REDEFINING REVOLUTION

Paul Cardan

Solidarity Introduction

'If, contrary to all probabilities, the October Revolution fails during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter, to find its continuation in any of the advanced countries; and if, on the contrary, the proletariat is thrown back everywhere and on all fronts—then we should doubtlessly have to pose the question of revising our conception of the present epoch and its driving forces. In that case it would be a question not of slapping a copybook label on the USSR or the Stalinist gang but of re-evaluating the world historical perspective for the next decades if not centuries.....'[1]

The October Revolution did not 'find its continuation in any of the advanced countries' in the aftermath of World War II. Yet nowhere was the necessary re-evaluation of marxism attempted, least of all by the trotskyists. This re-evaluation is today imperative, for a number of reasons.

Marxist ideas have influenced the birth and moulded the shape of new societies all over the world. All have been ruthlessly exploitative societies, geared to the development of the productive forces, on the basis of intensive primitive accumulation and of the centralisation of the means of production in the hands of state bureaucracies. What needs to be challenged are the very roots of the ideology and of the philosophy which inspired their creation.

We consider marxism inadequate, not only as a system of ideas capable of leading to libertarian revolutionary action, but also as a method. A method deals with a number of categories, seeking to relate them in a specified way to one another. But if these categories are themselves the products of historical development it is obvious that at some stage revolutionaries will have to go beyond them, if only to grasp the new reality, the better to change it. At some stage we will have to choose between developing further as revolutionaries . . . and remaining marxists.

The very concept of 'scientific socialism' must be challenged if one is to understand human relationships. It is not true that 'active social forces work exactly like natural forces'[2] Social development cannot be brought down to the level of a chemical reaction. In a chemical reaction there is no element of choice. *There is a choice* wherever people are concerned. The water in kettle cannot choose not to boil when the kettle is placed on the fire. Workers can choose not to strike, even when under pressure. And socialism is about people.

A sophisticated marxist, Anton Pannekoek, was led very far by this idea of 'scientific socialism'[3] He believed that one could determine laws of social evolution, in the same way that one could study the laws of gravitation (Pannekoek was himself an astronomer). He arrived at the conclusion that man was the summit of the evolution of animal species, the 'chosen' animal so to speak, gifted with ideal abilities. Human evolution was inevitable. Man himself was no accident. Man was bound to be the perfect animal, destined to dominate the world. He could develop no ethic other than one of domination.

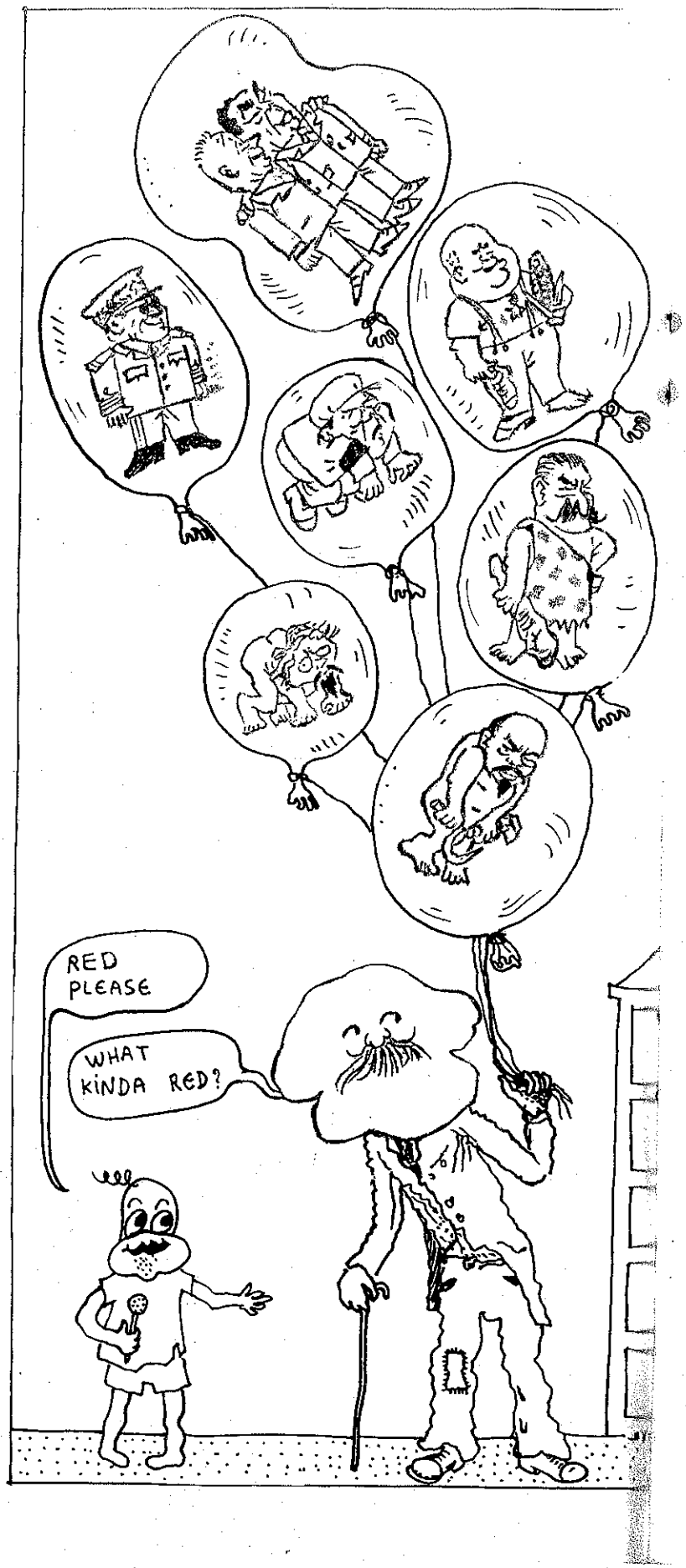
With the rise of capitalism natural and social science became a new type of religion (scientism). Two of scientism's greatest proponents were Darwin and Marx.[4] Pannekoek was one of the latter-day priests. It does not follow that one must reject everything that Darwin or Marx said. On the contrary, we would not think and act the way we do if they had not made important contributions to the development of human thought. But we must now try and go beyond them. There is no such thing as a 'system of laws' that will always explain all we know of natural history and of the physical world. Even less is there a 'system' that can explain all of social history. Many people however—on the left and elsewhere—are still addicted to this idea of a complete system, containing all the answers. It is part of a character structure, itself manifested in the particular ideas taken up.

1. L. Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism* (The USSR in War), Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1942, pp. 14-15.
2. F. Engels, *Socialism: Utopian or Scientific,* Moscow 1955, p. 108.
3. A. Pannekoek, *Anthropogenesis,* North Holland, 1953.
4. That Marx wanted to dedicate *Capital* to Darwin was no accident. Darwin refused, feeling he had a 'bad' enough reputation already.

Modern society is geared towards crushing any attempt at self-activity and at autonomous thinking. We are always encouraged to rely on others to choose and decide for us, and to provide the answers to all our problems. Many people, especially among the young, are deeply disillusioned with the values of this society. Yet a number of them join marxist organisations or become Jesus freaks or adepts of some guru. This is not so surprising, considering the fact that in all of these outfits all the answers are provided. The disciples are relieved of the need to decide or choose for themselves. The Party line—or the word of the Master—does it for them. They are no longer burdened by the responsibilities of decisions to be made. A deep feeling of insecurity attracts people like a magnet towards any closed sytem of ideas which will relieve them from anxiety in the face of the unknown. For many people the most frightful and distressing thing is not knowing the future.

The following essay, first published in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* No. 35 in 1964,[5] does not provide yet another blueprint for ideological or emotional 'security'. Quite the opposite. Nor is it intended to be the theoretical bible of *Solidarity*. Many will find differences—even contradictions—with some of the author's earlier writings. They will be right. The author himself was at one time a trotskyist. People evolve, change, develop new ideas. Only fossilised dogmatists can pride themselves on not having changed their ideas for the last 30 or 40 years.

We publish this pamphlet not because we agree with every word in it but because we think it a stimulating and fruitful contribution to the development of revolutionary theory. The text aims to uncover new problems. It asks many new questions and is not concerned with salvaging old answers.



5. The text was published before the main impact of the Women's Liberation Movement had made itself felt in Western Europe. One of the effects of this movement has been to compel serious revolutionaries carefully to consider their use of words, less they themselves contribute to the sexist assumptions that underlie so much of everyday language. For instance, at the end of section 8, the author says 'whether *he* knows it or not, and whether *he* wants it or not', a formulation we reproduce for the sake of accuracy in translation, but which hopefully, we would not ourselves now use.

The End of Classical Marxism

1

Three massive facts today confront revolutionaries who still wish to act in full knowledge of what they are doing:

(a) The functioning of modern capitalism has altered fundamentally in relation to the reality of before 1939. It has altered even more when compared to the analyses of it provided by marxism.

(b) The working class movement, seen as an organised class movement *explicitly* and *permanently* contesting capitalist exploitation has disappeared.[1]

(c) Classical colonial or semi-colonial methods of domination of the 'advanced' countries over the 'backward' ones have by and large been abandoned without this anywhere having been accompanied by a genuine revolutionary accession to power of the masses in these countries—and without the foundations of capitalism having thereby been shaken in the advanced countries.[2]

2

For those who refuse to mystify themselves it should be clear that these three facts, in practice, destroy classical marxism as a *system* of ideas and action which formed, developed and maintained itself between 1847 and 1939. For what these three cardinal observations imply are the refutation (or the transcending) of Marx's analysis of capitalism in his major work (the analysis of the economy), of Lenin's theory of imperialism, and of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as applied to the backward countries. They imply the irreversible bankruptcy of virtually all the traditional forms of organisation and action (except those of a revolutionary period).

