

THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKERS' REVOLUTION IN THE SOVIET UNION OUTLINE OF A SOCIALIST CRITIQUE

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Mansoor Hekmat and Iraj Azarin, who were themselves founding members of the Communist Party of Iran, left the CPI along with other members of its leadership (the political bureau of the CPI) in November 1991 to found the Worker-communist Party of Iran. (The Communiqué on the formation of the Worker-communist Party of Iran is reprinted at the end of this interview.)

THE KEY ISSUES IN THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE

Mansoor Hekmat

I shall begin by making some general remarks on the subject we are to present today. The viewpoint whose outline we are to present here contains an outlook which does not follow in the tradition of the radical Left, and which therefore requires a great deal of efforts to establish its validity. That is particularly so because those who set out to deal with the Soviet question from a radical viewpoint are generally influenced with the already existing critiques presented by different trends within the radical Left. Our argument has fundamental differences with such interpretations, and in order to elucidate it more clearly we will have to constantly bring out the distinctions between it and the current radical notions. These theses are in our view deductions which a tendency belonging to worker communism can make, on the basis of its general viewpoint, on the Soviet experience. In passing let us remind that what the expression "worker communism" intends to convey is nothing but an emphasis on the social origin of Marxism and communism, viz. the working class.

Unfortunately, communism has today, more than ever, assumed the features of a school of thought, whereas both practically, in a good part of its history, and theoretically, as far as its relation to Marxism is concerned, it is a *social* movement. It is the movement of a social class aimed at bringing about actual changes in society. This social-class point of departure is not something which one should only consider when passing from the theory of Marxism to party and political practice but is also a concept which should become an integral part of our current

theoretical outlook towards various issues. In the so-called radical esoteric Marxism, the working class is an abstract category, and so are socialism and class struggle. However, in real Marxism, that is in worker communism, these categories refer to concrete social-historical relations and phenomena. Our critique of the experience of the workers' revolution in Russia is the critique of a real historical process promoted by active social forces, and as such it must therefore begin by regarding and assessing this phenomenon in terms of its objective dynamism and the movement of social forces present at the time. That is why we believe we have serious differences with what has been internationally recognised as the radical critique of the Soviet experience. Our critique does not follow in the current tradition of the radical left, which is under the illusion that to the degree that it succeeds to point out the contrasts between the actual experience and its own preconceived tenets, to the degree that it succeeds to deny the proletarian character of different aspects of the Russian revolution, to the same degree it has come closer to orthodox Marxism, or has presented a more "profound" critique of the subject at issue. From the viewpoint of worker communism one cannot deal with the Soviet experience with the same laxity as the "radical" critics of the Bolshevik revolution within Left Communism, the New Left, and so on treat it. This experience is the outcome of a class numbering in millions. A class which embarked on this practice with the belief that it was striving for its class emancipatory interests. For several decades, the most advanced working-class parties and organisations had tried to bring about this revolution. It was a revolution which left its imprint not on the fate of the workers' movement alone, but the whole of contemporary world. Such an experience cannot be judged simply with the criterion of the ideological purity and theoretical orthodoxy of its leadership; as if a flaw in this suffices to wipe out the whole experience.

The class practice of the working class can only be countered and nullified by the great social forces of other classes. Theoretical impurities and incompatibility with pre-conceived patterns and tenets do not on their own justify any attempt to deny such an immense objective social experience. What one has to show is this: under what specific circumstances and by what material and social forces the immense rising of the Russian working class was eventually defeated.

Thus, although our critique of the Russian experience may not seem "radical" enough to the present radical left, in our own view it presents the most radical critique of the Soviet experience. In fact, one of the cardinal points in our argument is that the radical critiques have so far represented nothing but an esoteric reductionism, on the one hand, and a *radical* democratism on the other. The fact is that a truly radical critique can only be a proletarian *socialist* one, and it is such a critique whose outline we are to present here today.

DEMOCRATIC OR SOCIALIST CRITIQUE

By putting forward the present theses we intend to present a socialist critique of the Soviet experience. I emphasize the word *socialist* since I believe that previous critiques for the most part are not *socialist*, but are in essence a democratic criticism which has been presented in

various ways in radical forms. There is a whole range of issues which constitutes the analytical base of these critiques, issues such as the party deviations, the theoretical and ideological incorrect outlooks and weaknesses in the party, the post-revolutionary state structure, the performance of the Soviet government in the international arena, and so on. But it is imperative to understand that even the most radical of the democratic critiques not only fail to provide an answer to the most controversial problem in the debate over the Soviet experience, namely: *why was a socialist society not built in the Soviet Union?*, but, consequently, they even cannot produce a materialist critique to the very issues which they choose to pinpoint. In these critiques it usually seems as if such deviations, like a viral disease, are conceived somewhere, aggravate, and eventually corrupt and degenerate everything. But in fact the whole merit of historical materialism and of Marxism's methodological achievement, is its ability to lay bare the *material* bases of superstructural developments, i.e., intellectual, political, legal, administrative, etc., developments of society. When a viewpoint fails to point out the material and economic bases of such developments, its analysis of these very developments will naturally be deficient and inadequate.

Central to the socialist critique is how the soviet economy developed after the revolution. This is the quintessence of Marxism, and its rejection represents, in our view, a non-Marxist standpoint. To reject the issue of *economic transformation* of the society in the aftermath of the revolution as the issue which must be examined in relation to the Soviet experience, amounts to neglecting or omitting the question altogether. Why?

Firstly, the socialist revolution is basically an *economic* revolution, and only on this basis can it be a social revolution. The fact that in the Marxism of our time this point has fallen into oblivion, the fact that Marxism has been reduced from the theory of social revolution, to the "science" of how to conquer the political power, is itself an indication of the increasing use made of Marxism by non-proletarian layers of society as a veil for non-revolutionary, non-socialist interests. Fundamental to the social revolution is the revolutionary transformation of the economy; not in a quantitative sense viz. a change in the quantity of production, but in the sense that Marx uses the term, i.e., the transformation of *the social relations of production* -which will also definitely bring about a rapid promotion in the productive power of society. For, such issues as democracy, the abolition of legal, political, cultural, and even economic differences among individuals, social strata and even nations, none are novel ideas particular to Marxism. These are the old ideals of mankind. What gives Marxism a special status and significance is that it links these ideals, these demands, with the overthrow of a certain *economic order*, with that of the given relations of production which create the working class with a certain position in the social production. Socialism and communism are themselves the product of the struggle of this class against the present class-structured, exploitative relations in the existing society, i.e., the capitalist. This struggle will have reached its goal only when bourgeois ownership are abolished and common ownership of the means of production is established. If we take this away from Marxism, nothing novel and special remains of it. Marxism clearly proves that in the absence of such a change in the *economic* base of society those ideals will lack the material basis for their

definite realization. It is therefore clear that from the point of view of the working class, and from the standpoint of the revolutionary transformation of society, the criterion for judging any socialist revolution (including the October Revolution) is its success or failure to achieve this goal.

Therefore, the discussion about the Russian revolution and its consequences can and should be focused on this question: why and under what circumstances, did the conquest of political power by the working class *not lead* to the radical transformation of the capitalist foundation of society. This is the gist of proletarian socialist critique of the experience of the Russian revolution as a working-class revolution.

Thus, right from the beginning, we stress the profound (and in our view, class) difference which exists between our outlook and those outlooks which base their analyses on the "impossibility" of the economic transformation of the Russian society after the seizure of power by the working class; be it formulated as the "necessity of the world revolution", the "backwardness of Russia" or else. Because such outlooks basically deny the very *raison d'être* of the working-class revolution in Russia.

Secondly, the economic transformation of Russia is central to the socialist critique because the political and ideological degeneration of the revolution (such as the bureaucratisation of the state structure, the distortion of the class orientation and practice of the party, difficulties and deviations in the domestic and international policies of the Soviet state, and the cultural and ethical retreats made after the initial progress of the revolution in these fields, etc.) can only be explained through examining that question. In our view the causes underlying these undesirable political and ideological (superstructural *tout court*) changes can be correctly analyzed only if one examines the factors which prevented the revolutionary transformation of the *economic relations* in Russia. The conquest of political power and its consolidation by the working class is the first step in the proletarian revolution. But once the working class conquers this power, it must, as Engels emphasises, use it to "keep down its capitalist enemies and carry out that *economic revolution* without which the *whole victory* must end in a defeat and in a massacre of the working class like that after the Paris Commune." (F. Engels, on the occasion of Karl Marx's Death, in *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*, Moscow, 1974, p.173, emphases mine)

As we can see this is a simple and obvious principle in Marxism. Of course in a Marxism which has not been tampered with and falsified by non-proletarian classes, and whose clear and vivid principles have not been encapsulated in the abstruse and meaningless elaborations of the non-proletarian Left. It is all too clear. If the workers cannot transform the economic base of the society after the seizure of power, their revolution will not succeed, and will eventually lead to the massacre of the working class itself. Engels emphasises that the course of events after the Paris Commune has vindicated this in practice. What happened in Russia has in fact been already said by Engels in the above sentence. The only difference is that this massacre of the class was not carried out by the troops of the enemy openly and at one definite date nor did it happen after the occupation of a particular city, but took place through a long and intricate process and in different fronts. Nevertheless, the outcome was still the same: the defeat and massacre of the

working class. the scale of this failure was no less than that of the Paris Commune. What we are witnessing today is the result of the failure of the victorious proletariat in Russia to carry out the revolutionary transformation necessary in the economic foundation of society, and to accomplish its economic revolution. The political, ideological and administrative degeneration of the Russian revolution was the result of this failure. This is a crucial element in our outlook. This is the fundamental lesson of the October Revolution for us. This is the point of departure for a socialist critique of the Soviet experience.

I would like to add that we have a serious methodological difference with those outlooks which in examining the Soviet experience begin with the rise of the bureaucracy, the political and theoretical degeneration of the party and other observations related to the superstructural development of the society and revolution. In our opinion, these issues and observations are the *effects* of the interruption and degeneration of the Russian revolution and not the cause of it. These are part of the reality which must be explained and not the tools for its analysis. To explain the defeat of the revolution with these factors amounts to explaining the effects with the effects. It is just like trying to explain a disease with its symptoms and effects.

What I have said so far should have clarified our main point of departure in this discussion. It is now time to elaborate the theses in greater details.

THE SOCIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The October Revolution took shape in a definite set of social circumstances. It was a moment in the history and the course of movement of the capitalist society in general and that of the Russian society in particular. To explain the October Revolution within the limited framework of the workers' and communist movement, i.e. as a stage in the development of this movement or as its inevitable outcome is a flawed attempt. Both the development and occurrence of the revolution, and its subsequent process of degeneration should be considered within the context of the Russian society and of its contemporary history, in which not only the subjective and active element of the revolution but the whole set of social and class relations are included. In other words it is not only the working class, its aims and ideals which are considered, but the positions, demands and the course of movement of all major classes in society. Had the socialist revolution in Russia become victorious and a new socialist society established, then we would have seen a fundamental break in the history of the social development of the Russian society. A certain social setting with all its material foundations, processes and forces would have been negated and a new setting would have formed on the basis of a new dynamism, and new ideals, objectives and preferences. But *the defeat of the revolution* places it in the context of the historical development of the pre-revolutionary society and in continuance with it. It is therefore clear that the question cannot be simply posed: "either the victory of the working class or its defeat." The October Revolution was a great historical event. Its victory would certainly have been epoch-making. But its defeat should have also found its historical place in the course of movement of the old society. In other words, the defeated workers' revolution occupies

nevertheless a very significant moment and juncture in the social history of Russia. The defeat of the Russian revolution is, however, a moment in the development of the *bourgeois* society in Russia.

The social perception of the Russian revolution, namely, understanding it within a *social* framework, has a very important place in our analysis. Later, I shall deal with more concrete deductions from this point. But, here, it is necessary to point out briefly the importance of this kind of approach to the understanding and analysis of the question of Soviet Union.

Revolution, even a revolution with the magnificence of the October Revolution, is an event in *society*. Society is that immense and all-embracing phenomenon which necessitates and creates the revolution, determines its extent and makes its laws of movement. Essentially, it is by analysing *society* that a revolution can be examined and understood. This point seems too obvious and simple. But to take *society* as a reference point for social relations in order to explain the actions of man, is a corner-stone of Marxism. This simple Marxist tenet is too often overlooked in the elaborations of the Left radicals of the Soviet question. Whatever the outcome of the revolution, it was not fitting for its ideals. But it was the outcome of the impact of the revolution *on the Russian society*. Revolution does not write off society in order to institute its own independent mechanism and dynamism as the basis for the movement of history. On the contrary, it is itself the result of social mechanisms and dynamisms. For instance, When one suddenly discovers a new ruling class on the basis of "bureaucracy" in the Soviet Union, one is turning the society into an outcome of the revolution. In Marxist theory, revolution is a stage in the conflict and struggle of social classes. But in the non-social and non-materialist conception of the radical Left, social classes are created by the revolution. Or when one arbitrarily changes the fundamental class antagonism on the morrow of the 1917 revolution to that between the proletariat and marginal strata, one is subordinating the society to the revolution. In Marxism, revolution is the reflection of the rift and conflict between the main social classes which have come about as a result of the dominant production relations. For the radical Left, social classes are moved back and forth, omitted or created by the will of the revolution. Of course, a victorious socialist revolution which has transformed the *economic relations*, will also transform the society and with it the social classes. But the whole creative power of the socialist revolution arises from the transformation of the *economic relations* and one who talks about not a victorious revolution but an unfinished, unsuccessful or defeated revolution, one who admits that no revolutionary transformation was carried out in the production relations, he cannot then write off the already existing society in his analysis and explain the revolution *on its own*. This is subjectivism and turning one's back to Marx's historical materialism.

A *social* perception of the October Revolution allows us to remain faithful to historical materialism in the examination of the dynamism of the movement of the revolution; not to overlook decisive social factors such as production relations, real class antagonisms, and the historical continuity of these factors; and in particular to be able to recognise the background to the emergence of the revolution, and also to pursue in the concrete course of its development

after October the main social logjams, key questions of the class struggle, and the real movement of the society.

In this part it is my intention to stress these points. In particular I shall deal with the question central to the revolution in Russia, that is what made the October Revolution possible, and was decisive in shaping its ultimate destiny. This question, in my view, is the confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in Russia during 4-5 decades before the revolution and a decade after it with regard to the destiny of the Russian society and the perspective for its development and growth.

The history of Russia in the decades before the revolution was greatly influenced by the emergence and development of the two main classes of the capitalist society, i.e., the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Two classes which found themselves in confrontation not only with each other but also with the whole existing social, economic and political setting. Two classes challenged the backward Tsarist Russia and matured in it. Both classes placed before the existing backward reality the image of a "developed, free and industrial Russia". In the beginning of the twentieth century it was obvious to everyone that Russia would be facing serious upheavals. It was evident that Russia must enter a new era. The economic, political and cultural backwardness of Russia in comparison with other European countries had become a source of serious social criticism there.

But what played a major role in the subsequent development of the Russian society was the simultaneous criticism of its backwardness from two distinct class viewpoints. Two alternatives were placed before the Russian society. The alternatives of two distinct and opposing social classes. Capitalism and socialism were two distinct perspectives which were placed not merely against each other, but primarily, together and more fundamentally, against the then Russian society. The whole Russian bourgeoisie wanted to join the mainstream of capitalist civilization whose products were then being exhibited delightfully by the European bourgeoisie. Whilst the Russian proletariat, under the influence of the Russian social democracy, was increasingly calling for socialism.

The social realities of Russia, its connection to the community of European countries, its power as a colonial state and its military strength, and its economic potential, all provided the historical possibility for the realization of both alternatives. Objectively, the backward Russia of the close of nineteenth century *could become* a capitalist or a socialist Russia in the twentieth century. Economic progress was possible through both alternatives. The social forces for these alternatives were already trying to mobilise and gather force. The historical perspectives of these two alternatives were already penetrating the pores of the Russian society and forming the bases of a revolutionary consciousness. Here, it is necessary to note several points:

1- The objective existence of social, economic, political and cultural backwardness meant that for a long time the "common" ground shared by these two distinct class alternatives would be prominent and stressed upon. Socialism and capitalism bear no resemblance to each other, but if feudal relations, Tsarism, absolutism and ignorance are the dominant features of the society, then in both alternatives the modernist element becomes inevitably predominant and is

emphasised on; both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie become the enemies of this economic and political backwardness; and these common aspects not only become evident, but are consciously emphasised, particularly by the socialist movement, to the extent that the Russian social democracy, contrary to Narodnism, considers a degree of capitalist development vital and desirable for the movement of society towards socialism. Both in the political and in cultural controversies, the social democracy finds itself many times aligned with the protagonists of the bourgeois alternative. Conformity with the debates of Legal Marxism on the Russian economy, the alignment of, in particular the Mensheviks with the Russian liberal bourgeoisie, and the continuous admiration of the leaders of social democracy, including the Bolsheviks, for being the champions of bourgeois democracy in the Russian history, are all evidence to this assertion. These alignments, although inevitable at certain historical junctures, nevertheless in effect retard the process of an all-sided differentiation of the proletarian perspective from that of the bourgeoisie, and bring about their negative results at a later time - in my opinion particularly after the October Revolution.

2- It is obvious that the Russian social democracy was not a product of the economic and social modernism. It was not a Russian product or a Russian phenomenon. Although, communism today is in many countries truly the direct manifestation of the indigenous national reformism whose aspirations are moulded in phrases borrowed from Marxism, in the case of Russia the link between social democracy and the international proletarian camp was profound and its international and class attributes were quite clear. Nevertheless, social democracy provided a body for national modernism and Russian reformism which inevitably drew to itself and channelled a large portion of the anti-Tsarist protest, in particular that which came from the petty bourgeois strata. In its development, the Russian social democracy continuously faced the fact that national reformism was being produced and reproduced in its ranks and was becoming a trend within it. The Mensheviks were the real and material embodiment of this social tendency.

But Menshevism was not the only vehicle for the expression of this tendency and persuasions. The struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the struggle between socialism and capitalism, was not limited to the struggle between the Russian working-class social democracy and the open representatives and political parties of the bourgeoisie. This struggle also constituted part of the internal dynamism of the social democracy itself and led to various splits and conflicts even within the ranks of the Bolsheviks over decisive tactics and ultimately over decisive controversies on the perspectives of the Russian revolution. The question of what the attitude of social democracy should be towards the revolutionary provisional government and the split of Menshevism and Bolshevism over this issue, the outbreak of the First World War and different stands taken by the Russian social democracy, the occurrence of the October Revolution and the standpoints of different fractions within the Bolshevik party itself on the course of its development, all bear witness to the internalisation of this class struggle. This conflict exists to varying degrees in all workers' parties. But in the case of Russia, the crucial point in this conflict was the correspondence of fundamental class perspectives on the future of Russia and its economic and social progress.

3- Thus, it is clear that the history of Russian social democracy, the history of workers' and communist revolutionism, is at the same time the history of its break from the influence of the bourgeois perspective of Russian nationalism and modernism; a break conditioned by its common historical stand with the bourgeoisie against Tsarism, and the backward economic relations.

