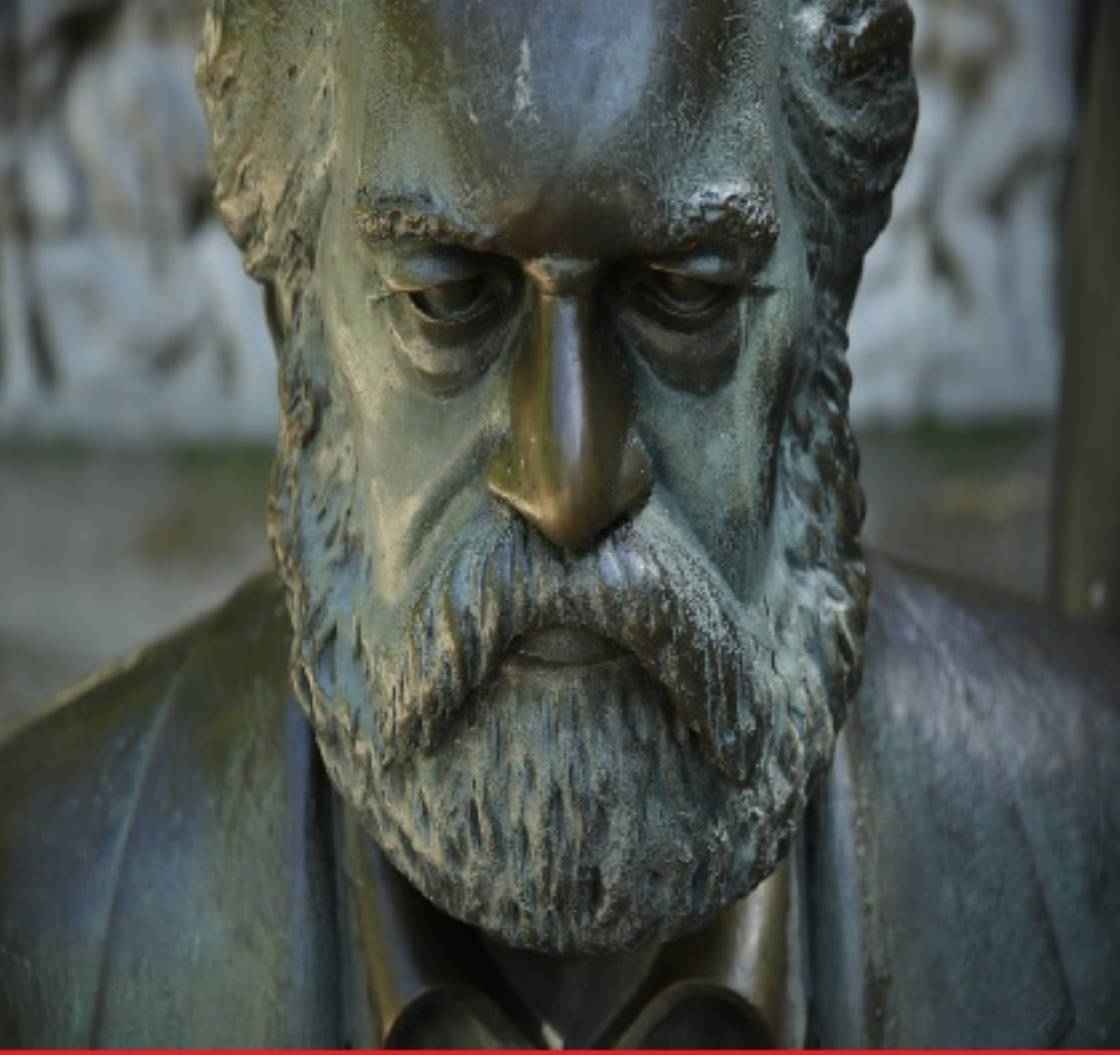

Revolutionary Strategy in Europe

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A Political Interview

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The revolutionary Left, and especially the Fourth International, is often accused – for example, by the leaderships of the PdUPC in Italy or the PSU and CFDT in France – of mechanically superimposing onto the reality of the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe a 'model' derived from the Russian revolution: breakdown of the state, rise of soviets, dual power, marginalization of

reformists and development of the clash between soviet power and bourgeois power to the point of insurrection. However, the argument runs, the social formations in question are in reality so different that it is as senseless to superimpose this Bolshevik schema as it would be to apply a Maoist model of protracted guerrilla warfare, or a Guevarist or Vietnamese model. Hence, the specificity of the capitalist societies of Western Europe requires an equally specific and different strategy for the conquest of power. What do you think of this?

There are several questions mixed up here. We must start by distinguishing between what is specifically Russian and what is universal in the 'schema' or 'model' of the Russian revolution. What was specifically Russian was not the duration of the revolutionary crisis, nor the soviet form of self-organization of the masses, nor the tactics utilized by the Bolsheviks to win a majority in the soviets, nor the concrete form of the decomposition of the bourgeois state. This is not a dogmatic assertion, but a conclusion which can be drawn from the historical experience of more than half a century. All the features I have just listed, and quite a few others, can be found in the German revolution of 1917-23, in the Spanish revolution of 1936-7 and – in a more

embryonic form – in the Portuguese revolution. Early signs of their development can be seen too in the Italian events of 1920, in the revolutionary upsurge in Italy at the end of the Second World War and even in May ’68 in France. That is why we consider these to be the most likely forms of revolutionary crisis in Western Europe.

Similarly, the extent of decomposition of the Tsarist/bourgeois state apparatus in Russia between February and October 1917 is not at all peculiar to the Russian social formation. It is a phenomenon which recurred in all the revolutionary crises in Western Europe that I have mentioned – perhaps in different forms, but with the same, and sometimes with an even more pronounced dynamic. Thus, during 1975, the repressive forces in Portugal were more paralysed and the bourgeois state apparatus was in a more advanced stage of decomposition than was the Tsarist/bourgeois state apparatus at any time between February and October. Of course, I am not here denying the obviously far greater *intrinsic* strength and stability of the bourgeois state and social order in the West, *in normal times*. But, precisely, that strength is itself dependent upon the maintenance of that ‘normality’. When the social ‘peace’ is shattered, as in May ’68 in France, for instance, that apparent strength is replaced by an evident vulnerability.

What was, indeed, peculiar to Russia was not the *ease* with which the Bolsheviks were able to seize power, but on the contrary the much greater *difficulties* they faced on the eve and above all on the morrow of the seizure of power – compared with the possibilities in the advanced capitalist countries of today. I am not trying to advance a paradox.

Truly, the most striking feature of the critiques levelled against revolutionary Marxists by the anti-Leninists and centrists is their attempt to ignore or blot out this obvious fact. The peculiarity of Russia lay above all in the limited weight of the working class in the total active population. This meant that the Bolsheviks could hold an absolute majority in the soviets, whilst remaining a political minority in the country – a situation which is unthinkable in an advanced capitalist country. In England, France or Italy it would be impossible for a party to have 65 per cent of the votes in workers' councils elected in every town by universal suffrage, and at the same time to have only 20 or 30 per cent of the votes of the whole population. What would be the social basis of such a disparity? What was also peculiar to the Russian social formation was the existence of a huge peasant hinterland, which served as the rural base for the reconstruction of a counter-revolutionary army and for its attempts to reconquer the towns. The social structure of most West European countries makes this unthinkable as well.

Another peculiarity of the Russian social formation was the much lower degree of technical, cultural and also political preparation of the working class for the direct exercise of political and economic power that exists in the advanced capitalist countries. Yet another specific feature was the world context of the Russian revolution. International capitalism was then incomparably stronger than it is today: it had at its disposal infinitely greater economic, social, political and even ideological resources, as well as an incomparably more extensive and secure international system of supports and credits. Thus, the Russian revolution was from the outset threatened with submergence by a counter-revolution basing itself on the passivity of the majority of the population, and on an active

minority which was not much smaller than the minority that supported the revolution. In addition, an armed international counter-revolution was ready to undertake an almost immediate military intervention, by invading Russia with armies from six, seven or eight different countries. Today, such operations are a little more difficult! We have not witnessed any 'descent' on Portugal by the Spanish regular army – let alone the French, German or American regular armies. Nor do I think that a victorious revolution in Spain, Italy or France will have to face anything of that kind in the first three or six months. The world has changed a great deal since 1917. My conclusion from the historical balance-sheet, then, is the paradoxical one that the 'Leninist schema', or what I see as the essence of Leninism – namely, the strategy which combines **State and Revolution**, the documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International and what is valid in **Left-Wing Communism** – is much more applicable in the advanced capitalist countries of Europe than it ever was in Russia. In all likelihood, that strategy, which was not applied in its entirety or even to a very great extent in Russia, will be fully applied for the first time now in Western Europe.

In contrast to all gradualist strategies, the revolutionary Marxist conception attributes a key role to the notion of revolutionary crisis. However, not all crises of bourgeois society are revolutionary, or even pre-revolutionary. Can you explain exactly what you understand by a revolutionary crisis in an advanced capitalist country? Could June '36 in France be

characterized in that way? Or the Liberation? Or May '68? Or the recent Portuguese crisis?

There is a certain lack of precision in the relevant concepts used by the Marxist classics, and, despite the modest theoretical gains of recent years, the Fourth International has still not entirely eliminated this imprecision. Your question then is very much to the point. My answer will only be an approximation, since we still lack the practical references which would allow us really to settle the matter. Let me begin by referring to the essential point developed by Lenin. For there to be a revolutionary crisis, the impetuous rise of the mass movement is not enough; such an upsurge gives rise to a *pre-revolutionary* situation, or rather process, which may go a long way without developing into a revolutionary situation. A *revolutionary* situation or crisis (the lack of precision is evident in our identification of the two for the time being) requires the combination of the impetuous rise of the mass movement with the real inability of the possessing class, the bourgeoisie, to rule. In Lenin's brilliant formulation, a revolutionary crisis breaks out 'when the "lower classes" no longer want to be ruled in the old way, and when the "upper classes" cannot carry on ruling in the old way'.

