined with the tendency of Stalinist

theoreticians to write Russian revolutionary history as though there were only two protagonists, the Russian people and Lenin (most other individuals having become unpersons) has created an image of Bolshevism as invented by Lenin much as Watt invented the steam engine. In fact the break with gradualism in the sphere of organisation was itself a gradual and only semi-conscious process, though one marked by many sharp and conscious struggles. Leninism was the product of a sustained and developing revolutionary response to a concrete situation and to understand that response we must look at the elements in the situation that made it possible.

The first factor which springs to mind as a source of Bolshevism is what Tony Cliff calls "the tradition of substitutionism" in the Russian revolutionary movement". (1) This tradition was indeed very strong. In the 1860's and 70's sometimes tens, occasionally, hundreds of heroic and idealistic intellectuals pitted themselves against the autocracy, alternately "going to the people" as their educators and enlighteners, and "acting on behalf of the people" with daring acts of terrorism. And in so doing these Narodniks gained the undying respect and admiration of Russian revolutionaries including, and especially, Lenin who refers repeatedly to their "devoted determination and vigour". (2) To strengthen the case various biographical evidence can be thrown in. The formative influence on Lenin of such basically elitist writers as Chernychevsky and Tkachev; (3) and of course the

fate of his brother, executed for terrorism.

However this argument, superficially attractive as it is, will not bear critical examination and is also highly reactionary. It employs the kind of determinism which enables psychologists (and social scientists) to imprison a man on his background and thus explain away his ideas without confronting them. In particular it serves to suggest that Lenin was merely a terrorist by other means, who wedded to his terrorism a passionate desire for power. But it ignores that Lenin cut his theoretical teeth precisely in the struggle against Narodism; that he opposed individual terrorism throughout his life; that he refused to countenance a seizure of power in 1917 until the Bolsheviks had a majority in the soviets; and that he waged a most vigorous struggle against all forms of "putchism", of attempts at uprisings by minorities, at the Third Congress of the Communist International (1921). Above all it ignores the fact, ignored by all attempts to explain Bolshevism by Lenin's psychology, that from 1903 to 1917, throughout the formative period of the Bolshevik party Lenin held the view that the coming revolution would be bourgeois not socialist. To Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution Lenin replied "That cannot be! It cannot be because a revolutionary dictatorship can endure for a time only if it rests on the enormous majority of the people.... The proletariat constitutes a minority... Anyone who attempts to achieve

socialism by any other route without passing through the stage of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at the most absurd and reactionary conclusions, both economic and politic". (4)

It was not terrorism, but the situation which produced terrorism, that was an important factor in the development of Lenin's ideas. Lenin could break decisively with the romantic and utopian theories of the terrorists, he could adhere absolutely to the theory of the class struggle as the lever of the social revolution, but he could not break with the reality of the Tsarist police. From the point of view of the revolutionary forces in Russian society the change from the passive peasantry of the seventies to the massive workers strikes of the nineties was dramatic, and the emergence of Marxism reflected this, but the Tsarist autocracy remained the same. Political repression remained virtually absolute and so did the ban on all trade union and strike activity.

In such a situation the Social Democratic model of a broad mass party representing the whole of the working class was simply impossible. "Only an incorrigible utopian would have a broad organisation of workers.... under the autocracy". (5) In fact as far as combating the Tsarist police was concerned the smaller the organisation the better. Inextricably linked to the question of size and secrecy was the need for efficiency and vigorous training. Russian revolutionaries could not afford to learn gradually and "by experience" since learning "by experience" meant speedy arrest. The

need for efficiency which is hammered home again and again in "What is to be Done?", and was almost certainly the main objective factor in determining the success of this work at the time, gives rise to the concept of the professional revolutionary as the basis of the revolutionary organisation. Summing up his views on this aspect of the argument Lenin writes:

".... in an autocratic state, the more we confine the membership of such an organisation to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to unearth the organisation". (6)

The eminent practicality of this emphasis on secrecy, training, and professionalism in organisation should be clear, and what is more Lenin makes it plain that these conclusions are the product of much bitter experience, both general and personal, of primitiveness in the struggle against the gendarmes? (7) But this element of pure practicality or necessity in Lenin's theory of organisation can easily be exaggerated. If immediate expediency were the sole consideration then it would be true to say with Leonard Schapiro (and many other commentators) that "Lenin's conceptions had perhaps moved nearer to the conspiratorial ideas of Narodnaya Volya, and away from Marx's conception of the historic mission of an entire class". (8) In fact this was not so; the hard core of professional

revolutionaries were not seen as an end in themselves but as a means.

Lenin stresses that the tighter the core of the party "the greater will be the number of people from the working class and from the other social classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it". (9) Lenin's perspective was always one of a mass, class, movement against the autocracy but one led by a vanguard party. "We are the party of a class, and therefore almost the entire class (and in times of war, in a period of civil war, the entire class) should act under the leadership of our party". (10) Furthermore if it were merely practical necessity that determined Lenin's thought then his ideas would possess only local, temporary significance. Bolshevism would have proved a specifically Russian phenomenon, an exception to the rule, rather than the basis for ~~a~~ vast international movement and tradition. It would have, perhaps, the status of Guevarism, or Castroism, which happened to succeed in the particular conditions of Cuba, but proved a dismal failure when generalised even to the rest of Latin America. Indeed the conspiratorial elements in Lenin's conception are historically limited and Lenin recognises this.

"Under conditions of political freedom our party will be built entirely on the elective principle. Under the autocracy this is impracticable for the collective thousands of workers that make up the party". (11)

If it was the level of repression that made a broad Western-type party impossible it was the particular social and political

conjuncture in Russia and trends within the revolutionary movement that stimulated Lenin into new theoretical insights and enabled him to take a step forward from the Social Democratic model rather than a step backwards to conspiracy. This situation must therefore be examined.

The primary distinction between the tasks of the revolutionary movement in Western Europe and in Russia was that in the west capitalism had been firmly established whereas in Russia capitalism was still nascent and the bourgeois revolution had not yet been achieved. Thus whereas in the West Marxism presented itself straightforwardly as the theory of the overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat, in Russia Marxism appeared to many as the theory of the inevitability of the development of capitalism. Since the authorities at first regarded the terrorists as the main danger and the terrorists argued that Russia could side step capitalism by means of an immediate revolution, Marxist criticism of terrorism and emphasis on the inevitability of capitalism was for a period welcomed or at least regarded as very much a lesser evil. This led to what became known as "Legal Marxism", and Marxism became a veritable fashion:

"Marxist journals and newspapers were founded, nearly everyone became a Marxist, Marxists were flattered, Marxists were courted, and the book publishers rejoiced at the extraordinary ready sale of Marxist literature". (12)

Inevitably in such a situation a coalition of "manifestly heterogeneous elements" (13) occurred. In particular calling themselves Marxists were those who regarded capitalism as inevitable and progressive but also wanted to fight it and overthrow it, and also calling themselves Marxists were those who in reality supported capitalism as such and for whom socialism was cloudy rhetoric for the dim and distant future (The leading representative of the latter trend was Pyotr Struve originally a collaborator of Lenin and Plekhanov, who was in 1905 to found the bourgeois democratic Cadet Party). This meant that Lenin from very early on felt himself in the position of having to select very vigorously those who really wanted to fight from a large number of people who mouthed radical phrases. This was a major factor in conditioning Lenin's doctrinal intransigence and especially his insistence on distinguishing between what people said and what they were actually prepared to do. This latter faculty, which was so acutely developed in Lenin and is one of the most striking features of all his writings, was to play an enormous role in the development of Bolshevism as a separate party.

The revolutionary Marxist answer to the problem of seeing capitalism as progressive and at the same time maintaining the complete independence of the proletariat for the fight against capitalism lay in the theory of the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution. Originating in Plekhanov ("the Russian revolution will succeed as a workers revolution or it will not succeed at all") (14), though later abandoned by him, and adopted and refined by Lenin, this

theory was to become a hallmark of Bolshevism in the pre-1917 period. The essence of this theory was that the Russian bourgeoisie, because it arrived late on the scene long after the bourgeoisie had ceased to be a revolutionary force on a world scale, and because it was a comprador class intimately tied by financial loans to the bourgeoisie of France and England, was a conservative cowardly half-class completely incapable of leading a revolution against the autocracy. Therefore this task would fall to the proletariat which, although small, was developing rapidly in large scale modern industry, and could ally itself to the tremendous elemental force of the peasant revolt. (15) In order to accomplish this task the proletariat would have to adopt the overthrow of Tsarism as its first and most important demand and place itself in the vanguard of every struggle for democracy and political freedom.

B. The Critique of Economism.

It was this theory which brought Lenin into conflict with the various trends which he grouped under the term "Economism". The main representatives of Economism at the time were "Rabochaya Mysl" ("The Workers' Thought"), a journal published in St.Petersburg from 1897 to 1902, and "Rabocheye Dyelo" ("The Workers' Task") the organ of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad from 1899 to 1903 - the latter assuming a position which could more strictly be described as semi-Economism. The basic contention of the Economists was that Social Democracy should concentrate its work, not on the political struggle against the autocracy, but in serving and developing the

economic struggle of the workers, and it was in the disputes with Economism that many of the fundamental ideas of Bolshevism emerged. In order to understand and assess those ideas it will therefore be necessary to look at the disputes in some detail - but even before that it is necessary to look at the context in which the disputes occurred and simply to ask why they were so important. To reply glibly that they were important because Economism was a deviation from Marxism and Lenin always fought deviations from Marxism is to fail to grasp the relationship of theory to practice for Economism has always been present to a greater or lesser extent in the working class movement and has always been a deviation and yet Marxists have had different attitudes to it at different times. When they were building the Communist International Lenin and Trotsky regarded the syndicalists of France and Spain, the I.W.W. of America, the Shop Stewards Movement of Britain etc. as their closest potential allies who, to quote Trotsky, "not only wish to fight against the bourgeoisie, but who, unlike Scheidemann, really wish to tear its head off". (16) But in 1901 Lenin regarded Economism as the main enemy and retrograde trend in the Russian Social Democracy.

The basic reason for this was that Lenin saw Economism as leading inevitably to the abandonment of the hegemony of the proletariat in the coming democratic revolution by instituting a division of labour in which the workers would limit themselves to the trade union struggle, leaving politics to the bourgeoisie. Indeed it was the open advocacy

of such a division in the document known as "The Credo", by Y.D. Kuskova of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, that first spurred Lenin to take up the cudgels against Economism with his "Protest by Russian Social Democrats" in August 1899. (17) In "The Credo" Kuskova had written:

"For the Russian Marxist there is only one course: participation in, i.e assistance to the economic struggle of the proletariat; and participation in liberal opposition activity". (18)

To Lenin such a course meant betrayal of the revolution, for "liberal opposition activity" (i.e. the bourgeoisie) was completely incapable of consistent revolutionary opposition to the autocracy. "Rabocheye Dyelo" naturally enough denied the connection between its position and ideas expressed in "The Credo" but Lenin as always was concerned not with intentions but with what ideas would lead to in practise. He held that any attempt to narrow down the tasks of the proletariat and the Social Democratic movement would play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and regarded any tendency towards Economism as leading in that direction. In this way the debate with Economism foreshadowed the central issue for the Russian Marxists in the next 17 years - the relative role and tasks of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the revolution-with a fundamental continuity existing between the position of early Economism and late Menshevism that the leading role should go to the bourgeoisie.

From this it can be seen that Lenin was also correct in

linking Economism to the international trend to reformism or "revisionism" in Social Democracy which he does right at the beginning of "What Is To Be Done" in the section on "Dogmatism and Freedom of Criticism". Once again the Economists denied this connection and indeed open advocacy of a reformist or parliamentary road to socialism was almost inconceivable in Russian conditions (19) though they shared the defacto split between economics and politics and asserted with Bernstein the importance of "the movement" (immediate demands) as against the "ultimate aim" (socialism or, in this case, the overthrow of Tsarism). Thus economism in general can be either an ultra-left (but revolutionary) disgust at the corruption and sterility of bourgeois politicking (The I.W.W.) or an opportunistic collapse into reformism as in Russia at the turn of the century. The former calls for comradely persuasion, the latter for fierce polemic.

Fierce polemic, for Lenin, meant getting to the very root of the disputed questions and pursuing ruthlessly the logic of his own and his opponents' arguments, thus these polemics, though rooted in concrete issues invariably possess a certain universal significance. (20) The product of the struggle against the Economists was "What Is To Be Done" which, quite deservedly, has had an immense influence on Marxist theory and practice throughout the world and which, I would argue, wrongly, has been regarded as the standard Marxist text on the theory of the party. Thus any critical study of the Marxist theory of the party must look very seriously at this work.

"What Is To Be Done?" sums up all Lenin's arguments against Economism and his case for a nationwide revolutionary organisation based on a cadre of professional revolutionaries and an all-Russia newspaper. Thus many of the points it makes are of a practical nature of the kind referred to earlier in this essay but its central theme is the relationship of spontaneity and consciousness in the development of the revolutionary movement. The Economists holding that "politics always obediently follows economics" (21) and that therefore political consciousness would grow organically from economic struggles, contended that the main task of Marxists was to assist the economic struggle and that Lenin and the Iskra-ites "belittled the spontaneous element" and "overestimated consciousness". But for Lenin this method of even presenting the problem was completely unsatisfactory. It was not that the spontaneous upsurge of the workers was unimportant (on the contrary it was profoundly important) but that its importance lay precisely in the demands that it made on consciousness, on organisation.

The programme of Rabochye Dyelo stated:

"We consider that the most important phenomenon of Russian life, the one that will mainly determine the tasks and the character of the publication activity of the Union, is the mass working class movement which has arisen in recent years".

And Lenin comments:

"That the mass movement is a most important phenomenon is not to be disputed. But the crux of the matter is, how is one to understand the statement that the mass working class movement will "determine

the tasks"? It may be interpreted in one of two ways, Either it means bowing to the spontaneity of this movement, i.e. reducing the role of Social Democracy to mere subservience to the working class movement as such,.... or it means that the mass movement places before us new theoretical, political, and organisational tasks, far more complicated than those that might have satisfied us in the period before the rise of the mass movement". (22)

This dialectical conception of the relationship between spontaneity and consciousness, the mass movement and the party, represents a tremendous step forward for Marxist theory and is an advance on any previous contribution to this problem (including that of Marx himself and especially that of German Social Democracy). Essentially it is the necessary starting point of a truly revolutionary theory of the party because it is a radical break with fatalism. (23)

"We revolutionary Social-Democrats, on the contrary, are dissatisfied with this worship of spontaneity, i.e. of that which exists at the present moment" (My emphasis) (24)

For Lenin the development of the class struggle itself, even its economic form, is a process of moving from "spontaneity" to "consciousness".

"Strikes occurred in Russia in the seventies and sixties (and even in the first half of the nineteenth century) and they were accompanied by the "spontaneous" destruction of machinery, etc. Compared with these "revolts", the strikes of the nineties might even be described as "conscious", to such an extent do they mark the progress which the working

class movement made in that period. This shows that the "spontaneous element" in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in embryonic form" (25)

Lenin therefore sees it as the duty of the revolutionary always to assist the conscious element and work for the overcoming of spontaneity.

But Lenin is not merely arguing for organisation against lack of organisation, for leadership against the "tail-ending" (tailism) of the economists. What is central to his attack on the economists and to his view of the nature of tasks of the party is his rejection of the notion that proletarian class consciousness can develop gradually on the basis of an accumulation of economic struggles.

As Lukacs writes:

"The impossibility of the economic evolution of capitalism into socialism was clearly proved by the Bernstein debates. Nevertheless, its ideological counterpart lived on uncontradicted in the minds of many honest European revolutionaries, and was, moreover, not even recognised as either a problem or a danger". (26)

Lenin's position on this was extreme and uncompromising "Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected - unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete,

and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups of the population". (27)

And therefore:

"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers". (28)

In practical terms this meant that it was necessary for social democrats not merely "To go among the workers", but to "go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions" (29) Workers should be mobilised to take action in support of all victims of the autocracy including such groups as religious minorities and students. "The Social-Democrats ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but the tribune of the people..... who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands." (30)

Essential to this strategy was an all-Russia newspaper keeping a vigilant eye on every aspect of political and social life in Russia and able to mount nationwide political exposures. "Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today." (31)

It is perhaps necessary to point out in passing that of course Lenin in no way regarded this diversification of forces as a modification

or compromise of the class basis of the party. On the contrary it was possible only on the basis of a prolonged period of largely economicistic agitation in the working class. "In the earlier period, indeed, we had astonishingly few forces, and it was perfectly natural and legitimate then to devote ourselves exclusively to activities among the workers and to condemn severely any deviation from this course. The entire task then was to consolidate our position in the working class." (32) And in any case the whole purpose of the strategy was to ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in the struggle against the autocracy.

The conception of the tasks and methods of the party outlined in "What Is To Be Done" have exercised a profound and indeed determining influence on the everyday activity of not only the Bolsheviks but also Communist Parties, and later Trotskyist groups, throughout the world. They have all attempted, with varying emphasis, to build their organisations and gain support by being in the vanguard of all revolts against oppression and every form of discontent and by having a proletarian or socialist line on all political and social questions.

What is specifically and characteristically Leninist about this approach, and what distinguishes it from the methods of Social Democracy and the Second International is not that Marxists fight for democratic rights and for reforms. That much was common ground and indeed second nature to German Social Democracy. But the social democrats fought for reforms because they were "progressive", and part of the development of capitalism into socialism, in other words they fought for reforms as reformists. Where as for Lenin the whole process was part of

the battle for the class consciousness of the proletariat, to enable it to grasp the relationships in action of all social classes and groups, and thus to fit itself for taking power. Thus for Social Democracy a yawning gap developed between the minimum and the maximum programme (between immediate demands and ultimate aim). While for Lenin all-sided political agitation was a means of bridging this gap, and securing the predominance of the ultimate revolutionary aim. Essentially the same point is made by Lukacs (though in a different context) when he writes "The development which Marxism thus underwent through Lenin consists merely - merely! - in its increasing grasp of the intimate, visible and momentous connection between individual actions and general destiny - the revolutionary destiny of the whole working class." (33)

C. Socialism from Without?

At this point we have summed up the main advances made by "What Is To Be Done" over the theory of the party to be found in Marx, and prevailing in more dogmatic form in Russian Economism and to a certain extent in European Social Democracy. But there remains an important aspect of Lenin's argument we have not dealt with - important not because of its centrality to Lenin's own theory and practice but because of its influence on many later followers. I am referring to the thesis that "political consciousness" can only be introduced into the working class movement "from without", which is inserted to give theoretical justification to the attack on spontaneism. This thesis appears in "What Is To Be Done" in two forms. One, which we have cited already,

is that:

"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers."

The other is that:

"We have said that there could not have been Social Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary, labour legislation etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia." (34)

There is a clear distinction between the two formulations. The first is merely an extreme and slightly clumsy way of saying that workers need to understand the totality of social relations and all forms of oppression, knowledge of which comes from a much wider sphere

than ("from without") the factory. As such one could quibble with the wording but the content is fairly unexceptionable. In the second formulation, however, "from without" means from outside the working class, specifically from the bourgeois intelligentsia, and moreover it carries with it an attempt at a positive account of the origins and development of the theory of scientific socialism. This raises problems of considerable theoretical significance, especially for the theory of the party, so it is necessary to embark on a fairly detailed critical analysis of Lenin's conception here.

The first point that must be made is that Lenin was here expressing ideas taken directly from Karl Kautsky and indeed he uses a quotation from Kautsky to provide him with theoretical authority.

"But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat but the bourgeois intelligentsia." (35)

This resort to Kautsky, given the latter's mechanical version of Marxism and his subsequent political development, is clearly a danger signal to those of us working with the benefit of hindsight, and a number of latter day Leninists have been critical of this point.

Trotsky comments that Lenin himself "subsequently acknowledged the biased nature, and therewith the erroneousness, of his theory." (36) Lucio Magri in a recent article calls the quotation from Kautsky an "Enlightenment schema", (37) and Nigel Harris refers to it as an "elitist statement". (38)

The fundamental problem is that if one accepts literally the Lenin-Kautsky formulation that political consciousness derives from the bourgeois intelligentsia and at the same time that the political struggle must predominate over the economic struggle then precious little is left of Marx's fundamental dictum that "the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself," on the contrary the role of the working class would be a strictly subordinate one. The truly revolutionary class would be not the working class but the discontented intellectuals, thus implicitly confirming the typical bourgeois picture of radical movements as made up of a malevolent middle class leadership and an "innocent" manipulated working class rank-and-file. The division of mental and manual labour, inherent in class society, far from being overcome is carried over into the socialist movement and sanctified in the revolutionary party.

In fact the whole presentation of science, theory and socialist consciousness (which are here equated) is completely un-Marxist and has more in common with nineteenth century positivism and idealism. Science is seen as developing in complete isolation from social life, from practice. As far as the natural sciences, philosophy and bourgeois social science is concerned this appears to be true in so

far as the thinker tends to the isolation of the ivory tower but in reality this is only an illusion, a mystification produced by class society. For this reason Marx refused to recognise philosophy or any other discipline as having its own history independent of the history of men active in society. Where the theory of socialism is concerned even the relative and illusory autonomy of bourgeois science does not and should not exist if this theory is to be genuinely revolutionary. On the contrary it must be intimately related to, influenced by, and based upon the activity of the working class. Thus Marx writes:

"Just as the economists are the scientific representatives of the bourgeoisie, so the socialists and communists are the theorists of the proletariat. As long as the proletariat is not sufficiently developed to constitute itself as a class, as long therefore as the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie has not acquired a political character, and while the productive forces are not yet sufficiently developed, within bourgeois society itself, to give an indication of the material conditions necessary for the emancipation of the proletariat and the constitution of a new society, these theorists remain Utopians who, in order to remedy the distress of the oppressed classes, improvise systems and pursue a regenerative science. But as history continues, and as the struggle of the proletariat takes shape more clearly, they have no further need to look for a science in their own minds; they have only to observe what is happening before their eyes, and to make themselves its vehicle of expression. As long as they are looking for a science and only create systems, as long as they

are at the beginning of the struggle, they see in poverty only poverty, without noticing its revolutionary and subversive aspect, which will overthrow the old society. But from this moment, the science produced by the historical movement, and which consciously associates itself with this movement, has ceased to be doctrinaire and has become revolutionary".

(39)

So when Lenin writes that "in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia," one can only conclude that either Lenin was wrong or the theory of Russian Social Democracy was doctrinaire rather than revolutionary (which may shed some light on the fate of Plekhanov). Also the notion that socialist theory can be the "natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought", i.e. that it can be the product of contemplation, is roundly condemned by Marx in the Theses on Feuerbach.

"The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively.

"The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question".

(40)

also clearly refutes the "Lenin-Kautsky" theory of "separate development." The idea of socialism and the socialist revolution itself was not something invented or discovered by Marx, rather it emerged from the struggles of the masses as the extreme left wing of the bourgeois revolutions in England and France - witness the Levellers and Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals (who Marx referred to as the world's first Communist Party). Raya Dunayevskaya in "Marxism and Freedom" records the impact of the American Civil War and the English workers' struggle over the working day on the structure of "Capital". She writes "No one is more blind to the greatness of Marx's contributions than those who praise him to the skies for his genius as if that genius matured outside of the actual struggles of the period in which he lived. As if he gained the impulses from the sheer development of his own thoughts instead of from the living workers changing living reality by their actions." (41) Again it was from the insurgent workers of Paris that Marx learned that the working class cannot simply take over the existing state machine but must necessarily smash it.

History also provides numerous examples of workers spontaneously rising to much greater heights than trade unionism and trade union politics; the Chartists, the 1848 revolution in France, the Paris Commune, the Russian workers in 1905 and February 1917, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and so on.

But this critique of the way in which Lenin theoretically justified his position at this time does not, as some of Lenin's hagiographers might maintain, undermine the whole basis of Lenin's

theory of the party. The fact of workers achieving socialist consciousness spontaneously does not entail a return to a social democratic gradualist view, for this consciousness does not develop gradually, steadily and inevitably accumulating. On the contrary it takes giant and sudden leaps forward and can suffer equally catastrophic shipwrecks. Nor does the consciousness spread evenly through the class, so the consciousness of the advanced socialist workers must be organized and centralized to increase to the maximum its influence within the ideologically heterogeneous class as a whole. These ideas will be returned to and developed later in this work especially when dealing with the contribution of Rosa Luxemburg.

D. The Bolshevik-Menshevik Split.

Because of its great theoretical, historical, and practical significance "What Is To Be Done?" tends to be regarded as the founding document of Bolshevism. In a certain sense this is correct which is why we have subjected it to such detailed analysis. But it was not "What Is To Be Done?" which directly occasioned the split of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. On the contrary the pamphlet acted as a rallying point in the struggle for the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. bringing together militants on an all-Russian basis, and having the apparently united support of the leading intellectuals of Russian Marxism, Plekhanov, Martow, Axelrod, Trotsky etc. It was the attempt to put the programme of "What Is To Be

"Done?" into practice that produced the split. Men who thought themselves in agreement in theory found themselves in violent disagreement when those theories were translated into practical rules and decisions at the Second Congress in London in 1903.

The history of the development of the split is both complicated and obscure. A blow-by-blow account of the disputes at the Congress is available, for those interested, in Lenin's "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back" written, immediately after the split, in 1904. In much abbreviated form what happened was this. The formerly united (and dominant) Iskraist tendency within the party divided over the formulation of Paragraph I of the Rules. Martov's formulation was as follows: "A member of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party is one who accepts its programme, supports the Party financially, and renders it regular personal assistance under the direction of one of its organisations." Whereas Lenin's draft read; "A member of the Party is one who accepts its programme and who supports the Party both financially and by personal participation in one of the Party organisations." (My emphasis) On this question the Iskraists split into two definite factions. Plekhanov supported Lenin but when it came to the vote Martov, with the aid of anti-centralist "economist" elements still within the party, gained a majority. But with the secession of the "Rabochee Dyclo" economists at a later session the majority passed to Lenin's faction which enabled him to push through his slate of candidates for the Iskra editorial board. This replaced the old board

of six (Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich, Lenin, Martov, Potressov) with a board of three (Lenin, Plekhanov, Martov). Martov and his supporters refused to accept this decision and Martov resigned from Iskra. The terms Bolshevik and Menshevik (meaning "majority" and "minority") referred to the vote on the editorial board, but, because officially the two factions remained parts of the same party, the names stuck and have passed into history.

For the purpose of this study it is necessary to ask two questions. First, what were these disputes, seemingly a hair splitting wrangle about words, really about? Secondly what was the impact of the split on the developing Leninist theory of the party? To grasp the real meaning of any dispute in the Marxist movement it is always necessary to see it in its context. "Truth is concrete" as Lenin was so fond of saying. Writing in this vein we find Paul Frolich who sums up the situation as follows:

"In order to understand these debates, it is necessary to keep in mind the state of the social-democratic movement at that time, with its unstable and anarchical network of circles, and the conditions in which an illegal party organisation had to operate under absolutism. At the same time, it is necessary to understand that deep political antagonisms were coming to a head in the discussions on the statutes, antagonisms which were still only felt rather than clearly expressed in any single argument. Lenin sensed grave dangers ahead and wanted to ward them off by organising the party more tightly. He was aware of the tremendous tasks which the party would face in the approaching

revolution, and wanted to forge it into a weapon of iron. And, finally, he recognised that he alone out of the whole Iskra group would be able to lead the party with the necessary confidence and determination. The very impersonal and objective way in which he reached this conclusion explains his obstinacy on this question.

"The wording of the two proposals for Paragraph I of the statutes gives hardly an inkling of the antagonism. It is certain that Martov wanted a party with ill-defined boundaries in accordance with the actual state of the movement, and with strong autonomy for the individual groups; a party of agitation which would broadly and loosely embrace everybody who called himself a socialist. Lenin, however, felt it was important to overcome the autonomy and the isolation of the local groups, and thus avoid the dangers inherent in their over-simplified and ossified ideas, not to speak of their backward political development. He wanted a firmly and tightly organised party which, as the vanguard of the class, would be closely connected with it, but at the same time clearly distinct from it". (42)

There is of course a clear difference between the two drafts in that Lenin's specifically requires personal participation in an organisation of the Party whereas Martov's does not, but the importance of this difference depends on what the authors' have in mind in practice and therefore on the importance they attach to it. At first, no doubt Lenin thought he was merely clarifying Martov's rather vague formulation - vagueness and inconsistency was characteristic of Martov. What clearly

revealed Martov's real intentions was the way in which he sought to justify his position in the debates and kind of support he received. For example the "Economist" Akimov who apposed the whole idea of a revolutionary party supported Martov as the lesser evil. "Comrades Martov and Lenin are arguing as to which (formulation) will best achieve their common aim. Brouckere and I want to choose the one which will least achieve that aim, From this angle I choose Martov's formulation." (43) Martov himself had this to say "The more widespread the title of Party member, the better..... We could only rejoice if ever striker, every demonstrator, answering for his actions, could proclaim himself a Party member?" (44) Apart from the totally impractical notion of people randomly "proclaiming themselves" Party members this passage clearly shows what Martov had in mind. That while for practical reasons he accepted the need for secrecy and tightly knit conspiracy, politically he blurred the distinction between the party and the class, he conceived of the party as reflecting the class as a whole not as its vanguard.

There was, however, another aspect of the debate which Lenin fastened on. There was a second possible interpretation of Martov's formulation; "that a Party organisation (would be) entitled to regard as a Party member anyone who renders it regular personal assistance under its direction" and "that a committee would assign functions and watch over their fulfilment." Lenin comments:

"Such special assignments will never, of course, be made to the mass of the workers, to the thousands of proletarians (of whom Comrade Axelrod and Comrade Martynov spoke) - they will frequently be

given precisely to... professors..... high school students.... and revolutionary youth.... In a word, Comrade Martov's formula will either remain a dead letter, an empty phrase, or it will be of benefit mainly and almost exclusively to 'intellectuals who are thoroughly imbued with bourgeois individualism' and do not wish to join an organisation. In words, Martov's formulation defends the interests of the broad strata of the proletariat, but in fact it serves the interests of the bourgeois intellectuals, who fight shy of proletarian discipline and organisation."

(45)

Raya Dunayevskaya also fastens on this point as the central question in the dispute. "The disciplining by the local was so crucial to Lenin's conception that it held primacy over verbal adherence to Marxist theory, propagandising Marxist views, and holding a membership card..... Lenin insisted that the Marxist intellectual needed the ideological discipline of the proletarians in the local because otherwise he was resisting not only local discipline but also resisting being theoretically disciplined by the economic content of the Russian revolution."

(46)

It was this softness towards the bourgeois intellectuals which was probably the main cause of Martovite hostility to Lenin (and this would fit very well the pattern of future Bolshevik-Menshevik differences). But to counter this particular deviation Lenin did not have to leave the ground of Kautskyite social democratic orthodoxy. The organisational views of the Mensheviks could be assimilated to those of Bernstein, Jaurès, and the general opportunist trend in

international social democracy, (47) and there was even a lengthy quotation from Kautsky himself to fit the bill. (48) What was crucial for the development of Lenin's thought; i.e. what enabled him to make a breakthrough into a new Marxist approach to organisation, was the question of the distinction between the party of the class and the class itself, which Lenin was forced to clarify by the debate on the conditions of membership.

...."The stronger our Party organisations, consisting of real Social-Democrats, the less wavering and instability there is within the Party, the broader, more varied, richer and more fruitful will be the Party's influence on the elements of the working-class masses surrounding it and guided by it. The Party, as the vanguard of the working class, must not be confused, after all, with the entire class.
(my emphasis - J.M.)" (49)

It is this last sentence which signifies the break with Marx's concept of organisation in which the distinction between party and class remains blurred, and, more decisively, with the orthodox Social-Democratic conception of the party as representing the class. What renders this break permanent, rather than temporary, and of universal, rather than merely Russian, significance is that Lenin roots it not in practical necessities of secrecy (though these are of course not lost sight of) nor in an erroneous theory of the introduction of consciousness "from the outside" but in the objective situation of the proletariat under capitalism:

".....precisely because there are differences in degree of consciousness and degree of activity. a distinction must be made in

degree of proximity to the Party..... it would be.... "tailism" to think that the entire class, or almost the entire class, can ever rise, under capitalism, to the level of consciousness and activity of its vanguard, of its Social-Democratic Party." (50)

Of great importance in this passage is the charge of "tailism" directed at his opponents. "Tailism" (from the Russian "khvostism" - to run at the back of) is Lenin's figurative and polemical term for "fatalism" which was to prove the Achilles' heel of the Second International. Running like a red thread through "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back" is the contrast between the Bolshevik activist, revolutionary outlook on the world and the "tailist" fatalist complacency of the Mensheviks. Nothing illustrates this better than one of the disputes with Trotsky.

"To the category of arguments, which inevitably crop up when attempts are made to justify Martov's formulation, belongs in particular, Comrade Trotsky's statement that 'opportunism is produced by more complex (or: is determined by deeper) causes than one or another clause in the Rules; it is brought about by the relative level of development of bourgeois democracy and the proletariat....' The point is not that clauses in the Rules may produce opportunism, but that with their help a move or a less trenchant weapon against opportunism can be forged. The deeper its causes, the more trenchant should this weapon be. Therefore, to justify a formulation which opens the door to opportunism on the grounds that opportunism has "deep causes" is tail-ism of the first water." (51)

Trotsky analyses and explains a phenomenon and leaves it at that. Lenin accepts the explanation but wants to use it to do something about it. "Philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways, the point is to change it."

This very quotation from Marx, however, shows that the posing of the question of fatalism in itself was not a new departure. What is new, with regard both to Marx and the Second International, is posing it in relation to organisation. Thus only Lenin could have written the following sentence!

"The philosophy of tail-ism, which flourished three years ago in questions of tactics, is being resurrected to-day in relation to questions of organisation." (52)

It was in the determined and thoroughgoing struggle against "tail-ism" in organisation that Bolshevism and the Leninist theory of the party was conceived. The purpose of this chapter has been to show the particular conditions, and the problems which they posed, which made this development a possibility; and to show the particular response of Lenin which translated this possibility into a reality.

CHAPTER 3

Lenin: From Russian Bolshevism to the Communist International.

As we have shown, by 1904 Lenin had developed a number of ideas which constituted a definite advance on the generally accepted view of the party. Because of this, and because of the historical continuity of the Bolshevik faction from the 1903 split to the 1917 revolution, it has commonly been assumed that Lenin had, almost from the first, his own, clearly worked out theory of the party, quite distinct from that of social democracy in the west. But this is to make the mistake of reading back into the past ideas that only became clarified much later. In reality Lenin, at this stage, was not aware that he diverged in any fundamental way from social democratic orthodoxy. He identified the Mensheviks with Bernsteinian "revisionism" and himself with the mainstream Bebel-Kautsky tendency of the SPD.

Thus when Rosa Luxemburg wrote her trenchant critique (1) of "One Step Forwards, Two Steps Backwards" Lenin did not respond to the theoretical challenge. He contented himself in his reply with pointing out a number of factual error's on Rosa's part and argued that her criticisms were misdirected. "Comrade Luxemburg", he wrote, "supposes that I defend one system of organisation against another. But actually that is not so. From the first to the last page of my book, I defend the elementary principles of any conceivable system of party organisation" (2) In 1906 in an article on "The Crisis of Menshevism", Lenin wrote, "From the very first.....we affirmed that we are not creating any special sort of Bolshevik tendency; we only take our stand everywhere and at all times in defence of the point of view of the revolutionary

social democracy." (3) The citations of Kautsky as the Marxist authority are legion in Lenin works at this time and remain so throughout the pre-war period. Even Kautsky's tendency to favour the Mensheviks is not allowed to affect this judgement; it is always attributed to Kautsky's ignorance of the real situation in Russia. (4) As late as August 1913 Lenin can refer to Bebel as a "model workers' leader," (5) and praise him as the elaborator of "the fundamentals of parliamentary tactics for German (and international) Social-Democracy, tactics that never yield an inch to the enemy....(and are) always directed to the accomplishment of the final aim."(6) As far as perceiving the conservatism of the SPD is concerned, not only Luxemburg who saw its leaders at first hand, but also Trotsky was far in advance of Lenin. As early as 1906 he warned that, "The European Socialist parties, particularly the largest of them, the German Social-Democratic Party, have developed their conservatism in proportion as the masses have embraced socialism and the more these masses have become organised and disciplined. As a consequence of this Social Democracy as an organisation embodying the political experience of the proletariat may at a certain moment become a direct obstacle to open conflict between the workers and bourgeois reaction."

(7)

This point is stressed as a corrective to the widespread tendency to exaggerate the "unity" of Lenin's thought, to make of his ideas a totally consistent system in which everything from beginning to end fits neatly into place. (8) As Trotsky once commented, "If Lenin

in 1903 had understood and formulated everything that was required for the coming times, then the remainder of his life would have consisted only of reiterations. In reality this was not at all the case." (9)

There is a great gap between Lenin's theory of the party in 1903-4 and his theory of the party in 1919 at the founding of the Communist International. Lenin developed that theory, not all at once, but through a series of responses to, and generalisations from, the course of the class struggle. Consequently as with Marx, an understanding of that theory cannot be extracted from one or two key texts, but must be drawn from an examination of Lenin's practice as a whole.

A. The impact of 1905.

After the 1903 split the next event which had a major impact on Lenin's theory of the party was the 1905 revolution. The first effect of 1905 was to deepen the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Originally the division had been only about organisation, apparently unrelated to questions of programme or strategy, but now a fundamental divergence emerged in the estimation of the driving forces of the revolution. Lenin, as we have indicated above, accepted the bourgeois nature of the revolution, but because of the conservative, weak and cowardly nature of the Russian bourgeoisie, held that the bourgeois revolution would have to be made by the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry. Attempting to concretize this position for the purpose of revolutionary action, Lenin argued that the social democrats should work to break the influence of the bourgeois liberals (Cadets

etc) on the peasantry, and then stage a joint proletarian-peasant insurrection to overthrow the autocracy. Issuing from a successful rising would be a provisional revolutionary government consisting of the revolutionary workers' party (the Social Democrats) and the party of the revolutionary peasantry (the Socialist Revolutionaries) which would represent the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." After a brief period of energetic measures to sweep away every vestige of feudalism the provisional revolutionary government would summon a constituent assembly, which, because of the peasant majority of the population, would inevitably be anti-socialist, and the social democrats would then become an opposition party leading the struggle for socialism. In this way, maintained Lenin, the Russian revolution would be thorough going (like the great French Revolution, rather than a shabby compromise like Germany in 1848) and would secure the best possible conditions for the future battles of the proletariat.

(10)

The Mensheviks however rejected this perspective. More and more they tended towards the view that because the revolution was bourgeois its driving force must be the bourgeoisie, with only a subsidiary role assigned to the proletariat. The job of the Social Democrats was to pressurise the bourgeois liberals so as to "revolutionise" them, but at the same time not to frighten them. They rejected the formula of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry," and participation in a provisional revolutionary government as likely to "cause the bourgeois classes to recoil from the revolution and thus diminish its sweep." (11) During the rise of the revolution the

Mensheviks were in large part swept along by events but as soon as the movement began to ebb they more and more came to express regret at the extreme positions and actions into which they had been pushed - a process which culminated in Plekhanov's notorious remark, "We should not have taken up arms." (12)

Lenin's observation of the conduct of the Mensheviks convinced him of the connection between opportunism in relation to organisation and opportunism in politics. Thus, although the joint action of Bolshevik and Menshevik workers in the revolutionary struggles promised great pressures for unification, to which Lenin formally acceded, he became more determined than ever to strengthen the independent organisation of his own tendency. In his article of 1910 on "The historical meaning of the inner-party struggle in Russia", it is on the issue of the role of the proletariat in the revolution that Lenin focuses, writing that "Bolshevism as a tendency took definite shape in the spring and summer of 1905. (13)

The second effect of the revolution was to bring about a shift of emphasis in Lenin's conception of the relationship between party and class. In "What Is To Be Done?" Lenin had justified his view of the party with the argument that socialism had to be introduced into the working class "from without", and that spontaneously the working class could not rise above the level of trade unionism. In the face of the enormous and spontaneous revolutionary achievements of the Russian working class the tone Lenin's writings changes completely.

"There is not the slightest doubt that the revolution will

teach social-democratism to the masses of the workers in Russia....

At such a time the working class feels an instinctive urge for open revolutionary action". (14)

"Revolutions are the festivals of the oppressed and the exploited. At no other time are the masses of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order as at a time of revolution. At such times the people are capable of performing miracles, if judged by the narrow, philistine scale of gradual progress".

(15)

"The working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic". (16)

It is now that Lenin notices "how the elementary instinct of the working-class movement is able to correct the conceptions of the greatest minds" (17) and from this point on he becomes circumspect about the formulations of "What Is To Be Done?" "What Is To Be Done?", he writes in 1907, "is a controversial correction of Economist distortions and it would be wrong to regard the pamphlet in any other light." (18) This reappraisal did not, however involve a return to a spontanist, or fatalist attitude to the tasks of the party - on the contrary it was precisely on this score that Lenin most strongly attacked the Mensheviks. "Good marchers, but bad leaders, they belittle the materialist conception of history by ignoring the active, leading and guiding part in history which can and must be played by parties that understand the material prerequisites of a revolution and that have placed themselves

at the head of the progressive classes." (19) The break with economicistic fatalism that was achieved in "What Is To Be Done?" and "One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back", is maintained and developed, but freed of the elitist foundation that Lenin had at first given it. The formulations in "Two Tactics" are eminently dialectical. "Undoubtedly, the revolution will teach us, and will teach the masses of the people. But the question that now confronts a militant political party is: shall we be able to teach the revolution anything?" (20)

The corollary of this theoretical shift was a struggle by Lenin, within the Bolshevik faction, against the influence of the "professional revolutionaries", or "committeemen" on whom he had placed so much emphasis a year or two earlier. In the pre-revolutionary period of clandestinity these "committeemen" provided the stability and the expertise necessary to firmly establish the party in such difficult circumstances but they also became prey to a certain routinism which revealed its reactionary features with the arrival of the revolution. In particular they were the tangible embodiment of the theory of "bringing socialism to the working class from without," and as such tended to have a superior attitude to the workers, with the result that there were practically no workers on the Bolshevik committees. The question of bringing workers on to the committees came up at the Bolsheviks Third Congress in April 1905. Krupskaya has described the debate:

"Vladimir Ilyich vigorously defended the idea of including

workers. The people abroad, Bogdanov and the writers were also in favour. The Komitetchiks (committeemen) were against. Both sides became very heated.....

In his speech in this discussion Vladimir Ilyich said:
'I think we should consider the question more broadly. To bring workers on to the committees is not only an educational but a political task. The workers have a class instinct, and even with little political experience they quite quickly become steadfast Social Democrats. I would very much like to see eight workers on our committees for every two intellectuals...'

"When Mikhailov (Pestolovsky) said, 'so in practical work very small demands are made of intellectuals, but extremely big demands are made of workers', Vladimir Ilyich cried out: 'That is absolutely true!' His exclamation was drowned in a chorus of - 'Not true!' from the Komitetchiks. When Rumyanstiev said 'There is only one worker on the Petersburg committee, although work has been going on there for fifteen years.' Vladimir Ilyich shouted: 'What a disgrace'. (21)

The debate about worker involvement on the committees, over which, incidently, Lenin was defeated by the Congress, was only one aspect of Lenin's fight against conservative sectarianism in the Bolshevik ranks. Another issue over which he clashed with his supporters was the attitude of the party to the Soviet. Trotsky, the Soviets' chairman has described the initial response of the Bolsheviks to this historic organisation. "The Petersburg Committee of the Bolsheviks was frightened

at first by such an innovation as a non-partisan representation of the embattled masses, and could find nothing better to do than to present the Soviet with an ultimatum: immediately adopt a Social-Democratic programme, or disband. The Petersburg Soviet as a whole, including the contingent of Bolshevik workingmen as well, ignored this ultimatum without batting an eyelash". (22) Even from abroad Lenin saw the sterility of this approach and opposed it in a letter to the party's paper *Novaya Zhizn*, in which he argued that it was not a question of the Soviet or the party, but of "both the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Party", (23) and that it would be inadvisable for the Soviet to adhere wholly to any one party". (24) "To my mind", wrote Lenin, "the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, as a revolutionary centre providing political leadership, is not too broad an organisation but on the contrary, a much too narrow one. The Soviet must proclaim itself the provisional revolutionary government, or form such a government". (25)

The essential difference between the "committeemen" and Lenin was that the former wished to apply in the revolution the concept of the party which had operated in the pre-revolutionary period, whereas, Lenin wanted to completely re-organise the party so as to embrace the new forces and confront the new tasks thrown up by the revolution.

"If we fail to show bold initiative in setting up new organisations, we shall have to give up as groundless all pretensions to the role of vanguard. If we stop helplessly at the achieved boundaries,

forms and confines of the committees, groups, meetings, and circles, we shall merely prove our own incapacity. Thousands of circles are now springing up everywhere without our aid, without any definite programme or aim, simply under the impact of events..... Let all such circles, except those that are avowedly non-Social-Democratic, either directly join the Party or align themselves with the Party. In the latter event we must not demand that they accept our programme or that they necessarily enter into organisational relations with us. Their mood of protest and their sympathy for the cause of international revolutionary Social-Democracy in themselves suffice, provided the Social Democrats work effectively among them". (26)

The party machine resisted Lenin's exhortations but the course of events was on his side. By November 1905 he could note with satisfaction: "At the Third Congress of the Party I suggested that there be about eight workers to every two intellectuals in the Party committees. How obsolete that suggestion seems today! Now we must wish for the new Party organisations to have one Social-Democratic intellectual to several hundred Social-Democratic workers". (27)

Just as Lenin's theoretical reappraisal of the spontaneous capacities of the proletariat did not involve a return to economic fatalism, neither did his new views on party organisation mean adoption of the Menshevik position of the broad party. The open ended expansion envisaged by Lenin in the revolutionary period was possible only on the basis of the party prior solid preparation.

"Is Social-Democracy endangered by the realisation of the plan we propose?

Danger may be said to lie in a sudden influx of large numbers of non-Social-Democrats into the Party. If that occurred, the Party would be dissolved among the masses, it would cease to be the conscious vanguard of its class, its role would be reduced to that of a tail. That would mean a very deplorable period indeed. And this danger could undoubtedly become a very serious one if we showed any inclination towards demagogic, if we lacked party principles... entirely, or if those principles were feeble and shaky. But the fact is that no such 'ifs' exist. We Bolsheviks have never shown any inclination towards demagogic... We have demanded class consciousness from those joining the Party, we have insisted on the tremendous importance of continuity in the Party's development, we have preached discipline and demanded that every Party member be trained in one or other of the Party organisations....

Don't forget that in every live and growing party there will always be elements of instability, vacillation, wavering. But these elements can be influenced, and they will submit to the influence of the steadfast and solid core of Social-Democrats". (28)

Thus the experience of the "great dress rehearsal" of the Russian Revolution raised Lenin's theory of the party to a new level. It deepened his opposition to opportunism and strengthened his determination to build a specifically revolutionary party. It also clarified his understanding of the relationship between party and class. The party remains a vanguard, distinct from the class as a whole, but now it is the party of the advanced workers - a part of the class, not the party

of the declassed intelligentsia introducing socialism "from without".

But it was not only the upsurge of revolution that affected Lenin, the period of reaction which followed also added important elements to his theory of the party.

B. Reaction Steels.

From December 1905 to mid-1907 the revolutionary wave gradually subsided, but Lenin continually looked for a new upsurge and refused to draw the conclusion that the revolution had exhausted itself.

(29) Throughout this period he adhered to the course of preparing for a new insurrection. Finally, on June 3rd 1907, Stolypin dissolved the Second Duma and arrested the Social-Democratic deputies. When this veritable coup d'e'tat met with no response from the workers, the advent of a period of black reaction could no longer be doubted. It was to last for approximately five years.

During the revolution's decline the Bolsheviks had continued to grow in numbers, if not in influence over the masses, but now all the Social-Democratic organisations were shattered. All estimations of membership of illegal underground parties are likely to be inaccurate but the following figures for the Moscow district provide some indication of the state of affairs. "For the summer of 1905, 1,435 members; for mid-May 1906, 5,320 members, for mid-1908, 250 members; end of 1908, 150 members. In 1910 the Moscow organisation ceased to

exist". (30) Demoralisation and despair set in all round, not infrequently resulting in suicides, and the movement became riddled with police spies who everywhere added to the confusion. (31) Inevitably, in such a period, there were numerous quarrels, disputes and splits, even amongst those who remained in the movement.

It is interesting to compare Lenin's response to this situation with that of Marx after the defeat of the 1848 revolutions. Marx dissolved the Communist League, left the emigrés to their squabbles, and retired to the study. Lenin, however, clung desperately both to the remnants of his party organisation, and to the party idea, defending them passionately against all assaults. "Let the Black-Hundred diehards rejoice and howl "he wrote", let the reaction rage..... A party which succeeds in consolidating itself for persistent work in contact with the masses, a party of the advanced class, which succeeds in organising its vanguard, and which directs its forces in such a way as to influence in a Social-Democratic spirit every sign of life of the proletariat - such a party will win no matter what happens". (32) The difference here between Marx and Lenin was one not of psychology - Marx was no faint heart - but, at least in part, of theory. (33) The role of party in the revolution, and hence the task of its patient preparation beforehand, stood much higher in the eyes of Lenin than in the eyes of Marx. Because of this Lenin saw in the reaction not only its negative side (this he could hardly miss) but also its positive aspect. "We are now going through a process of necessary sorting-out, demarcation, new

crystallisation of the genuinely proletarian-socialist elements....