The Russian social democracy had come to existence not only as a vehicle for the expression of the anti-capitalist protest of the proletariat, but also as a channel for the populist protest and modernism. The Russian social democracy, as a social movement, was not only the representative of proletarian socialism and internationalism in Russia, but also a pole of attraction for the "revolutionary Russian society", itself a historical offspring of nationalist and democratic protests. But the course of development of the Russian society and its class polarisation as well as the theoretical and political refinement of Marxism in Russia could not leave social democracy unscathed and turn it as a whole into the advanced element of the social revolution. The history of Russian social democracy is at the same time the history of the separation of the proletariat and its perspective from the bourgeoisie and its perspective. This process of separation has its own historical moments and turning-points which we are all familiar with. Separation from Narodism and its critique as a non-proletarian popular socialism was the origin of the formation of the revolutionary social democracy. The debates of Bolshevism and Menshevism at the time of the 1905 revolution on the relation of the working class with political power in a bourgeois revolution and the attitude which the proletariat should take towards the liberal bourgeoisie, the polemics of the two factions on the characteristics of the proletarian party, the analysis of Bolshevism of the agrarian question and its understanding of the historical impacts of the Stolypin reaction on the economic fabric of Russia, and more importantly the position which the Bolsheviks took on WWI in which the revolutionary social democracy had to condemn most unequivocally nationalism and patriotism as an anti-worker tendency, all these make up moments at which the working class separated itself and its perspective from the bourgeois horizon, and as a force stood against it. This pattern of break is a fundamental and distinct foundation of Leninism. We were precisely referring to this point when we said earlier "Leninism was not represented in the economic debates of 1924-28"*. In other words, contrary to earlier periods, a decisive break did not happen between the proletarian and bourgeois perspectives at this most determining juncture in the Russian revolution, i.e. at a time when the fundamental task of the workers' revolution, the revolutionary transformation of capitalism, was being settled.

What we are emphasising here is that the class struggle in Russia was not from the very beginning the contest of two forces separated and distinct (intellectually, in political perspective and in their practical alternatives). It was not the struggle of two camps entirely demarcated and clearly deployed before each other. The class struggle in Russia involved a process in which the ranks of the proletariat were step by step separated from nationalism, liberalism and industrial modernism of the Russian bourgeoisie. As we said, the history of Russian social democracy bore

* A reference to a previous remark made by the author in another seminar on this topic.

witness to how the Russian proletariat under the leadership of Bolshevism cast aside the common beliefs of the "modernist" opposition, and acquired and took up its own independent ideas, perspectives and horizon on social and political issues, and how through it the encounter between those two alternatives for the future development of the Russian society became more prominent.

In spite of this, the gist of our argument is that whilst this separation had occurred completely in the ideological and political terrains, a corresponding thorough separation did not take place in the economic thinking, i.e., with regard to the perspective of the economic development of the post-Tsarist Russian society. There was no essential polemic before the 1917 revolution in which the economics of the post-revolutionary society was clarified. The specific outlook of the proletariat on economics was not concretised and discussed with the same vigour with which its specific political outlook had been deliberated and debated on, for instance, the question of the state, the imperialist war, democracy, etc.. It could be said that the concept of socialism, as a new economic relationship, and the notion of the abolition of private property are on their own quite sufficient to clarify this outlook. But the problem lies precisely here. The major features of socialism as predominantly conceived by the Russian social democracy and the international social democracy in general were the abolition of *private* property, the introduction of economic planning, the centralization of production and the growth of the productive forces. This is the essential content of the economic thinking of the Russian social democracy up to that moment. A thinking which revealed itself from the first draft of the programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party prepared by Plekhanov to the debates of 1924-28. It is interesting to note that this perception of the economics of socialism has been more or less preserved by the present reformist social democracy, that is by the heirs of the Second International, and constitutes the backbone of the bourgeoisie's formulation of socialism. In the understanding of the Russian social democracy, the fundamental tasks of socialism and of the proletarian revolution in the economic terrain were: the growth of the productive forces, the development of industry, and the foundation of a modern economy based on central planning. The reason behind such an understanding lies in the fact that essentially capitalism, as far as theoretical formulations on it are concerned, was criticised mainly for its "anarchy in production". It is only natural that with such a conception of capitalism, its anti-thesis is conceived to be an economic system which by the help of planning puts an end to this anarchy. The more fundamental task of socialism, i.e. the emergence of those *forms of ownership and economic control* which would negate the bourgeois ownership, *put an end to wage-labour*, overthrow capital in every form and *precisely through such a course of action* pave the way for the massive growth of the productive forces, received less attention. The concept of *common ownership and the abolition of wage-labour* in comparison with the notion of the development of productive forces and the building of a national economy was definitely driven to the side-lines. Of course, this understanding of the economic tasks of the workers' revolution and this conception of socialism, was a heritage of the Second International and of the technological determinism and evolutionism dominant in its system of thinking, and did not only reveal the theoretical state of Russian social democracy.

There were still many common points in the economic visions of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Economic modernism, industrial growth and even economic centralisation and the concept of planning could have become parts of the economic platform of the Russian big bourgeoisie which nevertheless had to strive hard to compensate for the backwardness of Russia, and to achieve it by resorting to methods different to those common in laissez-fair capitalism. I draw your attention to the fact that my argument here does not concern the presence or the absence of a certain document, pamphlet or book in which the more practical steps of workers' socialism in the economic terrain could have been expounded. The discussion is about the training of Russian advanced workers, be it partisan or non-partisan, with an alternative economic vision, and their immunisation against the bourgeois perspective for economic development. Such an education and upbringing was only possible through years of profound and extensive polemics and demarcations. Just like the process in which the imperialist patriotism of the Russian bourgeoisie was discredited in the eyes of the Russian workers. Or like the rich experiences which had helped to discredit liberalism and reformism before the Russian workers. But the *economic* alternative of the Russian bourgeoisie was left untouched and not criticised through these years.

As a matter of fact it was only later, when the issue of Russian economy and its course of development effectively became an urging question, that the common elements between the old ideals of the Russian anti-Tsarist bourgeoisie, namely modernism, industrialisation, etc., and the economic expectations of the advanced rank of Russian workers, an issue so far uncriticised, made their presence felt. At the historical and decisive juncture of the '20s it was these common elements which blocked the forward march of the proletarian revolution in the economic terrain, and led the proletarian revolution onto the main road of capitalist development in Russia. I sum up my discussion so far. The twentieth century placed a fundamental question before the Russian society in general, and that was how to overcome its economic backwardness and catch up with the industrial and production growth which the western Europe was undergoing. The social forces in Russia were set in motion around this fundamental question. The two main emerging classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, together arose against the *ancien regime*, and at the same time stood before each other as two opposing forces with two antagonistic perspectives. Given the conditions of Russia, both alternatives enjoyed the historical possibility for their realisation. Both alternatives could open the way for the economic progress of the Russian society. Bolshevism and Leninism brought the working class to the field as an independent force in opposition to both the bourgeoisie and Tsarism. This class independence on the question of political power and even of the structure of the state was clearly achieved and became an organic and established feature of the Russian proletarian movement. That much independence allowed the Russian workers under the leadership of Bolshevism to disrupt the plans for the bourgeois-democratic development of the political and state superstructure in Russia and to establish the independent power of workers through a proletarian revolution. But the populist aspirations for overcoming the backwardness of the national economy of Russia, and the defective economic thoughts predominant in the international social democracy deprived the

working class and its vanguard party, the Bolshevik party, of forming at the most decisive moment in the Russian revolution its independent rank on the fundamental question of the Russian society, i.e., the social mode of production and economic development. "The revolution became a victim of confusion in its ^{economic} aims." This confusion represented not a theoretical or intellectual problem but a social reality. The Russian society was not sufficiently polarised on the economic perspective for its development. The workers' party, lacking a clear vision for the revolutionary transformation of the production relations, and under the economic and political pressures of the capitalist system both domestically and internationally, retreated to the common grounds of its economic stands with the perspective of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary transformation of the capitalist system gave way to its reform through the extension of state ownership and planning for the accumulation of capital and the division of labour. With a halt at this stage, the workers' revolution allowed all of its political gains to be wrested back gradually and under the pressure of the realities and the needs of the bourgeois economy. Leninism, the class independence of the proletariat at every front and battle, was not represented at the time when the future of the economic system of the Russian society was being settled. "Socialism in one country" was the banner for the retreat to the interests of national-bourgeois economy in Russia. A banner which was hoisted precisely due to the absence of a Leninist banner for the building of *socialism* in Russia, as a "superior" economic system based on *common ownership and the abolition of wage-labour*. The building of *socialism* in Russia, in the true and Marxist sense of the term, not only was *possible* but was also *imperative* for the continuation and consolidation of the revolution. The workers' revolution was defeated in the face of its *economic* tasks.

From these reasoning we can draw several conclusions. Firstly, we emphasise once more the fundamental role of economic transformation in Russia after the revolution. The class struggle in Russia took place in the context of given social relations and over fundamental problems which resulted from the immanent contradictions and antagonisms of these relations. The same economic development which brought about the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in Russia, also presented the objective necessity for the transformation of the existing economic relations. The fate of the Russian revolution was ultimately determined by the way in which this fundamental social-historical necessity was dealt with. This was the essential link in the development of the proletarian revolution as it also was the main issue for the bourgeois counterrevolution. The economic outcome of the revolution turned out to be the imposition of certain reforms on the development of capitalism in Russia, and not a socialist transformation. The root of this failure must be sought in the lack of a material and social demarcation between the economic perspective of the working class and the industrialist and national horizon of the Russian bourgeoisie.

Secondly, if we accept that the struggle of social forces in Russia prior to the revolution was being polarised over two alternative class policies on the future development of Russia, i.e., the industrialist-nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie and the socialist policy of the proletariat, then it becomes evident why the fate of the workers' revolution in Russia, too, should be assessed on

the basis of the continuity of this fundamental class concurrence after the revolution. The political victory of the working class in Russia, the expropriation of the big bourgeoisie, both politically and economically, was not tantamount to an end in the *social* and class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie for the determination of the destiny of the Russian society according to their patterns and alternatives. Since, still both alternatives were historically possible and had grounds for realisation. The capitalist development of the Russian society, the attainment of economic power under the capitalist system, was still a real possibility and a viable perspective in society. (As it was later vindicated, the economic development of Russia did actually advance under the capitalist system.) It is therefore clear that the discussion is about showing which social and class forces would become the standard-bearers of either of these two historically realisable alternatives. The truth of the matter is that in the 20's under specific circumstances, mainly the absence of an organised proletarian rank advocating a real socialist path, this bourgeois perspective was represented by the official line in the Communist Party itself, namely the Stalin's line.

We do not therefore accept this schematic and unreal assumption that on the morrow of the 1917 revolution the name of the bourgeoisie was struck out of the list of active social forces in the society, and the bourgeois alternative for the development of the Russian society lost all its relevance. To understand the social framework of the October Revolution, means to understand the *continuity of the class struggle before and after the revolution*, that is to grasp this point that on the morrow of the October revolution the proletarian and bourgeois perspectives for the transformation of the Russian society were still confronting each other, and as the key problems of the class struggle could still rally around themselves real forces in society. Even in the current interpretation of the radical Left it is emphasised that the Stalin faction represented in the final analysis *the Russian nationalism*. But what this left fails to understand is that this nationalism was not merely an ideological phenomenon or a superstructural tendency. This nationalism was the banner of the bourgeoisie and the symbol of its material power in society. This nationalism had a certain economic content and that was none other than the promotion of the national economy of Russia to the level of the advanced capitalist economy of the Europe of the time. The material power of the bourgeoisie by far exceeds the physical presence of the bourgeois in management posts or governmental offices. The bourgeoisie disseminates its interests and ideas as the ideals of the entire society. Bourgeois thinking becomes an immense force which survives in the "spontaneous" mentality and inclinations of millions of people, who have directly no common interest with the bourgeoisie. One who with the 1917 revolution writes off the bourgeoisie from the political arena commits the most flagrant reductionism and the worst kind of departure from the comprehensive and *social* understanding of Marxism of the class relations in a capitalist society. The October Revolution brought about many great changes, to the advantage of the working class, in the balance of forces which existed between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. But it did not obliterate, nor could it obliterate, the essence of this class confrontation. A confrontation which then acted as the focus of the class struggle in society and which could not be eliminated without an immense economic transformation. Therefore, we have differences with

those viewpoints for which the triumph of the October Revolution and the establishment of the workers' state, is sufficient justification to consider that the dynamism of the Russian society was based on something other than the class struggle of *the proletariat and the bourgeoisie*; viewpoints which become stunned by the contradictions of the proletariat with the minor classes of the society, and which consider that the threat to socialism came not from capitalism but from the petty commodity-production and the like. In our opinion such consideration of the problems of the Russian society after the revolution is, from the point of view of Marxist theory, incorrect and mechanistic, and politically, naive. We are not denying the importance of the contradictions between the proletariat and its interests and the aspirations of other social strata, but we stress the continuity of class dynamism in the movement of a society, that is the predominance of the confrontation between labour and capital, the worker and the capitalist, in both the periods preceding and following the revolution, and lay emphasis on the influence of this dynamism even on other social conflicts. With the political and economic expropriation of the Russian big bourgeoisie, the social solution of this class is not eliminated, but loses its direct human agencies and must thus temporarily find new human and class agents. In other words, if on the morrow of the October the proletariat is seeking its *socialist* alternative, what is happening on the other side of the equation is the arrival of class forces and social strata which attempt (no doubt with the blessing and support of international capital) to act as the defender of the interests of the bourgeois industrialist alternative in Russia. In the context of such a fundamental class contradiction, the peasants, the petty-bourgeois, the middlemen, the bureaucrats, etc., could only act as the human and class agents for continuing and preserving the *bourgeois* alternative, and not as the standard-bearers and the motive force of the alternatives of the newly-emerging marginal strata. It was only in this capacity which these marginal strata could essentially have any *decisive* social role and not as the defenders of their marginal interests. The social struggle only takes form on the basis of the those class alternatives which have a universal and historical possibility and significance. This contest in our era is the contest of socialism and capitalism, the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. All social classes and strata must be polarised around this struggle and in the final analysis play no socially decisive role except in connection with this fundamental contest.

The other implication of this argument is that once the proletariat failed to realise its alternative, the Russian society had no other way for its development except that provided by the bourgeois alternative. Thus we do not accept the argument for the establishment of a new mode of production or an intermediary economy based on petty-commodity forms of production and so on. Nor do we accept the bureaucracy as the main social class in a society. These should be considered as the forms of continuation of the capitalist society and of the rule of capital. On paper, one can define any new mode of production or any new ruling class which one chooses, and classify the reality in whatever arbitrary array of tables one wishes to, but history only moves on the basis of its own material possibilities and social grounds, which are the product of real social classes. The defeat of the proletarian revolution, in the context of a *capitalist* society, means the continuation of *capitalism*, albeit in new forms. It does not mean the

emergence of a new mode of production whose motive forces, historical background and social bases did not have any objective existence at the height of the struggle between socialism and capitalism. The advocates of such viewpoints not only should explain the origins and the forms of emergence of such a new mode of production, and the way in which it superceded the socialist movement, but should also explain how it overwhelmed the bourgeois alternative, and the really existing capitalism. How could a task which the proletarian revolution failed to accomplish, i.e., the overthrow of capital, be done by a social "stratum", from the side and without any resistance on the part of the *bourgeoisie*!

SOME REMARKS ON THE THEORETICAL PREMISES OF THE FINAL DEFEAT OF THE REVOLUTION

Certainly one of the most important reasons responsible for the inability of the Russian working class to decisively conclude its revolution, was the lack of theoretical preparedness on the part of the advanced element of the class. Below, I shall deal with the significance of this weakness. But initially I should point out that my argument is not over the "scientific" mastery of Marxism by the Bolshevik party or over its theoretical competence. I am not talking of theory as an independent realm and as something in its own right. With lack of theoretical preparedness, I mean confusion in the political vision of the working class. The Russian working class came to the fore as the leader for the revolutionary transformation of society. But the extent of this transformation, and the way in which the society would be driven forward, was dependent upon what, in the words of its vanguards, the working class had presented to the society about itself, and its aims and preferences. In its practice, the working class does not go beyond the perspective which the vanguard of the class, i.e., its political party and leaders, have placed before it. It is quite possible that the working class comes to the fore leading the social protest, but it may happen that its perspectives for struggle do not go beyond measures which aim to achieve democratic changes, national sovereignty, or the abolition of racial discrimination, and so on. Theoretical preparedness of the advanced element of the class does not merely mean its theoretical maturity and mastery. But essentially it refers to its ability to arm the working class at every juncture and period with a correct perception and image of its class aims in distinction to the aims of other social tendencies. The working-class party may have mastered the Marxist theory, but it could well have failed to train the workers, through a theoretical struggle at the social level, with a profound critical attitude towards nationalism, religion or the oppression of women. The theoretical preparedness of the socialist movement of the proletariat is not merely achieved by the scientific understanding of the Marxist theory by the working-class party, and it cannot be merely reduced to the existing theoretical literature of this movement. The point is the training of the actual leaders of the class with clear perceptions in the heat of class struggle, and in particular at its decisive turning points. The question is about turning theoretical principles into a part of the political and practical consciousness of the vanguard workers and the local

leaders of the class. This can only be achieved if the interests of non-proletarian tendencies are challenged by these class principles in the real conflicts which arise in society.

The Bolsheviks succeeded to arm the Russian worker in many respects with an independent perspective. It is interesting to note that in finding theoretical faults in the Bolsheviks after the seizure of power, the Radical Left pinpoints areas which constituted the strength of Bolshevism, namely the Marxist conception of internationalism and proletarian democracy. Incidentally it should be said that these areas were domains in which the Bolsheviks not only represented theoretical orthodoxy against the whole socialism of their time, but they succeeded turning this orthodoxy into a characteristic of the Russian workers. At the most crucial and decisive moments, at the outbreak of an imperialist war which drove the entire international social democracy onto supporting their own bourgeoisie, it was the Bolsheviks who not only gave meaning to internationalism but also in practice led the Russian workers into a violent confrontation against their own bourgeoisie. As regards the principle of proletarian democracy, it was the Bolsheviks who through the Soviets resuscitated the experience of the Commune, and established among the Russian workers the feasibility of the workers' state based on the Soviets. In order to turn these principles into a part of the self-consciousness of the Russian working class, the Bolsheviks promoted and led decisive theoretical battles from the beginning of the twentieth century to the time of the October Revolution.

My argument about the lack of theoretical preparedness on the part of the Bolsheviks refers precisely to those domains which irrespective of whether as Marxist theoreticians they had scientific mastery, had failed to draw the theoretical and ideological demarcation of the working class against the bourgeoisie. I refer to domains which by then had not yet become the major arena for an ideological struggle between classes, and in which the distinctive political identity of the proletariat had not yet acquired prominence. The theoretical flaws of a current, of a party, including the Bolshevik party can be numerous. It may be possible to show that the Bolsheviks had flaws as regards the question of women, inner-party arrangements, or the right of nations to self-determination, etc. But our argument is that these defects, if they ever existed, never became a decisive theoretical factor in marking the eventual fate of the revolution. The fundamental unpreparedness, in the social sense I explained earlier, was on the issue of defining the economic tasks of the proletariat and elaborating the demands of the proletariat for the transformation of the economic relations in the Russian society. In other words, the mere existence of a theoretical "deviation" is not sufficient to explain the failure of a party and a social movement. Every theoretical flaw does not hold a parallel importance in the realm of practice, albeit that any of them could become a decisive inhibitive factor at a particular moment. It is the social and historical circumstances and the characteristics of the decisive junctures in the class struggle which determine the place of any given "theoretical deviation". We should point out those areas in the outlook of Bolshevism and of the Russian proletariat after the 1917 revolution which had caused their inability to face the real and decisive questions for the concrete circumstances of the time, and not look for their "deviation" and "departure" from certain theoretical principles. I emphasise this since in my opinion it is of no virtue that one becomes

scrupulous about the history of ideas in the Bolshevik party and wherever Bukharin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Stalin or even Lenin have made a point or put forward a policy which has theoretical flaws, magnifies those errors and adds them to his list for the causes of the defeat of the workers' revolution in Russia. The attitude of a certain party leader on the question of inner-party democracy, the behaviour of Stalin towards his colleagues, and his attitude on the national question, a certain speech by Zinoviev to the Comintern, etc., do not contribute equally to the making of the theoretical premises important for the defeat of the revolution. In my view, a party whose internal democracy was supposedly defective, a party which made zig-zags in its attitude on the national question, could also emerge honourably and at the head of the socialist proletariat from the debates on the issue of "socialism in one country", provided that its economic outlook was sufficiently clear and socialist, and was adequately expressed and represented in confrontation with the bourgeoisie and its tendencies. We find no virtue in turning the history of the degeneration of the workers' revolution in Russia into the history of theoretical slips in the Bolshevik party, and thereby bringing the moment of defeat ever closer to 1917. One should find the decisive juncture and the decisive theoretical weakness. A party which emerged from *historically decisive* moments with pride (as the Bolsheviks did from the period of seizure of political power, despite whatever shortcoming), would also have rectified its minor defects in its forward movement.