We must obviously interpret the expression 'cannot carry on ruling' not in the general historical, but in the conjunctural sense that the 'upper classes' do not have the material possibility of exercising power. Let me illustrate

this by a very 'provocative' example (which has long been the subject of a debate amongst revolutionaries). In May '68, there was not a really revolutionary situation, since the Gaullist régime was not so paralysed that it could not go on ruling. At no point did De Gaulle lose the capacity for political initiative. He was thrown off course and temporarily immobilized by the changed relation of forces. He was shrewd enough not to take on the extremely powerful mass movement with a frontal assault – which could have provoked a revolutionary situation! But he never lost the capacity for political manoeuvre and initiative. He waited for his hour (or almost the exact minute) to strike, and when this came it was clear at once that – due to the complicity of the reformist leadership of the pcf – he was in a position to assert his power throughout the country.

A revolutionary crisis appears when the bourgeoisie loses this capacity for initiative and assertion of its political authority. Whence does it derive? This is the real problem. It is difficult for us today, with so rich an experience behind us, to reduce all the major instances of revolutionary crisis in Europe – Russia 1917, Germany 1918-19, Hungary 1919, Spain 1936-7, Yugoslavia 1941-4, perhaps even Portugal 1975, and the list is not exhaustive – to a single common denominator. However, we can isolate two or three basic factors. *First*, a highly advanced stage of decomposition of the repressive apparatus of the state machine. This is an altogether decisive element in the loss of authority and initiative by the bourgeoisie. It may be due to a war or to the disintegrating effects on important sections of the army of a partially miscarried coup d'état, as in Spain. Or it may be the result of a general strike or workers' uprising of such great moral and political power that it disintegrates the army from within, as happened in the days following the Kapp putsch in Germany 1920. *Secondly* (the positive side of the same

coin) a generalization or at least broad development of organs of workers' and popular power to the point where a régime of dual power exists, with the same impact on the repressive apparatus. The bourgeois state apparatus is obviously completely paralysed once the workers' and people's councils are strong enough for a major part of the public services to identify with them. If the staff of the banks reject the orders of the Finance Minister or of the Governor of the Central Bank in favour of the workers' council of the banking sector, then the whole administration is paralysed. It is the same with the transport sector, and so on. If the phenomenon is widely extended, to include even sectors of the police, it is clear that what is involved is a total paralysis of the bourgeois state apparatus and of the bourgeoisie's capacity for centralized political initiatives. However, it is the *third*, politico-ideological dimension to the mounting crisis which interests us most, because it has hitherto been so neglected. *There must be a crisis of legitimacy of the state institutions in the eyes of the great majority of the working class.* Unless this majority identifies with a new, rising legitimacy, then a revolutionary development of the crisis is highly unlikely. I do not say that it is ruled out, for the uneven development of class consciousness can give rise to some strange and surprising combinations. However, if we use the term 'legitimacy' in its most general sense, then the mere fact that the masses no longer recognize themselves in a government elected by universal suffrage – and perhaps reflecting a majority of two or three years, or even six months previously – does not suffice to create a revolutionary crisis. It is a governmental or ministerial crisis, or at most a crisis of the régime, but it is not yet a genuinely revolutionary crisis. For that there must be a further ideological, moral dimension whereby the masses begin to reject the legitimacy of the institutions of the

bourgeois state. And that can only come about through profound experiences of struggle and a very sharp – though not necessarily violent or bloody – clash between these institutions and the immediate revolutionary aspirations of the masses.

The way in which a revolutionary crisis appears is closely linked to such phenomena. Look, for example, at the extremely complex situation in June 1936, about which Trotsky's judgements were not false, but rather incomplete. (No doubt I will be accused of revisionism on this score, but that does not bother me – Marxism is a science, and this kind of question must be discussed scientifically and not dealt with peremptorily by appeals to authority.) Can one say that the masses unreservedly supported the Popular Front government? Of course not. If that had been the whole story, there would have been no general strike and the masses would have entrusted Blum with the application of his programme. The launching of the general strike expressed a clear element of mistrust: for some it was just a question of giving the Blum government 'a helping hand', a push from behind, but that push took on such force that it called into question the whole time-scale, and even the will of the newly elected ministers to apply the programme. Was there an objective tendency for the PS-PC-CGT leaderships to be outflanked? Clearly the occupation of the factories, expressing a spontaneous rejection of the capitalist system, went far beyond the programme of the Popular Front – a programme which in any case was more moderate than that of today's Union of the Left, as far as its challenge to private property was concerned.

However, all that I have just said, which can be found in Trotsky's analyses, is still rather incomplete, since it leaves untouched the undeniable fact that June '36 not only came off, but was also *over*come with baffling ease. When you see

millions of workers occupy their factories, objectively posing the eradication of private property and of the bosses' rights over the means of production, and then you see the way in which after the Matignon agreements they nearly all accepted a mere combination of immediate economic reforms with the implementation of the Popular Front programme, you need a further explanation of this retreat. What was absolutely decisive were the parliamentary and electoralist illusions and the lack of a credible alternative political solution. There was a development by leaps and bounds of the spontaneous action of the workers; but the partial development of consciousness was not enough to lead them to question the legitimacy of the institutions of bourgeois democracy and oppose to them institutions created by the working class itself. Thus it is no accident that there was no generalization of soviets in June '36. (Those who try automatically to identify strike committees, often set up by the trade unions, with soviets are making a big mistake. They are confusing what could have been the embryo of a movement of workers' councils with the culmination of that movement; a preliminary, preparatory stage with a situation of generalized dual power.)

Well, that is my not altogether satisfactory attempt at an analysis. Our concepts are still rather imprecise, even if we are approaching a greater rigour. Once again, all this must be studied in the light of the historical experiences in Western Europe since 1917 and a thorough balance-sheet drawn up, categorizing, classifying and comparing the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations. I think that it is by this historico-genetic method that we will succeed, rather than by an abstract attempt to work out concepts that risk being challenged by the next historical experiences. It is only the balance-sheet of history and revolutionary practice

that will teach us to think more correctly.

So you think that when Trotsky wrote of June '36 'the French revolution has begun', he was hopelessly wide of the mark?

Trotsky himself revised his judgement when he said later of June '36 that it was a mere caricature of the February revolution in Russia. So his first assessment was certainly incomplete. We know ourselves from May '68 that when a pre-revolutionary situation arises, revolutionaries are faced with a dual obligation and a dual task. On the one hand, they must analyse what is happening in as cool and objective a way as possible. On the other hand, they are obviously not passive spectators – they intervene in the situation in order to change it. Any self-respecting revolutionary organization which is more than a mere sideline sect has to attempt to change the pre-revolutionary situation into a revolutionary one. It strives to develop the potential for workers' councils and other forms of self-organization inherent in the situation. Of course, there is a certain contradiction between this organizational and political task and the job of the analyst and historian. The former is a dynamic attempt to unblock and change the situation, whereas the latter is descriptive, purely analytic and thus more static. When Trotsky said 'The French revolution has begun', he was not just saying 'I really hope the

French revolution has begun', but also 'Revolutionaries are able to and must intervene in this kind of general strike in order to transform it into a revolution'. We completely agree with that position: it was possible to do that in June '36 as it was in May '68. We therefore accuse the reformists, Stalinists and centrists of not having done that – they who had infinitely greater resources than us in the existing political and organizational balance of forces. Their failure to do it does slightly modify our later assessment of what took place; but one cannot conclude from the fact that the French revolution had not begun that it was not possible. For us, the uneven development of class consciousness does not have just a purely spontaneous aspect, independent of the intervention of the subjective factor; it also involves a whole area of possibility, determined by the political forces of the workers' movement, the relation of forces between the traditional leaderships and the revolutionary minorities, and the responsibility of those who are in a position to push forward events but do not do so. We do not dissolve that responsibility in over-objectivist analyses.

What about the Liberation?

That is a more complex question. First of all, you cannot place under a single general heading – 'the Liberation' – the experiences in Yugoslavia, Greece,

Italy, France and Belgium, not to mention Denmark, Holland and other countries. The differential development of the resistance movements gave rise to widely varying relations of forces. Secondly, Marxists must take great care in assessing the level of consciousness of the masses – the extreme complexity and unevenness of which can lead dogmatic thinkers to lose their bearings. It is true – and I know this from my own experience of debates with social-democrats and centrists during the occupation – that it was difficult to call upon the working masses of Western Europe to rise up immediately against the allied imperialist powers. The treacherous policy of the social-democratic and Stalinist leaders, and of the leaders of the reconstituted trade-union federations, had been firmly within the ideological framework of the alliance of 'democratic nations' against the 'totalitarian countries'; they had thus induced a degree of identification between Anglo-American and French imperialism and the democratic cause, or even the cause of some kind of transition to socialism. However, it is also the case that the broad-based, impetuous mobilizations in some countries – especially Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy, and to a slightly lesser extent France – possessed an inner logic that made it possible to challenge capitalism and the bourgeois state, and above all to take initiatives in the construction of a popular power from below:

initiatives which could have led to the generalization of revolutionary situations of dual power.

I do not think that an immediate struggle for power was possible in countries like France as soon as the Nazi front collapsed. Nor do I think that we can treat as insignificant the presence of American troops, which has been held up as the sole, irrefutable argument by the Stalinists and which revolutionaries have tended to dismiss a little too lightly. The nearest we can get to a correct formulation is this: during the liberation struggles, it was possible to develop factory occupations and take-overs, to form local organs of popular power, and above all to bring about the general arming of the masses, in such a way as to generalize situations of dual power and open up the possibility of a later seizure of power.

We should not forget that the presence of American troops was limited in time and that the American soldiers brought strong pressure to bear for their return. Moreover, even without any pre-existing situation of dual power, the fluctuations in the political conjuncture brought about highly explosive crises. The most important of these was in Italy in 1948, when, in response to the attempted assassination of Togliatti on 14 July, the masses went well beyond a general protest strike to occupy factories, railway stations, electric power stations, etc., thus demonstrating that they instinctively posed the question of power. If workers' councils had already existed and if a part of the proletariat had been armed, then July 1948 could have opened up an extremely deep revolutionary crisis in Italy. Such a development would have been possible in France as well – but of course with the aid of 'ifs' one can rewrite the whole of world history!