We certainly need not fear this sorting-out. We should welcome it, we should help it.... That to-day, when the wave has ebbed, there remain and will remain only real Marxists, does not frighten us but rejoices us". (34)

To preserve and build the kind of party he wanted Lenin had to fight many factional battles. The three most important of these were against a) right wing "liquidationism", (35) b) ultra-left "otzovism" ("recallism") (36) and c) centrist "conciliationism". (37) These disputes became very fierce and very tangled, and the theoretical level of the polemics which they produced was not always very high. Consequently there is no need to go into detail about them here, but nonetheless certain important general principles emerged which are worthy of note, and which stood Lenin in good stead in later years. (38) Firstly, that the party is not only an organisation for attack, but also for "retreat in good order". "Of all the defeated opposition and revolutionary parties, the Bolsheviks effected the most orderly retreat, with the least loss to their "army", with its core best preserved". (39) Secondly, the principle of "combining illegal work with the utilisation of 'legal opportunities'." (40) And thirdly the principle of carrying the fight against opportunism through to its organisational conclusions, and effecting a split with all non-revolutionary elements.

It was this last point which was really the distinct hallmark of Leninism, and which resulted in 1912 in the formal foundation of the

Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) as a completely separate and independent party. Kautsky had fought Bernstein theoretically but the revisionists were not expelled from the SPD. Rosa Luxemburg fought Kautsky and the SPD centre but built no separate organisation. Trotsky was opposed to both liquidationism and otzovism and was just as critical as Lenin of the political line of the Mensheviks, (41) and yet he actively worked against a split. It was also an advance on Lenin's own earlier position, in that the 1903 split had been in large part been the work of the Mensheviks and Lenin had frequently been willing to countenance reunification, whereas now Lenin broke with the Mensheviks once and for all.

The result of Lenin's determined struggles during the reaction was that the Bolsheviks started life as a fully independent party just as the working class movement began to get going again. The slowly reviving movement received a great impetus from the massacre of gold miners in Lena on 4th April 1912 which produced a wave of strikes, protest meetings and demonstrations throughout the country, culminating in a 400,000 strong May Day strike. Lenin intervened in this situation through the production of a legal daily newspaper, Pravda, the first issue of which appeared 18 days after the Lena Massacre. Pravda combined an intransigent revolutionary political line, (42) with numerous reports from workers themselves chronicling their every day conditions and struggles. In one year 11,000 such workers' letters and contributions were published. (43) The daily circulation of Pravda

reached over 40,000 and the formation of workers' groups to collect money for the paper compensated for the lack of mass legal party. On the basis of a painstaking analysis of these collections Lenin showed that the Bolsheviks had won clear hegemony over the politically conscious workers. In 1913 Pravda received donations from 2,181 groups while the Menshevik papers got donations from 661 groups. In 1914 up to May 13th the figure for donations to Pravda was 2,873, as against 671 for the Mensheviks. (44) From this Lenin concluded, "Pravdism, Pravdist decisions and Pravdist tactics have united four-fifths of Russia's class conscious workers." (45) Lenin had thus become the first Marxist to have created a party consisting solely of revolutionaries, without any reformist or opportunist wing, which also had a substantial base in the working class.

C. The Most Revolutionary Section of the Second International.

At this point it is useful to examine what the Bolshevik party, the tangible embodiment of Lenin's ideas on the party, actually looked like in practice and see how it compared with the more "orthodox" social democratic parties.

Firstly, the Bolsheviks were, of course, an illegal party operating in a country where there were no democratic liberties and no effective trade unions, whereas most western social democracies had long since obtained their legality. The consequence of this was that the Bolsheviks did not, and could not, develop, as did for example, the SPD, a broad layer of functionaries consisting of local officials, trade

union leaders, members of parliament, local councillors etc.

This is a stratum which is inevitably subject to enormous "moderating" pressures from its environment. Raised to a privileged position vis-a-vis the rank-and-file workers such functionaries find that there is a definite role, for them to play, not only within the workers' movement, but also within capitalism, as mediators between the classes, and therefore they have a direct interest in social peace. They thus constitute a major conservative force. Within international social democracy this stratum acted as a permanent base for reformism. The fact that the Bolshevik leadership and its local cadre were closer to the prison cell or Siberian exile than they were to ministerial posts or to trade union officialdom, and that the party itself had no more than a threadbare administrative apparatus, made the party relatively (though not absolutely) immune to bureaucratic routinism.

Secondly the Bolshevik party was heavily proletarian in composition. David Lane has produced the following breakdown of Bolshevik membership for 1905: Workers, 61.9%; peasants, 4.8%; white collar, 27.4%, others 5.9%; (46) and concludes, "If judged by the bottom levels of the party and particularly by its popular support, it may be said that the Bolsheviks were a 'workers' party,' whereas, "It seems probable that the Mensheviks had comparatively more 'petty-bourgeois' members, and fewer working class supporters at the lower levels". (47) During the reaction there was a mass exodus of intellectuals from the movement whereas the factory cells, albeit isolated, survived better thus increasing the party's proletarianisation. Lenin's above mentioned

analysis of money collections between 1912 and 1914 confirms this picture. Of all the donations to Pravda in the first quarter of 1914, 87% came from workers collections and 13% from non-workers, whereas only 44% of donations to the Menshevik papers came from workers, and 56% from non-workers. (48)

The combination of the illegal status of the party and its proletarian composition made for an organisational structure radically different from the normal social democratic tradition. Despite their revolutionary rhetoric the essential strategy of most of the parties of the Second International was the achievement of the parliamentary majority, therefore the base units of these parties were organised on residential, or geographical lines, so as to facilitate mobilisation of the party membership for electoral campaigns in the respective electoral districts. In Russia the absence of parliamentary elections (such elections as did take place to the Duma were on a factory basis) and the need for secrecy led the Bolsheviks to base their organisation on the factories. Osip Piatnitsky an old Bolshevik organisation man, records that "During all periods the lower party organisation of the Bolsheviks existed at the place of work rather than at the place of residence". (49) This structure despite the smallness of the Bolshevik party, made for a more intimate relationship between the party and the proletariat than was achieved by the social democratic parties where contact with the factories

tended to be maintained only indirectly through control of the trade unions, and where a certain division of labour operated between the industrial struggle handled by the unions and the political struggle handled by the party. No such defacto separation occurred with the Bolsheviks however. Piatnitsky has described the work of Bolshevik factory cells:

"In Czarist Russia the cells.....utilised all the grievances in the factories; the gruffness of the foremen, deductions from wages, fines, the failure to provide medical aid in accidents, etc., for oral agitation at the bench, through leaflets, meetings at the factory gates or in the factory yards, and separate meetings of the more class conscious and revolutionary workers. The Bolsheviks always showed the connection between the maltreatment of factories, and the rule of the autocracy..... At the same time the autocracy was connected up in the agitation of the Party cells with the capitalist system, so that at the very beginning of the development of the Labour movement the Bolsheviks established a connection between the economic struggle and the political".

(50)

Thus the Bolshevik party, rather than being simply the political representative of the working class, was an interventionist combat party striving to lead and guide the class in all its battles.

Also important was the youth of the party membership. In 1907 approximately 22% of the party members were less than 20 years old; 37% were between 20 and 24, and 16% between 25 and 29. (51) Trotsky has

commented on the significance of this. "Bolshevism when underground was always a party of young workers. The Mensheviks relied upon the more respectable skilled upper stratum, always prided themselves on it, and looked down on the Bolsheviks. Subsequent events harshly showed them their mistake. At the decisive moment the youth carried with them the more mature stratum and even the old folks". (52) And Lane notes that "the Bolsheviks were younger than the Mensheviks at the lowest levels of party organisation and more so among the 'activists' than among the ordinary members. This suggests that the Bolshevik organisational structure allowed the young to advance to positions of responsibility more easily than did the Menshevik..... Politically, these young men may have provided more dynamic and vigorous leadership for the Bolshevik faction". (53) Certainly the youth of the party was another major factor in freeing it from conservative routinism.

Finally, the Bolshevik party was a disciplined body. The internal regime of the party was characterised as democratic centralism, but this phrase in itself does not have great significance. As an organisational formula it was not at all specifically Leninist, being accepted in theory by both the Mensheviks and many other social democratic parties. (54) What mattered was the interpretation given to democratic centralism in practice. Lenin defined it as; "unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism," (55) by which he meant freedom of criticism within the bounds of the party programme and until a definite decision was reached, then the implementation of that decision

by the party as one man. No party which contains both a revolutionary and a reformist wing, i.e. groups with fundamentally divergent aims, can in practice be a disciplined organisation. Thus although German social democracy attached great importance to administrative centralisation and to party unity it had a very lax attitude to breaches of discipline by party dignitaries, trade union leaders and so on. Discipline exists to achieve unity in action, but if organisational unity is placed above principle then real discipline inevitably disappears. "Unless the masses are organised," wrote Lenin, "the proletariat is nothing. Organised - it is everything. Organisation means unity of action, unity in practical operations. But every action is valuable, of course, only because and insofar as it serves to push things forward and not backward..... Organisation not based on principle is meaningless , and in practice converts the workers into a miserable appendage of the bourgeoisie in power..... Therefore class-conscious workers must never forget that serious violations of principle occur which make the severance of all organisational relations imperative." (56) The Bolshevik party was compelled by its situation to be disciplined, and it was able to achieve the necessary discipline because it was politically united. But it is important to realise that this discipline did not, as was often claimed, rule out independent initiative from the rank and file of the party. The same repressive conditions which made unity in action a necessity also compelled the local sections of the party to act for themselves. Piatnitsky writes, "The initiative of the local Party organisations, of the cells, was encouraged. Were the Bolsheviks of

Odessa, or Moscow, or Baku, or Tiflis, always to have waited for the directives from the Central Committee, the provincial committees, etc. which during the years of the reaction and of the war frequently did not exist at all owing to arrests, what would have been the result? The Bolsheviks would not have captured the working masses and exercised any influence over them." (57)

All these factors combined made Lenin's Bolshevik Party, on the eve of the 1st World War, in the words of Trotsky, "the most revolutionary - indeed, the only revolutionary - section of the Second International." (58) This achievement had a two-fold basis. Firstly the objective situation; that in Russia the contradictions racking the old society were more extreme than elsewhere, and consequently, as Lenin put it, "no other country knew anything even approximating to that revolutionary experience, that rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement - legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms." (59) Secondly Lenin's unique response to that situation which sought at all times to create an organisation capable of measuring up to the tasks that confronted it. The key to Lenin's success during the reaction was his ability, theoretically and psychologically, to remain "in touch" with the advanced workers, and with them (while recognising the need to adjust to changed circumstances) to base himself and his party in the highest point reached by the movement - the revolution of 1905.

D. The Break with Social Democracy.

Trotsky's characterisation of the Bolsheviks as "the only revolutionary section of the Second International," however, also indicates the limits of Lenin's achievements up to this point in time, for it makes clear the fact that the Bolsheviks remained a section of Social democracy. This in itself shows that although Lenin had developed in practice a party quite at variance with the social democratic norm he had not yet consciously formulated this as, or generalised it into, a distinct and new theory of the party. It was only the collapse of the International in the face of the World war that brought about Lenin's complete theoretical break with the old socialism, and the birth of a specifically Leninist theory of the party.

Lenin, it is well known, was taken completely by surprise by the support given to the war by all the main European socialist parties, in total defiance of all their past policy. His first reaction to the issue of "Vorwarts" recording the SPD's vote for war credits was that it must be a forgery. But once he had grasped the scale of the capitulation his thought developed with extreme rapidity. Lenin's very first article after the outbreak of the war, "The Tasks of Revolutionary Social Democracy in the European War", written not later than August 28, 1914, not only condemned the leaders of international social democracy for their, "betrayal of socialism" (60) and recorded the "ideological and political bankruptcy of the International". (61) but also identified in this betrayal and abandonment of past positions a continuation of tendencies

long at work in the pre-war period. Social-chauvinism is identified as the product and development of opportunism. "This collapse (of the International) has been mainly caused by the actual prevalence in it of petty-bourgeois opportunism..... The so-called Centre of the German and other Social Democratic parties has in actual fact faint-heartedly capitulated to the opportunists." (62) From this Lenin immediately drew the conclusion that; "It must be the task of the future International resolutely and irrevocably to rid itself of this bourgeois trend in socialism." (63)

From this point on Lenin would have no truck with schemes to reunite or resurrect the old International, "on the contrary, this collapse must be frankly recognised and understood, so as to make it possible to build up a new and more lasting socialist unity of the workers of all countries." (64) By November 1, the Bolshevik Central Committee had issued the slogan, "Long live a proletarian International freed from opportunism." (65) In December Lenin was asking "is it not better to give up the name of Social Democrats, which has been besmirched and degraded by them, and return to the old Marxist name of Communists?" (66) and by February 1915 the Bolshevik Party Conference had committed itself officially to the eventual creation of a "Third International".(67)

Up till 1914 Lenin had seen himself as an orthodox social democrat applying to the peculiar conditions of Tsarist Russia the tried and tested theory and method of Kautsky and Bebel. But the decision in favour of a Third International signified not a determination to uphold that tradition, abandoned by its leaders, but a thorough-going rejection

of it. Lenin levelled two interconnected charges at the Second International: a) that it was the product of a prolonged period of "peace" - "peace" signifying not only peace between nations but also relative peace between classes - in which it had become so accustomed to legal methods, and the growth of its legal mass organisations that it was unwilling and unable to make the necessary transition to illegal work, b) that it was a coalition between revolutionaries and opportunists to the advantage of the latter.

"Typical of the socialist parties of the epoch of the Second International was one that tolerated in its midst an opportunism built up in decades of the 'peaceful' period..... This type has outlived itself. If the war ends in 1915, will any thinking socialist be found willing to begin, in 1916, restoring the workers' parties together with the opportunists, knowing from experience that in any new crisis all of them to a man..... will be for the bourgeoisie."(68)

In contradistinction to the Second International, which Kautsky aptly described as "an instrument for peace, unsuitable for war," the Third International was to be precisely an instrument of war - international civil war against the imperialist bourgeoisie - and therefore could tolerate in its ranks neither a fifth column nor waverers. In mounting this critique of social democracy it is clear that Lenin based himself on his experiences with the Bolsheviks, and the struggle against Menshevism, but now for the first time these experiences and the numerous theoretical insights that accompanied them, were generalised internationally into a new theory of the party to replace everywhere the

old forms of organisation.

A new theory of the party, however, could not stand on its own; it required the all-round regeneration of Marxism. For a theory of the party is merely the application to the sphere of organisation of an analysis of the class struggle as a whole. The Social democratic parties were both producer and product of a mechanistic and fatalist interpretation of Marxism in which the unification of the proletariat and the growth of its political party were seen as proceeding smoothly and harmoniously in a steadily ascending line, as an inevitable consequence of capitalist development. The tasks of Marxists in this scheme were formulated by Kautsky as, "Building up the organisation, winning all positions of power, which we are able to win and hold securely by our own strength, studying the state and society and educating the masses; other aims we cannot consciously and systematically set either to ourselves or to our organisations," (69) and the object as "the conquest of state power by winning a majority in parliament and by raising parliament to the rank of master of the government". (70) The latter would inevitably be realised provided only that the party avoided the disruption of its prized "organisations" through being drawn into foolish or premature conflicts. In practice the avoidance of such upsets became the main preoccupation of many of the social democratic leaders. In the first years of the war Lenin set about systematically dismantling this perspective and establishing a new theoretical foundation for the future Third International: This project led Lenin into three main areas of

theoretical investigation: a) philosophy, b) economics (the analysis of imperialism), c) politics (the state). Each of these had an important bearing on his theory of the party and therefore, although it is not possible here to go deeply into any of these questions, it is necessary at least to indicate the main interconnections.

In relation to philosophy we have already argued that the key to Lenin's attitude in the original split with the Mensheviks was his rejection of latter's fatalist ("tailist") approach to problems of organisation. At that time Lenin's position was the product more of his keen political instinct and practical judgement than of a philosophical break with mechanical materialism, as is illustrated by his formulations in "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism". (71) There was in Lenin prior to 1914 a contradiction between, as Raya Dunayevskaya has put it, "the practicing revolutionary dialectician and the thinking Kautskyan". (72) At the end of 1914, however, Lenin plunged into the study of Hegel, in particular Hegel's "Science of Logic", Lenin, like Marx, never wrote his "Dialectics" but nonetheless his marginal notes on Hegel (73) show clearly the philosophical "revolution" brought about by this reading. Naturally Lenin started out, "in general trying to read Hegel materialistically" (74) but what his notes draw out and emphasize is Hegel's dialectic method and its superiority to mechanical materialism. "Intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism. Dialectical Idealism instead of intelligent, metaphysical, undeveloped, dead, crude, rigid instead of stupid". (75) "Movement and 'self-movement....."

notes Lenin, " 'change', 'movement and vitality', "the principle of all self-movement", 'impulse' to 'movement' and to 'activity' - the opposite to 'dead Being' - who would believe that this is the core of 'Hegelianism'? of abstract and abstrusen (ponderous, absurd?) Hegelianism?? This core has to be discovered, understood, rescued, laid bare, refined, which is precisely what Marx and Engels did." (76)

Many of Lenin's comments are clearly not only a critique of other Marxists (e.g. Plekhanov (77) - his mentor in philosophy) but are also self-criticism. For example he writes "The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not 'lifelessly' not 'abstractly', not devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution", (78) and then further on, "Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it". (79) "It is impossible", Lenin concluded, "completely to understand Man's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx". (80) Perhaps the note which best illustrates what Lenin drew from Hegel is his statement "Practice is higher than (theoretical) knowledge, for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality". (81) Through this restoration of the dialectic and of practice to their rightful places in the Marxist world view (82) Lenin established the philosophical basis for a party which aimed, not passively to reflect the working class and await the working

out of iron historical laws, but to actively intervene in the shaping of history.

In relation to economics Lenin's task was to show that the objective situation was ripe for the creation of a new international party which was revolutionary not only in its ultimate aims but also in its immediate advocacy and preparation of revolutionary methods of struggle. Although it must be built in advance of the actual revolutionary situation such a party can only grow (as opposed to becoming an irrelevant sect) in the context of a revolutionary period. "Anybody", wrote Lenin, "who accepts or rejects the Bolshevik party organisation independently of whether or not we live at a time of proletarian revolution has completely misunderstood it". (83) In Russia the "actuality of the revolution", to use Lukacs' phrase, was given by the incompatibility of the Tsarist autocracy with the development of Russian Capitalism and the incapacity of the Russian bourgeoisie to fight Tsarism. But what of the capitalist system as a whole? Kautsky, after all was arguing that imperialism was only a policy preferred by finance capital, not a necessity for the system itself, that many sections of the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia were interested in peace and disarmament, and that capitalism might be about to pass into a new phase of peaceful "ultra-imperialism".

Lenin wrote his booklet, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism" (84) not only to prove that "the war of 1914-18 was imperialistic..... on the part of both sides" (85) but also to show that

imperialism was not a "policy" but a new stage in the development of capitalism which inevitably gave rise to the most violent struggle for the division and redivision of the world. Lenin's argument, in its bare bones, was that imperialism was the product of the transformation, through the law of concentration of capital, of capitalism based on free competition into its opposite, monopoly capitalism. This was accompanied by the dominance of finance capital over industrial capital, and the accumulation of a surplus of capital which could only find profitable outlets in the backward countries where labour was cheap and capital scarce. Consequently the world had been divided up between the great monopolies and their respective "home" governments. Since such division could take place only on the basis of relative strength, and since the relative strengths of the monopolies and the capitalist powers would not remain stable, so struggle for redivision, again on the basis of strength (i.e. war) would inevitably set in. On this basis - any achievement of peace would merely be the prelude to a new war. Lenin rejected the view that monopoly meant the overcoming of capitalist contradictions. "On the contrary, monopoly which is created in certain branches of industry, increases and intensifies the anarchy inherent in capitalist production as a whole". (86) Above all imperialism aggravated the contradiction between the socialization of production, and its private appropriation, thus imperialism marked the beginning of the decline of capitalism and the opening of the era of "wars and revolutions".

In addition to thus establishing the objective basis for a new revolutionary international, Lenin's analysis of imperialism also provided an economic foundation for his critique of the Second International. Recalling Engels' comments on the bourgeoisification of a section of the English proletariat due to England's industrial and colonial monopoly, (87) Lenin argued that imperialist monopolies gained "superprofits" from their exploitation of the colonies and that this enabled "the bourgeoisie of an imperialist "Great" Power (to) economically bribe the upper strata of "its" workers". (88) In the nineteenth century this had been possible only in England, but there it had operated for decades to corrupt the labour movement, but now on the other hand "every imperialist "Great" Power, can and does bribe smaller strata (than in England in 1848-68) of the 'labour aristocracy'".

(89) In this way "in all countries the bourgeoisie has already.... secured for itself 'bourgeois labour parties' of social chauvinists".

(90) In this way Lenin established that opportunism, or reformism, in the working class movement, was not just an alternative school of thought, or a sign of immaturity, or even simply a product of the pressure of bourgeois ideology; rather it was "substantiated economically". (91) Opportunism was the sacrifice of the overall interests of the proletariat as a whole for the immediate interests of separate groups of workers. The concept of the "bourgeois labour party" signifies that opportunism is regarded as the agent of the class enemy within the ranks of the proletariat. (92)

This definition of opportunism, which no Marxist had formulated so clearly before, is crucial for Lenin's theory of the party. It is the basic reason why the party must strictly exclude all reformist trends from its ranks. It is a recognition that the revolutionary party must be organised for struggle not only against the bourgeoisie, but also (in a different way) against bourgeois organisations within the working class. It is an understanding and materialist explanation of the difficulties involved in the transition from the class-in-itself to the class-for-itself. In 1901 Lenin had grasped this problem but had explained it in terms of the inability of the working class to achieve socialist consciousness by its own efforts. Now he explained it in terms of the contradiction between the historical and immediate interests of the proletariat, which for limited periods and limited strata could predominate over the ultimate need for class unity. The socialist unification of the working class develops dialectically, through internal struggle. As the agent of this struggle, the revolutionary party must confine its membership to those for whom the overall interests of the proletariat stand higher than immediate interests, in a word, to internationalists.

Finally there is the question of the state which was brought to the fore by the debates on imperialism and the war. (93) The essence of socialist revolution is the transfer of state power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. Since the organisation of the party is necessarily in part determined by the tasks it will have to perform in the revolution, how this transfer of power is envisaged is of great importance

to the theory of the party. The theorists of the Second International did not rule out violence, particularly defensive violence, in the struggle for power, but essentially they expected the revolution to leave the state machine itself intact. The role of the party would be to take over the existing state, no doubt changing its leading personnel, reorganising it and so on, but not fundamentally challenging its structure. With such a view of the tasks of the revolution in regard to the state the centre gravity of the class struggle must inevitably be seen as being in parliament, and parliamentary elections. Thus Kautsky wrote, "This direct action" of the unions can operate effectively only as an auxiliary and reinforcement to, and not as substitute for, parliamentary action" (94) and "it (parliament) is the most powerful lever that can be used to raise the proletariat out of its economic, social and moral degradation". (95) From this it follows that the leadership of the party comes to lie with its parliamentary representatives since it is through a parliamentary majority that the revolutionary government will be found. In this conception the role of the rank-and-file of the party, and even more so that of workers outside the party is essentially passive, for even though they may be called upon to fight, they are not expected either themselves to create new structures of power, or to participate in running them. Social democracy's bureaucratic conception of the revolution entailed a bureaucratic organisation of the party.

For the Bolsheviks, as we have shown above, none of this has applied because no modern "democratic" state existed in Russia and

they had from the start been illegal. But now with a new international in mind Lenin had to confront this problem theoretically. The result was that he rediscovered, clarified and systematised, Marx's generalisation from the experience of the French revolutions of 1848-52, and 1871, that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes." (96) Lenin, in his notebooks, summed up the question as follows:

"Changes after 1871? They are all such, or their general nature or their sum is such, that bureaucracy has everywhere soared (both in parliamentarism, within it, - in local self-government, in the joint-stock companies, in the trust and so on). That is the first thing. And second: the workers' 'socialist' parties have, by $\frac{2}{4}$, 'grown into' a similar bureaucracy. The split between the social-patriots and the internationalists, between the reformists and the revolutionaries, has, consequently, a still more profound significance: the reformists and the social-patriots 'perfect' the bureaucratic-state machine..... while the revolutionaries must 'smash' it, this 'bureaucratic-military state machine', smash it, replacing it by the 'Commune', a new 'semi-state'.

One could, probably, in brief and drastically, express the whole matter thus; replacement of the old ('ready-made') state machine and parliaments by Soviets of Workers' Deputies and their trustees. Therein lies the essence!!" (97)

A party aiming to smash the state cannot be organised in the same way as a party intending to take it over. Its centre of gravity must be, not in parliament, but in the factories, from which the new

state will issue. The rank-and-file of the party cannot simply be passive voters, or even propagandists, they themselves have to become leaders of their fellow workers, builders of their own new state machine. Moreover the thesis that the bourgeois state had to be smashed finally closed the option of a peaceful, or constitutional, revolution (98) even for the "freest" of democratic republics. Proletarian revolution would by definition involve a mass struggle for power and therefore every revolutionary party would have to be so organised as to be able to lead such a struggle. This meant the creation of parallel legal and illegal apparatuses, the organisation of fighting detachments, the creation of party groups within the armed forces and so on.

Finally, Lenin's theory of the state radically altered current conceptions of the relationship of the party to the workers' state during and after the conquest of power. If the revolution means the taking over of the existing state then the class content of the state as a workers' state is defined by the party that controls it. The party and the state must merge. In this sense, for social democracy, the party was the embryo of the new state. Lenin's theory of the replacement of the existing state by soviets (workers' councils) established a clear distinction between the workers' state and the revolutionary party. The class content of the new state is defined by the fact that is the creation of the working class as a whole, and involves the class as a whole in its operation. "Under socialism.... the mass of

the population will rise to taking an independent part, not only in voting and elections, but also in the everyday administration of the state." (99) The role of the party is not to be the workers' state, but to be the advanced minority which leads and guides the process of the new state's creation and consolidation. As Chris Harman has put it, "The Soviet state is the highest concrete embodiment of the self-activity of the whole working class; the party is that section of the class that is most conscious of the world historical implications of this self-activity." (100) It is because the party and the state are not identical that more than one party can contend for influence and government with the framework of the institutions of workers' state power.

Thus Lenin's theory of the state was an indispensable complement to his theory of the party. It was this that ensured that the restriction of the party to the advanced minority of the proletariat in no way implied the party substituting itself for the class as a whole, or attempting to seize power as a minority. It was the theory of the state that brought the Leninist theory of the party into harmony with the fundamental principle of Marxism that "the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class itself". Of course after the revolution in Russia (we shall discuss this question again in relation to the actual seizure of power in October) reality did not at all conform to this schema. At first slowly, and then with increasing speed party and

state began to merge, until before long they were to all intents and purposes identical. (101) But this was not a gradual translation of theory into practice. Rather it was one aspect of the degeneration of the revolution as a whole, produced by the combination of Russia's isolation, its backwardness, the devastation of its economy, and the decimation and demoralization of the Russian working class. Consequently whether one regards this aspect of the Leninist theory of the party as refuted by events depends on whether one regards the theory in toto as refuted by the emergence of the Stalinist dictatorship. (This question is discussed in Chapter 7 below).

As a result of these few years of intense theoretical labour the theoretical foundations of the Second International had been completely demolished and Lenin's new theory of the party was now fully formed (which is not to say that further additions or developments were excluded). It represented not an isolated breakthrough but the crowning practical conclusions of a comprehensive renovation of the Marxist world view. Nor did this come a moment too soon. For now it faced the crucial test of practice with the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in February 1917. The question we must now ask is how did it measure up to this test?

E. The Party in the Revolution.

The momentous events of the Russian Revolution confirmed Lenin's theory of the party in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it showed that an originally tiny organisation could, in the heat of the struggle, grow extremely rapidly and, even more importantly, gain the support of

the overwhelming majority of the working class. In January 1917 the Bolshevik party membership stood at 23,600. By the end of April it had grown to 79,204, and in August it was estimated to be about 200,000.

(102) Presumably by October it was even larger. Measured against the Russian population as a whole 200,000 remained an almost insignificant figure but the Bolshevik membership was concentrated in the small, but politically decisive, working class. Leonard Schapiro has recorded that: "A sample of replies from the organizations in twenty-five towns shows that the percentage of organized Bolsheviks among the factory workers in the towns at this date (August 1917) varied from 1 per cent to 12 per cent - the average for the twenty-five towns being 5.4 per cent."

(103) For a disciplined activist party this was a very high proportion. It meant that in the key industrial centres, especially Petrograd, the Bolsheviks had complete political leadership of the proletariat. Thus the first representative body to yield a Bolshevik majority was a conference of Petrograd factory delegates at the end of May, and when the Menshevik/SR dominated executive of the Soviets called a mass demonstration in Petrograd on June 18, about 400,000 marched and ninety per cent of the banners bore Bolshevik slogans. As for October Lenin's old opponent Martov wrote "Understand, please, what we have before us after all is a victorious uprising of the proletariat - almost the entire proletariat supports Lenin and expects its social liberation from the uprising." (104) In nine months the Bolsheviks rose from a seemingly irrelevant splinter group to the most powerful political force in Russia.

Secondly the Revolution demonstrated the indispensability of a centralised revolutionary party for the conquest of state power by the working class. The February Revolution which overthrew Tsarism and gave birth to the Soviets was, of course, not led by the Bolsheviks or by any political party. As E.H.Carr comments: "The February Revolution.....was the spontaneous outbreak of a multitude exasperated by the privations of the war and the manifest inequality in distribution of burdens.....The revolutionary parties played no direct part in the making of the revolution. They did not expect it and were at first somewhat nonplussed by it. The creation at the moment of the revolution of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies was a spontaneous act of groups of workers without central direction." (105) But precisely because of this, the victorious revolution made by workers and soldiers (peasants in uniform), did not place power in the hands of the working class. On the contrary it voluntarily surrendered power to the bourgeoisie in the form of the Provisional Government. The workers and soldiers certainly did not like this development, "as early as March 3, meetings of soldiers and workers began to demand that the Soviet depose forthwith the Provisional Government of the liberal bourgeoisie, and take power in its own hands." (106) But lacking organisation and political leadership they were unable to impose their will. Only with the growth of the Bolsheviks into a mass party, and with the emergence of a Bolshevik majority in the soviets, were these embryos of workers' state power able to fulfil their potentiality. Only through a party could a clear and

concise political programme - "Bread, Land, and Peace", "All Power to the Soviets" - be formulated, capable of concretising the feelings of the masses, and uniting the different strands of the revolution, the workers, the peasants, and the soldiers.

Also the party was crucial for the mounting and success of the actual insurrection. In the first place it was able through its capacity to assess the situation in Russia as a whole, its discipline and its moral authority with the workers, to prevent a premature rising in "the July Days", which would have isolated the impetuous workers and soldiers of Petrograd from the rest of the country. Had the Bolsheviks been less disciplined and less well established they might easily have been caught up by events and dragged into a hopeless uprising which would have met the fate of the Paris Commune or the German revolution of 1919. (107) Then when, after the defeat of the Kornilov plot, the mood of the country, not just of Petrograd, had shifted in their favour, and it became clear that the Bolsheviks would have a majority at the Second Congress of Soviets, the party was able to seize the critical moment when power could be gained swiftly and smoothly. Carr writes that; "For the organization of the almost bloodless victory of 25 October-7 November 1917 the Petrograd Soviet and its military-revolutionary committee were responsible." (108) But the Soviet had a Bolshevik majority and the military-revolutionary committee contained only one non-Bolshevik (a young left-S.R.). Moreover the initial decision to launch the insurrection, which they were implementing, was taken not by the Soviet but by the

central committee of the party in secret session. (109) Nor could it have been otherwise for timing and secrecy were of the essence. A public debate in the Soviet would have alerted the Provisional Government and given it the chance to take preemptive action. By their nature the soviets were politically heterogeneous. Only a disciplined and politically united body, the party, could discuss the tactical pros and cons of the insurrection and plan its execution. And immediately after the seizure of power only the Bolshevik party possessed the unity of will and purpose to form a government capable of dealing with the immensely difficult and chaotic situation facing the revolution.

The preeminent role of the Bolshevik party in the October insurrection combined with the relatively small number of participants in the fighting, and the brevity of the operation (at least in the capital) have led many commentators to depict the revolution as essentially a "coup d'etat" by a tiny but determined minority, acting quite independently of the class they claimed to represent. (110) This view seems strengthened by Lenin's repeated insistence that it was "necessary to fight against constitutional illusions and hopes placed in the Congress of Soviets, to discard the preconceived idea that we absolutely must "wait" for it." (111) Did not the actual course of the insurrection completely violate the distinction between party and state, which we discussed earlier, and did not this mean that in practice the Leninist conception of the party as a minority vanguard necessarily led to the seizure of power by that minority? In answering these questions it is

necessary to look not just at the period when the whole fate of the revolution depended on a few days fighting, but at the evolution of Lenin's policy throughout 1917. Lenin first set the Bolsheviks on course for the conquest of power with his "April Theses", but from the start he guarded himself "against any kind of Blanquist adventurism", (112) "In the thesis," wrote Lenin, "I very definitely reduced the question to one of a struggle for influence within the Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies". To leave no shadow of doubt on this score, I twice emphasised in the theses the need for patient and persistent 'explanatory' work 'adapted to the practical needs of the masses'". (113) "Patient explanation", remained the line of Lenin and the Bolsheviks through the spring and summer of 1917, and always the struggle for power was linked to winning over the soviets. Even when in July Lenin considered that the soviets had moved decisively into the anti-revolutionary camp and therefore wanted to withdraw the slogan "All power to the soviets", he was still careful to warn that "a decisive struggle will be possible only in the event of a new revolutionary upsurge in the very depths of the masses." (114) Nor did he then abandon the soviet idea. "Soviets may appear in this new revolution, and indeed are bound to, but not the present Soviets, not organs collaborating with the bourgeoisie, but organs of revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. It is true that even then we shall be in favour of building the whole state on the model of the Soviets." (115) Only when the Bolsheviks had achieved a majority in the soviets did Lenin place insurrection on the

order of the day.

The fact that it was primarily the party, acting through the Petrograd Soviet, that effected the rising did not contradict this perspective because this was essentially a destructive operation. The new structure of state power was already in existence and recognised as the supreme authority by both the workers and the army. The action on the night of October 24/25 merely eliminated the Provisional Government leaving the Soviets as the sole power. Furthermore it was on their soviet majority, not the right of armed conquest that the Bolsheviks based their claim to form the government. On November 5 Lenin wrote:

"There must be no other government in Russia but a Soviet government. Soviet power has been won in Russia and the government can be transferred out of the hands of one Soviet party into the hands of another party without any revolution, simply by a decision of the Soviets, simply by new elections of deputies to the Soviets. The Bolshevik Party was in the majority at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Only a government formed by that Party is, therefore, a Soviet government." (116)

Thus, in general, the practical test of the Russian Revolution brilliantly confirmed Lenin's theory of the party. It completely justified his conviction that a principled and disciplined vanguard would play a decisive role in the achievement of the socialist revolution. But here a note of caution must be sounded for the process by which the Bolshevik party actually came to play this role was not at all automatic.

Before Lenin's return to Russia the Bolshevik leadership slipped into a position of conditional support for the Provisional Government and also for the war: When Lenin first declared in favour of the overthrow of the Provisional Government and "All power to the Soviets", he found no support from within the party's leading circles. The latter, basing themselves on the long standing Bolshevik formula of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry", denounced Lenin's position as "unacceptable" in Pravda. Even the most meticulously prepared revolutionary party could not anticipate all the concrete features of the revolution, and therefore had to learn from reality and from the workers. Within the party leadership Lenin was the agent of this learning process. "Theory my friend, is grey, but green is the eternal tree of life", (117) wrote Lenin, condemning, "those 'old Bolsheviks' who more than once already have played so regrettable a role in the history of our Party by reiterating formulas senselessly learned by rote, instead of studying the specific features of the new and living reality". (118) That, starting from a position of seeming isolation, Lenin so rapidly won over the party to his position, was due partly to his great personal prestige, but also to the fact that he was articulating theoretically the views of the advanced workers who were flooding into the party. Lenin's tirades against the "old Bolsheviks," dovetailed with the pressure coming up from the factory districts. Repeatedly through 1917 Lenin would comment that the party was to the left of its central committee, and the masses were to the left of the party.

Even after Lenin had won the victory in principle at the April Conference sections of the party continued to vacilate, and this was especially marked in relation to the question of insurrection, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Nogin, Milnitin and Rykov formed a grouping within the leadership completely opposed to the staging of an insurrection. (119) Kamenev and Zinoviev stood, next to Lenin, as the party's most authoritative leaders, and yet at the decisive moment they wavered. It took a month of battering by Lenin, including threats to resign and campaign among the rank and file, (120) to overcome this opposition and shake the central committee out of its inertia. When, immediately after the seizure of power the Zinoviev-Kamenev group demanded that the Bolsheviks enter a coalition with the Mensheviks and S.R's Lenin once again threatened a split ("an honest and open split would now be incomparably better than internal sabotage, the thwarting of our own decisions, disorganisation and prostration", (121) and declared that if the opposition had a majority in the party they should form their coalition government and he would "go to the sailors".

That sections of the Bolshevik party, and at times the party as a whole, faltered in this way, does not, of course, invalidate the principles on which it had been built. Neither before nor since has any working class party acquitted itself better in the conditions of revolutionary upheaval. But it does mean that the organisation of the party on Leninist lines is not, in itself, any guarantee of success. It is not an organisational key which opens all the doors of history. The revolutionary

party is indispensable, but the most revolutionary of parties is subject to an element of conservative routinism simply because it has to be a permanent stable organisation. Equally the very creation of a party as a distinct body involves the risk that the party may separate itself from the class. The advantage of the Leninist party was that though it could not exclude these dangers it reduced them to a minimum. The greatness of Lenin in the Russian Revolution was that he - the party man par excellence, - in the last analysis transcended his party. He was able, so to speak, to reach over the head of the party to the mass of the Russian workers and soldiers, not so much to address them, as to respond to them, and so was able to force the party to respond as well. Expressing this idea as a theoretical generalisation one can say that for Lenin, although the party had often to maintain a high degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the working class, and although the claims of the party and its discipline were strong, in the final analysis the party remained subordinate to, and dependent upon, the class. The Leninist theory of the party in no way implies the fetishization of party loyalty that characterised social democracy and was later to assume the most grotesque forms and dimensions in the official Communist Parties of the Soviet Union and the world.

F. The Single World Party.

Lenin's theory of the party was, we have argued, in its essentials fully formed by the beginning of 1917. Now with the theory vindicated

by the October Revolution he possessed the political authority and influence to bring into being the logical conclusion of that theory, namely the Third, Communist International. The first congress of the Communist International opened in Moscow on the 2 March 1919, but in reality this was little more than the planting of a banner and a declaration of intent. Only 35 delegates attended and most of these were from the small nations that formerly were part of the Russian empire. Not until the second congress in July 1920, which 217 delegates attended, did the new International take definite shape as a mass fighting organisation. The leadership of the Communist International was naturally the work of many hands and Lenin frequently took a back seat. Zinoviev was its president and many of its most important manifestos) were written by Trotsky. Nonetheless it is quite legitimate to consider the work of the Communist International in a study of Lenin's theory of the party as he was its initiator and most ardent champion (sometimes even against his own supporters) and certainly either inspired or approved all its most important strategic decisions. (122) The discussion here will be extremely brief and inadequate. There are two reasons for this: firstly a half-way adequate treatment of all the questions of party strategy, tactics and organisation dealt with by the International in its first few years would require at least a book to itself; secondly we have been concerned primarily with the development of Lenin's theory of the party and the work of the International involved in the main the application of ideas we have already discussed. Consequently only the

main outlines will be indicated here, with the emphasis on those aspects of the Comintern which were in some way new departures.

The most immediately striking difference between the Second and Third Internationals, as organisations, lay in the fact that the former was a loose federation of independent national parties, whereas the latter was to be strictly centralised. As the Statutes adopted at the second congress put it: "The Communist International must, in fact and indeed, be a single communist party of the entire world. The parties working in the various countries are but its separate sections."

(123) Supreme authority was vested in the World congress to meet regularly once a year, but in between congresses, the International was to be run by its elected Executive Committee, which was given extensive powers. "The Executive Committee conducts the entire work of the Communist International from one congress to the next.... and issues instructions which are binding on all parties and organisations belonging to the Communist International. The Executive Committee of the Communist International shall expel groups or persons who offend against international discipline, and it also has the right to expel from the Communist International those parties which violate decisions of the world congress". (124)

This conception of the International as a centralised world party was major advance. In part it was designed to prevent any repetition of the nationalist fragmentation that destroyed the Second International in 1914. More positively its aim was to create a unified general staff of what was assumed to be the impending world revolution. Trotsky

has neatly summarised the thinking that lay behind this form of organisation. "Lenin's Internationalism is not a formula for harmonising national and international interests in empty verbiage. It is a guide to revolutionary action embracing all nations. Our planet, inhabited by so-called civilized humanity, is considered as one single battlefield where various nations and social classes contend." (125) One battlefield required one army and one high command. The Communist International was to be, as Lukács has put it, "The Bolshevik Party - Lenin's concept of the party - on a world scale." (126)

To realise this aim it was necessary to foster the rapid growth of genuine revolutionary parties in all the main capitalist countries. To do this the Comintern worked to draw together existing Communist groups and trends and unite them into stable parties, and to win over as large a proportion as possible of the rank-and-file of Europe's socialist parties (notably the USPD, the Italian Socialist Party, and the French Socialist Party). In this process the main enemy was "centrism", (127) in the sense that the centrist leaders had to be discredited to capture their supporters, and in the sense that they had to be prevented from entering the International and infecting it. It was precisely the pressure from the rank-and-file in favour of the International that drew reformists in its direction and created this latter danger. At the second congress Lenin warned that "The Communist International is, to a certain extent, becoming the vogue...[and] may be faced with the danger of dilution by the influx of wavering and irresolute groups that have not

as yet broken with their Second International ideology." (128) Just as in 1903 Lenin had insisted on Clause 1 of the Party Rules as a weapon against opportunism, he now drew up 21 conditions of admission to the Communist International. These were extremely stringent. Condition 2 demanded that "Any organisation that wishes to join the Communist International must consistently and systematically dismiss reformists and 'Centrists' from positions of any responsibility in the working class movement".

(129) Condition 4 insisted on "systematic propaganda and agitation.... in the armed forces." (130) Condition 14 required that "Communist parties in countries where Communists can conduct their work legally must carry out periodic membership purges (re-registrations) with the aim of systematically ridding the party of petty bourgeois elements that inevitably percolate into them." Summing up the 21 conditions Zinoviev declared "Just as it is not easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, so, I hope, it will not be easy for the adherents of the centre to slip through the 21 conditions." (132) Prominent leaders of the centre, Crispin and Dittmann from the USPD, and Serrati from the PSI, were present at the congress but their objections were forcefully rebutted by Lenin as "fundamentally Kautskyan... (and) imbued with a bourgeois spirit".

(133)

Parallel to the struggle against centrism there was a debate with various revolutionary but ultra-left or syndicalist tendencies. This was conducted in a much more friendly fashion. The errors of the "Left" were put down primarily to their "youth" and inexperience. Some

of the "Left", notably Pestaña from the Spanish syndicatists and Tanner from the British Shop Stewards Movement, were so disgusted by the opportunism of the social democratic parties that they rejected altogether the need for a proletarian party. In reply Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev patiently set out the ABC of the Leninist theory of the party, stressing the contrast between a social democratic and a communist party. (134)

It is noticeable that there were no tirades against economism and no mention of the "introduction of socialism into the working class from without". The adopted theses stated "The revolutionary syndicatists often speak of the great part that can be played by a determined revolutionary minority. A really determined minority of the working class, a minority that is communist, that wants to act, that has a programme, that is out to organise the struggle of the masses - that is precisely what the communist party is." (135)

More difficult, and more instructive, was the argument with those who accepted the need for a revolutionary party but who wanted it to pursue a simon-pure policy of no compromise, no manoeuvres, and no participation in bourgeois parliaments or reactionary trade unions - this was the line of the KAPD (recently split from the German CP), Bordiga in Italy, Gorter and Pannekoek in Holland, Gallacher and Sylvia Pankhurst in Britain. To Lenin all this was "old and familiar rubbish". (136) but his reply "Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder", specially written for the second congress, was one of his most thorough and lucid expositions of the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary

party. Recounting some of the lesser known episodes in the history of Bolshevism Lenin argued that it was necessary to remain in the trade unions and "carry on communist work within them at all costs", (137) and that "whilst you lack the strength to do away with bourgeois parliaments and every other type of reactionary institution you must work within them." (138) "The task devolving on Communists," he wrote, "is to convince the backward elements, to work among them, and not to fence themselves off from them with artificial and childishly 'Left' slogans." (139) Lenin was concerned that Communists should not "regard what is obsolete to us as something obsolete to a class, to the masses". (140)

The concept of the Party presented by Lenin in "Left-Wing Communism" is that, not of a band of blinkered dogmatists marching in only one direction - straight forward, but of a highly aware and politically astute body able to manoeuvre, at times to compromise and to retreat, so as never to lose contact with the class it aims to lead, and yet able "through all the intermediate stations and all compromises... to clearly perceive and constantly pursue the final aim". (141) Of course it would not always be easy to distinguish between compromises that were necessary and those that were treacherous, but "It would be absurd to formulate a recipe or general rule ('No compromises,') to suit all cases." (142) What was required, Lenin argued, was analysis of the concrete situation. "It is, in fact, one of the functions of a party organisation and of party leaders worthy of the name, to acquire, through the prolonged, persistent, variegated and comprehensive efforts of all thinking

representatives of a given class, the knowledge, experience and - in addition to knowledge and experience - the political flair necessary for the speedy and correct solution of complex political problems." (143)

During 1919 and 1920 the main emphasis within the Comintern was placed on the struggle against opportunism with ultra-leftism being regarded as a much less serious deviation, but in 1921 this changed. Throughout Europe the working class movement had been split and the opportunists and centrists had been expelled from the International - now the emphasis shifted to combatting 'leftism'. The basic reason for this was the change in the objective situation. The immediate post-war period had seen an international wave of direct revolutionary struggles and the bourgeoisie had been thrown into panic. The perspective of the International was one of immediate world revolution. But in country after country the working class had been beaten back and the bourgeoisie had regained confidence. In all cases the new Communist parties had conspicuously failed to win the support of the majority of the working class.

The immediate catalyst of the reorientation of Comintern strategy was the disastrous March action of the KPD in 1921. Over-reacting to the deliberately provocative police occupation of the Mansfield coppermines the German Communist leaders attempted, without preparation and without majority support, to call a general strike and transform it into an uprising. When the workers failed to respond party members were ordered to force them on to the streets and the unemployed, amongst whom the party had a strong base, were used to occupy factories against the

will of the workers. The result was heavy fighting between Communist and non-Communist workers, the complete rout of the former and the decimation of the party (membership fell by almost two-thirds). (144) Not content with this the KPD's 'left' leadership attempted to generalise their ludicrous adventurism into a system, going under the name "the theory of the offensive."

Clearly it was time to call a halt. Lenin declared that if the "theorists of the offensive," constituted a definite trend then "a relentless fight against this trend is essential, for otherwise there is no Communist International". (145) The third congress of the International in June 1921 adopted the slogan "To the masses" and stated that "The most important question before the Communist International today is to win predominating influence over the majority of the working class." (146) Particular attention was now to be paid to "partial struggles and partial demands." "The task of the Communist parties is to extend, to deepen, and to unify this struggle for concrete demands.....These partial demands, anchored in the needs of the broadest masses, must be put forward by the Communist parties in a way which not only leads the masses to struggle, but by its very nature organises them." (147) The logical consequence of this new line was the policy of the united front which was promulgated by the Executive of the International in December 1921 and ratified by the fourth congress in 1922. The idea of the united front was that public approaches should be made to the leaders of the social democratic parties proposing united action on a common programme of basic

economic and political demands arising from the immediate needs of the working class. If the social democrats agreed then the Communist parties would have the chance to prove in practice their superiority as defenders of the proletariat. If the social democrats rejected the proposals then the blame for any disunity would fall on them. But as well as being an indirect weapon against the social democrats the united front was also designed to reconcile the existence of separate Communist parties with need of the working class for unity in the day to day struggle against the industrialists and the state. (148)

In order that the parties of the International should be able more effectively to carry out this day to day agitation for immediate demands and lend it a revolutionary character, and to be better prepared for future revolutionary opportunities, it was thought necessary that they should "bolshevise," not only their ideology, strategy and tactics, but also the details of their organisation and methods of work. We discussed earlier the differences between the organisation of the pre-revolutionary Bolshevik party and that current in the European social democratic parties. In 1921 many of the Western C.P's were still functioning on the social democratic model. To correct this the third congress adopted theses on "The Organisation and Construction of Communist Parties," which were to be implemented by each national section. Apart from general remarks about democratic centralism the theses stressed the obligation of all members to work, the key role of factory and trade union cells, the importance of report backs on all activity, and the necessity

of an illegal communications network, and gave instructions on how to prepare for meetings and work in trade union branches. These theses were hastily drafted, and are not well written, but they are of considerable interest for, more than any other document they give a comprehensive picture of the detailed functioning of a Leninist party. For this reason they are reproduced here as an appendix.