In my opinion the fundamental theoretical inadequacy was the lack of elaboration of the economic aims and methods of the socialist proletariat. This inadequacy had certain historical causes. As I said, the economic modernism of the Russian bourgeoisie, the idea of "building a prosperous and industrial Russia", had escaped criticism for a long period. The question of which specific production relations and which economic forms should be established in Russia, was overshadowed by the criticism of the existing backwardness. The constant emphasis of the party leaders in the post-revolutionary period that "we must learn from the bourgeoisie", is a witness to the fact that the question of economic transformation was for them identified with the quantitative aspect of production and the improvement in the means of production, and not with the revolutionisation of the production relations, i.e., the sphere in which there is nothing to learn from the bourgeoisie and in which the proletariat must in particular pursue its own method *in opposition* to the economic practice of the bourgeoisie, both in Russia and in Germany.

But, the roots of this short-sightedness in the attitude towards the economic tasks of the proletariat must not be searched in Russia itself. Perhaps the more important factor was the entire education of the social democracy and the Second International in this domain. The vision and outlook of the Second International had influenced the thinking of the Russian social democracy for a long time.

The Second International produced a certain version of Marxism, and it was this version which in turn gave ground for nationalist interpretations. It was the leaders of this International which after a while themselves turned into advocates of their own bourgeoisie in WWI, and now it is the social democratic parties which in their evolution have further developed their nationalism by producing national economic and political strategies aimed at securing the domestic economy

of their own countries. For a long time the Russian social democracy understood and recognised Marxist principles in the tradition of this International and in the words of its leaders. The break of the Bolsheviks from the theoretical and practical influence of the Second International was a step-by-step *process*. This process had decisive historical moments. But what is important to point out is that this process was not completely and decisively finalised by 1917. For instance, if we consider the economic version of both the Stalin and the Trotsky current of socialism and capitalism, i.e., the version which more or less understands state capitalism and state ownership of the means of production as being tantamount to socialist and common ownership, then the extent of the intellectual influence of the Second International becomes revealing.

Two main components in the thinking of the Second International can be mentioned which ranked as the most fundamental theoretical weaknesses in the Marxist movement of the time, and which furnished the important bases for the theoretical disarming of communism in facing the issue of how to develop the October Revolution at the close of the '20s. The first component was contrived by reducing the theory of proletarian revolution to a theoretical explanation for the gradual and evolutionist development of society, i.e., the outlook which bases itself on the development of productive forces and which turns this notion into the driving force of history. The outlook which considers social changes as being the plain and simple reflections of the quantitative and qualitative growth of the means of production, and which abstracts from the role of the class struggle and the practice of mankind in the progress of social history. The human factor, the revolutionary agent and the concept of revolutionary periods do not have any determining place in these thoughts, and thus fail to provide any room for the role of the revolutionary practice of the class. Philosophically, this outlook is based on a mechanistic and reductionist materialism. This is that methodology which a large section of the Left employs today. This is the version of Marxism which is more prevalent today than the revolutionary theory of Marx itself. Around us we can see many who believe in these views. Those who consider their role in the political struggle to be facilitating the seizure of power by those social strata which can develop the productive forces, those who advocate revolution in stages, etc., they are all directly and indirectly still influenced by the Second International's version of Marxism. Let me point out an example in passing. We are often told that the Bolsheviks were internationalists and *thus* believed that without the German revolution the Russian revolution could not become victorious. I shall later consider the "internationalist" value of such an explanation. But for now let us see what explanation those who defended this outlook in the economic debates of 1924 and after really offered. The central argument propounded in support of this thesis (mainly by Zinoviev) was that *Germany had an advanced industrial economy*, that it was only such an economy which could really introduce socialism, and that without its help the "backward" Russia was not alone able to establish socialist relations. This is a vivid example of the system which I was talking about. I am not concerned now with what the German economy in 1917 was in comparison with the present South Korean economy, and what the industrial development "which made socialism possible" was with respect to the technological standards of current semi-industrial countries. My concern now is to show that in the outlook

of Zinoviev and others the possibility of building socialism, the possibility of abolishing bourgeois ownership and establishing common ownership, is initially fixed to *industrial* potentials. It is this outlook which contradicts the spirit of *Communist Manifesto*, and the gist of *The German Ideology*. It was in the latter, that Marx having posited the era of "capitalist domination, declared the possibility of building socialism - 60 years before Zinoviev denied such a possibility for Russia. Such an outlook is Social Darwinism and a banal economic determinism which refuses to take notice of the real strength of the revolutionary proletariat, and is instead concerned with the level of productive forces and industrial development as a guide to introducing socialism.

In short, the first effect of the theoretical influence of the Second International was that the Russian working class and its vanguard party in their strategy in advanced downplayed the possibility of establishing socialist economic relations in Russia, mainly on the ground that it had a "backward" economy. The party's strategy was based on the triumph of the German revolution which, was of course, a real historical possibility.

The other incorrect trend in the thinking of the Second International was the reduction of the concept of socialism, i.e., common ownership and the abolition of wage-labour, to *state* ownership and economy. This understanding is still dominant not only among official social democratic parties but also among a large section of the radical Left. Today, in order to regard it a socialist country, the defenders of the Soviet Union point to the absence of bourgeois personal ownership over the means of production and the predominance of state ownership in this country. A large section of the critics of the Soviet union also accept this definition of socialism but spend all their time and resources to show that "the Soviet state is not proletarian", and thus the state ownership in this particular case is not tantamount to socialism. To reduce socialism to state economy is truly a bourgeois falsification in Marxist theory. It is this version of socialism which the bourgeoisie spreads throughout the world. Unfortunately up to now this fundamental distortion in the economic vision of the working class has not met any serious theoretical challenge by the Marxists.

Pivotal to such a bourgeois conception of socialism, is the bourgeois assessment of capitalism. In this outlook capitalism is recognised not on the basis of the labour-capital relation but on the basis of the relation of capitals to each other. It is the outlook of an individual capitalist, and thus a bourgeois attitude to capitalism. Competition and anarchy in production is considered to be the basis of capitalism. And therefore in opposing it, as the anti-thesis of capitalism, state ownership and planning is placed. This is a common conception. For Marx, and for us as Marxists who have grasped the essence of Marx's criticism of the political economy of capitalism, it is simple to understand that capital is defined in the domain of social production and on the basis of its relation to wage-labour. Competition and the fragmentation of capitals is the dominant *form* of capitalism up to now. It is the *form* in which the immanent essence of capital is externalised. But this immanent essence is not defined on the basis of this form of appearance. This essence has a certain economic content, which is labour-power becoming a commodity and being exploited. Marx considers the production of surplus value, i.e., the determination of surplus product as

surplus *value*, to be the basis of capitalism, and recognises this process as the result, only, of labour-power becoming a commodity and of the domination of wage-labour. For us the alternative to capitalism is the abolition of bourgeois property, the abolition of *wage-labour* and the establishment of common ownership over the means of production.

The draft programme of the Russian social democracy and a great part of the economic debates of the '20s indicate the predominance of this incorrect understanding of the Second International within this trend. An understanding in which capitalism and the crisis of this system is based on competition and anarchy in production. The social and class essence of capital is reduced to one of its definite forms. Thus, inevitably, for the establishment of socialism, the abolition of this definite form i.e., the phenomenon of competition and multiple ownership over capital, is aimed at. As I said, the reduction of socialism to state economy is inevitable in this outlook.

This intellectual heritage of the Second International, in addition to the *Russian* roots of nationalism in the Russian social democracy, which I dealt with above, narrowed the perspective of communism in Russia for the economic changes which were historically possible after workers' revolution. The debates on the issue of "socialism in one country", that is the debates on the economic future of the revolution, which were conducted between 1924 and 1928, fell victim to the narrowness of this perspective and to the lack of preparation on the part of the party of advanced workers for accomplishing that fundamental transformation needed to continue the revolution. What Leninism had for years fought against, once again dominated the practice of the working-class party, thanks to the force of real economic, political and even military pressures. But this time it had its new theoretical protagonists. Thus not only did the Russian society not advance in the interest of the development of the proletarian revolution in the economic sphere, but even the Communist International, which Leninism had founded in opposition to social democracy, itself became an instrument for the furtherance of bourgeois interests and perspective in a certain country.

THE KEY QUESTIONS OF A PRINCIPLED POSITION

What I have said so far, should in principle have clarified our main theses and general attitude on the question of the Soviet Union. As I said, in dealing with this subject our intention is not to prove analytically our theses, but to present them in order to demonstrate our differences with other existing critiques of the Soviet Union. For this purpose, I continue the discussion by giving brief answers to some of the key questions regarding the Soviet Union.

1- The nature of the Bolshevik government

The October Revolution undoubtedly established the proletarian dictatorship in Russia. We reject the formally radical, but in fact *right* and bourgeois critique that what was established in

Russia was not the dictatorship of the working class. Those Left currents which make such a critique, mainly substantiate their claim by pointing out the relation which existed between the Bolshevik party and the Russian working class, and the manner in which the bulk of workers did actually participate in the state structure. The dictatorship of the proletariat, they say, should be the organised power of the entire mass of the working class on the basis of "democratic" administrative arrangements. As though it was not the case in Russia. Hence it is claimed that the Bolshevik-Soviet government was not a proletarian dictatorship. Such a judgment, in our view, abstracts from the real class with its real political and practical limitations, and thus abstracts from the material form which the proletarian dictatorship takes in the first step, i.e., when it emerges from the womb of the old society. This amounts to a bookish appraisal and a pedantic proscription of the real proletariat and its real state. This implies denying the proletariat of any real possibility to win the political power and denouncing its genuine struggle and power under the pretext of criticizing its defects and shortcomings in the exercise of its power. This is idealism and in effect amounts to rejecting in advance any possibility for the victory of the workers. On this subject I have already elaborated my views both in previous seminars on the Soviet Union and in articles such as *The State in Revolutionary Periods**

Does our position on this issue means that we are careless about how the workings and the forms of the proletarian dictatorship in reality should be? Absolutely not. This only implies that we understand and take into account the historical and material limitations of a class which is the product of the circumstances of the old society and the pressures of a violent class confrontation. It is evident that to the degree that the working class succeeds to base, without interruption, its dictatorship on forms which allow the working masses to directly exercise their will, and to the degree that its dictatorship is based on standard democratic structures, to the same degree it will be a more powerful class. But the point is about a certain historical possibility and certain historical circumstances. If a particular working class did not succeed to act as such, if it did not succeed to immediately set up its desirable model of state and its pre-conceived conception of the proletarian dictatorship, then we would not be among those who deny there ever existed a workers' state and condemn the existing proletarian dictatorship, which in the context of real history is practically *the* proletarian dictatorship. Workers and working-class parties should know that in the course of real history they could face such a situation many times. Circumstances in which the workers would seize the power but would not find immediately the necessary social material for forming a class rule corresponding to their desired model of state. The history of the Bolshevik party is incidentally a testimony to the attempts made by the Russian proletariat to preserve its rule whilst facing real shortcomings.

2- The structure of workers' power

* Reference to an article published in *Besooy-e-Sosyalism*, the theoretical journal of the CPI, no.2, Nov. 1985 . The article was based on a seminar presented by the author.

One could claim that the structure of workers' power in the October revolution was not democratic since it was exercised not by the working masses themselves but by the leadership.

In my opinion the distinction made by the radical left between leaders and the led in the October revolution is the expression of an anti-dictatorial and bourgeois mentality. One of our main arguments which is particularly relevant to the issue of workers' communism is that one cannot start off from the category of "right", "leadership" and so on as perceived by the bourgeoisie and thus explain the relation of the *working class* and its leadership. The relation of the working class with its representatives, the political movement of the working class, the way that the working class exercises its will, is closely related to the way that its political leadership carries out its actions. The actual leadership of the working class represents much more directly the will of the working masses. In the relation of the working masses with their leaders the procedure of voting by ballots and thus assessing workers' opinion by the number of votes cast does not occupy an important place. Hence, the argument which claims that after the October revolution the leadership did not base its legitimacy on the votes of the working masses, and also the argument which maintains that the structure of power had not been "democratic", have entered the issue of "democracy" into their analysis of the Soviet Union in a proportion which by far exceeds its real place in the actual history of the Russian revolution. In a strange way, the Bolsheviks and their actions are divorced in this reasoning from the wishes of workers and hastily set in confrontation, as a dichotomy, to the will of the workers. It is said that the Bolsheviks curtailed the authority of mass organs of workers. But it is forgotten that the Bolsheviks themselves constituted and represented a large section of the workers. When the Bolsheviks declared their view on a certain issue, it meant that the advanced section of workers had declared its view on the subject. The Bolsheviks were not the party of the intelligentsia, but expressed the organisation and unity of the most radical sections of the Russian workers. To confront the *vanguards of the working class* with the working masses is an absurd idea. To contrast the actions of self-claimed and phoney leaders with the will of working masses is quite understandable. But to oppose the working masses with their own vanguards in the arena of class struggle is a contradiction in terms. The working class when see its own real leadership in power consider *itself* in power. This is the aspect which is absent in the discussion of the democratic critics of the Soviet Union. This is an expression of the anti-dictatorial preoccupation of bourgeois liberalism which has been vainly extended to the working class. Once the leaders of the real unions of workers, the real leaders of the movement of factory committees, the leaders of the partisan movement of workers, local agitators and leaders of workers, that is to say the very people who have mobilised the workers and led them to resurrection, are in power, the working class can say that "I am in power" and no measure of scrutiny on whether the relation between this leadership and the masses is democratic can change this fact.

For the bourgeoisie which in order to rule has to detach its statesman from the rest of its class and place him in a government apparently above society, for the bourgeoisie which understands its relation to these statesmen only through periodic elections, the confrontation of leadership and class has a significance. But if one is to turn this apparently democratic mechanism into a basis

for judging proletarian dictatorship, one commits a grave error. Proletarian democracy is not an extension of bourgeois democracy. It is a different type of democracy which has its own particular mechanisms in establishing the link between the masses and the leaders. The Paris Commune must be by the accounts of these critics very undemocratic.

An understanding of the mechanism of struggle of the working class, of the relation of the working masses and their leaders is one of the essential components of the discussion of worker communism, which stands wholly against the prevalent bourgeois conceptions of democracy and democratic relationships. Essentially the political identity of the working class takes form through the agency of its class *leadership* and vanguard elements.

The example of British miners' strike is very revealing. The bourgeoisie called the decision of NUM leadership undemocratic since it was never taken to vote, whilst the realities of the year-long and courageous struggle of the miners demonstrated that these actions were replete of democracy and the direct exercise of miners' authority. It was the very will of the overwhelming majority of miners which was manifested in the decision of NUM leadership to continue the strike.

On the question of *voting* in the struggle of workers there is a further point which I should add. This mechanism does not occupy a significant position in workers' struggles since it cannot correctly reflect the unity and organised strength of the workers, nor can it consolidate it. The whole strength of workers lies in their assembly, their collective decision-making, and their boosting of each others' morals through public expression of solidarity and participation in common action. If workers cast their votes in isolation, the working class will always appear less decisive, less courageous and less resistant than what it really is, or could be inside an action. It is in their actions and in the midst of their gatherings which workers express their real votes; as isolated individuals, they are overwhelmed by the power of capital, lose their morale, and lack a necessary militant perspective for bold decisions.

The peculiarities of the internal relations of the class and in particular the relation of the working masses with their leaders and vanguards is the result of several factors:

Firstly, the objective productive and social position of the worker. The worker is devoid of ownership and the bourgeois society essentially recognises the individual on the basis of ownership and his relation to capital and commodity. The ownership of capital is the source of power; a power which is formally recognised in bourgeois society in the form of *the right to vote*. It is a fact of that bourgeois democracy has moved over from the limited voting right restricted to the propertied classes and the owners of capital and wealth to universal suffrage. In this system if workers have won the right to vote, this has become possible by emptying the "right to vote" from any real social sense and any direct relation to "a share of power". Voting is appropriate for the internal relation of an oligarchy owning capital, but is an inappropriate means for the exercise of power by those classes which are devoid of a material basis for the exercise of power through voting. An individual worker counts as nothing, he has no power. An individual bourgeois in proportion to his capital has real power.

Therefore, one should ask where does the power of workers lie, how does it exercise it, and what place does *individual vote* hold in this mechanism. The power of workers demonstrates itself in their simultaneous, open and organised movement, in their united movement. Voting plays a limited role in the creation of this movement. The essential role is played by the *leadership*, agitation and the justification of the slogans and policies for which the workers should be mobilised. That is why in 99 per cent of the cases in which workers resort to organised and united struggle they do so without asking for votes from anyone. This united movement mainly takes shape by the action of the advanced elements, their power of convincing, their clear-sightedness, their sense of discretion and the effectiveness of their policies. It is these factors which determine the internal relationships of the working class.

Secondly, workers are an oppressed class. Their struggle, contrary to the legal and parliamentary activity of the bourgeoisie, faces immediately an external and coercive force, namely the state. The political movement of workers immediately takes up the dynamism of a *battle* and inevitably the camp of workers turns into a militant rank deployed for war. The worker for the exercise of his will has no opportunity to collect and count individual votes. It is in the course of his action and by the constant assessment of his ability in carrying out the struggle that he becomes aware of the individual opinions of its rank. A bourgeois leader rides unbridled so long as he has the confidence of the parliament. A workers' leader who cannot assess the mood of the masses of his class according to the counts of the ballot-box, has to appraise at every moment the mood and feeling dominant in the rank of workers, estimate the power of his class and make a decision. If he has made a correct analysis and appraisal, then his decision will conform to the aspirations and wishes of the working masses. Otherwise, the practical indications and features of the struggle would make him to revise his decision.

At any rate, I wanted to say that the categories which have been taken from bourgeois democracy, and at best determine the relation of the bourgeois and his class cannot and should not be employed in the assessment of the relation between the working masses and their vanguards. The workers government in Russia should be judged by worker criteria and not by a generalisation of bourgeois democratic conceptions.

In the Russian revolution the October uprising was an indication of the mass support of workers for the Bolsheviks. The October uprising and not the election for the Constituent Assembly represented the real vote of workers. Any socialist interpreter of the October Revolution should appreciate the significance of this fact and judge the state and party of workers according to *their real relation* to workers and not on the basis of formal patterns which materialise this relation.

3- The relation between economics and politics in the era of proletarian dictatorship

An assertion often made about the Soviet experience is that irrespective of the economic difficulties of the time "the structure of the state should have been democratic". This assertion

is correct on its own but let me in reply talk a little about proletarian democracy and the relation between economics and politics in the era of proletarian dictatorship.