The elements of this interpretation of the Liberation and of its possible aftermath were already put forward during the war by my organization, the Belgian section of the Fourth International. In one country, Yugoslavia, it was objectively applied with tremendous success. At the head of a powerful mobilization of the toiling masses, the Yugoslav Communist Party carried through the transformation of a mass, anti-imperialist resistance movement against the oppression and super-exploitation introduced by Nazi imperialism into a genuine socialist revolution; the bourgeois state apparatus was destroyed and a workers' state created, bureaucratically deformed though it was from birth. It was done in a bureaucratic, manipulatory way, with a great deal of Stalinist skulduggery, but it was nevertheless an essentially revolutionary action. Moreover, when one considers that the Yugoslav cp was not very strong in 1940-1 and that the insurrection was launched by only a few thousand militants, mainly from the Yugoslav Communist Youth, one cannot but feel a certain admiration. Those few thousand communists of 1941 became by 1945 a partisan army of half a million revolutionaries, and led the overwhelming majority of the proletariat and middle and poor peasantry behind them. Thanks to this mass mobilization, this organized force, they succeeded in crushing all the attempts of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism to reconstruct a bourgeois state apparatus. As one hostile Western commentator put it, 'they introduced the civil war into even the tiniest village'. To sum up this huge social struggle by the sole formula 'petty-bourgeois nationalism' is to fasten upon a single ideological aspect – and even then one that is only partially true, since the Yugoslav partisans provoked Stalin's fury by forming proletarian brigades, as well as international brigades composed of thousands of Italian and German fighters. Such

a mode of analysis reveals blind sectarianism and abandons the historical materialist method of Marxism, which judges movements by their objective effects on the social structure and on entire social classes, not by some ideas that they may carry around.

Do you not think that what was decisive in this period was the weight of international factors, of US imperialism, and that even if a situation of dual power had arisen in a strategically more important country of Western Europe, it could only have ended in a heavy defeat of the working class?

I am not at all sure of that. There are obviously so many unknown factors underlying that kind of question that it is difficult to give an entirely satisfactory answer – we enter the realm of speculation and counter-speculation. However, I think that people who were in the Communist Parties at that time (and who have a guilt complex which they certainly need to assuage) generally underestimate the following factors: the crisis, reaching the point of mutiny, within the us Army; the wish of the American soldiers to go back home as quickly as possible; the pressure of the Pacific war which was not yet over; the necessity for us imperialism to establish complete control over the Pacific and Japan in order to assure its world hegemony – which meant that it could not keep the bulk of its troops in Western Europe. I think

> that the enormous prestige of the Soviet Union and of the Red Army is also under-estimated, as well as the extreme political, military and moral weakness of the European bourgeoisie. I repeat, the question of whether or not it was possible to seize power is for me a false question. *What is clear is that the relation of forces could have been infinitely more favourable to the workers' movement if there had been a communist leadership which was not prepared to liquidate the gains of the mass resistance, to reconstruct the bourgeois state and to capitulate before the exigencies of bourgeois economic reconstruction*. Had such a leadership existed, a situation of dual power would have been created which could well have borne ripe fruits at a later stage: 1947, 1948 or 1949, it is hard to say exactly when.

The responsibility of the Stalinist leadership in 1944-7 is therefore overwhelming, even if we abstract from the mood of the masses. In fact, the true 'ultra-lefts' play into the hands of the Stalinists by arguing that a working class which was so patriotic and nationalist was in any case incapable of struggling for power. At bottom such arguments allow the cp leaders to escape their responsibilities. 'Priority to production'; 'the strike is the weapon of the trusts'; the calls of Maurice Thorez for 'one army, one state, one police force'; the disarming of the partisans; participation in government – it was this whole criminal policy of the cp leaderships in France, Italy, Greece or Belgium which liquidated the clear possibilities of revolutionary development inherent in the very deep crisis of the bourgeois order. The objective crisis of the bourgeoisie was much more profound in 1944 than it

is today. Western Europe was a grouping of economically disorganized countries which had been bled dry and where nothing worked properly. Today it is very hard to imagine that. It was much more similar to Germany in 1918-19 than to present-day Europe. Of course, I am not saying that such a crisis is the 'most useful' in bringing on a revolutionary situation and a 'classical' seizure of power by the working class, but the depth of the crisis should not be forgotten. If there had been an adequate and bold revolutionary leadership, it could have compensated for a lower level of consciousness and preparation of the working class than exists today.

What about Portugal?

Our movement has described the situation in Portugal very well. I would mention especially the book by comrades Rossi, Udry and Bensaïd [1], and the writings of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista, the Portuguese sympathizing group of the Fourth International. These comrades developed the idea of the progressive growing over or transformation of a pre-revolutionary situation into a revolutionary one that had not fully ripened. It is difficult to arrive at a precise definition because, up to 25 November 1975, what we were witnessing was already the beginning of organs of popular power; *the beginnings of dual power, but not yet a situation of generalized dual power*. Both in Portugal and on an international scale, we were the first to understand the duty of revolutionary Marxists in such a situation: to extend,

> generalize and centralise these organs. But when soviets have begun to appear without yet existing everywhere, then an intermediate situation exists where it is very difficult to give an exact definition of the concept of 'revolutionary crisis'.

Even today it is hard to characterize the situation precisely: the retreat or tactical defeat of 25 November has not been extended into the factories, and even at the political level the parliamentary election results are not the expression of a retreat. The workers' parties continue to represent 54 per cent of the electorate, in a country where the working class makes up barely a third of the total active population. If we take into account all the distortions of bourgeois parliamentary elections (atomization of voters, etc.), then the relationship of forces is even more favourable than is indicated by the figure of 54 per cent. Under these circumstances, one can hardly say that nothing is left of what was a pre-revolutionary situation. The bourgeoisie has not succeeded in 'rectifying' or 'stabilizing' the situation. There is still a pre-revolutionary situation and a new turn is still possible that could lead almost overnight to the brink of a revolutionary crisis. Only twice before has a similar situation existed: in Germany between 1918 and 1923, and in Spain between 1931 and 1937. The instability of the régime was so great throughout these periods that one cannot talk of 'normalization'. Of course, it would also be absurd to talk of a revolutionary crisis lasting six years! Such a period must be understood as a succession of phases of revolutionary upsurge, interspersed with conjunctural revolutionary crises, followed by partial retreats of the mass movement and even by partial victories of the counter-revolution. The term *partial* is here used in opposition to any reversal of the *historical tendency* such as occurred in

Spain only after May 1937, and in Germany after October 1923.

In every advanced capitalist country, the masses have shown a strong attachment to bourgeois representative democracy, to 'formal democracy'. It is exactly as if the popular masses had themselves taken over the bourgeois precept: 'The democratic republic may be an abominable régime, but it is surely the least abominable of them all.' This attachment is especially strong in France, where the parliamentary régime and the democratic gains were not concessions shrewdly granted to the masses, but the result of revolutionary popular struggles. This adherence of the masses to the principles of bourgeois representative democracy, and even to the institutions and procedures which embody it, constitutes a serious obstacle on the road to the destruction of the bourgeois state and the installation of socialist democracy. Can you explain the roots of these democratic illusions amongst the masses, and how they can be overcome?

There is an ambiguity in bourgeois parliamentary democracy which the bourgeoisie has succeeded in exploiting to the full, with the obvious and indispensable complicity of the reformist leaderships

who thus bear an overwhelming historical responsibility. Little by little, this ambiguity has been converted into one of the main ideological props of bourgeois domination in those countries where the working class has become the great majority of the nation. The ambiguity consists in the following. In most cases after the First World War, and sometimes even later in the 1930s or 1940s, the masses began to identify their *democratic freedoms* – which are an absolute gain that we aim not merely to defend but to consolidate and deepen within the workers' state – with the *bourgeois-democratic, parliamentary state institutions*. If it is true that the responsibility of the reformist leaderships for this was overwhelming, they could nevertheless not have had the effect they did without a specific conjunction of historical circumstances: of major importance was the experience of fascism; so too was that of Stalinism, both through the reformist turn of the Comintern in 1934 and through the repulsive example of the régimes of Eastern Europe and the ussr.

Also significant has been a certain political maturing of the workers' movement, which now faces a changed and enriched political problematic. It is no longer preoccupied solely with demands for the reduction of the working day and for protection against unemployment and sickness, or with the general question of universal suffrage and freedom of association. The organized workers' movement and important sections of the working class today take up a wide range of questions concerning commercial and financial

policy, infrastructural development, employment, education, etc. At the same time, since the movement has increasingly neglected the problems of education of the working class and proletarian democracy, bourgeois politics has stepped in to fill the vacuum and thus articulated the choices and alternative policies that confront and concern the masses. This has made little difference in a country like the United States, where the masses are not very concerned with politics. But in countries where there is a much higher level of mass interest, since it is only in the bourgeois political arena of parliament and bourgeois elections that these questions can be raised and decided upon, this politicization has undoubtedly contributed to the process of identification we mentioned earlier.

I have stressed elsewhere the negative side of this. The characteristic feature of bourgeois democracy is the tendency towards atomization of the working class – it is individual voters who are counted, and not social groups or classes who are consulted. Moreover, the economic growth of the last twenty-five years has brought into the heart of the working class consumption habits – most clearly symbolized by the motor-car and the television – which serve to reprivatize leisure activity and thus to reinforce the atomization of the class. The time has gone when political questions were discussed *collectively* in the *Maisons du Peuple* – as was still the case in the thirties; or when working-class newspapers were read and discussed collectively. Of course, this reprivatization of leisure activity can lead by a historical detour to a higher level of class consciousness. Workers, especially young workers, read much more and have a higher level of culture. Future possibilities of a real proletarian democracy may thus be strengthened. But for a long period this reprivatization has assisted the identification between bourgeois democracy and

the defence of democratic freedoms. Herein lies the basic source of ambiguity.