These three observations spell the collapse of classical marxism as a system of concrete thought, having some connection with real life. Apart from a few abstract ideas, nothing that is central to *Capital*[3] is to be found in the reality of today. Conversely, what is central to today's reality (the evolution and crisis in the nature of work, the dichotomy and conflict between the formal and real organisation of production, and between the formal and real functioning of institutions, the phenomenon of bureaucratisation, the consumer society, working class 'depoliticisation', the class nature of the regimes of Eastern Europe, the evolution of the 'backward' countries and their relations with the 'advanced' ones, the crisis of all aspects of everyday life, and the increasing importance taken on by various phenomena previously considered marginal—not to mention the attempts by people to find a solution to this crisis)—all this needs analyses of a different type to be properly understood. What was best in Marx's writing may, it is true, serve as an inspiration for such analyses, although the vulgar and bastardised marxism, alone practiced by marxism's self-proclaimed defenders of all ilk, today constitutes a barrier to genuine understanding.

Our three basic observations also spell the ruin of classical marxism (and incidentally of leninism, trotskyism, bordigism, etc.)[5] as a *programme of action* in which what had *to be done by revolutionaries at any given point* in time was coherently linked (at least in the intentions of the revolutionaries) with real actions of the working class itself and with an overall theoretical conception. When for instance in the past a marxist organisation supported or led a strike on a wages issue it did so: (a) with a real chance of a mass hearing among the workers; (b) as the only structured organisation fighting on their side; and (c) believing that each working class victory on the wages front was a blow delivered to the objective edifice of capitalism. None of the measures advocated in the classical marxist programme can today fulfil these three requirements.[6]

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1. We are not saying the working class has disappeared—which would be absurd—but that its organisations (trade unions and parties) have become so totally integrated into exploiting society that they now constitute obstacles rather than instruments of working class emancipation. (Solidarity footnote.)
2. Certain actions (such as that of the Portuguese in Africa) merely reflect the backwardness of certain sectors of the European bourgeoisie who have not yet learned what the more 'advanced' and sophisticated sections—Britain, France, Holland, Belgium, etc—have now fully assimilated, namely that continued exploitation does not necessitate the physical presence of troops or direct forms of repression. (Solidarity footnote.)
3. For instance: the falling rate of profit, the growth of the industrial reserve army, the determination of the value of labour power, relative or absolute pauperisation, major recurrent economic crises, etc. (Solidarity footnote.)
4. Such as manipulation in consumption and leisure, the 'youth revolt', the 'sexual revolution', and the gradual recognition of the role of authoritarian conditioning. (Solidarity footnote.)
5. And, of course, of maoism and all its variants. (Solidarity footnote.)
6. Even the programme outlined in the *Communist Manifesto*, with its emphasis on the centralisation of the means of production in the hands of the state, is perfectly compatible with a regime of total bureaucratic capitalism. (Solidarity footnote.)

3

Modern society certainly remains profoundly divided. It constantly functions against the immense majority of working people. In everyday life the exploited defend themselves against exploitation by part of every single one of their everyday gestures. The present crisis of humanity, it is true, will only be solved by a socialist revolution. But these ideas risk remaining empty abstractions, pretexts for sermons or for a blind, spasmodic activism if one doesn't try to understand the *new* ways in which the division of society assumes concrete form today, *how* modern capitalism functions, the new forms taken today by the working class sturggle against the ruling classes and their system, and unless one seriously tries to understand what—under these conditions—a new revolutionary activity integrated to the real struggle of people in society might mean and how it could be linked to a coherent and lucid understanding of the world. To achieve this what is needed is nothing less than a radical theoretical and practical renewal.

What has characterised *Socialisme ou Barbarie* from the beginning has been this effort at renewal and the specific new ideas in which this attempt has, at each stage, found expression. It is this objective that has guided us rather than a simple and rigid adherence to those classical ideas (which have sterilised trotskyists, bordiguists and almost every variety of 'left' socialist or communist). From the very onset we asserted (in a critique of conservatism in the realm of theory) that 'without a *development* of revolutionary theory there could be no *development* of revolutionary action'.[7] Ten years later, having shown that the basic postulates and the logical structure of Marx's economic theory reflected 'the capitalist vision of man'[8] and having affirmed that a 'total reconstruction' of revolutionary theory was needed, we concluded that 'whatever the content of a revolutionary theory or programme and whatever its relation to the experience and needs of the working class, there will always be the *possibility*—or even more the *certainty*—that a time will come when the said theory or programme will be overtaken by history. And there will always be the risk that those who had hitherto defended that theory or programme will want to make 'absolutes' of them and seek to subordinate to them the creations of living history'.[9]

4

This reconstruction of revolutionary theory remains a *permanent challenge*. It has nothing to do with a vague, muddled and irresponsible revisionism. We have never abandoned the traditional positions because they were traditional, contenting ourselves with proclaiming such banalities as 'they are out-dated', 'times have changed'. On the contrary, we have, on each occasion, sought to demonstrate *why* traditional beliefs were wrong or outdated. We have also sought to define *by what* they should be replaced. We have sought to do this everywhere except where (in the absence of large-scale activity of the masses themselves) it was—and remains—impossible for a revolutionary group to define new forms to replace those that history itself has refuted.

At each of its crucial stages such a theoretical reconstruction is bound to encounter—even within the ranks of revolutionary groups—the heated opposition of conservative elements, representing the type of activist who retains the nostalgia of a golden age of the working class movement—a golden age which of course is purely imaginary, like all other golden ages—and who advances backwards into history, constantly regretting the epoch where, so he believes, theory and programme were not discussed, having—thank God!—been established once and for all and obviously being corroborated, day in day out, by the activity of the masses.[10]

5

It is simply impossible to analyse this conservatism in any depth, for its main feature is a reluctance to discuss the problems that really matter today, usually by denying that they in fact exist. It is a negative and sterile tendency. This sterility is not, of course, a personal or characteriological defect of those trapped in traditional ideology. It is itself an objective phenomenon, the inevitable consequence of the ground on which the 'conservatives' take their stand and the result of the very conceptions they have of revolutionary theory.

A contemporary physicist who would set himself the task of 'defending' Newtonian physics against all and sundry would condemn himself to total sterility—and would doubtless be driven to outbursts of rage every time people referred to such monstrosities as anti-matter, to particles which were at the same time waves, to the expansion of the universe and the collapse of causality, locality and identity as absolute categories. The plight of the revolutionary who today only seeks to 'defend marxism' (or a handful of ideas borrowed from it) is just as desperate.

Taken in this form the fate of marxism has been settled once and for all by life itself and is beyond discussion. Leaving aside, for the moment, the theoretical reconstruc-

7. *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 1, 1949, p.4.
8. *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*, by Paul Cardan, p.33 (a Solidarity book).
9. *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 27, pp. 65–66, 80, 87.

10. This opposition reached its climax in relation to the text *The revolutionary movement under modern capitalism* (Nos. 31–33 of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*) and in relation to the ideas which developed from this text and which are outlined in the following pages. This finally led to a split. The comrades who have left us (amongst them P. Brune, J.F. Lyotard and R. Maille) are proposing to continue publishing the monthly *Pouvoir Ouvrier*. It would of course have been consonant with both custom and logic to discuss publicly the reasons for the split, and the opposing theses. Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to do this. The opposition remained without definable content, either positive or negative. To this day we don't know what those who refuse our ideas wish to put in their place—and moreover what exactly it is that they are opposed to. We can therefore only outline our own ideas and for the rest just note once again the ideological and political sterility of conservatism.

tion we have been attempting, marxism simply no longer exists as a *living* theory. Marxism wasn't, couldn't and didn't seek to be a theory just like any other, whose truth was enshrined in books. In this sense marxist ideas were never like those of Plato, Spinoza or Hegel. According to its own programme and to its deepest and most revolutionary content, marxism could only live as a constantly *renewed* theoretical endeavour to throw light on a world in constant change. It could only develop as an activity which constantly changed the world, while constantly allowing itself to be changed *by* the world (the indissoluble link between the two corresponding to the marxist concept of praxis).

Where is that kind of marxism today? Where since 1923 (when Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* was published) has anything been produced which has advanced marxism? Where since 1940 (date of Trotsky's death), has a single text been written defending traditional marxist ideas at a level which allows one to discuss them without being ashamed of so doing? Where since the Spanish Civil War has a self-styled marxist group participated in any meaningful way—and according to its own principles—in a genuine activity of the masses? Quite simply: nowhere!

The situation today is a tragic farce. Marxism's 'defenders' are both raping marxism and putting it to death by the very things they do to 'defend' it, and by their very act of defending it. For they can only defend marxism by remaining silent about what has happened to it in the last 40 years. They behave as if real history didn't matter. They act as if the presence or absence in the real world of a theory or of a programme had no bearing on the truth or significance of such a theory or programme, the truth or significance of which somehow always remained 'elsewhere'. They 'forget' that it was one of the most indestructible principles taught us by Marx himself that an ideology was not to be judged by the words it uses but by what it became in social reality.[11] Traditional revolutionaries can only defend marxism by converting it into its opposite, into an eternal doctrine which no mere fact of real life could ever disturb (forgetting in the process that, if this could ever be achieved, the theory could never in its turn 'disturb' the facts, that is to say could never become historically effective). Despairing lovers whose mistress died prematurely, they can now only express their love by raping the corpse.

6

Less and less does this deeply conservative attitude assume the form of a defence of marxist orthodoxy as such. It is obviously difficult to proclaim—without being laughed out of court—that one should confine oneself to the 'truths' revealed once and for all by Marx or Lenin. Rather does it take on the following form: confronted with the disintegration of the traditional working class movement, the traditional revolutionaries reason as if this disintegration only affected specific organisations (the Labour Party, the TUC, various 'communist' parties, etc.). Faced with the deep transformations of capitalism, the traditional revolutionaries argue as if this only represented an accumulation or accentuation of some of its essential and well-known characteristics, which in themselves don't really change anything fundamental.