There is no democracy more radical than the one which strives to remove the material bases for the absence of democracy. That "democratism" which is prepared to accept the survival of state capitalism in Russia provided "the state remains democratic", is not in my opinion democratism. The whole point of my argument is that our discussion not only is not against a criticism of the deficiencies of democracy in the Russian society, but provides the only real criticism for the abolition of democracy there. To suppose that the worker can be economically in an oppressed state, but yet remain politically a powerful and dominant class is an absurd illusion. State monopoly capitalism, i.e., the production relations in such a system, leaves no room for the democratic exercise of the will of the workers. If one believes that whilst capitalism is preserved the democratic institutions of workers' state can also expand, he should also reply to our argument. If one demands that the direct producers, the workers, should have the power to make decisions at all levels, then he should also know that the economic subjugation of workers, even in a "state capitalism", should be abolished.

It is said that "a one-sided explanation should not be given for this issue. Why are you in a one-sided way making the economic issue central." We do not argue one-sidedly. It was the Russian history itself whose fate was decided by the economic problems of the proletarian dictatorship. If before the occurrence of this revolution one was asked what the conditions of its victory could have been, one could have named numerous factors. But if one were to be asked about the reasons of its failure after the revolution, then one should formulate his reply on the basis of the issues *pivotal* in this history. There are those who claim that basically the workers never seized the power. We believe they did, but what hindered the creation of the suitable forms of workers' rule and finally led to the loss of power by the workers was the persistence of the relationships which became the basis for the economic development of society and which made the workers put on the yoke of wage-slavery. State capitalism, in which a plan is drawn up by a certain ministry for growth, and is carried out by another state office, leaves no room for the real authority of workers' soviets except formally and in secondary matters such as civil, cultural and judicial issues. We say that the way in which the authority of workers could be exercised, as it is wished by those who demand a democratic and mass structure for the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., is the way for the exercise of mass class power, is only possible through the exercise of mass *economic* power. It is the position of the working masses within the social and economic relationships which determines their place in the political structure. In the mid '20s the maintenance of power in the hands of the working class and the progress of the workers' revolution wholly depended on what happens to the dominant economic relationships in society. The fact that in those years, the worker still remained a wage-earner who lacked any control over the means of production and economic decision-making, also made a victim the state, which had been set up at the cost of sacrifices against the attacks of the bourgeoisie. But if that juncture had come to a close by the domination of the policy for the socialization of production and the *abolition of wage-labour*, accompanied by the organisation of a new economy on the basis of

workers' soviets, then not only workers' rule would have been maintained, but the structure of the workers' state would have also developed in proportion to this new economics and based on patterns appropriate to the most extensive forms of proletarian democracy and the direct exercise of authority by the working masses. In the mid '20s *this was still an unsettled issue*. In democratic criticisms, the mere existence of administrative deviations in the party and state or ideological errors is sufficient to write off such a perspective and to deny any possibility for a victorious development of the revolution. We do not accept this view.

In the October Revolution the political power was seized by the workers. This state was preserved against the military and political attacks of the bourgeoisie, economic blockade and at the cost of the sacrifices of the class and its vanguards, and also by the concession of many compromises (of which NEP is one). But at a later stage, once the political power was settled and the question of socialist transformation of society was posed, the proletariat could not continue its revolution. It yielded to that pattern of course of economic development which had no other consequence but the economic subjugation of workers, the survival of the capital-labour relation, the permanence of bureaucracy as the system appropriate to the economic base, the dissolution of the soviets, the intellectual domination of revisionism corresponding to these new relationships and in one word the transformation of political compromises into a systematic political and administrative degeneration which undermined the rule of workers.

The question can be posed, and has in fact been posed here, whether it was basically possible to carry out such a revolutionary transformation of the economic relationships which could at the same time meet the production of everyday necessities and current needs of society? In my opinion this is the question to which present-day communists should pay attention. Either this task is possible and is accomplished, or workers are doomed to defeat one after the other, even after they have seized the power. In my view the socialist economic revolution, not only was possible, but was imperative for meeting the material needs of society. The gist of Marxism is that by the impasse of capitalism, it is only socialism which can pave the way for the development of the productive forces. These plans and measures should be concretely defined. A more detailed picture of common ownership and socialist planned production should be given. The Bolsheviks did not have such a perspective, and thus sought the way for the development of the productive forces in state capitalism. If there ever existed a justification for this shortcoming of the Bolsheviks, the operation of state capitalism in numerous countries should by now have removed this deficiency for today's communists.

One definition of proletarian dictatorship with which I fully agree is this: "Proletarian dictatorship should be a state in which the producers (workers) themselves form the state." Very well, but such a state can only be created under special economic relationships. The political institutions of such a state cannot be formed, completed and then the question of production relations pursued separately. The very process which settles the question of production and economic relations, also determines the state structure and arrangement and the position of the masses in it. If we accept that the working class is to *collectively* control and administer production, which is scattered throughout the country in different economic units, then we should

also accept that a certain structure is necessary to mould the political and administrative power by which the collective organs of workers at different levels, from bottom to the top, will act as the components of this state.

In the proletarian revolution we shall not have a stage where initially, irrespective of the way the economic authority is exercised, a democratic structure for the exercise of the political authority of the working class and the intervention of the working masses and individuals is defined and established, and then this exercise of authority is extended to the economic terrain. So long as the levers of economic authority are not vested to the realm of soviet power, the soviet will not also become the lasting body for the exercise of the political and administrative authority of workers, or at any rate the workers will be left out of the real domain of direct authority. It is the relation of workers to the means of production which determines the proper groups workers for struggle (as well as ruling). Trade unions, for instance, suit the working class which sees the control of the means of production in the hands of an external party for which it works. Workers' soviets which are in power, are the organisation suitable for a working class which has effectively seized the control of the economy and exercises its authority at local level. However, if one demands the establishment of a democratic structure for the proletarian dictatorship, one should realise that this presupposes common ownership and the abolition of wage-labour, and requires the socialisation of production-relations and the elimination of capital as a social relation, whether it is in the hands of individuals or the state.

In the particular case of Russia the time when the above question should have been posed, was the period in which the social position and status of the working class was also being determined, i.e., when the issue of state ownership and production on the basis of wage-labour was being established. This development inevitably defined the political position and character of the working class and its position in the political and administrative system of the society. This process might have taken years to arrive at its logical conclusion. But there could be no doubt as to what this logical conclusion would have been: political deprivation of the workers and their political expropriation, and the demise of the workers' state created by the October Revolution.

4- Theoretical, political and administrative deviations and defects after the october revolution

We do not deny that the Russian revolution underwent degeneration and suffered political retrogression. But what concerns us is the explanation of the real place of these observations in the analysis of the causes of the defeat of the Russian revolution. In our discussion we laid the main emphasis on the economic transformation of the Russian society, and noted that the fundamental reason for the defeat of the workers' revolution in Russia was the inability of the party and the class to strike at the roots of the existing economic order and to revolutionise it. We could be criticised for failing to appreciate that the fundamental reason for this inability must be sought in the political arena and in the retreats of the party and the workers' government. It could well be argued that the emergence of the bureaucracy, the weakening of the inner-party

democracy, the fall in the power of workers' and mass organs vis-a-vis the power of the party and the state, the frequent compromises made with the institutions of the old society or the pressures of the bourgeoisie, etc., were indeed the factors which by 1924 had virtually divested the proletariat of any opportunity to make any progress in the economic plane. This is one objection. The other objection which could be raised is that essentially the task of the Russian proletariat was not to pass to the stage of economic transformation at all. That the fundamental issue at the time was the maintenance of the proletarian state, the preservation of its purity and loyalty to principles and the promotion of the revolution worldwide; in this way, the Russian economy could take up the form of state capitalism or any other form. We accept neither of these two approaches. I have already talked about the second objection. In my opinion this amounts to subjectivism and refusal to meet the material and real problems of a given social revolution. Waiting, even active waiting, for a world revolution cannot be a substitute for the progress of a certain revolution at a certain juncture. The question of what the economic perspective for Russia should be, was seriously posed in 1924 and after, and it was a challenge which could not be avoided. State capitalism or "any other form" could not be taken as an answer. It was a juncture when the workers' revolution in Russia had to issue its specific economic decree or otherwise face the prospect of even losing its *political authority*.

But regarding the first objection, that is the analytical precedence of political deviations in finding the causes for the defeat of the workers' revolution, I should talk at a greater length. In my view there is a serious difference between the political degeneration which reflects a reproducible, backward, and bourgeois material and economic base, and those politically undesirable slips, defects and tendencies which are not yet reproduced as a social phenomenon, and in reality are caused by momentary shortcomings and pressures, temporary straits, or the force of habit and upbringing of the advanced ranks of the revolution. There were numerous political and theoretical slips from the very first day after the October 1917. Many undesirable tendencies could be observed with respect to compromises made with the institutions of the old society, the development of bureaucracy, the weakening of inner-party democracy, the fall in the power of the organs responsible for the direct action of the workers, and evasion from deepening the political transformation in the legal and cultural life of society, etc.. But these do not provide us with a list for the causes of the defeat, since the decisive battle of the proletariat for the economic transformation of society had not yet begun. This battle began in the '20s. If in this battle the alternative for common ownership and the abolition of wage-labour, i.e., the proletarian alternative for the economic perspective of Russia had prevailed, then these undesirable political and administrative tendencies, would not only have been deprived of any material bases for their survival, but would also have faded away in the course of the profound economic transformation of society and became superceded by political methods and mechanisms which corresponded to this transforming economy and to this further progress of the revolution in its most decisive domain. But if, as it did happen in practice, the nationalist-industrialist alternative of the bourgeoisie had shaped the perspective for the economic progress of Russia, then these slips and defects which could have become secondary, accidental and indeterminate

factors in the fate of the revolution, would now have turned into organic and reproducible components of the political superstructure. Hence, the turning of these political, legal and administrative slips and defects into an all-sided political degeneration, above all necessitated that the question of the economy be settled in the interest of a bourgeois economic base and a path of capitalist economic development. The issue of bureaucracy is a good example to illustrate the issue. Under the pressure of post-revolutionary circumstances the workers' state resorted to many compromises. The Red Army made use of the core of the Tsarist army. Government departments were reconstructed on the shoulders of the old bureaucrats, and privileges were conceded to certain strata in society in order to use their expertise and professional qualities. Undoubtedly, all these point to the existence of undesirable tendencies at the political and administrative level. But before the beginning of the economic debates of the '20s, bureaucratism was the result of the compromises by the advanced class due to the *external* pressures. We can consider these compromises entirely or partially as inevitable, but cannot doubt the fact that these shortcomings were being *imposed* on the advanced force of the revolution.

One can find a multitude of examples in the discussions of the Bolshevik leaders which show that whilst they were indeed aware of these undesirable tendencies, suffered from them and tried to remove them, they still talked of them as temporary and transitional compromises which could become unnecessary with the consolidation of the rule of the proletariat. But after the '20s, when the course of development based on planned state capitalism, based on wage-labour, was established as the basis for the movement of the revolutionary society, when the bourgeois-nationalist vision of development became the basis for social reproduction, then the bureaucracy was no longer an imposed pressure and a product of the compromises made, but had become an *organic and reproducible* component of the political superstructure. Here, we are talking about the bureaucracy as a superstructural institution corresponding to the economic base of society, and to the dynamism of development of relations in the base. After the October Revolution, the soviets were weakened due to various reasons and mainly as a result of the pressure of the extraordinary circumstances of the time. But once the course of economic progress was concluded in favour of the bourgeois-nationalist perspective, then the reason for the degeneration or the absence of the soviets and the domination of the bureaucracy should not be sought in the extraordinary and junctural circumstances of the time. Bureaucracy was the political superstructure corresponding to the state capitalist economic perspective now institutionalised in the society. In the first stage, the dire needs of circumstances called for a centralisation of power so that the workers' state could overcome its difficulties. This led to a weakening of the soviets. In the second stage the soviets had to be completely negated so that the mechanism of political and economic decision-making in the country would correspond to the bourgeois logic of the economic development.

Therefore, we very much distinguish between the superstructural deviations and shortcomings prevailing in the Russian society immediately after the Revolution (at the ideological, political, cultural and administrative level) and the political decline of the post-twenties. In our opinion, the political and superstructural shortcomings of the first stage were minor and secondary factors

which did not play any decisive role in the destiny of the Russian revolution. These were rectifiable or removable tendencies and defects. They cannot be considered as characteristic hallmarks in the analysis of the workers' revolution. In the post '20s, when the bourgeois-nationalist course of development finally became dominant, these superstructural features became the organic and reproducible parts of an economic and social system - a superstructure which itself reflected the essential features of the production base.

Let me explain this problem from a different angle. If we consider the division which I maintained in the article *State in Revolutionary Periods*, i.e, the division of the post-revolutionary period into a revolutionary period in the strict sense of the term, and the stabilisation period of the proletarian dictatorship, then one can express the problem in the following way: in the first period, when the central question of the revolution was the consolidation of the young workers' state, many compromises were forced on the working class. These compromises were neither immoral nor unprincipled. They were largely the result of either the exigencies brought about by the enemy forces or the violent resistance of the domestic and international bourgeoisie. Political and administrative deviations in this period were imposed on the vanguard party. The Russian working class successfully passed through the first period despite all these compromises. By 1924 the workers' state had established its political authority against the resistance of the bourgeoisie. But precisely for this reason the question of what the economic content of the workers' revolution should be and what the economic tasks of the proletarian dictatorship were, became the key question for the development of the revolution, that is for the accomplishment of the *economic revolution* which in the words of Engels without it the political triumph of the class would become null and void. This economic revolution did not happen, since neither the working class nor its vanguard party had such a perspective before them. Bourgeois nationalism and industrialism, the deep-rooted and historical alternative of the Russian bourgeoisie in the twentieth century against which the Russian social democracy had not demarcated itself clearly, emerged from this stage of the revolution victoriously. The outcome of these circumstances was that the political and administrative defects and shortcomings of the first period not only were not removed or compensated as a result of a great economic revolution - which could have established common ownership - but were even promoted to a higher level after the domination of the bourgeois economic perspective, and the institutionalisation in the Russian society of the state economic alternative based on wage-labour. Bureaucracy, lack of inner-party democracy, curtailment of the authority of the soviets and their subsequent decline, abolition of workers' control, etc., all were established as the organic components of this bourgeois economic pattern. Now these observations were *reproduced* as the superstructure corresponding to the new economic process. Hence, we can talk of these deviationary tendencies in the political and ideological superstructure of the Russian society as being *non-decisive* factors in both periods. In the first period these factors were secondary in comparison with the need of the working class to establish its very rule. In the second period, these tendencies did not exist *de novo* but were themselves the product and the effect of a more fundamental deviation. They were the consequence of the choice of bourgeois course of development for the Russian society.

I should mention several points here. Firstly it could be asked why we regard the political and ideological deviations of the first period reversible. In my view if one accepts that what was needed in Russia in the economic terrain was an economic revolution, that such a revolution was still objectively possible in the '20s, i.e. there existed a historical opportunity for it to happen, then one would have little difficulty to understand why such a revolution could have brought with it the resuscitation of the soviets, the revival of the most extensive form of proletarian democracy within the state and party structure, and the decline of bureaucratic tendencies.

The move for the establishment of common ownership and the abolition of wage-labour, the move for the imposition of real workers' control over the economy and economic policy-making, once again could have disturbed the remainder of the bureaucratic and bourgeois forms of control in the political and administrative domains. The resistance of these forms was much weaker than the resistance of the entire political and administrative system of Tsarism and the Russian bourgeoisie.

We have serious differences with the outlook which dooms the revolution and the proletarian democracy, and considers them lost just because at one time Stalin got the upper hand, or a certain decree was issued curtailing the rights of fractions, or a certain People's Commissariat interfered with the jurisdiction of the soviets or the factory committees. This party of many faults, if there existed a powerful move for the establishment of common ownership and the socialist forms of production, could have emerged with triumph out of the economic debates of '20s, and thereby to build the material foundations for the removal of the political and administrative defects and shortcomings prevailing in the superstructure of the society. The cause of difficulty was not the persistence of defects and shortcomings in the party; it was a fundamental defect in *something else*, namely the absence of a clear vision on the socialist forms of ownership and production.

It follows then that we are opposed to those outlooks which base their analyses on the existence of superstructural deviationary tendencies in the Bolshevik party and the Russian society, and which consider the degeneration of the Russian revolution to be the reflection of the political degeneration of the party or the administrative degeneration of the Soviet state. This political degeneration is an *effect* of the economic degeneration of the Revolution, and not the cause of it, and should therefore be explained as the inevitable consequence of this economic degeneration. On the other hand we consider it wrong to attach to the violation of democracy in the first period of the revolution (i.e., immediately after the October) the same significance as some outlooks do. This is a democratic outlook on the workers' revolution. Whilst it should be attempted that the proletarian dictatorship embraces from inception the widest possible forms of proletarian democracy, nevertheless the defeat of the revolution was not primarily the product of the failure of the Russian workers in this field. In spite of all these shortcomings they passed one decisive stage with triumph. The fundamental cause of the ultimate defeat of the workers in Russia must be sought in the economic defeat of the class in the '20s. Had the Russian workers succeeded to win this decisive battle in the second period, then the difficulties and shortcomings of the first period, would have amounted to some bygone hardship, the birthpangs of a new

society, and would have set in their proper place, and faded away in the post-revolutionary history of Russia.

Two objections could be raised here. First, in a criticism of our emphasis on the question of economic transformation it could be said that political and economic transformation should occur simultaneously and "in parallel to each other". This is a misunderstanding of our argument. Incidentally, the crux of our argument is that *political emancipation* precedes economic transformation. But the whole point is that the Russian worker *had won* his political emancipation in October 1917, he had achieved his immediate aims in the political field. He had seized power. At that time, the working class was not at the helm where it concerned the question of administering society and organising social production. I emphasise once again that in our view the Bolshevik revolution was a workers' revolution. This revolution placed the workers at reign of power and made their arms the guarantor of their rule. No revolution in the history of man has hitherto been able to gain such an achievement.

In the way that I have understood Marx and Lenin, the seizure of power precedes the economic revolution. To present our argument opposed to this understanding and with the warning that political and economic emancipation must proceed "parallel to each other", is very wrong and unjustified. Such an understanding of our views can only come from the outlook which itself does not believe that political power was indeed won by the workers and hence in opposing our argument about the necessity to revolutionise the economic structure in the interest of workers, is obliged to note that "after all the political power was not yet in the hands of the *working class*." Let me emphasise this point once more. The political power after October was indeed in the hands of the *working class*. But once in power the working class, just as the bourgeoisie, expresses itself in various and manifold manners. Today, the political power is in the hands of the bourgeoisie without any individual bourgeois can directly exercise it. To exercise its power, every class has its own particular methods, each depending on the given circumstances of a certain period. When Marx speaks of proletarian democracy, he is talking not of a workers' state engaged in war, a state waging the military suppression of the bourgeois resistance, but of a state carrying out *the administration of society*. Our argument which has been clearly expressed and leaves no room for misunderstanding, is that political power was indeed seized by the workers, the working class fought and consolidated it. But precisely at the time when this power should have been used to accomplish its real historical mission, namely, the overthrow of the whole system of bourgeois ownership and wage-labour, the working class failed to march forward. Since this power was not employed to further such a policy.

Furthermore, It could be argued that the conditions of the post-revolutionary period were anti-democratic, that even if a principled line had existed it would have been suppressed. First of all we do not share this observation. In my view much exaggeration has been made on the extent which "democracy" had been "restricted" in this period. Secondly, if we were to imagine that such a claim was indeed true, we know of no recipe which could assure a guaranteed protection of political tendencies against such a repression. Moreover, we also consider as illusory the claim that in the absence of a clear proletarian perspective on the future of the economy of

society, the mere demand of de-centralisation of power and democratisation of the system could have been a guarantee for the rectification of the course of revolution. In a revolutionary period, the power tends to centralise in order to represent the ruling class in the major battles in society. To complain about "currents which had grabbed the power" is by no means a helpful method of approach. Worse still, it is to preach that they should not have committed this act and to substitute this preaching for an analysis of the defeat of the revolution. Here, we would like to argue for the possibility of a socialist victory, and not its inevitability if all the shortcomings considered by us were non-existent. However, in the real scene of struggle every tendency is obliged to mobilise force in order to win. We believe that in the years 1924 and after, a socialist tendency did not have a real presence. If such a tendency did exist then our discussion could focus on how it could have been strengthened.