This answer to your first question clears the ground for the second: how can we overcome this obstacle? Generally speaking, we must seek to bring about a radical break between, on the one hand, the defence of the democratic freedoms and self-activity of the working class – everything that is, to the greatest extent possible, free, broad, spontaneous and self-determined activity of the masses – and, on the other hand, the institutions of the bourgeois state. There is, of course, something of the chicken and the egg in this, for it is precisely the revolutionary situation that can make this break not only possible, but even relatively simple and inevitable. That is the lesson of the Portuguese revolution over the last year, and it will be similarly affirmed in the coming revolutions in Spain, Italy and France.

It is irresponsible, or even criminal, for revolutionaries to seek to oppose the concept of 'dictatorship of the proletariat' or 'people's power' to democratic freedoms. On the contrary, any tactic or initiative of revolutionaries which allows the masses to learn, through their own experience, *that the extension of their own freedom comes up against the restrictive institutions of bourgeois democracy*, is not only extremely useful but even indispensable. The most symbolic and synthetic example is that of freedom of the press; it is here that the Portuguese revolution was blown off course, and that there was great confusion which the bourgeoisie and social democracy were able to turn to their advantage.

What lessons should we draw from initiatives such as those of the **Republica** or *Radio Renascença* workers? Certainly not that we want to suppress the right of any political party to publish its own papers in a régime of soviet democracy. There can be absolutely no question of that. What is at issue is the *broadening* of the freedom of the

press to include print-shop workers, radio-station workers as well as workers' commissions and groups within every workplace. They too need the right to express themselves freely in the press – even if they do not own a paper or have enough money to open one, and even if they do not have the means to express themselves with the same regularity as political parties. In other words, our aim is to *break the monopoly* of private ownership, and even of political party ownership, not in the sense of taking away anyone's right of expression that he holds today, but in the sense of extending that right to others. Thus, despite all the errors committed by the centrist and ultra-left leaderships in these two experiences, it remains an extremely positive and democratic achievement that there was a broadcasting station able to report all the workers' struggles and read out the demands and resolutions of any working-class group without being controlled by the censorship of the government or of a party headquarters. This pointed in the same direction as the paper **Izvestia** created during the Russian revolution – which, after all, was initially simply an organ in which all the soviets could freely express themselves, irrespective of their political affiliation or majority composition.

Considerable political skill and the authority of a vanguard party are required to use examples of this kind to show to the masses in practice that the revolution is extending democratic freedoms; to show that it is the defenders of private property, the absolute authority of parliament and the monopoly position of political parties who in fact seek to restrict these freedoms and to prevent the masses from gaining a greater degree of liberty, political weight and power than they have in a bourgeois-democratic republic. The conclusive demonstration of this can only take place in a fairly long period of dual power, during which

such experiences enter the consciousness of the masses and are, so to speak, internalized by a sufficient number of workers. However, once this is achieved, then what we referred to as a possible break becomes a reality. This is not at all a utopian blue-print, but the concrete way in which a soviet legitimacy will be created that is more deeply rooted in the convictions and consciousness of the masses than bourgeois-democratic legitimacy.

Only a really lived experience, going beyond resolutions, newspaper articles and propaganda speeches, can accomplish this. Thousands upon thousands of workers must grasp, on the basis of their own experience, that the practice of proletarian democracy cannot be confined within the limits of bourgeois democracy. That brings us back to the question of the duration of dual power, and here the historical record forces us to regard the Russian experience as exceptional. A period of six or seven months is much too short for a proletariat like that of Western Europe to progressively abandon the legitimacy of bourgeois democracy in favour of the new, higher legitimacy of proletarian democracy. *A longer period of dual power will probably be needed, which may be partial and discontinuous and which may stretch over several years.* In Germany, for example, the workers' councils lasted only a few months as organs of political power, whereas the factory councils partially survived for several years with powers going beyond those of the legal authorities. And in 1923 the German communists were almost unanimous in considering this remnant of 1918-19 to be the main organ of development of class consciousness during the revolutionary upsurge; they also thought that it would be around these organs that it would become possible once again to place the seizure of power by the German working class on the order of the day. The industrially advanced countries of Western

Europe will probably throw up a whole range of such variations and combinations.

Finally, I would like to stress the absolutely decisive importance here of workers' control. Although the relation between proletarian and bourgeois democracy – in other words, the problem of the state – appears to revolutionaries and Marxist theorists as a supremely political problem, in fact the everyday mediations of real pedagogic value for the working class are not purely political. Even the freedom of the press has never been a pure political abstraction for the working class. It is the freedom to say things that are of immediate interest to the workers. This nearly always revolves around their immediate preoccupations, their daily lives, their demands, struggles and experiences. Such 'freedom of the press' is not an absolute, abstract freedom to say whatever comes into one's head, but the concrete freedom to *give an account* of concrete things – of struggles, demands and fighting goals. This is related to the key role of workers' control in a period of dual power, since it trains the class for the exercise of power.

Of course, we are neither Economists nor spontaneists, and we understand the embryonic, fragmented, inadequate and thus almost utopian character of workers' control. Nevertheless, it constitutes an invaluable *practical training*. Workers' control is not concerned merely with the minutiae of the firm; once it is extended to certain vital sectors, in particular to the public services, its revolutionary potential becomes enormous. Workers' control over the banks, public transport, power stations and television – just to give four examples – will shake to its foundations the whole daily life of a modern nation. It is through this kind of apprenticeship that the workers will continually run up against the restrictive and repressive authority of the bourgeois-democratic state, even if it is 'governed' by workers' parties,

and that they will learn the limits of this bourgeois democracy and the need to replace it.

The Portuguese far left let slip an enormous ideological opportunity. After all, it is no accident that when Soares, the one-time frenzied agitator for the freedom of the press, dropped his mask, he had to start attacking 'anarcho-populism' or 'anarcho-spontaneism' – in other words the initiatives of the masses. He began to preach the strengthening of discipline and state authority or, to call things by their right name, *repression*. In a revolutionary situation, the workers must learn that the real debate is not between democracy and dictatorship, but between the limited and repressive character of bourgeois democracy and the extension of democratic freedoms by the initiative and authority of the masses. Once that debate is won, the break of the masses with bourgeois institutions no longer seems as difficult and unrealizable as it did at first. But for that to happen, revolutionaries have to apply intelligent tactics, and not engage in senseless, ultra-left attacks against 'social-fascism'.

Perhaps another reason for these democratic illusions is that the superiority of direct soviet democracy over representative bourgeois democracy has never been convincingly demonstrated in the eyes of the workers – either in propaganda or in practice. We are prone to speaking of soviet democracy as 'a thousand times higher than the most democratic forms of bourgeois democracy' (Lenin), but that can often seem to be begging the question. In what way does our critique of

the formal character of bourgeois democracy not also apply, mutatis mutandis, to soviet democracy – since, so long as some kind of social and technical division of labour exists, it necessarily entails forms of representation and delegation? What emerges from a clear analysis of the first months of the Russian revolution is 1. that the rank-and-file delegates became very rapidly alienated from the general assemblies of the main soviets, including that of Petrograd (look, for example, at the constant appeals in the Soviet press for delegates to attend assembly meetings); 2. that power underwent an enormous concentration in the executive bodies at the top. One could list a whole series of indications that a system of soviet democracy based on such a form of delegation of power also lends itself to the political expropriation and manipulation of the masses and to the usurpation of power. To what extent is the Fourth International aware of these dangerous, formal aspects of such a system of soviet democracy, and how does it seek to guard against them and assure as real a democracy as possible?

First of all, the argument that the superiority of soviet democracy 'has never been shown in practice' is slightly anachronistic. Of course, the present

generation of workers has had no such experience, and it can sometimes seem artificial to juxtapose what exists, however imperfect it may be, with what has not appeared before one's eyes. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that the international working class has lived through several concrete and highly developed experiences of direct democracy, which has stood up to the test of practice and demonstrated its superiority over bourgeois democracy. Let me mention just one of many examples. Between July 1936 and May 1937, the Spanish and especially Catalan committees developed the experience of direct democracy beyond the limits of the bourgeois régime in numerous fields – in particular, in local administration, industry, public supply and health – and were felt to be great achievements by the Spanish masses. It is not widely known that under the administration of the workers industrial production grew markedly and that the functioning of restaurants, theatres, education, health and justice in Barcelona, stimulated by – among others – our ex-comrade Andres Nin, was a remarkable example of broad mass participation in the carrying out of appointed tasks. A considerable body of literature exists on this extremely advanced experience of proletarian democracy (and not just in the semi-mythological writings of anarchist authors).

Furthermore, to conclude from the lack of contemporary examples that a particular orientation is difficult if not impossible amounts in effect to rejecting the possibility of all

revolutionary *innovation* – someone after all does have to be first, in order to begin something new! What precedent could the Russian workers have had before their eyes in 1917? What was the precedent for the Paris Commune? Every revolution is always an eminently innovative experience, and there is no reason to be frightened of that. The continuity that really counts and makes our aim a realistic one is the continuity between the day-to-day class struggle, in the maturity of capitalism as in its decline, and the revolutionary situation. The masses prepare for revolution much less by studying previous historical experiences or by comparing events in other countries than by their experience of struggle today before the outbreak of a revolutionary crisis – by the development of higher forms of self-organization and of anti-capitalist demands, by strikes and factory occupations. The direct democracy of workers' councils will develop more out of that than out of historical comparisons of a theoretical nature.

More serious is the argument that direct soviet democracy itself bears certain elements of indirect democracy, in that it is based on the delegation of power and on a pyramidal structure. I think that we need to utilize the historical experience and progress in political theory of the last half-century in order to develop the answers of Lenin in **State and Revolution**. There are three basic safeguards that *reduce* the force of the argument, without to be sure eliminating it.

It should not be forgotten that, in the last analysis, the argument points up a *real contradiction* in the role of the workers' state as the last historical form of the state. It is a state form that begins at once to wither away, but it is no less a state form, that is to say, 'special bodies of men exercising repressive functions'. If we thought that the anarchist project was not utopian and that it was possible to

leap straight from bourgeois society to a stateless society, then we would be the most convinced of anarchists. We are not anarchists because we think that it is impossible, for objective and subjective reasons, to bypass the stage of the workers' state, of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Moreover, the Spanish experience shows that an artificial attempt to avoid the centralization of *workers' power* does not lead to a situation of no power, but to the maintenance or reconstruction of *bourgeois power*, which is ten times more bureaucratic, repressive and authoritarian.