Organising millions of workers in a single world party the Communist International, during its first few years, marks, in many respects, the highest point that has yet been achieved by the Marxist revolutionary movement. And yet it was also a failure; not just in that it did not produce immediate world revolution but also in that within a few years it ceased to be a revolutionary force at all and became the submissive instrument of Russian foreign policy. Russian domination was the rock on which the Communist International foundered. It was of course inevitable that the leaders of the World's first successful workers' revolution would be listened to with respect. Moreover this was, at first, a positive factor as the Russian leaders, especially Lenin and Trotsky, were clearly superior in theory and in practical experience to anyone in the new European parties. Lenin frankly acknowledged the fact of Russian leadership but assumed that it would be only temporary. "Leadership in the revolutionary proletarian International has passed for a time - for a short time, it goes without saying - to the Russians, just as at various periods of the 19th century it was in the hands of the British, then of the French, then of the Germans." (149)

As long as the Russian Revolution linked its fate to the success of the revolution internationally, (150) the pre-eminence of the Russian leaders aided the International but as soon as this orientation was abandoned the International was ruined.

Two factors explain the continued passive submission of the foreign Communist parties to Russian direction. The first was the series of defeats inflicted on the international working class movement. The Russians alone retained the prestige of success and on the basis of nothing but setbacks no other party developed the confidence or authority to challenge them. The second was a failure of the Bolsheviks to communicate, or put the other way round, a failure of the foreign parties to learn. The Communists of Germany, Italy, France etc. found themselves continually being criticised and corrected, first from the left and then from the right. In the process they seem to have absorbed, not the Leninist method as a whole, on which ~~the~~ corrections were based, but only the idea that Moscow was always right. Consequently they never developed the capacity for independent concrete analysis that Lenin considered it to be a function of the party to produce in its leaders. In his last speech to the Communist International in November 1922, Lenin seemed to be beginning to grapple with this problem, though he did not have the chance to develop his ideas.

"At the Third Congress in 1921, we adopted a resolution on the organisational structure of the Communist Parties and on the methods and content of their activities. The resolution is an excellent one,

but is almost entirely Russian, that is to say, everything in it is based on Russian conditions. This is its good point but it is also its failing. It is its failing because I am sure that no foreigner can read it....And.. if by way of exception some foreigner does understand it, he cannot carry it out.... we have not learnt how to present our Russian experience to foreigners....the most important thing for all of us, Russian and foreign comrades alike, is to sit down and study..... We are studying in the general sense. They, however, must study in the special sense, in order that they may really understand the organisational structure, method and content of revolutionary work." (151)

The failure of the International, its transformation into the tool of the emergent Russian state bureaucracy, does not discredit the concept of the centralised world party for that concept was the reflection of the international nature of the class struggle. But it does show that the creation of an international intensifies, not only the advantages, but also the dangers inherent in the creation of a party at all. A healthy International would have been a powerful counterweight to the processes of degeneration at work in Russia. As it was the International proved a reliable prop and support for the Stalinist bureaucracy. What remained from the early years of the Communist International was, in Trotsky's words, "an invaluable programmatic heritage". (152) To this one can add that its documents, its theses, its debates, and in some respects its practice, give us the most complete picture of the application of the fully developed Leninist theory of the party.

G. The Essence of Lenin's Theory.

From the foregoing account it is clear that Lenin's theory of the party was a highly complex, many faceted doctrine. We have argued that to understand this theory fully it is necessary to trace its evolution relating each step in its development to the practical and theoretical problems which engendered it. This we have attempted to do and on this basis it is possible to venture a brief summary of the essence of the theory.

There are two basic themes in Lenin's theory of the party. First, the absolutely independent organisation of the advanced workers, rigidly upholding the overall interests of the working class and all the exploited and the ultimate aim of international socialist revolution. Second, the closest possible relationship with the mass of workers maintained by providing practical leadership in every struggle involving the workers or affecting their interests. The former means fixed adherence to principle, a willingness to accept, for a period, the position of a tiny, and apparently isolated minority, and the waging of an unrelenting struggle within the working class against all manifestations of opportunism. The latter means extreme tactical flexibility and the ability to exploit every avenue to maintain contact with the masses.

These two elements are not separate but dialectically interrelated and mutually dependent. Without firm principles and disciplined organisation the party will either be unable to execute the necessary abrupt tactical turns or will be derailed by them. Without deep involvement in the struggles of the working class the party will be

unable to forge and maintain its discipline and will become subject to the pressure of alien classes. Unless the day to day struggle of the working class is linked to the ultimate aim of the overthrow of capitalism, it will fail of its purpose. Unless the party can relate the ultimate aim to immediate struggles it will degenerate into a useless sect. The more developed the spontaneous activity of the workers, the more it demands conscious revolutionary organisation on pain of catastrophic defeat. But revolutionary organisation cannot be maintained and renewed unless it receives the infusion of fresh blood from the spontaneous revolt of the masses.

All the organisational forms characteristic of Bolshevism - the close watch on the party's boundaries, the commitment to activity of all members, the strict discipline, the full inner-party democracy, the primary role of the workplace cell, the combination of legal and illegal work - derive from the need to combine these two elements. The Leninist party is the concrete expression of the Marxist synthesis of determinism and voluntarism in revolutionary practice.

Throughout Lenin's revolutionary career the two aspects outlined here were continually present, but at different times one aspect preponderated over the other in his concerns. In 1903, and 1914, and the first two congresses of the Communist International, it was the independence of the party that was dominant. In 1905, and the third and fourth congresses of the International it was the relationship with the masses. In October 1917 the two were inextricably fused precisely because the

revolution marked the fusion in the working class of its immediate demands and its historical interests. Part of Lenin's unique genius was his ability to judge, which aspect to stress, which way to "bend the stick", at a particular time.

"It is not enough", he wrote, "to be a revolutionary and an advocate of socialism in general. It is necessary to know at every moment how to find the particular link in the chain which must be grasped with all one's strength in order to keep the whole chain in place and prepare to move on resolutely to the next link". (153)

Of all Marxists Lenin unquestionably made the largest and most significant contribution to the development of the theory of the party. His ideas transformed the organisation, strategy and tactics of first the Russian and then the world, working class movement. They are the criteria by which, and to a large extent the framework within which, all other contributions to the theory of the party, including that of Marx, must be assessed.

CHAPTER 4

The Contribution of Rosa Luxemburg.

A. Rosa Luxemburg Misrepresented.

In 1904 Rosa Luxemburg wrote an article entitled "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" which took issue with the views of Lenin as expressed in "What Is To Be Done?" and "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back". In 1918 she wrote (though did not publish) "The Russian Revolution" which contained a number of criticisms of the policies of the victorious Bolsheviks. These two works and the continuity of certain themes from one to the other (the importance of democracy, mass initiative of the working class etc.) have furnished the basis for the view that Rosa Luxemburg was in some way fundamentally separate from the Leninist mainstream of revolutionary Marxism in the twentieth century - that she represented a democratic, almost liberal version of Marxism as opposed to the dictatorial intransigence of Lenin. Always the key question on which they were seen to differ was the party.

Bertram D.Wolfe, who published the 1904 article under the misleading title "Leninism or Marxism" (1) is one of the main proponents of this view. Of Rosa and Lenin he writes:

"Though they were both called "revolutionary" socialists, their diverse temperaments and differing attitudes on the nature of socialist leadership, on party organization, and on the initiative and self-activity of the working class, kept them poles apart". (2)

This view has some strange and heterogeneous supporters - namely both Stalinists for whom any criticism of Lenin was tantamount to heresy, and for whom Luxemburg's emphasis on working class spontan-

eity represented not only a deviation but a threat,(3) and various anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, and "Luxemburgists" who have sought to form groups or movements independent of Trotskyism or Stalinism. (4) Though of course this opposition to Lenin was seen as being to her credit by the anti-communist academics and anarchists whereas it damned her in the eyes of the Stalinists. The significance of this for our investigation is that the placing of Luxemburg decisively outside the Leninist tradition has led most Marxists, including Trotskyists who have otherwise defended Rosa, to ignore the important positive aspects of her contribution to the Marxist theory of the party and to concentrate only on its weaknesses. A balanced and accurate assessment of Rosa Luxemburg's position on the party can only be made on the basis of an understanding that fundamentally she stood on the same terrain as Lenin. Fortunately this is not difficult to establish.

The common feature of the arguments of Betram D.Wolfe, Stalin, and latter-day Luxemburgists such as Paul Mattick (5) is that Rosa's differences with Lenin's "ultra-centralism" were what was fundamental and that their agreement as "revolutionary socialists" was merely superficial. But this flies in complete contradiction to the closing words of "The Russian Revolution" one of the main documents advanced to support this argument.

"The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of the historical possibilities.....

"What is in order is to distinguish the essential from the

non-essential, the kernel from the accidental excrescences in the policies of the Bolsheviks. In the present period when we face decisive and final struggles in all the world, the most important problem of socialism was and is the burning question of our time. It is not a matter of this or that secondary question of tactics, but of the capacity for action of the proletariat, the strength to act, the will to power of socialism as such. In this, Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the first, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world; they are still the only ones up to now who can cry with Hatten . . . "I have dared!"

"This is the essential and enduring in Bolshevik policy. In this sense theirs is the immortal historical service of having marched at the head of the international proletariat with the conquest of political power and the practical placing of the problem of the realization of Socialism, and of having advanced mightily the settlement of the score between capital and labor in the entire world. In Russia the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in this sense, the future everywhere belongs to 'Bolshevism'" (6)

What could be more explicit? Nor were the declarations of solidarity all on one side. After August 4th 1914 Lenin repeatedly cites Luxemburg and Liebknecht as his international comrades and especially in 1917 as symbols of the approaching German revolution. In his "Notes of a Publicist", occasioned by Paul Levi's posthumous publication of "The Russian Revolution" Lenin lists what he considers to have been her mistakes "on the question of the independence of Poland.....

in 1903 in her appraisal of Menshevism; on the theory of the accumulation of capital.....(on) unity between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks....in what she wrote in prison in 1918," (7) and not, one sees on the general question of the party, although of course the appraisal of Menshevism is an aspect of this. Indeed within a year of writing the document which shows her to be "poles apart" from Lenin Rosa Luxemburg was engaged in the most concrete form of political and organizational solidarity with Lenin by participating in the foundation of the German Communist Party. Bertram D. Wolfe can only avoid these blatant contradictions by taking an unbearably patronising attitude to Rosa's ideas and intellect (Stalin avoided them by simple historical falsification and invention (8): she was a revolutionary rather than a reformist because of an emotional "longing 'to conquer in storm and passion'" (9) and "much of what [she] wrote (i.e. everything which was revolutionary) is now hopelessly dated, for much of it stems from dogmas which would not bear examination and have not resisted the passage of time".(10)

In fact the view that Rosa Luxemburg represented an essentially different school of socialism from Lenin can only be maintained in complete ignorance, or defiance of her life's work. Luxemburg was always a member of a political party and German Social Democracy which she served for so long was in many respects highly centralised, indeed bureaucratised. The Polish party, the SDKPiL, organised by her closest comrade Leo Jogiches in conditions similar to those faced by the Bolsheviks, of which she always remained

theoretical leader, was extremely hard, centralised and conspiratorial.

After 1914 and the debacle of the Second International which she described as a "stinking corpse" Rosa, like Lenin, advocated the building of a centralised, as against a federal, international. At the end of the Junius brochure she writes in her appended "Theses on the Tasks of International Social Democracy":

"3. The centre of gravity of the organisation of the proletariat as a class is the International. The International decides in time of peace the tactics to be adopted by national sections on the questions of militarism, colonial policy, commercial policy, the celebration of May Day, and finally, the collective tactic to be followed in the event of war.

4. The obligation to carry out the decisions of the International takes precedence over all else. National sections which do not conform with this place themselves outside the International". (11)

Bertram D. Wolfe's contention that Rosa was opposed to the formation of the Third International in 1918 (12) is based on the misleading elevation of a minor tactical disagreement into a matter of principle.

Rosa Luxemburg was a thinker of great stature and independence. As such she inevitably differed with Lenin on many points of theory and many tactical questions but what she shared with Lenin, total commitment to revolutionary Marxism and the international class struggle of the proletariat, was much more fundamental. They debated fiercely, yes, but within a shared framework, and not at all in the way that both

of them fought Bernstein or the later Kautsky. Only on the basis of an understanding of this shared framework, their common starting point, can the nuances and finer points of their disagreements on the nature and role of the party be properly grasped and estimated.

B. Polemics with Lenin - the Creativity of the Masses.

To achieve this latter task we must begin with an account of two of Rosa's most important and controversial works, "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" and "The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions."

In "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" she begins, as a Marxist should by situating the problem of party organisation firmly in the context of the peculiar tasks and problems facing the proletariat movement as a whole in Russia. Because Russia has not yet achieved a bourgeois revolution and still suffers the domination of an absolute monarchy, the proletariat has not had the benefit of the political education and organisation that a period of bourgeois democracy inevitably brings. In Russia, therefore, she writes:

"The Social Democracy must make up by its own efforts an entire historic period. It must lead the Russian proletarians from their present "atomized" condition, which prolongs the autocratic regime, to a class organization that would help them to become aware of their historic objectives and prepare them to struggle to achieve those objectives....Like God Almighty they must have this organization arise out of the void, so to speak." (13)

In this context of a struggle against the disconnected clubs and local groups characteristic of the old organizational type she finds it "understandable why the slogan of the persons who want to see an inclusive national organisation should be "Centralism" (14). But she warns "centralism' does not completely cover the question of organisation for the Russian Social Democracy". (15) For although "it is undeniable that a strong tendency toward centralization is inherent in the Social Democratic movement [springing from the economic make-up of capitalism]" (16) it can be carried too far to a point where it hinders the unfettered development and initiative of the working class itself.

"The Social Democratic movement is the first in the history of class societies which reckons, in all its phases and through its entire course, on the organization and the direct, independent action of the masses.

Because of this, the Social Democracy creates an organizational type that is entirely different from those common to earlier revolutionary movements, such as those of the Jacobins and the adherents of Blanqui." (17)

Because the proletariat learns and develops both its class consciousness and its organisation in the course of the struggle itself "there do not exist detailed sets of tactics which a Central Committee can teach the party membership in the same way as troops are instructed in their training camps". (18)

"For this reason Social Democratic centralism cannot be based on the mechanical subordination and blind obedience of the party

membership to the leading party centre. For this reason the Social Democratic movement cannot allow the erection of an air-tight partition between the class-conscious nucleus of the proletariat already in the party and its immediate popular environment, the non-party sections of the proletariat."(19)

Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg argues, has forgotten or does not appreciate this basic distinction between the organisation of Social Democracy and that of Jacobinism or Blanquism. In opposition to Lenin's dictum that the revolutionary Social Democratic is nothing else than a "Jacobin indissolubly joined to the organisation of the proletariat, which has become conscious of its class interests" she writes, "The fact is that the Social Democracy is not joined to the organization of the proletariat. It is itself the proletariat." (20) Therefore at all costs it must not be straitjacketed by an ultra-centralised, and disciplined form of organisation but allowed free reign to develop. The great forward steps of the movement in terms of tactics, and methods of struggle are not invented by leaders, or by a central committee but are the "spontaneous product of the movement in ferment." (21)

"The unconscious comes before the conscious. The logic of the historic process comes before the subjective logic of the human beings who participate in the historic process. The tendency is for the directing organs of the socialist party to play a conservative role."(22)

For Rosa, Lenin's failure to appreciate this conservative tendency is particularly dangerous in Russian conditions where the proletarian movement is young and as yet not fully matured in its

political education.

"To attempt to bind the initiative of the party at this moment, to surround it with a network of barbed wire, is to render it incapable of accomplishing the tremendous tasks of the hour...." (23)

"Nothing will more surely enslave a young labour movement to an intellectual elite hungry for power than this bureaucratic straitjacket, which will immobilise the movement and turn it into an automaton manipulated by a Central Committee." (24)

In addition to these general warnings on the dangers of Lenin's "ultra centralism" Rosa Luxemburg also takes up the important question of the relationship of party organisation to opportunism. Lenin had argued that the fight against opportunism had to be carried into the organisational sphere and that the party rules should constitute a weapon against opportunism. Further he argued that the stratum of intellectuals within social democracy, who by their life situation remain individualists, represented an important medium through which opportunism made its way into the workers movement, and that the rallying cry everywhere of such intellectuals was always "autonomy", "freedom of criticism" etc. Rosa however rejects this argument at all points. First she scorns Lenin's "romantic" glorification of the "supposed genius of proletarians in the matter of socialist organisation" (25). Secondly she contends that Lenin's attitude to intellectuals, while to some extent justified for Germany where decentralising tendencies have been fostered by bourgeois parliamentanism, does not apply to Russia.

"The milieu where intellectuals are reunited for socialism in Russia is much more declassed and by far less bourgeois than in Western Europe.... the intellectual within the Russian social Democratic movement can only with difficulty be attracted to any act of disorganisation. It is contrary to the general outlook of the Russian intellectual's milieu. There is no bourgeois parliament in Russia to favour this tendency. (26)

Finally and fundamentally she dismisses "the idea that the road to opportunism can be barred by means of clauses in a party constitution". (27) Opportunism is an historic product and an inevitable phase of the movement. "It is naive to hope to stop this current by means of a formula written down in a constitution." (28)

In summing up her critique of Lenin's organisational theses Rosa returns to her starting point; that of situating the dispute in the overall development of the class struggle in Russia.

"In Lenin's overanxious desire to establish the guardianship of an omniscient and omnipotent Central Committee in order to protect so promising and vigorous a labour movement from any mis-step, we recognize symptoms of the same subjectivism that has already played more than one trick on socialist thinking in Russia.

It is amusing to note the strange somersaults that the respectable human "ego" has had to perform in recent Russian history. Knocked to the ground, almost reduced to dust, by Russian absolutism, the "ego" takes revenge by turning to revolutionary activity. In the

shape of a committee of conspirators in the name of a non-existent Will of the People, it seats itself on a kind of throne and proclaims it is all-powerful. But the 'object' proves to be the stronger. The knout is triumphant, for Czarist might seems to be the "legitimate" expression of history.

In time we see appear on the scene an even more "legitimate" child of history - the Russian labour movement. For the first time, bases for the formation of a real "people's will" are laid in Russian soil.

But here is the "ego" of the Russian revolutionary again! Pirouetting on its head, it once more proclaims itself to be the all powerful director of history - this time with the title of His Excellency the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Russia.

The nimble acrobat fails to perceive that the only "subject" which merits today the role of director is the collective "ego" of the working class. The working class demands the right to make the mistakes and learn in the dialectic of history.

Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee".

Thus for Rosa Luxemburg Lenin's whole plan constitutes a "voluntarist" or "subjectivist" (in philosophical terms "idealist") deviation from an historical materialist approach produced by the combination of an immature proletarian movement and the enormous tasks facing it. Aside from general remarks about political leadership,

Rosa has little or nothing positive to say about how the party should be organised, or what precisely its role and tasks are. Her main concern is to issue a warning against overestimating the power of an organisation and especially its leadership to influence events at the expense of undervaluing the spontaneous and independent actions of the workers. If the Marxist theory of the party was a self-contained discipline concerned primarily with the technical problems of organisational structure then Rosa Luxemburg's contribution to the development of that theory would be negligible. But because the theory of the party is fundamentally rooted in the problem of the relationship between the party and the working class and is therefore vitally concerned with the nature and capacities of that class, Rosa Luxemburg's emphasis on the importance of working class self-activity is a contribution which cannot be ignored.

It is this last factor which lends significance to Rosa's work "The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions," which despite its title also does not have a great deal positive to say about the party. This pamphlet was written in 1906 to explain to the German working class the significance of the events of the previous year in Russia. It shows how many of the ideas posed theoretically and generally in "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" became concrete reality in the enormous revolutionary upheaval that was Russia in 1905, and is a magnificently eloquent celebration of the spontaneous daring, initiative and creativity of workers in struggle.

Rosa begins this study by noting that from the English Chartists

onwards the dominant conception of the general strike has been an administrative one. It has been seen as a single mass action a "great Kladderadatsch", planned and prepared in advance and summoned by a call from above. This anarchist theory of the general strike has always exhausted itself in a simple contradiction.

"Either the proletariat as a whole are not yet in possession of the powerful organisation and financial resources required, in which case they can't carry through the general strike; or they are sufficiently well organised in which case they do not need the general strike." (29)

But Rosa argues those apposed to the mass strike as well as those in favour of it have both shared this anarchistic subjective conception.

"On the same ground of abstract, unhistorical methods of observation stand those today who would, in the manner of a board of directors put the mass strike in Germany on the calendar on the appointed day, and those who, like the participants in the trade union congress at Cologne, would by prohibition of "propaganda" eliminate the problem of the mass strike from the face of the earth." (30)

The Russian events, however, have rendered this kind of thinking obsolete. The Russian workers have found the way out of the dilemma which immobilised the leaders and theoreticians of German socialism. The Russian Revolution teaches "above all that the mass strike is not artificially 'made', not 'decided' at random, not 'propagated', but that it is a historical phenomenon which, at a given moment results from social conditions with historical inevitability." (31)

The 1905 revolution, Rosa shows, was merely the culmination of five years of turmoil in which Russia was continually aflame with mass strikes. These strikes were the outward manifestation of the inner maturation of the revolution itself. Often they began without any preparation, or even strike funds, and, contrary to all previous schemas, rather than following upon trade union organisation, preceeded it and gave it a powerful impetus. Often, also the immediate cause was a minor grievance; the mass strike of January 1905 in St.Petersburg which led to the march on the Winter Palace began over the sacking of two men at the Putilov works. What united all these actions was there spontaneity. They had no predetermined plan and were not called for by any party or body of leaders and were only possible because the revolution itself had unleashed hitherto undreamt of initiative, courage and self-sacrifice in the masses. An attempt, Luxemburg notes, at the end of the movement by the Central Committee of the RSDLP to call a mass strike over the opening of the Duma, fell absolutely flat.

Also central to Rosa's critique of established preconceptions of the class struggle is her attack on the mechanical separation of the economic and political struggles. The Russian workers had not conformed to these categories either.

"But the movement as a whole does not proceed from the economic to the political struggle, nor even the reverse. Every great political mass action, after it has attained its political highest point, breaks up into a mass of economic strikes. And that applies not only to each of the great mass strikes, but also to the revolution as a whole.

With the spreading, clarifying and involution of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but extends, organises, and becomes involved in equal measure. Between the two there is the most complete reciprocal action.....

If the sophisticated theory proposes to make a clever logical dissection of the mass strike for the purpose of getting at the "purely political mass strike," it will by this dissection, as with any other, not perceive the phenomenon in its living essence, but will kill it altogether." (32)

Rosa, of course does not conclude from these observations that the political party is irrelevant or unimportant. On the contrary she argues strongly against theories of trade union "independence" from social democracy and stresses the need for their united action but she does deny the party any great administrative or organisational roles.

"It becomes obvious that the task of social democracy does not consist in technical preparation and direction of mass strikes, but first and foremost, in the political leadership of the whole movement." (33)

As we can see "The Mass Strike" pamphlet is of a piece with "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy". Just as Lenin's organisational plan was "subjectivist" so are those who seek to plan mass strikes. Her main theme in both works is to warn against overestimating the role and capacities of the party and especially the

the party leadership. She asserts the primacy of historical forces over consciousness. This is stated explicitly in "The Mass Strike."

"Further there are quite definite limits set to initiative and conscious direction. During the revolution it is extremely difficult for any directing organ of the proletarian movement to foresee and calculate which occasions and factors can lead to explosions and which cannot. Here also initiative and direction do not consist in issuing commands according to one's inclinations, but in the most adroit adaptability to the given situation, and the closest possible contact with the masses. In short.....revolutions do not allow anyone to play the schoolmaster with them". (34)

C. The Strengths of her Position.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter the fact that Rosa Luxemburg disagreed with Lenin has been enough to damn her in the eyes of many subsequent Marxists. In evaluating her ideas on the party they have simply cited the authority of "What Is To Be Done?" and come down entirely on the side of Lenin, ignoring Lenin's later development and oversimplifying Rosa's views in the process. Luxemburgism is a deviation which overestimates spontaneity and underestimates organisation and leadership and that's all there is to it. This has been a common response, and a totally inadequate one. For, in the opinion of this writer, Rosa Luxemburg was, on a number of points, closer to a correct Marxist analysis than was the Lenin of 1902-4. (35)

She was right that the most important advances in the field of tactics and methods of struggle of the proletariat are not invented by any central committee or leadership but are discovered and created by the workers themselves in the heat of battle. This has been demonstrated again and again, both on the grand scale with the spontaneous creation of a new type of state (Paris Commune; Russian soviets) and in a smaller way with factory occupations, or flying pickets, (British miners and building workers in 1972).

She was right that the class struggle in full flow does not allow of the mechanical separation of the economic and the political and her formulations in "Mass Strike" are far more dialectical than some of the abstract schemas in "What Is To Be Done?". Again recent struggles of the British working class illustrate this admirably. The existence of the Tory Industrial Relations Act means that purely trade union, economic disputes such as the Dockers struggles against containerisation in 1972 or the strike of union recognition by engineers at the Con-Mech factory in 1973 inevitably and rapidly transform themselves into mass battles against the state, bourgeois law and the government as a whole.

She was right to warn about the inherent conservative tendencies at the top of socialist parties and even in parties as a whole produced by isolation from the dynamic forces at work unseen in the depths of the working class. Lenin himself, as we have seen, experienced this within the Bolshevik party both in 1905 and 1917.

A contemporary Marxist, Duncan Hallas, explains well how this can occur even on the factory floor itself.

"It sometimes happens that even the best militants find themselves overtaken by events and occupying a position for a shorter or longer time, to the right of previously unmilitant workers. The experience is familiar to active rank-and-file trade unionists. Slogans and demands that were yesterday acceptable only to the more conscious people can quite suddenly be too limited for the majority when a struggle develops beyond the expected point. Inevitably the greater experience and knowledge of the activists induces a certain caution, normally appropriate, but which in a rapidly changing situation, can sometimes be a real barrier to advance." (36)

Rosa was right also to oppose to Lenin's conception of the introduction of socialism to the working class from without" (which we have already criticised) the enormous role and achievements of spontaneity. The party is neither the fount of all wisdom nor the omnipotent managing director of the class struggle and there is an element of truth in the charge that Lenin was bending the stick too far in the direction of voluntarism (Though this was also in a sense his great achievement. see Ch.2 above) If Rosa Luxemburg's deep appreciation of and commitment to the spontaneous creativity of the working class were common qualities in the history of the socialist movement it might be permissible to pass over there points without emphasis. However decades of bureaucratic Stalinist and Social Democratic hegemony over the

labour movement have ensured that the contribution of Rosa Luxemburg remains of lasting importance as a corrective to those who would downgrade proletarian self-activity as the heart of socialism.

D. The Weaknesses.

This strong defence of Luxemburg is not, however, to be taken for an uncritical evaluation of her position on the party taken as a whole. Even less is it intended to suggest that she was right against Lenin about what should be done in Russia. Rosa confronts neither the problem of "economism" and the tendency to abandon the political struggle to the liberal bourgeoisie, nor the practical necessities of organisation under the Tsarist autocracy, nor the specifics of the dispute, and the opposing trends in the Russian party. Thus to counterpose Luxemburg to Lenin in 1903 would be, objectively, to justify Menshevism - a tendency which Rosa opposed on every other issue and from which she was really "poles apart".

But being wrong in her perspectives for Russia is by no means the main charge against Rosa's conception of the party. Although she polemicised with Lenin, and although she wrote about the Russian mass strikes it is clear from those same texts that her eye was really on Germany and on the conservative leaderships of the SPD and the trade unions. And if one compared Rosa's views on Russia with Lenin's views on Germany (Lenin completely failed to see the opportunism of the Kautskyite leadership of the SPD until 1914) there would not be great deal to choose for inaccuracy. In fact the most conclusive evidence

against the validity of Rosa's position is that it failed the test of the German revolution itself.

In the long awaited German revolution of 1918-1919 Rosa Luxemburg's Spartacus League proved itself to be the only consistently revolutionary force in Germany, but it was too weak, in numbers, experience and in organisational cohesiveness, to decisively influence events. Rather it was continually blown about in the revolutionary gale unable to formulate a coherent strategy other than calling repeatedly for mass action and all power to the workers' and soldiers' councils. Radek, present as an emissary from Russia, reported that at the start of the revolution the Spartacists had no more than fifty organised people in Berlin (37) and even at the Conference at which the Spartacus League founded the Communist Party of Germany felt moved to comment "I still did not feel that I was in the presence of a party". (38) Even Rosa Luxemburg's most ardent and uncritical supporter Paul Frolich confirms this picture of weakness (though he does not recognise its effect on strategy). "When the revolution came the Spartakusbund was only a federation of local groups existing in almost all the larger towns, and not yet a political party". (39) In addition they suffered all the "infantile disorders" of a youthful organisation. Rosa and the Executive were overruled by a substantial majority at the KPD founding conference on the question of participation in the Constituent Assembly. (The Bolsheviks had disposed of this kind of ultra-leftism a decade before the test of 1917). Unable to make a substantial impact within

the Workers Councils the Spartacus League was forced into an unstable alliance with the USPD (Independent Social Democrats) and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards and then had to attempt to disentangle itself when the latter elements vacillated. In the end despite the words of its own programme that "Spartakus will never undertake to govern other than through the clear unmistakable wish of the great majority of the proletarian masses," it was overtaken by events and led into a hopelessly premature rising which resulted in the crushing of the revolution and murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Rosa undoubtedly was aware of the mistakes that were being made but she was powerless to prevent them.

Nor was this weakness entirely accidental or due solely to unavoidable historical factors. J.P.Nettle comments:

"The main historical burden of the German Communists to this day has been their failure to build up an organization during and particularly at the end of the First World War. But it was certainly not due to any oversight. The Spartakus leaders deliberately decided to forgo any sustained attempt to create an organization in 1918. They held that the revolutionary possibilities made this an unnecessary dispersal of effort." (40)

E. The Roots of her Errors.

Thus we are forced by the negative verdict of history to critically reexamine the position of Rosa Luxemburg on spontaneity,

organization and the party. It is not difficult with the benefit of hindsight to see the one-sidedness of many of Rosa's conceptions, especially those regarding the spontaneity of mass strikes. While history has shown us many examples of such spontaneity it has also shown us many examples of its inadequacy. The British General Strike of 1926 illustrates this well. All the driving force, energy and initiative for the strike came from below but the strike was planned and was called by the "leadership", the General Council of the TUC, and most importantly was effectively demobilised by that leadership at the crucial moment.

In the months prior to the strike the British ruling class prepared very carefully, both politically and militarily, for the confrontation. Clearly a Marxist criticism in that situation would be directed not against the idea that the strike could be planned, but against the failure of the General Council to plan and prepare when it knew that its enemy was doing so. But such a criticism, while valid, does not strike at the root of Rosa's errors. As Paul Frölich is at pains to out, (41) she never held a pure theory of spontaneity and clearly she overstated her case (as Lenin often did) for polemical reasons. Faced with the situation she was certainly capable of making the necessary adjustment of her ideas over such a tactical question. Indeed when the German working class went into battle for equal suffrage in 1910 Rosa "demanded that the Party Executive work out a great plan of action". (42)

Lucio Magri, in "Problems of the Marxist Theory of the Revolutionary Party" makes a more serious charge. He goes beyond simply

asserting Luxemburg's spontaneism to explaining it by attempting to locate it in her economic theory of capitalist crisis.

"How, then, could her spontaneist vision be combined with this unlikely foundation? [her critique of opportunism] It is my view that the basis of this paradox is to be found in the decisive role attributed, and exaggerated, by Rosa Luxemburg to the final crisis of capitalism in the revolutionary process, which she conceived as the economic impossibility of the system's survival and as a cataclysmic collapse of its economic and social equilibrium. The very crisis that capitalism sets in motion, the dramatic tensions of the forces thereby released, leads the working class through a rapid and to a large extent spontaneous awakening to attack the system in its entirety." (43)

The main appeal of Magri's argument here is its neatness but unfortunately it is hard to find evidence for it (Magri does not try) in Rosa Luxemburg's writings. To find quotations that contradict it, however, is not so difficult. For example:

"It is true that even the prevailing social-democratic tactic does not consist in waiting for the development of capitalist contradictions to reach their utmost intensity, and in then waiting still further for sudden change to occur. On the contrary, we base our line simply on the tendency of this development, once it has been ascertained, and we then push the consequences of this development to their limits in our political struggle; that is the very essence of any revolutionary tactic." (44)

And again from her major economic work "The Accumulation

of Capital."

"Here, as at other times in history, theory does its full service by showing us the tendency of development and the logical end towards which it is steering. However, the present period of historical development can no more reach this end than any earlier period could ever unfold to its final consequences. The more social consciousness, this time embodied in the socialist proletariat, intervenes as an active factor in the blind play of forces, the less is the need for this end to be reached. And in the present case too, a correct understanding of Marxist theory offers social consciousness the most fruitful impulses and a most powerful incentive." (45)

Far from fatalistically awaiting the collapse of capitalism Rosa expected the revolution to erupt before the final crisis was reached. In any case she did not view this crisis with equanimity or see socialism as its inevitable outcome. The alternative for her was always socialism or barbarism and she quoted Engels to this effect in "The Junius brochure". (46) In fact Magri's criticism would be better laid at the door, not of Rosa Luxemburg, but of Karl Kautsky her arch-opponent.

Thus we must return to Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of the process by which the proletariat develops its revolutionary potential. But the problem remains how can we identify the theoretical source of Rosa's faulty practice without simply reasserting that she overestimated spontaneity, which merely begs the question, and without resorting to

the idealist conception of "What Is To Be Done?" that socialist consciousness has to be introduced into the working class from the outside. The solution lies in the dialectical nature of the transformation of the class-in-itself into the class-for-itself; that is in the fact that this is a process which develops through contradiction, through a struggle of opposites. This Rosa Luxemburg, who had such a superb grasp of the contradictions of capitalism failed to fully comprehend. She was not wrong in her estimation of the heights to which the revolutionary proletariat could rise but she did overestimate the evenness with which this process could occur. Clearly Rosa recognised that some workers are more capable and courageous than others, and that some are more developed in their socialist consciousness than others. What she did not realise is that between the revolutionary worker who wishes to overthrow capitalism and the less advanced worker who wishes to improve his conditions within capitalism there exists a certain contradiction (albeit not an insoluble one). And that on the basis of this contradiction there arise parties claiming to be parties of the working class but which actually operate as bourgeois agents within the labour movement. Therefore she failed to see the necessity of organising independently the vanguard workers, those for whom the historical interests of the class as a whole predominate over immediate or sectional interests, so as to increase their specific gravity within the class and to equip them for struggle against hostile tendencies.

That Rosa Luxemburg should have made this mistake was

hardly surprising. As we have shown in Chapter 1 Marx himself did not develop his theory in this direction and for the Second International the question did not even exist. For social democracy organisation and consciousness developed ~~by~~ a process of gradual accumulation without contradictions and without qualitative leaps. Rosa's emphasis on the spontaneity of the masses placed her furthest from this orthodox view of all the Western Marxists but she still did not break the circle completely. When she correctly took issue with Lenin for his phrase that the revolutionary social democrat is nothing but a "Jacobin indissolubly joined to the organisation of the proletariat" she fell into the opposite, and typically social democratic error, of saying that social democracy "is itself the proletariat". (47) Thus she failed to make the distinction so crucial for Lenin's thought, between the party and the class as a whole, between the vanguard of the proletariat and the average workers.

When we have grasped this central weakness in Rosa's thought most of her other errors fall clearly into place. If the party (social democracy) is the proletariat then debates and struggles within the class must necessarily also take place within the party. The party must contain all the different tendencies from right to left that exist within the class. If the class radicalises spontaneously and uniformly then past divisions will dissolve in mass ~~action~~ and false leaders will simply be bypassed. "Leaders who hang back will certainly be pushed aside by the storming masses." (48) Therefore there was no need to take

the struggle against opportunism beyond the arena of political debate and into the area of organisation. For this reason Rosa hardly ever bothered with organisational matters, frequently declining to attend congresses and sit on central committees. For this reason she failed even after August 4, 1914 to weld her supporters into more than a loose federation. Rosa Luxemburg saw more profoundly than any of her contemporaries the theoretical implications of Bernsteinism, and earlier than anyone else, the conservatism and parliamentary cretinism of the Kautskyite centre but she fatally underestimated the paralysing and divisive effect these tendencies would have within the working class even in the midst of the mass actions which she longed for.

When the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils met in Berlin in December 1918 it decided to hand over power to the Ebert-Scheidemann Council of People's Commissars and the coming National Assembly. Rosa Luxemburg commented:

"This is an expression not merely of the general inadequacy of the first unripe stage of the revolution, but also of the particular difficulties attending this proletarian revolution and the peculiarities of its historical situation. In all former revolutions the combatants entered the lists with their visors up: class against class, programme against programme, shield against shield. In the present revolution the defenders of the old order enter the lists not with the shields and coats-of-arms of the ruling classes, but under the banner of a "Social-Democratic Party". If the cardinal question of the revolution was

openly and honestly: capitalism or socialism the great mass of the proletariat today would not have any doubts or hesitation about the answer." (49)

The tone here is of someone who has at last realised the true problem - but too late. Nor is the statement strictly accurate. In 1917 the last line of defense of bourgeois Russia had been the "socialist" and "Marxist" Mensheviks. And even the Great French Revolution had amply illustrated the dialectic of struggle within the revolutionary class itself. Not for nothing had Lenin likened the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks to that between the Jacobins and the Girondins. Certainly since 1914 the retarding and ultimately counter-revolutionary effect of social democracy (and today one must add Stalinism) is something with which every revolutionary party must reckon.

Tony Cliff makes the following point:

"The main reason for Rosa Luxemburg's overestimation of the factor of spontaneity and underestimation of the factor of organisation probably lies in the need, in the immediate struggle against reformism, for emphasis on spontaneity as the first step in all revolutions. From this one stage in the struggle of the proletariat she generalised too widely to embrace the struggle as a whole." (50)

And we can see now how this mistake flows inevitably from Rosa's starting point. Revolutions do start as spontaneous mass explosions, usually over a particular grievance. But it is after the

first great upsurge, often after an initial victory that the key political problems facing the class and therefore the divisions within the class make their appearance. In such a situation it is the strategy of the bourgeoisie a) to grant certain reforms or concessions in the hope that they can be taken back later when the balance of forces has changed b) to use the influence and following that reformist leaders and parties have within the working class to give the class the illusion of power while preparing behind the scenes for counter revolution. This can be combatted only by a disciplined party of the advanced workers which simultaneously organises (not merely propagandizes for) the defence of the revolution and fights a ruthless war against those who would limit the development of the revolution and thus prepare its defeat.

There is another effect of this uneven development of the proletariat which is equally important and which cost Rosa Luxemburg her life. The opposite side of the same coin which causes some sections of the class to lag behind others is the impulse the revolution gives to the advanced workers to attempt to seize power prematurely before the balance of class forces in the society permit this to be carried out successfully. Precisely this occurred in the Russian Revolution with the so-called "July Days" and in the German Revolution with the January Rising. In Russia the Bolsheviks were able to clearly oppose the adventure, prevent it doing too much damage, preserve their organisation and prepare for the next round in the battle. In Germany

the Spartacus League could not formulate a clear strategy and were swept along by events to consequent disaster. The difference lay not in Lenin and Trotsky's *intelligence* or "realism" as against Rosa Luxemburg's supposed "revolutionary romanticism" but in the existence in Russia of a hardened party with authority among the advanced workers and its absence in Germany. It was not that Rosa Luxemburg did not want such a party but that she did not see early enough that it must be built on the basis of the advanced workers in organisational struggle against opportunism and centrism.

Some of Rosa Luxemburg's other differences with Lenin, though superficially unconnected with the question of the party, were also rooted in her overestimation of the homogeneity of the masses. A continual bone of contention between Rosa and Lenin was the national question. Generalizing from her early struggle against the opportunist Polish Socialist Party whose main aim was the independence of Poland she denied that the slogan of national independence could have any progressive value under capitalism, while under socialism she argued there would be no need for it. In the Junius brochure she claimed that under imperialism national wars were impossible and in her "The Russian Revolution" she took the Bolsheviks to task for their policy of granting the right of self-determination to the nations of the old Tsarist Empire. For Rosa the struggle of the working class was international and its aim was international socialism so how could talk of "the right of nations to self-determination" be anything but

a reactionary diversion. But Lenin, no less concerned with the international unity of the proletariat, reasoned differently. Recognising the objective and subjective divisions existing between the workers of an imperialist oppressor nation and the workers of an oppressed nation he argued that the only way in which they could be united was for the workers of the oppressor nation to take a clear stand against their own ruling class and fight for the right to self-determination of the oppressed nation. Thus for Rosa Luxemburg international unity would develop in a straight line without zig-zags or contradictions. For Lenin, on the other hand, it would develop through contradictions and the unity of opposites. History has shown repeatedly the superiority of Lenin's position. Once again Rosa Luxemburg overestimated the ease and straightforwardness with which the political and ideological divisions in the working class could be overcome.

The same factors are at work in her criticisms of the Bolshevik policy on the land question and the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. In the middle of the revolution Lenin and the Bolsheviks had taken over and advocated the land policy of the Social Revolutionaries, i.e. the break-up and distribution of the great landed estates among the peasants. In the past Lenin had opposed this policy calling for the nationalization of all landed estates. Rosa Luxemburg sternly criticised this sudden about turn.

"A socialist government which has come to power must in any

event do one thing: It must take measures which lead in the direction of that fundamental prerequisite for a later socialist reform of agriculture; it must at least avoid everything which may bar the way to those measures.

Now the slogan launched by the Bolsheviks.... not only is it not a socialist measure: It even cuts off the way to such measures... The seizure of the landed estates by the peasants....simply led to the sudden, chaotic conversion of large ownership into peasant ownership. What was created is not social property but a new form of private property". (51)

Rosa made this criticism from a prison with only scanty information at her disposal and never herself published it, but this does not change the fact that her reasoning here is undialectical. She expects the revolution to proceed in a straight line from its inception to its ultimate aim. If the consciousness of the working class (and in this case of the workers and peasants) developed evenly this would be possible but in reality certain detours were necessary even though these would cause problems later. If the Bolsheviks and the Russian proletariat were not to be isolated from the countryside (and the revolution doomed to the fate of the Paris Commune) no alternative policy was possible. There was of course a contradiction between the small peasant landholdings and the socialist aims of the revolution but was a contradiction inherent in reality which Bolshevik policy had to recognise. As Lenin often said, the condition of undertaking such

manoeuvres, or compromises, was a hard central axis in the form of a disciplined vanguard party.

On the question of Rosa Luxemburg's opposition to the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly other issues are involved such as what is the specific form assumed by the rule of the proletariat; is it a parliament or workers' councils? Also we know that in the course of the German Revolution Rosa completely reversed her position and most ardently condemned the call for a National Assembly. None the less if the process of radicalisation of the working class was harmonious and even as she tended to assume there would be no principled reason for ruling out a parliamentary transition to socialism, albeit a violent struggle in the course of which parliament was preserved. It is the volatility of the consciousness of the proletariat which demands institutions which a) reflect the sudden changes and leaps in consciousness, and b) are based on production units (i.e. delegates are elected from factories etc.) where the class is most unified and strongest, rather than institutions based on where the class is weakest as fragmented individuals in the ballot box.

In this context a word is appropriate on the Programme of the Spartacus League. Section 2 of this states:

"The Spartacus League will never assume governmental authority except through the clear unambiguous will of the vast majority of the German Working Class; in no other way except through its conscious concurrence with the views, aims and fighting tactics of the Spartacus League." (52)

Read sympathetically this statement is fairly unexceptionable but taken in conjunction with Rosa's concern over the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly it can suggest an overly formalistic conception of democracy in a revolutionary situation. Revolutions occur not when fifty per cent plus one of the population (or any other particular percentage of the working class) support the revolutionaries, but when the revolution can put more forces into the field of battle than can the defenders of the established order and when the class struggle reaches such a point of crisis that either the working class launches a struggle for power or is decisively thrown backwards. Such moments do not come often and when they arrive may last only a matter of weeks or even days. They demand the most immediate, resolute and skillfully timed action if the opportunity is not to be lost. At such times attempts to count heads in a formal way are futile for the simple reason that in all probability neither side will have a formal majority, for a substantial section of the population will be vacillating waiting to see which side is stronger before committing itself. Thus the revolution will achieve its formal majority only after the decisive test of strength. Rosa Luxemburg's failure to grasp or even really consider this kind of problem was intimately linked to her failure to see the full implications of the uneven development of the proletariat.

All these criticisms can be summed-up by saying that Rosa Luxemburg had a certain tendency towards fatalism. If this is taken to mean that personally she was inclined to passivity or that her

general theoretical conception of the revolution was fatalistic (as has been asserted by Stalinists in particular) then this charge must be rejected as false. Psychologically she longed for action and no one has laid greater stress on the active role of the proletariat. The following quotation sums up her attitude in this respect.

"Men do not make history of their own free will, but they do make their own history. The proletariat is dependent in its action on the given degree of maturity in social development existing at the time, but social development does not proceed independently of and apart from the proletariat, and the proletariat is as much its cause and mainspring as it is its product and consequence. The action of the proletariat is a determining factor in history, and although we can no more jump over stages of historical development than a man can jump over his shadow, still we can accelerate or retard that development. The victory of the Socialist proletariat will be the result of iron historical laws, and it would depend upon a thousand steps in previous, laborious and all-too-slow development. However, it will never be fulfilled unless the material conditions brought together by the historical process are vitalised with the life-giving spark of conscious will power generated in the great masses of the people." (53)

Rosa Luxemburg was no ivory tower theorist of historical inevitability and economic determinism à la Karl Kautsky, but as Antonio Gramsci once wrote fatalism was the "aroma" of the Second International

and not even Rosa escaped it entirely. It expressed itself in her work in relation to the struggle of tendencies within the working class movement. She believed that everything would come out in the wash. This was in fact also a form of "economism", not like the Russian variety in that it ignored or played down the political struggle, but in that it assumed the fundamental economic unity of the working class as a class-in-itself would spontaneously guarantee its political unity at the decisive moment. The historical roots of Rosa's errors are clear. Lenin used to say that anarchism was a penalty paid by the movement for the sins of opportunism. In like manner Rosa's attitude to organisation was a reaction to the bureaucratic leadership of the SPD and the trade unions for whom organisation was a fetish.

Finally the reference points for any overall judgement of Rosa Luxemburg's conception of the party must inevitably be Marx and Lenin. In many respects Rosa was closer to Marx than was Lenin. She shared Marx's strengths, his opposition to sectarianism and his emphasis on the mass activity of the working class and also his weakness; an overoptimistic and foreshortened view of the process by which the class-in-itself transforms itself into a class-for-itself. For Marx a correct understanding of this problem was impossible given the undeveloped state of the socialist movement at the time but Rosa can be criticised for failing to make or recognise the important advance over Marx that was involved in Lenin's theory of the vanguard party. Her work on the

party remains of lasting value, however, as a corrective to the one-sidedness of the early Lenin and to all latter-day would be "schoolmasters" of the revolution.

CHAPTER 5

Philosophy and the Party: Lukács and Gramsci.

The Russian Revolution gave a tremendous impetus to the development of the revolution throughout Europe and in so doing it attracted into the ranks of the Communist movement many who came from completely different political and cultural traditions from the mainstream of Marxism dominated by the Second International. These included workers who had previously been attracted by syndicalism and anarchism rejecting the Social Democrats because of their bureaucratic reformism and intellectuals who had been repelled by Kautskyite mechanical materialism. This influx of new blood was important because European Marxism was dominated by men whose philosophical thinking was influenced primarily either by the later work of Engels ("Anti-Duhring", "Dialectics of Nature", etc) or by even cruder nineteenth century positivism. The only exception to this was Lenin who had re-studied Hegel during the war, but this had remained an entirely private reappraisal. On the basis of their different traditions the new generation of revolutionaries were able, for a few years before the re-establishment of a dogmatic orthodoxy under Stalin, to stimulate enormous debate on all areas of Marxism. Indeed such a debate was a necessity at the time. The demise and bankruptcy of the "optimistic" evolutionism of the Second International was so total that despite the tremendous contribution of Lenin much remained to be done by way of a critique of the theoretical foundations of Social Democracy and a revolutionary reconstruction of the Marxist world outlook. Of those who undertook this task the two most outstanding were the Hungarian, Georg Lukacs and the Italian, Antonio Gramsci.

Both Lukács and Gramsci came to Marxism through Hegel and so "through philosophy". Both were profoundly hostile to positivism and mechanistic materialism which they regarded as philosophically pre-Marxist. It was inevitable, given that Bolshevism had pushed the question to the fore, that both would have something to say on the party. For it is on the question of the party that philosophy and concrete politics mostly closely mesh. The problems of consciousness, of theory and practice, of the false alternatives of fatalism and voluntarism; these are also the problems of the party, as we have attempted to show throughout this study. Any tendency towards fatalism, either open and pervasive as in Kautsky, or marginal and hidden as in Rosa Luxemburg, is likely to manifest itself in the absence of a theory of the vanguard party. Any tendency towards idealism or voluntarism as in Lenin at the time of "What Is To Be Done?" is likely to manifest itself in the concept of the party as an élite above the working class.