Let me give an explanation on the question of "appropriation of power by the party". First I would like to say that incidentally in the period which usually preoccupies the attention of the democratic critics of the Bolshevik revolution, namely, in the initial years of the revolution, the power was not "appropriated" by anybody. The power was so fragmented, and locally administered by various institutions of workers and toilers, that for a few years it was not even possible to standardise state laws and regulations, to impart a uniform pattern to organs and the manner of decision-making in different areas, and to unify and centralise the courts and penal codes. Even the decisions of the supreme soviet were not necessarily binding locally and applied by the local soviet. Contrary to what through the spectacles of bourgeois democracy is seen as the confiscation of power, the experience of the first few years of the revolution is the experience of *local* legislating and exercise of power. For a long time the problem in Russia was that there did not exist uniform criteria in different areas of the country for the punishment of culprits and the organisation of social issues, etc. The official and direct authority of the Bolshevik party which had apparently "usurped" power did not go much beyond major cities. The real power of the Bolshevik party lied in its *dispersion* of power to local assemblies of workers and soldiers. Essentially, the Bolsheviks had not organised any independent authority against the workers' exercise of power from below. There can be no talk of the harassment of masses by the top. And this was nothing but proletarian dictatorship. Workers who had overthrown the bourgeois state and directly seized power, and then organised themselves in different forms at the local level, had indeed established the proletarian dictatorship. The judicial and legal structure of this workers' power not only was not an important issue at the time, but could not be finalised at a revolutionary period. Hence, not only the claim made about the centralisation of power in the hands of the Bolshevik government is incorrect, but such a centralisation was not essentially *possible*. This was itself a real problem of the state. Even if the Bolsheviks wanted to usurp power, the revolutionary material process and the particular historical circumstances did not render it possible.

Hence, one interpretation of the actions of the Bolshevik party which has become commonplace, particularly after the rise of Stalin, *and which has been extended to the initial stage of the revolution*, is nothing but the result of the pressure which European liberalism and

bourgeois parliamentarianism has exerted on the Left. It is the result of this pressure which has made currents such as the New Left and so on to criticize the Soviet Union with the jargons of democracy. They have been compelled to present in their criticism of the Soviet Union recipes and patterns of democracy which are favoured by the bourgeois public opinion of those countries in which they are present. Under such pressure, one current, Eurocommunism, has even omitted the phrase proletarian dictatorship from its programme and policies, and the other current which wants to keep it supplants its content with an extended type of bourgeois democracy and scruples the real proletarian dictatorship of Russian workers. It is interesting to note that the same people who when examining bourgeois states overlook the non-democratic relation of such states with the bourgeoisie, and can easily identify dictatorial bourgeois regimes with the bourgeoisie, are the ones who look for a "democratic" constitution when it comes to the formation of workers' states! In its own time, the Soviet state was recognised both by the workers and the bourgeoisie as a workers' state. No one could deny the class character of this state. The issue was if it could survive. Naturally, those who then denied the proletarian character of this state failed to win an audience for their claim about a living fact of their own time. But today, 70 years later, when the living history and those momentous occasions in which the will of workers was exercised in Russia has been forgotten and faded into the past, such claims find room to present themselves. In the past, everyone knew that the power had been seized by the workers in Russia. What we hear today is the reflection of the guilty conscience and of the lost confidence of a radical left which no longer has that living reality before itself.

5- 'Socialism in One Country' and the economic fate of the October revolution

By 1923 the Russian society had ended the first stage in the workers' revolution. The political authority of workers - all compromises, deficiencies and shortcomings notwithstanding - was established in triumph against the open political and military resistance of the bourgeoisie. Now the other fundamental question of the Russian revolution, that is the settling of the issue of economic transformation of society under the dictatorship of the proletariat was gradually being presented. This was a question which by 1929 was finally settled in debates which centered around the issue of "socialism in one country". The bourgeois economic perspective and the capitalist course of development became dominant in this period, and in the '30s we witness the general movement of society in this direction. In this period the *essential point* was the bourgeois development of the Russian society, and consequently the workers' struggle was a struggle in confrontation with this development.

On the issue of "socialism in one country" it is necessary to state clearly several points:

Firstly, in our opinion, theoretically and *irrespective of the question of the Soviet Union*, the establishment of socialism in one country, i.e., the establishment of relations based on common ownership, the abolition of wage-labour, i.e. what Marx envisaged to be the outlines of the lower stage of communism, is quite possible, and not only that, it is vital for the fate of workers'

revolution. The establishment of socialism is the immediate and vital task of any working class which succeeds to win the political power in a given country. We consider unacceptable and non-Marxist those outlooks which for any reason or under any pretext, leave out from the agenda of the proletariat which has come to power in a given country the task to establish a socialist economy based on common ownership and the abolition of wage-labour, and postpone it to a different period.

Secondly, in our opinion, the distinction which Marx defines for the two stages of communism is a very clear and valid one which is directly related to the economic tasks of the proletarian dictatorship. We do not consider communism (the upper phase) to be possible in a single country. The reason is that the main characteristics of this stage are: economic abundance, the colossal development of the productive forces, the fundamental revolutionisation of the position of man in society, and with it a radical transformation of the existing codes of ethics, the withering away of the state, and so on - conditions which we do not consider to be realisable within the boundaries of any given country. For instance, so long as national frontiers exist and these are to set the border-line between the socialist and capitalist societies, the withering away of the state is not practical. But socialism, as the lower phase of communism, not only is possible but as we said is necessary.

Thirdly, we must emphasise that in the economic polemics of the mid-'20s in the Bolshevik party, "socialism in one country" was the context for the resurgence of bourgeois nationalism in the sense referred to before, that is it acted as the banner for the domination of the bourgeois alternative for the development of society in the domain of production and reproduction. In other words, although the phrase "socialism in one country" does not on its own carry any deviation, nevertheless "socialism in one country", as the banner of a certain movement, in a certain period, and in a certain society, was the hallmark of a great anti-working class movement and a milestone for the interruption and the defeat of the Russian revolution. We denounce this movement as the bearer of the bourgeois alternative in the Russian society.

Against this movement, the opponents who had clearly noted the revival of bourgeois nationalism under this banner, took refuge in the idea of "world revolution". It is interesting to note that the Opposition and Stalin faction, despite their differences, shared very important common grounds. In the first instance, the fact that the difference in opinion focused not on the word "*socialism*" but on the term "in one country", indicates that the Opposition's version of "socialism" did not differ from that of Stalin's official line. Apparently nobody felt any difference on the measures that were to be carried out under the name of socialism, and it seems that the controversy was about the possibility of these measures "in one country". The next move of the Russian revolution showed how Stalin faction succeeded to realise the economic platform of the United Opposition (Trotsky - Zinoviev), and how with this move Trotskyism was for ever disarmed on the question of the economic structure of the Soviet Union. The "socialism-in-one-country" current was not criticised from a socialist standpoint. The "socialism" of this current which is a set of stratification of the economy, industrialisation and the development of the productive forces whilst keeping the system of wage-labour, was not contrasted with any socialist

alternative. In the contest of the official line and the Opposition, the socialist proletariat was not represented; nor was any attention paid to the warning of Engels on the necessity of an *economic revolution* after the conquest of power.

The above point also explains the reasons for the triumph of the advocates of "socialism in one country". At a time when the Russian revolution had arrived at a decisive moment in its destiny, the Opposition did not have any alternative in the *economic* realm. The platform of "world revolution" could not be an effective weapon in the fight with the bourgeoisie which behind the banner of "socialism in one country" was presenting an alternative for the most imperative and decisive question of society. The Opposition became a victim of its irrelevance to the real history of workers' revolution in Russia.

However, when we view this period of the Russian revolution in a wider historical context, we can see that the platform of "socialism in one country" was indeed the vessel for the new ascension of the Russian bourgeoisie to power. This was an event which took place independent of the intentions of those who represented this line. Indeed, once the non-revolutionary and capitalist course of development was chosen, and the cause of economic revolution was neglected and reduced to state economy and planning, then for all intents and purposes Stalin's line became an impediment to the further development of the revolutionary Russian society and to the continuation of the workers' revolution. As far as the Opposition and the advocates of the cause of "world revolution" were concerned at the time, they at best represented a radicalism in the Bolshevik party which had already sensed this retrogression but itself had essentially no other different alternative and merely resorted to a fruitless resistance based on a democratic political platform. The position of the Opposition resulted in the fact that the radical sections of the proletariat, sections discontent with the weakening of the Soviets, the abolition of workers' control, the growth of bureaucracy, the fall in the living standard of the proletariat, firstly were not represented in their entirety, and secondly tailed behind the Opposition as an insignificant force. An opposition which itself had stood before Stalin's line only on the basis of a very narrow and non-revolutionary platform, and which was incapable of representing the real radicalism of the revolution, i.e., the essential aspiration of the revolution for bringing about a gigantic transformation in the economic relations.

Let me in passing point out another aspect of the Opposition's standpoints. Nowadays for many, including for some of our own comrades, the belief of the Opposition in the "necessity of world revolution", and "the impossibility of socialism in one country" is a vindication for their "internationalism". In my view this outlook has no particular internationalist bearing. Why should one who believes that the fate of the Russian revolution is tied up to the German revolution simply because this country is industrially backward, be necessarily regarded as an internationalist? Internationalism means believing in the international character of the working class and defending the workers' revolution anywhere, i.e., defending these revolutions because of their working-class character. But if one on the basis of one's concrete analysis comes to the conclusion that the revolution in country "A" depends for a variety of reasons on the revolution in country "B" in order to survive, this does not vindicate, on any account, that there is

something internationalist about that stand. This is a concrete analysis which could have been arrived at simply in the interests of the revolution in country "A". One could be internationalist and yet agree or disagree with such a concrete analysis on the inevitable relation between the Russian and the German revolutions. Indeed, in the concrete case of Russia, it is one of our arguments that a refusal to advance the Russian revolution, and to continue the proletarian revolutions to the extent of fundamentally revolutionising the whole economic system in Russia, was itself tantamount to refusing to promote the Russian workers as active and effective internationalists.

But this so-called internationalist position taken by the Opposition, as we pointed out before, in fact revealed the pitfalls in the viewpoint of the Opposition, and the common plane it shared with the official line regarding the very nature of socialism as a definite set of economic and social relations and its requirements in the post-revolutionary Russian society. The whole stand of the Opposition boiled down to the argument that it was the revolution in the *industrialised* Germany that could provide the proletarian revolution in Russia with the vital level of productive forces needed to establish socialism. Such an outlook is one which denies beforehand the possibility of furthering the Russian revolution to the extent of a revolution in the Russian economy.

It is true that the German revolution had a decisive place in the strategy of the Bolsheviks. The likelihood of this revolution taking place and the possibilities which such a revolution would have provided for the Russian proletariat, was itself one of the reasons for the lack of any concrete steps being envisioned by the Bolsheviks in regard to the question of economic transformation in Russia itself. The Bolsheviks had indeed made the realisation of their own economic horizon dependent on the success of the German revolution. It was also for this reason that the debate over the long-term perspective of the Russian economy was seriously conducted once it was ascertained that a workers' revolution in Germany was not in the offing - at least not in the short-term. And it is also understandable why in opposition to the traditional vision in the party which awaited the coincidence of revolution in Germany and Europe, Stalin's line identified its outlook with socialism *in one country*.

It is regrettable that a notion which in the Bolshevik tradition had arisen from a concrete analysis of the concrete situation in a definite period, has now been elevated by a large section of the Radical Left to a general theoretical maxim on the impossibility of socialist economic advance within the boundaries of a single country. Thus an idealist, esoteric and passive conception of the socialist revolution has replaced the vivid understanding of Marx and Lenin of this revolution. The understanding which is also reflected in the brief warning of Engels, quoted above, about the tasks of the proletariat after the conquest of power (including its tasks in the *Paris Commune*).

Nevertheless, at a juncture in the Russian revolution, when the economic alternative of the bourgeoisie should have been truly counterpoised by the economic alternative of the proletariat, at a time when the economic decree of the workers' revolution, the mandate for the socialisation of production and the abolition of wage-labour, should have been translated into clear economic,

judicial and administrative policies and contrasted with the state capitalism presented under the guise of socialism, the debates within the Bolshevnik party were conducted within the framework of the struggle between nationalism and "internationalism". The confrontation between socialism and capitalism diminished *in Russia itself*, and hence not only a true alignment of forces was not made against nationalism, but also with the failure to make a *socialist* critique of the *economic* alternative of nationalism, the way was paved for the domination of this tendency in the Bolshevnik party and the Soviet state. The economic critique which existed, did not challenge the capitalist framework of the official line, and was merely concerned with the pace of industrialisation, the relation with the peasants and the like. In a nutshell, the fundamental theme of the proletarian revolution, that is the *socialist* economy, was not contended in these debates.

6- On the Soviet Union today

The present Soviet society is capitalist. Arguments for a new mode of production or a transitional economy and suchlike are not valid. Furthermore, in our view the features of the Soviet capitalist economy are not identical with the features predominant in western Europe and USA. In our belief, a capitalism which is established and consolidated in the name of socialism after a workers' revolution, has specific characteristics which must be recognised and studied. The prevalence of wage-labour, the predominance of labour-power as a commodity and the organisation of social production on the basis of wage-labour, are all sufficient to prove that the Soviet economy is a capitalist economy. But what should be explained about the peculiarities of this economy are of a more concrete nature than these general characteristics of capitalism. For instance the question of fragmentation of capital and competition, the system which in the Soviet Union facilitates the operation of the fundamental laws and exigencies of capital as objective laws external to it, the forms which the reserve army of labour takes up in this society, the way in which the surplus-value is distributed and divided between different parts of the whole social capital and different branches of production, the role of price and market in this economy, are some of the issues which should be studied. Here I shall not dwell on these matters. This is a very important area for discussion, and investigation. Here it suffices to present our points of view on the nature of the Soviet economy in a polemical fashion. On this issue, both myself and comrade Iraj Azarin in our articles on the Sweezy-Bettelheim debate* have already put forward points which should have clarified the outline of our position on the subject.

7- One fundamental lesson of the workers' revolution in the Soviet Union

* A reference to articles written by the author and Iraj Azarin in the first issue of the bulletin *Marxism and the Question of the Soviet Union* published March 1986.

The lesson that the Radical Left has mainly learnt from the experience of the Soviet Union is either one on the issue of "democracy" or on the necessity to preserve one's "ideological purity". They all emphasise how theoretical slips can pave the way for the defeat of the workers' revolution; how a breaking of the element of democracy in the theory of socialism and hence the insensitivity to the violation of democracy in inner-party relations or in the state structure, can have destructive consequences for the proletarian revolution. These conclusions, if they are not abstracted from their material and historical basis, are of course important and valuable contributions. But these do not yet address the key question which a present-day communist should learn from the experience of the Russian revolution, that is the very question on which Engels on the basis of the experience of the Commune has laid stress. No degree of theoretical preparedness, no degree of theoretical education, no degree of preponderance of democratic ideas and methods among us, can assure that at the moment when the workers' revolution takes shape we shall have a party as powerful, solid and clear-sightedness as the Bolshevik party. What we could have, and unfortunately the Bolsheviks did not enjoy in the proper sense, would be a clear economic perspective for the revolutionary transformation of society after the seizure of power by the working class. Once the working class seizes the power, society will objectively face this question: what is it going to do with this power? If this power is not employed to bring about a revolution in the economic relations of society, and to transform the foundation of bourgeois property and production; if the political power of the working class is not used as a means to establish common ownership over the means of production and to abolish wage-labour, if this power is not exploited to bring about the *economic revolution* which constitutes the essence of the socialist revolution of the proletariat, then any victory is doomed to failure, then even the political domination of the workers will be something temporary and, in a wider historical context, inconclusive - this is the fundamental lesson of the workers' revolution in Russia.

THE DILEMMA OF THE REVOLUTION

Iraj Azarin

Comrade Hekmat presented the basis of our discussion. My job here is to give our conception of the course of the workers' revolution in Russia up to the late '20s. Before going into this, I wanted to re-emphasise certain points.

I have to say a few things about our methodology and point of departure which we have named a *socialist critique*. To begin with, we have not tried to present our criticism, here, in opposition to those who believe that the Soviet Union is a socialist state. Our criticism stands alongside the other "radical" criticisms of the USSR, and in fact in distinction to and demarcation from these views. Clearly, each of these critical schools, depending on its particular conception, focuses on particular problematic (bureaucracy, internationalism, the state structure, etc.). But these do not necessarily - or, it should be said, generally - hold the same key position with us as they do with the other analyses. The point is that our analysis is able to explain the issues which hold a key status in the other radical stands. Moving from this position, we can explain our standpoint on all these issues, in a distinct way. In fact our criticism of the experience of the working class in the Soviet Union is at the same time a criticism directed against the existing "radical" critical views. I remind you that, as comrade Hekmat also said, the Soviet problematic has two components for us: one is the explanation of the nature of the prevailing relations of production in the USSR, and the other is the historical explanation of the emergence of the present-day Soviet Union, i.e. how a victorious workers' revolution ended up in the present situation - a situation totally removed from the fundamental cause of the revolution, i.e. a socialist society.

With regard to the first aspect of the Soviet problematic, i.e. the explanation of the nature of the production relations in the Soviet Union, the various critical schools provide generally four kinds of answers: a) A new mode of production exists in the Soviet Union; b) There is basically no mode of production in the Soviet Union; c) The USSR is neither capitalist nor socialist; it is in transition from the one to the other (the traditional Trotskyist view); and d) The Soviet Union is capitalist - state-capitalist. In purely theoretical terms, all these four categories exist, but obviously they do not have equal practical prevalence (In fact, logically, it is very hard to imagine that there may be any more categories. And some of these views, especially the one questioning the existence of any mode of production, seem to exist only on account of this "logical probability"!).

In our earlier writings we have touched upon the first viewpoint which maintains that a new mode of production exists in the Soviet Union. Theoretically, valid arguments have been put forward against this view in the polemics of other currents. It is not difficult to reject this hypothesis. How can a new mode of production spring up and become established without there existing historically and in the previous mode of production any sign of its development, any sign

of the forces which give rise to it? The contradiction between this viewpoint with historical materialism and Marxist theory is so obvious that its advocates in order to substantiate their position necessarily leave the framework of the Soviet discussion and get down to reviewing and revising the fundamentals of historical materialism. In any case these views have a long history and I think from the late 1930s they were systematically advanced by some currents which had split from Trotskyism. "Collective Bureaucracy", "State Collective Production", etc., these are the designations employed by these currents, as well as by some anarcho-syndicalist groupings and recently by Sweezy (and, in another way, by a group in Britain called the Revolutionary Communist Party) to describe the nature of the production relations in the Soviet Union.

The second viewpoint which maintains that basically no mode of production exists in the Soviet Union, is really a naive one. Such a view has largely been proposed by the *Critique* journal in Scotland and by its main theoretician Tikitin. Evidently, this view totally lacks a serious political content. From a purely theoretical aspect this school has not had much success and has rarely been taken seriously. Even its initiators and protagonists have not really pursued their argument. At any rate, it is by no means difficult to criticise it.

The traditional Trotskyist school, the "transition period" hypothesis, is a more familiar viewpoint. It is necessary to criticize it with regard to its conception of the production relations in the Soviet Union, and, in general, its conception of capitalism and socialism.