Now, we are not blind to the limits of proletarian democracy, any more than was Lenin. In so far as the state does not wither away all at once, in so far as it survives, so too do bourgeois right and elements of bureaucracy survive. The experience of the Russian revolution, the nightmare of Stalinism and the deepening of our understanding of the phenomenon of bureaucracy should alert us to the need for safeguards additional to those foreseen by Marx and Lenin: the eligibility of all to hold state posts, the possibility of recalling all delegates, the reduction of their earnings to the level of the average wage and a more or less speedy rotation of delegates.

The first and perhaps most important of these three further safeguards is that the state of proletarian dictatorship must from the beginning be a state that is breaking up. This 'breaking up' is the concrete form of its withering away. What I mean by this is that the centralization of power is only justifiable for a certain narrowly demarcated range of problems. It should be the Congress of Workers' Councils that takes decisions concerning the allocation of national resources. For it is the working class that bears the sacrifice of not consuming a share of what it produces, so it is up to the working class to decide the extent of the sacrifice it is prepared to accept. But

once it has been decided to devote 7, 10 or 12 per cent of national production to education or health, there is absolutely no need for state management of the education or health budgets. It is pointless for the Congress of Workers' Councils to take on this task of management, which can be much better assumed at the more democratic level of school or higher educational councils, and councils of medical staff and patients. The people who sit on these bodies will be different from those who are delegated to the Congress of Workers' Councils. This breaking up of the functions of the central state means that dozens of councils will be meeting at the same time and involving tens of thousands of people on a national and continental scale. And as the same kind of process will be occurring at the regional and municipal level, this 'breaking up' will allow hundreds of thousands or even millions of people to participate in the direct exercise of power.

The second important safeguard is a much closer attention to the problem of the rotation of posts than was possible for the Bolsheviks, who were faced with a working class that was culturally underdeveloped and a minority of the population. In the industrially advanced countries, a much more radical application of the principle of rotation of posts will be possible than obtains, for example, in Yugoslavia. If this principle is strictly applied (for example, by prohibiting the election of the same delegate more than twice), then after a number of years a very large number of people indeed will have been involved in the exercise of power in the various congresses and other assemblies. The idea of the participation of all workers in the direct exercise of power will thus take on a concrete form.

Thirdly, I have always had great reservations about the formulation: the social division of labour remains inevitable. I think that there is a lack of conceptual clarity involved here

in the frequent conflation of the term 'social division of labour' with what I would call the 'occupational division of labour', or 'professionalization', or 'diversity of occupational activity'. The social division of labour refers to *qualitatively different social functions*, ultimately reducible to the functions of production and administration (or accumulation). Now, although the occupational division of labour cannot be overcome in the first phase of socialism, our aim is to begin immediately the overcoming of the *social* division of labour – that is the whole meaning of the term 'self-management'. And for that it is necessary to secure the adequate *material conditions*, rather than to speculate on the level of maturity, preparedness or unpreparedness of the working class, etc.

It is clear what these material conditions are. Firstly, there must be a sweeping reduction in working time that will allow workers to enter the soviets and attend congresses. If they work eight or nine hours a day, plus two or three hours travelling time, then they will not be able to be involved in management or administration. A long working day means the division of society into those who produce and those who manage; it inevitably means the survival of 'professional politicians' in the soviets. Only the reduction of the working day by half will create the conditions for a genuine democratic management, that is to say, the involvement of hundreds of thousands or millions of workers in the management of the economy and the state.

Another material condition is the breaking of the monopoly of information, which is itself only one facet of the monopoly of culture. Thanks to data processing, electronic computers and television, it is today much easier than in Lenin's time to make information of all kinds available to everybody, and thus to make possible workers' management of the economy, the state and society. This participation of

workers will be made materially easier by the smashing of a whole series of cultural obstacles to it, through the lengthening of the period of school education, the revolutionizing of education, the elimination of the division between a youth spent at school and 'adulthood', etc.

A further condition will require considerable innovation: the socialist constitution must allocate the majority of posts (at least in bodies exercising central state power) to persons engaged in productive activity – not only to male workers, but also to women. This is an indispensable safeguard, because ultimately bureaucratization is based on the professionalization of management functions. The only way to check this is for a majority of those exercising central political power to continue working in production, which is, of course, only possible if it is accompanied by the breaking up of management functions that I mentioned earlier. Once all these measures are put into practice, the basis of bureaucratization will be considerably reduced.

An additional problem that should be touched upon is whether a socialist revolution can go together with a rise rather than a decline of the productive forces. This question was already prominent in the debates between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and has continued to occupy revolutionaries, centrists and ultra-lefts over the last fifty-five years. Many dogmatic theorizations of the Russian experience of 1917-19, especially by Bukharin but also by Bordiga and other revolutionary leaders of the period, rested on the assertion that a decline in the productive forces was inevitable during a socialist revolution. I will leave it to others to pronounce on 'the inevitable laws of history', but in the present, exceptionally favourable conditions for socialist revolution in Western Europe, such a hypothesis is not very credible. Unless there were an outbreak of nuclear war or a military intervention with large-scale bombing, there is no

reason to suppose that a socialist revolution in Spain, Italy or France would be accompanied by a decline in material production. On the contrary, the post-war development of the productive forces has confirmed that the industrial system constructed by the bourgeoisie conceals vast reserves for the expansion of production.

Thus it is not at all utopian to anticipate a sweeping reduction in the length of the working day simultaneously with an increase in material production. I am convinced that the accomplishment of these tasks will be greatly facilitated by the introduction of workers' management, the development of workers' initiative, and the flowering of the spirit of self-organization and creativity amongst the broad masses in the field of technology and the organization of labour. In the bourgeois theory of the firm and the industrial unit, there is an optimum level of performance which is never identical with the maximum level (and the capitalists have themselves learnt this to their cost!). Once this optimum level is reached, once industrial units become excessively large, the *faux frais* of production grow faster than the unit cost of production falls. There is a sudden flood of bad decisions as the ability to form a global view is lost. Planned self-management, based on the self-activity of the workers, will absorb and overcome these experiences of bourgeois management in a way that is impossible for the capitalists themselves.

Can you say briefly whether you think the conditions existed in China in 1949 for the functioning of a soviet-type democracy?

China was an even more backward country than Russia, and the odds were set dead against the

development of a higher form of soviet democracy than that of the Russian revolution. But to recognize that some form of bureaucracy was inevitable is not at all the same as justifying the Maoist system, which has not allowed the slightest blossoming of direct democracy or direct workers' power. Moreover, there is an evident contradiction in the policy of the régime: whereas the Maoist leaders have systematically sought to prevent any form of self-administration by the urban working class, they have been much more prudent in the countryside. The present administrative form of the people's commune unquestionably contains elements of direct democracy – decentralized, fragmented and non-federated elements, which correspond to certain characteristics of the Chinese peasantry. This is in any case much less dangerous for the bureaucracy, and indeed is even inevitable in a country as vast as China with its 600,000 or more villages. But such a dichotomy expresses a clear social choice: the régime is much less afraid of the initiative of the peasants than of that of the workers. That has remained a constant feature since 1949, not excluding the two successive phases of the Cultural Revolution. The bureaucrats think that self-organization is easier to control and manipulate so long as it is confined to peasants or students; once it appears in the factories, among the workers, they are seized by panic.

Under the leadership of Lenin, the Bolsheviks did not always counterpose soviet institutions to representative democratic institutions (the National Assembly elected by universal suffrage in geographical areas). Despite the capacity of the Constituent Assembly for exclusive political centralization, Lenin fought after the *April Theses* right up to October, against the equivocations of the bourgeois government, for a political system articulating soviets at the base to Constituent Assembly at the top. (*Collected Works*, Vol.24, p.99; Vol.26, p.200.)

Zinoviev and Kamenev held a similar position, stressing moreover that such a system would provide a national body with a legitimacy that the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets did not possess. That was also the position of Rosa Luxemburg after the overthrow.

Your question strikes me as exceedingly abstract, pitched at the level of general principles. I know of no Marxist study that approaches the problem in such an abstract form, not even Luxemburg's to which you refer. For us, as for Luxemburg, the real problem is *the coupling of democratic freedoms with the soviet form of organization*. Here historical experience shows not only that the two are compatible, but that they must be combined with one another. A soviet form of state, involving the direct exercise of power by

> the workers – and not by the party substituting itself for them – is inconceivable without the maintenance and broadening of democratic freedoms beyond the level existing under a capitalist régime. Similarly, such freedoms are indispensable for proletarian democracy within a single revolutionary party and *a fortiori* in a multi-party system such as the Fourth International has envisaged since its adoption of the **Transitional Programme** in 1938.

In this connection, we should be aware that there are two aspects to the evolution of the Communist Parties in recent years, and that one of these is positive. This evolution is in fact taking place under a dual, contradictory pressure. On the one hand, these parties are bending to the pressure of the bourgeoisie and social democracy – for example, in their abandonment of the concept of 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. We completely disagree with such concessions and continue to uphold the entire classical Marxist-Leninist polemic against the inadequacies, the formalism, the class character and the indirect, oppressive and severely truncated nature of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. *But the second dimension of this evolution represents a concession to the working class of Western Europe – a class which has developed a profoundly anti-bureaucratic consciousness in reaction to the Stalinist experience and does not want a repetition of Stalinism.* There we can only say 'bravo'!

When Marchais says that he is abandoning the word 'dictatorship' because it recalls Hitler and Pétain, the hypocrisy is quite transparent. No one in France or any other European country identifies the Communist Party with Hitler or Pétain. What he really means, but does not

dare say out of sympathy for his former friends in the Soviet bureaucracy, is that when the masses of Western Europe hear the word 'communist dictatorship' they think, not of Hitler or Pétain, but of Stalin, Hungary and Czechoslovakia – in other words, of a bureaucratic dictatorship which they do not want.