Lukács and Gramsci were concerned above all to root out the element of mechanical fatalism that had crept into the Marxist tradition and what distinguished them from, for example, Trotsky or Luxemburg was that they were conscious of this as a philosophical question. As Lukács wrote "The idea of the Communist Party opposed and slandered by all opportunists, instinctively seized upon and made their own by the best revolutionary workers, has yet often been seen purely in technical terms rather than as one the most important intellectual questions of the revolution" (1)

It is no accident that it was via a return to Hegel that such questions came to be posed in the 1920's. The basic reason for this can be found in Marx's first thesis on Fenerbach where he writes that because of the contemplative nature of all hitherto existing materialism, "hence it happened that the active side, in contradiction to materialism was developed by idealism" (2) Lukács puts the same idea in the context of the times in his Preface to the 1967 edition of "History and Class Consciousness". "For the revival of Hegel's dialectics struck a hard blow at the revisionist tradition. Already Bernstein had wished to eliminate everything reminiscent of Hegel's dialectics in the name of "science". And nothing was further from the mind of his philosophical opponents, and above all Kautsky, than the wish to undertake a defence of this tradition. For anyone wishing to return to the revolutionary traditions of Marxism the revival of the Hegelian traditions was obligatory." (3)

Having thus briefly indicated the factors which link Lukács and Gramsci it is also necessary to point out that each carried out his work quite independently, one might even say in isolation from the other and that theoretically they took very different roads. For this reason their respective contributions will be examined separately here. Lukács will be dealt with first since Gramsci's achievements can in some ways be highlighted by contrasting them with the theories of Lukács.

I. Lukács: Class consciousness and the Party.

For anyone attempting to write about the theoretical position of Lukács there is a problem that must be faced at the outset; namely, his various self-criticisms and recantations. These consist of a tangled mixture of sincere revaluations and "tactical" retreats in the face of Stalinism and although Lukács has written an explanatory account of these in his 1967 Preface to "History and Class Consciousness" it seems unlikely that even he can now honestly and clearly separate out the different factors at work in the evolution of his thought. For this reason we have decided to treat the early Lukács as the "historical Lukács" and to disregard his later development (except in so far as points from his self-criticism seem valid in their own right and can be incorporated into our own critique). There should be no objections to this procedure in a study of this nature since it is only in his early works that Lukács makes any distinct or original contribution to the development of Marxism as a whole (as different from the limited sphere of aesthetics) and it is only in "History and Class Consciousness" and the 1924 work on "Lenin" that he makes a substantial analysis of the theory of party.

A. In the footsteps of Marx.

To understand how Lukács arrived at his position of 1923 we have to look more closely at his intellectual development before he joined the Hungarian Communist Party in 1918, for as Istvan Mészáros points out there is a dialectical "unity of continuity and discontinuity" (4) and a profound similarity in his "structure of thought" between his

pre-Marxist and post-Marxist works. From adolescence Lukács' primary intellectual interests were literature and philosophy. The backwardness of Hungarian philosophy meant that he naturally turned to Germany and in particular to German classical philosophy in the formation of his world view. At first this was mediated through the influence of neo-Kantians such as Georg Simmel, Wilhelm Dilthey, Emil Lask, and Heinrich Rickert. Then under the impact of the 1st World War and the need for a "total" philosophy he turned directly to Hegel. The political position that accompanied this philosophical development was a romantic anti-capitalism with leanings towards the syndicalism of Ervin Szabó and Georges Sorel. As Lukács himself points out his road to Marx was heavily influenced by ethical considerations. It was the Russian Revolution in which he saw " - at last! at last! a way for mankind to escape from war and capitalism" (5) that finally pushed Lukács over to a revolutionary Marxist position and from that point on his politics were increasingly drawn from Lenin.

What is particularly striking about Lukács' early development is the way in which, more closely than any other leading Marxist of the time, he recapitulated the development of Marx himself. It is this similarity of intellectual background with the early Marx which surely explains Lukács' remarkable discovery and highlighting of the concept of reification, a very similar (though not identical) concept to that of alienation which was so much in the forefront of the then unknown 1844 Manuscripts and which enabled Lukács to bring to light

whole areas of Marx's thought hitherto either ignored or completely unperceived. At the same time Lukács attempted to synthesize his version of Marxism with Lenin's Bolshevism and this took the form of taking the practical policies and ideas propounded by Lenin and providing them with a wider, or different philosophical and theoretical foundation than Lenin himself had done.

B. The Party as bearer of Class Consciousness.

The concept of reification, which is central to "History and Class Consciousness", related directly to Lukács' theory of the party as advanced in that work because it focuses his attention on the question of consciousness. Reification means that the social relationships between people involved in production take on the appearance, in the form of the commodity, of relations between things. Social and economic facts, processes and laws which are produced by men appear to be completely independent of men. Thus the reality of capitalist society, the exploitative relations of production on which it is founded, is hidden - it lies below the surface, beneath the facade of an immutable natural, order of things. This for Lukács is the key to the enormous mystificatory powers of capitalism. The thought of all men who live in capitalist society is permanently threatened, distorted and forced into unresolvable antinomies by the phenomenon of reification. Bourgeois thought is thus always trapped in the false dichotomies of fatalism and voluntarism, or mechanical materialism and idealism.

Philosophically these centre on the subject-object problem -Kant's postulation of the unknowable "thing-in-itself." In non-philosophical terms the fact that the subject, man, cannot know or control the world which confronts him as an object. For Lukács the way out of these dilemmas is provided only by what he calls "the standpoint of the proletariat". Only the proletariat "can function as the identical subject-object of the social and historical processes of evolution." (6) Because of its economic position as producer "the self-understanding of the proletariat is therefore simultaneously the objective understanding of the nature of society". (7)

What then constitutes "the standpoint of the proletariat"? This Lukács investigates in his important essay on "Class Consciousness", and immediately rejects the commonsense or empiricist answer to this question, that the standpoint of the proletariat is the sum or average of what is thought by the individuals who make up the class. Lukács begins with the following quotation from Marx:

"The question is not what goal is envisaged for the time being by this or that member of the proletariat, or even by the proletariat as a whole. The question is what is the proletariat and what course of action will it be forced historically to take in conformity with its own nature." (8)

He then goes on, beyond Marx, to assert the complete independence of "class consciousness" (a term which can reasonably be equated with "the standpoint of the proletariat" as used in the major

essay on reification) from the actual consciousness of the actual proletariat. "This analysis establishes right from the start the distance that separates class consciousness from the empirically given, and from the psychologically describable and explicable ideas which men form about their situation in life". (9) And even further, "Thus we must never overlook the distance that separates the consciousness of even the most revolutionary worker from the authentic class consciousness of the proletariat".(10) Rather than being what proletarians actually think "class consciousness" for Lukács is what rationally they ought to think. "Now class consciousness consists in fact of the appropriate and rational reactions 'imputed' to a particular typical position in the process of production". (11)

Now clearly Lukács has a problem here for what he has arrived at in his definition of "class consciousness" is an abstraction. Moreover it is an abstraction which has to do a lot of work, not only in analysis, but also in the real world. "Only the consciousness of the proletariat can point to the way that leads out of the impasse of capitalism." (12) It is class consciousness that determines "the historically significant actions of the class as a whole", as well as the degree of physical force which a class can mobilize, and is in general the decisive factor in the proletarian revolution. This problem can be temporarily sidestepped by various verbal hypostatisations of this abstract imputed class consciousness (there are a number of examples of this in Lukács) but in the end the question must be faced -

who, and on what basis, decides what are "the appropriate and rational reactions" of the class? If it is to perform real tasks in the real world the abstraction must find a real bearer.

Lukács' answer is the party. The party is the bearer of class consciousness. "The Communist Party must exist as an independent organisation so that the proletariat may be able to see its own class consciousness given historical shape." (13) Lukács' critique of social democratic opportunism is a straight line of negatives of his own positive argument. Kautsky and company fell victims to the pressure of reification. They conceived of the social revolution as the inexorable working out of economic laws independent of mens actions. Therefore they failed to see the overriding importance of the consciousness of the proletariat, and the ideological crisis that the proletariat would necessarily pass through. Therefore they failed to see the role of the party as the embodiment of authentic class consciousness. This at least shows why Lukács regarded the party as "one of the most important intellectual questions of the revolution".

A further question now arises. What is it that qualifies the party for the exalted role assigned to it here and what enables it to resist the pressures of capitalist reification which prove too much for social democrats and the working class as a whole? Since for Lukács "organisation is the form of mediation between theory and practice," (14) the essential basis for the Communist Party (in Lukács this is synonymous with the wider term, revolutionary party), is a correct theory. "We see

here the importance of a correct theory for the organisation of the Communist Party. It must represent the highest objective possibility of proletarian action. But the indispensable prerequisite for this is to have correct theoretical insight." (15) It is obvious that Lukács considers the correct theory to be Marxism, but from two other essays in "History and Class Consciousness" ("What Is Orthodox Marxism?", and "The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg") we learn what he holds to be the most important and essential characteristics of Marxism. The central, and only essential thing about Marxism, writes Lukács is its method.

"Let us assume for the sake of argument that recent research had disproved once for all everyone of Marx's individual theses. Even if this were to be proved, every serious 'orthodox' Marxist would still be able to accept all such modern findings without reservation and hence dismiss all of Marx's theses in toto-without having to renounce his orthodoxy for a single moment. Orthodox Marxism, therefore does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred' book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to method. It is the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth and that its methods can be developed, expanded and deepened only along the lines laid down by its founders."(16)

In the essay on Rosa Luxemburg Lukács tells us what distinguishes this method.

"It is not the primacy of economic motives in historical

explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality. The category of totality, the all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts is the essence of the method which Marx took over from Hegel and brilliantly transformed into the foundations of a wholly new science. The capitalist separation of the producer from the total process of production, the division of the process of labour into parts at the cost of the individual humanity of the worker, the atomisation of society into individuals who simply go on producing without rhyme or reason, must all have a profound influence on the thought, the science and the philosophy of capitalism. Proletarian science is revolutionary not just by virtue of its revolutionary ideas which it opposes to bourgeois society, but above all because of its method. The primacy of the category of totality is the bearer of the principle of revolution in science." (17)

If in the past isolated geniuses (Marx) could achieve the viewpoint of totality this can now only be articulated, maintained and transmitted to the class as a whole by the party. The party is able to withstand the ideological pressures of capitalism, where the workers as a whole are not, because "it is a form of organisation that produces and reproduces correct theoretical insights by consciously ensuring that the organisation has built into it ways of adapting with increased sensitivity to the effects of a theoretical posture"(18) It achieves this because the party liquidates and transcends the paralysing capitalist division of labour between thought and action, active leaders

and passive led, and because it involves the whole personality of its members.

"The inner life of the party is one unceasing struggle against this, its capitalist inheritance. The only decisive weapon it possesses is its ability to draw together all the party members and to involve them in activity on behalf of the party with the whole of their personality. A man's function in the party must not be seen as an office whose duties can be performed conscientiously and devotedly but only as official duties; on the contrary the activity of every member must extend to every possible kind of party work. Moreover this activity must be varied in accordance with what work is available so that party members enter with their whole personalities into a living relationship with the whole of the life of the party and of the revolution so that they cease to be mere specialists necessarily exposed to the danger of ossification." (19)

Thus "every Communist Party represents a higher type of organisation than every bourgeois party or opportunist workers' party and this shows itself in the greater demands made by the party on its individual members." (20) Discipline also becomes "no mere technical and practical question; [but] one of the most exalted and important intellectual problems in the history of the revolution." (21)

This does not imply, of course, blind obedience or mechanical subordination. Lukács means by discipline a situation where collective decisions are binding on all members of the party, leadership and

rank-and-file alike, and where every decision affects every member so intimately (to the extent of endangering his life) that he is equipped and compelled to seriously consider that decision for himself and make his views felt. In this way the party becomes a highly sensitive instrument for measuring the effectiveness of and correcting its own line. The totality is continually related to the particular and back again.

In "Lenin: A Study on the Unity of his Thought," (22)

Lukács further develops his theory of the party. The exposition here is briefer and less philosophical than in "History and Class Consciousness", and because Lenin is in the foreground of the study, the ideas are necessarily more concrete. Nevertheless what we are presented with is very much a Lukácsian Lenin, with Lenin's formulations pressed into the service of Lukács' theoretical 'system'. Class consciousness still occupies the centre of the stage and the party is above all "the tangible embodiment of proletarian class-consciousness". (23) The central problem remains that the proletariat cannot "gradually evolve ideologically into the revolutionary vocation appropriate to its class". (24) Lenin is acclaimed as "the first and for a long time the only important leader and theoretician who tackled this problem at its theoretical roots and therefore at its decisive, practical point: that of organisation." (25)

What is new in "Lenin" is that whereas in "History and Class Consciousness" the impending crisis and catastrophe of capita-

lism was always there in the background, here it is linked directly to the question of party which is placed much more in the context of tasks facing the proletariat in the coming revolution. The Communist Party as the highest form of working class organisation derives from and is only appropriate to a revolutionary period. "The actuality of the revolution: this is the core of Lenin's thought". (26) It is this actuality, theoretically established by the analysis of imperialism, which provides the objective foundation for Lenin's "grasp of intimate, visible, and momentous connexion between individual actions and general destiny" and makes "every question of the day - precisely as a question of the day - at the same time.... a fundamental problem of the revolution." (27) In the terminology of "History and Class Consciousness" it is the actuality of the revolution which furnishes the objective possibility for the maintainence by the party of the viewpoint of totality. The actuality of the revolution also dissolves the old fatalist/voluntarist dilemma of whether the party should await the revolution or should attempt to "make" it. "The party must prepare the revolution" (28) is Lukács's solution which means above all preparing the class consciousness of the proletariat.

Because of the great complexity and density of Lukács's writing this summary of his theory of the party is necessarily incomplete and schematic. What I have attempted to do is to draw out the main elements of his thought and present them as a coherent whole while laying special emphasis on those themes which are particular to

Lukács at the expense of those which he simply took over from Lenin.

The same difficulties accompany any attempt at a balanced assessment of Lukács, as the history of one-sided judgements of his work testifies. The problem is that brilliant insights continually stand side by side with, and merge into, overstatements and exaggerations which vitiate his case.

The great merit of Lukács is his critique of economic determinism and fatalism. He showed more clearly than any previous Marxist that a fatalist view of historical development is not only harmful to the cause of revolution but is actually a capitulation to bourgeois ideology. It is the reified structures of capitalism which create "economic laws" independent of men's will and set over and against them as "natural" and immutable. To see the socialist revolution as merely the outcome of the inevitable working out of these laws and to subordinate the self-activity of the proletariat to this process is to condemn the proletariat to remain in the role assigned to it by capitalism: the object rather than the subject, of history. Lukács emphasises again and again that the success of the revolution would depend above all on the free activity of the proletariat itself. He is also absolutely correct in stressing that the consciousness necessary for this can be achieved only by means of a determined struggle within the proletariat and as a result of the proletariat passing through an enormous ideological crisis; hence the vital importance of political leadership and the vanguard party. It is no accident that Lukács produced one of the most telling refutations of Rosa Luxemburg's spontanism. (28)

C. Lukács's hidden idealism.

Nonetheless it is at the centre of Lukács's achievement, his restoration of the role of consciousness to its rightful place, that his great weakness appears. For Lukács not only emphasises consciousness, he remains, like the Young Hegelians though in a much more Marxist fashion, almost entirely within the domain of consciousness. Lenin regarded the essence of Marxism as "the concrete analysis of a concrete situation" and Lukács makes the same point himself, (29) but nowhere in Lukács's theory of the party is it raised to the level of a concrete analysis. Of all the great Marxists he is far and away the most abstract. There is a witty comment by Berchtold Brecht (writing in a different context) which neatly "fixes" Lukács.

"The Germans have no aptitude for materialism. When they do have materialism they immediately make an idea out of it. A materialist is then someone who believes that ideas come from material circumstances and not the reverse and after that matter does not appear again. One might well imagine that in Germany there are only two sorts of people, priests and opponents of priests." (30)

A materialism which remains entirely in the field of consciousness and abstract theory in fact allows idealism to enter by the back door. This hidden idealism permeates every level of Lukács thought. The first example we can take is the concept of reification (without in any way denigrating Lukács's achievement in "discovering" this element of Marxism). We have said already that the concept of reification is similar but not identical to Marx's concept of alienation.

The difference is that reification refers to the appearance assumed by social relations, in other words to the impact of the capitalist mode of production on consciousness. Alienation, or more correctly alienated labour, is a deeper concept because it reveals what it is in the process of production that gives rise to the phenomenon of reification. And indeed, as Lukács himself points out in his 1967 Preface, (31) it is labour as the mediation between man and nature and as the original form and model of praxis which is the missing concept in "History and Class Consciousness". (32)

A second example, and here we have a proposition which Lukács still held to in 1967, (33) is the definition of orthodoxy in Marxism as pertaining solely to method. While it is true that the validity of Marxism does not stand or fall on many of Marx's empirical propositions (e.g. his various predictions of revolutionary outbreaks in numerous countries) and that the method of dialectical materialism is of central importance, it is not true that the essence of Marxism can be separated from a number of concrete theses e.g. that history is the history of class struggles, that the basis of society is production, and that the proletariat is the revolutionary class. Such an approach dehistoricizes Marxism and deprives it of its class basis as the theory of the proletariat. This idealist separation of method from content opens the way to the view of Marxism as a supra-historical "philosophy" capable of explaining everything. A view of his theory which Marx consistently rejected.

Following on from this in the same vein, and here directly affecting the theory of the party, is the concept of imputed class consciousness. Once again there is an important element of truth; namely the critique of the empiricist "public opinion poll" view of class consciousness. If Marxists are to speak of false consciousness and of raising consciousness then clearly they must be operating with a standard by which they judge empirically existing consciousness. But this standard is not created merely by rational ascription but rather by generalisation from the historical experience of the working class, and especially from the periods of the highest revolutionary upsurge and activity. In resolving the problems incurred in his abstract formulation by making the party the sole bearer of class consciousness Lukács inevitably postulates an élitist relationship between the party and the working class. The party is seen as deriving its vanguard leadership position from its innate superiority and possession of the truth which is denied to the masses. Thus its position is held by right rather than having to be fought for and won by virtue of its performance in the class struggle.

Lukács is at least partially aware of this problem and in order to overcome it he presents an extremely idealised view of party organisation. He is right, of course, that active participation in the work of a disciplined collective is the essential foundation of the revolutionary party as Lenin argued in his dispute with the Mensheviks, but Lukács exaggerates the extent to which this can be achieved. Under capitalism, with all its attendant problems for

working people; poverty, long working hours, family pressures etc, it is wildly utopian to believe that anything approaching an even level of commitment is possible within a party that aspires to a large membership in the working class. As for the "active engagement of the total personality" of every member this is clearly impossible given for example the situation (and it is a very common situation in every large party) of a worker whose wife is not involved in the movement. Lukács could well object that he only sets this forward as an ideal to be worked for, to which we would reply that in that case he should not have made so much depend on its being realised to a far greater extent than is actually possible. There is no guarantee against the degeneration of the party within the organisational form of the party. In the last analysis it is dependent both on the activity of the class outside the party and on the role of individuals (e.g. Lenin in 1917) as much as it is on the party organisation.

By his abstract theory of class consciousness, his concept of the party as its sole bearer, and his idealisation of party organisation Lukács led himself to a theoretical impasse which, by an irony of history, proceeded immediately to stare him in the face. Alasdair MacIntyre explains this well:

"[When he was denounced by the Comintern] Lukács was at once confronted by a dilemma whose roots were already obvious in "History and Class Consciousness". For there he explains Marxism as the class consciousness of the proletariat whose articulate representative is the

Communist Party. Thus it is entailed by Lukács's own argument that if the Comintern holds that Marxism is not what Lukács says it is, then Lukács must be wrong. Or rather, either what Lukács says is wrong or the Comintern is not the true Communist Party. But if it is not, then Marxism is only a theory, only an idea; it lacks any material incarnation. To have grasped the horns of the dilemma would have thrown Lukács back to his starting point in an unbearable way". (34)

For the democracy, the interaction between rank-and-file and leadership, which Lukács proclaims, to be a reality there has to exist the political right for an appeal within the party to the needs, aspirations and actions of the proletariat outside the party. It must be possible, as it was for Lenin in his struggle against the "old" Bolsheviks in 1917, to say that the rank-and-file of the party are more revolutionary than the leadership, and the masses are more revolutionary than the party members. This possibility Lukács had deprived himself of by his theory of class consciousness. It can only exist if it is recognised that for the party learning from the working class is as essential as teaching. Democracy evaporates in Lukács's conception of the party because the dissident (as he himself turned out to be) has the alternatives only of recantation or departure from the party. Lukács chose recantation. But the utopianism of Lukács's analysis of the party is demonstrated even more clearly by historical events, than by his own demise. For at the very time that Lukács was outlining his idealised model of the functioning of the party the

Communist International was succumbing rapidly to bureaucratisation, mechanical obedience, and theoretical dogmatism under the regime of Zinoviev, Kamenev and ultimately Stalin. The concrete historical forces which conditioned this degeneration nowhere appear in Lukács's work for the already stated reason that there is simply no concrete analysis. Lukács was therefore powerless to fight them.

The final judgement on Lukács therefore must be that despite his theoretical genius he, like Plekhanov and unlike Lenin, was never able to link his theory with the practice of the actual workers' movement. Thus despite his constant emphasis on praxis he was forced against his will to remain in the role of contemplative intellectual who could participate in changing the world only at the cost of denying his own ideas. His theoretical writings on the party remain an almost inexhaustable source of stimulating ideas and suggestions but he was unable to construct of these a synthesis which could add anything practical or concrete to the concept of the party developed by Lenin.

II: Gramsci's Modern Prince.

Like Lukács Gramsci is one of the most original thinkers produced by the Marxist movement but unlike Lukács he was able, because his ideas were both theoretically profound and historically concrete to make a major new contribution to the development of the theory of the party. In seeking to understand what made this possible it is necessary, as it was with Lukács, to look briefly at Gramsci's background and

early development.

A. A Unique Background.

Whereas with Lukács we were concerned solely with his intellectual background, with Gramsci there is a personal fact which immediately sets him apart from most other Marxist theoreticians and commands our attention. Although the idea, quite widely believed, that Gramsci was of peasant stock or his family very poor is a myth, (35) it remains true that compared with Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, or Lukács, his childhood in Sardinia was extremely harsh. When he was six his father who worked as a clerk in a land office was arrested for an "administrative irregularity" and was goaled for five years leaving his mother to raise seven children on her own in a house with no running water, no toilet facilities and only a single candle for lighting. In addition the young Gramsci had the handicap of his hunched back (the result of a childhood accident) and poor health. Later Gramsci was to remark that he had "almost always known only the most brutal aspect of life".(36) His struggle against these economic, physical and above all cultural disadvantages - he did not set foot out of Sardinia till he was twenty, - was long and hard and involved an immense effort of will. This period undoubtedly had a profound influence on Gramsci's political evolution. Firstly in the sense of determining his basic class allegiance. Already as a youth he developed an "instinct of rebellion against the rich. I could not go to school, I who got tens in all the subjects in

elementary school; yet the sons of the butcher, the pharmacist, and the draper were going" (37) Secondly in his abiding interest in the problems of the peasantry and the mezzogiorno; but most importantly in giving Gramsci such deep insight into the process by which the oppressed could struggle to emancipate themselves from cultural backwardness and in impressing on him the role of willpower and determination in any achievement, personal or historical. Fortunately for Gramsci the isolation of his Sardinian upbringing received a massive counterbalance in his entry to the University of Turin in 1911. This move brought Gramsci into contact with both the mainstream of Italian thought and the flower of the Italian proletariat concentrated in the great factories of Turin's rapidly growing automobile industry.

The key figures in Gramsci's intellectual formation, apart of course from Marx and Lenin, were Benedetto Croce and Antonio Labriola. Croce was an idealist philosopher for whom the central purpose of philosophy was the understanding of history and who therefore called himself an "absolute historian" Gramsci regarded him as the highest representative of Italian bourgeois culture and indeed as one of the premier spokesmen of liberalism in the world. Croce was a critic of Marxism but for Gramsci his work was on a much more advanced intellectual level than that of the vulgar Marxism and positivism prevalent in pre-war Italy. Thus Gramsci's relationship with Croce parallels that between Marx and Hegel. At first under his influence then more and more seeing him as the major figure who has to be challenged and super-

ceded in a new synthesis. What Gramsci took from Croce and developed was the rejection of economic determinism and positivism and the importance of the "ethico-political" or "ideological" moment in history. The bridge between Marxism and Crocean idealism was provided by Antonio Labriola, the "founding father" of Italian Marxism at the end of the 19th century. Labriola was a professor of philosophy at the University of Rome who came to Marxism late in life having been a leading figure in the Italian Hegelian school. It was Labriola who first introduced the term "the philosophy of praxis" used by Gramsci as a periphrasis for Marxism in the Prison Notebooks. Gramsci had a high regard for Labriola valuing especially his emphasis on the unity of theory and practice and the independence of Marxism from any other philosophical currents. In the Prison Notebooks Gramsci describes him as "the only man who has attempted to build up the philosophy of praxis scientifically".

(38)

Of course Croce and Labriola must be seen in the context of the intellectual ferment raging in pre-war Italy - in particular the struggle against previously dominant positivism - which profoundly influenced Gramsci. Croce, for example, must be set against Achille Loria, a crude economic determinist, who had been the object of Engels' sarcasm in Volume III of Capital and who was later severely criticised by Gramsci. Gramsci's intellectual interests were extremely wide and among those who may be said to have influenced him, in some way at least, are Sorel and Bergson as well as a number of his professors such

as Annibale Pastore or Umberto Cosmo. But what emerged from this period of intense study was a young man with enormous respect for values of intellectual discipline and scholarship but who was above all concerned with social action, with "how thought makes hands move, and how and why we can act with ideas"(39) and as a result gradually abandoned his academic career for socialist activity. Gramsci's passionate rejection of all passivity and the militant environment of Turin meant that he naturally gravitated towards the left wing of the Italian Socialist Party but his Marxism was as yet undeveloped and his urge to action sometimes led him astray as with his hesitant (and short-lived) support for Mussolini when the latter began to suggest Italian intervention in the War. Nonetheless it is possible to see clear indications of Gramsci's future development in his work during the war years. For example he greeted the Russian Revolution with an article entitled "The Revolution against Das Kapital" in which he praised the Bolsheviks for their refusal to be bound by any iron historical timetable. And from the moment his writings became known in Italy Lenin, especially through "The State and Revolution", was a central influence on Gramsci and he began to regard himself as a Communist.

B. L'Ordine Nuovo, the PSI, and PCI.

Up to this point the parallels between Lukács and Gramsci, with exception of upbringing, are clear but the decisive experience for the formation of the mature Gramsci was one which enabled him to realise a unity of theory and practice never achieved by Lukács. This was the rising of the Italian workers, spearheaded by the proletariat of Turin,

in 1919 and 1920. Gramsci's intervention in these events, through the weekly journal, "L'Ordine Nuovo" brought him into the closest contact with the Turin workers. "At that time" he recalled, "no initiative was taken that was not tested in reality... if the opinions of the workers were not taken fully into account. For this reason, our initiatives appeared as the interpretation} of a felt need, never as the cold application of intellectual schema." (40) Gramsci's great achievement in "L'Ordine Nuovo" was the translation into Italy of the Russian idea of Soviets through the development of the already existing factory internal commissions into factory councils as the foundation of a new state. In an important passage written in 1920 Gramsci summed up his basic conception of Communism.

"We have therefore maintained: 1. that the revolution is not necessarily proletarian and Communist if it proposes and obtains the overthrow of the bourgeois state; 2. nor is it proletarian and Communist if it proposes and obtains the destruction of the representative institutions and administrative machine through which the central government exercises the political power of the bourgeoisie; 3. it is not proletarian and Communist even if the wave of popular insurrection places power in the hands of men who call themselves (and sincerely are) Communists. The revolution is proletarian and Communist only in so far as it liberates proletarian and Communist forces of production, forces that have been developing within the society ruled by the capital class. It is proletarian and Communist in so far as it advances and promotes the growth and systematisation of proletarian and

Communist forces that can begin the patient, methodical work necessary for the construction of a new order in the relations of production and distribution." (41)

This emphasis on the creative, constructive aspect of the workers' revolution as against the destructive aspect of overthrowing capitalism was to remain a constant theme in Gramsci's thought.

But this experience was also a negative one in that it revealed the decisive weakness of the PSI and the whole tradition of Italian maximalist socialism. The mainstream of Italian socialism completely failed to appreciate the significance of the factory councils, regarding them as a threat to the established order of the trade unions, and the Turin proletariat was left to fight alone. At the crucial moment the PSI remained bureaucratically paralysed and unable or unwilling to give coherent leadership to the rising revolutionary movement; as a result the initiative was lost and the way opened for the vicious counter revolution which climaxed in Mussolini's march on Rome. Gramsci's response to this betrayal was a devastating critique entitled "Toward a Renewal of the Socialist Party" (42) in which he indicted the party leadership for its failure to create a homogeneous fighting party purged of its reformist and non-communist elements, its failure to involve the party in the life of the Third International, its lack of a revolutionary opposition in the General Confederation of Labour, its attachment to parliamentary democracy, and its abstentionist refusal to launch a struggle for power. These theses, which received the endorsement of Lenin, concluded that, "the existence of a cohesive and

highly disciplined Communist Party with factory, trade union and co-operative cells, that can co-ordinate and centralize in its central executive committee the whole revolutionary action of the proletariat, is the fundamental and indispensable condition for any experiment in Soviets." (43) From this time on the question of the party remained at the centre of Gramsci's theory of revolution.

By now Gramsci was a fully-fledged Marxist, and a convinced Leninist, albeit of an original kind, but for various reasons the course of the Italian class struggle in the years following the Fascist takeover prevented Gramsci from pursuing an independent policy and for a period his originality remained obscured. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was formed as the result of a split in the PSI at the Congress of Livorno in 1921 where the Maximalist leadership under Serrati refused to expel Turati and the reformists. For Gramsci this split occurred too far to the left leaving the majority of socialist workers under the control of the PSP and he later described this as "without doubt reaction's greatest triumph." (44) But despite the narrow basis on which it was formed the new party was far from unified. Leadership in the PCI was exercised by Amadeo Bordiga who had built a substantial following in the rank-and-file as for many years the main proponent of revolutionary intransigence and electoral abstentionism. Bordiga was unquestionably a powerful figure; a dominating personality, passionate orator and an energetic organiser with an immense capacity for work; but as a theorist he was simplistic and dogmatic. He refused to make any distinction between fascism and bourgeois democracy and his conception of

revolutionary strategy allowed for no alliances, compromises or tactical manoeuvres. No policy was acceptable except the immediate preparation for insurrection and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The party should simply establish itself with its pure and correct line and sooner or later the masses would rally to its banner. This rigid "left-wing communism" naturally brought Bordiga and PCI into conflict with the International. The main bone of contention was the united front policy adopted at the Third World Congress in recognition of the ebb of post war revolutionary wave and the need for the Communist Parties to win from the social democrats the allegiance of the majority of the workers. But the dialectical strategy of independent party and broad alliance was quite beyond Bordiga. To him and to the majority of Italian Communists a united front with the hated centrists and reformists from whom they had just split was unthinkable. Just as opportunism so often produces syndicalist or anarchist deviations as its dialectical complement so Bordiga's ultra-leftism produced a right-wing, pro-united front, opposition under the leadership of Angelo Tasca. Gramsci was stymied. Privately he disagreed with Bordigist-sectarianism and supported the position of the International as well as having new ideas of his own but he was unwilling to make any open move. He regarded Bordiga as indispensable to the leadership of the PCI and he feared handing the party over to Tasca with whom he had clashed when they collaborated in the production of "L'Ordine Nuovo" and Tasca had opposed its sovietist orientation. It was not until after

the arrest of Bordiga and the near-disintegration of the party under fascist repression that Gramsci would accept Comintern invitations to become leader of the PCI in 1924 and it was not until his own arrest in 1926 that he had the opportunity to develop and set out his own original contribution to Marxist theory.

Although we have some indications as to Gramsci's views on certain later events (the expulsion of Trotsky, Stalin's third period policy etc.) it is essentially against the background of the period up to 1926 that the prison writings must be judged. He had seen the havoc wrought in the international and Italian workers' movement by the Marxism of the Second International and by its hangovers in the Third. He had seen the failure of attempts to mechanically and superficially imitate the Bolshevik revolution in the West. He had discerned in Italian fascism and American Fordism the beginnings of important new developments in capitalism which posed new problems for the communist movement. His concern in the Prison Notebooks was to begin the renovation and reconstitution of Marxism to fit it for these new tasks, and he brought to this enormous undertaking a broader philosophical knowledge and general culture than any Marxist of his generation.

Gramsci tackled the versions of Marxism which he rejected at their roots, their philosophy. Although the sections dealing specifically with philosophical questions are placed at the end of the Prison Notebooks they are really the foundation of the whole work. It is impossible to grasp the full meaning and significance of Gramsci's

theory of the party without first considering his conception of Marxist philosophy.

For Gramsci Marxism or "the philosophy of praxis" (45) as he terms it, is "absolute 'historicism', the absolute secularisation and earthliness of thought, an absolute humanism of history."(46) It is totally opposed to all forms of transcendentalism, be it the transcendentalism of an abstract "human nature" or "man in general", of religion and derivative idealist philosophies, or the transcendentalism of metaphysical materialism basing itself on "objective laws".

"Objective always means 'humanly objective' which can be held to correspond exactly to 'historically subjective': in other words, objective would mean 'universal subjective'.....

"The idea of 'objective' in metaphysical materialism would appear to mean an objectivity that exists even apart from man; but when one affirms that a reality would exist even if man did not, one is either speaking metaphorically or one is falling into a form of mysticism. We know reality only in relation to man, and since man is historical becoming, knowledge and reality are also a becoming and so is objectivity, etc...." (47)

Philosophies or conceptions of the World are not as has often been argued by Marxists, more or less correct or incorrect reflections of reality but "a response to certain specific problems posed by reality." (48) "Every 'truth' believed to be eternal and absolute has had practical origins and has represented a 'provisional' value (historicity of every conception of the World and of life)".(49) Bukharin is severely criticised for his failure to appreciate this and

hence his presentation of past philosophies as "folly" and "delirium"
(50) rather than "having been [at one time] historically valid and
having performed a necessary function". (51) Furthermore it is
necessary to realize that this historical limitation applies also
to Marxism, which will itself be superceded after the achievement of
communism. "That the philosophy of praxis thinks of itself in a
historicism manner, that is, as a transitory phase of philosophical
thought, is not only implicit in its entire system, but is made quite
explicit in the well-known thesis that historical development will at
a certain point be characterised by the passage from the reign of nec-
essity to the reign of freedom." (52) But to see Marxism in this
light is not to down-grade it, for "it contains in itself all the
fundamental elements needed to construct a total and integral conception
of the World.....The philosophy of praxis has no need of support from
alien sources" (53) and "Marx initiates intellectually an historical
epoch which will last in all probability for centuries." (54) On the
contrary those who down-grade Marxism are those who present it as
needing a broader ethical foundation (e.g. the neo-Kantians) or as a
sociological application or subsystem of traditional materialism
(Bukharin).

By defining Marxism in this historicist/humanist way Gramsci
separates himself not only from Bukharin and Kautsky and from the
neo-Kantians but also from Plekhanov, the philosophical teacher of all
the Russian Marxists, who Lenin described as the author of the best that
had been written on philosophy in the international Marxist movement.

He breaks with the whole tradition of orthodox "scientistic" Marxism and this leads him to a critique of the standard presentation of issues which are of greatest importance for the theory of party: fatalism, prediction, and economic determinism. As we have frequently pointed out in this study fatalistic interpretations of Marxism have repeatedly hindered understanding of the role of the party, and it is one of Lenin's great achievements that he broke with the Second International's fatalist conception of organisation. But what distinguishes Gramsci from Lenin, Trotsky and other opponents of fatalism is that the latter never really confronted fatalism as such at a philosophical level. The basic argument was always avoided by introducing the time factor. Of course in the long run, they would say, the unity of the proletariat, the victory of socialism etc. is inevitable, but the question is how to speed this process up, what we should do now and so on. In this way the baleful effectss of fatalism were repeatedly warded off, but because of the concession of ultimate inevitability it was never fundamentally refuted.

In Gramsci however, although he recognises the historically "useful" role played by fatalism, there is no such basic equivocation.

"It should be noted how the deterministic, fatalistic, and mechanistic element has been a direct ideological 'aroma' emanating from the philosophy of praxis, rather like religion or drugs (in their stupefying effect).....(55)

In periods of defeat the fatalist view that "history is on our side," has been a great source of strength and resistance but when

the proletariat takes the stage as the active director of events (i.e. in a revolution) "mechanicism at a certain point becomes an imminent danger and a revision must take place in modes of thinking because a change has taken place in the social mode of existence.... if yesterday the subaltern element was a thing, today it is no longer a thing but an historical person, a protagonist; if yesterday it was not responsible, because "resisting" a will external to itself, now it feels itself to be responsible because it is no longer resisting but an agent necessarily active and taking the initiative." (56)

But despite its past "value" fatalism has always been a false consciousness to be rejected by Marxists.

"But even yesterday was it [the proletariat J:M] ever mere 'resistance' a mere 'thing', mere 'non-responsibility'? Certainly not. Indeed one should emphasize how fatalism is nothing other than the clothing worn by real and active will when in a weak position. This is why it is essential at all times to demonstrate the futility of mechanical determinism: for, although it is explicable as a naive philosophy of the mass and as such, but only as such, can be an intrinsic element of strength, nevertheless when it is adopted as a thought-out and coherent philosophy on the part of the intellectuals it becomes a cause of passivity, of idiotic self-sufficiency." (57)

For the deterministic Marxist the great strength of Marxism as against bourgeois ideology, is its ability to foresee the future because of its insight into the "laws of history". This claim is made by

Bukharin and it is a recurring theme in the writings of Trotsky and many others, but for Gramsci "to believe that one particular conception of the world, and of life generally, in itself possesses a superior predictive capacity is a crudely fatuous and superficial error." (58)

"In reality one can 'scientifically' foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of the struggle, which cannot but be the results of opposing forces in continuous movement, which are never reducible to fixed quantities since within them quantity is continually becoming quality. In reality one can 'foresee' to the extent that one acts, to the extent that one applies a voluntary effort and therefore contributes concretely to creating the result 'foreseen'. Prediction reveals itself not as a scientific act of knowledge, but as the abstract expression of the effort made, the practical way of creating a collective will". (59)

"It is certain that prediction only means seeing the present and the past clearly as movement. Seeing them clearly; in other words, accurately identifying the fundamental and permanent elements of the process. But it is absurd to think of a purely 'objective' prediction. Anybody who makes a prediction has in fact a 'programme' for whose victory he is working, and his prediction is precisely an element contributing to that victory.....This is in contrast with the habitual way of looking at the problem. For it is generally thought that every act of prediction presupposes the determination of laws of regularity similar to those of the natural

sciences. But since these laws do not exist in the absolute or mechanical sense that is imagined, no account is taken of the will of others, nor is its application 'predicted! Consequently everything is built on an arbitrary hypothesis and not on reality". (60)

If, for Gramsci, fatalism was akin to religion then economic determinism he regarded as little better than superstition and a complete vulgarisation of Marxism. Against economic determinism as a historical methodology he cites "the authentic testimony of Marx, the author of concrete political and historical works" (61) (The 18th Brumaire", "The Civil War in France etc) and points out: 1. "the difficulty of identifying at any given time, statically (like an instantaneous photographic image) the structure", (62) which is supposed to determine political actions. 2. the necessity for allowing for "error of calculation on the part of leaders". (63) 3. "that many political acts are due to internal necessities of an organisational character, that is they are tied to the need to give coherence to a party, a group, a society." (64) Economism or syndicalism as a tendency in the working class movement Gramsci sees as derivative more from Laissezfaire liberalism (65) (the free play of economic forces) than from Marxism which aims, through politics, at the subordination of economic forces to man's will. Syndicalism is the theory of an oppressed class "which is prevented by this theory from ever becoming dominant." (66) Ultra-left electoral abstentionism, absolute rejection of "compromises" and hostility to alliances are all

linked by Gramsci with economism in that they are all based on the conviction that economic laws (especially as manifested in capitalist crisis) will of themselves lead to socialism. To Gramsci this view of the role of economic crises was "out and out historical mysticism, the awaiting of a sort of miraculous illumination." (67) On the contrary "it may be ruled out that immediate economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events: they can simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life." (68)

For Gramsci a genuine Marxist analysis of a situation must be a concrete study of the relation of forces on the situation with a view to changing it. Such an analysis must incorporate, and distinguish, at least three "moments" or "levels";(69) 1: the "relation of social forces closely linked to the structure, objective, independent of human will and which can be measured with the systems of the exact or physical sciences". On this basis one can discover "whether in a particular society there exist the necessary and sufficient conditions for its transformation". 2: the relation of political forces: "an evaluation of the homogeneity, self awareness and organisation attained by the various social classes." 3: the relation of military forces. "Historical development", writes Gramsci, "oscillates continually between the first and the third moment with the mediation of the second," (70) and it is precisely with the second, mediating, moment of politics that he is particularly concerned.

Gramsci then, assigns to philosophies, conceptions of the world, and the ideas men hold, an important and active role in the making of history. Naturally this opens him to charges of voluntarism, and idealism (and such charges were frequently forthcoming in inner-party struggles), just as we have earlier charged Lukács. But in fact Gramsci is very different from Lukács. He is concerned not with philosophy in the abstract, but with the concrete historical development of particular philosophies and above all with their impact on the everyday thinking and "common sense" of the masses. "For a mass of people to be led to think coherently in the same coherent fashion about the present world is a 'philosophical' event far more important and 'original' than the discovery by some philosophical 'genius' of a truth which remains the property of small groups of intellectuals".

(71) Gramsci insists that "everyone is a philosopher, though in his own way and unconsciously" (72) but what is necessary is to transform that which is implicit, contradictory and fragmented in the masses, into a critical and systematic awareness which can result in the formation of a popular collective will to action. But a world outlook does not grow spontaneously in isolated individuals. The formation of a collective will requires a point of origin and a point of dissemination. There must be an active force working to develop it in both theory and practice.

D. The Modern Prince and the Dual Perspective.

The significance of Machiavelli for Gramsci is that he

represented a pioneering attempt in Italy to show how to create such a national collective will for the foundation of a new state (a unified bourgeois Italy). Machiavelli was a "precocious Jacobin", (73) who through the myth-figure of "The Prince" set out the political leadership, the strategy and the tactics necessary for the achievement of this end. The foundation of a new workers' state also requires such political leadership - a "modern prince". But Gramsci argues: "The modern prince..... cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form. History has already provided this organism, and it is the political party - the first cell in which there come together germs of a collective will tending to become universal and total". (74) Just as Machiavelli shows the necessary characteristics of a successful prince so Gramsci proceeds, basing himself throughout on the philosophical position we have outlined above, to discuss the necessary characteristics of the revolutionary party. Unfortunately this is not done systematically but in a series of very rich and complicated observations which are more or less disconnected and in which prescriptions for the Marxist party intermingle with analytical points about parties in general. Thus any relatively brief exposition of these ideas, such as this study, must necessarily attempt to pick out the main themes and give them a structure not present (at least explicitly) in the original. This must to

some extent be an arbitrary and unsatisfactory process but it is unavoidable.

A useful starting point for understanding the originality of Gramsci's theory is his notion of the "dual perspective" with which the party must operate. The term itself actually derives from Section XIII of the Theses on Tactics adopted, under the inspiration of Zinoviev, by the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern;(75) but it is clear that Gramsci invests the concept with much greater universal significance and deeper content than its originator intended. "The dual perspective", he writes, "can present itself on various levels, from the most elementary to the most complex: but these can all theoretically be reduced to two fundamental levels, corresponding to the dual nature of Machiavelli's Centaur - half animal and half-human. They are the levels of force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilisation, of the individual moment and the universal moment ('church' and 'state') of agitation and propaganda, of tactics and of strategy etc."(76) Gramsci resists any mechanical separation of the two levels, or any attempt to present them as successive stages, separate in time. The element of consent is always present in the application of force and the element of force is always present in the achievement of consent. The editors of the English edition of the Prison Notebooks comment: "Perhaps one can see here an attempt to theorise the struggle Gramsci had conducted in the PCI against Bordiga on the one hand and Tasca on the other. Bordiga in this schema would repre-

sent an undialectical isolation of the moment of force, domination etc., Tasca a parallel isolation of the moment of consent, hegemony; Gramsci sought to theorise the unity of the two perspectives." (77) But it is also true that just as in the revolutionary dialectic of destruction/reconstruction Gramsci emphasizes reconstruction so, while never losing sight of the moment of force, it is the moment of consent which Gramsci emphasizes and on which he develops his researches. The reason for this stress is partially polemical (i.e. the struggle against Bordigism) but primarily Gramsci's profound reappraisal of the tasks facing revolutionary parties as a result of the defeat of the post-war revolutionary wave, and the development of modern capitalism.

If the revolutionary party must pursue a "dual perspective" it is because the ruling class maintains itself by the same method - by a combination of dictatorship and hegemony which are respectively institutionalised in political state power and in civil society. But repressive state power and the institutions of civil society do not develop evenly or stand in the same relationship to each other at all times or in all countries. The revolutionary party must make a concrete analysis of this relationship and shape its strategy accordingly. In particular Gramsci believed that the post-war failure of the revolution in the West was the consequence of a basic difference between Russia and the West in this respect. "In Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once

revealed". (78) And also "in the case of the most advanced States.....

'civil society' has become a very complex structure and one which is resistant to the catastrophic 'incursions' of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc.)" (79) In Russia therefore the capitalist state stood isolated in its repressive functions and was susceptible to a speedy frontal attack, but in the West where capitalism was older and had struck much deeper roots in society a different strategy was required. Gramsci, using an analogy from military strategy, terms this "the war of position" as against the previous "war of manoeuvre". (80) At other points in the Notebooks Gramsci poses the question of transition from war of manoeuvre to war of position differently - not in terms of Russia and the West, but in terms of time scale. "In the present epoch the war of movement took place politically from March 1917 to March 1921; this was followed by a war of position".

(81) There need be no contradiction here as Gramsci may be suggesting that the war of manoeuvre was always inadequate for advanced capitalism but that it was only after the defeats of 1921 that this began to be realised (with the turn to the united front policy by the Comintern).

In contrast to the war of manoeuvre which offers the prospect of quick victory the war of position implies a long drawn out "reciprocal siege" (82) which demands an "unprecedented concentration of hegemony". (83) The struggle of the revolutionary party to undermine the consent given by the masses to the authority of the ruling class (which is secured through a thousand institutional and associational channels and penetrates deeply into everyday "common sense" thought)

and to establish its own hegemony must take place on three related levels. The first is the question of alliances: "The proletariat can become the leading and ruling class to the extent to which it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances which enables it to mobilise the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois state." (84) Such alliances, Gramsci points out, must inevitably contain an element of compromise. "If the union of two forces is necessary in order to defeat a third..... the only concrete possibility is compromise." (85) The aversion on principle of ultra-lefts to compromises and therefore to alliances is, he argues, a product of their fatalistic economism: "since favourable conditions are inevitably going to appear.... it is evident that any deliberate initiative tending to predispose and plan these conditions is not only useless but even harmful". (86) Gramsci, on the contrary, placed especial importance on the strategy of alliances because in Italy the revolution could be made only through an alliance of the northern proletariat and the southern peasantry - a question on which the record of Italian socialism was poor. The overcoming of all sectarian tendencies in the party is a precondition of its achieving hegemony. Thus it is not surprising that Gramsci was completely opposed to the tactics of the Stalinist "third period" although this was concealed at the time. (87)

The second level of the struggle for hegemony is that of the education of one's own forces. For the war of position it is not possible to rely solely on the mobilisation of the mass of workers behind immediate demands and slogans, rather they have to be won over at the

basic level of their world view and welded into a "permanently organised and long prepared force which can be put into the field at the favourable moment" (88). To do this the party must "never tire of repeating its own arguments (though offering literary variation of form): repetition is the best didactic means for working on the popular mentality [and must] work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of the populace"(89). This requires a correction of the balance between agitation and propaganda (in favour of propaganda) (90) for the party must not only be an expression of the class but must "react energetically [upon it] in order to develop, solidify and universalise [it].")91) Sectarian dogmatism in theory is fatal for such a work of "intellectual and moral reform" and Gramsci was always opposed for example, to the appearance of crude anti-clericalism in socialist propaganda. The raising of the intellectual level of the masses cannot be brought about by the imposition of dogma but must come through separating the element of "good sense" in their "common sense" from the element of confused prejudice and working to expand and develop it. This requires a sophisticated and non-economistic Marxist method.

The third level, which conditions the success of the first two, might be termed the struggle for the intellectuals, and this in turn has two aspects. First it is necessary to create a stratum of intellectuals "organic" to the working class. Here Gramsci is not using intellectual in the usual way to signify the man of letters, the

philosopher, the abstract thinker etc., but to refer to the worker who has a clear conception of the world and of his aims, is an active participant in practical life, a "permanent persuader", and constitutes the organising directive element in the working class.

In other words the proletarian counterpart to the organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie - the industrial technicians, the political economists, the judges and lawyers etc.(92) "In the modern world, technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual", (93) but since the education system is inevitably controlled by the bourgeoisie the practical basis of the development of the worker-intellectual must be the struggle for workers' control of production as exemplified by the Turin factory councils movement. Only through the creation of this stratum can a new conception of the world spread among the masses. The formation of "élites of intellectuals of a new type which arise directly out of the masses, but remain in contact with them to become, as it were, the whalebone in the corset. This... is what really modifies the 'ideological panorama' of the age." (94) But Gramsci is not utopian about this. He is fully aware, from his own experience, of the difficulty of intellectual labour and systematic study, especially for the worker, and recognises that the formation of worker-intellectuals is a long slow process that can be completed only after the conquest of state power.

It is also necessary, however, to carry out work in relation to non-proletarian intellectuals, though again Gramsci is clear about the limitations of this.