In doing so the traditional revolutionaries forget—and help others forget—that the crisis of the working class movement goes deeper than the degeneration of social-democratic and bolshevik organisations. The crisis affects almost all the traditional expressions of working class activity. We aren't dealing with a mere crust on the otherwise healthy revolutionary body of the proletariat. Nor is the crisis some kind of condemnation inflicted upon the working class from outside. On the contrary, it reflects problems at the very core of the proletarian condition, on which condition, moreover, the crisis acts in its turn.[12] The traditional revolutionaries forget, and help others forget, that the quantitative accumulation of certain features of capitalism is accompanied by deep going qualitative changes. 'Proletarianisation' in modern society hasn't the simple meaning attributed to it in classical marxism. Bureaucratisation isn't a simple and superficial corollary to the process of the concentration of capital, but something which entails profound modifications in the structure and functioning of society.[13] What the traditional revolutionaries do is simply to make one or two 'additional' interpretations—as if marxism's claim to be a conception of history and of the world uniting theory and practice could be subjected to 'additions' of this nature, like a pile of potato sacks in a shed, whose fundamental nature wouldn't be altered by throwing in a few more.

By doing this the traditional revolutionaries are reducing the unknown to the level of the known—which is tantamount to suppressing all that is new and finally to reducing history to a gigantic truism. In the best of cases, the traditional revolutionaries seek to effect 'repairs at lowest cost', which in the long run is an infallible way of going broke ideologically, just as it is a sure way of financially going broke in everyday life. Although psychologically understandable, it is impossible for us to endorse this attitude.

For a number of reasons, once certain limits have been reached, such an approach can no longer be taken seriously. One reason is that it is intrinsically contradictory (ideas cannot remain intact while reality changes) nor can a new reality be understood without a revolution in ideas). Another reason is that such an attitude is theological (and as all theology, what it essentially expresses is fear and fundamental insecurity when faced with the unknown; we have no reason to share these fears).

7

The time has come for us clearly to appreciate that contemporary reality can no longer be grasped simply through low-cost repairs to classical marxism—or even through a

11. This yardstick should be applied to marxism itself. For a fuller development of this argument see Cardan's text *The Fate of Marxism*. (Solidarity footnote.)

12. See *Proletariat and organisation, Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 27, pp. 72–74.

13. See *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*. (Solidarity footnote.)

more extensive or costly revision. To be understood, contemporary reality requires a new system of ideas, a system where the *breaks* with traditional ideology are just as important (and much more significant) than the links. Even in our own eyes, this fact has probably been masked by the gradual character of our theoretical elaboration and also, no doubt, by our wish to maintain historical continuity for as long as possible. The need for a break appears, however, most clearly when we look back over the ground travelled and when we measure the distance which separates ideas which now seem to us essential from the ideas of classical marxism. Let us give a few examples:[14]

(a) For classical marxism the division of society was between capitalists, who owned the means of production, and property-less proletarians. Today the division must be seen as between order-givers (dirigeants) and order-takers (executants).

(b) Society was seen as dominated by the abstract power of impersonal capital. Today we see it dominated by a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure, affecting all aspects of social life.

(c) The cardinal category necessary for the understanding of capitalist social relations was, for Marx, the category of reification. Reification had been brought about by the transformation of all *human* relations into *market* relations.[15] For us, on the other hand, the main factor moulding the structure of contemporary society is not 'the market' but the drive to bureaucratic-hierarchical 'organisation'.[16] The cardinal category necessary for the understanding of modern social relations is the *cleavage* between management and the execution of collective activities.

(d) The concept of 'reification' finds, in Marx, a natural extension in the analysis of labour power as a commodity, 'nothing more and nothing less'. As a commodity, labour power had (according to marxism) an *exchange-value* determined by 'objective' factors (its cost of production and reproduction) and a *use-value*, which the purchaser would have to extract as best he could. The worker was seen as a passive object of capitalist economy and capitalist production. For us this abstraction is already in part a mystification. Labour power can never be reduced to the level of a commodity pure and simple (despite the efforts of capitalism to do just that). And there is no such thing as an *exchange-value* of labour power determined by 'objective' factors: the level of wages is essentially determined by working class struggle, 'formal' or 'informal'. Moreover, there is no definable *use-value* for labour power. Productivity is the object of a permanent struggle within production, a struggle in which the worker is both object and active subject.

(e) For Marx the basic 'contradiction' inherent in capitalism was that the development of the productive forces became, beyond a certain point, incompatible with capitalist forms of property and with the private appropriation of the product, and had to 'break them asunder'. For us, the dominant contradiction within capitalism is exemplified in the type of cleavage between management and execution which modern capitalism brings about. It lies in the consequent need for capitalism simultaneously to seek the exclusion and to solicit the participation of individuals in relation to their activities.

(f) According to classical marxism, the proletariat endures its history until one day it explodes it. For us, the proletariat constantly makes its own history, within given conditions. The class struggle constantly transforms capitalist society. And in the course of its struggles the proletariat *itself* is changed.

(g) According to the classical conception, capitalist culture produces either mystifications pure and simple (which one has to denounce as such) or it produces scientific truths and valid works (and one then denounces their exclusive appropriation by the privileged strata). For us modern culture—in all its manifestations—both participates in the general crisis of society *and* prepares the ground for a new form of human life.

(h) For Marx, production will always remain within the 'realm of necessity'. From this flows the attitude, implicit in the whole marxist movement, that socialism consists essentially in the rearrangement of the economic and social consequences of a technological infrastructure which is itself both 'neutral' and 'inevitable'. For us production must become the realm of the creativity of the associated producers. The conscious transformation of technology and the placing of such a transformed technology at the disposal of the producers must be one of the central concerns of post-revolutionary society.

(i) Already for Marx (and much more within the marxist movement) the development of the productive forces was seen as being at the centre of the historical process. The incompatibility of such a development with capitalist relations of production constituted the historical condemnation of those relations. From there, there followed quite naturally the identification of socialism with the nationalisation of the means of production and with the planning of the economy. For us, the essence of socialism is the domination of men over all aspects of their life—and in the first place over their work. It follows that socialism is inconceivable outside of the management of production by the associated producers—and without the power of the workers' councils.[17]

(j) For Marx, 'bourgeois right' (and therefore wage inequality) had to prevail during the transition period. For us a revolutionary society could not survive or develop if it

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14. Our ideas were developed in a number of texts published in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. See in particular the editorial of issue No. 1 and the articles on *Relations of production in Russia* (No. 2), *The Socialist programme* (No. 10), *The proletarian experience* (No. 11), *The workers and the trade union bureaucracy* (No. 13), *On the content of socialism* (Nos. 17, 22 and 23), *The revolution in Poland and Hungary* (No. 20), *The factory and workers' management* (No. 22), *Working class organisation* (Nos. 27 and 28), *The workers and culture* (No. 30), and on *The revolutionary movement under modern capitalism* (Nos. 31–33). These texts are all in French. Some may still be obtained from Libraire La Vieille Taupe, 1 rue des Fosses St. Jacques, Paris 5, at about 25p each. Others, such as *The content of socialism* and *The revolutionary movement under modern capitalism* are available in English as Solidarity pamphlet No. 40 (*Workers' Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society*) and the Solidarity book *Modern Capitalism and Revolution.*

15. It is in a spirit of profound faithfulness to this most important aspect of Marx's doctrine that Lukacs devotes the main theme of his *History and Class Consciousness* to an analysis of reification.

16. The root causes of this drive have been previously described (see *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*, pp. 40–46) and are discussed again further on. (Solidarity footnote.)

17. See *Workers' councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society*, Solidarity pamphlet No. 40 (Solidarity footnote).

did not immediately institute an absolute equality of wages.[18]

(k) Finally — and to keep the discussion within the realms of the *important* differences—the traditional movement has always been dominated by the two concepts of economic determinism and of the dominant role of the Party. For us, at the centre of everything, is the autonomy of the working class, the capacity of the masses to manage their own activities, without which any idea of socialism immediately becomes a mystification. This necessitates a new conception of the revolutionary process, of revolutionary organisation, and of the nature of revolutionary politics.

It isn't hard to see that these ideas (whether they are true or false doesn't matter at this stage), aren't just 'additions' or 'partial revisions' but constitute the basic elements of a total theoretical reconstruction.

8

One must also grasp that this reconstruction doesn't only affect the content of the ideas, but also the very type of theoretical construct one is attempting. Just as it would be fruitless today to seek a type of organisation that could be a 'substitute' for a trade union somehow uniting trade unionism's erstwhile positive features while leaving out its negative aspects (in short seaking to invent a type of organisation that would be a union—without 'really' being one—yet still remaining one), it would similarly be illusory to believe that there can somehow exist 'another marxism' which wouldn't be the old one. The ruin of marxism isn't just the ruin of a certain number of ideas (a ruin despite which—need it be stressed?—there remain a number of fundamental insights and a way of looking at history and at society that no one henceforth will be able to ignore). It is also the ruin of a certain type of link between ideas, and between ideas and reality or action. In short it is the ruin of the concept of the 'closed' theory (and, even more, of a closed 'theoretico-practical' system) which believed it could encompass the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth of the historical period unfurling around it, through a certain number of allegedly 'scientific' schemas.

With this ruin a whole phase of the history of the working class movement (in fact a whole phase of human history) is coming to an end. We can call it the *theological* phase, given that there can be (and is) a theology of 'science' which is no better and probably worse than the other theology (inasmuch as it provides its believers with the false conviction that there beliefs are 'rational'). It is the phase of history in which people believe either in a supreme being or in an 'exceptional' man or group of men, or in an impersonal truth established once and for all and incorporated in a doctrine. It is the phase during which man becomes alienated from his own creations, imaginary or real, theoretical or practical. There will never again be a 'complete' theory, merely requiring periodic 'renovations'. Incidentally, in real life, there have never before existed any such theories, for all great theoretical discoveries have tended to become myths as soon as they sought to convert themselves into systems, marxism no less than any other.

What there has been—and what there must be—is a *living* theoretical process, in the course of which moments of truth will emerge which must sooner or later be transcended (if only by their integration into a new totality in which they will mean something different). This should not be taken as philosophical scepticism.[19] At each moment in time and for each stage of our understanding there certainly exists both truths and falsehoods, and there will always be a need to tot things up provisionally and to seek a total view of what is true—even if a changing and open-ended one. *But the idea of a complete and final theory is, in the modern era, nothing but a bureaucrat's day-dream, and moreover a tool helping him to manipulate the oppressed.* For the latter, such a view can only be the equivalent, in modern terms, of an essentially irrational faith.