In the tradition of Marx's writings on the Paris Commune and of Lenin's **State and Revolution**, the dictatorship of the proletariat is for us a dictatorship which consolidates and deepens all democratic freedoms – the freedom of the press, the right to demonstrate, the freedom of association and of political parties, the right to strike and trade-union independence from the state. Naturally, such a way of posing things is also an advance on the model of the Soviet Union under Lenin and Trotsky. In any case, those comrades never made a model or norm out of their pioneering achievements, which were the first attempt at proletarian dictatorship under very unfavourable circumstances. On the contrary, Lenin repeated dozens of times that one must not construct dogmas, and that the workers of Central and Western Europe would do much better than the Bolsheviks. It is this realistic and lucid, flesh-and-blood Lenin who should serve as our inspiration, not those formulas also to be found in his writings which justify the temporary defensive measures taken by the Russian revolution by raising them to the level of theorems, or even axioms.

Let me take the concrete example of political parties, which is both important and relevant today. What does Lenin say on this question in **The Proletarian Revolution and The Renegade Kautsky**? He says that it is no accident that neither the Bolshevik programme nor **State and Revolution** advocate suppressing the right to vote of the bourgeoisie, for this is not a matter of principle

under the proletarian dictatorship. He even adds ironically that the Cadets left the soviets of their own volition. The meaning of this is clear: the Cadets had a place in the soviets, and as long as they remained in them no one tried to drive them out. When they left in order to launch the civil war, of course that was quite another matter. When someone starts firing at you, you have to use all means to defend yourself including rifles. Give up shooting, Cadet gentlemen, and no one will drive you anywhere – that is the conclusion which can be drawn from this passage from Lenin.

We should be quite clear about the dynamic that would be unleashed if one were to insert into the Soviet constitution of tomorrow the clause: 'Only workers' parties will be legally tolerated or recognized; bourgeois parties will be banned'. Not only the Stalinists and Mao-Stalinists – which is bad enough – but even certain pseudo-Trotskyists, who go around *very* light-mindedly dishing out labels of 'petty-bourgeois' and 'bourgeois', will start saying that the social-democrats are a bourgeois party, and the psu too. The Communist Party, the party of 'social-imperialism', will also be defined as a bourgeois party. As for the Trotskyist organizations, they too will find plenty of people, including some donning 'Trotskyist' masks, who will accuse them of being 'petty-bourgeois' or even 'counter-revolutionary traitors'. The result will be that only the self-proclaimed 'revolutionary' organization, or only the one that is in agreement with the thoughts of Chairman Mao, will be 'genuinely' proletarian, even if it represents only a tiny minority.

Such a dynamic can assume terrifying proportions. Any real constitutional or institutional defence of the multi-party principle is impossible once you start introducing criteria that are subjective and subjectivist. The only *objective*

criterion is that of *soviet legality*. Any party will be recognized that respects the socialist constitution *in practice*: it may have an anti-socialist programme and carry out anti-socialist propaganda, but it will not be permitted to throw bombs or organize civil war. Once it starts that, it will be outlawed. If the bourgeois parties content themselves with discussing and persuading people, we are quite confident that the working class of Western Europe is sufficiently strong and clear-thinking not to hand back the factories that it has seized from the bosses, simply as a result of skilful bourgeois propaganda. For us, ideas are the most effective means of waging the struggle against bourgeois ideology, which is merely strengthened by bans and other administrative measures. Our chosen weapons are the weapons of propaganda and education of the working class, and for us there is only one limit to the defence and extension of democratic freedoms under the proletarian dictatorship: the limit imposed by the need to prevent any attempted restoration by force of the exploitative régime of private property and bourgeois power. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a dictatorship to the extent that, as the **Communist Manifesto** puts it, it takes 'despotic measures' against private property and the bourgeois state, crushing the violence and power of the bourgeoisie. But it does not take despotic measures against bourgeois ideas or bourgeois parties which confine themselves to propaganda and 'counter-education'. On that level, the political superiority of Marxism, of the armed people in possession of economic power, seems to me quite adequate to prevent a return to capitalism.

If I have not answered the question about whether parliamentary organs are necessary, it is because I think that it is an *essentially tactical* matter. We should not treat it as a question of absolute principle, and it will not necessarily be

answered in the same way in every country. If a parliamentary organ is used in an attempt to repress and 'roll back' the self-organization of the masses, then it is a clear instrument of counter-revolution and we have to take a position accordingly (such was the case in Portugal last year, as it was in Germany 1918 and in Russia after October 1917). It should not be forgotten that Rosa Luxemburg took a quite unambiguous position against the transfer of power to the Constituent Assembly in Germany. She – and the Spartacist delegates at the First Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils – opposed the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, arguing instead for the maintenance of the sovereignty of the Congress of Councils as the only representative organ of power of the German working class. *But once that sovereignty is established, then it is not a question of principle whether there should be a parliamentary organ to deal with secondarymatters.* Its usefulness is not all that clear to me, but the answer will depend on the national political tradition of various countries and on the role such an organ might play as an arena of struggle between the major cultural and ideological currents. What is essential is that political and economic power should be firmly and genuinely in the hands of the armed workers organized in soviets.

Trotsky's own thinking on this question underwent an unquestionable evolution, which we have to continue. Like Lenin, Trotsky combined two elements in the period of 1920-21. On the one hand, in order to defend soviet power in extremely difficult and dangerous conditions, they took decisions – with an iron determination that we cannot but approve of – which led them to introduce measures that broke in practice with soviet democracy, and they assumed full responsibility for this. Going further than Trotsky, Lenin declared in 1920 that the Soviet state was no longer a

healthy workers' state, but a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations. He was absolutely lucid about this and did not aim to deceive anyone. Of course, one can discuss whether one particular measure or another was justified in the given conjuncture, but that is not the essential point.

However, there was also a second, infinitely more dangerous aspect to their actions in this period. This was their attempt to give some of these measures a general theoretical foundation that is quite unacceptable. For example, Trotsky wrote in 1921 that soviet democracy is not a fetish, and that the party can exercise power not only in the name of the working class, but even in exceptional circumstances *against* the will of the majority of the class. We should be incomparably more cautious before adopting formulations of that kind, because we know from experience that in such a situation it is a bureaucracy rather than a revolutionary minority that will come to exercise power against the majority of workers – a fact that Lenin and Trotsky were themselves to recognize a year later. As far as theory is concerned, the year 1921 was the nadir of the Bolsheviks' history and Lenin and Trotsky made a whole number of errors.

All you have to do is read Trotsky's later writings to understand that he became aware of these errors. At the end of his life, he said that he did not want to discuss whether the banning of factions in the Party was inevitable, but that what was clear was that it assisted the establishment of the Stalinist régime and the bureaucratic dictatorship in the ussr. What is that if not a *de facto* self-criticism? Moreover, when Trotsky said in the **Transitional Programme** of 1938 that he was in favour of freedom for all soviet parties, he had undoubtedly drawn the conclusion that the lack of such a constitutional right opens the door to the use of the argument 'You are a potential party' against any faction, and

of ‘You are a potential faction’ against any current or tendency. In that direction, it is not only socialist democracy that is stifled, but also inner-party democracy. In the period 1936-8, Trotsky had become fully aware of the inner logic of such positions, and was implicitly undertaking a serious self-criticism. In our own thinking on the question, we should not let ourselves be restricted by an uncritical defence of the decisions taken under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky.

I think that the Bolsheviks were wrong in 1921. They should not have banned the Menshevik Party; they should not have banned the anarchist organizations; and they should not have suppressed multiple slates in elections to the soviets after the end of the Civil War. The paradox is quite striking: during the Civil War the Bolsheviks allowed themselves the luxury of an opposition in the press and in the soviets, but once the war was over they made an error of judgement. They thought that the main danger following the introduction of the nep was a political resurgence of the petty and medium bourgeoisie, which would threaten the restoration of capitalism in the short term. That was an error of conjunctural analysis, but it was no less an error. The peasantry was much too dispersed and demoralized to pose an immediate threat to soviet power. (Of course, in the long term, as the Left Opposition pointed out, this analysis was correct, and six years later in 1927 the danger became acute.) But in 1921 the main danger was not bourgeois counter-revolution; it was the depoliticization of the working class and the rapid process of bureaucratization. The measures taken at that time assisted and developed that process. We should have the courage to recognize that this was an error and that the Opposition slogan of 1923 ‘Extend rather than reduce soviet democracy’ was valid from 1921

onwards.

Unlike the Russian working class, the working class of the advanced capitalist countries of today has a tradition of mass trade-union and political organization and institutions with which it identifies. Moreover, the reformists, both social-democratic and Stalinist, will fight against the development of soviets. Do you think that in spite of everything dual power will take on the soviet form, or that it may be expressed in other ways – through a bloc of left forces, or even through the trade unions as Monatte thought possible in the case of France?

Here we can base ourselves on lengthy historical experience, the lessons of which are absolutely clear and unambiguous. Whenever a revolutionary crisis has broken out in an industrially advanced country, where there is a working class at the height of its social, political and economic maturity, we have witnessed the emergence of soviet-type organs. However different they may have been in name or origin, there is not the slightest doubt about the nature of these organs. It is true that in the Spanish revolution of 1936-7 an organizational bloc was imposed at the level of the towns and the organs of political power, but there was nothing of the kind at

the level of the workplace: there the masses organized themselves. In most West European countries, the workers' movement is divided between different fragmented mass organizations, which are themselves not free from internal contradiction, and which furthermore rarely encompass a majority (or more than a slight majority) of the masses. Given this situation, a powerful and impetuous revolutionary movement of the proletariat will have to find a form of self-representation which involves the class in its entirety. History has produced nothing better than the soviet form, which is not an 'invention' of the Bolsheviks or the Trotskyists, but the result of real historical experience.

Of quite a different order is the question of the precise origin of these organs in each country, and the way in which the existing political and trade-union mass organizations will be combined with and represented in them. History has already given a wide range of answers to this, and there are even considerable differences between the two experiences in Russia. The first soviets arose in 1905 out of strike committees, whereas in 1917 the opposite happened: the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviets was constituted before the appearance of soviets throughout the country. In Spain 1936 it was quite different again: rank-and-file committees sprang up, which were then topped off by a bloc of organizations.