"The intellectuals develop slowly, much more slowly than any other social group, because of their own nature and historical role.... To think it possible that this type can, as a mass, break with the whole of the past in order to place itself wholeheartedly on the side of a new ideology, is absurd also for very many intellectuals taken individually, despite all the honest efforts they make and want to make. Now the intellectuals interest us as a mass, and not only as individuals. It is certainly important and useful for the proletariat that one or more intellectuals, individually, adhere to its programme and its doctrine, merge themselves with the proletariat, and become and feel themselves an integral part of it.... But it is also important and useful that a break of an organic kind, characterised historically, is caused inside the mass of intellectuals: that there is formed, as a mass formation, a left-wing tendency, in the modern sense of the word, that is, one which is orienated towards the revolutionary proletariat." (95)

This is necessary not only because it undermines the exercise of bourgeois hegemony in general but because Gramsci considers that the intellectuals play a key role in maintaining the system of alliances constructed by the ruling class with subordinate strata, and therefore can play a corresponding role in the system of alliances that must be constructed by the party of the proletariat. With regard to Italy, Gramsci analyses the role of intellectuals in the Southern agrarian bloc where they acted as mediators between the peasants and the big landowners; and argues that a left tendency among the intellectuals is one of the prerequisites for breaking this bloc and securing the alliance of the peasantry with the proletariat. In this connection

Gramsci notes that the more developed is the stratum of organic intellectuals of the proletariat the greater the pole of attraction the revolutionary party will constitute for the intellectuals in general, and that such intellectuals are likely to be repelled if presented with a vulgar materialist version of Marxist theory.

E. Spontaneity and Leadership.

Underlying the whole of Gramsci's theory of the party is his conception of the relationship of spontaneity and conscious leadership, which can be regarded, at least partially, as equivalent to the relationship between party and class, and which is the fundamental question of the Marxist theory of the party. His presentation of the problem is a clear advance on that which was achieved by Rosa Luxemburg, the early Lenin, or by Lukács, and corresponds most closely to the position of the mature Lenin. Gramsci begins with a critique of the very concept of pure spontaneity.

"It must be stressed that 'pure' spontaneity does not exist in history: it would come to the same thing as 'pure' mechanicity. In the 'most spontaneous' movement it is simply the case that the elements of 'conscious leadership' cannot be checked, have left no reliable document. It may be said that spontaneity is therefore characteristic of the 'history of the subaltern classes', and indeed of their most marginal and peripheral elements.....Hence in such movements there exist multiple elements of 'conscious leadership' but no one of them is predominant or transcends the level of a given social

stratum's 'popular science' - its 'common sense' or traditional conception of the world." (96)

Gramsci rejects those who counterpose this spontaneity to Marxism and who extol it as a political method. This a mistake in theory and in practice is based on a "vulgar contradiction" which betrays its manifest practical origin - i.e. the immediate desire to replace a given leadership by a different one." (97) But he is equally opposed to a disdainful attitude to mass spontaneity. "Neglecting, or worse still despising, so-called 'spontaneous' movements. i.e. failing to give them a conscious leadership or to raise them to a higher plane by inserting them into politics, may often have extremely serious consequences. It is almost always the case that a 'spontaneous' movement of the subaltern classes is accompanied by a reactionary movement of the right-wing of the dominant class, for concomitant reasons. An economic crisis, for instance, engenders on the one hand discontent among the subaltern classes and spontaneous mass movements, and on the other conspiracies among the reactionary groups, who take advantage of the objective weakening of the government in order to attempt coups d'état. Among the effective causes of the coups must be included the failure of the responsible groups to give any conscious leadership to the spontaneous revolts or to make them into a positive political factor". (98) Although Gramsci follows this with a reference to the rising of the Sicilian Vespers of 1282 (probably to divert the censor) he clearly has in mind the attitude of the PSI and of the Bordighists to the events of 1919-20 as a factor in permitting the triumph of Mussolini.

As an example of the correct relationship between spontaneity and conscious leadership Gramsci cites the work of the Ordine Nuovo group.

"The Turin movement was accused simultaneously of being 'spontaneist' and 'voluntarist' or Bersonian. This contradictory accusation, if one analyses it, only testifies to the fact that the leadership given to the movement was both creative and correct. This leadership was not 'abstract'; it neither consisted in mechanically repeating scientific or theoretical formulae, nor did it confuse politics, real action, with theoretical disquisition. It applied itself to real men, formed in specific historical relations, with specific feelings, outlooks, fragmentary conceptions of the world, etc. which were the result of 'spontaneous' combinations of a given situation of material production with the 'fortuitous' agglomeration within it of disparate social elements. The element of 'spontaneity' was not neglected and even less despised. It was educated, directed, purged of extraneous contaminations; the aim was to bring it in line with modern theory [Marxism] - but in a living and historically effective manner. The leaders themselves spoke of the 'spontaneity' of the movement and rightly so. This assertion was a stimulus, a tonic, an element of unification in depth; above all it denied that the movement was arbitrary, a cooked-up venture, and stressed its historical necessity. It gave the masses a 'theoretical' consciousness of being creators of historical and institutional values, of being founders of a State. This unity between 'spontaneity' and 'conscious leadership' or 'discipline'

is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, in so far as this is mass politics and not merely an adventure by groups claiming to represent the masses". (99)

As a result of this analysis Gramsci then raises what he calls "a fundamental theoretical question" which relates, though from a different angle, to Lenin's view in "What Is To Be Done?" that socialism must be introduced into the working class from the outside. Gramsci asks "can modern theory [Marxism] be in opposition to the 'spontaneous' feelings of the masses? ('Spontaneous in the sense that they are not the result of any systematic educational activity on the part of an already conscious leading group, but have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by 'common sense' i.e. by the traditional popular conception of the World.)" (100) Gramsci's answer: "It cannot be in opposition to them. Between the two there is a 'quantitative' difference of degree not one of quality. A reciprocal 'reduction' so to speak, a passage from one to the other and vice versa, must be possible." (101) The contrast between Gramsci's view, and that of both the early Lenin, and Lukács, should be clear. Gramsci establishes the link and reciprocal relationship (which is denied in "What Is To Be Done?" and "History and Class Consciousness") between the actual consciousness, experience and practice of the working class and potential socialist class consciousness. And he does this without falling into the opposite error of spontanism.

But Gramsci does not only deal with the strategic tasks of the party and with what its relationship should be to the mass of the

class, the "Prison Notebooks" also contain a number of comments on the organisation and internal life necessary for it to be able to play the role assigned to it. Indeed he goes so far as to say that "the way in which the party functions provides discriminating criteria" (102) for judging the party as a whole. "When the party is progressive it functions 'democratically' (democratic centralism); when the party is regressive it functions 'bureaucratically' (bureaucratic centralism)." (103)

At the same time, again in contrast to Lukács, there is no trace of utopianism in Gramsci's picture of the party and its membership. He begins by asserting the "primordial and (given certain general conditions [i.e. the existence of class society - J.M]) irreducible fact".....that there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led", (104) and that although this division has its origin in class divisions it operates also within socially homogeneous groups and therefore within parties. In line with this premiss Gramsci analyses the membership of the party as consisting of three elements:

"1. A mass element, composed of ordinary, average men, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organisational ability. Without these the party would not exist it is true, but it is also true that neither could it exist with these alone. They are a force in so far as there is somebody to centralise, organise and discipline them.....

"2. The principal cohesive element, which centralises nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left

to themselves would count for nothing. This element is endowed with great cohesive, centralising and disciplinary powers; also - and indeed this is perhaps the basis for the others - with the power of innovation....

"3. An intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually." (105)

Nor does Gramsci make any bones about the fact that of the three elements it is the second, the leadership, to which he attaches most importance. "It is also true that neither could this element form the party alone; however it could do so more than could the first element considered. One speaks of generals without any army but in reality it is easier to form an army than to form generals." (106)

However this "realism" is counter-balanced by another equally fundamental premiss. "In the formation of leaders...is it the intention that there should always be rulers and ruled, or is the objective to create the conditions in which this division is no longer necessary?" (107) Since Gramsci's aim is certainly the latter the authority of leadership, discipline, must not be based on "a passive and supine acceptance of orders, or the mechanical carrying out of an assignment (which, however, will still be necessary on particular occasions) but [on] the conscious and lucid assimilation of the directive to be accomplished." (108)

What must be achieved within the party, therefore, is "centralism in movement," - i.e. a continual adaptation of the organisation to the real movement, a matching of thrusts from below the orders from above,

a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank-and-file into the solid framework of the leadership apparatus."

(109)

"One of the most important questions concerning the political party," Gramsci argues is, "the party's capacity to react against force of habit".(110) Parties are created in order to prepare for crisis situations, to be able to act at historical turning points, but often they become routinised and are incapable of adapting themselves to new tasks. In this respect the main enemy is bureaucracy. "The bureaucracy is the most dangerously hidebound and conservative force; if it ends up by constituting a compact body, which stands on its own and feels itself independent of the mass of members, the party ends up by becoming anachronistic and at moments of acute crisis it is voided of its social content and left as though suspended in mid-air." (111) But this question also must not be viewed one-sidedly - there is the problem of habit and routine, there is also the need to maintain continuity and establish a tradition. "There is a danger of becoming 'bureaucratised' it is true, but every organic continuity presents this danger, which must be watched. The danger of discontinuity, of improvisation, is still greater." (112) Thus in the case of the internal life of the party, just as with the "dual perspective," and the relationship of the party to the class Gramsci envisages a dialectical unity between leaders and led, discipline and initiative, continuity and change.

F. A Provisional Assessment.

An overall assessment of Gramsci's theory of the party must first take into account a) the claims that have been made for it, and b) the interpretation of Gramsci on which such claims have been based. The intellectual recognition of Gramsci, outside Italy and especially in the English speaking world, has been belated but very warm, indeed almost uncritical, at least from certain leading strata of the Marxist intelligentsia. Eugene Genovese, for example, has described him as "the one theorist of genius who posed and faced Western socialism's most difficult problems"; (113) Achille Occhetto has called him "the theoretician of revolution in the West"; (114) Lucio Magri likewise writes, "Gramsci was the most important, perhaps the only Marxist to have confronted in the fullest theoretical terms the thematic imposed on the revolutionary movement in post-war Western Europe." (115) And John Merrington broadly endorses this estimation. (116)

But before ourselves assessing the validity of these judgements it is necessary to ask to what extent they are based on a, currently fashionable, "culturalist" interpretation of Gramsci. My meaning here can be explained by an analogy with the intellectual fate of Marx. In order to counter the them prevalent bourgeois idealism and utopian socialism Marx and Engels stressed "the economic factor" at the expense sometimes of its complex interaction with politics and ideology. As a result many of their "followers" took Marx and Engels to be, and became themselves, economic determinists. To which Marx

replied "if this is Marxism I'm no Marxist." Similarly, Gramsci stressed ideology to counteract the crude materialism and economism rampant in both the social democratic and communist movements. Have Gramsci's "followers" seized one-sidedly on this aspect of his theory to deprive it of its materialist foundations, eliminate economics, and discover a "new" idealist Marxism? This is certainly the case with Genovese who in a study which claims to be inspired by Gramsci can write "The assertion that only the working class can establish socialism is dogmatic nonsense," (117) and proceed to base his strategy for socialism in America on an appeal to the "new middle class" and the struggle for hegemony in the universities (provided incidentally that the latter does not infringe the right of the professor "to teach his course as he and he alone sees fit". (118)) Gwyn Williams also tends in this direction in his study on "Hegemony" (119) linking Gramsci to such figures as Iris Murdoch, Raymond Williams and William Morris, as does the Australian socialist Alastair Davison (120) for whom the major parallel figure is Herbert Marcuse, and who, to sustain his thesis, postulates a radical disjuncture between the early and late Gramsci. What unites all these writers in their interpretation and advocacy of Gramsci is the conviction that a) Gramsci's theory of the party represents a more or less complete break with Leninism, b) advanced capitalism has solved the problem of economic crises and therefore of poverty, unemployment etc. as a result of which the proletariat will no longer move independently into struggle against the system, except under the

guidance of an enlightened intelligentsia. Even Lucio Magri in a study on the revolutionary party (121) which is a much more serious work than those referred to above (and avoids their grosser distortions of Gramsci) nonetheless echoes and repeats precisely these same themes. (122) Indeed one is tempted to say that the popularity of Gramsci with intellectuals is due, at least in part, to the fact that they imagine he assigns them such a prominent role in the revolutionary process.

In fact the misreading of Gramsci involved in these perspectives is clear. Gramsci propounds a "dual perspective", force and consent, dictatorship and hegemony. His epigones notice only hegemony and lose sight of the moment of force. Gramsci calls for the creation of organic intellectuals of the proletariat and a left-wing tendency among the traditional intellectuals. The epigones stress the latter and forget about its prerequisite, the organic intellectuals. Gramsci points out that economic crisis do not of themselves cause revolutions. They, impressionistically, deny the existence of economic crises. Gramsci writes of the need to educate and give leadership to spontaneous movements, and the fatal stupidity of ignoring or despising them. They, precisely, "fail to see" and implicitly despise spontaneous movements. (In the case of Genovese his contempt for the American student revolt is explicit). But the basic error of all the "culturalist" interpretations of Gramsci is the failure to realise that the necessary prerequisite of the whole Gramscian strategy, war of position,

struggle for hegemony, the system of alliances etc. is the pre-existence of a Leninist proletarian party. Naturally Gramsci does not spell this out in his prison writings in such a way that misunderstanding is impossible; for one thing it would have brought the prison censorship down on his head, for another there was no need. His entire political practice over the seven years prior to his arrest made his position absolutely beyond doubt. In any case the necessary quotations are there in the Notebooks if one wants to look. Gramsci's Modern Prince is a development of Bolshevism not a break with it.

But these "diversions" apart what of the claim that Gramsci is "the theoretician of revolution in the west" taken in its own right? In one sense it is clearly exaggerated. At the most general level "the theoretician of revolution in the west" is Marx, more specifically this revolution has yet to occur and its accomplishment will require new theoreticians with answers to new problems. But in another sense the claim is well founded. Leninism proved itself in Russia and in so doing broke new ground of universal significance. It was Gramsci, through his analysis of the development of civil society and the deep roots of bourgeois hegemony, who saw more clearly than anyone else the basic difference between Russia and advanced capitalism and therefore the broadening of the framework of Leninism that would be necessary. Lenin and Trotsky, as Gramsci was aware, had by 1921 begun to sense the problem but Lenin was preoccupied with Russia and soon to die, and Trotsky, also beset with other difficulties, was unable to develop his

insights beyond the level of tactics. Gramsci, however, thought through the implications of his analysis as thoroughly and concretely as the isolation of his prison cell permitted. Moreover history has proved to be "on Gramsci's side" in this respect. Western capitalism has shown itself to possess far greater resilience than the theory of the early Comintern Marxists allowed for, and Gramsci's analysis of the expansion of bourgeois social control in his study of "Americanism and Fordism" reveal him as a profound prophet of new tendencies in capitalism. Philosophically, Gramsci has also been justified; by the publication of Marx's early writings and the *Grundrisse*, and by the numerous modern researches into Marxist philosophy. Can any serious Marxist today doubt the baleful influence of fatalism and economic determinism on the revolutionary movement? Other, later, Marxists approached if not equalled Gramsci in their insights into the structure of capitalist society and Marxist philosophy but Gramsci is distinguished from them all in that he, and he alone, was able to forge these insights into a coherent revolutionary strategy based on a development of the theory of the party. Gramsci is thus the only Marxist to have added anything fundamentally new to Lenin's theory of the party.

Nevertheless there remains a question mark over Gramsci's contribution. His ideas have never been applied in practice. (Unless one regards the reformism and popular frontism of the post-war PCI as an example of Gramscian practice (124)). Like Machiavelli he was not himself in a position to change reality - "only of showing concretely how the historical forces ought to have acted in order to be effective."

(125) Nor have Gramsci's ideas found other hands to take them up and apply them, and what is more they could not have done so. As we have already stated Gramscian strategy requires as its starting point the existence of a Leninist party but the combined effects of the long post-war boom and the ravages of Stalinism have meant that such parties have not in fact existed. The basic principles of Bolshevism can within certain limits (and they are quite narrow limits) guide the activity of a small organisation or even a tiny group. This is not the case with the ideas of Gramsci. The war of manoeuvre, like guerrilla war, can be waged with relatively small forces but the war of position demands a mass army. Without a mass party alliances will not be alliances between classes in a historical bloc but mere temporary co-operation between groups, which may often serve only to blur theoretical and programmatic differences. Without a mass proletarian base the formation of organic intellectuals and the struggle to win over traditional intellectuals will not as intended, strengthen proletarian hegemony, but will degenerate into scholastic intellectualism and academicism. Gramsci, it must be remembered, wrote against a background in which basic ideas of socialism were very widely spread in the working class and the PCI had been founded with a membership of about 40,000 of whom 98% were workers and less than $\frac{1}{2}\%$ (245 in all) intellectuals. (126) To imagine that his ideas can be simply transferred to a situation in which the revolutionary movement is overloaded with students and petty bourgeois and has only the slenderest roots in

the working class is crassly ahistorical. The result is that whereas Lenin can be judged by the Bolshevik party, Luxemburg by Spartacism, Trotsky by the Fourth International there has been no such tangible embodiment of the "Modern Prince". We do not really know what the war of position looks like in its practical details. Thus any judgement of Gramsci's theory of the party must be a provisional rather than final one. If one is impressed and convinced, as it is hard not to be, by the coherence, depth, subtlety and concreteness of Gramsci's ideas then one must hold that they will face their decisive test in the future when advanced Western Capitalism is once again confronted by mass revolutionary workers' parties.

III Postscript: Lukács and Gramsci.

With both Lukács and Gramsci it was their philosophical position that formed the basis of their theories of the party. Both were original and profound philosophical thinkers, probably the greatest produced by the Marxist movement in the twentieth century. And yet there is an enormous gap between their respective achievements. Why is Gramsci so decisively superior Lukács? The answer, which is of great significance for Marxist philosophy itself, does not lie in Gramsci's superior intellect but in his practice, in his much more intimate connection with the workers movement and his total commitment to the world of action. It was this that gave Gramsci's thought its "this-sidedness". "Gramsci was saved from any idealist or formal solution by his close grounding in political reality". (127)

CHAPTER 6.

Trotsky versus Stalin: the Defense of Leninism.

There can be no doubt that of all the Marxist interpretations of the theory of the party it is Stalin's which, in terms of embodiment in a large number of mass organisations, has been most "successful." It is the Stalinist conception of the party which has passed most widely into the popular consciousness and has exercised the most powerful pole of both attraction and repulsion for millions of workers and intellectuals. It would seem necessary therefore that Stalin's theory of the party should be the subject of a substantial analysis in a work such as this. In fact my intention is to deal with Stalin not directly in his own right, but indirectly, through an account of the theory of his main Marxist adversary Leon Trotsky.

This requires some preliminary justification.

In the first place Stalin neither possessed nor claimed to possess an independent or original theory of the party. Nor did he make or claim to make any substantial advances on or additions to the existing body of theory. He simply presented himself as the most orthodox representative and disciple of the Leninist theory of the party. In other fields Stalin did make certain attempts at innovation (e.g. his "Economic Problems of Socialism") but not on the question of the party. His originality, if such it may be called, lay entirely in the sphere of practice. Secondly Stalinist "theory" frequently amounts to nothing more or less than a vast historical lie. When Stalin writes about "combating bureaucracy" or "implanting inner party democracy" (1) within either the CPSU or the Soviet State he is quite simply lying, and one cannot debate or analyse a lie in the same

way that one does a theoretical proposition. It is not possible for example to discuss Stalin's critique of the Trotskyist or Bukharinist oppositions in terms of the merits of his theoretical arguments, their logic, consistency etc. for it was not based on argument or logic but on gross distortion and falsification. Thirdly, and most importantly, with Stalin theory and practice no longer stand in the same relationship as they did in classical Marxism. For Marx, Lenin or Gramsci, theory was "not a dogma, but a guide to action", to use Engels much quoted phrase. Theory was a means of understanding the world in order to change it. For Stalin however this relationship was reversed. Theory comes after the event as a means of justifying and apologising for actions taken for quite other reasons. For example the line of the international Communist movement on the Second World War was based not on an analysis of the class forces behind the war but solely on the national interests of the Russian state. Consequently while Stalin was allied to Hitler it was an "imperialist war" but the moment Hitler invaded Russia it became a "people's war". In other words with Stalin Marxist theory is transformed into an ideology, in the worst sense of the word; a conservative and ossified "system" serving to mask and defend the status quo.

All this is not meant to suggest that an analysis of Stalinist ideology, even Stalin's theory of the party, is in any way impossible, (2) merely that it would require a very different approach from that employed in the rest of this study. Above all it would involve revealing the reality, both in effects and aims, which underlay the

various theoretical excursions. In so far as this task remains necessary it can be achieved through an account of the work of Trotsky who, for all his "lack of success", has the advantage of having made a genuine and honest contribution to the development of Marxist theory.

Trotsky divided from Stalin over two basic issues; the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian state and the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country". The two issues were of course connected. The bureaucracy arose in the Soviet state to fill a political and administrative vacuum created by the exhaustion and dispersal of the revolutionary proletariat as a result of the cumulative sufferings of the 1st World War, the revolution, and the Civil War and the accompanying economic devastation, famine, epidemics, and physical annihilation. (3) This bureaucracy, consisting in large part of careerists, administrators taken over from the old regime, ex-Mensheviks, and long declassed workers, wanted above all an end to upheavals and business-as-usual. They had no interest in what seemed to them the romantic and dangerous adventure of world revolution. Thus the theory of socialism in one country was not a mere Stalinist invention. On the contrary "it expressed unmistakeably the mood of the bureaucracy. When speaking of the victory of socialism, they meant their own victory". (4)

This then was a dispute over fundamentals; as deep as the split between communism and social democracy. It involved two completely different and opposed conceptions of socialism. For Trotsky

as for Marx and Lenin, socialism was a classless, state-less self-governing community based on an abundance of material goods in which "the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all". Dictatorship, state planning, economic growth and efficiency, iron discipline etc. were means to this end (means from which Trotsky did not shrink)but not ends in themselves. For Stalin, as for the bureaucracy of which he was the prime representative, socialism was identified precisely with nationalisation, state control and the economic and military growth of Russia into a front rank world power. From Trotsky's point-of-view a degree of bureaucratisation was perhaps unavoidable but it remained an ever present danger to be closely watched and dispensed with as soon as possible.

From Stalin's it was the essential core and foundation of the new regime. Given Trotsky's conception of socialism the project of its realization in one country, and backward Russia at that, was a reactionary utopia. Given Stalin's it was the only practical and realistic perspective. Being a dispute about fundamentals, and being waged by leaders who thought their ideas through to the end and acted on them, this conflict necessarily expanded to the point where it affected every event, and every policy in the life of the international working class movement, including of course the nature, role, strategy and tactics of the revolutionary party and the revolutionary international. It is Trotsky's struggle against Stalin on questions relating to the party that we shall now explore before going on to

discuss Trotsky's conception of the party in its own right.

A: Democracy and the Party.

The gradual bureaucratisation of the Soviet state in the absence of an energetic and politically active working class necessarily raised the question of the bureaucratisation of the Communist Party - and the destruction of its inner party democracy. For although there was a formal separation between state (soviet) and party institutions the Bolsheviks constituted in reality a state party. Since the civil war the party had maintained a complete political monopoly and control over all key posts. Consequently if the state machine was becoming bureaucratised it could not fail also to have an effect in the party. What made this so crucial was that the party, as the vanguard of the proletariat with its core of incorruptible old Bolsheviks, its revolutionary tradition, its maximum earnings rule, (5) and its strict discipline, was generally conceived of as the main bulwark against bureaucracy If the party succumbed there would, given the passivity of the workers, be no further line of defense. It was in 1923 that Trotsky felt the situation had become so serious that he had to launch an open struggle for democracy within the party.

There was much in Trotsky's past that made him appear ill-suited to the role of defender of party democracy. In the first place there was the fact that Trotsky had sided with the Mensheviks in the 1903 split, had polemicised bitterly with Lenin throughout the pre-war period, and until 1917 had rejected the Leninist theory of the

party. On the other hand since 1917, and especially since the Civil War Trotsky had stood definitely on the disciplinarian and authoritarian side of the party, emphasizing that Marxists "do not make a fetish of democracy" (6) and condemning the "Workers' Opposition" group. He had even clashed with Lenin along these lines in the "trade-union dispute" of 1921 when Trotsky had called for the militarisation of labour and the statisation of the trade unions denying the unions the right to defend themselves against their own state. (7) These past positions could easily be used, and were, to discredit Trotsky's arguments and suggest that he was motivated by personal ambition.

What then lay behind Trotsky's change of position? Isaac Deutscher argues that "he was grappling all this time with a dilemma which occupied the party as a whole.....the dilemma between authority and freedom. Trotsky was almost equally sensitive to the claims of both. As long as the revolution was struggling for bare survival he put authority first.....Yet even in this phase the socialist 'libertarian' was alive and awake in him....He sought to strike a balance between Bolshevik discipline and proletarian democracy; and the more the balance was tipped in favour of the former, the more was he inclined to uphold the latter. The decisive shifts which upset the balance occurred in the years 1921-23; and in these years he gradually came to put the claims of inner-party democracy against those of discipline".

(8) But in addition to these general tendencies there were two specific factors: a) the fact that in 1923 Lenin was seriously ill, and party leadership had passed into the hands of Zinoviev, Kamenev

and Stalin - the so-called Troika. Trotsky revered and trusted Lenin and knew that Lenin was keenly aware of the bureaucratic danger; (9) he profoundly distrusted the Troika. b) the failure of the German CP, acting under the guidance of Zinoviev, to seize the revolutionary opportunities of Autumn 1923. This simultaneously confirmed the Soviet state in its isolation thereby increasing the danger of bureaucratic degeneration and reinforced Trotsky's suspicions about the party leadership. It was this last event which finally impelled Trotsky to come out into the open with a series of articles for Pravda collectively entitled "The New Course". (10)

The tone of "The New Course" is cautious and some of the formulations are hesitant but in many respects it is an admirable presentation of the case for democracy within the revolutionary party and is of lasting value. Trotsky does not pose the question of democracy as an abstract right but locates its necessity in the development of the party and the new historical stage being entered. First he examines relations between the old and new generation (pre-and post-October) of party members. "The conquest of power was followed by a rapid, even abnormal, growth of the party." (11) There was an influx both of inexperienced workers with little consciousness and of certain alien elements, functionaries and hangers-on. "In this chaotic period, [the party] was able to preserve its Bolshevik nature only thanks to the internal dictatorship of the Old Guard, which had been tested in October." (12) But since then the situation had changed. The party had

purged itself of the climbers, (13) and now the new generation, for the sake of its own political development and for the future of the party as a whole, must be drawn actively into the political life and decision making process of the party. Then Trotsky looks at the social composition of the party showing how the need to fill administrative posts with workers led to the weakening of "its fundamental cells, the factory nuclei", (14) and this was an important source of bureaucratism. Trotsky argues for the necessity of strengthening the proletarian base of the party and for the use of the students and youth as a force against bureaucracy.

On the necessity of internal democracy Trotsky writes; "The essential incomparable advantage of our party consists in its being able, at every moment, to look at industry with the eyes of the communist machinist, the communist specialist, the communist director, and the communist merchant, collect the experience of these mutually complementary workers, draw conclusions from them, and thus determine its line for directing economy in general and each enterprise in particular. It is clear that such leadership is realizable only on the basis of a vibrant and active democracy inside the party". (15) These remarks are directed to a party in power and in a specific situation but the principle contained in them, the necessity of democracy for correct leadership, is of general validity.

The main burden of the leadership's answer to Trotsky's criticism was an outraged defense of the great traditions of the Old Guard and an emphasis on the imperative need for party unity and

the dangers of factionalism. Trotsky's reply points out that "tradition" has a negative as well as a positive side in the revolutionary movement. Citing numerous examples, including the stand of the Old Bolsheviks against Lenin's April Theses, he argues that Bolshevism's "most precious fundamental tactical quality is its unequalled aptitude to orient itself rapidly, to change tactics quickly, to renew its armament and to apply new methods, in a word, to carry out abrupt turns", (16) and that no tradition, however revolutionary, in itself provides infallible supra-historical guarantees against degeneration. On the question of factions Trotsky recognises the great danger of factionalism in the situation, and the possibility that factional differences may rapidly come to reflect the pressure of social and class forces hostile to the proletariat but contends that an undemocratic party regime is in itself a cause of factionalism. "The leading organs of the party must lend an ear to the voice of the broad party mass, not consider every criticism as a manifestation of factional spirit, and thereby drive conscientious and disciplined communists to maintain a systematic silence or else constitute themselves as factions". (17)

The essence of Trotsky's case in "The New Course", is that "it is in contradic-tions and differences of opinion that the working out of the party's public opinion inevitably takes place. To localize this process only within the apparatus which is then charged to furnish the party with the fruit of its labours in the form of slogans, orders etc. is to sterilize the party ideologically and politically". (18)

At the same time the claims of authority in the immensely difficult objective situation still exercise a strong hold over Trotsky. While demanding inner-party democracy he nonetheless accepts that "We are the only party in the country and, in the period of the dictatorship, it could not be otherwise". (19) And in so doing Trotsky participated in the current practice of raising to the level of a general principle what was originally envisaged as a merely temporary measure due to the extraordinary situation of the Civil War. Max Schachtman, an erstwhile follower of Trotsky, sees in this a fundamental contradiction. "Trotsky.....gave no sign of realizing.. that the denial of democratic rights to those outside the party could be enforced only by the denial, sooner or later, of the same rights to the members of that very party itself. For this is a veritable law of politics; every serious difference of opinion in a serious political party entails an appeal - direct or indirect, explicit or implicit, deliberate or unintentioned - to one or other segment of the people outside this party". (20) This is a substantial point but it does not really undermine Trotsky's whole position. There is no doubt that in the long run, "sooner or later", dictatorship by one party will lead to dictatorship within the party, but, as Trotsky often says, in politics time is an important factor. From Trotsky's point of view the Bolsheviks were engaged in an exceptionally difficult and delicate holding operation: between "sooner" and "later" there was the possibility of relief from the international revolution.

This said, however, it must also be recognised that the

contradictory pressures on Trotsky - the fear of splitting the party and encouraging the counter revolution, and the desire to fight against the party's Stalinization - produced ambiguities and contradictions in his thought. For a whole period - that following Lenin's death - he seems to have lost his nerve. He endorsed the "Lenin Levy", (21) which he was later to describe as a "manoeuvre to dissolve the revolutionary vanguard in raw human material....a death blow to the party of Lenin". (22) He remained silent over the non-implementation and partial suppression of Lenin's political "Testament". Trotsky's dilemma is best expressed in the statement he made to the Thirteenth Congress of the party in May 1924 when Zinoviev demanded he recant his views. "Comrades, none of us wishes to be or can be right against the party. In the last instance the party is always right, because it is the only historic instrument which the working class possesses for the solution of its fundamental tasks. I have said already that nothing would be easier than to say before the party that all these criticisms and all these declarations, warnings and protests were mistaken from beginning to end. I cannot say so, however, because, comrades, I do not think so. I know that one ought not to be right against the party. One can be right only with the party and through the party because history has not created any other way for the realization of one's rightness. The English have the saying 'My Country, right or wrong'. With much greater justification we can say: My party, right or wrong - wrong on certain partial, specific issues or at certain moments".(23)

One is reminded here of the position Lukács got himself into with his theory of class consciousness and indeed the dilemma of opposing the party was one which confronted, and often crushed, many old Bolsheviks. In all probability it was this as much as, or as well as, torture and fear which produced the absurd confessions of the Moscow Trials. But with Trotsky there is a difference. His problem in 1923-24 was part political, part moral, part tactical, but not fundamentally theoretical. Theoretically he had already seen with some clarity the possibility and the causes of the party's degeneration. Consequently as Stalin extended his despotic control over the party and the country and as his policy diverged ever further from revolutionary Marxism so the ambiguity in Trotsky's position gradually disappeared. The calls for party democracy became more insistent and the opposition to Stalin's organisational methods became irreconcilable.

The 1927 Platform of the Joint Opposition signed by Trotsky, Zinoviev and eleven other members of the Central Committee contains a ringing indictment of the party regime:

"The last few years have seen a systematic abolition of inner-party democracy - in violation of the whole tradition of the Bolshevik party, in violation of the direct decisions of a series of party congresses. The genuine election of officials is in actual practice dying out. The organizational principles of Bolshevism are being perverted at every step. The party constitution is being systematically changed, to increase the volume of rights at the top, and diminish the rights of

the branches at the bottom.

"The leadership of the regional committees, the regional executive committees, the regional trade union councils etc. are, in actual fact, irremovable....The right of each member of the party, of each group of party members, to 'appeal its radical differences to the court of the whole party', (Lenin) is in actual fact annulled. Congresses and conferences are called without a preliminary free discussion (such as was always held under Lenin) of all questions by the whole party. The demand for such a discussion is treated as a violation of party discipline....

"The dying out of inner-party democracy leads to a dying out of workers' democracy in general - in the trade unions, and in all other non-party mass organisations". (24)

In this "Platform" the analysis, warnings and suggestions of "The New Course" have crystallized into programmatic demands; prepare for the Fifteenth Congress upon a basis of real inner-party democracy; every comrade and group of comrades to have an opportunity to defend their point of view before the party; improve the social composition by admitting into the party only workers from the factories and the land; proletarianize and cut down the party apparatus; reinstate immediately the expelled Oppositionists; reconstruct the Central Control Committee, independently of the apparatus. But at this stage the condemnation and the demands still operate within the framework of complete loyalty to the Russian Communist Party and acceptance of its political monopoly. "We will struggle with all our force against the formation of two parties, for the dictatorship of

the proletariat demands as its very core a single proletarian party".(15)

By 1933, after the paralysis of the Comintern in the face of Hitler (see below) and the total liquidation of all opposition and criticism in Russia, Trotsky abandoned this last constraint. Declaring that the Bolshevik Party of Lenin had been completely destroyed by Stalinism he called for the building of revolutionary parties anew and the overthrow of the bureaucracy by political revolution. In 1936 in his major work "The Revolution Betrayed", Trotsky was able to make a completely unequivocal exposition of his views on party democracy.

"The inner regime of the Bolshevik party was characterized by the method of democratic centralism. The combination of these two concepts, democracy and centralism, is not in the least contradictory. The party took watchful care not only that its boundaries should always be strictly defined, but also that all those who entered these boundaries should enjoy the actual right to define the direction of the party policy. Freedom of criticism and intellectual struggle was an irrevocable content of the party democracy. The present doctrine that Bolshevism does not tolerate factions is a myth of the epoch of decline. In reality the history of Bolshevism is a history of the struggle of factions. And, indeed, how could a genuinely revolutionary organization, setting itself the task of overthrowing the world and uniting under its banner the most audacious iconoclasts fighters and insurgents, live and develop without intellectual conflicts, without groupings and temporary factional formations? The farsightedness of the Bolshevik leadership often made it possible to soften

conflicts and shorten the duration of factional struggle, but no more than that. The Central Committee relied upon this seething democratic support. From this it derived the audacity to make decisions and give orders. The obvious correctness of the leadership at all critical stages gave it that high authority which is the priceless moral capital of centralism.

"The regime of the Bolshevik party, especially before it came to power, stood thus in complete contradiction to the regime of the present sections of the Communist International, with their "leaders" appointed from above, making complete changes of policy at a word of command, with their uncontrolled apparatus, haughty in its attitude to the rank and file, servile in its attitude to the Kremlin". (26)

Trotsky not only restores the original Bolshevik position on factions but also breaks with the doctrine of the one-party state. "In the beginning the party had wished and hoped to preserve freedom of political struggle within the framework of the Soviets. The civil war introduced stern amendments into this calculation. The opposition parties were forbidden one after another. This measure, obviously in conflict with the spirit of Soviet democracy, the leaders of Bolshevism regarded not as a principle but as an episodic act of self-defense".(27) He rejects the identification of class dictatorship with party dictatorship. "Since a class has many 'parts' - some look forward and some back - one and the same class may create several parties. For the same reason one party may rest upon parts of different classes. An example of only one

party corresponding to one class is not to be found in the whole course of political history - provided, of course, you do not take the police appearance for the reality". (28) And the 1938 programme of the Fourth International states: "Democratization of the soviets is impossible without legalization of soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties". (29)

When one surveys the record of Trotsky's struggle for workers' democracy in the Russian Communist Party and the Russian state it is clear that he made many mistakes. With the benefit of hindsight one can say that he should have begun his resistance earlier, that there were times when he made a virtue out of necessity, that in 1923-24 he should have fought more energetically and consistently, that he should have appealed sooner to the rank-and-file of the party and sooner to the mass of workers themselves. Many of these criticisms may be justified but they are also one-sided for they neglect the immense difficulties of the situation which Trotsky faced, in particular the deep passivity of the Russian workers, including the mass of party members, during this period. Also Trotsky clearly considered it the duty of revolutionaries, in the absence of any existing alternative, to remain loyal to the party of the revolution to the last possible moment. This was a weighty consideration much easier to dismiss when the degeneration has run its course than in the midst of the struggle. A balanced view must recognise the immense achievement of Trotsky in defending and preserving the Marxist and Leninist tradition of party democracy, of the party as a collective and living organism,

against enormous odds, without collapsing, as did so many others, into either social democratic or anarchist rejection of democratic centralism and the vanguard party. Without Trotsky the Stalinist concept of the authoritarian and monolithic party would have remained effectively unchallenged in the Marxist movement.

B: "Socialism in One Country" and the Parties of the International.

The theory of "socialism in one country" was proclaimed by Stalin in the autumn of 1924 in direct violation of the traditions of Marxism from Engels in 1847 (30) to the first edition of Stalin's "Foundations of Leninism". (Spring 1924) which argued as follows:

"The overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian government in one country does not yet guarantee the complete victory of socialism. The main task of socialism - the organisation of socialist production - still remains ahead. Can this task be accomplished, can the final victory of socialism in one country be attained, without the joint efforts of the proletariat of several advanced countries? No this is impossible. To overthrow the bourgeoisie, - the efforts of one country are sufficient - the history of the revolution bears this out. For the final victory of socialism, for the organisation of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of such a peasant country as Russia are insufficient. For this the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are necessary". (31)

As we said "socialism in one country" expressed the mood of the bureaucracy. It was also a response, a capitulationist response, to the ebb of the post-war revolutionary wave in Europe. We have already indicated the fundamental implication of this theory for the conception of socialism, it is also necessary to see what it signified in practice. Because the international revolution was transformed from a vital necessity for the survival of the soviet state into an optional extra (and ultimately into a potential embarrassment as the rule and privileges of the bureaucracy became more pronounced) so the role of the Communist International was equally transformed. In the eyes of Moscow, though not of course in the eyes of its international membership, the Comintern changed from a world party of socialist revolution into a world organisation for the furtherance and defence of the interests of the Russian State (i.e. the interests of the Russian bureaucracy) until in the end it lost all usefulness and was dissolved as a gesture of goodwill to the Allies in 1943. This entailed the transfer of the organisational methods employed by Stalin in Russia into the International as a whole in order to ensure the existence of thoroughly compliant leaderships, and it also had a devastating effect on the "domestic" policies of the national sections of the International. To Trotsky, an internationalist to the core, the fate of the Comintern and its constituent parties was of no less concern than the fate of the Russian party, thus disputes about the strategy and tactics of the "foreign" Communist Parties loomed large in Trotsky's struggle against Stalin.

The issues taken up by Trotsky, even those relating directly to the theory of the party, are so numerous that they cannot all be dealt with here. Considerations of space permit only the discussion of certain particularly "instructive" examples. In the period 1925-1927 two questions arose which were of considerable historical and theoretical significance and can be subsumed under the heading of "the independence of the party". They were the British General Strike and case of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, and the Chinese Revolution.

The British Communist Party was a small and inexperienced organisation essentially on the fringe of the British political scene. In stark contrast to this stood the British trade unions, the largest and most solidly based in the capitalist world. Given the orientation which saw the only threat to socialism in one country as being foreign intervention, the leaders of the British TUC with their "mass" following began to appear to Moscow as much more effective and influential allies in the struggle to prevent that intervention than was the CPGB. The Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee made up of the councils of the British and Russian trade unions and formed in mid-1925 rapidly became the focus for this perspective. It began to be discussed amongst the Soviet leadership whether the revolution might not "enter Britain through the broad gateway of the trade union rather than through the narrow path of the Communist Party". (32) Soon the Committee came to be invested with great significance. In 1926 it was described by Stalin as "the organisation of a broad movement of the Working class against new

imperialist wars in general and against an intervention in our country, especially on the part of England, the mightiest of the imperialist states of Europe". (33) This manoeuvre, however, coincided with the preparation and outbreak of the British General Strike, which the anti-imperialist" leaders of the TUC including the "lefts" promptly and openly sabotaged. This "unfortunate" occurrence however was in no way permitted to effect the Anglo-Russian Committee which continued undisturbed through 1927 until it was finally discarded by the TUC. Apart from the fact that the Committee served to enhance the revolutionary credibility of TUC left reformists such as Purcell and Hicks in the eyes of the British workers without committing them to any action, its worst defect was the effect it had on the British CP. Because of their "good line on Russia" the CP abstained from any criticism of the left union leaders in the period of preparation for the strike and issued no warnings of the treacherous role they would play in a crisis. During the strike itself the CP put forward the totally confused slogan "All power to the General Council" which besides its syndicalist character could only bolster illusions in the latter body as the genuine leaders of the movement.

Trotsky had no truck with this scheme from beginning to end. In "Where is Britain Going?" (34) in 1925 he had already expounded at length on the counter revolutionary nature of the British Labourist tradition and its trade union counterparts. At every turning point in the struggle he demanded the Russian Trade Unions make a demonstrative break with the Committee so as to free the CP for a political struggle

against the union leaders. In 1928 he summed up the episode as follows:

"The point of departure of the Anglo-Russian Committee.... was the impatient urge to leap over the young and too slowly developing Communist Party. This invested the entire experience with a false character even prior to the general strike.....

"From beginning to end, the entire policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee, because of its false line, provided only aid to the General Council..... As the upshot of the greatest revolutionary movement in England since the days of Chartism the English Communist Party has hardly grown while the General Council sits in the saddle even more firmly than before the general strike.....

"It is the worst and most dangerous thing if a manoeuvre arises out of the impatient opportunistic endeavour to outstrip the development of one's own party and to leap over the necessary stages of its development (it is precisely here that no stages must be leaped over) by binding, combining, and uniting superficially, fraudulently, diplomatically, through combinations and trickery, organizations and elements that pull in opposite directions. Such experiments, always dangerous, are fatal to young and weak parties.

In a manoeuvre, as is in a battle, what decides it not strategic wisdom alone (still less the cunning of combinationists), but the relationship of forces. Even a correctly contrived manoeuvre is, generally speaking, all the more dangerous for a revolutionary party, the younger and weaker the latter is in relation to its enemies, allies and semi-allies. That is why - and we arrive here at a point which is of paramount importance for the Comintern - the Bolshevik party did not at

all begin with manoeuvring as a panacea but came to it, grew into it in the measure that it sunk its roots deeply into the working class, became strong politically and matured ideologically". (35)

The policy of Stalin and the Comintern on China derived from the same mainspring as its policy on Britain - the search for a more influential ally than the local Communist Party - only in this case the consequences were far more catastrophic and the theoretical issues involved much wider. Basing himself on Lenin's pre-1917 slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry". Stalin argued that the coming revolution in China could only be national and bourgeois democratic in content. From this he drew the conclusion that leadership of the revolution would come from Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-Shek's bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang which he described as a "workers' and peasants' party". The Kuomintang was admitted to the Comintern as an associate member and the Chinese Communist Party was instructed to join it, accept its discipline, and refrain from all criticism of the ideology of "Sun Yat-Senism" or the Kuomintang leadership.

Trotsky, the author of the theory of "permanent revolution", was naturally completely opposed to this strategy. The Chinese bourgeoisie, he argued, no more than the Russian would be capable of waging a consistent struggle against imperialism. Inevitably they would turn against the workers, the peasants and the Communists at the decisive moment. The notion that the Kuomintang was a "workers' and peasants' party", or that there could be such a two-class party, Trotsky dismissed as an illusion

which served to mask the domination by the bourgeoisie of all such parties. Only the Communist Party as the party of the Chinese proletariat could successfully accomplish even the tasks of the national revolution. So ran Trotsky's basic perspective which inevitably raised all the old disputes about permanent revolution to a new fever pitch. But he was also able to concede to his opponents the bourgeois nature of the Chinese Revolution and still attack their policy on the basis of Lenin and the history of the Bolshevism. Stalin's policy, as Trotsky repeatedly pointed out was a recapitulation not of Bolshevik, but of Menshevik tactics for a bourgeois revolution. Trotsky quoted Lenin on this very point:

"Our revolution is bourgeois revolution, the workers must support the bourgeoisie - say the worthless politicians from the camp of the liquidators. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, say we who are Marxists. The workers must open the eyes of the people to the fraud of the bourgeois politicians, teach them not to place trust in promises and to rely on their OWN forces, on their OWN 'organisation', on their OWN unity, and on their OWN weapons alone". (36)

And commented "This Leninist thesis is compulsory for the Orient as a whole. It must by all means find a place in the programme of the Comintern". (37) Trotsky insisted that the independence of the party was the prerequisite for any strategy at all. "In order to have the right to speak about the struggle for the Bolshevik path of the democratic revolution, one must possess the principle instrument of proletarian policy: an independent proletarian party which fights under its own banner and never permits its policy and organisation to be dissolved

in the policy and organisation of other classes". (38)

Not surprisingly these warnings from Trotsky and the Opposition were systematically ignored and suppressed as were the repeated protests of Chen Tu-hsiu, leader of the Chinese party but almost immediately their worst fears were confirmed. In spring 1927 the workers of Shanghai rose and took control of the city but Stalin ordered the Communists to hand it over to Chiang Kai-shek and lay down their arms. Chiang responded to this gesture by promptly slaughtering the Communists and workers by the thousand in a massacre which beheaded the Chinese proletariat for a generation. It was under the impact of this disaster that when the International Left Opposition drew up its programme in February 1933 the first point read; "1. The Independence of the Proletarian Party, always and under all conditions; condemnation of the Kuomintang policy of 1924-1928; condemnation of the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; condemnation of Stalin's theory of two-class (worker and peasant) parties and the whole practice based on this theory". (39)

C. The United Front and The Popular Front.

Up to this point Trotsky's critique of Comintern policy was entirely from the "left". He could therefore be characterised, provided the evidence was not examined too closely, as a consistent "leftist" or "ultra-left", a revolutionary romantic, or more sophisticatedly as the "theorist of the frontal assault", (Gramsci); in any event as someone broadly akin to the rigid Bordiga. But the course of Trotsky's next major struggle against the international policies of Stalinism, over

Communist policy in the fight against fascism in Germany, refutes any such simplified interpretation. In this dispute it was Stalin and the official leadership who were cast in the role of ultra-lefts and Trotsky who was attacking from the "right". It was also another example of the subordination of the Comintern and the needs of the international working class to the interests of the Russian bureaucracy, but in this case it was not the interests of the Russian state which were served but the needs of Stalin's ruling faction in an inner party struggle.

The background to the Comintern's German policy was Stalin's turn against the Bukharinist right-wing within Russia in 1928. Having crushed the Left Opposition in 1927 the alarming rise of the Kulak, bad harvests, desperate grain shortages, and the growing threat of war forced Stalin into the policies he had previously rejected; collectivisation and industrialisation. This inevitably entailed conflict with Bukharin who as the theorist of "socialism at a snail's pace" feared above all a clash with the peasantry. To justify and "generalise" this destruction of the Bukharinist opposition Stalin promulgated a new theory - that of the "third-period". Post 1917 history was divided into three periods - 1917 - 1924 was declared the "first period" of revolutionary upsurge, 1924-28 was a period of capitalist stabilization. 1928 marked the beginning of the "third period" of direct revolutionary offensive. The unique theoretical child of this mechanical periodisation, which immediately became obligatory for all sections of the International was the theory of "social-fascism". Since, it was argued, in an immediate revolutionary situation all parties except the Communist Party are counter revolutionary,

so in the "third period" "the social-democracy, objectively speaking, is the moderate wing of Fascism". (40) "Social Democracy and fascism", wrote Stalin, "are twins".

The consequences of this line for Germany were doubly disastrous. On the one hand it ruled out the possibility of a united front between the Communists and Social Democrats thus ensuring the disunity of the working class in the face of its mortal enemy. By declaring the social democratic workers social fascists the KPD erected a wall between itself and the majority of the German proletariat. On the other hand, intentionally or not, the threat posed by fascism was minimised in the eyes of the German workers. If Social Democracy was a wing of fascism then fascism was but a version of Social Democracy so what did the workers have to fear from Hitler that they had not already experienced at the hands of the SPD. Communist leaders circulated the idea that any victory for the Nazis would be short lived and only pave the way for the Communists. Thus when Hitler finally did seize power he met with practically no serious resistance from the German working class.