At every stage of our development we must therefore assert what we feel sure about. But we must also recognise, and not just tongue in cheek, that at the frontier of our reflection and of our practice will be found problems whose solution we will not be able to know in advance, which may baffle us, and which may in fact compel us to abandon beliefs we might have died for until then. In our everyday life, every one of us (whether he knows it or not, and whether he wants to or not) is compelled to show such lucidity and courage in the face of the unknown and to react to it creatively. Revolutionary politics cannot become the last refuge of neurotic rigidity and of the neurotic need for security.

9

More than ever before, the fate of mankind is now posed in global terms. Everyday, in one form or another, we are confronted with the fate of the two-thirds of humanity who live in non-industrialised countries, with the relations of these countries to the industrial ones and, at a deeper level, with the structure and dynamic of a world society gradually being born. For us, however, who live in a modern capitalist society, the first task is the analysis of that society, the understanding of the fate of the working class movement that was born in it, and the orientation which revolutionaries living in that particular milieu should set themselves. This task is *objectively* the prime one (because it is the forms of life of modern capitalism which dominate the world and increasingly influence the evolution of other countries). The task is also a prime one *for us*, for we are nothing if we cannot define ourselves (both in theory and in practice) in relation to our own environment. It is to this definition that we must now turn.

18. Until such time, that is, as the development of production and changes in human attitudes, in particular the emergence of other motivations stronger than the urge to 'consume' more and more—allow society to do away with rules about 'wages' and 'incomes'. (Solidarity footnote.)

19. Or as philosophical nihilism. (Solidarity footnote.)

Modern Bureaucratic Capitalism

10

There exists no impossibility whatsoever for either 'private' or totally bureaucratic capitalism to continue to develop the productive forces. Nor is there, in the functioning of capitalism, any economic contradiction that cannot be overcome. More generally, there is no contradiction between the development of the productive forces and capitalist economic forms or capitalist relations of production. To aver that, under a socialist regime, the productive forces could be developed infinitely faster is not to point out a contradiction. And to say that there is a contradiction between capitalist forms and the development of human beings is a sophism: one can speak of the development of human beings only insofar as one considers them as something other than 'productive forces'. Capitalism is involved in a process of expansion of the productive forces, and itself constantly creates the conditions for such an expansion.

Classical economic crises of overproduction correspond to a period when the capitalist class was unorganised. Historically, this period is over. Such crises are unknown under totally bureaucratic capitalism (as it exists in the Eastern countries). The economic fluctuations in modern industrial countries, which state control of the economy can and does restrict within narrow limits, are only a minor equivalent of the classical crises.

11

There is neither a growing'industrial reserve army' nor a pauperisation (relative or absolute) of workers which would prevent the system from selling its products or render its long-term functioning impossible. 'Full employment' (in the capitalist sense and within capitalist limits) and the rise in mass consumption (a consumption that is capitalist both in its form and in its content) are at the same time the prerequisites and the result of the expansion of production, effectively brought about by modern capitalism. The continuous rise in workers' real wages (within its usual limits) not only does not undermine the foundations of capitalism as a system but is a condition of its survival. The same will become more and more true with regard to the shortening of the working week.

12

All this does not prevent the capitalist economy from being full of irrationalities and antinomies in all its manifestations. Nor does it prevent capitalism from being immensely wasteful when compared with the possibilities of a socialist economy. But these irrationalities cannot be grasped with an analysis such as the one used in *Capital*. They are the irrationalities stemming from bureaucratic management of the economy. They exist in a pure and unadulterated form in the Eastern countries. In the Western countries they are mixed with remnants of the private-anarchic phase of capitalism.

These irrationalities express the incapacity of a separate ruling stratum rationally to manage any field of activity in an alienated society. They do not reflect the autonomous functioning of 'economic laws', acting independently of individuals, groups or classes. That is why they are always irrationalities, and never absolute impossibilities, except at the moment when the exploited refuse to make the system work any longer.

13

Under capitalism, the evolution of work and of its organisation is dominated by two intimately linked tendencies: on the one hand, bureaucratisation; on the other, mechanisation-automation. These constitute the essential response of the order-givers when confronted by the struggle of the order-takers against their exploitation and alienation. But this fact does not lead to a simple, straightforward and uniform evolution of work, of its structure, of the qualifications it requires, of its relationship to the product or to the machine, or to a simple evolution of relations between workers. Although the fragmentation of tasks has for a long time been the central phenomenon of capitalist production—and although it remains so—it is beginning to encounter its limits in certain characteristic sectors of modern production, where it becomes impossible further to divide tasks without making work itself impossible. In the same way, rendering tasks more and more simple (thus destroying skilled work) finds its limits in modern production where a reverse tendency is becoming apparent in certain very modern industries which require better qualifications. Mechanisation and automation lead to a fragmentation of tasks, but these fragmented and simplified tasks are at the next stage taken over by 'totally' automated set-ups, entailing a restructuring of the work force into, on the other hand, a group of

'passive', isolated and unskilled attendants, and on the other, highly qualified technicians working in teams.

Side by side with all this, and remaining numerically preponderant, there continue to exist traditionally-structured sectors of the labour force in which are to be found all the historical sediments of the previous evolution of work, together with new sectors (offices, for instance) where traditional concepts and distinctions are losing much of their meaning. We must therefore treat as hasty and unconfirmed extrapolations both the traditional idea (of Marx, in *Capital*) that capitalism can only destroy skills and create an undifferentiated mass of worker-automatons, slaves to the machines, *and* the more recent concept of the increasing importance of a category of universal workers, tending universal machines.[20] These two tendencies exist as partial tendencies, together with a third tendency to proliferation of new categories both skilled and specialised. It is neither possible nor necessary arbitrarily to decide that only one of the three foreshadows the future.

14

It flows from all this that the problem of uniting workers in the struggle against the present system, and that of workers' management after the revolution, do not have a solution underwritten by an automatic process incorporated within technical evolution itself. These problems remain *political* in the deepest sense: their solution depends upon the development of a high level of consciousness concerning the totality of the problems of society.

Under capitalism it will always be difficult to unite the struggles of different categories of working people who are not in identical situations and never will be. During the revolution and even after, workers' management will not consist of the take-over by the workers of a process of production embodied in machinism and endowed with a waterproof and unarguable objective logic of its own. Nor will it consist of the unfolding of the full aptitudes of a collectivity of virtually universal producers, ready-made by capitalism. Workers' management will have to face an extraordinarily complex internal differentiation within the ranks of working people; it will have to solve the fundamental problem of integrating individuals, categories and activities. In no foreseeable future will capitalism produce, out of its own working, a class of workers already in itself a 'concrete universal'. Effective working class unity (other than as a sociological concept) can only be realised in the struggle of workers against capitalism. (Parenthetically, to speak today of the proletariat as a class is to indulge in purely descriptive sociology: what unites workers as identical members of a group is simply the sum total of the common passive features imposed on them by capitalism, and not their own attempt to define themselves as a class, united and opposed to the rest of society, either through their activity—even piecemeal—or through their organisation—even that of a minority.)

20. See *The American Worker*, by Paul Romano and Ria Stone, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Nos. 1–8.

The two problems mentioned (uniting workers in struggle and workers' management after the revolution) can only be solved by the association of all the non-exploiting categories at the place of work: manual workers, intellectuals, office workers and technicians. Any attempt at achieving workers' management which involved the elimination of a category of workers essential to modern production would lead to the downfall of that production, which could only subsequently be restored through coercion and renewed bureaucratisation.

15

The evolution of social structures, during the past 100 years, has not been that predicted by classical marxism. This has important consequences. There has certainly been a 'proletarianisation' of society in that the old 'petty bourgeois' classes have practically disappeared, and in that the immense majority of the population has been converted into wage and salary earners and been integrated into their place of work according to a capitalist division of labour. But this 'proletarianisation' is essentially different from the classical model, where society evolves towards two opposite poles, an enormous one consisting of industrial workers and an infinitesimal one consisting of capitalists. On the contrary, as it became bureaucratised, society has been transformed into a pyramid, or rather into a complex of pyramids, and this in accordance with the very logic of bureaucratis ation.

The transformation of virtually the whole population into wage and salary earners does not mean that only order-takers occupy the bottom rungs of the ladder. The population absorbed by the bureaucratic-capitalist structure has come to inhabit all the storeys of the bureaucratic pyramid. It will go on doing so. And in this pyramid there does not appear to be any tendency towards a reduction of the intermediate layers. On the contrary. Although it is difficult clearly to delimit this concept and impossible to make it coincide with existing statistical categories, it is possible to assert with certainty that in no modern industrial country do straightforward order-takers (manual workers in industry and their counterparts in other branches—typists, salesmen, etc.) exceed 50% of the working population. Moreover, the population has not been absorbed into industry. Except in countries which have not 'completed' their industrialisation (Italy for example) the percentage of the population in industry has ceased to increase after having reached a ceiling of between 30% and (rarely) 50% of the active population. The rest is employed in the 'service industries' (the number employed in agriculture is declining rapidly everywhere and is already negligible in Great Britain and the USA).

Even if the rise in the percentage of those employed in 'services' were to stop (due to mechanisation and automation involving this sector in turn) the tendency could hardly be reversed in view of the more and more rapid rise in industrial productivity and the consequent rapid decrease in demand for industrial labour. The combined results of these two facts is that the industrial proletariat (in the strict classical sense, i.e. defined either as manual workers, or as hourly-paid workers, categories which are roughly superimposable) is declining in relative or even absolute importance. For instance in the USA the percentage of industrial

workers ('production and allied workers' and 'unskilled workers other than those in agriculture and mining', the *the statistics including the unemployed* listed according to their last job) has come down from 28% in 1947 to 24% in 1961, a decline which has continued since 1955.[21]

16

These observations do not mean that the industrial working class has lost its importance. Nor do they mean that industrial workers do not have a central role to play in the revolutionary process, as was confirmed both by the Hungarian Revolution (although not under the conditions of modern capitalism) and by the Belgian General Strike. But our observations certainly show that the revolutionary movement could no longer pretend to represent the immense majority of mankind if it did not address itself to *all* the categories of the wage-earning working population (excluding the small minority of capitalists and ruling bureaucrats) and if it did not seek to associate with the strata of simple order-takers all the intermediate strata in the pyramid, which are nearly as important numerically speaking.