The other viewpoint regards the relations of production in the Soviet Union as capitalist, but here we are not confronted with a single viewpoint. Different currents from different traditions (Trotskyist, Maoist, etc.), with diverse interpretations, have advanced this proposition. Their common position of regarding the Soviet Union capitalist is by no means based on a common conception and method.

In fact this last point applies to all the above four categories concerning the nature of the production relations in the USSR. Looking at the specific analysis and argumentation of any current or school, we see that despite agreeing on the conclusion (whether those who regard the Soviet Union a capitalist country, or those who believe in the existence of a new mode of production there) they provide different concepts and arguments. Even in the case of standpoints with opposite conclusions we can see that identical concepts and arguments such as bureaucracy, neglect of internationalism, etc., hold identical places in their elaborations. This remark alerts us to the importance of the other component of the Soviet problematic, namely the historical and concrete exposition of the course of the workers' revolution, and the elucidation of factors which led to its ultimate degeneration and defeat. Since it is only in the concrete elaboration of the causes of degeneration, or more precisely in the determination of the battlefields in which the workers' revolution had failed, that the different outlooks on the Soviet experience show clearly to the socialist movement of the working class the essence of their criticism and consequently the lessons they have learned from this experience. It is the explanation of the ultimate causes of the defeat of the working class in the Soviet Union which also in fact ascertains the content of any standpoint on the nature of the production relations in the present Soviet Union.

Thus, it is not by recognising the capitalist nature of the production relations in the Soviet Union that we distinguish ourselves fundamentally from other critical outlooks. It is our *socialist critique* of the Soviet experience, that marks out our fundamental differences and naturally influences our understanding of the nature of the present-day Soviet Union.

Hence the outlook we are presenting differs fundamentally from other radical outlooks essentially on the basis of our different understanding of socialism. It is obvious that the outlooks whose conception of socialism *in economic terms* is more or less what has been established in the Soviet Union, cannot by definition have any socialist criticism of the Soviet experience. Needless to say, I am not referring to those for whom the Soviet Union and the Soviet camp are a proof of socialism and the validity of their ideals. I have in mind those critics who recognise the Soviet Union economically to be a socialist country but have a very serious criticism of the political set-up there and also in other countries in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Camp. As an example, many of the theoreticians who are the product of the New Left movement in Europe and the USA during the '60s and the beginning of the '70s, and, as it were, belong to the tradition of "Western Marxism", recognise the Soviet Union to be a socialist country in the economic sense (and often favour an extension of the role of market there), whilst declaring that they are for a different kind of socialism: "democratic socialism", "socialism with a human face", i.e. a socialism with the preservation and the promotion of bourgeois democracy, etc.. They are strongly influenced by the experiences of Yugoslavia, Dubcek in Czechoslovakia, and so on. Such critics also exist in some of the European social democratic parties, and generally speaking can be identified with the social democratic tradition. They *explicitly* limit their criticism to the domain of democracy. But for now this group of critics is not my major concern. I am referring to the group of critics who do not recognise the relations dominant in the Soviet Union to be socialist in the economic sense but themselves lack any different understanding of the economics of socialism. For them, too, economically speaking, socialism is a state economy plus planning, that is that which exists in the Soviet Union. But these critics, in an eclectic manner add to the definition of socialism in the economic domain *superstructural* components, and

subsequently conclude that if the dominant mode of production in the Soviet Union cannot yet be called socialist it is because socialism proper cannot exist without democracy or orthodox ideology, and the like. Such outlooks, whatever they may say in criticizing this society, are concerned with the superstructure, or to put it more precisely, they explain the *reason* for the absence of socialism in the Soviet Union on the basis of the lack of certain superstructural components. One such outlooks is the Maoist outlook, or the trend which is known as the "anti-revisionist" tradition and which identifies itself with such a trait. In another instance we have

dealt with the views of Bettelheim* . We have regarded such criticisms of the Soviet Union, and in general such conceptions of socialism, as *mystic socialism*.

As concerns the traditional trend of Trotskyism, that is the outlook which believes that the Soviet Union is passing through a transitional stage (and it seems there is no end to it!) it, too, fails to have a concept of socialism different from what has, in theory and practice, been carried out in the Socialist Camp. This view firstly considers what now exists in the Soviet Union to be, in economic terms, the equivalent of the destruction of capitalism. Secondly, and more importantly, its version of socialism in the economic domain is the *same* state ownership and economic planning - with the proviso that as yet the degree of development of the productive forces does not allow the possibility of any comprehensive planning, that the mode of production is a "transitional one". However, in the traditional Trotskyist outlook, and also in that of the Italian Left Communism (the Bordigist faction) any possibility of the establishment of socialism after the 1917 revolution is dismissed outright. According to such outlooks the fortunes of the proletariat out of all these is, historically speaking, either a long transitional period or state capitalism (according to Bordigists) - be it with bureaucracy or with more or less internationalism. However, it should be pointed out that the views which are identified with their rejection of the possibility of the establishment of socialism after the workers' revolution in Russia in 1917 (and even now) as far as their theoretical and intellectual development, and to be more precise their class ancestry is concerned, precede Trotsky and the like, go back to the overall theoretical framework of Menshevism and thereby to the dominant trend within the Second International and the social democracy, i.e. the view that envisions the possibility of socialism only as a continuation of the complete and "terminated" development of capitalism. In short both the outlooks which do not regard the establishment of socialism in the economic sense possible in the Soviet society after the October Revolution, and the viewpoints which in the economic sense do not have a different conception of socialism from what is provided by the Russian revisionism, cannot of course examine the experience of the working class in the Soviet Union from the standpoint of a socialist critique. As comrade Hekmat mentioned, during the past several decades numerous radical critiques have been presented in explaining the Soviet experience. As a result there now exists a list of problematic in this regard. Of course one can lengthen this list by adding a few more titles to it, such as: the influence of the Soviet degeneration on the activity and deviations of the Comintern; the question of economic backwardness in Russia (the prevalence of petty-production and so on) and its place in the degeneration of the struggle for socialism; the assessment of the different Oppositions and fractions within the Bolshevik party; the appraisal of the results of industrialisation and collectivisation; the relevance of abandoning theoretical and practical principles, and so on. I cannot deal with all these issues individually, and perhaps it is right if here I only present briefly

* Reference to an earlier article written by the author on Bettelheim's critique of the Soviet Union. The article was headed "A Critique of Mystic Socialism". An English translation of this article was published by the CPI in June 1989.

our assessment of the course of the workers' revolution up to the end of the '20s - the decade in which the question of advance or defeat of the revolution was settled and the material bases for the future developments in the Soviet Union were created. Whilst expounding our assessment of the course of the Revolution in the '20s I shall also point out implicitly our demarcations with others on the pivotal issues that they put forward. It is natural that I should lay more emphasis on questions relevant to our own positive argument than on others. Perhaps we can deal more directly with these points in answering questions which might be raised later.

THE QUESTION OF ECONOMIC REVOLUTION AND THE INITIAL STRATEGY OF THE BOLSHEVIKS

The state which was instituted after the October Revolution was the state of a working class which had won the political power. The proletarian dictatorship had been established and consolidated to the extent that the question of dealing with the economic domain and revolutionising the economic base was well on its agenda as an objective necessity.

Unfortunately today one has to remind such obvious a fact that the economic content of the workers' revolution is none other than socialism. By definition, the aim of the socialist revolution is to build a socialist economy. Otherwise, no doctrine could ever penetrate the social movement for socialism. The social movement of the working class against capitalism has historical precedence to Marxism, and Marx's scientific socialism is the revolutionary theory of this revolutionary movement. Essentially, it is for the accomplishment of the economic revolution that, in opposition to anarchist schools, Marx's scientific socialism deems it necessary that the political power is won by the working class. No indicator demonstrates better the objective possibility for the establishment of socialism in the economic sense than the existence of a working class which demands socialism and has conquered the power. The socialist revolution is neither a matter of accident nor is the outcome of voluntarism of the "revolutionary avant-garde". The socialist revolution only occurs in the context of a socio-economic crisis whose occurrence has no reason other than the fact that capitalism as a mode of production has been plunged so deeply into disarray that in the view of millions of workers, and more generally the deprived masses of society, its substitution with socialism has become an urgent matter, requiring of them to resort to *revolution* against it. That the economic content of workers' revolution is socialism was a tautology to Marx and Engels. The views which uphold that the Russian society was not objectively ready to adopt a socialist economy and thus state capitalism was necessary there, or those who took the notion that socialism is only realisable at an international level and hence the economic content of the workers' revolution in Russia could only be a kind of capitalism, are fundamentally alienated from Marx and Engels's socialism, and from the social origin and content of Marxism. For Lenin, too, the assertion that "imperialism is the epoch of proletarian revolution" was not simply a political or tactical statement. It was a challenge to the common belief prevalent in the international social democracy on the historical course of

capitalist development and the attitude of the proletariat towards it. The understanding dominant in the Second International was that capitalism develops until it enters the monopolist and imperialist phase. This was thought to be the ultimate limit for capitalist centralisation, and it was assumed that later through reforms in this extremely centralised capitalism, the latter would be gradually handed down to a workers' government which would introduce socialism. Hence, in view of the Second International imperialism was busy preparing the material foundation, material in the technical sense of the term, for socialism. The gist of Lenin's analysis and critique was that "imperialism is the epoch of proletarian revolution", in the sense that the decay of capitalist production relations is so exacerbated and evident in the era of imperialism that socialism can and must replace it; that the only economic alternative of the proletariat for these circumstances, and thus the sole economic content of the workers' revolution, is socialism. It is therefore clear that no intermediate programme of capitalist development, whether it be a state model, or the promotion of petty-production or whatever, could have been *in the economic sense* valid or legitimate. I repeat, *economically* speaking the adoption of no measure which was immediately capitalistic could have amounted to a necessary economic step for building socialism, and considered as an *economic* pre-requisite for the socialist transformation. It is interesting to note that neither Lenin, nor any other Bolshevnik leader doubted the fact that the working-class socialist revolution should continue up to an economic revolution. If there was disagreement - which there was - it was one on which strategy to choose for the socialist transformation of the economy. Unfortunately, it is necessary to remind all these, since apparently it is in re-examining the experience of the working class and the Bolshevnik leaders in Russia that the Radical Left has made fashionable such arguments as "the economic content of the October Revolution could only be state capitalism".

This leads us to the second point. It is an historical fact that the Bolshevnik party which led the workers' revolution in Russia had established its strategy for the irrevocable victory of the revolution in Russia on the basis of the triumph of revolution in Europe, and in particular in Germany. When we speak of the *irrevocable* victory of revolution in Russia we mean that the Bolshevniks began the revolution in Russia but saw it as a link in a series of revolutions in Europe and as an introduction to them. They thought they would conquer the political power and then it would be followed by victorious workers' revolutions in other European countries. It is out of such a vision that in the first Constitution of the Soviet Russia, the Soviet land has no geographical definitions. It is only defined as a union, a federation of Soviet republics joined together. It was hoped that the revolution would not be limited to the realm of the Russian Empire. And it was not just a *hope*, it was a real possibility, since this strategy was based on the realities of an imperialist war. A few years before the outbreak of the First World War, the resolution adopted by the Second International, moved by Lenin and Luxembourg, presented very clearly the strategy to the international socialists that the occurrence of a European imperialist war, by exacerbating the hardship of the masses, provided the necessity and the possibility of the revolutionary action by the socialists and the working class for the organisation of a workers' socialist revolution. The working class should respond to an imperialist war only by resorting

to a workers' revolution. The Bolsheviks accomplished this very ably, and naturally were hoping to see similar events in Europe, and in particular the German revolution - a revolution which did occur but what became of it is a different story.

Being faithful to an strategy which the Russian revolution was to be only a part of it, it was natural and rational that the Bolsheviks did not envision in the first instance the question of building the economic foundations of socialism as a matter limited to Russia. But the wave of revolution which was sweeping Europe subsided in 1921. In particular after the March action the chance for the victory of a workers' revolution in Germany led by the communists was missed, until the time when again in 1923 for a short period of time a near-revolutionary situation was created. Between 1921-1923, i.e., after the inception of NEP, and despite the subsiding of the German revolution, the economic construction of socialism was objectively put forward. But in 1923 the fate of two events made this issue appear in a new and totally different fashion to what it had been envisioned in the initial strategy of the Bolsheviks. In the first instance the last attempts of the Comintern to spark off a revolution in Germany did not bear any fruits. In Germany the communists could not - or were not able to - make use of the favourable circumstances which were created. The second event, which will also be dealt with below, is the regeneration of industry and generally speaking the regeneration of the post-civil war economy two years after the adoption of NEP. Nevertheless, by 1923 it had become clearly obvious that all attempts to trigger a revolution in Germany had failed. Objectively, the Bolsheviks had succeeded to consolidate the bases of workers' power, despite the failure of the revolution in Europe, but the socialist transformation of the economy had now presented itself, albeit in new circumstances totally different to the conditions which justified the initial strategy of the Bolsheviks. The question was: what was to be done now that the German revolution had not occurred?

Thus, about 1923 the internal debates of the Bolshevik party was focused on the issue of economic alternative, the way out of NEP, the path of socialist transformation, and so on. In fact, the material bases for the formation of different oppositions within the Bolshevik party (from this junction till a few years after), and the intense controversy which they had, was the question of how to advance the revolution in the economic arena.

Here, it is appropriate to make a reference to the issue of "German revolution and internationalism". Of course we shall return to this subject again when we discuss the economic platforms of different factions. Some have noted that the October Bolsheviks were internationalist since they were awaiting the occurrence of the German revolution. But to see this as a manifestation of internationalism, and even worse to appraise that as the cause of one's internationalism is really a superficial approach to the subject. There is nothing internationalist in "asking for help" from the victorious proletariat of another country. As a rule, internationalism should at least require of one to endeavour and labour for the victory of workers in countries other than one's own. However a detailed analysis of the case would reveal that in the midst of the imperialist world war, the recognition of a single cause for the outbreak of revolutions in different countries was the justification which led the Bolsheviks to believe that

the German revolution was a probable event. On the basis of the probable course of events, if the Bolsheviks were to be asked how the Russian workers would preserve the conquered power, or how the Russian working class could build socialism, they would have naturally responded by asking: "do you not see how the imperialist war has fanned the world revolution?" and added that the revolution would occur in Europe and that the German proletariat would triumph. And these circumstances would remove any danger of foreign invasion of Russia, and that ultimately the victorious working classes in Russia, Germany, (and may be in Italy, and Bulgaria), with their cooperation, would build a single community based on communal economy, etc.. Later and in particular since October 1923, i.e. when it became evident that the revolutionary situation in Europe would subside for a long period to come, the same Bolsheviks had to produce a different solution to the problem of how a socialist transformation of the economy could eventuate in Russia - and they did attempt to produce such a solution.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC MEASURES OF THE BOLSHEVIK GOVERNMENT: WAR COMMUNISM AND NEP

An assessment of War Communism can be made with no difficulty. Perhaps, for the reason that it was the subject of numerous debates and polemics in the Bolshevik party itself and that it was eventually Lenin's views which in their entirety prevailed in the Bolshevik party. Thus, it is clear that War Communism was by no means conceived as a measure or stage necessary for setting the economic foundation of socialism. As a matter of fact War Communism was considered to be a kind of war economy, a war-time economic mobilization, an exigency in the service of war efforts, etc.. But since the acquisition of grain from the peasants - after deducing a portion for the subsistence of the peasant household - and the delivery of the necessary goods to the countryside and towns was not carried out according to any kind of capitalist norms of exchange, and thus money played no role, and since the transactions between nationalised industries were consequently conducted according to the priorities of war and hence without any heed to the norms of exchange, the expression "War Communism" was coined for the prevalent state of affairs.

As for NEP (New Economic Policy) it is a totally different story. In this period the peasants were allowed to sell their food surpluses in the market after deductions were made for the tax in kind. Generally speaking, trade and transaction were to a large extent relieved of any constraints. And so the activity of small and medium-sized enterprises in the private sector were legalised. In short, in NEP a certain extent of capitalist practices were recognised. The phrase "state capitalism" was sometimes used by Lenin to describe this period in a specific context and in a definite sense, and wholly different from what was later associated with this phrase. For Lenin it meant a state of affairs where the monopoly of foreign trade was in the hands of the workers' state, the "key industries" were nationalised and under the supervision of the state, and all these rendered it possible for the state to have an overall control of the economy. However,

there did exist diverse views on the significance of NEP - something which later in the controversies of the mid 20's and the succeeding years became the subject of intense polemics by different factions of the Bolshevik party. And it was the authority of Lenin which was evoked by different contending factions in support of their views and assessment of NEP. It is true that Lenin has somewhere described NEP as a "retreat"; it is also true that in another instance he has remarked that this policy could last for a very long time, and that it was only by surpassing this stage that one would arrive at socialism, and so on. Nevertheless, this new economic policy was introduced from 1921, and notwithstanding the changes and reverses it underwent, continued until 1929 ,i.e., a few months after the adoption of the first Five-Year Plan and the collectivisation of agriculture.

Our assessment of NEP is this: we hold to the view that it did not have relevance as an economic alternative for the proletarian state, nor did it bear any significance as a step which was *economically* necessary to lay the foundations of socialism. In our opinion, the main feature of NEP was that *it revitalised the very act of production in the Russian society*. All historians of the Russian revolution have clearly described how at the end of the period of War Communism the whole fabric of society was disintegrating. Millions had perished. Cities were deserted. The whole society was simply on the verge of breaking apart and being atomised; in the sense that isolated economic units based on natural economy were being formed in the countryside. After the cessation of the civil war, the loss of a considerable part of the Russian territory had left no place for many former soldiers of the Red Army to return to. The precondition for the existence of a society, as Marx said, is that the process of production (which also always means the process of reproduction) is conducted socially. Otherwise a mass of human beings, however numerous, could not be considered constituting a society. Russia was on the brink of such circumstances. It was then more a "geographical" entity than a society, essentially because the social production was disintegrated.

Thus, in our outlook the *raison d'être* for NEP was *to revitalise the social production as a precondition for the very survival of the Russian society*. Regardless of this or that quotation from Lenin, it is our view that if even the works of Lenin from that period are understood in their real historical context, it becomes quite clear that the essence of NEP was to restructure the social production. Lenin used to refer to the "linking of the town with the countryside". We understand this reference to mean that the whole philosophy of NEP was to hold together a disintegrating society.

Of course the adoption of NEP by the Bolshevik party was a controversial matter. At the end of the civil war there were those who used to criticize NEP for its capitalist nature and demanded that the revitalisation of the social production is done with non-capitalist methods, viz. without a monetary and exchange economy. In our view, Lenin gave a justifiable reply to these criticisms: workers' government cannot and should not subordinate the vital question of food, which is a matter of life and death to millions to whether money and exchange have anything to do with the way the production is carried out, or to whether money has any role in the delivery of food. When on the morrow of the end of the war the question of daily life becomes the issue

in a war-stricken city, the quickest way to meet the problem for the time being is to give the population food and supply them with a minimum of housing and healthcare in the way that the society already knows and is used to. If that means that for the present the baker will give bread to the people queueing for it only in exchange for money, or that the estate agency will hand in the keys for its accommodation in exchange for money, it is *for the moment* a secondary matter.

So what made the introduction of NEP, from the vantage point of the working class now in power, understandable and justifiable was by no means the claim that NEP was the way for building socialism, or was the *economic* requirement for the subsequent building of socialism. NEP was justified since at a time when a total economic disintegration was threatening the very existence of the Russian society it was a certain step which could provide the social bases for preserving the society as an entity.