From his exile on Prinkipo Trotsky waged an unceasing and desperate struggle to avert the disaster. He criticised the metaphysics of the "third period", condemned the theory of social fascism and insistently proposed a workers' united front against the fascists. He wrote that "the most elementary revolutionary duty of the German Communist Party demands that it say: Fascism can come into power only after a merciless, annihilating civil war to the bitter end. First of all,

all the worker' Communists must know this. The social democratic workers must know it, the non-party workers, the whole proletariat". (41) In large part Trotsky's efforts were based on his deep understanding of the terrible danger posed by fascism. "Like no one else, and much earlier than anyone, he grasped the destructive delirium with which National Socialism was to burst upon the world". (42) Time and again he sounded the alarm to the German workers; "should fascism come to power, it will ride over your skulls and spines like a terrific tank", (43) and "the hellish work of Italian fascism would probably appear as a pale and almost humane experiment in comparison with the work of the German National Socialists". (44)

However, involved in Trotsky's critique was not merely a greater insight into the nature of fascism but also a view of the relationship between the revolutionary party and the working class quite opposed to that of Stalin and the leaders of the Comintern. The latter were accustomed to view the party "from the top down" as an instrument of their will. They had developed as Trotsky put it "a theory that in Bolshevism the Central Committee is everything and the party nothing". (45) Moreover they viewed the class in essentially the same light, as an instrument of the party. The leaders of the Second International saw the party, by virtue of its broad and seeming ever increasing membership, as representing the class. In so far as sections of the class remained outside its organisations they were held to be of little account. Revolutionary action was made dependent on the party first drawing into its ranks a majority of the workers, and thus permanently postponed to the

indefinite future. The Stalinists, by a different route, had arrived at a similar view of the party/class relationship. For them too the party by definition represented the class. In this case the authority of the party was seen as deriving from the past (the October Revolution) and from the possession of an infallible orthodoxy (theory transformed into a dogma), with both these elements sustained primarily by the grip of the Stalinist apparatus on state power. The party's political and theoretical monopoly established in Russia was thus extended in the minds of its functionaries to cover the working class of the whole world. So it became possible to make blocs behind the back and against the interests of the workers at one point and then switch over to refusing an alliance or united front positively demanded by the conditions of the struggle. It was always possible to fall back on the argument that the Communist Party alone was revolutionary, it had a monopoly of truth, and that therefore it was the duty of the class to march under its banner, and its banner alone. In so far as they refused they were damned. We have already recorded Rosa Luxemburg's ringing denunciations of this kind of politics but since the days of Rosa it had gained a tremendous hold over the Marxist movement (we have seen the influence it exercised even over Trotsky in 1924). A major part of Trotsky's writings on Germany between 1930 and 1933 was concerned to combat this method of "bureaucratic ultimatism" as he termed it.

This required a painstaking and careful analysis. Because he was continually under attack for being anti-party and a Menshevik etc.

and because he had no desire to revert to a spontanist position.

Trotsky prefaced his critique with an unequivocal assertion of the historical role of the revolutionary party.

"The class, taken by itself, is only material for exploitation. The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class in itself it becomes a political class for itself.

This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ through which the class becomes class conscious. To say that 'class stands higher than the party,' is to assert that the class in the raw stands higher than the class which is on the road to class consciousness. Not only is this incorrect; it is reactionary. There isn't the slightest need for this smug and shallow theory in order to establish the necessity for a united front.....

"The historical interests of the proletariat find their expression in the Communist Party - when its policies are correct. The task of the Communist Party consists in winning over the proletariat; and only thus is the socialist revolution made possible. The Communist Party cannot fulfill its mission except by preserving, completely and unconditionally, its political and organisational independence apart from all other parties and organisations within and without the working class....

"The struggle of the Left Opposition for the maintenance of the complete and unconditional independence of the Communist Party and of its policies.....strained the relations between the Opposition and the Stalinist faction to the breaking point during the period of Stalin's bloc

with Chiang Kai-Shek....It is not we therefore, who have to go to school and learn from Stalin and Thaelmann about the independent policies of the Communist Party!" (46)

But for Trotsky this was only the first letter of the alphabet of Marxism. It by no means exhausted the question of the party's relationship to the class. The proletariat comes to political awareness not through being lectured but through struggle. To fight either economic or political battles the workers need unity in the ranks. Consequently the struggle of the party to win a majority in the class must not obstruct the needs of the class for fighting unity. The means for reconciling these apparently contradictory requirements is the united front. The logic of the KPD however led to a position where the German workers were permitted to fight fascism only on the say-so, and under the leadership of the party's Central Committee.

"The identity, in principle, of the interests of the proletariat and of the aims of the Communist Party does not mean either that the proletariat as a whole is, even today, conscious of its class interests, or that the party under all conditions formulates them correctly... The task of the party consists in learning, from experience derived from the struggle, how to demonstrate to the proletariat its right to leadership. And yet the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the contrary, holds to the opinion that it can demand outright obedience from the proletariat, simply on the strength of a party passport, stamped with the seal of the Comintern.

"Every united front that doesn't first place itself under the leadership of the Communist Party, reiterates Die Rote Fahne (paper of

the KPD) is directed against the interests of the proletariat. Whoever doesn't recognise the leadership of the Communist Party is himself a "counter revolutionary! The worker is obliged to trust the Communist organisation in advance, on its word of honour. From the identity, in principle, of the aims of the party and of the class the functionary deduces his right to lay down the law to the class. The very historical problem which the Communist Party is yet to solve - that of uniting the overwhelming majority of workers under its banner - is turned by the bureaucrat into an ultimatum, into a pistol which he holds against the temple of the Working class. Formalistic, administrative, and bureaucratic thinking supplants the dialectic.....

"From the worker desirous of joining the ranks of the Communists, the party has a right to demand: you must accept our programme and obey our regulations and the authority of our electoral institutions. But it is absurd and criminal to present the same a priori demand or even a part of it, to the working masses of workers organisations. When the matter of joint action for the sake of definite aims of struggle is broached. Thereby the very foundations of the party are undermined; for the party can fulfill its task only by maintaining correct relations with the class. Instead of issuing such a one-sided ultimatum, which irritates and insults the workers, the party should submit a definite programme for joint action: that is the surest way of achieving leadership in reality.

"Ultimatism is an attempt to rape the working class after

failing to convince it: workers, unless you accept the leadership of Thaelmann - Remmele - Neumann, we will not permit you to establish the united front. The bitterest foe could not devise a more unsound position than the one in which the leaders of the party place themselves. That is the surest way to ruin".(47)

History records that the road to ruin was persisted in to the bitter end. All Trotsky's warnings, inevitably given the balance of forces, fell on deaf ears. While the Comintern Praesidium was announcing that the "current calm after the victory of fascism is temporary [and] the revolutionary tide in Germany will grow" (48) thousands of communists were being thrown into concentration camps and every independent economic, political, and cultural organisation of the German working class was being destroyed without a fight. For Trotsky, as for the world, this was an historic turning point. Of the KPD he wrote "An organisation which was not roused by the thunder of fascism and which submits docilely to such outrageous acts of bureaucracy demonstrates thereby that it is dead and cannot be revived". (49) He noted also the failure of any party of the International to protest against the official line despite the overwhelming evidence of its bankruptcy. From this Trotsky drew the conclusion that the Communist Parties and the International as a whole, could no longer be regarded as in any sense a revolutionary force. It was necessary for the Left Opposition to abandon the perspective of reforming the Comintern and begin the task of building revolutionary parties and an International anew.

As Trotsky made this fundamental decision to build a Fourth International so the policies of the Comintern underwent another 180 degree about turn. From refusing even tactical agreements with "social fascists" the Comintern switched to the strategy of the Popular Front - the creation of the widest possible alliance of all democratic forces against fascism. But this turn represented neither a concession to Trotsky's criticisms nor an ability to learn from experience. Rather it reflected a sudden awakening to the military threat posed to the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany and Stalin's renewed search for powerful allies. Whereas in the "second period" of 1924-28 the allies sought were the British trade union leaders and the Kuomintang now they became the "democratic" imperialist bourgeoisie.

The similarity between Trotsky's strategy of the united front and the Stalinist Popular Front is entirely superficial. In reality the two conceptions were completely different. Trotsky advocated a united front between the parties with a mass base in the working class. The Popular Front extended this alliance to include openly bourgeois parties such as the French Radical Party. The aim of the united front was to unite the working class in struggle around a concrete plan of action which would correspond to the immediate needs of the workers but would go beyond what the Social Democratic leaders would actually be prepared to fight for. Thus in the course of the struggle the revolutionary party would demonstrate in practice its superiority and win over a majority of the working class. Clearly an alliance with a bourgeois party could

not possibly function in this way. It could serve neither to unite the class in struggle nor to win workers to a revolutionary position. Its only possible consequence would be to hold back and moderate the demands of the workers so as not to frighten or offend the bourgeois parties, and thus disrupt the anti-fascist alliance. In other words the Popular Front was to quote Trotsky "nothing else than betrayal of the proletariat for the sake of an alliance with the bourgeoisie". (50) Whereas the united front was concerned solely with "striking together" while "marching separately" and involved no common programmes or limitation as criticism the Popular Front meant not only a common programme but also support for and participation in bourgeois governments. Clearly such collaboration with bourgeois and right wing social democratic forces would only be agreed to if solid guarantees were given that the question of socialist revolution was postponed indefinitely. Stalinism did not hesitate to give such guarantees. Thus Jesús Hernandez, editor of the Spanish CP's newspaper "El Mundo obrero" wrote: "It is absolutely false that the present workers' movement has for its object the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship after the war has terminated. It cannot be said we have a social motive for our participation in the war. We communists are the first to repudiate this supposition. We are motivated exclusively by a desire to defend the democratic republic." (51) And Stalin in a letter to Largo Caballero, prime minister in the Spanish Popular Front government advised him to "attract the middle and lower bourgeoisie...[by] protecting them against confiscations." (52) To Trotsky "the slogan

'First Victory, then reforms', is the slogan of all oppressors and exploiters from the Biblical Kings down to Stalin". (53)

But for Trotsky the Popular Front was not only a betrayal of socialism it was also a completely ineffective instrument for the achievement of the aim it set itself, the defeat of fascism:

"The theoreticians of the Popular Front do not essentially go beyond the first rule of arithmetic, that is addition: "Communists" plus Socialists plus Anarchists plus liberals add up to a total which is greater than their respective isolated numbers. Such is all their wisdom. However arithmetic alone does not suffice here. One needs as well at least mechanics. The law of the parallelogram of forces applies to politics as well. In such a parallelogram we know that the resultant is shorter the more the component forces diverge from each other. When political allies tend to pull in opposite directions the resultant may prove equal to zero.

"A bloc of divergent political groups of the working class is sometimes completely indispensable for the solution of common practical problems. In certain historical circumstances, such a bloc is capable of attracting the oppressed petty-bourgeois masses whose interests are close to the interests of the proletariat. The joint force of such a bloc can prove far stronger than the sum of the forces of each of its component parts. On the contrary, the political alliance of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, whose interests on basic questions in the present epoch diverge at an angle of 180 degrees, as a general rule is capable only of

paralyzing the revolutionary force of the proletariat.

"Civil War, in which the force of naked coercion is hardly effective, demands of its participants the spirit of supreme self-abnegation. The workers and peasants can assure victory only if they wage a struggle for their own emancipation. Under these conditions, to subordinate the proletariat to the leadership of the bourgeoisie means beforehand to assure defeat in the civil war." (54)

Trotsky regarded the Popular Front with extreme seriousness. It was he wrote "the question of questions.....the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch," (55) but it was not one which posed for him any new theoretical problems. For Trotsky the question of the Popular Front had been decisively resolved by the experience of Bolshevism, and its twin struggle against Tsarism and Menshevism. "Lenin", he wrote, "began on his task in Tsarist Russia, where not only the workers, the peasants and the intellectuals but wide circles of the bourgeoisie were fighting against the old regime. If, generally speaking, the policy of the People's Front could have been justified, it would appear to be above all in a country which had not yet made its bourgeois revolution. Messrs. falsifiers would do well to point out in what phase, at what moment, and in what circumstances the Bolshevik party realized a simulacrum of the People's Front in Russia. Let them put their gray matter to work and rummage through the historical documents." (56) One major objection that is often made to Trotsky's position is that his critique of the Popular Front was based on a failure to appreciate

the need of the proletariat and its party for allies, especially with regard to the peasantry. But this criticism misses the mark. Trotsky rejected, not alliance with the peasantry or the oppressed petty bourgeoisie, but with the parties of the bourgeoisie itself; moreover he disagreed with the Stalinist method of realizing the former alliance. "It is an elementary principle of Marxian strategy that the alliance of the proletariat with the little people of town and country must be realized solely in the irreducible struggle against the traditional parliamentary representation of the petty bourgeoisie. In order to win the peasant over to the side of the worker it is necessary to detach him from the Radical politician who subjects him to finance capital." (57)

On the basis of this analysis as a whole Trotsky forecast the inevitable collapse and defeat of the Popular Fronts both in France and Spain, and once again as with China and Germany, he was proved to be correct. Writing now in 1974 it is clear that Trotsky's analysis retains all its significance, for some variation of the Popular Front is today the strategy of almost every Communist Party throughout the world. In Britain it takes the form of a parliamentary road to socialism through an anti-monopolies alliance as outlined in "The British Road to Socialism"; in France it is the joint-programme with the Socialist Party for the election of Mitterrand; in Spain and South Africa it means limiting the struggle against Franco and Vorster to the restoration of democracy; in Portugal it means uncritical support for General Spinola's military junta. In addition to all this we have had repeated once again the full tragic

consequences of the Popular Front strategy in the fate of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government in Chile. A complete rejection of class collaborationist Popular Frontism is the indispensable prerequisite of the development of genuine revolutionary parties today and the indispensable theoretical foundation for a critique of this strategy is to be found in Trotsky. Trotsky's consistent defense of the Leninist principle of unconditional independence of the proletarian party throughout the enormously difficult period of the twenties and thirties was one of his most important contributions to Marxist theory and practice.

D. The Fourth International and "The Crisis of Leadership."

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that in the opinion of the author it was Trotsky who, as against Stalin, represented the continuation and defense of Lenin's theory of the party, which was inextricably bound up with the defense of classical Marxism and Leninism as a whole. Stalin's victory and Trotsky's eclipse, both in Russia and internationally, were the product not of Stalin's superiority or correctness but of the weight of the social forces which he represented and the fact that this was a period of massive defeats and set backs for the working class movement. But the final period of Trotsky's life and work, occupied with the struggle to build the Fourth International, must be judged by other criteria than comparison with Stalin. Here Trotsky appeared, not as a left critic of Stalinism within the same movement and party, but as the aspirant founder and leader of a new "World Party

of Socialist Revolution". In this struggle Trotsky's theory of the party and his application of it in practice must be assessed in its own right, in accordance with its adequacy for meeting the problems posed by the class struggle.

From 1933 onwards Trotsky laboured painstakingly to rally his slender band of followers in every country and to weld them into at least the embryos of new revolutionary parties. Most of his supporters were intellectuals reacting against Stalinism and Trotsky fought continuously to break them out of their petty bourgeois milieu and turn them towards the mass workers' movement. The conditions for this were exceptionally disadvantageous. It was a question not only of withstanding a degree of persecution and vilification within the labour movement that was unprecedented in history, but also of overcoming the psychological and political resistance of the mass of politically conscious workers.

As Trotsky himself wrote; "Our situation now is incomparably more difficult than that of any other organisation at any other time, because we have the terrible betrayal of the Communist International which arose from the betrayal of the Second International. The degeneration of the Third International developed so quickly and so unexpectedly that the same generation which heard its formation now hears us and they say, 'But we have already heard this once'." (58) Trotsky's forces grew very little if at all during these years but despite this he decided in 1938 to take the plunge and declare the foundation of the Fourth International. The founding conference which met for only one day in the house of Alfred

Resmer, veteran French revolutionist, was pitifully small. Twenty one delegates "representing" eleven countries attended, but few of these came from even barely viable organisations. In itself the International was practically non-existent. It was a desperate gamble for the future.

Many of Trotsky's most experienced and distinguished sympathizers, men like Victor Serge, Alfred Resmer and Isaac Deutscher, regarded this as essentially a vain and hopeless venture. But what sustained Trotsky in his work, convincing him of its viability and indeed absolute necessity, was his theory of the "crisis in leadership" of the proletariat. It was Trotsky's conviction that both capitalism and Stalinism had reached an impossible impasse. The successful resolution of this crisis for all humanity depended entirely on the emergence of a new revolutionary leadership. In the inevitably approaching revolutionary situations the crucial factor would be the quality of the revolutionary leadership, and equally in such situations it would be possible for initially tiny organisations to rapidly gain a mass following and exercise a decisive influence on events. This view of the crucial importance of leadership was not a new one for Trotsky; indeed it was always a major part of his theory of the party. In his "History of the Russian Revolution" and again in his "Diary in Exile" Trotsky argued that had Lenin been prevented from returning to Russia in 1917 the Bolshevik Party would never have successfully carried through the October Revolution. In "The Lessons of October" in 1924 Trotsky wrote that "the entire preparatory work is of value only to the extent that it renders the party and above all its leading organs capable of determining

the moment for an insurrection, and of assuming the leadership of it...

What is Bolshevisation of Communist parties? It is giving them such a training, and effecting such a selection of the leading staff as would prevent them from 'drifting' when the hour for their October strikes.

'That is the whole of Hegel, and the wisdom of book and the meaning of all philosophy....'" (59) By 1938 this theory had become the fundamental historical justification for the proclamation of the Fourth International.

The programme adopted at the founding conference, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" opens as follows, "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat," and continues, "The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only 'ripened'; they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e. chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." (60)

Trotsky's point-blank presentation of this question has often been criticized and indeed we have here an issue of vital importance for the Marxist theory of the party. One critic of Trotsky in this respect is Isaac Deutscher who, in "The Prophet Outcast", takes Trotsky to task over the role of Lenin in 1917. He charges Trotsky with succumbing to "subjectivist thinking" and "the cult of Lenin" in asserting that one individual could have been indispensable. Basing himself on Plekhanov's famous essay "The Role of the Individual in History", Deutscher

argues that "the leader is merely the organ of an historic need or necessity, and that necessity creates its organ when it needs it. No great man is 'irreplaceable'.....Owing to the specific qualities of their minds and their characters, influential individuals can change the individual features of events and some of their particular consequences but they cannot change their general trend, which is determined by other forces". (61)

What matters here is not the relatively scholastic and unprovable argument about the irrereplaceability of Lenin (though even on this point Trotsky's case is impressive) but the general question of the decisive significance of correct leadership in a revolutionary situation. There is a dangerous fatalism in the logic of Plekhanov/Deutscher. If historical necessity "inevitably" finds its leader when it needs him, then there is no reason why it should not also find its central committee or its party, and if they are not there ready made then "necessity" will create them. If individuals, or individual actions cannot alter the course of history, then neither can small groups of individuals, and most revolutionary parties are only small groups compared with the social classes as a whole, which are the main driving force of history. In other words the course of revolutions as a whole becomes inevitable, Deutscher says that Trotsky's view goes "strongly against the grain of the Marxist intellectual tradition", (62) but the tradition to which he refers is that of Plekhanov, Kautsky and the Second International, always strongly imbued with fatalism.

Naturally we do not have Trotsky's reply to Deutscher on this

question. But we do have in his article "The Class, The Party and the Leadership", his reply to almost identical objections raised by some French Marxists in relation to the Trotskyist charges of betrayal of the revolution in Spain. If the revolution in Spain was defeated argued the critics, this must be explained by "a certain condition of social forces (immaturity of the working class, lack of independence of the peasantry)" (63) and not by reference to wrong leadership by the parties. To this Trotsky answered:

"There is an ancient, evolutionary-liberal epigram: every people gets the government it deserves....Imitating the liberals our sages tacitly accept the axiom that every class gets the leadership it deserves. In reality leadership is not at all a mere 'reflection' of a class or the product of its own free creativeness. A leadership is shaped in the process of clashes between the different classes or the friction between the different layers within a given class. Having once arisen, the leadership invariably rises above its class and thereby becomes predisposed to the pressure and influence of other classes. The proletariat may 'tolerate' for a long time a leadership that has already suffered a complete inner degeneration but has not as yet had the opportunity to express this degeneration amid great events. A great historic shock is necessary to reveal sharply the contradiction between the leadership and the class. The mightiest historical shocks are wars and revolutions. Precisely for this reason the working class is often caught unawares by war and revolution. But even in cases where the old leadership has revealed its internal corruption, the class cannot

improvise immediately a new leadership, especially if it has not inherited from the previous period strong revolutionary cadres capable of utilising the collapse of the old leading party. The Marxist, i.e. dialectic and not scholastic interpretation of the interrelationship between a class and its leadership does not leave a single stone unturned of our author's legalistic sophistry." (64)

Deutscher's deterministic argument is based on the correct, and for a Marxist, indisputable assumption that great historical events have profound social causes and are effected by mighty social forces. i.e. mass social classes. What it fails to recognise is the dialectical point that historical development is the product of contradiction, of great social forces moving in opposite directions, and that at key historical turning points these social forces may balance each other out almost exactly. In such situations apparently small factors, such as the quality of leadership, the decisions of a central committee etc. can decisively tip the balance one way or the other. What is so dangerous about the deterministic view is that it is precisely in such situations of "balance" that revolutions occur. In "For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism" Trotsky gave an excellent characterisation of such a turning point.

"Germany is now passing through one of these great historic hours upon which the fate of the German people, the fate of Europe, and in significant measure of all humanity, will depend for decades.
(My emphasis) If you place a ball on top of a pyramid, the slightest

impact can cause it to roll down either to the left or to the right.

That is the situation approaching with every hour in Germany today.

There are forces which would like the ball to roll down towards the right and break the back of the working class. There are forces which would like the ball to remain at the top. That is a utopia. The ball cannot remain at the top of the pyramid. The Communists want the ball to roll down toward the left and break the back of capitalism. But it is not enough to want; one must know how. Let us calmly reflect once more: is the policy carried on at present by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany correct or incorrect." (65)

The "crisis of leadership" theory was thus a distillation of the revolutionary experience of a whole epoch from the positive example of October 1917, through the negative examples of Hungary 1919, Italy 1920, Germany 1923, and 1933, China 1925-27, and Spain 1931-37. But this does not exhaust the problem. Trotsky never for one moment claimed that the leadership created or "made" the revolution (as for example some Guevarists have suggested), merely that it was a decisive "link" in the chain of events; the other primary components of the chain being the objective economic and political crisis of capitalism, the mass upsurge of the working class, and the existence of a well prepared revolutionary party. As Deutscher concedes Trotsky "repeatedly demonstrates that Lenin merely translated into clear formulas and action the thoughts and moods which agitated the rank-and-file, and that because of this he eventually prevailed. Leader and mass act in unison."(66)

But without this chain "the leadership" would be isolated, suspended in a vacuum, and relatively impotent, and its position would be worse in so far as it had an inflated or false picture of its own capabilities and significance. The problem for Trotsky was that when in September 1938 he founded the Fourth International (World Party of the Socialist Revolution) vital links in the chain did not exist. There was neither an upsurge of the working class nor anywhere in the world a solidly based revolutionary party. On the contrary the working class movement was everywhere defeated and the revolutionary Marxist forces were numbered in handfulls.

Trotsky was naturally acutely aware of this. He "solved" the problem by a series of predictions in which he forecast the inevitable emergence of the component links in the revolutionary chain in the near future. Firstly, he believed that capitalism had entered its final crisis, "The economic prerequisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism. Mankind's productive forces stagnate." (67) The situation was such that there could be "no discussion of systematic social reforms and raising of the masses' living standards," (68) as a consequence of which social democracy would be fatally undermined. Secondly, he saw the approaching World War as unleashing, like its predecessor only more so, an enormous revolutionary wave. "Second births are commonly easier than first. In the new war, it will not be necessary to wait a whole two years and a half for the first insurrection." (69) Thirdly, he believed the Stalinist regime in Russia to be highly unstable

"like a pyramid balanced on its head", and unable to withstand the shock of war. "If it is not paralyzed by revolution in the West, imperialism will sweep away the regime which issued from the October revolution", (70) and while Trotsky was for the defence of the Soviet Union he could not fail to reckon with the fact that such an overthrow would deal a fatal blow to what he regarded as the main counter-revolutionary force in the workers' movement. Fourthly, in line with Lenin's "Imperialism" and his own theory of permanent revolution, he thought that the colonies would be unable to gain independence without a head-on conflict with imperialism, and, since the national bourgeoisies would shrink from this conflict, the rising national liberation movements would have to take the road of socialist revolution. "The banner on which is emblazoned the struggle for the liberation of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples, i.e. a good half of mankind, has definitely passed into the hands of the Fourth International." (71) Taken as a whole this amounted to a perspective in which, "The epoch....about to begin for European humanity will not leave a trace in the labour movement of all that is ambiguous and gangrened.....The sections of the Second and Third Internationals will depart the scene without a sound, one after the other. A new and grand regrouping of the workers' ranks is inevitable. The young revolutionary cadres will acquire flesh and blood."(72)

For each of the predictions that made up this perspective there was much evidence but the fact remains that every one of them was falsified by history. Preparations for the war themselves began to lift

capitalism out of slump. The war did not produce revolution in its wake but on the contrary ushered in an unprecedented period of capitalist boom and prosperity. Stalin's regime did not collapse in war but emerged victorious and greatly strengthened. Imperialism was able, in large part, to grant independence to the colonies through a deal with the colonial bourgeoisies thus severing the connection between national liberation and proletarian revolution. The Fourth International was thus left high and dry. Trotsky had predicted: "During the next ten years the programme of the Fourth International will become the guide of millions and these revolutionary millions will know how to storm heaven and earth." (73) But when, ten years later in 1948, the 2nd World Congress of the Fourth International was convened it still represented only tiny groups.

As far as the theory of the party is concerned the main problem was not that Trotsky had a false, or foreshortened, perspective, but that he had saddled his supporters with an entirely inappropriate form of organisation. This in turn militated against the timely reappraisal and correction of the perspective. In 1928 Trotsky had written that "it is the worst and most dangerous thing if a manoeuvre arises out of the impatient opportunistic endeavour to outstrip the development of one's own party and to leap over the necessary stages of its development (it is precisely here that no stages can be leaped over)". The proclamation of the Fourth International was not opportunism but it was certainly impatient and involved leaping over necessary stages. In the founding programme Trotsky wrote "If our International be still

weak in numbers it is strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres." (74) This was wishful thinking. Trotsky's supporters, for the most part, lacked both revolutionary experience and roots in the working class. He himself never stopped having trouble with them and the history of Trotskyism both before and after his death is riddled with petty bourgeois factionalism. These people were neither theoretically nor practically equipped for the task of leading a world revolutionary movement.

This weakness revealed itself most clearly in the attitude of the movement to its programme, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and Tasks of the Fourth International." The aim of this programme was to form a bridge between present demands and the revolution. "This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: The conquest of power by the proletariat." (75) But such demands, by their very nature, must be the expression of a living mass movement; they cannot possibly be formulated in isolation, no matter how brilliant or experienced their author, for the simple reason that it is never possible to predict the concrete forms of the struggle even with a broadly correct perspective. Consequently Trotsky's "transitioned demands" never found an echo in the working class. By and large they remained dead letters from the moment they were set down. These problems were only aggravated by the grandiose international scale on which the whole enterprise was conceived. For Trotsky's successors this Transitional Programme, superb in its

symmetry and rhetoric, became a fetished substitute for the weakness of the movement. It had to be preserved and defended at all costs even when the bulk of its theses were demonstrably out of date. In the 1950's Trotskyists were still claiming that "Mankind's productive forces stagnate." Today there are at least four tiny 'world parties' calling themselves "The Fourth International" and claiming their adherence to the Transitional Programme at a time when it is of rather less practical use than the Communist Manifesto. The fundamental problem of an International without a base is that its "world" perspectives can depart ever further from reality without being subject to the test and check of practice.

Thus Trotsky's theory of "crisis of leadership" which was the expression of all that he had learned in his revolutionary career finally led him astray. This was due, not to its internal defects, but simply to the fact that, like any other such formula, it could not be applied a-historically. There were many factors which contributed to Trotsky's error of judgement, some of them no doubt were psychological, but the key theoretical flaw lay in his attitude to prediction. The "crisis of leadership" theory represented a complete break with mechanical determinism in revolutionary situations but at a broader philosophical level, Trotsky's Marxism bore many encrustations of determinism. This led him to an exaggerated view of the predictive capacities of Marxism. "The essence of Marxism consists in this, that it approaches society concretely as a subject for objective research

and analyses human history as one would examine a colossal laboratory record".....Precisely this objective approach arms Marxism with the insuperable power of historical foresight". (76) We have already discussed this question in relation to Gramsci and his criticisms of this view of Marxism so we need not dwell on it here. Suffice it to say that Trotsky believed he could establish the International and draw up its programme in advance of, and in the absence of the mass movement because he believed he could forecast its emergence in some detail. Events proved him wrong, and many of his followers were not of the stature to realise it.

E. Conclusion.

We have recorded here both Trotsky's defense of the Leninist theory of the party and also his weaknesses. It is important to point out that on balance his positive achievements far outweighed the mistakes. Trotsky, and virtually Trotsky alone, kept alive the flame of Leninism, of revolutionary Marxism during the darkest hours of the proletarian movement. This was an immense accomplishment. For the construction of Leninist parties in the world today the theoretical conquests of Trotsky's struggle against Stalin, on inner-party democracy on the independence of the party, on the united front as against the popular front on the crisis of leadership in the revolution and on the international nature of the class struggle, are an indispensable component. It must be recognised that Gramsci advanced the theory of the party in ways that

Trotsky did not. But in so far as the practical application of Gramsci's ideas is dependent on the existence of a Leninist party, and Trotskyism represents the continuation of Leninism, so the best in Trotsky and Gramsci must be synthesized. But at the same time the condition of such a synthesis, and the revival of the essence of Trotskyism, is that Trotskyists dispense with the inward looking and sectarian traditions born of an organisation founded on a false perspective and delusions of grandeur.

CHAPTER 7.

Conclusion - The Theory Assessed.

We have now traced the development of the Marxist theory of the party from Marx's original establishment of the idea of a party of the working class, through Lenin's concept of the vanguard party; Rosa Luxemburg's emphasis on the creativity of the masses, Lukács' theory of the party as bearer of class consciousness and Gramsci's analysis of the struggle for hegemony, to Trotsky's lonely defense of Leninism. In the course of this account the views and criticisms of non-Marxists have, with minor exceptions, been ignored so as not to interrupt the flow of the argument. We can now correct this imbalance and in so doing make an overall assessment of the validity of the theory.

The main thrust of non- or anti- Marxist criticism on this question has been to challenge not the Marxist party's effectiveness as an agent of revolution but its claim to have "no interests separate and apart from the proletariat as a whole," a claim made by each of the Marxists discussed in this work. Far from being the servant of the class the party, it is maintained, is an instrument for the domination and manipulation of first its own supporters and then, if possible, the working class as a whole by a new elite of authoritarian leaders.

We shall begin by examining the most comprehensive and coherent statement of this case - that made by Robert Michels in 1911 in his famous work "Political Parties." (1)

A. Michels and the "Iron Law of Oligarchy".

Michels' view was that "Democracy is inconceivable without

organisation" (2) but that "Who says organisation, says oligarchy".(3)

As a test case for this hypothesis he selected for analysis the

Socialist Parties of the day, on the grounds if any large scale

organisations could function democratically it would be these.

Michels begins by demonstrating that although the labour and socialist movement often started out with an ideology of "direct democracy" and "no leadership" the moment its organisations grew to any significant size the emergence of a leadership was inevitable. Direct government of the party by the mass rank-and-file is a mechanical and technical impossibility. "Above all in the great industrial centres where the labour party sometimes numbers its adherents by tens of thousands, it is impossible to carry on the affairs of this gigantic body without a system of representation." (4) The fact that the socialist party is a fighting organisation engaged in a battle on many fronts and therefore has to take quick decisions greatly increases the necessity for a leadership with wide ranging powers. "Democracy is utterly incompatible with strategic promptness".(5)

Once a leadership has emerged it is soon able to consolidate itself establishing its customary right to office. In modern conditions leadership almost invariably has to be professional and professional leaders possess or rapidly obtain many enormous advantages vis-à-vis the rank-and-file of the party. "With the appearance of professional leadership, there ensues a great accentuation of the cultural differences between the leaders and the led." (6) The leaders, likely to have been the most able in the first place, become vastly superior in knowledge,

intellect, oratory and administrative and political expertise to the point where they are indispensable to the party's functioning and quite beyond any meaningful control by the membership. "When the workers choose leaders for themselves they are with their own hands creating new masters whose principle means of dominion is found in their better instructed minds." (7)

Raised to this position of eminence the psychology of the most sincerely revolutionary and democratic leaders undergoes a transformation in an autocratic direction. "The consciousness of power always produces variety, an undue belief in personal greatness....He who has acquired power will almost always endeavour to consolidate it, and to extend it, to multiply the ramparts which defend his position, and to withdraw himself from the control of the masses." (8) Thus leaders develop a series of devices and strategems with which to manipulate their followers. They trade on their indispensability by threatening to resign unless they get their own way.(9) They use their control of the party press as a "means of diffusing the fame of individual leaders among the masses."(10) They resist any challenge from aspirant leaders by resorting to underhand methods to discredit the opposition.(11) In this way the leadership of political parties invariably comes to constitute a closed oligarchy.

The whole process is possible and inevitable because of what Michels calls the "incompetence of the masses." (12) This "incompetence" has three main aspects. First, the inability of the ordinary workers to

master the complexities of political life. This is attributed not to their stupidity (13) but to their lack of formal instruction and their situation. "Their occupation and the needs of daily life render it impossible for the masses to attain to a profound knowledge of the social machinery, and above all the working of the political machine." (14) Second, the average persons apathy and indifference to public affairs. "The majority is content, with Stirner to call out to the state 'Get away from between me and the sun!'"(15) Moreover this attitude is prevalent even among party members. "It is only a minority which participates in party decisions, and sometimes that minority is ludicrously small." (16) Consequently "though it grumbles occasionally, the majority is really delighted to find persons who will take the trouble to look after its affairs." (17) Third, the profound deference of the masses towards their leaders - "the gratitude felt by the crowd for those who speak and write on their behalf", (18) and the conviction that "their leaders belong to a higher order of humanity than themselves." (19)

This, in essence, is Michels' argument. He substantiates it with a wealth of detailed observation of the workings of oligarchy in the parties of the Second International, and supplements it with a number of subsidiary analyses of amongst other things, the effects of parliamentarism, the role of intellectuals in the labour movement, the authoritarian tendencies of leaders with proletarian origins, the petty bourgeois life style of party officials, and the failure of all artificial attempts to restrict the power of leaders. All the evidence

Michels maintains, points to an "iron law of oligarchy" which renders impossible the democratic functioning of any political party.

Although Marxists have been among the strongest critics of formal democracy, Michels thesis strikes at the core of the Marxist theory of the party. The Marxist party aims to play a role in the self emancipation of the working class. Though the party frequently cannot accept the opinions of the mass of workers it must always be responsive to its needs and aspirations. But this responsiveness cannot be achieved except through a fundamentally democratic relationship between the rank-and-file of the party and the leadership. For it is the rank-and-file who are closest to the masses, and they who have to implement the political line of the organisation by carrying it among their fellow workers.

Democracy in the party is essential if it is to realize the correct relationship with the class. If party democracy is impossible then so is the revolutionary party as conceived by Marxists from Marx onwards.

Michels also indentifies the conservatism inherent in oligarchical leadership. In so far as the party becomes an instrument in the hands of its leaders for increasing their power and prestige so it will lose its subversive and revolutionary character. Principles will be abandoned so as to attract the widest possible support and all upsets or confrontations which might disrupt the steady growth of the organisation will be avoided. "At bottom, all the thoughts of these leaders are concentrated upon the single hope that there shall long continue to exist a proletariat to choose them as its delegates and to provide them with a livelihood."(20)

"Political Parties" has been an immensely influential book.

Indeed its influence would be hard to exaggerate. Michels' theory has dominated the political and sociological analysis of party leadership for sixty years. Leading students of political institutions such as Sigmund Neumann, Maurice Duverger, S.M. Lipset, and Robert McKensie all acknowledge their debt to, and sometimes their complete agreement with Michels. (21) As S.J. Eldersveld puts it "It is amazing how heavily we have relied on the 'iron law of oligarchy'." (22) But because of the extreme pessimism of Michels' conclusions, his belief that not only party democracy but also democracy in general is unrealizable, (23) his theory is usually accepted in a modified form. The party leadership may not be subject to any positive control by the rank-and-file membership but they are at least it is argued, subject to negative restraint by the electorate who can decline to vote for them if they do not like their policies, and by the members who can leave the party. Indeed in Britain today any attempt by rank-and-file members of the Labour Party to control the behaviour of their M.P.'s is regarded in some circles as dictatorship and a violation of the democratic rights of the electorate to whom, alone, the M.P. is responsible. To those whose perspective is the preservation of the status quo combined perhaps with limited reforms this is a very palatable compromise. It provides a justification for existing elitist practices as inevitable while avoiding the stigma of outright tyranny. But for the Marxist this blunted version of Michels holds no comfort. The Marxist party cannot subordinate itself to electoral

popularity and so if its members do not exercise some real measure of control it lacks any democratic component. Also for a party with revolutionary aims mere negative restraint is insufficient. There may be occasions when it is a matter of urgency that the rank-and-file force on the leadership amore resolute or active policy than it would otherwise be inclined to pursue. As S.M.Lipset correctly points out, "the socialist and labour movements clearly have had a special obligation to deal with Michels." (24)

The standard Marxist reply to Michels has been that the reorganisation of society on socialist lines would so change the significance of power, and the nature and capacities of men that the possibility of oligarchy would disappear. Thus Sidney Hook, in his Marxist days, wrote as follows:

"Michels overlooks.....the social and economic presuppositions of oligarchic leadership in the past. Political leadership in past societies meant economic power. Education and tradition fostered the tendencies to predatory self insertion in some classes and at the same time sought to deaden the interest in politics on the part of the masses. In a socialist society in which political leadership is an administrative function, and therefore, carries with it no economic power, in which processes of education strive to direct the psychic tendencies to self-assertion into 'moral and social equivalents' of oligarchic ambition, in which the monopoly of education for one class has been abolished, and the division of labor between manual and mental work is progressively eliminated - the danger that Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy' will express

itself in traditional form, becomes quite remote." (25)

Nikolai Bukharin, in "Historical Materialism", makes a similar critique predicting that "in the society of the future there will be a colossal over-production of organisers which will nullify the stability of the ruling groups." (26) But whatever the validity of these arguments it is clear that they do not effectively answer Michels for the revolutionary party has to be built not in the classless communist future but in the class-ridden capitalist present. The problem is how, in a thoroughly oligarchic environment, the party can avoid itself succumbing to this disease? The refutation of Michels requires a more detailed probing of his case.

From the outset we should recognise the power of Michels' arguments, and the extent to which modern history has confirmed them. In nation after nation, organisation after organisation, party after party, where democracy is trumpeted from the rooftops, oligarchy, dictatorship and even tyranny are the rule in practice. Michels himself is at his best when he is describing such situations. Unlike so many others he is completely undeviated by the democratic rhetoric that has become virtually obligatory in the last century. Michels' portrait of German Social Democracy (27) is, considering it was written in 1911, of unparalleled insight. More clearly than anyone else at the time (with the possible exception of Rosa Luxemburg) he saw the gap between the party's theory and its practice, and the distance which it had travelled from original Marxism. What other commentator on social democracy could have honestly claimed in 1915 that "The author's general conclusions....

have been strikingly confirmed in the political life of all the leading belligerent nations immediately before the outbreak of the War and during the progress of the struggle." (28) But while an abundance of empirical evidence is enough to demonstrate a tendency it is not enough to establish an "iron law" to which there can be no exceptions. Michels himself recognises this: "Like all other scientific laws, sociological laws are derived from empirical observation. In order, however, to deprive our axiom of its purely descriptive character, and to confer upon it that status of analytical explanation which can alone transform a formula into a law, it does not suffice to contemplate from a unitary outlook those phenomena which may be empirically established; we must also study the determining causes of these phenomena." (29) But it is precisely here that Michels is vulnerable.

One of Michels' principal weaknesses is his failure to distinguish with sufficient clarity between leadership and oligarchy. Leadership, which no serious Marxist has ever denied the need for, implies a harmony of aim and interest between leaders and led. Oligarchy implies (at least as Michels uses it) a contradiction between the interests of leaders and led. But why should leaders, even if they cannot directly be controlled by the rank-and-file of the party, develop interests opposed to those of their followers? Essentially Michels' answer is that leaders have a "natural greed for power". (30) But this is clearly inadequate. It is a grand metaphysical generalisation which he simply asserts as a psychological fact without making any serious attempt to

substantiate it. But psychology apart there are two obvious objections to this justification for conflating leadership and oligarchy. Firstly, the revolutionary movement has produced more than a few leaders willing to sacrifice both power and life rather than abandon their principles.

(31) Secondly, why should not the most crudely ambitious of leaders seek to realise his ambitions precisely through faithfully serving the interests of the masses?

This last point becomes clearer if we examine the functioning of the openly pro-bourgeois parties - parties, like the British Conservative Party, which derive the hard core of their support from industry and business. Michels disregarded these parties on the grounds that (in this day) they did not even profess to be democratic. But this was a mistake; for although such parties may lack a formally democratic structure, and may be authoritarian and oligarchical in relation to society as a whole, in fact they tend to serve the social class which they represent fairly well. Although there are obviously many exceptions, the ruling classes of Britain, America, Germany etc. generally get the policies they want from their respective political parties particularly on the crucial economic issues; and when they do not it is a question of error or of loss of nerve rather than outright betrayal, or the manipulation of the party to serve the interests of the individual leaders. There has never been a Tory equivalent of Ramsay MacDonald, or French and German bourgeois equivalents of Millerand and Ebert. Also it is well known that the Tory Party although until recently its leader "emerged" rather than being elected, is much more ruthless in removing an

unsatisfactory leader than is the Labour Party. What is suggested is not that such bourgeois parties are models of the democratic process, far from it, but simply that from the point of view of their own class they preserve the essence of democracy quite efficiently. The leaders of the Tory Party do not constitute an oligarchy vis-à-vis the British capitalist class in the sense that the leaders of the Labour Party are an oligarchy vis-à-vis the working class.

The reasons for this phenomenon are obvious. Clearly it is not a question of capitalist politicians being less ambitious and power greedy than politicians from the working class movement, but of capitalist politicians expressing their ambition by serving their class, and working class politicians expressing theirs by abandoning their class. This difference is produced by three factors: (1) The economic power of the bourgeoisie which enables them to set the economic framework of political debate and to apply very effective economic sanctions thus forcing its political representatives to do its will. (2) The wealth and social status of the bourgeoisie which means that its political leaders do not become more economically and socially privileged than the rest of the class. (3) The superior class consciousness of the bourgeoisie which enables it much more effectively than the working class, to assess correctly its class interests.

The point of this analysis is that the prime cause of oligarchy in socialist and labour parties is not the technical and psychological factors on which Michels places so much emphasis, but

socio-economic factors, specifically the socio-economic structure of the societies within which the parties operate. Since the working class is by definition an economically and socially subordinate class during the period in which its political party is being constructed the key variable in this situation is its class consciousness. Oligarchy arises in workers' political parties not because of the technical necessity of leadership but because the rank-and-file members of the party lack the class consciousness to control the leaders. It is on his notion of "the incompetence of the masses" that Michels' theory really rests.

For Michels the incompetence of the masses is an eternal category. "The objective immaturity of the mass is not a mere transitory phenomenon which will disappear with the progress of democratization 'an lendemain du socialisme'. On the contrary it derives from the very nature of mass as mass, for this, even when organised, suffers from an incurable incompetence for the solution of the diverse problems which present themselves for solution - because the mass per se is amorphous and therefore needs division of labour, specialisation and guidance. 'The human species wants to be governed, it will be. I am ashamed of my kind' wrote Proudhon from his prison in 1850. Man as an individual is by nature predestined to be guided, and to be guided all the more in proportion as the functions of life undergo division and subdivision." (32)

Such thinking is essentially metaphysical rather than social scientific and cannot possibly be accepted by Marxists. Indeed since Michels viewed humanity as divided into "the dictatorial and the servile" it is hardly surprising that he formulated an "iron law of oligarchy".

But this does not dispose of the problem of the incompetence of the masses. If capitalism is the irrational and oppressive system that Marxists claim it to be, then it could not survive at all except by virtue of the incompetence (lack of class consciousness) of the masses. If capitalism did not produce in its workers, apathy, depression, inertia, passivity and confusion it would not be as oppressive as it is. Here we have an apparent paradox. Capitalism creates an "incompetent" working class. Yet without overcoming this incompetence it is impossible to create the revolutionary party necessary for capitalisms' overthrow. On the basis of a static view of workers' consciousness there is no way out of this dilemma.

But, as we have tried to show throughout this study, class consciousness is neither static nor even. Under the impact of great events, and especially through experience of mass struggles, the consciousness of the working class can rise dramatically, only to fall away just as rapidly should the workers meet with decisive defeat. At the same time there is great unevenness in consciousness within the working class at any one time. On the one hand some sections of workers (miners, dockers etc.) may be more advanced than others because of their particular traditions and situation. On the other hand within each work place there will also be great variation ranging from committed militants at one extreme to scabs and even fascist elements at the other. The key to escaping from the iron law of oligarchy is the restriction of party membership to those with sufficient class consciousness and commitment to be able to control their leaders, until such time as the class as a

whole is fired with revolutionary enthusiasm (a revolutionary situation) when the gates to the party can, with certain provisos, be thrown open. What is described here was of course the policy of Lenin. In the pre-revolutionary period the Bolshevik party remained a small compact body with closely defined boundaries; In the revolutionary upheavals of both 1905 and 1917 thousands of newly revolutionised workers flooded into the party. The main aim of this policy was the struggle against opportunism rather than against oligarchy but it was also the essential condition of retaining meaningful party democracy.

This position clearly requires further elaboration and justification. The first question that arises is; what is the level of competence/consciousness that must be demanded of members to prevent degeneration? No single precise answer can be given to this question as the criterion of membership will be different in different circumstances, but there are certain general considerations which remain valid for most situations. First of all it is not a matter of formal education, or detailed technical or theoretical knowledge. To control their party workers need neither a profound understanding of the intricacies of Marxist economics, nor close familiarity with the details of parliamentary procedure; any more than the capitalists need detailed knowledge of all aspects of the production process in order to determine the general line of development of their factories. What is important is a firm grasp of basic principles, a clear idea of the ultimate aim of the movement and of the main means of getting there. What is crucial for checking and

controlling the party leadership is that for the party rank-and-file adherence to political principles takes precedence over organisational loyalties. Equally important for this purpose is the participation of all members in regular organised activity, Lenin's sticking point in the 1903 debate with the Mensheviks. If decisions taken at the top directly affect the day to day practice of members those members will be concerned to question and if need be challenge those decisions. People are always hardest to fool or mislead on those questions of which they have personal experience. Perhaps the best example (in the negative sense) of these propositions is the use made by Stalin in 1924 of the "Lenin enrolment" to swamp the Bolshevik party with an influx of raw recruits. The 240,000 new members signed up between February and May 1924 proved to be one of the firmest foundations of the rising Stalinist bureaucracy.

(33)

If the party membership is restricted in this way to the class conscious and committed the cultural gap between leaders and rank-and-file, although not eliminated will be narrowed, and so many of the factors cited by Michels as leading to oligarchy either fall away or can be consciously combatted. Thus the cult of veneration of leaders is the attitude of a passive working class expecting its emancipation from above: it is not characteristic of workers actively and consciously engaged in a struggle for their liberation. In revolutions the working ~~class~~ as a whole shows scant respect for leaders as numerous examples from 1917 could show. The tendency of the upper echelons of the party to

assume a bourgeois lifestyle can be countered by paying all party officials no more than the average industrial wage, (34) and where necessary even more specific measures can be taken such as the Comintern's edict that the leaders of the French CP had to break all their ties with freemasonry or resign their posts. (35) It can become a consciously established practice that delegates and officials do not have a customary right to their positions. It is possible to ensure that every party member receives at least some systematic political education, and that there is an ongoing process of political debate at every level of the organisation.

All of these practices, derived from Lenin and incorporated in the ideas of Gramsci and Trotsky, are possible only on the basis of a politically aware, involved and enthusiastic membership. Combined they make it possible for the revolutionary party to constitute an exception to Michels' iron law. Of course, as we argued against Lukács, it would be a mistake to imagine that we have here a magic formula which guarantees against degeneration either into oligarchy or opportunism. The revolutionary party has to operate in a capitalist environment and is therefore continually threatened by it. Thus a soundly constructed party can suffer a major defeat (as Trotsky so frequently pointed out the dividing line between victory and defeat is very narrow) and its membership lose its confidence. A demoralised party cannot control its leaders. Nonetheless it can be said that the Marxist theory of the party has reduced Michels theory from the status of a "law" to that of

a "tendency". Moreover it is a tendency which is consciously recognised and can therefore be consciously guarded against.

B. Leninism and Stalinism.

In arguing that the revolutionary Marxist party constitutes an exception to the law of oligarchy there is one overwhelming fact that has to be confronted - namely, that from what is generally regarded as the model Marxist party, Lenin's Bolshevik party, there emerged the most monstrous bureaucracy in history. For the Marxist theory of the party the nature of the relationship between the Leninist party and Stalinism is a question of crucial importance.

The consensus of Western academic opinion is that the kind of party built by Lenin from 1903 onwards was one of the prime causes of Stalinist totalitarianism. Alfred G.Meyer is representative of this consensus when he writes: "In the Bolshevik movement, he created the model on which many other modern totalitarian parties have been built. Lenin must therefore be considered a pioneer of the totalitarianism of our age." (36) Three main arguments are put forward for this view; a) that Lenin exercised a personal dictatorship over the Bolshevik party, b) that the regime of the party, its discipline, made it tyrannical, c) that the relationship between the party and the class was essentially elitist and manipulative. (37) We shall first discuss these propositions and then consider the question at a more general level putting forward an alternative view.

The view that Lenin was a dictator in the Bolshevik party, and in this way foreshadowed the dictatorship of Stalin, is widely held. Thus Leonard Schapiro writes, "once dictatorship from the top downwards was accepted as the principle of organisation [at the Second Congress] it was logical that Lenin should be that dictator." (38) But this is a myth which cannot withstand either critical examination or contact with the facts.