17

Apart from the transformations in the nature of the capitalist state and those of capitalist politics which we have analysed elsewhere,[22] one must understand what the new form of capitalist totalitarianism really means, and what its methods of domination really are in contemporary society. The state, as the central expression of the domination of society by a minority, or its appendages (and in the last resort the ruling strata) capture every sphere of social activity and attempt explicitly to mould them according to their interests or point of view. But this in no way implies the continuous use of violence or direct coercion, nor the suppression of formal rights and freedoms. Violence remains of course the ultimate guarantor of the system, but the system does not need to resort to violence every day. It can avoid doing so precisely to the extent that the spread of its control to virtually all spheres ensures its authority more 'economically', to the extent that its control over a continuously expanding economy allows it most of the time to assuage economic demands without major conflict, and finally to the extent that the rise in material standard of living and the degeneration of traditional ideas and organisations of the working class movement lead constantly to the privatisation of individuals, which although contradictory and transitory, nevertheless means that nobody in this society is explicitly contesting the domination of the system.

We must reject the traditional idea that bourgeois democracy is a worm-eaten edifice condemned, in the absence of revolution, to be replaced by fascism. Firstly this 'democracy', even as bourgeois democracy, has already effectively disappared, not through the reign of the Gestapo, but through the bureaucratisation of all political and state institutions and the concomitant apathy of the population. Secondly, this pseudo-democracy (pseudo to the second degree) *is* precisely the most adequate form of domination for modern capitalism. Modern capitalism could not do without parties (including socialist and communist parties) or trade unions, nowadays in every way essential cogs of the system. This is confirmed by the evolution in France over the last five years, where in spite of the decomposition of the state apparatus and the Algerian crisis, the risk of a fascist dictatorship was never real. It is also confirmed by Khruschevism in Russia, which expresses precisely the attempt of the bureaucracy to adopt new modes of domination, the old ones (totalitarian in the traditional sense) becoming incompatible with modern society. (It is another thing that there are chances of everything breaking up *during* these attempts. With the monopoly of violence as its last resort, capitalist domination is nowadays based on the bureaucratic manipulation of people, at work, in consumption, and in all areas of life.

18

Thus, modern capitalist society is essentially a bureaucratised society with a pyramidal, hierarchical structure. A small class of exploiters and a large class of producers are not facing each other from well-dfined storeys of the edifice. The division of society is much more complex and stratified, and no simple criterion can adequately summarise it.

The traditional concept of class corresponded to the relation of individuals and social groups to the ownership of the means of production, and we have rightly overtaken it by our insistence on the situation of individuals or groups in the real relations of production, and by introducing the concepts of order-givers (dirigeants) and order-takers (executants). These concepts remain valid for throwing light on modern capitalism, but they should not be applied in a mechanical way. In their pure state, they can only be applied concretely to the very top and bottom of the pyramid. They therefore 'ignore' all the intermediate strata, that is almost half the population, who are both order-takers (from those above) and order-givers (to those below). It is true that within these intermediate strata one can again meet nearly 'pure' cases. Thus a part of the hierarchical network fulfils essentially order-giving and coercive functions, while another fulfils essentially technical functions and includes people one might call 'order-takers with status' (for instance well-paid technicians or scientists who only carry out studies or do research they are asked to do). But the collectivisation of production means that these 'pure' cases, rarer and rarer nowadays, take no account of the great majority of the intermediate strata. When the personnel department of an enterprise is vastly expanded, it is clear that not only the typists, but also a good number of higher-placed employees, do not play any *personal* part in the system of coercion which their department helps impose on the rest of the enterprise. Conversely, when a research department is developed, an authority structure grows within it, for quite a few people will have the funciton of administering other people's work.

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21. By 1971 the proportion had declined to 21%. (Figures calculated from *Manpower Report of the President*, GPO Washington, 1973, pp. 188–189; and *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 1963. (Solidarity footnote.)
22. See *Modern Capitalism and Revolution* and *Workers' Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society*.

More generally it is not possible for the bureaucracy — and that is another expression of its contradiction — fully to separate the two requirements ('knowledge' and technical expertise on the one hand, 'ability to manage' on the other). The logic of the system would suggest that only those who are capable of 'leading men' should participate in managerial structures, but the logic of reality demands that those who take on work should know something about it — and the system can never get fully unstuck from reality. This is why the intermediate strata are full of people who combine professional qualifications with the exercise of managerial functions. For some of these people the problem of management, as something other than manipulation or coercion, is posed everyday. Ambiguity vanishes when one reaches the layer of those who really manage; those in whose interests everything finally functions, who take the important decisions, who reactivate and stimulate the working of the system which otherwise would founder in its own inertia, and who initiate the plugging of holes in moments of crisis.

This definition differs from the simple criteria adopted in the past to characterise classes. But the question today is not to gargle with the concept of class: it is to understand and to show that bureaucratisiation does not reduce the division of society but on the contrary makes it worse (by complicating it), that the system always functions in the interests of the small minority at the top, that hierarchy cannot and will never suppress the struggle of mankind against the dominant minority and its rules, that the workers (be they industrial workers, computer programmers or consultant engineers) will only be able to liberate themselves from oppression, alienation and exploitation when they overthrow this system, do away with hierarchy and replace it with collective and egalitarian management of production. The revolution will become reality on the day when the immense majority of workers inhabiting the bureaucratic pyramid attack it *and* the small minority who dominate it. It will only be real on that day. In the meantime the only differentiation which has a real practical importance is that which exists, at nearly all levels of the pyramid (except of course at the top), between those who *accept* the system and those who, in the everyday reality of production, *fight against it.* [23]

23. We feel this concept which, in a sense, transcends Cardan's earlier concepts of 'order-givers' and 'order-takers' requires further discussion and elaboration. 'Acceptance' of the system is a relative phenomenon. Certain sections of the population may, for instance, formally 'accept' the system and yet be more compelled than others (and this for very material reasons) to fight against it ... often denying they are doing any such thing. Moreover the specific weight, in the process of social transformation, of various groups 'fighting against the system' is by no means equal. (*Solidarity* footnote)

19

The deep contradiction of this society has already been analysed elsewhere.[24] In short, it lies in the fact that capitalism (and this comes to a paroxysm under bureaucratic capitalism) is obliged to try and achieve the simultaneous exclusion and participation of people in relation to their activities, in the fact that people are forced to ensure the functioning of the system half of the time *against* the system's own rules and therefore in struggle against it. This fundamental contradiction appears constantly wherever the process of management meets the process of execution, which is precisely (and par excellence) the social moment of production. The contradiction also appears, in infinitely refracted forms, within the process of management itself, where it renders the functioning of the bureaucracy irrational from the roots up. This contradiction can be analysed particularly clearly in the work process, which is a central manifestation of human activity in modern western societies. But it is also to be found in more or less transposed forms in all spheres of social activity, whether one is dealing with political life, sexual life, family life (where people are more or less forced to conform to norms they no longer internalise) or cultural life.

20

The crisis in capitalist production is but the other face of this contradiction. It has already been analysed in this journal,[25] as have been the crises in political and other organisations and institutions. These analyses have to be complemented by an analysis of the crisis of values and of social life as such, and finally by an analysis of the crisis of the very personality of modern man. This stems as much from the contradictory situations with which he must constantly grapple, both at work and in his private life, as from the collapse of values in the deepest sense of the word. Without values no culture is capable of structuring personalities adequate to it (that is which are capable of ensuring its functioning, if only as slaves).

However, our analysis of the crisis in production did not claim that there was only alienation there. On the contrary we have stressed that production could only occur to the extent that the producers constantly struggled against their alienation. Similarly, our analysis of the crisis of capitalist culture in the widest sense, and of the corresponding crisis of human personality, must start from the obvious fact that society is not and cannot be simply a 'society without culture'. Alongside the debris of the old culture are to be

24. See *Modern Capitalism and Revolution* and *Workers' Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society*.

25. See issues Nos. 1–8 (*The American worker* by Paul Romano and Ria Stone), issue No. 22 (*The factory and workers' management* by D. Mothe), issue No. 20 (*An experience of working class organisation* by R. Berthier), and issue No. 23 (*On the content of socialism* by P. Chaulieu).

found positive elements (though these are always ambivalent) created by historical evolution and in particular by the constant endeavour of men to give a meaning to their life in a period when nothing is certain any more and where nothing coming from without is accepted at face value. In the course of this endeavour, and for the first time in the history of humanity, men tend to realise their aspiration towards autonomy: it is therefore just as important for the preparation of the socialist revolution as are similar manifestations in the realm of production.

21

The fundamental contradiction of capitalism and the multiple conflicts and irrationalities which stem from it produces and will produce (as long as this society exists) 'crises' of one kind or another, i.e. breakdowns in the regular functioning of the system. These crises may open up revolutionary periods, if the mass of working people are sufficiently militant to question the very existence of the capitalist system and sufficiently conscious to bring it down and to organise a new society on its ruins. The very functioning of capitalism therefore guarantees that there will always be 'revolutionary opportunities'. But it does not guarantee revolutionary results, which depend wholly on the level of consciousness and of autonomy of the masses. There is no 'objective' dynamic that guarantees socialism, and to assert that such a dynamic could exist is self-contradictory. All the objective dynamics which can be detected in contemporary society are profoundly ambiguous, as we have shown elsewhere.[26]

The only dynamic to which one can, and should, give the meaning of a dialectical progression towards revolution is the *historical* dialectic of the struggle of social groups, firstly of the proletariat in the strict sense of the term, and today more generally of all wage and salary earners. This dialectic means that the struggle of those who are exploited transforms reality as well as themselves, so that when the struggle is taken up again it can only be at a higher level. This is the only revolutionary perspective and the quest for another, even by those who condemn a mechanistic approach, proves that the real meaning of this rejection of mechanism has not fully been understood.