With the introduction of NEP, the whole energy of the Bolshevik party was directed at moving it ahead. We have already mentioned that it was in this year that the waves of revolution subsided in Europe. But still it was natural that at the inception of NEP the question of "how we are to emerge out of NEP" was not raised but, rather, the question "whether NEP will succeed?" was posed. The turning-point was reached in 1925 when the necessity to deal with the economy presented itself saliently. The defeat of the German revolution and thus the need for a revision of the initial strategy of the Bolsheviks for the continuation of the revolution notwithstanding, NEP had led in the past four consecutive years to the recovery of the production level both in agriculture and in industry to the pre-First World War levels. An expression current at the time in the debates of the Bolsheviks was: the period of "restoration" had ended, it was time for expansion and "reconstruction to commence. Hence, the question of what the economic content of the workers' revolution should be, and how a socialist economy could be founded, became the central issue in the internal debates of the Bolshevik party.

THE FORMATION OF FRACTIONS OVER DIFFERENT ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

It was at about this time that the issue of "socialism in one country" was first put forward. The thesis "socialism in one country" more than being a demarcation line for different economic *programmes* in fact separated different *strategies* from one another. Now that the German revolution had not occurred and the initial strategy of the Bolsheviks had lost its relevance, how could the path of economic construction of socialism be pursued? The advocates of the thesis of "socialism in one country" by emphasising "one country" were in fact putting forward the strategy that socialism should and could be built in the economic sense by relying on the existing resources in Russia, and that it is an aim worth striving for. The opponents of this thesis in these years were in fact still stressing the initial strategy of the Bolsheviks. As to which specific

economic programme should have been pursued the advocates and the opponents of "socialism in one country" also differed. The advocates of this thesis, i.e., the Bukharin-Stalin faction sought in the continuation of NEP, a bloc with the peasants, and the preservation of the economic relations and regime dominant in NEP - a way through which the economic victory of socialism could be secured in Russia. On the contrary, the opponents of this thesis i.e. Trotsky's faction or the Left Opposition laid emphasis on ending NEP and pointed out that the economic programme which Russia should have pursued was one of industrialisation and economic planning. It is common knowledge that the subsequent outcome of the issue of "socialism in one country" was a programme different to one identified with it in the '20s, and that it was eventually the course of accelerated industrialisation and collectivised agriculture which was conceived by the Stalin faction to be the path which would lead to the establishment of socialism. But the point which should be emphasised at this stage is that firstly all the debating factions within the Bolshevik party agreed that the continuation of the revolution to the economic level and the socialist transformation of the economic base was an imperative and vital task. Secondly, the Left Opposition faction recognised the *progress* towards building socialism something quite necessary, but not that its victory or complete establishment was possible by relying only on the resources of Russia itself. It was on the question of economic programme which the theoreticians of the Left Opposition faced a dead-end. In his latest economic debates which could still (in 1927) be presented openly, Preobrazhensky put forward a complete economic plan. But in propounding this solution he was faced with the obstacle that the progress of industrialisation and planning could not go further than a certain point, that it would encounter resource shortages, and that the quest on of foreign aid to overcome these problems would be raised. In other words the programme which the Left Opposition was putting forward for the economic transformation could not be pursued by the existing resources of Russia until "final victory" and the establishment of socialist relations. The question of "obtaining foreign resources" was then posed for the Soviet state, just as it is today posed for numerous states, and entails the issue of debts from international organisations or the advanced capitalist countries. But for a state which at the time was under imperialist siege and with which the outside capitalist world had no relation but one of enmity, this issue could naturally have significance only in the form of obtaining "aid from the victorious proletariat of an advanced industrial country".

Thus for the Left Opposition its emphasis on the initial strategy of the Bolsheviks stemmed from objective economic reasons. In my view the fact that the leaders of the Opposition sometimes expressed opposition to the policies of the ruling Stalin faction on international issues and the policy of the Comintern, or in some instances attempted to present the possibility of building socialism at a world level as an alternative before Stalin, are all facts which only show how for the sake of defeating the opponent in the ongoing political struggle of the time all different issues were being wrapped up under the heading of a single thesis. Since otherwise one does not need to be reminded that both the origin and the content of this thesis was always about the question of which strategy to take for the accomplishment of the economic revolution in Russia. That is why I believe that to link the issue of internationalism to the economic debates

of the Left Opposition is to confound the issue. The Left Opposition could have been right about the policies conceived by Stalin-Bukharin or they might have been waging a struggle against bureaucracy effectively along marxist principles, despite whatever personal intentions or factional political aims. But it is important that we can discern that the emphasis of these Bolshevik leaders on the initial strategy of the Bolsheviks, and their opposition to the thesis "socialism in one country", was completely based on the analysis which they had about the possibilities for the socialist transformation of the Russian economy. In their view the socialist transformation of the economy should have started with a planned industrialisation; but even then they did not regard it possible that the final establishment of "socialism" could be accomplished in this way unless foreign resources could be reached or the "German revolution" came to their aid.

Below, we shall again deal with the economic programmes of the different factions. But here it is necessary to emphasise that from the beginning of the debates of the Bolshevik party to its end all factions shared a common conception of the economic meaning of socialism, something which became a point of reference for them. In all these controversies, the argument was over different *ways, strategies, and programmes* for arriving at "socialism", and none of the participants in the controversy ever questioned the *aim* of the programme and strategy of the other. As a matter of fact, the debates were conducted in the context of a general conception of what socialism means economically. This fact that the conception of socialism which is presupposed at the time in the debates was fundamentally remote from Marx's, holds a pivotal place in our outlook.

MARX'S SOCIALISM, THE PREDOMINANT CONCEPTION OF SOCIALISM IN THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY AND ITS BACKGROUND

In all the discussions that were going on in the Bolshevik party at this juncture about the economic foundation of socialism, the latter was understood by almost all to be tantamount to state ownership plus economic planning. There was no mention of the fundamental and essential component of Marx's socialism, namely the abolition of wage-labour. In Marx's analysis the revolutionary economic transformation of capitalism is nothing but a change in the *production relations* between human beings. Every economic crisis of capitalism exposes to the whole of society the decay and inadequacy of the capitalist relations of production. It is the production relations, the relation of man to man, or more precisely the historical array of the two main social classes in the process of production, which has become a menace for the existence of society. One class owns the means of production whilst the other is deprived of them, and they are linked together in a wage-labour system for social production to take place. This system, too, engenders the working class as the propertyless class in every cycle of production, whilst on the other hand ensures the accumulation of capital and secures the position of the capitalist class. Hence, it is the relation of men to the means of production, or more precisely the relation of classes to the means of production, and consequently the production relations between classes

which are reproduced by the capitalist system. Hence, it becomes clear that the fundamental way to overthrow this system must be the disruption of the production relations between classes, i.e., the dismantling of the wage-labour system. Otherwise the mere expropriation of a part of society, namely, the bare abolition of the ownership of the capitalist class over the means of production, which is no doubt a necessary and vital requirement for the crushing of the capitalist relations, does not on its own tear down the wage-labour system, unless it is accompanied by a new social organisation of production. A society in which the capitalist relations of production are abolished is a society in which communal ownership over the means of production is established. In such society all the people work and the fruits of their labour belongs to all members of society; every individual is entitled to take a portion of the products of society for personal consumption, or to put it more correctly society is obliged to provide for the consumption of every individual. One could compare such a society with the institution of the family, where solely because of blood ties - and certainly because of fulfilling one's family duties - every one of its members can sit at the dinner table, and expect to be looked after at the time of illness.

In communal society, too, simply because one is working one becomes a member of society and society provides for his material and intellectual life. Naturally, in such society where the means of production and hence its products do not belong to a special individual or group, where the whole proceeds of society are owned by all, and one can take a portion of them for one's consumption, there is no need for market, price, money, etc.; in short all categories of the capitalist economy become superfluous. In other words, since the object of production and distribution is not to enhance the wealth and economic power of definite persons or groups, they are carried out in a conscious and planned manner. Thus planning is an important aspect of socialist economy. But it is not an aim in itself, it is a means to accomplish the essence of socialism, namely, the abolition of wage-labour and the establishment of a new social organisation of labour. However, the concept of planning has been taken out of its real context, and has become mistakenly the central issue in all subsequent versions of socialism without any regards been paid to the objectives it was set to resolve; and this to the extent that socialism is now merely taken to be planning, whilst in fact the real basis of socialist planning - common ownership and abolition of wage-labour - is left out. As to the manner in which the consumer goods are distributed, or the amount which every individual can take from the whole of social products for his personal consumption, there is a point which needs to be emphasised. It is evident that so long as economic abundance has not been achieved and there is a limited amount of consumer goods available to society, the members of society can take these goods only in the proportion that leaves something for others. Marx has discussed this issue clearly, and said that in this phase of socialism a "just" ratio must naturally be the basis for distribution, and for instance it could be said that each individual can take consumer goods in proportion to the labour which he has done the society. Of course Marx explains that even such an arrangement is "just" in a bourgeois conception of equality; since the consumption needs of individuals are not equal. Hence, this bourgeois equality and justice like all other bourgeois "equalities" carries with it the seeds of inequality. It is necessary to emphasise that it is *within a framework of socialist relations*

that Marx is proposing that the *proportion of the labour of individuals* to be a standard of distribution. This point has been completely falsified by Russian revisionism and trends splitting from it. Once socialism is reduced merely to planning; once "planning" is simply added to a given capitalist relations; it is evident that in such system the commensuration of the right of individuals on the basis of labour, has no other meaning but the very preservation of wage-labour for the worker, in short the continuation of exploitation. Here "the share of worker from the social products" too is equivalent to the wage which he receives, that is a sum which belongs to him according to the laws of capitalist accumulation, i.e. after his surplus labour is robbed off, and is determined by the level of productivity. In other words what the worker receives is no greater than the value of his labour-power.

Before proceeding with our main argument, a reference to one theoretical point could be useful. I mentioned earlier that in the bourgeois versions of socialism, socialism is reduced to planning. Theoretically, these trends argue that by disturbing the operation of market, planning will put an end to commodity production. Once, according to a plan, everything not only is produced but is also distributed and directly delivered to the consumer, then, in the view of these trends, products are no longer commodities. Hence, labour-power is not a commodity either. From this they conclude that the precondition for the abolition of wage-labour is the introduction of a comprehensive economic planning which can account for all production and distribution, down to the last item of product. This of course requires advanced technology. In fact such a high degree of technology which even today people like Mandel argue does not exist in a united Europe! Therefore, the argument continues, the development of productive forces is the precondition for such planning which is in turn a requirement for the abolition of wage-labour. This is of course not Marxism, but technological determinism. Such an outlook stands in opposition to Marx's socialism. Historical experience, too, proves how it has been used by bourgeois spokesmen and states to enslave the working class in capitalist relations.

Let us return to our main argument. I said that in the controversy over the building of socialism in the Bolshevik party, socialism was understood almost by all the debating factions to mean state ownership and central planning. The most essential component of Marx's socialism, the abolition of wage-labour, was all forgotten about. But this was not the outcome of a theoretical oblivion, nor was it due to the ignorance of the Bolshevik leaders of the fact that socialism is nothing but the smashing of capitalist relations. This had objective and subjective causes which I shall now deal with.

The first point that should be pointed out is that the Bolsheviks were part of an international socialist current, the Second International. That finally at the end of the First World War and with the exposure of the opportunism of the official line of the International, the Bolsheviks split from it, and that the Bolsheviks through all the period of their involvement with the Second International belonged to its left faction, does not change the fact that they were greatly influenced in the theoretical field by the version and understanding of the Second International of Marx's theory.

Reducing Marx's socialism to state capitalism was the official version of socialism as propounded by the Second International. For the Second International itself the prevalence of this version was not the product of a sheer and straightforward falsification. It had occurred in the context of certain objective and subjective conditions. Actually, a strong reformist tendency had taken shape in the Second International. In the sense that the road to power was pursued through electoral victories and, along with this the economic building of socialism was preached to be possible by means of a series of gradual reforms in capitalism. What gave this tendency room to manoeuvre was a "peaceful" period of class struggle in Europe. From the Paris Commune to the outbreak of the First World War, i.e. for about half a century with the exception of the 1905 Revolution in Russia, there was no revolutionary or intense upheaval in the class struggle in Europe. The existence of such a turmoil-free period of class struggle naturally gave greater momentum to the reformist tendency in the Second International. All parties of the Second International (except in Russia) were legal, and functioned openly. The rank and file of these parties was quite extensive and their membership was largely made up of working masses. The German Social Democratic Party which was in fact the backbone of the Second International managed to gain up to 33% of the votes cast, and the expectation that one day their electoral share would reach 51% was quite prevalent. Thus it was believed that by winning over the parliament it could be turned into a means of transforming capitalism.

A more important factor was a degree of real improvement in the living standard of the population at large including the working class brought about by the development of capitalism in this half century - a development which had acquired greater momentum with the rise of imperialism. The conditions of the working class in this half century had changed considerably, such that in Lenin's understanding, it had led to the creation of a stratum of labour aristocracy whose manner of living was quite comparable to that of the petty-bourgeois and, partly, of the bourgeois. Lenin deliberated in detail how this stratum of labour aristocracy in order to maintain its own social standing generally became an interested party in preserving capitalism. These were all the objective backgrounds which invigorated in the Second International the idea of state capitalism to the disadvantage of the cause of socialism. Under the pressure of these forces the cause of socialism had been reduced to the establishment of a kind of capitalism whose undesirable symptoms had been alleviated.

In the theoretical field natural sciences had made great progress in this fifty years. Darwinism as a theory of evolution had become quite established. The idea of "progress" and "evolution" in the Darwinian sense had acquired general acceptance. Marxism had very plainly been drained of its historical materialism and reduced to a theory of social evolution. A large number of the protagonists of the Second International, in particular its intellectual mentor Kautsky, recognised Darwinism and Marxism as being one single outlook. Trotsky, even after the October Revolution and the split from the Second International, talks about "Darwinism-Marxism" as a unitary theory, one for organic life and the other for social life. Nevertheless the dominance of such theoretical perceptions had the effect that socialism came to be understood as the natural extension of capitalism. The "inevitability of socialism" no longer meant that from the vantage-

point of one social class, the working class, putting an end to capitalism was both necessary and possible. But it was understood to mean that capitalism in its own course of development would pass into socialism. The theoretical elucidation of this notion in the economic field, has been formulated in some of the conclusions of Hilferding and also in Kautsky's conclusions on imperialism. In short, it amounted to the idea that capitalism in its monopoly and imperialist phase was moving ever more towards organising the social production as one entity, and forming national, and even global, monopolies and that this development in the economic sense is identical to socialism, or almost socialism. So it suffices that the political power is seized. To this extent even Bukharin who belonged to the left faction of the Second International shared these reasonings. On the question of the seizure of political power, Kautsky made the claim that the monopoly phase of capitalism whilst weakening the factor of competition in the economics, promoted the tendency for the expansion of democracy in the political terrain. Hence it was possible and practical to seize the political power by a parliamentary road and through elections. But Bukharin rejected this conclusion politically and contended that the true tendency of imperialism was to wage war and resort to reaction and dictatorship.

However, the point we made was that in the economic sense, socialism was understood only as state capitalism. The fundamental critique of Marx of capitalism as an exploitative system of production, had been replaced by a critique of the anarchy of production. In this version, socialism was nothing but a capitalism without its negative symptoms, a more productive, rationalised capitalism which would not waste its productive energy due to the anarchy of competition and market, but would through "planning" prevent overproduction and ensure that its resources were not unduly dissipated. Reduction of socialism to organised and planned capitalism was not a theoretical issue. It also made its imprint on the practice of all parties of the Second International. After the end of the First World War, a number of social democratic parties in Germany, Austria and even in Britain came to power. Their programme as government was nothing less than attempting to nationalise the industry, and to introduce planning. And to this date all social democratic parties, once in power, have adopted measures along these lines.

Bolshevism was by no means immune to the influence of these perceptions. Lenin made splendid but scattered remarks in distancing himself from this outlook, for instance in criticizing the idea of "organised capitalism" held by Bukharin and Hilferding. Likewise Lenin utterly rejected and considered absurd the claim that only a "completely advanced and mature capitalism" could be transformed into socialism. Leaving aside the fact that in methodology and attitude, the whole political life of Lenin, and particularly his role as the leader of the workers' revolution in October is indicative of his different understanding, one can also find this here and there in articles written by him. In his famous note, "On our revolution", which is one of his last works, he has explicitly expressed his attitude on this issue in distinction to the notion prevalent at the time. In the economic field, whether in the discussions on the party programme in 1919, or in the notes and even official documents drafted by him in the period after the end of the civil war and before the introduction of NEP, Lenin's emphasis on building socialism as a moneyless economy, devoid of commodity production, and especially as a new social

organisation of labour is quite conspicuous. These remarks and demarcations were scattered and never took the form of a coherent and exhaustive theoretical exposition against the understanding of the Second International.

That is why when one studies the foundation of the Comintern and the formation of the communist movement in the strict sense of the term, one finds that Comintern does not distinguish itself in this respect from the Second International. The founding of the Comintern was an international schism in the already existing socialist movement of the working class, and the Comintern formulated the bases of this split at its birth - and in completion of the efforts of internationalist socialists before its formation. But in these statements of demarcation there is no mention of how the Comintern had demarcated itself on the ultimate goal of socialism from the conception dominated in the Second International. The question of *state* is unequivocally referred to. A defence of the idea of *proletarian dictatorship* in Marxism, of the state of the Commune-type, of the Soviet state against the peaceful capture of parliament are all clearly and categorically expressed, and the question of tactics, of revolutionary tactics against reformist tactics are very prominent. The question of the advanced organisation of the class, the revolutionary communist party, against the federative and incoherent socialist parties is completely emphasised. But this important split in the working class movement did not develop to the extent of categorically differentiating oneself on the ultimate goal, socialism, from social democracy and the Second International. The Bolsheviks also carried this ambiguity.

But apart from the influence which the Bolsheviks received on the conception of socialism from the Second International, there were other powerful factors which helped to reduce the ideal of socialism to state capitalism. I would like to touch on these points now.

The long struggle of Russian social democracy against Tsarism and for the achievement of democracy, led to an understanding, even in the ranks of the Bolsheviks, that the economic aspect of the socialist revolution was a matter for the more remote future. Hence, an elaboration of the economic aspect of socialism was not considered to be an imperative area of investigation. In fact until April 1917 when Lenin produced his famous theses, the predominant belief among the Bolsheviks was still based on their strategy in the 1905 Revolution. The political side of this argument is familiar, and it is common knowledge that up to April 1917 the Bolsheviks were still stuck to the slogan "Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the and Peasantry", and although the economic changes after 1907, as well as the outbreak of the First World War, should have led them to reexamine their strategy, they only paid attention to it between the space of February till October. But leaving aside the political side of the issue, one should note that since 1905 it was taken for granted in the ranks of the Bolsheviks that there should be a period of capitalist economic growth in the countryside corresponding to the democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants.

However, the point to be made is that the 1905 strategy whilst politically envisioned no place for the proletarian dictatorship, the economic sense presupposed an economic content corresponding to the state of workers and peasants, i.e. capitalist development in the countryside. This is yet another reason why even the Bolshevik leaders failed to deal with the economic issue

of the socialist revolution in Russia and faced it after the October Revolution without previous theoretical preparedness.