The history of the Bolshevik party is a history of factional struggles, with the Mensheviks, the otzovists, the conciliators, the "old Bolsheviks" in 1917, the "left" Communists in 1918, the Workers' Opposition and so on and of hundreds of lesser disputes. In all of these disputes the different sides had the opportunity to argue their case (often at interminable length) openly before the party. This alone demonstrates that Lenin was no dictator, for a party dictator tolerates neither factional opposition nor free debate, and a closer examination of the way in which the party took 'crucial decisions makes this even clearer. Lenin, it is true, usually got his own way, but there was nothing automatic about this - on the contrary it often proved a difficult task to win over either his co-leaders or the party as a whole. Thus, for example, when Lenin first produced his April Theses he met with no support from the party leadership and a meeting of the Petrograd Committee voted thirteen to two against his position. (39) Only at the Party Conference did Lenin gain a majority. On the question of the Brest-Litovsk peace - a matter of life or death for the revolution. Lenin was for a long time in a minority. At a meeting of the central committee

and active workers on January 8 1918 Lenin's position for an immediate peace received only 15 votes, as against 32 votes for revolutionary war, and 16 votes for Trotsky's "neither peace nor war" formulation. On January 11 the Central Committee voted 9 to 7 for Trotsky's position, and on January 21 9 to 5 against an immediate peace. In addition the Petrograd and Moscow party committees both came out in favour of revolutionary war. Only on February 23 did Lenin at last get a clear majority for an immediate peace. (40) In this case it was neither Lenin's authority nor his powers of persuasion that carried the day, but simply that his position was proved correct in practice by the inability of the Russian army to resist the German advance. On many other questions, such as non-participation in the Stockholm Conference of Socialist Parties in April 1917, the boycott of Kerensky's Democratic Conference (September 1917), the date and place of the October Insurrection (Lenin wanted to start in Moscow), and the postponement of elections to the Constituent Assembly, Lenin was quite simply defeated. Throughout his career Lenin exercised his leadership through the party's elected bodies, and its congresses, and conferences which, while the party was underground were convened as often as circumstances would permit, and after it was in power took place at least every year. Finally, during his lifetime Lenin was never the subject of a cult of personality.

Even the briefest look at the Stalin era shows the complete contrast between the role and power of the two leaders. Since the defeat of Bukharin and the so-called "right wing" in 1929 there has never been a

single open factional or theoretical struggle on any question within the CPSU. Any relationship between the central committee and the body supposed to elect it, the party congress, vanished since the congresses were so rare and irregular (five years between the 17th congress in 1934 and the 18th in 1939, and then thirteen years to the 19th in 1952). Nor did the central committee hold any real power as is demonstrated by the fact between 1934 and 1939 over three quarters of its members were purged in one way or another. Under Stalin the most momentous about turns in policy, forced collectivisation or the Stalin-Hitler pact, were decreed without any consultation and the whole party (and indeed the whole International) were expected to adhere immediately and unquestioningly to the new line on pain of damnation as "enemies of the people". Even if one leaves aside the question of the means employed by Stalin, the wholesale murder and rewriting of history etc., it is ludicrous to argue that there is any similarity or straightforward continuity between the authority of Lenin and that of Stalin.

The view that Bolshevik discipline, the concept of democratic centralism, was a principle germ of Stalinism is even more widespread than the notion that Lenin was a dictator. Moreover it is a thesis which, by its nature, cannot be refuted in a straightforward empirical manner. Rather it is necessary to examine theoretically the meaning and nature of discipline in a revolutionary party. There is no need to labour the practical advantages and indeed necessity of disciplined organisation in the conditions of Tsarist Russia - this point has already been made

in the chapter on Lenin and in any case does not answer the charge that such discipline inevitably negated any real party democracy. What is required however is a demonstration that in the Bolsheviks and in revolutionary parties in general discipline is not just a matter of efficiency but also has important democratic functions.

All political parties require some degree of discipline if they are to be effective at all but in conservative, liberal and social democratic parties this is generally achieved informally without any of the open stress that is laid on it by Marxist parties. There are two reasons for this: Firstly in parliamentarist parties only a tiny percentage of the party membership, its M.P's and a few leading administrators and organisers need to be subject to control in any way, since the rest of the members are merely passive onlookers whose activity lacks any great significance one way or another. Secondly within this upper layer discipline can be maintained without any formal rules by a system of patronage. The leaders of such parties have at their disposal numerous lucrative and prestigious posts with which loyalty can be rewarded. This is not just a question of direct bribery. Every politician knows that if he wishes to succeed he must not rock the boat too much. In contrast the revolutionary party aims at active interventions by its base in the daily events of the class struggle and consequently the behaviour of every member is a matter of concern. Also the revolutionary party has no wealth or status to offer in return for good behaviour. On the contrary the economic and social pressures are all the other way around. At factory level the worker continually risks losing his job through carrying out

party policy, or alternatively could easily be made foreman if he would only abandon his convictions. Higher up it may only be his party card that stands between a capable leader and a trade union post or a seat in parliament, or even a ministry.

Discipline is usually regarded as a means whereby the party leadership controls the rank-and-file but from this analysis we can see that it is also a means whereby the rank-and-file control the leaders. In this respect discipline and democracy are not separate or opposed tendencies but rather two sides of the same coin. A contemporary example illustrates this well. In Britain Labour Governments frequently fail to carry out, or directly contravene, decisions taken by Labour Party Conferences, and M.P's quite often get into trouble with their constituency parties. The demands that frequently come from the rank-and-file party activists that the Parliamentary party should be bound by conference decisions or that constituencies should have some control over their M.P's are simultaneously demands for more discipline and more democracy. In this case the Labour Party leaders, while demanding more obedience to the Whips in parliament, become the strongest advocates of freedom of conscience for M.P's and a free hand for the government. In the Bolshevik party there was no such two-tier system of discipline which applied equally to members of all rank. When Zinoviev and Kamenev revealed the date of the planned insurrection in the non-party press Lenin argued that precisely because of their position as prominent leaders disciplinary action should be all the more swift and severe. (41)

With these considerations in mind it is possible to clear up certain misconceptions about the operation of Bolshevik "democratic centralism". Meyer writes: "One of the basic rules of democratic centralism is that decisions reached by the party must be accepted unanimously by the membership. There may be full discussion of what is to be done; perhaps there ought to be such full discussion. There may even be sharp disagreements that are reconciled only with great difficulty. But, once a final decision has been made, it must be accepted by all, and not only on the surface. The agreement is expected to be wholehearted and sincere."

(42) Implied here is the idea that democratic centralism meant party members had to have extremely "flexible" minds, changing their personal convictions by order of the party. While this was one of the most revolting features of the Stalin period with its confessions, and self-criticisms, its insistence on unanimity on questions of art and science, its sudden zig-zags whereby a social democrat changed overnight from a "social fascist" into a "progressive force", there was in Lenin's day never any suggestion of such inquisitorial methods. Bolshevik discipline demanded unity in action not monolithicity of thought. Consequently it was the norm for the party to contain prominent members who were dissident on some important question. Thus Bogdanov was "revisionist" in matters of philosophy from at least 1903 and for three years led an organised opposition (the otzovists), and Bukharin always disagreed with Lenin over the right of nation's to self determination. Only in 1921, at the time of the Kronstadt rebellion and the New Economic Policy, was

the right to factional organisation abrogated, and on that occasion the leaders of the main faction concerned, the Workers' Opposition, were required to cease factional activity not abandon their views. (43)

The practice of demanding self criticism from dissidents, which became the rule under Stalin, was inaugurated by Zinoviev at the party's thirteenth congress in May 1924 when he insisted that Trotsky recant his warnings of bureaucratic degeneration. Isaac Deutscher has described the episode and the reaction of Lenin's widow: "This was the first time in the party's experience that a member had been confronted with the demand for recantation. Even this congress, zealous as it was to pronounce anathema on Trotsky, was shocked. The mass of delegates rose to give an ovation to Krupskaya when she, without supporting Trotsky, made a strong and dignified protest against Zinoviev's 'psychologically impossible demand'." (44) Finally it must be remembered that until the mid-1920's Bolshevik discipline was backed by nothing stronger than the purely moral sanction of expulsion, and its acceptance was an obligation freely entered into by each member.

From all this it is clear that there is no parallel between the nature and role of discipline in the Leninist and Stalinist parties. Under Lenin discipline served to ensure the effective implementation of the policy of the majority of the party; under Stalin it served to suppress all independent thought or opposition to the policies handed down from above. Of course it cannot be claimed that the Bolshevik tradition of discipline did not aid Stalin in his rise to power and in

the consolidation of his position. Many Bolshevik leaders, notably Trotsky and Zinoviev, muted their opposition to Stalin out of consideration for party discipline. They made the mistake which Lenin never did, of at times placing party loyalty above fundamental issues of principle. The point here is that in an organisation which is fundamentally democratic discipline can simultaneously strengthen democracy and efficiency. In an organisation which has lost that basic democratic component discipline can be used as a pretext for destroying the last remnants of democracy and critical thought. That this transformation occurred in the role of discipline in the Bolshevik party was not the inevitable result of the democratic centralist regime as such but the consequence of a complex historical situation which must be analysed in its totality.

The most serious challenge to the Leninist theory of the party is that which locates the source of Stalinist degeneration not in the internal organisation of the Bolshevik party but in its relationship to the working class. For this school of thought the original sin of Bolshevism is the theory put forward in "What Is To Be Done?" that the working class cannot by its own efforts rise above the level of trade union consciousness and that socialism must be introduced into the working class from the outside. Lichtheim writes that "What Is To Be Done?" "in fact amounted to the political expropriation of the proletariat," (45) and Bertram D.Wolfe that, "Lenin from the outset favoured not a party of the class but a party for the class....Lenin never accepted the idea that the emancipation of the working class was to be the work of the working class itself." (46) The logic of this argument is

that "What Is To Be Done?" was the programmatic statement of a voluntaristic revision of Marxism by Lenin which permeated the whole practice of Bolshevism, leading to the seizure of power by a minority, and ultimately to a dictatorship over, rather than of, the proletariat.

Carew Hunt summarises this case as follows:

"Lenin's attack on 'subservience to spontaneity' was the protest of a practical revolutionary, who was unwilling to wait upon the dialectical process, and believed that, given the necessary organization, he could, as he put it, 'overthrow all Russia'; and it was thus an implicit revolt against the determinist in favour of the voluntarist element in Marx's teaching. Stalin was to carry this still further by representing that the real determinant of socialist development in the Soviet Union is the State (a euphemism for the party), which is no longer, as it was for Marx, an organ of oppression - superstructural and expendable - but has been transformed into the instrument for 'building socialism,' and for eventually securing the transition into communism." (47)

We have already attempted to refute this view at various points in this study. In the chapters on Lenin we argued that he abandoned the formulations of "What Is To Be Done?" under the impact of the 1905 revolution and did not subsequently return to them and that the practice of the Bolsheviks before and during the October Revolution was not at all in contradiction to the Marxist theory of proletarian self-emancipation. Also we have maintained that Marxism is neither a deterministic nor voluntaristic theory (nor an ambiguous combination of

these) but a dialectical synthesis of the two, and that the Marxist revolutionary party is the concrete expression of this synthesis.

There is no need to repeat the arguments here, nonetheless there are some points that can be made.

Firstly, although the idea that socialism has to be introduced into the working class from without certainly has elitist implications (as we noted when first discussing it), Lenin's critics are clearly exaggerating when they talk about "political expropriation of the proletariat", and such like. As Plamenatz (certainly no Leninist) argues, "Lenin did not mean either to deny the political capacity of the workers or to flatter the Marxist intellectuals; he meant only to show that they were necessary to each other....He never, when he wrote 'What Is To Be Done?' intended that the 'party of the proletariat' should drive and bully the workers, or even that it should make their revolution for them....The party was merely to educate and guide them, to raise them....up to 'its own level of consciousness'." (48) That Lenin expressed his ideas in awkward and undialectical formulations is unfortunate but should not be used to suggest that he conceived of the party acting separately from the class or giving it orders from above, which was plainly not his meaning.

Secondly it is important to note the intellectual leger de main that is involved in this argument. For while the theory of "What Is To Be Done?" is morally condemned and held responsible for all sorts of later evils it is simultaneously approved of, in the sense of

being regarded as an accurate assessment. Thus John Keep writes, "Lenin held - quite reasonably, as one may think [my emphasis - JM] - that ordinary working men would never make the kind of revolution he wanted if they were left to their own resources, but had to be cajoled or coerced into doing so." (49) Usually the approval is less explicit than this but the appeal to critics of socialism of the idea that socialism does not come naturally to workers is obvious. (50) But if one says that Lenin's theory meant the substitution of a small conspiratorial party for the proletariat, that this theory was realistic (if unpleasant), and that with this theory the Bolshevik party preserved itself through fourteen years of repression to make, independently of any class, the most important revolution of the century and, for good or ill, completely transform Russian society, one is in fact completely endorsing the whole Blanquist project. Lichtheim explicitly accepts this logic, writing that, "The only reason for not describing [Lenin's organisational model] as 'Blanquist' was that Blanqui had never envisaged anything quite so thorough-going....[and] Lenin in 1917 did in fact organise a seizure of power modelled on Blanqui's Parisian coups: of course with the difference that he succeeded where Blanqui had failed." (51) Thus, by implication, those who hold that the source of Stalinism lay in Lenin's theory of the party, and the nature of Bolshevik organisation, fall into a view of history which is voluntaristic in the extreme. Even if this view were not so glaringly at variance with the facts it would be highly dubious on a priori theoretical grounds

for it is not that far removed from a conception of history as essentially the biographies of Kings, generals, and prime ministers. Political parties, like leaders and leaderships in general, play a major part in history by strengthening the cohesion and consciousness of classes, and at crucial turning points they can mean the difference between victory and defeat for one of those classes, but they cannot themselves "make" great social revolutions, or create new societies.

Since we have rejected on both empirical and theoretical grounds the notion of continuity between Leninism and Stalinism it is necessary to indicate, if only in outline, an alternative view of the relationship between them. In essence this alternative view is that the material conditions in Russia were such that, if the revolution remained isolated, its collapse or degeneration were inevitable and that the party of the revolution could not hope to remain immune to these processes.

Despite the fact that Russia contained pockets of highly advanced industry which made possible the proletarian revolution, the country as a whole was economically the most backward in Europe. It has been calculated that the average income per occupied person in Russia in 1913 was only 80.9% of the corresponding figure for Britain in 1688 and 35% of the British figure for 1913. (52) This alone constituted an insuperable barrier to the construction of a classless society in Russia alone for as Marx wrote, "A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of Communism], because without it want is generalised, and with want the

struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive." (53) By the "old crap" Marx meant the division of societies into classes and the state as a parasitic organ standing above society. Historically the origin of classes lies in the fact that on the basis of poverty and a low productivity of labour the majority of the population spend their lives completely involved in productive labour, and the management of society is undertaken by a minority not absorbed in manual work. Moreover when the majority live at or about the subsistence level the accumulation of a social surplus necessary for the progress of society is possible only through the exploitation and oppression of the masses by a minority.

The sociological corollary of Russian economic backwardness was that 80% of the population were peasants and this fact further aggravated the situation. The Russian Revolution was the product of the merging of two processes. A proletarian revolution which transferred industry and state power into the collective hands of the working class and a peasant revolt which seized the landed estates and divided them up into 25 million small holdings. The Russian workers achieved unprecedeted heights of class consciousness and socialist idealism but the mass of peasants because of the material situation as small property owners did not, and could not possess socialist consciousness. The peasantry gave the Bolsheviks at least passive support because the Bolsheviks alone opposed the war and sanctioned the seizure of the land. They maintained that support as long as there was a direct threat of the restoration of the landlords but when the civil war ended they

inevitably returned to asserting their private interests which stood in contradiction to the interests of the proletariat. Thus, paradoxically, victory in the civil war lost the Bolsheviks the support of the majority of the population. They could only maintain their position at all by making substantial, though openly acknowledged, concessions to capitalism in the form of N.E.P., and simultaneously removing themselves further from popular control.

The effect of the civil war on industry and the working class compounded these difficulties a hundred fold. By May 1919 Russian industry was reduced to 10% of its normal fuel supply and by the end of 1920 the output of all manufactured goods had fallen to 12.9% of the 1913 level. (54) Chronic food shortages drove workers back to the countryside to avoid literal starvation while the most politically advanced workers either fought at the front or were drawn into administration. In 1917 the industrial working class numbered over three million. By 1921 it had fallen to one and a quarter million. (55) Thus the Bolsheviks had lost not only the majority support in the country but also their social base in the working class. The proletariat that made the revolution of 1917 had, within four years, practically ceased to exist. Those that remained were dispersed and exhausted, incapable of asserting themselves politically. The soviets no longer had any life in them; they had become mere extensions of the party which hung suspended in mid-air responsible to no-one. By the early twenties the Bolshevik party had become what Lenin has so often been accused of trying to create - a party separate from and above the working class - and it

had become this through circumstances entirely beyond its control.

What were the Bolsheviks to do in this desperate situation? They could hardly wash their hands of it à la Pontius Pilate for they knew full well what would be the consequences of a counter revolutionary restoration and they were the only organised socialist force in the country capable of resisting this. The only possible course was to cling to power while doing everything they could to bring about the international revolution. But the international revolution did not come and clinging to power meant increasing reliance on the old officialdom taken over from Tsarism and the use of more and more undemocratic methods. Cast in this new role it was impossible for the socialist character of the party to survive indefinitely. The Bolshevik leaders were acutely aware of the dangers in the situation but every measure they took to safeguard the purity of the party - the purges of 'alien' elements, the banning of factions, (56) the concentration of power in the hands of the Bolshevik 'old guard', and even the campaigns against bureaucracy and red tape - served only to strengthen the bureaucracy for, in the absence of a conscious and energetic working class only the bureaucracy was available to carry them out. At the end of 1922 Lenin seems suddenly to have grasped the extent of the transformation that had already occurred in the party and the state and he prepared to move drastically against Stalin. (57) But by then Lenin was a dying man and once he was removed from the scene there was no force that could resist the complete bureaucratisation of the party and the

regime.

If one abstracts from the International situation i.e. from the fact that on a world scale the prerequisites for socialism did exist and that the Russian Revolution was predicated on the not unreasonable assumption of approaching international revolution, then the situation of the Bolsheviks is well described by Engels famous words from "The Peasant War in Germany."

"The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party, is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents and for the realisation of the measures which that domination would imply....he necessarily finds himself in an unsolvable dilemma. What he can do is in contrast to all his actions as hitherto practised, to all his principles and to the present interests of his party; what he ought to do cannot be achieved. In a word, he is compelled to represent not his party nor his class, but the class for whom conditions are ripe for domination. In the interests of the movement itself, he is compelled to defend the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with phrases and promises, with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost." (58)

To many dissident Communists, including Trotsky's Left Opposition, it seemed that the Stalin-led party was serving the interests of the newly developing class of rich peasants, but in fact it turned rapidly into the political instrument of the new class of state

bureaucrats. Stalin as chief representative of this process had to eliminate not only the most dangerous oppositionists such as Trotsky but practically the entire Leninist "old guard" of the party. The great purges of the thirties left alive almost nobody of any prominence who retained any real connection or commitment, however distorted, to the revolutionary ideals of 1917. As Trotsky often used to say "Stalinism is divided from Bolshevism by a river of blood."

Far from being essentially parties of the same type the Leninist and Stalinist parties are in fact agents of different and antagonistic social classes - the proletariat and the state bureaucracy. The relationship of Stalin's party to Lenin's is that of its counter-revolutionary negation. Of course it would be pointless to argue that there was absolutely no connection between Bolshevik organisation and Stalinism. As Victor Serge Commented: "It is often said that 'the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning.' Well I have no objection. Only Bolshevism also contained many other germs - a mass of other germs....To judge a living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in a corpse - and which he may have carried in him since his birth - is this very sensible?" (59) That the Stalinist germ flourished, while the others died, was above all because of the failure of the international revolution which in turn derived from the lack of Bolshevik parties in Germany, Italy, Hungary and elsewhere.

C. The Relevance of the Marxist Theory of the Party Today.

Given that the Marxist theory of the party is not refuted by the principal objections that have been made to it, the final question that must be asked is: what is the relevance of this theory to the present day? Really this is the subject for a whole new study but it is quite common for a work to end at the point where another might begin. Essentially we are faced here with the choice of saying a great deal (to prove, or seriously substantiate the points made) or very little (simply to assert them). We shall say very little.

The relevance of the Marxist party is of course dependent on the general relevance of Marxism as a means of understanding the modern world and as a guide to changing it. Not so long ago the world view, not only of Marx, but of all subsequent Marxists, seemed so divorced from contemporary reality as to be hardly worth considering as a living force. Capitalism was enjoying the most sustained boom in its history. The wages of the industrial proletariat were rising steadily as were their general conditions of life. Revolt or revolution seemed out of the question. This was the age of the "new industrial society," of "high mass consumption and beyond," and above all of "the end of ideology." Marxism as a real political force was confined to the third world and there became essentially nationalist in content losing its class and internationalist character. In the West the official custodians of Marxism, the Communist Parties, adjusted to the situation by openly adopting a strategy of parliamentary reform. The few remaining independent Marxist intellectuals turned mostly to questions of

philosophy and sociology seeking, especially in the early Marx, a new basis for a critique of capitalism. Those who clung to the aspiration of classical Marxism - international proletarian revolution - were literally mere handfuls, with little or no hope of gaining a hearing. In such conditions the creation of Marxist revolutionary workers' parties was an impossibility and because there was no practice there was no significant theory either.

But this apparent truce between the classes could not last forever. Slowly but surely the old contradictions of the capitalist system have reasserted themselves.(60) In the mid-sixties the post-war boom began to falter; the late sixties and early seventies saw the emergence of a world inflationary spiral; determined attempts to cure inflation then precipitated recession without removing the inflation; recoiling from the threat of mass unemployment the western governments have now decided to reflate in a way that cannot fail to provoke a new and even fiercer wave of inflation. By common consent of economists, politicians, and ideologists, of left and right alike, the world economy is in its most severe crisis since the thirties and is poised on the brink of catastrophe. This steadily intensifying economic instability has inevitably brought with it a parallel growth in the combativity of a working class which had grown accustomed to an improving standard of living during the years of boom. In response governments of every shade and hue resorted to a combination of state power and propaganda to reduce the level of wage settlements through a variety of incomes policies and wage freezes. These in turn have intensified the resistance of

workers. The class struggle, or "industrial relations" as it is known, has returned to the centre of politics.

Alongside this growth in the antagonism between capital and labour, in part determined by it and in part arising from independent causes, a number of other social forces have emerged to open cracks in the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. The anti-war movement in America, the black movement, the student revolt and the women's movement internationally spring immediately to mind, but also a host of other sectional and local movements all based on the principle of self-help and self-activity. In the context of an expanding and confident capitalism with a passive working class each of these could no doubt be incorporated without serious damage to the system. In the context of a prolonged economic crisis and an aggressive working class they constitute a potentially explosive combination. The last ten years have relentlessly undermined the world view of Daniel Bell and Walt Whitman Rostow the next ten years will reinstate the world view of Karl Marx. The building of Marxist parties is once again on the agenda in the countries of advanced capitalism.

Inevitably the development of such parties has not kept pace with events for, as Trotsky pointed out, if consciousness changed in harmony with conditions there would be neither need nor occasion for revolutions. (61) Consequently we have yet to see the emergence of a large revolutionary workers' party anywhere in the western world. But the relevance of such parties has been demonstrated by what has happened in their absence. The French May Events in 1968 were one of the most

spectacular displays of revolutionary spontaneity in history and yet the acute social crisis produced by the general strike of ten million workers was defused almost as rapidly as it came into being. The lack of any revolutionary organisation with a nationwide base in the working class (as against the students) meant that the Communist Party and the trade unions it controls were able to dampen down the militancy of the strike and the factory occupations and engineer a feeble compromise with De Gaulle.

(62) If France showed the inadequacy of even the most developed spontaneity the Chilean coup in 1973 revealed the bankruptcy of even the most determined and radical reformism. There are no grounds for question-

ing the socialist intentions of Salvador Allende and his supporters and yet their commitment to **gradualism** and the constitution rendered them politically paralysed in the face of the all too obvious preparations

for military takeover. (63) The tragedy of Chile was the lack of a party strong and astute enough to play in relation to Allende and Popular Unity

the role the Bolsheviks played in relation to Kevensky and the Provisional Government - first clearly differentiating itself from them politically,

them defending them against the counter revolution by the independent

mobilisation of the masses, finally replacing them with the dictatorship

of the proletariat. To shift from the immediate past to the present

there is the situation in Portugal which today stands on a knife edge.

The overthrow of the Caetano dictatorship has been followed by a dramatic

rise in the long suppressed militancy and consciousness of the workers,

but the forces of reaction in Portugal, though temporarily disorientated,

are not yet defeated. Given time and the opportunity they will regroup

to "defend democracy" with a bloodbath should they find their position seriously threatened. As so often before the established parties of the working class (the Communists and Socialists) have combined to preach moderation, and once again the fate of the working class will depend on the emergence of a party able to bring cohesion and clarity to its spontaneous revolt.

Considering the profound downward tendency in the world economy the battles of France, of Chile, and of Portugal, are in all probability only the opening skirmishes in a new epoch of global confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In the last such period, that immediately following the ¹st World War, the building of revolutionary parties on an international scale commenced seriously only as the revolutionary wave was receding. The result was the defeat of the working class, fascism and ultimately another, more terrible, world war. In a world where three hundred million children are already at, or around, starvation level, and where the most powerful ruling classes possess unprecedented weapons of destruction the consequences of another defeat are unthinkable. To avert it revolutionary parties must be built as a matter of the greatest urgency. One prerequisite for this is the assimilation of the Marxist theory of the party as it has been developed over the past one hundred and thirty years and its imaginative application and further development.

The creation of Marxist parties is the immediate practical implication of Marxist theory. In so far as Marxism remains, despite innumerable "refutations," the most coherent total critique of, and

challenge to, the capitalist order so the Marxist theory of the party retains all its relevance for the present day.

APPENDIX

THESES ON THE ORGANISATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNIST PARTIES.

ADOPTED BY THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL. JULY 1921.

These theses are reproduced here because better than any other single document, they give a detailed picture of exactly how, according to the Leninist theory of the party, the revolutionary party should be organised, and how it should carry out its day to day work.

I GENERAL

1. The organization of the party must be adapted to the conditions and the purpose of its activity.....
2. There can be no one absolutely correct and unalterable form of the organization for the communist parties. The conditions of the proletarian class struggle are subject to change in an unceasing process of transformation and the organization of the proletarian vanguard must always seek the appropriate forms which correspond to these changes. Similarly, the parties in the different countries must be adapted to the historically determined peculiarities of the country concerned.

But this differentiation has definite limits. Despite all peculiarities there is a similarity in the conditions of the proletarian class struggle in the different countries and in the various phases of the proletarian revolution which is of fundamental importance for the international communist movement. It creates a common basis for the organization of communist parties in all countries.....
4. Any joint action requires leadership and this is necessary above all in the greatest struggle in world history. The organization of the communist party is the organization of communist leadership in the proletarian revolution.....
5.Successful leadership presupposes moreover the closest contact with the proletarian masses. Without such contact the leaders will not lead the masses but, at best, only follow them. These organic contacts are to be sought in the communist party organization through democratic centralism.

II. ON DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

6. Democratic centralism in the communist party organization should be a real synthesis, a fusion of centralism and proletarian democracy. This fusion can be attained only on the basis of constant common activity, of constant struggle of the entire party organization.

Centralism in the communist party organization is not formal and mechanical but the centralization of communist activity, that is, the formation of a strong, militant, and at the same time flexible leadership.

Formal or mechanical centralization would be the centralization in the hands of a party bureaucracy of 'power' to dominate the other members or the masses of the revolutionary proletariat outside the party. But only enemies of communism can maintain that the communist party wants to dominate the revolutionary proletariat by its leadership of the proletarian class struggle and by the centralization of this communist leadership. That is a lie. Equally incompatible with the principles of democratic centralism adopted by the Communist International is a conflict of power or a struggle for domination within the party.

The organizations of the old non-revolutionary labour movement developed an all-pervading dualism, such as that which arose in the organization of the bourgeois State, the dualism between bureaucracy and 'people'. Under the ossifying influence of the bourgeois environment their officials became estranged and a living labour community was replaced by a purely formal democracy and the splitting of the organization into active functionaries and passive masses. To a certain degree,

the revolutionary workers' movement has unavoidably inherited this tendency to formalism and dualism from the bourgeois environment.....

7.If centralization is not to remain a dead letter, if it is to be really carried out, this must be done in such a way that the members feel it to be an objectively justified strengthening and development of their common activity and fighting strength. Otherwise it will appear to the masses as a bureaucratization of the party which will conjure up an opposition to any centralization, to any leadership, to any strict discipline. Anarchism is the obverse of bureaucratism.....

III. THE COMMUNISTS' OBLIGATION TO WORK

8. The Communist party must be a working school of revolutionary Marxism. Organic links between the various parts and between the individual members will be forged by daily common work in the party organizations.

In the legal communist parties there is still no regular participation of the majority of the members in daily party work. This is the chief defect of these parties and the cause of constant uncertainty in their development.....

10. A communist party, if it is to have only truly active members, must demand of everyone in its ranks that he shall devote his strength and his time, in so far as they are at his disposal, to the party and always give his best in its service....

11. To carry out daily party work every member should as a rule belong to a small working group, a committee, a commission, a fraction,

or a cell. Only in this way can party work be distributed, conducted, and carried out in an orderly fashion.

It goes without saying that all members should take part in the general membership meetings of the local organizations. It is not good to wish to replace these periodic meetings in conditions of legality by local delegate meetings; rather all members should be obliged to attend these meetings regularly. But that is far from enough. The proper preparation of these meetings presupposes work in smaller groups or work by designated comrades, as does the preparation for the effective utilization of general workers' meetings, demonstrations, and mass actions by the working class. The manifold tasks involved can be examined with care and carried out only if prepared by small groups. Unless this detailed work is constantly carried out by the entire membership and distributed among small working groups, even our most zealous efforts to participate in the class struggles of the proletariat will only lead to vain and powerless attempts to influence these struggles and not to the necessary concentration of all living revolutionary forces of the proletariat into a unified communist party capable of action.

12. Communist nuclei should be formed for the day-to-day work in the various spheres of party activity: house-to-house agitation, party studies, literature distribution, information services, liaison service, etc.

Communist cells are nuclei for day-to-day communist work in factories and workshops, in trade unions, in proletarian co-operatives, in military detachments, etc., wherever there are at least a few members

in one factory or trade union branch etc., the cell is extended to a fraction whose work is directed by the nucleus.

Whether circumstances demand the formation of a wider opposition fraction, or participation in an already existing opposition, communists must try to bring it under the leadership of their cell. The question whether a communist cell should come out openly as communist can be decided only after a thorough examination of the dangers and advantages of such a course in the given situation.

13.It is particularly important that this reorganization shall from the outset be carried out with great care and after comprehensive deliberation. It is easy to distribute the members in any organization into small cells and groups according to a formal scheme and then without further ado require them all to undertake daily party work. But that would be worse than not beginning at all. It would very soon provoke dissension and aversion among the party members to this important innovation....

16. Our entire party work consists of practical or theoretical struggle or preparation for struggle. Until now specialization in this work has for the most part been very defective. There are some important fields in which the party has only accidentally done any work - for example, the legal parties have done practically nothing in the special struggle against the political police. As a rule, the instruction of party comrades happens only casually and incidentally, and moreover so superficially that the greater part of the most important theoretical decisions of the party, even the party programme and the resolutions of the

Communist International, remains wholly unknown to large sections of the party membership. The work of instruction must be systematically organized throughout the entire system of party organization, in all the party's working groups, and must be carried on unceasingly; this will also enable the party to reach a higher level of specialization.

17. The obligation to work necessarily involves the obligation to report. This applies both to all organizations and organs of the party, as well as to each individual member.....

18. The party makes a regular quarterly report to the leadership of the Communist International. Every organization in the party must report to its immediately superior committee (for example, the local organization must send in a monthly report to the appropriate committee).

Every cell, fraction, and working group must report to that party body under whose actual direction it stands. Individual members report (say weekly) to the cell or working group to which they belong, and on the fulfilment of special commissions to the party organ from which they were received.

The report should always be given at the first opportunity.

It is to be given verbally unless the party has asked for a written report. Reports should be brief and objective. Those who receive the reports are responsible for the safe keeping of those reports which it would be unwise to publish, as well as for transmitting important reports without delay to the relevant leading party body.

19.In all communist cells, fractions, and working groups the reports made, as well as the reports to be made, should be discussed.

Discussion must become a customary practice.

Cells and working groups must see that individual party members, or groups of members, are regularly given special instructions to observe and to report on hostile organizations, particularly petty-bourgeois organizations and, above all, 'socialist' party organizations.

IV. PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION

20. Our general task in the period before open revolutionary insurrection is revolutionary propaganda and agitation. This activity and its organization is still often pursued to a large extent in the old formal manner by casual intervention from outside at mass meetings and without special attention to the concrete revolutionary content of speeches and writings.

Communist propaganda and agitation must take root in the very centre of the proletariat. It must grow out of the actual life of the workers, out of their common interests and aspirations, and particularly out of their common struggles.

The most important aspect of communist propaganda is its revolutionary content. It is from this point of view that the slogans and attitudes on concrete questions in different situations must be most carefully examined. This requires constant and detailed instruction, not only for professional propagandists and agitators but also for all other party members.

21. The principal forms of communist propaganda and agitation are: verbal personal persuasion, participation in the struggles of the trade union and political workers' movement; and through the party press

and party literature. Every party member, whether in a legal or illegal party, is to take regular part in this activity.

Verbal personal propaganda must be conducted primarily as a systematically organized house-to-house agitation by working groups set up for that purpose. No house in the area covered by the local party organization should be omitted. In larger towns specially organised street agitation with posters and leaflets can bring good results. In addition regular personal agitation combined with literature distribution should be organized by the cells or fractions at their places of work.

In countries where there are national minorities it is the duty of the party to devote the necessary attention to agitation and propaganda among the proletarian sections of these minorities. This should of course be carried on in the language of the minority and for this purpose an appropriate party organ must be created.

22. Improved methods of work must be constantly sought in conducting communist propaganda in capitalist countries where the great majority of the proletariat still has no conscious revolutionary inclinations; it must be adapted to the understanding of workers who are not yet revolutionary but who are beginning to be revolutionized, and open the door for them into the revolutionary movement. Communist propaganda with its slogans should encourage in the different situations it encounters the budding, unconscious, hesitating, and semi-bourgeois tendencies towards revolution which wrestle in their minds against bourgeois traditions and sympathies.

At the same time communist propaganda should not limit itself to the restricted demands and vague hopes of the proletarian masses today.

The revolutionary kernel of these demands and hopes only provides an opening for our influence, for the proletariat can be brought nearer to an understanding of communism only by seizing on these links.

23. Communist agitation among the proletarian masses must be conducted in such a way that our communist organization will be recognized by the fighting proletariat as the courageous, far-sighted, loyal, and energetic leader of their own movement.

To accomplish this communists must take part in all the spontaneous struggles and movements of the working class and lead the workers' cause in all conflicts with the capitalist about hours of work, wages, labour conditions, etc. Communists must concern themselves actively with the concrete questions of the workers' life; they must help them to disentangle these questions, direct their attention to the most important abuses; help them to formulate their demands in a precise and practical form; endeavour to develop among the workers the sense of solidarity, awaken in them the consciousness of their common interests and of the common cause of all workers of the country as a single working class which is one section of the world army of the proletariat.

It is only by this daily detailed work, by constant devoted participation in all the struggles of the proletariat that the communist party can develop into a communist party. Only in this way will it distinguish itself from the obsolete socialist parties, whose activity consists in nothing but recruiting members, talking about reforms, and exploiting parliamentary possibilities. The conscious and devoted participation of the entire mass of the party membership in the school of the

daily struggles and disputes of the exploited against the exploiters, is the indispensable prerequisite, not only for the seizure of power, but even more for carrying out the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is only leadership of the working masses in the unending small-scale wars against the onslaughts of capital that will enable communist parties to become the vanguard of the working class, learning in practice how to lead the proletariat and gaining the ability to make deliberate preparation for the elimination of the bourgeoisie.

24. It is particularly important to mobilize the membership to take part in the workers' movement when there are strikes and lockouts and other mass dismissals.

It is the greatest mistake for communists to remain passive and disdainful or even hostile to the present struggles of the workers for small improvements in their working conditions by appealing to the communist programme and the final revolutionary armed struggle. However small and modest the demands may be for which the workers are ready today to fight the capitalists, that must never be a reason for communists to stand aside from the struggle. Our agitation should not, it is true, give the impression that we communists blindly stir up senseless strikes and other thoughtless action, but among the fighting workers communists must earn the reputation of being the ablest fighting comrades.

25. In their work in the trade union movement the communist cells and fractions are frequently perplexed by the simplest questions on the agenda. It is easy but useless just to go on preaching the general principles of communism, while falling into the negative attitude of a

vulgar syndicalism when confronted by concrete questions. That only makes the work of the yellow Amsterdam leadership easier. Instead of that, communists should determine their revolutionary attitude according to the objective content of every question that comes up - for example, instead of contenting themselves with opposition in principle to all wage agreements, they should fight the actual provisions of the agreements recommended by the Amsterdam leaders. Every brake on the militancy of the proletariat is to be condemned and vigorously contested; it is well known that the object of the capitalists and their Amsterdam assistants in every wage agreement is to tie the hands of the fighting workers, so that it is obviously the duty of communists to expose this aim to the workers. Such an exposure can as a rule be brought about by proposing an agreement which does not tie the workers down in any way.....

26. In the struggle against the social-democratic and other petty-bourgeois trade union leaders as well as the various workers' parties there is no point in trying persuasion. Against them an energetic struggle must be organized. But they can only be fought successfully by detaching their adherents from them, by convincing the workers that the social-traitor leaders are just the errand boys of capitalism. Therefore these leaders should whenever possible be placed in situations in which they are forced to expose themselves and then they can be attacked in the sharpest fashion.

It is not enough to damn the Amsterdam leaders merely as 'yellow'. Their yellow character must be demonstrated all the time by practical examples. Their activity in joint industrial councils, in the International

Labour Office of the League of Nations, in bourgeois ministries and administrations, the treacherous words in their speeches at conferences and in parliament, illuminating extracts from their soothing articles in hundreds of newspapers, and in particular their hesitating and reluctant attitude in preparing and carrying out even the smallest wage struggle, offer daily opportunities to expose in simply formulated resolutions and clear speeches the unreliable and treacherous activities of the yellow Amsterdam leaders.....

27. The fractions and working groups must carefully prepare in advance communist work in trade union meetings and conferences - for example, draft their own resolutions, choose speakers, nominate capable, experienced, and energetic comrades for election. Similarly communist organizations through their working groups must make careful preparations for all workers' meetings, election meetings, demonstrations, and similar events arranged by hostile parties. When communists themselves convene general workers' meetings, as many communist working groups as possible should co-operate in advance to run the meetings on an organized basis and follow them up.

28. Communists must learn how to bring unorganized and unconscious workers under lasting party influence. Our cells and fractions should persuade these workers to join the unions and to read our party papers. Other workers' associations (co-operatives, disabled ex-servicemen, educational and study groups, sports associations, theatre groups ect.) can also be used to transmit our influence. Where the communist party has to work illegally such workers' associations can, with the consent

and under the supervision of the leading party organs, be founded outside the party on the initiative of party members (associations of sympathizers).....

29. In order to win the semi-proletarian strata of the working population as sympathizers of the revolutionary proletariat, communists must exploit their special conflicts of interest with the landlords, capitalists, and the capitalist State, and by constant persuasion rid these middle strata of their mistrust of the proletarian revolution. That may frequently require prolonged association with them. Their confidence in the communist movement will be promoted by a sympathetic interest in their daily needs, by the provision of information and help without charge in their difficulties, by drawing them into special associations which further their education, etc. In this connexion it is necessary to work cautiously and untiringly against those hostile organizations and persons who have authority in the locality or who have influence on the working peasant, home workers, and other semi-proletarians. The nearest enemy, whom the exploited know as their oppressor from their own experience, must be exposed as the representative and personification of the entire body of capitalist criminals. All the daily events in which the State bureaucracy comes into conflict with the ideals of petty-bourgeois democracy and the rule of law must be intensively exploited in communist propaganda and agitation in a way which makes them intelligible to everyone.....

30. A special study must be made in each country of the best methods to be used in propaganda in the army and the navy of the capita-

list State. Anti-militarist agitation in the pacifist sense is extremely harmful and only nourishes the efforts of the bourgeoisie to disarm the proletariat. The proletariat rejects in principle and combats most energetically all the militarist institutions of the bourgeois State and the bourgeois class. On the other hand, these institutions (army, rifle clubs, territorials) can be used to give the workers practice in the use of arms for their revolutionary struggles. Consequently intensive agitation must be directed not against the military training of the youth and the workers but against the military order and the autocracy of the officers. Every opportunity of getting weapons into the hands of the proletariat must be vigorously exploited.

The class contradiction shown in the material privileges for officers and the bad treatment of the rank and file must be brought home to the rank and file. They must also be brought to understand how closely their entire future is bound up with the fate of the exploited class. When the revolutionary ferment has reached an advanced stage, agitation for the democratic election of all commanding officers by the soldiers and sailors and for the establishment of soldiers' councils, can be very effective in undermining the foundations of capitalist class rule.

The greatest vigilance and vigour is always necessary in agitation against the special class-war troops of the bourgeoisie, particularly against their armed bands of volunteers. Wherever their social composition and corrupt behaviour makes it possible, social disintegration must at the proper time be systematically introduced into their ranks. Where they have a uniform bourgeois class character, as for example in the officers' corps, they must be exposed to the entire

population and made so detestable and hated that the isolation in which they find themselves will act as a disintegrating force from within.

V. THE ORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL STRUGGLES

31. For a communist party there is no time in which the party organization cannot be politically active. The organizational exploitation of every political and economic situation and of every change in the situation must be developed into organizational strategy and tactics.

Even if the party is weak, it can still always make use of events which cause political excitement or large-scale strikes which shake the entire economic life by conducting radical propaganda which has been carefully and systematically organized. When a party has decided on such action it must direct all the energy of its members and sections into the campaign.

If the party cannot organize its own meetings suitable comrades must speak at general meetings of the fighting proletariat when they are on strike or in other actions, and take the lead in the discussion.

If there is a prospect of winning the majority or a great part of the meeting for our slogans, every effort must be made to get these embodied in well-formulated and well-argued motions and resolutions. If such resolutions are passed the attempt should be made to get the same or similar resolutions passed at all meetings in the same locality or in other localities involved in the same movement, or at least to get the support of strong minorities for them.....

As circumstances require, posters and small leaflets can be used to bring our practical slogans to the knowledge of the workers concerned, or more detailed leaflets can be handed out which enlighten them about the situation and with the help of suitable slogans help them to understand communism. The use of posters requires specially organized groups who choose the best places and times for putting up the posters. The distribution of leaflets in and outside factories, at the places where the workers involved in the movement meet, at traffic centres, labour exchanges, railway stations, etc., should as far as possible be used in conjunction with popular discussion of the kind which gets home to the working masses.....

34. Should the communist party make the attempt to take over the leadership of the masses at a time of political and economic tension which promises to lead on to the outbreak of new movements and struggles, special demands need not be put forward but appeals can be made directly to the members of socialist parties and trade unions in simple and popular language not to shrink from the struggles which their needs and the increasing oppression of the employers make necessary, even if this should be opposed by their bureaucratic leaders, otherwise they will be driven into complete ruin. The party press and, in particular, its daily newspapers, must in these circumstances emphasize and demonstrate every day that the communists are ready to intervene as leaders in the present and forthcoming struggles of the impoverished proletariat, that they are whenever possible prepared to come to the help of all the oppressed in the present tense situation. It must be proved every day that without

these struggles the condition of the working class will become impossible and that nevertheless the old organizations avoid these struggles and try to prevent them.....

As the struggles increase in extent and become general it will be necessary to establish unified organs for directing the struggle. If the bureaucratic strike leaders in many unions abandon the struggle prematurely, timely efforts must be made to get them replaced by communists who must ensure strong and resolute leadership.....

If, as a result of the extension of the movement and of the intervention of employers' organizations and public authorities, it should take on a political character, propaganda and preparations must be made for the possible eventual election of workers' councils. In these cases all party organs must do their utmost to spread the idea that it is only through such working-class bodies arising directly in the course of the struggle that the real emancipation of the working class can be effected with the necessary ruthlessness, in defiance of the trade union bureaucracy and their socialist party satellites.

35.Unless the party organization maintains the closest relations with the proletarian masses in the large and middle-sized factories, the communist party will not be able to carry through large-scale mass actions and genuine revolutionary movements. If the undoubtedly revolutionary rising which took place in Italy last year, and which was expressed most boldly in the occupation of the factories, collapsed prematurely, it was partly because of the treachery of the trade union bureaucracy and the inadequacy of the political party leadership, but also partly

because there was no close and organized contact between the party and the factories through politically informed shop stewards interested in party life. The great English miners' strike this year also undoubtedly suffered because of this defect.....

VII. ON THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY ORGANISM

43. In extending and consolidating the party a formal scheme based on geographical divisions should be avoided. The real economic, political, and communication structure of the area should be taken into account. The chief emphasis should be laid on capital cities and on the centres of largescale industry.....

46. The party as a whole is under the leadership of the Communist International. The directives and resolutions of the international leadership in matters affecting an affiliated party shall be sent to (I) the central committee of the party, or (2) through the central committee to the chief committee in charge of a special activity, or (3) to all party organizations.

Directives and decisions of the International are binding on the party and of course on every individual party member.

47. The central leadership of the party (central committee and advisory council or committee) is responsible to the party congress and to the leadership of the Communist International. The smaller committee as well as the larger committee and advisory council is as a rule elected by the party congress. If the congress considers it expedient it may instruct the central committee to elect from its own membership a smaller committee consisting of the members of the political and

organizational bureaux. The policy and current activities of the party are directed by the smaller committee through these two bureaux. The smaller committee convenes regular plenary sessions of the party central committee to decide on matters of greater importance and larger scope. In order to gain a thorough knowledge of the political situation as a whole, and to be able to have continually in view a living picture of the party and its capacities, it is necessary, when electing the central committee, to bear in mind the different areas of the country if suitable candidates are available. For the same reasons differences of opinion on tactical questions which are of a serious character should not be suppressed in the election of the central committee. On the contrary, their representation on the central committee by their best advocates should be facilitated. The smaller committee, however, should, whenever this is feasible, be like-minded in their views and they must be able, if they are to provide strong and confident leadership, to rely not only on their authority but also on a clear and numerically strong majority in the leadership as a whole.

A broad constitution of this kind in the central party leadership will in particular enable the legal mass parties to create the best foundations for the work of the central committee, firm discipline and the unqualified confidence of the membership. It will also bring to light the weaknesses and ailments which may afflict party functionaries and enable them to be quickly cured and overcome. This will make it possible to avoid any serious accumulation of such maladies in the party and their perhaps catastrophic removal by surgery at subsequent party congresses.....

49. The central leadership of the party and of the Communist International are at all times entitled to demand exhaustive reports from all communist organizations, from their subsidiary bodies, and from individual members. The representatives and delegates of the central leadership are entitled to attend all meetings and sessions with a consultative voice and the right of veto. The central party leadership must always have their delegates (commissars) available in order to be able to give responsible instruction and information to district and area committees, not only by political and organizational circulars and correspondence but also by direct word of mouth. Attached to every central committee and district committee must be a revision committee, composed of tried and expert party comrades, to supervise the book-keeping and audit the accounts. It should report regularly to the full committee or advisory council.

Every organization and every party body as well as every individual member is entitled at any time to put his wishes and proposals, his comments or complaints, direct to the central committee of the party or to the International.

50. The directives and decisions of the leading party bodies are binding on subordinate organizations and on all individual members....

51. In their public appearances party members are obliged to act always as disciplined members of a militant organization. Should differences of opinion arise as to the correct method of action, these should as far as possible be settled beforehand within the party organization and then action must be consistent with this decision. In order that every party

decision shall be carried out by all party organizations and members with the maximum energy, the widest circle of the party membership must whenever possible be drawn into the examination and decision of every question. Party organizations and committees also have the duty of deciding whether and to what extent and in what form questions shall be discussed by individual comrades in public (the press, lectures, pamphlets). But, even if the decisions of the organization or of the party leadership are in the opinion of other members mistaken, these comrades must in their public appearances never forget that the worst offence in regard to discipline and the worst mistake in regard to the struggle is to disturb or break the unity of the common front.

It is the supreme duty of every party member to defend the communist party and above all the Communist International against all the enemies of communism. Whoever forgets this and publicly attacks the party or the International is to be treated as an enemy of the party.

52.The decisions of the Communist International are to be carried out by affiliated parties without delay even in those cases where the requisite changes in the existing statutes and party decisions can only be made subsequently.

VIII. ON THE COMBINATION OF LEGAL AND ILLEGAL WORK

53.At bottom there is no essential difference in the kind of party structure which should be aimed at by a legal or an illegal

party.

The party should be organized in such a way that it is always in a position to adapt itself quickly to changes in the conditions of struggle.