The ripening of the conditions for socialism can never be an objective ripening (because no fact has a meaning outside of a human activity: to read a certainty of revolution in facts alone is no less absurd than attempting to read it in the stars). Neither can this ripening be a subjective one, in the psychological sense (working people today are far from storing in their mind the lessons of history; in any case, as Hegel said, the main lesson of history is that there are no lessons of history, for history is always new). The ripening is a historical ripening that is the accumulation of the objective conditions for an adequate consciousness. This accumulation is itself the product of the action of classes and of social groups but can only assume its true meaning when it is taken up again through a new consciousness and a new activity, which are not governed by 'laws' and which, while being probable, are never *inevitable.*

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26. See *Modern Capitalism and Revolution.*

22

The present period remains within this perspective. The coming of age of both reformism and of bureaucratic power means that working people will only be able to engage in important struggles by fighting reformism and the bureaucracy. The bureaucratisation of society explicitly poses the social problem as one of *management* of society: management by whom, to what ends, by what means? The rise in the level of consumption will tend to lessen its effectiveness as a substitute in men's lives, as a driving force, and as a justification for what is already being called 'the rate race'. Inasmuch as the narrow 'economic' problem becomes less important, the interest and concern of working people will turn to the real problems of life in modern society: to how work is organised, to the very *meaning* of work today, and to other facets of social organisation and of human life.

Here we must deal with a further important point. The crisis of culture and of traditional values increasingly confronts individuals with the problem of the orientation of their everyday life, at work as well as in all its other manifestations (relations between the sexes, with children, with other social groups, with the locality they live in, with voluntary and non-gainful activities), of its forms and finally of *its very meaning*. People are less and less able to solve those problems by conforming to traditional and inherited roles and ideas—and even when they do conform, they no longer internalise these roles and ideas. They no longer accept them as valid and unchallengeable—because these ideas and roles are no longer compatible either with present social reality or with the needs of individuals. They therefore crumble from within. The dominant bureaucracy seeks to replace them by manipulation, mystification, and propaganda. But its synthetic products, like other ersatz, fall before next year's fashion and only give rise to external and fleeting conformisms. People are therefore more and more forced to discover new answers to their problems, thereby both demonstrating their tendency towards autonomy and, at the same time embodying this autonomy in their behaviour and in their attitudes to others. These attitudes are more and more aligned on the idea that relations between human beings can only be based on the recognition by each of the freedom and responsibility of others in the conduct of their lives. If we are serious when we talk of the total character of revolution, if we understand that workers' management does not only imply a certain type of machinery, but also a certain type of individual, then we must admit that this tendency is as important a herald of revolution as the tendency of workers to fight bureaucratic management in the factory—even if we don't as yet see collective manifestations of it, or grasp how it could lead to organised activity.

The End of the Traditional Working Class Movement: a Balance Sheet

23

Today it is not possible to think or act as a revolutionary without becoming deeply and totally conscious that as a result of the transformations of capitalism and of the degeneration of the organised working class movement, the organisational forms, the types of activities, the preoccupations, the ideas, the traditional vocabulary itself no longer have any value, but are even detrimental. As Mothe wrote, when discussing the effective reality of the movement among workers: 'When the Roman Empire disappeared it left ruins behind it; the working class movement is leaving only refuse'.[27]

To become conscious of this fact means finishing once and for all with an idea which, consciously or not, still dominates the attitude of many, namely that existing parties and unions—and all that goes with them (ideas, demands, etc.)—are but a screen interposed between the proletariat, as revolutionary as ever, and its class objectives; or are but a mould which imparts a bad shape to working class activities but does not alter their substance. The degeneration of the working class movement has not only led to the development of a bureaucratic layer at the top of its organisations but has contaminated all its manifestations. This degeneration is not due to chance, or simply to the 'external' influence of capitalism. It also expresses the reality of the proletariat during a whole historical phase, for the working class cannot be and is not foreign to what is happening to it, and even less to what it does.[28]

To speak of the demise of the traditional working class movement means to understand that a historical period is coming to an end, dragging with it into the nothingness of things past the near-totality of forms and contents it had produced, and in which the workers had embodied their struggle for liberation. There will only be a renewal of struggle against capitalist society to the extent that workers sweep away all those remanants of their own past activity which hinder the rebirth of that struggle. In the same way there will only be a rebirth of revolutionary activity if all corpses are properly and definitely buried.

24

The traditional forms of organisation of the workers were the union and the Party. What is a union today? A cog in capitalist society, indispensable to its 'smooth' functioning both at the level of production and at the level of the distribution of the social product. (Even if a union is ambivalent in this last matter, this is not sufficient to distinguish it fundamentally from other institutions of present society; it is also another question whether revolutionary militants should belong to it in spite of this, etc.) All this is *necessarily* so, and to seek to restore the virginity of the union is, under the pretence of realism, to live in cloud-cuckoo-land.

What is a working class political party today? A managerial organ of capitalist society, marshalling the masses, which when 'in power' differs in no way from bourgeois parties, except in accelerating the evolution of capitalism towards it bureaucratic form, and in sometimes giving it a more overt totalitarian form. Such a party can in any case organise the repression of the exploited and of the colonial masses as well as, if not better, than its rivals. It is *necessarily* so and no reform of such parties is possible: a gulf separates a traditional party from what we mean by a revolutionary organisation.

In both cases our own critique[29] has only made explicit the criticism that history itself has inflicted on these two working class institutions; and like history, it has not only been a critique of events but a critique of the content and forms of action that men have engaged in during a whole period. It is not just *these* parties or *those* unions which have died as instruments of working class struggle, but The Party and The Union. It is not only utopian to seek to reform them, or to straighten them out, or to constitute new ones which by some miracle would escape the fate of the old ones. It is wrong, in the new period, to want to find exact equivalents for them, alternatives in new garb that would have the same functions.

25

Traditional *minimum* demands were first of all economic demands, which not only coincided with workers' interests but were supposed to undermine the capitalist system. We

27. *The workers and culture, Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 30.
28. *Proletariat and organisation, Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 27.
29. See *Proletariat and organisation, Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 22, pp. 63–74.

have already shown[30] that a regular increase in wages is a pre-condition of the expansion, and even of the health, of the capitalist system, even if some capitalists do not always understand this. (It is another thing that the resistance of capitalists to such increases can, under certain quite exceptional circumstances, become the starting point of conflicts that lead beyond economic questions.)

Then there were 'political' demands. In the great tradition of the real workers' movement (and for Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, if not for the ultra-left sects) these consisted in claiming and defending 'democratic rights' and their extension, in 'making use' of Parliament, and in seeking to control local authorities. The justification of these demands was (a) that these rights were necessary for the development of the workers' movement, and (b) that the bourgeoisie could not really grant them or tolerate their exercise in the long term, for it 'got strangled by its own legality'. However, we have seen that the system can cope perfectly well with its pseudo-democracy, and that the 'rights' do not mean very much for the working class movement as they are cancelled by the very bureaucratisation of 'working class' organisations. We must add that these 'rights' exist almost everywhere in modern western societies and that strong reactions from the people are only seldom encountered when some ruling stratum puts them in question. As for the so-called 'transitional' demands put forward by Trotsky, we have sufficiently shown their false and illusory character to have to return to the matter.

Finally, it must be said and repeated that the core of the traditional 'maximum' demands (which remain alive in the consciousness of the vast majority of people) was nationalisation and planning of the economy. We have shown that this was organically the programme of the bureaucracy (the words 'workers' management' are mentioned only once, *en passant*, in the documents of the First IV Congresses of the Communist International, without elaboration or even definition, and they do not reappear).

26

The traditional forms of action (we are not speaking now about armed insurrections which don't happen everyday—or even every year) were mainly the strike and the mass demonstration. What of the strike today—not of the idea of striking, but of its social reality? Essentially one sees mass strikes, controlled and marshalled by the unions, confrontations which unfold like a theatrical show (whatever the sacrifices such strikes may demand of the mass of workers). Or else, equally controlled and marshalled there are 'demonstration' strikes lasting an hour, or a day, etc. The only strikes that go beyond the institutionalised procedure which is now part of the ritual of negotiations between unions and bosses are the wildcat strikes in England and the USA, precisely because they challenge this procedure in both content and form. So do some strikes limited to one enterprise or one department, where the rank and file can play a more active role.

As for the mass demonstration it is better not to mention it. What must be understood in these two cases is that the reality of these forms of action is necessarily and indissolubly linked both to the organisations which control them as well as to the objectives pursued. For example, the idea of the big strike is *per se* still valid, and it is possible to imagine a process by which 'real' strike committees would be elected and would put forward the 'real' demands of the workers and remain under their control, etc. But in relation to present reality this is an empty and meaningless speculation. To achieve this on a larger scale than that of a single enterprise or shop would demand both a very deep break between workers and union bureaucrats and the ability of the masses to form autonomous organs and to formulate demands which tear asunder the present reformist context—in a word, it would mean that society was entering a revolutionary period. The enormous difficulties met by the Belgian strikes of 1960–61 and their eventual failure dramatically highlight the problem.

27

The same historical wear and tear irreversibly affects the traditional vocabulary of the working class movement, as well as its basic ideas. If we take into account the real social use of words and their real significance for live human beings (and not for dictionaries), a communist today is a member of the Communist Party, full stop. Socialism is the regime that exists in the USSR and similar countries. No one, outside the ultra left sects, uses the word 'proletariat'. Words have their own historical destiny, whatever troubles this may cause us (troubles that we only pretend to but don't really solve by writing 'communist' between inverted commas). We have to understand that in relation to the traditional vocabulary we cannot posture as another Academie Francaise, more conservative than the real one, refusing the living meaning of words in every day use and insisting that 'sensible' means 'pertaining to the mode of knowing' rather than 'reasonable'[31] or that a communist is someone in favour of a society where everyone gives according to his ability and receives according to his needs, and not just a follower of Maurice Thorez.