The most important thing for revolutionaries is to do away with all schematic and *a priori* thinking – something which is relevant to many lively debates within the Fourth International and in the European revolutionary Left in

general. We should not think that there is only one possible slogan, or only one form in which workers' councils can appear in the present situation. Under certain circumstances, for example of defensive struggle of the working class against the rise of fascism, it is quite possible and even likely that organs of workers' power will only emerge from bodies of the United Front bloc of parties and trade unions. That was what Trotsky plausibly envisaged in Germany until 1933. But in other circumstances, for example in France between 1934 and 1936, Trotsky was quite correct in rejecting this idea. He accused the centrists and even some pseudo-Trotskyists of thinking that Blum and Thorez had first to come to an agreement before there could be action committees. He rejected the argument that the development of organs of dual power had to be subordinated to the signing of an agreement at the top between the apparatuses. He thought it quite likely that the opposite would happen: that the rank-and-file would first build these committees, and that only afterwards would the bureaucrats agree at the top to accept them. The Portuguese experience has given us sufficient warning of the dangers of any kind of schematism. In all their writings on revolutionary situations, Lenin and Trotsky insisted that the main task is to keep one's eyes and ears open for developments in the working class and for signs of the real organizational direction it is taking – and not impose some theoretical schema on this real tendency of the workers to find their own forms of self-organization.

Will the reformists always and everyhere combat this spontaneous growth of workers' councils? The sectarian answer would be 'unfortunately not'! But as I am not a sectarian, I will simply say 'no'. The rational kernel of the sectarian response is the obvious fact that the task of revolutionaries would be much easier if the bureaucrats

were 'bravely' to swim against the tide. It would be so simple to isolate the bureaucratic apparatuses if they set themselves against millions of workers identifying with their councils. Unfortunately that is not how things happen; the bureaucrats are much too shrewd. What they generally do when the workers' councils are mushrooming is enter and identify with them, keeping close to the real movement. You only have to re-read what Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann wrote in the Germany of 1918 to understand that. The real problem will be the political confrontation with the reformists inside the councils.

We should also avoid a schematic view of relations between the workers' councils and the mass organizations and be prepared for all the possible variants that can arise. The basic determinant will clearly be the historical traditions and peculiarities of the Western working class, especially the much greater weight of the trade-union movement in these countries than was the case in Russia. There are two dangers to be avoided. The first is that of being dragged into the swamp of centrism, which devotes its energies to preparing a soup with no nutritive value at all. The ingredients of that soup are well known to us: the preservation of the institution of parliament, combined with affirmations of the sovereignty of the workers' councils, the sovereignty and independence of the trade unions; multiplicity of parties, combined with acceptance only of a 'limited' right of tendencies; and so on and so forth. In short, an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. The line which separates revolutionaries from reformism is clear enough: we are for the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus; we say that it is impossible to make a socialist revolution whilst respecting, tolerating or appeasing that apparatus; we are for the transfer of power to organs of self-representation of the working masses, and for a sovereign Congress of

Workers' Councils to exercise that power. The centrists would like to avoid such a clear choice, but every time that a revolutionary crisis breaks out, history gives fresh proof that room for equivocation does not exist.

The second danger to be avoided is that of sectarianism. There is a real function for the trade unions. Life itself will determine the exact sphere of their authority and the exact form of their fusion with the soviets. Although blocs of organizations are for us less democratic than directly elected organs, we will obviously not reject such blocs where they exist in the name of something that has not yet appeared. That would be a stupid sectarian attitude. We should remember that although Trotsky correctly criticized the bloc character of the Central Committee of Militias in Barcelona 1936, he nevertheless considered its dissolution to be the main crime of the reformists and centrists, including Andres Nin, and the beginning of the decline of the revolutionary upsurge in Spain. Moreover, there were also representatives of a bourgeois party, the *Esquerra Catalan*, in that committee, and Trotsky never suggested as a watchword: 'Let us first expel the bourgeois parties before recognizing this Central Committee of Militias as the organ of workers' power'.

With the possibility of workers' parties coming to power, Southern Europe is heading towards situations of a pre-revolutionary kind, in which although the hold of reformism may be fairly durable, a sizeable workers' vanguard already exists. There is enormous potential in this situation, but also enormous dangers: the reformists show no sign of wanting to go

forward to a successful revolution, while the bourgeoisie have the will to push back the tide by a victorious counter-revolution. Even if the masses throw up their soviet organs, revolutionaries can hardly expect to win over the majority. So what are the real aims that we should pursue?

No doubt you are playing the devil's advocate, but your question rests on a basic premise that I dispute. It is not true that the revolutionary vanguard is incapable of winning over the majority of workers in the revolutionary period opening up in Southern Europe. The essential historical function of the period from 1968 to the present day has been to allow the far Left to accumulate sufficient forces to enter this revolutionary period with the realistic possibility of winning over the majority of the working class.

Of course, we need to be a lot more specific: I would make five basic points. In the first place, every revolutionary experience shows that we have to start from the uneven development of class consciousness – an idea that the reformists and centrists find hard to grasp. We have already mentioned the examples of June 1936 and the Liberation. There is not the slightest contradiction in saying that *the overwhelming majority of the masses can at the same time vote for the reformist parties and partially break with them in practice*. In a revolutionary situation, class consciousness develops by leaps and bounds, although not on all fronts at once. The masses may think that the only useful way of voting at the parliamentary, electoral level is for the Socialist

Party or the Communist Party. At the same time, they may think that in the struggle against reaction at the workplaces and in the colleges the only useful way of acting is independently of those parties. A meticulous analysis of the attitude throughout 1975 of the Portuguese proletariat – which is, moreover, one of the politically least developed in Europe – would provide fresh confirmation of the uneven growth of class consciousness. There is a spectacular example of the same phenomenon today in Spain, and I think that we shall see the same thing in France and Italy. But I will go even further: it is not impossible for the majority of the class to vote in the workers' councils for the seizure of power by the councils, while still being prepared to vote for the reformist parties in parliamentary elections. Even the result of consultative polls, expressing a concrete political choice, varies according to whether they are held in isolated booths or in mass assemblies, in an atomized or a collective way. The trade-union bureaucrats and the bosses know very well that a mass meeting and a referendum or postal vote will produce different results on a proposal to declare or call off a strike.

This leads us on to the second question: the outflanking of the reformist leaderships. It is quite possible, and even likely that a *dual process* will occur in Western Europe – to a much greater extent than in June 1936, and at least as much as in Chile under the Allende government. The masses will accord the parliamentary majority or left government a relative, guarded and mistrustful trust – the contradictory formulation expresses the reality well. At the same time, they will show a tendency to break out of the limits to action laid down in advance by the reformist, class-collaborationist programme, with its avoidance of a break with the bourgeois régime. It is the inexorable logic of the unfolding class

struggle, rather than the theoretical clarity of the masses, that will determine the dynamic of this process.

The greatest analytical weakness of the reformists and centrists lies in their failure to understand this logic, despite its clear demonstration in the revolutionary experiences of the industrialized countries, including at the outer limit Chile. The world today is one in which a proletariat of greatly increased social, economic and political weight is faced with a crisis of capitalist relations of production and of all other bourgeois social relations; it is unthinkable that a qualitative deepening of the activity, combativity and demands of the masses should not lead to a veritable explosion of class conflict, that paralyses the capitalist economy and the bourgeois state. Any socialist or communist who thinks that he can tell this proletariat, representing at least 60 or 70% of the population: 'You are in power. The factory belongs to you. Now it is possible to raise the standard of living, reduce the length of the working day, extend nationalizations and put through progressive social legislation', and who thinks that at the same time it is possible to achieve an increase in capitalist investment, an increase in the mass or even rate of profit to finance this capitalist growth, such a person is an utterly ridiculous utopian dreamer. No one believes that, either in the workers' camp or in the bourgeois camp. Only dishonest or completely naive conciliators can spread around such fairy-tales. In the present climate in Southern Europe, therefore, we can rule out the possibility of the masses remaining passive when a left government takes office. This will inevitably be accompanied by an intensification of the class struggle, a flight of capital, an investment strike by the capitalists, sabotage of production, constant plotting against the government by reactionaries and the extreme right supported by the state apparatus, right-wing terrorism, and

so on. That is what we saw in Portugal last year, in Spain 1936, in Chile after 1970, and we shall see it tomorrow in Italy, Spain and France.

Now, the workers will not fail to react. They will place no trust in the bourgeois police to fight against the plotters, or in the Minister of Finance to halt the flight of capital. *Outflanking is not brought about by a state of mind, trust or mistrust, nor by 'leftist agitators' stirring things up. It is a result of the inevitable head-on collision between the major social classes.* Moreover, although the programme of the Union of the Left in France is perfectly compatible with the capitalist system, it is no accident that it is much more radical than the programme of the Popular Front. It reflects the changed relationship of forces since the thirties and the deepened structural crisis of capitalism. Today, reforms that are 'broad' enough to be of significance to the popular masses of Western Europe require considerably more sweeping changes in the functioning of the economy and society than those that could be envisaged in the twenties or thirties. This intensification of class conflict has a twin dynamic: on the one hand, in the direction of an ever wider outflanking of the bureaucratic apparatuses by the masses; on the other, towards a creeping paralysis of the 'classical' mechanisms of a social-democratic or reformist government. Once again, the experience of the first stage of the Allende government is highly illustrative. Even today, before the formation of a left government in Italy and before the complete dismantling of the dictatorship in Spain, there has been a sizeable flight of capital which gives us some idea of what will happen when a left government is actually in office. In such circumstances, it is utterly utopian to hope to govern by traditional, routine methods and to remain within the framework of bourgeois parliamentarianism and a Common Market which allows the free circulation of capital.

It is the reformists and centrists, not we revolutionaries, who are thus the real utopians. We are convinced that the reformist apparatuses will inevitably and rapidly be outflanked, in the context of what I have called the uneven development of class consciousness. I am not talking necessarily of a spectacular electoral break with the traditional parties; the outflanking could take intermediate forms, including the radicalization of a section of those parties themselves and a tendency struggle or even split within them. That is almost inevitable in such a situation, especially as the far Left is no longer marginalized and without importance, but an already recognized political force.