The communist party must develop into a fighting organization capable, on the one hand, of avoiding open encounters with the enemy in a field where he has concentrated overwhelmingly superior forces, and, on the other, of exploiting the enemy's difficulties in order to fall on him when and where he least expects it. It would be the greatest mistake in building the party organization to calculate exclusively on insurrections and street battles, or even on conditions of extreme oppression. In their revolutionary work communists must prepare for every situation, and always be ready for struggle, for it is often almost impossible to foresee the alternation from periods of insurrection to periods of calm, and even in cases where it is possible, this foresight cannot as a rule be used to reorganize the party, because the change usually takes place in a very short time, often indeed with great suddenness.

54. Legal communist parties in capitalist countries have not yet as a rule fully understood their task of learning how the party should arm itself for revolutionary risings, for the armed struggle, or for the illegal struggle in general. The party organization leans far too heavily on the assumption of permanent legality and is constructed according to the requirements of day-to-day legal work.

In the illegal parties, on the other hand, the possibilities of legal activity are not sufficiently exploited, nor the party organisation built in a way which maintains living contact with the revolutionary masses. In these cases party work shows a tendency to become a labour of Sisyphus or a powerless conspiracy.

Both are mistaken. Every legal communist party must know how to ensure the greatest possible militancy if it should have to go underground, and in particular it must be equipped for the outbreak of revolutionary risings. Every illegal communist party must energetically exploit the opportunities provided by the legal workers' movement to make itself by intensive party work the organiser and the real leader of the great revolutionary masses.

The direction of legal and of illegal work must always be in the hands of the same single central party committee.

55. Among some members in both the legal and illegal parties, illegal communist organizational work is often understood as the foundation and maintenance of a closely knit and exclusively military organization isolated from other party work and party organizations. That is completely wrong. On the contrary, in the pre-revolutionary period our fighting organization must be primarily the result of general communist party work. The entire party should be trained as a fighting organization for the revolution.

Isolated revolutionary military organizations, established far too soon before the revolution, are liable to early dissolution and

demoralization because they do not engage in directly useful party work.

56. It is of course of decisive importance for an illegal party in all its activities to protect its members and organs from discovery and not to endanger them by membership registration, careless collection of dues, or distribution of literature. It cannot therefore use open forms of organization for conspirative purposes to the same degree as a legal party, but it can learn to do so to an increasing extent.

All precautionary measures must be taken to prevent the penetration of dubious or unreliable elements into the party. The methods to be used will depend very largely on whether the party is legal or illegal, persecuted or tolerated, growing rapidly or stagnant. One method which has proved successful in certain circumstances is the system of candidature. Under this system an applicant for membership in the party is at first admitted as a candidate on the proposal of one or two party comrades and it depends on the way the work entrusted to him is carried out whether he is accepted as a member.

It is inevitable that the bourgeoisie should attempt to get spies and provocateurs into the illegal organizations. This must be fought with the utmost care and patience. One method is to combine legal with illegal activity. Prolonged legal revolutionary activity is the best way of finding out who is reliable, courageous, conscientious, energetic, capable, and accurate enough to be entrusted according to his capacity with important commissions concerned with illegal work.....

58. It has often been observed in revolutionary situations that the central revolutionary leadership showed itself incapable of carrying

out its tasks. In the revolution the proletariat may achieve great things....while disorder, bewilderment and chaos reign at headquarters....

Nor can it be otherwise if the leading revolutionary party has not organized in advance the special activities which will be required; for example...a system of secret communication can only work quickly and reliably if it has been in regular operation for a long time. In all these spheres of specialized revolutionary activity every legal communist party needs to make secret preparations, if only on a small scale.....

59. The communist organizer regards every party member and every revolutionary worker from the outset in his future historical role as a soldier in our fighting organization at the time of revolution. Accordingly he introduces him in advance into that nucleus and that work which best corresponds with his future position and weapon. His activity today must also be useful in itself, necessary for today's struggle, not merely an exercise which the practical worker today does not understand. This activity is however training for the important demands of tomorrow's final struggle.

FOOTNOTES.

Introduction.

1. A. McIntyre. Against the Self Images of the Age London 1971. p.43
2. This figure is taken from the following passage: "Mao's rise in the Chinese Communist Party coincided with a transformation in its social composition. Towards the end of 1926 at least 66 per cent of the membership were proletarians, another 22 per cent intellectuals and only 5 per cent peasants. By November 1928, the percentage of workers had fallen by more than four fifths, and an official report admitted that the Party 'did not have a single healthy Party nucleus among the industrial workers'. It was admitted officially that workers comprised only 10 per cent of the Party in 1928, 3 per cent in 1929, 2.5 per cent in March 1930, 1.6 per cent in September of the same year, and virtually nothing at the end of the year. From then and until Mao's final victory the Party had no industrial workers to speak of." Ygael Gluckstein. Mao's China. London 1957. pp.210-211
3. See Régis Debray. The Revolution in the Revolution? London 1968. Especially the section entitled The Principal Lesson for the Present.
4. See: Lucio Magri: Problems of the Marxist Theory of the Revolutionary Party. New Left Review 60; Rossana Rossanda Class and Party. Socialist Register 1970; Jean-Paul Sartre

Masses, Spontaneity, Party. Socialist Register 1970:

Ernest Mandel, The Leninist Theory of Organisation. London (n.d.);

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Party. Socialist Register 1967;

Chris Harman. Party and Class; and Tony Cliff. Trotsky on
"Substitutionism", in Party and Class. London (n.d.)

Footnotes

Chapter 1. Marx : Class and Party.

1. Dahrendorf R. Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society.
London 1959. p.19
2. Marx K. and Engels F. in "German Ideology" - cited by Dahrendorf. op.cit.¹⁴
3. Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto. Moscow 1957. p.48
4. Marx "Capital Vol.III cited by Dahrendorf. op.cit.p.13
5. The Communist Manifesto. op.cit.p.66
6. ibid. p.66
7. ibid. p.58
8. See. H.Draper. The Principle of Self-Emancipation in Marx
and Engels. Socialist Register 1972.
9. The Communist Manifesto. op.cit.p.67
10. Marx. The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. New York 1963. pp.123-124
11. For a full statement of the Marxist case against the peasantry
and for the proletariat as agents of revolution see. Harris N.
The Revolutionary Role of the Peasants. International
Socialism 41.
12. For an elaboration of the impossibility of an independent party
of the peasantry see. Trotsky L. The Permanent Revolution, and
Results and Prospects, New York 1969. pp.69-74, p.196
Trotsky's argument may seem invalidated by subsequent events
such as the Chinese Revolution but for an analysis of the
essentially non-peasant character of Marxism and the Chinese
Communist Party, see. Gluckstein V. Mao's China. London 1957.
pp.174-184.

13. See Marx. The Poverty of Philosophy, Moscow 1966. p.150.
14. Marx and Engels. The German Ideology, London 1965. p.78fn.
15. ibid p.61.
16. The Communist Manifesto op.cit.p.64.
17. cited by D.McLellan. The Thought of Karl Marx, London 1971.
p.177.
18. Provisional Rules of the 1st International, in Karl Marx: The 1st International and After. /ed. D.Fernbach, London 1974.
p.82.
19. The Communist Manifesto op.cit.p.72. .
20. Trotsky was to refer to this passage when arguing his case for
a united front against fascism in Germany. see below Ch.6.
21. Johnstone M.Marx and Engels and the Concept of the Party.
Socialist Register 1967. p.122.
22. Marx to Freiligrath (1860) cited in D.McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx op.cit.
23. Marx, Engels Selected Correspondence, Moscow 1965. p.263.
24. Dahrendorf op.cit.Ch.1
25. This seems to me to be generally the most desirable procedure,
even if it were not, as is the case with Marx the only possible
one.
26. A.Gramsci. Prison Notebooks, London 1971. p.259.
27. Engels F. "On the History of the Communist League", in Marx,
Engels Selected Works Vol.II, Moscow 1962. p.348.

28. The figure is taken from Johnstone M. Marx and Engels and the concept of the Party. op.cit.
29. Engels F. Marx and the Neue Rheinische Zeitung, in Marx Engels Selected Works. op.cit. Vol.II p.330
30. Cited in Mehring F. Karl Marx, London 1966. p.155
31. Cited in Mehring. op.cit. pp.185-186
32. Lenin. V.1. Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, Peking 1915.
33. Marx K. The March Address, in Marx Engels Selected Works. op.cit. Vol.I. pp.106-107
34. ibid. p.112
35. cited by Mehring F. op.cit. pp.207-208
36. Marx to Engels. February 11, 1851 cited in Wolfe B.D. Marxism: 100 Years in the Life of a Doctrine, London 1967. p.196
37. Engels to Marx. Feb.13, 1851. cited in Wolfe. op.cit.p.196
38. Mehring F., Karl Marx op.cit.p.209
39. Wolfe B.D. op.cit. pp.196-201
40. Avineri S., The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, Cambridge 1969 p.255
41. Even a cursory glance at the Marx-Engels Correspondence reveals that because of their deep bond of friendship and understanding they use all sorts of rash and outrageous expressions which they would have never dreamt of uttering in public statements.
42. Marx to Engels. November 25, 1857. Marx Engels Selected Correspondence. op.cit.p.99

43. cited in Wolfe. op.cit.p.200
44. cited by Edmund Wilson in To the Finland Station, London 1967
p.249
45. cited by Wilson, ibid. p.250
46. cited in J.Saville, Ernest Jones : Chartist, London 1952. p.247
47. see Marx to Weydemeyer. February 1, 1859. Marx Engels Selected Correspondence. op.cit.p.112
48. Marx to Engels November 4, 1864. Marx Engels Selected Correspondence. op.cit.p.146
49. It was in answer to Citizen Weston that Marx wrote his famous pamphlet "Wages, Prices and Profit".
50. See "Secret Societies and the First International", by Boris I. Nicolaevsky, in Milorad Drachovitch ed. "The Revolutionary Internationals 1864-1943", London 1966
51. Marx to Engels, November 4, 1864. op.cit.p.143
52. ibid. p.149
53. see H.Draper "The Principle of Self-Emancipation in Marx and Engels". op.cit.
54. Provisional Rules; Karl Marx The 1st International and After
op.cit.p.82
55. ibid. p.269
56. Marx Engels. Selected Works Vol.I. op.cit.p.388
57. cited in M.Johnstone op.cit.p.131
58. Marx, Engels Lenin. Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism,
Moscow 1972. p.56.

59. Bakunin to Richard. April 1, 1870. cited in M.Johnstone.
op.cit.p.134
60. M.Johnstone. op.cit.p.134
61. Engels to Sorge, September 12[-17] 1874. Marx Engels Selected Correspondence. op.cit.p.286
62. Marx obtained Bakunin's expulsion, not on a political basis, but by implicating him in the activities of the deluded Russian conspirator, Nekhayev, and by charging him with swindling Marx in connection with 300 roubles for the translation of "Capital".
63. Cited by D.McLellan. The Thought of Karl Marx op.cit.p.175-176
64. Marx to Bolte. November 23, 1871, Marx Engels Selected Correspondence op.cit.270-271
65. Engels to Bloch September 21-22, 1890. Marx Engels Selected Correspondence. op.cit.p.418
66. Marx/Engels. The Alleged Splits in the International, in Marx The First International and After. op.cit.p.298-299
67. Marx to Paul and Laura Lafarque (1870) cited in D.McLellan.
The Thought of Karl Marx. op.cit.p.176
68. Marx to Bolte. November 23, 1871. op.cit.p.269
69. Engels to Bernstein February 27 - March 1, 1883. Marx Engels Selected Correspondence. op.cit.p.358
70. Engels to Bebel, June 20, 1873, Marx Engels Selected Correspondence.
op.cit.pp.283-285
71. Engels to Sorge, September 12-17. ibid.p.289
72. Engels. Trades Unions II. The Labour Standard 4 June 1881,
reproduced in Engels Selected Writings. ed.W.O.Henderson,

London 1967. p.109

73. Engels to F.K.Wischnewetzky, 28 December 1886. Marx Engels
Selected Correspondence. op.cit.pp.398-399
74. Engels to Bernstein, October 20, 1882. ibid.p.352
75. ibid.p.353
76. Engels to Bebel. October 12 1875. ibid.p.298
77. Critique of the Gotha Programme in Marx : The First International and After. op.cit.
78. ibid.p.355
79. Marx and Engels to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke and Others.
September 17-18, 1879. Marx Engels Selected Correspondence.
op.cit.p.327
80. Engels to Bekker, July 1, 1879. ibid.p.320
81. Marx to Sorge. September 19, 1879. ibid.p.328
82. Marx and Engels to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke and Others.
op.cit.p.327
83. cited by James Joll in The Second International, London 1968. p.94
84. C.Harman, Party and Class, in Hallas, Cliff, Harman and Trotsky,
"Party and Class", London (n.d.) p.50
85. Engels to Sorge, 9 August 1890. cited in M.Johnstone. op.cit.p.157

Chapter 2. Lenin and the Birth of Bolshevism.

1. T.Cliff, Trotsky on Substitutionism, in, Hallas, Cliff, Harman, Trotsky - Party and Class. op.cit.p.28. By "substitutionism" Cliff means the tendency of individuals or parties to substitute themselves for the action of the masses.
2. Lenin. What Is To Be Done? Moscow 1969. p.29
3. See Leonard Schapiro "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union" London 1970. pp.2, 5
4. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow 1962. Vol.9. p.12
5. Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.117
6. ibid.p.121
7. ibid.p.124
8. L.Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union. op.cit.p.40
9. Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.121
10. Lenin, One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back, Moscow 1969. p.58
11. Lenin, Collected Works. Vol.8. p.196
12. Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.17
13. ibid. p.17
14. This was Plekhanov's statement at the First Congress of the Second International in 1889
15. The best exposition of this theory and its socio-economic basis in Russian history is to be found in the first chapter of Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution. Ann Arbor 1964.
16. L.Trotsky, The First Five Years of the Communist International. Vol.1. New York 1972. p.98

17. Though Economism in fact first arose in 1897. See What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.46
18. Lenin, Collected Works. Vol.4. p.174.
19. The Mensheviks remained formally committed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism right up to 1917 and were always verbally opposed to Bernsteinian revisionism.
20. This does not however mean that they can be dragged from their context and applied uncritically in all times and places, thus using the letter of Leninism against the spirit of Leninism as has so often been done.
21. Cited by Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.37
22. Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.46
23. Fatalism carried to its logical conclusion precludes the need for a revolutionary party, or even for any revolutionary activity. The problem with fatalism in the Marxist movement however is that it has never openly announced itself but has always remained half-developed in such a way as to paralyse revolutionary intervention at crucial moments without exposing its ultimate bankruptcy and absurdity.
24. Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.23
25. ibid. p.31
26. G.Lukács. Lenin, London 1970. p.24
27. Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.p.69
28. ibid.p.78
29. ibid.p.79
30. ibid.p.80

31. ibid.p.88
32. ibid.p.86. For an excellent account and analysis of this period
see T.Cliff. From a Marxist Circle to Agitation, International
Socialism 52.
33. G.Lukács, Lenin op.cit.p.13
34. Lenin, What Is To Be Done? op.cit.pp.31-32
35. ibid.p.40
36. L.Trotsky, Stalin, London 1968. p.58
37. Lucio Magri, Problems of the Marxist Theory of the Party,
New Left Review60. p.104.
38. N.Harris, Beliefs in Society, London 1971. p.156
39. Karl Marx, Selected Writings on Sociology and Social Philosophy.
ed. T.B. Bottomore and M.Rubel, London 1963, pp.80-81.
40. Marx, The German Ideology. op.cit.p.659.
41. Raya Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, London 1972. p.81
42. Paul Frolich, Rosa Luxemburg, London 1972. pp.82-83.
43. Quoted by Lenin in, One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back. op.cit.p.64.
44. Cited ibid.p.59
45. ibid.p.66.
46. Raya Dunayevskaya. op.cit.pp.180-181.
47. Lenin, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. p.199.
48. ibid.p.121-123.
49. ibid.p.57.
50. ibid.p.58.
51. ibid.p.71.
52. ibid.p.184.

Chapter 3. Lenin: From Russian Bolshevism to the Communist International.

1. See Chapter 4 below for a discussion of this.
2. V.1 Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow 1962 Vol.7 p.474.
3. ibid Vol.II p.361.
4. see ibid Vol.17 pp.74-75.
5. ibid Vo.19 p.301.
6. ibid Vol.19 p.298.
7. L.Trotsky, Results and Prospects and The Permanent Revolution, New York 1969 p.114.
8. The worst offenders in this respect are of course official Soviet historians and theorists for whom Lenin has become an infallible pope but there is a tendency in this direction even in such a work as Lukács's "Lenin" op.cit.
9. L.Trotsky, Hands off Rosa Luxemburg, in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, New York 1970 p.444.
10. Lenin's arguments are summed up in "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution", Peking 1965.
11. Resolution of the 1905 Menshevik Cancasion Conference cited by Lenin in "Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution". op.cit. p.102.
12. For Lenin's condemnation of this and his comparison of Plekhanov's attitude to 1905 with Marx's to the Paris Commune, see Collected Works op.cit. Vol.12 pp.104-112.
13. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.16 p.380.
14. Lenin, Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic

Revolution op.cit.pp.2-3.

15. ibid p.124.
16. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.10 p.32.
17. Lenin, Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic-Revolution
op.cit.p.155.
18. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.13 p.108.
19. Lenin, Two Tactics op.cit.p.36.
20. ibid p.2.
21. N.Krupskaya, Memories of Lenin, London 1970 pp.115-116.
22. L.Trotsky, Stalin, London 1968 pp.64-65.
23. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.10 p.19.
24. ibid Vol.10 p.19.
25. ibid Vol.10.p.23.
26. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.8 p.219.
27. ibid Vol.10 p.36.
28. ibid Vol.10 p.32.
29. See ibid Vol.10 pp.135-145.
30. T.Cliff, Lenin's Pravda, International Socialism 67 p.10. For a
different set of figures, also for the Moscow district, which
however show basically the same picture see L.Trotsky, Stalin,
op.cit.p.95.
31. The most famous example of this was the agent Roman Malinowski
who actually succeeded in getting on to the Bolshevik Central
Committee.
32. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.15 p.355.

33. There were also of course fundamental differences between the objective situation in 1850 and 1907. In 1850 the revolution had been defeated throughout Europe : in 1907 it had been defeated only in Russia. In 1850 the economic perspective was one of prolonged upswing ; this was not the case for Russia. In 1850 the European peasantry were counter-revolutionary; in Russia they were revolutionary, and so on. Moreover Lenin himself had made a close study of the parallels between the two situations (see Collected Works Vol.10 pp.135-145) though at a time when he had not yet accepted the triumph of the reaction. Nonetheless the difference in attitude to (or rather theory of) the party remains.
34. Lenin, Collected Works op.cit. Vol.15 pp.288-289, 290, 301.
35. Liquidationism was the "party name" given to a trend which appeared on the right flank of the Mensheviks. Essentially, the Liquidators regretted the event of 1905 and sought to take advantage of the disarray to proclaim the old underground apparatus dead and reorientate the movement in the direction of forming legal workers' associations as embryos of a future broad legal "western" type party. To Lenin such a perspective was impossible to realize under the autocracy and thus tantamount to the liquidation of the party as a revolutionary party.
36. The Otzovists were those Bolsheviks who failed to recognise the need for a change in strategy and tactics to meet the new conditions of the reaction. They wanted to continue the revolutionary

tactic of boycotting the Duma, and demanded the recall of the Social Democratic deputies from the Duma. To Lenin it was criminal ultra-leftism to refuse to use every legal opportunity to maintain contact with the masses.

37. Conciliationism, whose main representative was Trotsky, was the attempt to reconcile the warring factions of the party.
38. Lenin summarised the experience of the Bolshevik party, laying special stress on the period of the reaction, as the basis for his arguments against ultra-leftism in Left Wing Communism. -
An Infantile Disorder.
39. Lenin, Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder, Moscow 1968.
p.12.
40. ibid p.13.
41. see L.Trotsky, Our Differences, in "1905" New York 1971.
pp.299-318.
42. Because of the censorship Aesopian language had to be employed.
Thus the Bolshevik programme was referred to as "the uncurtailed demands of 1905".
43. See T.Cliff, Lenin's Pravda op.cit.p.12.
44. See Lenin, Collected Works Vol.20 p.363.
45. ibid p.366.
46. D.Lane, The Roots of Russian Communism, Assen 1969 p.26.
47. ibid p.50.
48. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.20 p.369.
49. D.Piatnitsky, The Bolshevisation of the Communist Parties By

- Eradicating the Social-Democratic traditions. Communist International Publication 1934. Printed by London Alliance in Defence of Workers' Rights. N.D. p.5.
50. ibid p.6.
51. Figures calculated from D.Lane op.cit.p.37.
52. L.Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, London 1967 p.159.
53. D.Lane op.cit.p.37
54. Leonard Schapiro comments. "It will be recalled that, in the Russian context, the phrase was of Menshevik origin. Historically, the phrase originated in the German Social Democratic Movement, and was first used in 1865 by J.B.Schweitzer, one of the principal followers of Lasalle." L.Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, London 1970 p.75 fn.
55. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.11 p.320.
56. ibid p.320-21.
57. O.Piatnitsky op.cit.p.13.
58. L.Trotsky, Stalin op.cit.p.168.
59. Lenin, Left Wing Communism - an Infantile Disorder op.cit.p.10.
60. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.21 p.16.
61. ibid p.16.
62. ibid p.16-17.
63. ibid p.17.
64. ibid p.31.
65. ibid p.34.

66. ibid p.93.
67. ibid p.162.
68. ibid p.110.
69. K.Kautsky, cited in Lenin, Marxism On the State, Moscow 1972 p.78.
70. K.Kautsky cited ibid p.78.
71. Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. Collected Works Vol.14.
72. R.Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, London 1971 p.186.
73. Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works Vol.38.
74. ibid p.104.
75. ibid p.276
76. ibid p.141.
77. Of Plekhanov Lenin complains "Plekhanov criticises Kantianism (and agnosticism in general) more from a vulgar-materialistic standpoint than from a dialectic-materialistic standpoint." (ibid p.179) and "Plekhanov wrote on philosophy (dialectics) probably about 1,000 pages (Beltov + against Bogdanov + against the Kantians + fundamental questions etc.etc.) Among them, about the large Logic, in connection with it, its thought (i.e. dialectics proper, as philosophical science) nil!!" (ibid p.277)
78. ibid p.195.
79. ibid p.212.
80. ibid p.180.
81. ibid p.213.
82. This theme is discussed in greater depth in relation to Lukács and Gramsci in Chapter 5.

83. Cited in G.Lukács Lenin, London 1970 p.26.
84. Lenin, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Peking 1965.
85. ibid p.4.
86. ibid p.28.
87. See Engels to Marx October 7, 1858, Marx Engels Selected Correspondence op.cit.p.110. and Engels to Kautsky, September 12, 1882 ibid p.351.
88. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.23 p.115.
89. ibid p.116.
90. ibid p.116-117.
91. ibid p.116.
92. It must be admitted that Lenin established his theory of the labour aristocracy very crudely. In particular, as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, "It is clear that the mechanism of exploiting a monopoly of markets, which Lenin regards as the basis of 'opportunism', functions in ways which cannot confine its benefits to one stratum only of the working class." (E. Hobsbawm, Lenin and the "Aristocracy of Labour". - Marxism Today July 1970 p.209)
Also it seems that at times Lenin confuses the labour aristocracy with the labour bureaucracy. An alternative schema is that in the period of capitalist expansion, based on imperialism, the working class as a whole were granted certain concessions (not without struggle but without a fight to the finish). On the basis of this a privileged stratum of party and trade union officials and bureaucrats arose, essentially as negotiators of

these concessions. Because of its objective role, this stratum developed a material interest in the maintenance of capitalist society. At the same time to be of any use as negotiators this bureaucracy had to retain its influence over the working class, by continuing to profess some sort of radical or socialist ideology. However this explanation, although different from Lenin's does not substantially alter his political conclusions - opportunism/reformism remains the agent of capitalism within the working class.

Other articles which discuss the question of the labour aristocracy are: E. Husbawm, The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain, and Trends in the British Labour Movement since 1850, both in Labouring Men, London 1964. Martin Nicolaus, Theory of the Labour Aristocracy, in Lenin Today ed. P.M.Sweezy and H.Magdoff, New York 1970.

Ernest Mandel, On Bureaucracy: a Marxist Analysis, London n.d. Tony Cliff, The Economic Roots of Reformism in Socialist Review, June 1957.

93. Because Lenin wrote "The State and Revolution" in August-September 1917 it is frequently assumed that the inspiration for this theoretical advance came from the experience of the Russian Revolution. In fact Lenin first referred to the need for a theoretical study of the state in response to an article by Bukharin (see Lenin Collected Works Vol.23 p.165-166), and by February 1917 Lenin had completed all the preparations for this. His notebooks have been

published as Lenin, Marxism on the State: Preparatory Material for the book. The State and Revolution, Moscow 1972 (For some reason they are not included in the English editions of the Collected Works). An examination of this material shows that it contains all the essential ideas of The State and Revolution.

94. Karl Kautsky, The Road to Power, Chicago 1910 p.95. cited in C.Harman, Party and Class op.cit.p.50.
95. K.Kautsky, The Erfurt Programme, Chicago 1910 p.188. cited in C.Harman ibid p.49.
96. K.Marx, The Civil War in France, Peking 1966 p.64.
97. To say this does not mean that the revolution must necessarily involve a great deal of bloodshed. This will depend on the balance of forces and the reaction of the ruling class. But it does necessarily involve the use of "illegal" and "unconstitutional" physical force, precisely because the revolution overthrows the old legality, the old constitution, and the corresponding power structures.
99. Lenin, The State and Revolution, Peking 1965 pp.139-140.
100. C.Harman, Party and Class op.cit.p.63.
101. For an account of this process see E.H.Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, London 1966 Vol.1 Chapter 9.
102. The August figure was a guess by Sverdlov, the party secretary, The January and April figure were official party figures but are also only approximations.
103. L.Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union op.cit.p.173.

104. Martov to Axelrod, 19 November 1917, Cited in I.Getzler, Martov, Cambridge 1967 p.172.
105. E.H.Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.1 p.81.
106. L.Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, Ann Arbor 1964 Vol.1 p.219.
107. Trotsky writes "Spartacus Week in January 1919 in Berlin belonged to the same type of intermediate, semi-revolution as the July Days in Petrograd.....The thing lacking was a Bolshevik party." ibid Vol.II p.80.
108. E.H.Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution Vol.1. op.cit.p.109.
109. The decision was taken by 10 votes to 2 on a resolution moved by Lenin on October 10 [23]. For the discussion see, The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution. Minutes of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) August 1917 - February 1918. London 1974 pp.85-89.
110. Thus Leonard Schapiro writes "This is the story of how a group of determined men seized power for themselves in Russia in 1917, and kept others from sharing it." The Origins of the Communist Autocracy, London 1966 p.v.
111. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.26 p.144.
112. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.24 p.48.
113. ibid p.49.
114. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.25 p.189.
115. ibid p.189.
116. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.26 p.303.

117. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.24 p.45.
118. ibid p.44.
119. For the arguments of this group see the document by Kamenev and Zinoviev on "The Current Situation", in The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution op.cit. pp.89-95.
120. See Lenin, Collected Works Vol.26 p.84.
121. ibid p.282.
122. We refer here, of course, to the early years of the Comintern, specifically to the period of its first four congresses.
123. The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents ed. Jane Dugas Vol.1 p.164.
124. ibid p.165.
125. L.Trotsky, On Lenin, London 1971 p.143.
126. G.Lukács, Lenin op.cit.p.59.
127. Centrism - the Leninist term for the Kautskyite "centre" of German social democracy and similar trends in other countries e.g. Martov in Russia, Serrati in Italy and MacDonald in England.
128. Lenin, Collected Works Vd.31 pp.206-207.
129. ibid p.207.
130. ibid p.208.
131. ibid p.210.
132. The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents op.cit.Vol.1 p.167.
133. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.31 pp.250-251.
134. For Lenin's speech on the question see Collected Works Vol.31 p.235-239. For Trotsky's see The First Five Years of The

Communist International, New York 1973 Vol.1 pp.97-101.

135. The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents op.cit.Vol.1 p.131.
136. Lenin, Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder op.cit.p.25.
137. ibid p.38.
138. ibid p.42.
139. ibid p.38.
140. ibid p.42.
141. Engels,cited ibid p.50.
142. ibid p.52.
143. ibid p.52.
144. For a more detailed account of the March action disaster see Franz Borkenau, World Communism, Ann Arbor 1971 pp.214-220.
145. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.32 p.469.
146. The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents op.cit.Vol.1 p.243.
147. ibid p.249.
148. For a further discussion of the united front see Chapter 6 below.
149. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.29 p.310.
150. The fourth congress was quite explicit on this point. A unanimously adopted resolution included the statement:
"The fourth world congress reminds the proletariat of all countries that the proletarian revolution can never triumph completely within a single country, rather it must triumph internationally, as world revolution." The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents Vol.1 op.cit.p.444. This question also is taken up more fully in Chapter 6.

151. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.33 pp.430-31-32.
152. L.Trotsky, First Five Years of the Communist International
Vol.1 op.cit.p.v.
153. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.22 p.286.

Chapter 4. The Contribution of Rosa Luxemburg.

1. Rosa Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism.
Introduction by Bertram D.Wolfe. Ann Arbor 1971.
2. ibid.p.1.
3. For an account of Rosa Luxemburg at the hands of Russian and East European historians etc. see J.P.Nettle, Rosa Luxemburg, London 1966. Vol.II Chapter XVIII, and also L.Trotsky, Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg, reproduced as Appendix C in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks. ed. Mary Alice Waters, New York 1970.
4. See L.Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and the Fourth International.
Appendix D. in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks. op.cit.
5. Mattick argues that the October Revolution was a state capitalist revolution and that Bolshevism led directly to Stalinism.
See. P.Mattick, Marx and Keynes, London 1971. p.278 and pp.307-308.
6. Rosa Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution. op.cit.p.80.
7. Lenin, Collected Works Vol.33. p.210.

8. See Trotsky, Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg. op.cit.
9. Bertram D.Wolfe. op.cit.p.4.
10. ibid.p.24.
11. Rosa Luxemburg, The Junius Pamphlet, London (n.d.) p.139.
12. Bertram D.Wolfe. op.cit.p.10.
13. Luxemburg, Leninism or Marxism. op.cit.p.82-83.
14. ibid.p.83.
15. ibid.p.83.
16. ibid.p.85.
17. ibid.p.86.
18. ibid.p.88.
19. ibid.p.88.
20. ibid.p.89.
21. ibid.p.91.
22. ibid.p.94.
23. ibid.p.94.
24. ibid.p.104.
25. ibid.p.96.
26. ibid.p.99.
27. ibid.p.103.
28. ibid.p.103.
29. Rosa Luxemburg Speaks. op.cit.p.156.
30. ibid.p.159.
31. ibid.p.160.
32. ibid.p.185.

33. ibid.p.200.
34. ibid.p.188.
35. For a Marxist who takes a similar view see T.Cliff, Rosa Luxemburg
London 1969.
36. D.Hallas, The Way Forward, in World Crisis. ed.J.Palmer and N.Harris,
London 1971. p.266.
37. See J.P.Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg. op.cit.vol.II. P.747.
38. ibid.p.752.
39. P.Frolich, Rosa Luxemburg. op.cit.p.279.
40. J.P.Nettl op.cit.p.724.
41. P.Frolich op.cit.pp.140-45.
42. ibid.p.171.
43. L.Magri. op.cit.p.108.
44. Cited by Frolich op.cit.p.162.
45. Cited by Frolich p.163.
46. Rosa Luxemburg, The Junius Pamphlet. op.cit.pp.16-17.
47. Luxemburg, Leninism or Marxism op.cit.p.89.
48. Cited by Frolich op.cit.p.143.
49. Cited ibid p.277.
50. T.Cliff, Rosa Luxemburg op.cit.p.43.
51. Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution op.cit.pp.43-44.
52. Cited by T.Cliff, Rosa Luxemburg op.cit.p.39.
53. Cited ibid pp.37-38.

Chapter 5. Philosophy and the Party : Lukács and Gramsci.

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2. Marx, The German Ideology. op.cit.p.665.
3. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness. op.cit.p.XXI
4. Istvan Mészáros, Lukács' Concept of Dialectic, London 1972. p.18.
5. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness. op.cit.p.XI.
6. ibid p.149.
7. ibid p.149.
8. cited ibid p.46.
9. ibid p.80.
10. ibid p.80.
11. ibid p.51.
12. ibid p.76.
13. ibid p.326.
14. ibid p.299.
15. ibid p.327.
16. ibid p.1.
17. ibid p.27.
18. ibid p.327.
19. ibid p.336.
20. ibid p.316.
21. ibid p.320.
22. Lukács, Lenin - A Study on the Unity of his Thought. op.cit.
23. ibid p.27.
24. ibid p.24.

25. ibid p.25.
26. ibid p.11.
27. ibid p.13.
28. See *Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg's' Critique of the Russian Revolution, in History and Class Consciousness. op.cit.
29. Lukács, Lenin op.cit.p.35
30. Cited by Alfred Schmidt, The Concept of Nature in Marx, London 1971. p.204.
31. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness. op.cit.p.XVii
32. For a further discussion of this point see P.Walton, From Alienation to Surplus Value, in Situating Marx ed. P.Walton and A.Gamble, London 1973.
33. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness. op.cit.p.XXV.
34. A.MacIntyre, Against The Self Images of the Age, London 1972. p.62.
35. G.Fiori, Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary, London 1970. p.9.
36. Cited by John M.Cammett in Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism, Stamford 1967. p.7.
37. Cited ibid pp.7-8.
38. A.Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks, London 1971. p,387.
39. Comment by Professor Pastore quoted in J.M.Cammett. op.cit.p.18.
40. Cited by J.Merrington Theory and Practice in Gramsci's Marxism, Socialist Register 1968. p.165.
41. A.Gramsci, Soviets in Italy, London 1969 pp.22-23.
42. Published in Soviets in Italy. op.cit.
43. ibid p.35.

44. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks. op.cit.p.XIii.
45. To deceive the prison censor Gramsci avoids all use of conventional Marxist terminology and all direct mention of well known revolutionaries. Thus "class" is rendered "fundamental social group," "oppressed class" = "subaltern group," Trotsky - Lev Davidovitch, Lenin = Ilych or "the recent great theoretician," and Marxism = "the philosophy of praxis."
46. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks. op.cit.p.465.
47. ibid pp.445-446.
48. ibid p.324.
49. ibid p.406.
50. The reference is to N.Bukharin's, Historical Materialism : A popular manual of Marxist Sociology, published in English as Historical Materialism - A System of Sociology, Ann Arbor 1969.
51. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks. op.cit.p.449.
52. ibid p.404.
53. ibid p.462.
54. ibid p.381.
55. ibid p.336.
56. ibid pp.336-37.
57. ibid p.337.
58. ibid p.171.
59. ibid p.438.
60. ibid pp.170-71.
61. ibid p.407.
62. ibid p.408.

63. ibid p.408.
64. ibid. p.408.
65. ibid p.160.
66. ibid p.160.
67. ibid p.233.
68. ibid p.184.
69. ibid pp.180-81.
70. ibid p.183.
71. ibid p.325.
72. ibid p.323.
73. ibid p.123.
74. ibid p.129.
75. For the background to this see ibid p.169.
76. ibid p.169-170.
77. ibid p.124.
78. ibid p.238.
79. ibid p.235.
80. ibid pp.229-39.
81. ibid p.120.
82. ibid p.239.
83. ibid p.238.
84. Gramsci, The Southern Question, in The Modern Prince and Other Writings, New York 1972. pp.30-31.
85. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks. op.cit.p.168.
86. ibid p.168.
87. Gramsci's brother Gennaro visited him in prison to ascertain his

attitude to the "third period" but on finding that he opposed it kept the information secret in case his brother should be expelled. See G.Fiori. op.cit.p.252-53.

88. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks. op.cit.p.185.
89. ibid p.340.
90. Gramsci makes this point as part of an analysis of Italian political parties "in general" but, as so often with Gramsci's "abstract" discussions, there is a clear implication for the practice of the revolutionary party.
91. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks. op.cit.p.227.
92. For Gramsci's analysis of "The Intellectuals" see ibid. pp.5-23.
93. ibid p.9.
94. ibid p.340.
95. Gramsci, The Modern Prince and Other Writings. op.cit.p.50-51.
96. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks. op.cit.pp.196-97.
97. ibid p.197.
98. ibid p.199.
99. ibid p.198.
100. ibid p.198-99.
101. ibid p.199.
102. ibid p.155.
103. ibid p.155.
104. ibid p.144.
105. ibid pp.152-53.
106. ibid pp.152-53.
107. ibid p.144.

108. Cited A. Pozzolini, Antonio Gramsci: An Introduction to his Thought, London 1970. p.65.
109. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks, op.cit.p.188.
110. ibid p.211.
111. ibid p.211.
112. ibid p.196.
113. E.Genovese, In Red and Black. London 1971. p.392.
114. Cited by J.Merrington op.cit.p.169.
115. L.Magri op.cit.p.112.
116. J.Merrington op.cit.p.146.
117. E.Genovese op.cit.p.411.
118. ibid p.417.
119. Gwyn Williams, The Concept of "Egemonia" in the thought of Antonio Gramsci: some notes on interpretation. Journal of the History of Ideas XXI 1960.
120. Alastair Davison. Antonio Gramsci: The Man, His Ideas. Australia 1968.
121. L.Magri op.cit. To do justice to Magri it must be noted that his original article was written in 1963 and that in a postscript added in 1970 he criticises a number of his earlier formulations.
122. ibid pp.116-17.
123. See Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks op.cit.pp.236-38. Gramsci records that Trotsky began "a revision of current tactical methods" along these lines at the 4th Congress of the Comintern. But paradoxically, and for reasons that can only be the subject of speculation, he accuses Trotsky of being "the political theorist of frontal attack

in a period in which it only leads to defeats" (p.238)

124. For a critique of this notion see Lucio Colletti. Gramsci and Revolution. New Left Review 65.
125. Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks op.cit.p.173.
126. ibid p.1iii.
127. J.Merrington op.cit.p.151.

Chapter 6. Trotsky versus Stalin : the defense of Leninism.

1. J.Stalin, The Essential Stalin, London 1953. p.221.
2. Notable examples of such analysis are: Herbert Marcuse, Soviet Marxism, London 1968, and Nigel Harris, Beliefs in Society, London 1971. Chapter 5.
3. See C.Harman, How the Revolution Was Lost, International Socialism 30.
4. L.Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, London 1967. p.292.
5. This rule prohibited party members earning over a certain maximum (approximately equal to that of a skilled worker). It was later secretly abolished by Stalin.
6. See L.Trotsky, Terrorism and Communism, Ann Arbor 1961.
7. For discussions of the "trade union" dispute see Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, London 1970 Chapter XIV and Raya Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, London 1972, Chapter XII.
8. Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, London 1970. pp.52-53.
9. See Moshe Lewin, Lenin's Last Struggle, London 1968.

10. L.Trotsky, The New Course, Ann Arbor 1965.
11. ibid p.12.
12. ibid p.12.
13. In 1921 200,000 members were expelled by special Control Commissions.
14. Trotsky, The New Course. op.cit.p.21.
15. ibid p.25.
16. ibid p.51.
17. ibid p.29.
18. ibid p.28.
19. ibid p.27.
20. Max Schachtman, Introduction to The New Course. op.cit.p.3.
21. See I.Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed. op.cit.p.136.
22. Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed. op.cit.p.98.
23. Cited in I.Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, op.cit.p.139.
24. The Platform of the Joint Opposition 1927, London 1973. pp.62-63.
25. ibid p.113.
26. Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed. op.cit. pp.94-95.
27. ibid p.96.
28. ibid p.267.
29. Trotsky, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, London 1972. p.51.
30. In The Principles of Communism (London 1970) Engels asked the question; "Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone?", and answered, "No, by creating the world market, big industry has already brought all the peoples

of the earth, and especially the civilised peoples, into such close relation with one another that none is independent of what happens to the others.

31. Cited in Trotsky, The Third International After Lenin, New York 1970.
p.36. Naturally this passage was expunged and replaced with its opposite in all later editions of the book, and the first edition was withdrawn from circulation.
32. Cited in Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed. op.cit.p.217.
33. Cited in Max Schachtman, The Genesis of Trotskyism, London 1973. p.25.
34. L.Trotsky, Where Is Britain Going? London 1970.
35. Trotsky, The Third International After Lenin op.cit.pp.128, 131, 140.
36. cited in ibid.p.179.
37. ibid p.180.
38. Trotsky, Problems of the Chinese Revolutions, Ann Arbor 1967. p.35.
39. Cited in Duncan Hallas, Against The Stream. International Socialism.
53. p.31.
40. Die Rote Fahne: cited in Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, New York 1971. p.157.
41. ibid p.127.
42. Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, London 1970. p.129.
43. Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany. op.cit.p.141.
44. ibid p.125.
45. Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed. op.cit.p.97.
46. Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany. op.cit.pp.163-64.
47. ibid pp.165-66.

48. Cited in "Fascism, Stalinism and the United Front", International Socialism 38/39. p.66.
49. Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany. op.cit.p.420.
50. Trotsky, The Spanish Revolution (1931-39) New York 1973. p.209.
51. Cited in Felix Morrow, Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain, New York 1938. p.34.
52. Cited in Trotsky, The Spanish Revolution. op.cit.p.43.
53. ibid p.320.
54. ibid p.309.
55. ibid p.220.
56. Trotsky, Introduction to the 1936 French edition of Terrorism and Communism. op.cit.p.XXI.
57. ibid p.XXX.
58. Trotsky, Fighting Against the Stream. Cited in D.Hallas, Against the Stream. op.cit.
59. Trotsky, The Lessons of October in The Essential Trotsky. London 1963. p.174.
60. Trotsky, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. op.cit.pp.12-13.
61. Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, op.cit.pp.243-44.
62. ibid p.242.
63. Cited in Trotsky, The Class, The Party and the Leadership in Hallas, Cliff, Harman, Trotsky. Party and Class. op.cit.p.68.
64. ibid pp.70-71.

65. Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany. op.cit.p.132.
66. Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast. op.cit.p.241.
67. Trotsky, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. op.cit.p.11.
68. ibid p.15.
69. Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed. op.cit.p.231.
70. ibid p.227.
71. Trotsky, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. op.cit.p.43.
72. Trotsky, Introduction to the French Edition. Terrorism and Communism. op.cit.p.XXXV.
73. Trotsky, Cited in D.Hallas, Against the Stream. op.cit.p.37.
74. Trotsky, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. op.cit.p.58.
75. ibid pp.14-15.
76. Trotsky, Dialectical Materialism and Science, in The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology. New York 1964.
p.347.

Chapter 7. Conclusion - The Theory Assessed.

1. R.Michels Political Parties - A Sociological Study of the Oligarchic Tendencies of Modern Democracy, New York 1966.
2. ibid p.61.
3. ibid p.365.

4. ibid p.65.
5. ibid p.79.
6. ibid p.107.
7. ibid p.109.
8. ibid p.206.
9. see ibid pp.81-84.
10. ibid p.149.
11. see ibid p.179.
12. ibid p.111.
13. Michels writes that "Every proletarian of average intelligence, given the necessary means, could acquire a university degree with some facility as does the average bourgeois". ibid p.300.
14. ibid p.109.
15. ibid p.85.
16. ibid p.86.
17. ibid p.88.
18. ibid p.92.
19. ibid p.93.
20. ibid p.284.
21. Thus Maurice Duverger writes "The leadership of parties tends naturally to assume oligarchic form". Political Parties - Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State. London 1964.
p.151. See also, Sigmund Neumann ed. Modern Political Parties, Chicago 1956. p.405. Robert McKensie, British Political Parties, London 1955. p.587.

22. S.J. Eldersveld, Political Parties: A Behavioural Analysis,
Chicago 1966. p.118.
23. "Leadership is a necessary phenomenon in every form of social life.. [and] "every system of leadership is incompatible with the most essential postulates of democracy." Michels op.cit.p.364. At the time of writing "Political Parties", Michels had not completely abandoned all democratic ideals. He still hoped that "in continuing our search, in labouring indefatigably to discover the undiscoverable, we shall perform a work which will have fertile results in the democratic sense." (ibid p.368) But in later years Michels came to prefer the open dictatorship of the charismatic leader to "democratic" hypocrisy and he died a supporter of Mussolini. This evolution towards Fascism is, in many respects, a logical outcome of the theory of the "iron law of oligarchy."
24. S.M.Lipset, Introduction to Michels "Political Parties". op.cit.p.25.
25. Sidney Hook, Towards The Understanding of Karl Marx, New York 1933. p.312. Cited by S.M.Lipset. ibid pp.25-26.
26. N.Bukharin, Historical Materialism - A System of Sociology, Ann Arbor 1969. p.310.
27. See especially Political Parties op.cit.p.333-41.

28. ibid p.7.
29. ibid p.364.
30. ibid p.205.
31. Trotsky, Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Gramsci, Guevara to name only the most famous.
32. Michels op.cit.p.367.
33. See the analysis of the 'Lenin enrolment' in E.H.Carr, The Interregnum (1923-24) London 1954. pp.352-356.
34. Strict asceticism was practically taken for granted in the early years of the Bolshevik party, but Tsarist repression was a more effective selector than any artificial measure. When the party was in power no member at any level or in any capacity was allowed to earn more than the wage of a skilled worker, until this law was repealed in 1929.
35. See L.Trotsky, First Five Years of the Communist International Vol2. op.cit.p.282.
36. Alfred G.Meyer, Leninism., New York 1972. p.19.
37. There are of course other grounds on which Leninism can be equated with Stalinism, such as Lenin's rejection of bourgeois democracy, or his philosophical "dogmatism", but we are concerned with arguments that seek to find the roots of Stalinism in Lenin's theory of the party.
38. L.Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union. op.cit.p.54. Other examples are George Lichtheim who writes of "Lenin's insistence on dictatorial control within a 'narrow' party of

- 'professional revolutionaries', " Marxism, London 1964 p.330,
and Sidney Hook who maintains that "Lenin as we have seen
embraced a dictatorial conception of Communist Party organisation."
Marx and the Marxists, New York 1955 p.83.
39. see T.Cliff, Russia - A Marxist Analysis, London 1964 p.76.
40. See The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution, Central Committee Minutes op.cit.pp.173, 180, 191-194, 198, 223.
41. "The more prominent they are, the more dangerous and the more
unworthy of 'pardon'.....The more 'prominent' the strike-breakers,
the greater the obligation to punish them instantly by expulsion."
Lenin ibid p.119.
42. Alfred G.Meyer, Leninism op.cit.p.93.
43. The platform of the Workers' Opposition was published by the party
in 250,000 copies and at the Tenth Congress, Lenin specifically
invited Shlyapnikov, and other leaders of the opposition to
develop their ideas theoretically and continue their research,
but to cease factional activity in the party. See Lenin,
Collected Works Vol.32 p.256. Also Shlyapnikov was elected to
the Central Committee as "an expression of comradely confidence."
ibid p.260.
44. I.Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed op.cit.p.138.
45. G.Lichtheim, Marxism op.cit.p.337.
46. Bertram D.Wolfe, Marxism: 100 Years in the Life of a Doctrine
op.cit.p.194.
47. R.N.Carew Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, London
1966 p.188-189.

48. John Plamenatz, German Marxism and Russian Communism,
London 1970 pp.223, 225-26.
49. John Keep, Lenin as Tactician, in Lenin: The Man, the Theorist, the Leader, ed. Leonard Schapiro and Peter Reddaway, London 1967 pp.135-136.
50. One hears a not too distant echo of the theoretical views of Mr.Keep and others in the cry of employers and rulers everywhere, when faced with revolt or rebellion, that "It was all caused by outside agitators."
51. G.Eichtheim, Marxism op.cit.p.337.
52. Calculations by Colin Clark in The Conditions of Economic Progress, London 1940, cited in T.Cliff, Russia - A Marxist Analysis, op.cit.p.103.
53. K.Marx, Cited by L.Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed. op.cit.p.56.
54. D.Hallas, The Way Forward, in World Crisis ed.J.Palmer and N.Harris. op.cit.p.255.
55. ibid p.255.
56. The Workers' Opposition was seen by Lenin as an anarcho-syndicalist deviation reflecting the pressure of the petty-bourgeois environment. See Lenin, Collected Works Vol.32 p.245.
57. See Lenin, Collected Works Vol.36 pp.593-609, and M.Lewin, Lenin's Last Struggle, London 1968.
58. F.Engels, The Peasant War in Germany, Moscow 1969 p.115.
59. Cited by Peter Sedgwick in his Introduction to Victor Serge, Memoirs of a Revolutionary, London 1963 p.XV.

60. For one analysis of why this has happened, and also why capitalism enjoyed such prolonged stability see Michael Kidron, Western Capitalism Since the War, London 1968 and Capitalism and Theory, London 1974.
61. Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution op.cit.p.XViii,
62. A number of Marxists made the need for a revolutionary party one of the principle conclusions of their analyses of the May Events. See. Lucio Magri, The May Events and Revolution in the West, Socialist Register 1969.
- Ernest Mandel, The Lessons of May, New Left Review 52.
- Andre Gorz, The Way Forward, New Left Review 52.
63. For an account of the last days of the Allende regime by a participant in the events see. Helios Prieto. Chile: The Gorillas are Among Us, London 1974.

APPENDIX.

1. Thesen und Resolutionen des III Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale, Hamburg 1921 p.105, reproduced in, The Communist International 1919-1943, Documents ed.Jane Degas Vol.I op.cit.pp.256-271.

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A comprehensive bibliography on this topic is impossible for the field has no clear perimeters and almost everything written on Marxist theory or the history of the Marxist movement might be considered relevant. Consequently what follows is simply a list of works cited in the text. In addition to Lenin's Collected Works his more popular pamphlets are cited as they were used in this form for convenience. All periodicals cited were published in London.

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