As for the guiding ideas of the working class movement, no one outside of the sects still knows, even vaguely, the meaning of 'social revolution'. At best people think of civil war. The 'abolition of the wages system', at one time mentioned in the programmes of various trade unions, has no longer any meaning for anybody. The last examples of effective internationalism go back to the Spanish Civil War (yet there have been many opportunities for it since). The very idea of the unity of the working class and more generally of all working people (inasmuch as their interests are essentially one and radically opposed to those of the ruling classes) finds little expression in reality (apart from solidarity strikes and the 'blacking' of certain firms which take place in England). The background to all this is the collapse of traditional theory and ideology, to which we shall not here return.

30. *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*

31. This is an English adaptation of Cardan's text. The original stated: '.....qui refuserait le sens vivant des mots dans l'usage social et insisterait qu'etonner signifie 'faire trembler par une violente commotion' et non 'surprendre'.....' (Solidarity footnote.)

28

At the same time as we witness the irreversible bankruptcy of the traditional movement, we are witnessing and shall witness the birth, rebirth, or readoption of new forms of struggle and organisation which, so far as we can now judge, point to the direction the revolutionary process will take in the future and which must guide us in our present thinking and activity. The Hungarian workers' councils, their attempt to manage production and to abolish norms, etc; the shop stewards movement in England; the wildcat strikes in the USA; all struggles concerning conditions of work in the most general sense; and demands aimed against hierarchy, which groups of workers in several countries are making and directing *against* the unions must be the definite and positive starting points in our effort to reconstruct a revolutionary movement. We have made an extensive analysis of these movements in the journal. This analysis is still valid (even if it must be reviewed and developed). But these insights will only prove fruitful for our thinking and activity if we understand fully the *break* they represent, not of course in relation to the summits of past revolutions, but in relation to the everyday historical reality of the traditional movement. We must understand them not as additions or amendments to past forms, but as new bases from which we must reflect and act, together with what we learn from our analysis and renewed critique of established society.

29

Present conditions therefore allow us to deepen and enlarge both our vision of socialism and its basis in social reality. This claim seems to be in direct conflict with the disappearance of the revolutionary socialist movement and of any political activity by the working class. This opposition is not fictitious: it is real and constitutes the central problem of our epoch. The working class movement has become integrated into official society, its institutions (parties, unions) have become part of that society. Worse, workers have *de facto* abandoned any political and most trade union activity. This privatisation of the working class and of all social groups is the joint result of two factors: on the one hand the bureaucratisation of parties and unions estranges the mass of workers; on the other the rise in living standards and the massive dissemination of new types and new objects of consumption provides them with a substitute for and the sham pretence of a meaningful life.

This phase is neither superficial nor accidental. It expresses one possible destiny of contemporary society. If the term 'barbarism' has any meaning today, it does not mean fascism, or mass poverty, or a return to the stone age. It means precisely this 'air-conditioned nightmare': consumption for consumption's sake in private life, organisation for organisation's sake in public life, and their corollaries—privatisation, withdrawal from and apathy towards social questions, dehumanisation of social relationships. This process is well advanced in the industrialised countries but it is engendering its own opposites. Bureaucratised institutions are abandoned by people who finally come into conflict with them. The race for ever-rising standards of consumption, for 'new' objects to consume, sooner or later reveals its absurdity. Those elements that allow the acquisition of consciousness, a socialist practice, and in the last analysis, revolution, have not disappeared, but on the contrary proliferate in society today. Every worker can observe the chaos and incoherence that characterise ruling classes and their system in their management of all big social questions. In his everyday existence, and primarily at work, the worker experiences the absurdity of a system seeking to turn him into an automaton, but obliged to call on his inventiveness and initiative to correct its own mistakes.

There lies the fundamental contradiction we have analysed, the crisis of all worn out forms of traditional organisation and life. There lies the yearning of people for autonomy as manifested in their concrete life, the constant informal struggle of workers against bureaucratic management of production, and the movements, and the meaningful demands mentioned in the previous paragraph. The twin elements of a socialist solution continue therefore to be produced— even if they are buried, deformed or mutilated by the working of bureaucratic society.

Moreover this society is incapable of rationalising its own functioning (even from its own point of view). It is condemned to produce 'crises' which, though they may each time appear accidental, are nevertheless inevitable and which each time objectively confront humanity with the totality of its problems. These two elements provide the necessary and sufficient basis on which to develop a revolutionary intent and perspective. It is useless and mystifying to seek any other perspective, to try to deduce, demonstrate or describe the way the conjunction of these two elements (the conscious revolt of the masses and the momentary inability of the system to function) will take place, and lead to revolution. There never was, anyway, any such description in classical marxism, except for the passage ending the chapter on 'primitive accumulation' in *Capital*. This passage is theoretically wrong, as none of the real historical revolutions ever took place that way. Revolutions occurred starting from an unpredictable 'accident' of the system, triggering off an explosion of activity of the masses. (The historians, whether marxist or not, who have never been able to predict anything although they are always very wise after the event, subsequently explain the explosion with *a posteriori* explanations which explain nothing.)

We said, a long time ago, that the problem was not to deduce the revolution, but to make it. And the only factor of fusion between the two elements of which we, as revolutionaries, can speak of is our own activity, the activity of a revolutionary organisation. This activity does not, of course, constitute any kind of 'guarantee'. But it is the only factor dependant upon us, which might influence the possibility that innumerable individual and collective revolts throughout society respond to one another, unite, take on the same meaning, aim explicitly at the radical reconstruction of society, and finally transform what always starts as 'just another crisis of the system' into a revolutionary crisis. In this sense, the bringing together of the two elements in the revolutionary perspective can only take place through activity and can only find expression in the concrete content of our orientation.

Bases for a New Orientation

30

As an organised movement, the revolutionary movement must be rebuilt from rock bottom. This reconstruction will find a solid basis in the development of working class experience. But it presupposes a radical break with all present organisations, their ideology, their mentality, their methods of action. Everything which has existed and exists in the working class movement (ideology, parties, unions, etc.) is irrevocably and irretrievably finished, rotten, integrated into exploiting society. There can be no miraculous solution. Everything must be built anew, at the cost of a long and patient labour. But this reconstruction will not take place in a vacuum. It will start from the immense experience of a century of working class struggle and with the working class closer today to real solutions than it has ever been before.

31

The confusion about the socialist programme created by the degenerated workers' organisations (whether reformist, stalinist or trotskyist) must be radically exposed. The idea that socialism is synonymous with the nationalisation of the means of production plus planning—must be pitilessly denounced. The identity of these views with the fundamental objectives of capitalism itself must constantly be shown.

Socialism means workers' management of production and society. It means popular self-administration through workers' councils. This must be proclaimed and illustrated from historical experience. The real content of socialism is the restitution to men of domination over their own lives and the transformation of labour from an absurd means of bread-winning into the free and creative action of individuals and groups. It is the constitution of integrated human communities. It is the union of the culture and of the life of men.

This content of socialism should not shamefully be hidden as some abstract speculation concerning an indeterminate future. It should be put forward as the only answer to the problems which torment and stifle mankind today. The socialist programme should be presented for what it is: a programme for the humanisation of work and of society. Socialism is not a backyard of leisure attached to the industrial prison. It is not transistors for the prisoners. It is the destruction of the industrial prison itself.

32

The revolutionary criticism of modern society must change its whole axis. It must denounce the inhuman and absurd character of work, in all its aspects. It must unmask the arb itrariness and monstrosity of hierarchy, both in production and in society, its total lack of justification, the enormous waste and antagonisms that it creates, the incapacity of those who rule, the contraditions and irrationality of the bureaucratic management of the factory, of the economy, of the state and of society. It must show that whatever the rise in 'living standards', the real problem of human needs is not solved even in the most 'affluent' societies; that capitalist consumption is full of contradictions and finally absurd. It must concern itself with all aspects of life. It must denounce the disintegration of communities, the dehumanisation of human relations, the content and methods of capitalist education, the monstrosity of modern cities, the double oppression imposed on women and on youth.

33

Our analysis of contemporary reality cannot and must not be simply a description and an exposure of alienation. It must constantly stress the *double reality* of any social activity in present day conditions (which is but the expression of what we have defined earlier as the fundamental contradiction of the system), namely that people's creativity and their struggle against alienation, at times individual, at others collective, necessarily manifest themselves in every field, particularly today (were this not so, there would never be any prospect of socialism).

We have shown the absurdity of considering the factory as nothing but a hard-labour camp, and have shown that alienation could never be total (for production would then cease). We have stressed that there was a tendency among the producers, individually and collectively, to take over in part the management of production. We must similarly expose the absurd idea that people's lives under capitalism consist of nothing but passivity towards capitalist manipulation and mystification (if this were so, we would be living in a world of zombies for whom socialism would be an impossibility). On the contrary we must highlight and give positive significance to people's endeavours (which are both cause and effect of the collapse of traditional forms and values) to find for themselves a direction to their attitudes and life, at a time when nothing is certain any more.

this endeavour opens—no more, no less—an absolutely new phase in the history of humanity, and insofar as it embodies the yearning for autonomy, is as important (if not more important) a condition of socialism than is the development of technology. We must show how often the exercise of this autonomy takes on a positive content, for instance in the growing transformation of the relations between the sexes, or of the relations between children and parents. These transformations contain within themselves the recognition of the other person's right to be master of his or her own life. It is also important to demonstrate the similar content appearing in certain radical tendencies in contemporary culture (in psychoanalysis, sociology and ethnology for instance) to the extent that these tendencies complete the demolition of what remains of oppressive ideologies, and are bound to spread within society.

34

The traditional organisations based themselves on the idea that economic demands were the central problem confronting workers and that capitalism would always be incapable of satisfying them. This idea no longer corresponds to contemporary reality. Revolutionary activity in the unions cannot be based on out-bidding other tendencies on economic demands, more or less supported by the unions themselves, and eventually achievable under capitalism without major difficulty. The basis of the permanent reformism of the unions and of their irreversible bureaucratic degeneration is to be found precisely in the possibility of such wage increases. Capitalism can only survive by granting wage increases. And to this end the bureacratised and reformist unions are indispensable to it. This does not mean that revolutionaries should leave the unions. It does not mean that they should be uninterested in economic demands. It means that neither of these points has the central importance formerly given to them.