The third point concerns the duration of the process. Here the conclusion could only be pessimistic if we thought that everything would be over within three months. Nowhere could the forces of the far Left win over the majority of the working class in such a short period – neither the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* in France, nor a far Left bloc in Italy, nor the LCR-ETA VI in Spain even if it fused with LC and OICE. [2] However, to think that things will be settled in three months is to under estimate, in a quite unrealistic fashion, the deep crisis of the bourgeois order and bourgeois leadership, as well as the degree of working-class combativity. The only recent points of reference we have are those of Chile and Portugal: the process lasted three years in Chile, where the working class was infinitely weaker than in Western Europe, and where there was a much greater danger of direct intervention by us imperialism. Things are still far from over in Portugal, where the crisis has already lasted more than three years. I mentioned earlier Germany 1918-23 and Spain 1931-7 as examples of a process stretching over a number of years; it is over such a long period that revolutionary organizations

could expect to win the support of the majority of the workers in the councils. These organizations already have thousands of members and tens of thousands of sympathizers, and in a protracted period of crisis they could gain tens of thousands of new members and hundreds of thousands of sympathizers. None of this will happen, however, unless these organizations carry out correct policies, especially in relation to the united front, which I will take up later.

The fourth point that has to be made is in answer to the following objection, which is perhaps the most powerful one of all. 'Practically everything to which you refer has already been seen in Chile. There was a left government in a state of paralysis; there were leftist sections of the masses storming marginal fortresses of the bourgeoisie; there were internal squabbles in the workers' movement, following clashes between the reformist majority and the revolutionary minority. And in the end what that led to was the triumph of reaction through a bloody coup d'état and a crushing defeat of the workers' movement.' In answering this, I must first say that no one can give an absolute assurance of victory. The correct revolutionary strategy has never been based on the certainty of a working-class victory. All we can say is that it is only our strategical and tactical line of march that can make that victory *possible*; but it cannot guarantee it. Additional factors are necessary for victory, in particular a favourable balance of forces which cannot be precisely calculated in advance.

The much less favourable objective and subjective situation in Chile was obviously the final determinant of the balance of forces between the classes, and between the reformist apparatuses and the far Left. In Western Europe the situation is much more promising from both points of view: the degree of self-sufficiency is incomparably higher

than in a country like Chile, and the proletariat has a much greater capacity for fighting back and winning support at an international level. Moreover, we have a formidable 'secret weapon' of which we make no secret: namely, the growing identity between the programme and aims of a proletarian revolution in Western Europe and the existing programme of a section of the workers' movement in the most 'stable' countries: Britain, Holland, Austria, West Germany. Socialist diplomacy will be able to stage its own 'Brest-Litovsk' if an economic blockade is organized against Portugal, Italy, Spain or France to 'punish' the working class for establishing workers' control or self-management, whilst the trade unions of Northern Europe are moving towards the same positions. That will obviously not be so easy if the revolution wears the hideous mask of Stalinist dictatorship. But if it presents instead the smiling Communist face of sovereign workers' councils – which is ten times more attractive than the Prague spring – then I do not think that it will be easy to mount such a blockade against European socialist countries.

Even the Chilean army, which was of a quite particular kind, was not inoculated beforehand against the virus of socialism and revolution. In fact, one of the catalysts of the coup d'état was the fear of the counter-revolutionary officers that the virus was spreading amongst the ranks, especially in the navy. Of course, the military plotters were aided by the treacherous ineptitude of the Popular Unity leaders faced with these first signs of rank-and-file insubordination against the army and navy officers, and by the remarkable political weakness of the centrist far Left, which had a completely wrong position on work in the army. Here too, I think that we will be able to avoid these mistakes and obtain better results. The recent experience of the soldiers' movement – especially in Portugal, but also in France and

Italy – shows that we are already in a better starting-position than were the Chileans. In highly industrialized countries – where even the composition of the army reflects the social structure of the country – it is extremely unlikely that a gigantic revolutionary upsurge will not find expression in opposition movements within the army. All these are trump cards that were not available in Chile.

In any case the essential point is that we have no choice in the matter. When there is an impetuous rise of an anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic mass movement, faced by the counter-revolutionary hardening of nearly the entire bourgeois apparatus, anything that demobilizes the working class and puts a break on the workers' offensive, and anyone who tries to dampen down their enthusiasm, can only serve the counter-revolution. The proletariat has never profited from demobilization and division in its camp during the course of class battles. When there is an extreme polarization of social forces, the only measures that serve the workers' cause are the widening and generalization of the mobilizations and of the tendency of the class to united self-expansion. We must put the centrists and vacillating forces on their guard against the grave danger of measures that repress, fragment, divide or demobilize the mass movement on the pretext of 'not alarming reaction'. Anything that has a demobilizing effect immediately shifts the balance of forces in favour of the bourgeoisie.

Conversely, anything that mobilizes and unifies the working class and the toiling masses shifts the balance of forces in favour of the working class. That is the whole basis of our orientation. It is what gives real coherence to our goal of winning over the majority of the working class; it is one of our political trump cards. *In a revolutionary situation, the revolutionary Marxists must be the force most committed to the strengthening of class unity and organization.* They

must constantly advocate the unity of the class apparatus of the workers, and this is made easier by the fact that the organs of workers' unity are precisely the organs of its self-representation: the Workers' councils. We defend workers' unity in as much as we defend the organs of workers' power in a situation of dual power.

There is a fifth and final point that must also be made clear. The essential weapon for winning the majority of the masses is the weapon of the united front. In the highly complex and delicate situation of a left government – identified by the masses with a government of the workers' organizations – the united front policy entails a well worked out and carefully nuanced attitude towards that government. (I am not talking here of a 'historical compromise' government – which is just the 'classical' coalition government of large bourgeois and reformist parties.) The attitude of revolutionary Marxists should not be a schematic one, or consist of constant calls for the overthrow of the government – which would sound in the ears of the masses strangely like the calls of the Right and the far Right. I am not saying that our attitude should be one of support: we are naturally not for such a government, but for the replacement of this 'bourgeois workers' government' by a genuine workers' government. Nevertheless, it will be a bourgeois *workers'* government and seen by the masses as such. It would be sectarian and completely unproductive to adopt the same attitude towards it as we do towards a straightforward bourgeois or Popular Front government.

We would only fundamentally change our position if the government began to repress the mass movement. That was the position of Lenin in April 1917, as can be clearly seen by reading all his writings from March to June 1917. For example: 'We are not yet for the overthrow of this government, in that it is supported by the majority of

workers'. He changed his attitude only after the repression following the July Days. So long as such a government does not engage in repression, we should adopt an attitude of 'critical toleration', of pedagogic propaganda opposition, in order to allow the masses to learn from the experience. Concretely, what that means is placing on the government a series of demands that correspond to two basic criteria.

First, it is necessary to intensify the break with the bourgeoisie and thus to demand the removal of the one or two wretched bourgeois ministers in the government. Of course, that will not change much in itself – it will remain a bourgeois workers' government even without those ministers. The experiences of Spain 1936 and of Chile have similarly made clear the need for a thoroughgoing purge and elimination of the whole repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie, the disbanding of repressive bodies and an end to full-time judges. In addition, there are all the economic demands of the masses related to nationalization under workers' control, which express the logic of dual power.

The second basic category of demands addressed to the government concern the riposte to be made to the inevitable bourgeois acts of sabotage and economic disruption. Here the guiding policy should be one of tit-for-tat: the occupation and take-over of factories followed by their co-ordination; working-out of a workers' plan of economic reconversion and revival, the extension and generalization of workers' control in the direction of self-management; the running of a whole number of areas of social life by those directly concerned (public transport, street markets, crèches, universities, agricultural land, etc.). Numerous layers will move from reformism towards left-centrism and revolutionary Marxism through discussing these questions in the framework of proletarian democracy and through their own practical experience, *protected by the*

intransigent defence of the freedom of mass action and mobilization, even when it 'embarrasses' the plans of the government or cuts across those of the reformists. This break from reformism will be assisted by the illustration, consolidation and centralization of varied experiences of self-organization; it will not be helped, however, by sectarian excesses, by insults of the 'social-fascists' type, or by ignoring the special sensitivity of those who still place their trust in the reformists. The policy of winning the masses by the united front is thus inextricably bound up with the affirmation, extension and generalization of dual power, up to and including the consolidation of workers' power by insurrection.

The objective results of the policies of the reformists are the following: growing impotence of the left government; inability to meet its promises; rising disillusionment amongst the masses and the creation, thereby, of a fertile ground for demobilization and demoralization and the return in force of reaction, whether through violence or even by legal and electoral means. This confirms that we have no choice in the matter: either we extend the mass outflanking towards victory or else decline and defeat are inevitable. In such a period there is a race between two movements, one leading to an outflanking of the reformist apparatuses and the other to a retreat of the masses as a result of the reformists' bankruptcy. The first will only win the day if the social and political relationship of forces has at least some favourable elements: if the mass movement is not broken but grows broader and broader; if self-organization is strengthened and generalized, rather than rapidly broken up; and if the revolutionaries succeed in overcoming their weakness and isolation, and forge thousands of new bonds with the masses on the basis of an extension and generalization of genuine, lived experiences of the united

front (rather than that propagandistic caricature which consists of demanding that the reformist leaderships give an answer in order to expose them in words). This road does not provide a guarantee of victory; but it is the only chance there is.

Notes

1*. This interview was conducted by *Critique Communiste,* a theoretical journal edited by members of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International, without being an official party organ. The interviewer was Henri Wéber, and the text appeared in **Critique Communiste**, No.8/9, September-December 1976.

1. Daniel Bensaïd, Carlos Rossi, Charles-André Udry, **Portugal: la révolution en marche**, Paris 1975.

2. The *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria* fused in 1974 with the Basque organization *Euzkadi ta Azkatasuna VI*. The joint organization, like the *Liga Comunista*, is a sympathizing group of the Fourth International: the two have a perspective of fusion. The *Organización Internacionalista Comunista de España*, a group with strength mainly in Euskadi, is also drawing closer to the *LCR-ETA VI*, and fusion negotiations are in progress.