The long period of struggle against Tsarism and for democracy, bore a more important aspect and that was the actual alignment of the Social Democratic party with the industrialist bourgeois opposition. Comrade Hekmat has dealt with this issue in great detail and here I mention only a particular aspect of it. The Russian bourgeoisie had for long the ideal of civilising Russia, i.e. industrialising it and turning it into an advanced country like the countries of western Europe. In general in the 19th century Russia two powerful and distinct social mainstreams could be distinguished. Two mainstreams to which all other intellectual and social currents and schools each somehow related. One of these mainstreams was pan-Slavism. A trend in which Tsarism, the Orthodox Church, the Russian life pattern with all its social and cultural attachments were sanctified. This trend also produced its radical wing. The radical wing of the pan-Slavist trend was Narodism. A tendency in which the so-called "specific" mode of production in Russia was sanctified. Its champion was the Russian peasant, the "Mozhik", and it endeavoured to promote Russia with its peculiar rural communes to a communist society through a popular revolution, a peasant revolution. The influence of classical anarchism - economic revolution without the seizure of the political power - was not minor this outlook. However, Narodism passed through different developments and stages in its life. Against this trend, the other mainstream was that of the "modernists" or "westerners". This trend, too, was intensely nationalist and had no objective but to advance Russia. For this purpose, however, it looked to the west and sought to imitate it. The modernist trend advocated the view that Russia should acquire European civilisation and culture, the social life pattern of advanced Europe, and likewise acquire from Europe the institution of democracy, and most importantly learn from Europe about industrial progress. They also believed that the Russian military forces should have been modernised so that Russia could become a powerful European country. The modernisation of military was itself a further emphasis on the importance of ever greater industrialisation of Russia and its promotion to the level of advanced European countries.

The Russian Social Democracy primarily belongs to this modernist-westerner trend. It is no accident that in the first St. Petersburg circles, Struve, the future leader of the Kadet party, sat next to Martov and Lenin. The common feature of all these seems to be the fact that they were all westerners and demanded the "last word" of Europe on the way to progress. Russian Legal Marxism was the Marxism which the bourgeoisie acquired from the west, and so sought to use it as such, that is, as a new modernist doctrine. The objective necessity for the transition of all societies to capitalism, the "objectivity" of the law of industrial development and suchlike were all what Russian Legal Marxism was seeking in Marxism. The struggle against Legal Marxism by Lenin (and Plekhanov) was the first attempt to separate the *socialist* movement of workers from the bourgeois modernist-westerner tradition. This endeavour continued throughout the whole life of social democracy and Bolshevism. The struggle against Economists; the struggle of Bolshevism against Menshevism; the struggle of internationalist Bolsheviks against social-chauvinists; these were all moments in a struggle to give an independent social identity to the

socialist workers' current as opposed to all bourgeois tendencies, and in particular in distinction to the modernist current. In this process, from a time onwards the Mensheviks completely lodged themselves in the modernist bourgeois current and became one of its factions, whilst the Bolsheviks hoisted the independent banner of the working-class movement. But the Bolsheviks failed to draw a clear-cut demarcation between themselves and the modernist-industrialist bourgeois current; were unable to instill in such a way the cause of socialism, as a new set of production-relations and mode of social life, in the ranks of the working class that its recognition by the workers becomes a matter of instinct and intuition.

So far I have tried to point out those objective and subjective factors and causes which made the conception of socialism for the Bolshevik party, and thereby for the revolutionary ranks of the working class confused and confounded. There is one other important factor, and perhaps the most important of all, which needs to be emphasised, namely the fact that there did exist an objective possibility for a capitalist transformation in the Russian economy, in the sense that it could have brought about a real change for the whole of society. And likewise, the social aspiration and force for the adoption of such a transformation, even after the October Revolution was still very powerful. It is necessary to deal with this issue.

THE CAPITALIST TRANSFORMATION ALTERNATIVE AND ITS SOCIAL FORCE

The socialist transformation of the economy was not the only path of economic development for the Russia of the '20s. It is all too clear that socialism by abolishing the capitalist relations of production, the emancipation of the working class from wage slavery, and in general with its new social organisation of labour and the new social meaning which it imparts to work, consequently leads to the immense development of the productive forces. In Russia, too, with a socialist transformation of the economy a new perspective would have certainly opened up before society for the promotion of its economic resources. But on a closer examination it could also be seen that for the Russia of the '20s the possibility of a rapid capitalist economic development was an objective alternative. The argument is not whether capitalism still had any prospect of growth. Such prospect always exists for capitalism, and no crisis, in the words of Marx, is the final crisis for capitalism, and never will capitalism out of excessive spontaneous growth arrive at a final dead-end and face disintegration. In fact if out of every crisis of capitalism the working class fails to seize the political power and establish socialism, capitalism can itself provide the conditions for another cycle of capitalist accumulation. But when we are speaking specifically about the Russia of the '20s it is not only the possibility for the continuation of capitalism which we have in mind. There were certain features peculiar to the Russia of the '20s: it was a backward society, 75% of its population lived in the countryside, and whilst the dominant mode of production was capitalism it had not yet fully activated and subsumed all the economic resources. Hence, there yet existed the possibility for a greater rate of accumulation,

for an economic boom, and for employing greater economic resources - and here we have in mind mainly the labour force which capital could have potentially "emancipated" from the countryside and drawn to industry. In short, there existed the possibility for a great leap in production within the very framework of dominant capitalism. If we call the objective possibility for a capitalist development in Russia a transformation, it is because such a development would have effectively brought along a gigantic transformation of the whole society. Undoubtedly, such a leap in economic growth would have greatly enhanced overall production and national income, and although certainly exacerbating the great difference in wealth between the capitalist class and the working class, nevertheless it could have increased the overall income of the working class compared to its previous situation and provided a more permanent employment for a greater part of the population. In short, within the framework of capitalism and along with the intense exacerbation of inequalities, there would have also been an improvement in the living-standard of certain sections of the workers. The expansion of capitalistic agriculture, and the vast supply of consumer goods, together pulled the Russian countryside out of its semi-medieval status. The bourgeois opposition of Tsarism had always demanded such a state of affairs. What was, in a class sense, desirable to the bourgeoisie could have also presented the perspective of "a better society" to the whole of society, and it was precisely for this virtue that the modernist-westerner cause could manifest itself as a popular social ideal, turn into a powerful social current, and become a pole of attraction and a tangible aim to great sections of different social classes.

After the October Revolution and especially after the civil war, the bourgeois modernist social current was thoroughly deprived of its own parties, that is, the traditional Kadet party. Even the Mensheviks who were the protagonists of this modernist current in the working class were banned. But this blow, however severe, only deprived the bourgeois industrialist current from its own *political* spokesmen. So long as there existed an objective possibility for the adoption of the capitalist alternative, and so long as the influence of the tradition and practice of this current was still present in society, this trend could survive as a social mainstream. Only an economic revolution, only a socialist transformation of society, could by eradicating the objective bases of this current, fundamentally remove the relevance of this ideal of the industrialist bourgeoisie from society. So long as there existed an objective possibility for a capitalist leap in Russia, and so long as such an event could have brought about a real transformation of society, or could fundamentally change the pattern of society and issues facing it, this current could have naturally rear its own political and intellectual spokesmen, or, to put it more precisely, find them in the political forces active in society. Indeed, the modernist current finally found its ablest spokesmen and representatives in of the factions of the Bolshevik party.

In the mid '20s the Bolshevik state found itself facing a turning-point. NEP had fulfilled its task, and in fact its continuation could not cope with the circumstances. Not only had the social production now acquired a degree of order but the symptoms of continuing such a system of economy were manifesting themselves. Numerous economic difficulties were recurring which all pointed to the necessity of a transformation of the economy. The so called "scissor crisis", the shortage of consumer commodities which came to acquire the name "goods famine", the

increasing grievances of the workers and the unstable condition of the middle peasants, the great hardship of the poor peasants, and generally speaking the fact that the government was feeling impotent and was faced with numerous obstacles in the adoption of its social programmes, were all indications of the fact that this economic situation could not last for long. In particular in 1927 official estimates revealed that the economic growth would soon be hit by stagnation unless the economic regime was changed. To all these the factor of imperialist threat should be added. Britain and France were, in particular in 1926-27, engaged in provoking military aggression. The military threat was itself a motive for accelerated industrialisation. A military power could only rely on a powerful industry. This was a belief which had a long legacy in the tradition of the bourgeois-modernist current and acquired its recognition from the defeat of Russia in Port Arthur (1904).

The fact that even the adoption of the capitalist alternative required the employment of revolutionary methods, and also the fact that by institutionalising the form of state ownership, the adoption of this alternative would have greatly commuted the distribution of wealth in comparison to the workings of private competitive capitalism, were also factors which facilitated the adoption of this capitalist alternative under the name of socialism. The adoption of the alternative for a capitalist development mobilised a vast social tradition, which the society was completely familiar and respected, in the service of the economic renewal of Russia. And thus it placed the Russian revolution in the continuance of the bourgeois development of the Russian society, and by mobilising the entire Russian nationalism opened up a clear and triumphant perspective. Clear and triumphant indeed; but for the industrialist Russian bourgeois nationalism, and not for the working class who had dragged its revolution that far through fire and blood.

THE ECONOMIC PLATFORMS OF THE DIFFERENT FACTIONS

A concrete assessment of the economic platforms proposed by different factions also reveals that they all equally shared certain capitalistic premises, and that basically none of these platforms were by any means concerned with changing the production relations. They aimed, rather, to respond to dire economic circumstances which had in fact emerged as soon as the useful life of NEP had come to an end.

First, we shall mention Bukharin's platform, what later came to be known as the platform of the "Right Opposition". We said before that it was in response to the criticisms of the Left Opposition against the policy of the ruling faction in continuing NEP in the mid '20s, that the thesis of "socialism in one country" was first introduced by Stalin-Bukharin. At the time of its introduction by Bukharin, this thesis was explained to be the way for continuing NEP towards establishing socialism in Russia. Those aspects of NEP which were under criticism of the Left Opposition, were the granting of concessions to Kulaks by the ruling party faction and its softening before them. The Opposition justified its criticisms by alleging that these measures would lead to the degeneration of the party and the state and could turn them into the mouthpiece and the guardian of the nepmen and Kulaks. The solution put forward by the Opposition was

rapid industrialisation. By providing an analysis of the economic relation of the state with the peasants Bukharin attempted to oppose this line of reasoning, whilst making a defence of the policy of the Soviet state and demonstrating how in the economic sense the continuation of the status quo would lead to socialism. Bukharin's argument in the economic sphere was the following: NEP could bring about a period of recovery for the Kulaks; if they produce more, there would be more grain to supply the market with and more for the state to purchase; the greater the surplus of Kulaks' grain, the greater would be the grain stocked by the state and thus available for export; with the income derived from the export of grain the state could purchase the necessary machinery and develop the industry. But since the Kulaks would sell their goods in the market if they could in turn purchase with the money their required commodities, Bukharin argued that the state must first develop the light industry, i.e., the sector which produces the consumer goods needed by the peasants. As a consequence, the industry as a whole would develop gradually and so would also the heavy industry. Bukharin himself emphasised that this course of development towards socialism would be at "snail's pace", but was the only way. Other options, he argued, by antagonising the peasants were perilous for the workers' state. So NEP must remain as a long-term policy - this was his conclusion. From the line of reasoning underlying Bukharin's argument it can be deduced that the richer the Kulaks became the greater the chances were for the development of industry and for arriving at socialism. It was for this very reason that he voiced the slogan "enrich yourselves" to the Kulaks.

This last hitch in Bukharin's position, the point which clearly takes sides with the rich peasants and their enrichment, was enough to politically discredit his argument. In fact in trying to prove the necessity of continuing NEP, Bukharin had also proved very many superfluous issues.

Our excursion into Bukharin's programme, however short, helps to elucidate a few important issues concerning the nature of the debates on economic policy. Firstly, in these debates the building of socialism was simply equated to the growth of industry, or to put it more clearly the question of economic development was formulated under the name of "building of socialism". This was an issue on which all factions and platforms agreed. Especially the nationalisation of an important section of the industry at this juncture, and the fact that the development of industry could only have been effectuated on the initiative of the state, left no room for doubt in the thinking of any of the factions that the development of industry is the building of socialism. Of course this was still regarded to be the *building* of socialism, and the "final victory" was taken to mean the all-sided and comprehensive development of the state sector, namely, a state monopoly capitalism. Secondly - and this point is all clear in the programme proposed by Bukharin - is the question of finding the *necessary capital* for the development of the industry. Generally speaking, one can also notice that the controversy of factions on economic strategy and policy, is in fact a controversy confined within the "development economics" of capitalism. In none of the platforms put forward at the time is there absolutely any reference to the abolition of the capitalist relations of production and the establishment of a new type of production relations. The debates were in the technical sense "economic", i.e. it was the categories of bourgeois economics which made up the basis of their entire analysis. The absence of an

economic revolutionary outlook, and the domination of state-capitalist concepts in place of socialism, had ineluctably imparted to all debates which were conducted on the issue of economic policy for arriving at "socialism", a content which was nothing but an investigation into finding the best model for a capitalist economic development.

Let us return to Bukharin's programme. Apart from its political weakness on the attitude towards the Kulaks, in the economic sense, too, it was by no means able to respond to the situation facing the Bolshevik party. The way out of that situation could either be a revolutionary socialist transformation of the economy, or a capitalistic economic leap. Bukharin's programme could by no means engender an economic development, since the volume of *the necessary capital* generated according to this programme was limited to the volume of the surplus produced by the peasants. This was an important hitch which deprived this alternative of any chance of being accepted. At the time, too, this hitch was pointed out, and the slow pace of economic growth and eventually economic stagnation was singled out as the weaknesses of Bukharin's economic policy.

Opposed to Bukharin's policy, was the economic programme of the Left Opposition and of its economic theoretician, Preobrazhensky. The Left Opposition at this time (1924 and after) demanded an end to NEP, and the development of the industry. The problems which the programme of the Left Opposition sought to overcome were the ones mentioned above. But contrary to the official line which supported the continuation of NEP, the Left Opposition by realizing the economic dead-end put forward a programme for accelerated development. Preobrazhensky, too, had to tackle the problem of finding the "necessary capital" for development. He propounded the category of "primitive socialist accumulation", meaning that the socialist state should first accomplish a "primitive accumulation" for amassing the necessary capital needed for building socialism - just as capitalism had undertaken such a task at its inception. Preobrazhensky explicitly identifies the state sector of the economy with the socialist sector, and states that undoubtedly the state sector cannot provide this primitive accumulation out of its own working, and so it must be extracted from the private sector.

Hence, like Bukharin, Preobrazhensky has in mind the peasants as the source for furnishing the necessary capital for the development of the state sector. But contrary to Bukharin, he proposes that the state by expropriating the Kulaks and maintaining an "unequal exchange" between the state and the peasants accomplishes this task at the cost of pauperising them. It is evident that in such a case there would be more capital for the development of state industries. Furthermore Preobrazhensky and the Left Opposition were demanding that the development of industry be initiated in the heavy industry so that the products of this branch would in turn furnish the premises for the expansion of the light industry. Preobrazhensky recognised the exchange between the state sector and the peasant economy to be the domain where the "law of value" functioned. And in his analysis the contradiction between planning and this "law of value" existed in the period of "building socialism", and it was by the expansion of the state sector and by its engulfing of the agricultural sector that this contradiction could be resolved to the advantage of planning and for the establishment of socialism.

In the programme put forward by the Left Opposition and theorized by Preobrazhensky, too, we can clearly witness how state capitalism and central planning have supplanted the cause of socialism, and how the destruction of capitalism is understood and pursued through the development of productive forces and the expansion of industry. The programme of the Left Opposition was also clearly a programme for an economic development in the capitalist manner. As far as a scheme for industrialisation and capitalist economic development could be plausible at the time, the programme of the Left Opposition more or less met the requirements.

But in elaborating the draft programme of the Left Opposition, Preobrazhensky faced certain contradictions. On the one hand the programme of the Left Opposition offered to provide the necessary capital for the expansion of the heavy industry through confiscation of the wealth of Kulaks and the imposition of the term of an unequal exchange on the transactions of the peasants with the state; on the other hand the pauperisation of the peasant population lessened the available resources for the next round of this unequal exchange. Thus, although according to Preobrazhensky it was possible to launch the development of the industry, and in general, the expansion of the state sector at the cost of the peasants, this process could not be continued to a comprehensive and all-embracing scale, that is to the extent of the nationalisation of the agricultural sector. So parallel to the "plan", a "law of value", brought into being as a result of the private sector of agriculture, still remains. The "ultimate victory" of socialism could not be accomplished by the resources of Russia alone, unless a window was opened to foreign resources, unless "the German revolution came to its aid". Of course this was a serious flaw in the economic solution of the Left Opposition. Since, when the controversy over the economic strategy of the revolution was once again thrown to the fore, it was a time when it was quite clear that the German revolution had subsided for a period. Hence only those economic alternatives could still be plausible that could envision a path to socialism despite the absence of the German revolution. It was evident that Stalin's faction by taking advantage of this shortcoming would crush the economic alternative of the Opposition and describe it a desperate adventurism, an indication of the loss of faith in the strength of the Russian working class. The Left Opposition tried in turn to make this weakness into a point of strength, and attribute their belief in the necessity of the "German revolution" to their loyalty to the initial principles of Bolshevism in October. In this way, contrary to the use which Stalin faction with its thesis of "socialism in one country" made of the nationalist sentiments, the Left faction resorted to revolutionary feelings and the glorious memories of the revolutionary days. That to what extent the Left Opposition was imbued with a true sense of internationalism - which it was - could not compensate for its lack of a viable economic alternative. The reality was more powerful. The question of economic transformation was an objective reality and demanded a solution, and the current which did not have a solution for it lost its political and social relevance.

The programme which Stalin faction eventually adopted was along the same lines as the programme of the Opposition. Of course, in the beginning of these debates (1923-24) Stalin took side with Bukharin on the question of NEP, and in opposition to the challenge of the Opposition to NEP, he advocated its continuation. But when Bukharin presented his views on the transition

from NEP to socialism, Stalin joined issue, without himself producing a distinct outlook. However, at the end of the '20s and after the defeat and the purge of the United Opposition, Stalin and his faction adopted a programme of industrialisation which emphasised many times over the extent of economic growth and the development of heavy industry. That this programme in its overall outline corresponds to the programme of the Left Opposition is a historical fact. The only difference being that the collectivisation policy of agriculture as carried out by the Stalin faction could never have been conceived by the Left Opposition and Preobrazhensky. In the face of this situation Preobrazhensky stated that it was their economic programme which Stalin had carried out, and so real life would also force him to adopt their political programme. It was by this line of reasoning which Preobrazhensky returned to the Party and employed his energy in the service of the Stalin faction. The example of Preobrazhensky was followed by many other leading figures of the Opposition who also saw their own economic programme now being realised. Those members of the Left or United Opposition who did not return to the Party, had differences with Stalin which were now generally not on the issue of economic policy. Trotsky himself, except for certain warnings on the rapid pace of development, and of course for his reservations on the aggressive forms of its adoption, had nothing more to say. He summed up this course of events as such: Stalin faction was forced "in its own manner" to strike at capitalism and destroy it. Having said that he then criticised the international policy of Stalin faction and finally concentrated this criticism on the question of bureaucracy. It is also a matter conceded by the economic historians of the official line, such as Maurice Dobb, that the programme of Stalin faction corresponded to the programme of the Opposition. However, Maurice Dobb claims that the right time for its adoption was when Stalin adopted it. At any rate, our intention in emphasising this point was to show concretely once more that the different factions of the Bolshevik party participating in these debates had in fact a common conception of socialism, and that throughout that great controversy the bone of contention was in fact about which choice to make for a capitalist way of development.

Here, it may be appropriate to stress an important difference between the social application of the programme of Stalin faction with that of the Left Opposition. Stalin faction managed to implement its policy under the banner of "socialism in one country". This appeared to be a way of pulling the workers' revolution out of the dead-end created after the subsidence of the German revolution. This naturally enabled Stalin to resort to mass mobilization. The programme of the Opposition was devoid of such an advantage.

So far we have several times stressed the content and the nature of the programme of Stalin faction. In the light of our explanation we tried to clarify how at a historical moment, for all the objective and subjective reasons which we enumerated, Stalin and a faction of the Bolshevik party became the new standard-bearers of capitalist development in Russia. This was a turning-point in the course of defeat of the workers' revolution in Russia; at the same time it became a link in the capitalist development of that country.