35

The humanity of the wage earner is less and less threatened by an economic misery challenging his very physical existence. It is more and more attacked by the nature and conditions of modern work, by the oppression and alienation the worker undergoes in production. In this field there can be no lasting reform. Employers may raise wages by 3% per annum but they cannot reduce alienation by 3% per annum. In this field there can only be a constant struggle, whose immediate objectives will vary as the organisation of production is constantly revolutionised by technological change. As this is an area in which the trade unions systematically co-operate with management, it is a key task for revolutionaries to help workers organise their struggles against the conditions of work and life in the capitalist factory.

36

The relations of exploitation in contemporary society increasingly take on the form of hierarchy. The 'need' for hierarchy is defended by workers' parties and trade unions. It has become the last ideological support for the whole capitalist system. The revolutionary movement must organise a systemmatic struggle against the ideology of hierarchy in all its forms, including the hierarchy of wages and jobs in the factory and the hierarchy of positions in workers' own organisations.

But this struggle can no longer take place simply by starting with the analysis of the respective situations of semi-skilled machine minders and foremen in traditional industry. Such an analysis would mean nothing to an increasing number of categories of workers, to whom it would be false to represent the hierarchy as just a veil of mystification covering a reality in which all roles would be identical, except those of coercion. What we must show is that the vast majority of differences in workers' qualifications (skills) result from the very functioning of a society that is from the very onset unequal and hierarchical.

Such a society constantly reproduces itself in a stratified manner within the new generations. It is not simply their different qualifications which determine the place of people in the hierarchical pyramid, but this place is just as much defined by people's ability to remain afloat during the struggle between bureaucratic clans and cliques—an ability of no social value. We must stress that in any case only the collectivity of workers can and should manage work rationally, in relation to its general objectives and conditions. To the extent that certain technical aspects of work demand a division of responsibilities, those responsible must remain under the control of the collectivity. We must emphasise that in no case can there be any justification for any difference in wages, the equality of which is at the core of any socialist programme. In this context, it must be understood that the desire of workers for responsibility or better qualifications does not always or necessarily mean an attempt to pass over to the other side of the class barrier. To a growing degree it expresses the need of people to find an interest in their work. It is another thing if the promotion cannot satisfy this need within the present system. And there is no point in saying that such a solution is a purely personal one. It is no more—or no less—than that of bringing up one's children as best one can without just saying 'the problem is insoluble, anyhow, within the present society'.

37

In all struggles, the way a result is obtained is just as important as what is obtained. Even in regard to immediate efficiency, actions organised and led by workers themselves are superior to actions decided and led bureaucratically. They alone create the conditions of progress, for they alone teach workers to run their own affairs. The first criterion guiding the activity of the revolutionary movement should be that its interventions aim not at replacing but at developing the initiative and autonomy of workers.

38

Even when the struggles in production reach a great intensity it remains difficult for workers to generalise their

experience, to pass from their own experience in production to an understanding of the global problems of society. In this field the revolutionary organisation has an important task to perform. This task must not be confused with sterile agitation about incidents in the political life of the capitalist parties, or of the degenerated workers' organisations. It means showing systematically that the system always functions against workers, that they cannot solve their problems without abolishing both capitalism and bureaucracy, and without completely reconstructing society. It means pointing out to them that there is a profound and intimate analogy between their fate as producers and their fate as men in society. Neither the one nor the other can be modified without abolishing the division of society into a class which decides and a class which merely executes. Only through long and patient work along these lines will it be possible to pose anew—and in correct terms—the problem of mobilising workers on general questions.

39

Experience has shown that internationalism is not an automatic product of working class life. Several decades ago it was a real factor in politics, generated through the activity of workers' organisations. It has disappeared as these organisations have degenerated and lapsed into chauvinism. The revolutionary movement must struggle to help the working class reclimb the long path it has descended for a quarter of a century. It must make international solidarity in working class struggles live again. It must especially seek to promote the solidarity of workers of imperialist countries with the struggles of colonial peoples.

40

The revolutionary movement must cease appearing as a political movement in the traditional sense. Traditional politics are dead and for good reasons. The population abandons them because it sees them for what they are: the activities of a group of professional mystifiers, buzzing around the machinery of the state or its appendages, with a view to penetrating them and 'taking them over'. The revolutionary movement must appear as what it really is: a total movement, concerned with everything men do and undergo in society, and above all with their real daily lives.

41

The revolutionary movement must therefore cease to be an organisation of specialists. It must become the place (the only place in contemporary society, outside the factory) where an increasing number of individuals learn about collective life, run their own affairs, and fulfil and develop themselves, working for a common objective in reciprocal recognition.

42

The propaganda and recruitment efforts of the revolutionary movement must take account of the transformations of capitalism, and of the generalisation of its crisis. The revolutionary movement cannot speak exclusively to manual workers. It cannot pretend that everyone is or will finally be transformed into a pure order-taker, at the very bottom of the bureaucratic pyramid. What is true, and a sufficient basis for propaganda and recruitment, is that the vast majority of individuals, whatever their qualifications or pay, are transformed into wage-earning 'executants', performing a broken-up labour, experiencing both alienation at work and the absurdity of society, and tending to revolt against them. In this respect, office workers and those in similar occupations are less and less distinguished from manual workers; they begin to criticise and struggle against the system along the same lines. Similarly, the crisis of culture and the decomposition of the values of capitalist society drive increasing numbers of intellectual and students towards a radical criticism of the system as a whole.

To achieve a unity of struggle against the system, as well as to make possible the collective management of production by working people, the role of these 'new layers' of workers will be fundamental; much more fundamental for instance than was in Lenin's time 'the unity with the poor peasantry'. This peasantry as such only represented a negative force, destined to destroy the old system, whereas the 'new layers' have an essential and positive role to play in the socialist reconstruction of society. The revolutionary movement alone can give a positive meaning and outlet to the revolt of these groups. In return, it will receive a precious enrichment. In the conditions of exploiting society, only the revolutionary movement can be the meeting place between manual workers, white-collar workers and intellectuals, a union without which there can be no victorious revolution.

43

The break between the generations and the revolt of youth in modern society are without common measure with the conflict of generations in previous epochs. Youth today no longer opposes adults with a view to taking their place in an established and recognised system. It refuses this system. Young people no longer recognise its values. Contemporary society is losing its hold on the generations it produces. The break is particularly sharp in the field of politics.

The vast majority of 'politically active' adult workers, whatever their good faith and good will, cannot make the essential reconversion that is now needed. They repeat mechanically the lessons and phrases learnt long ago, phrases which are now devoid of content. They remain attached to ideas, concepts, forms of action and patterns of organisation which have collapsed. The traditional organisations of the 'left' succeed less and less in recruiting youth. Nothing separates these organisations, in the eyes of young people, from the moth-eaten and rotten institutions they meet on coming into the social world. The revolutionary movement

will be able to give positive meaning to the immense revolt of contemporary youth and make it the ferment of social revolution if it can express what youth is looking for and can show young people effective methods of struggle against a world they reject.

44

The crisis and the wearing down of the capitalist system extend today to all sectors of life. The rulers exhaust themselves trying to plug the holes in their system, without ever succeeding. In contemporary society, the richest and most powerful the world has ever known, the dissatisfaction of men and their powerlessness before their own creations are greater than ever. Today, capitalism may succeed in 'privatising' people, in driving them away from social problems and from collective activity. But this phase cannot last forever, if only because it is the established society that would choke first. Sooner or later, due to one of those 'accidents' unavoidable under the present system, the masses will enter into action anew, to modify the conditions of their existence. The outcome of this struggle will depend on the degree of consciousness, of initiative, of will, of capacity for autonomy which workers will then show.

But the formation of this consciousness and the affirmation of this autonomy depend to an important degree on the continuous work of a revolutionary organisation which has understood the experience of a century of working class struggles. It must have understood above all that both the objective and the means of all revolutionary activity is the development of the conscious and autonomous action of the workers. It must be capable of tracing the perspective of a new, human, society for which it will be worth living and dying. It must, finally, itself embody the example of a collective activity that men both understand and dominate.

Appendix

In section 7 a number of points are listed in which Cardan considers the social analysis put forward by *Socialisme ou Barbarie* came to differ from that of Marx. We have felt it worth giving some key quotes from Marx, to underline the fact that the beliefs attributed to him were well and truly his own, and not those of later 'marxists'.

The quotations are grouped. The groups refer to the various themes listed in section 7 of the text. The page references given after the quotations refer to the English editions published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The relevant volumes were published in the following years: *The Holy Family,* 1956; *Selected Works* (S.W.), volumes I and II, 1958; *Capital,* volume III, 1959.

a

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses however this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat.

K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* S.W. vol 1, p. 34-35

The division of society into a small excessively rich class and a large propertyless class of wage workers results in a society suffocating from its own superfluity, while the great majority of its members is scarcely—or even not at all—protected from extreme want.

F. Engels, *Introduction (1891) to Marx's Wage Labour and Capital,* S.W. vol. 1, p. 78

b

Capital is therefore not a personal, it is a social power.

K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* S.W. vol. 1, p. 47

Capital becomes conscious of itself as a social power, in which every capitalist participates proportionally to his share in the total social capital.

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. III, p. 191

... laws, immanent in capitalist production, manifest themselves in the movements of individual masses of capital, where they assert themselves as coercive laws of competition, and are brought home to the mind and consciousness of the individual capitalist as the directing motive of his operations.

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. I chapter 12 (Allen & Unwin, 1938 edition, p. 305)

Capital comes more and more to the fore as a social power, whose agent is the capitalist ... It becomes an alienated, independent social power which stands opposed to society ...

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. III, p.259

c

Capital appears as a mysterious and self-creating source of interest: the source of its own increase ... Capital appears as a mere *thing.* The result of the entire process of reproduction appears as a propery inherent in the *thing* itself ... The social relation is consummated in the relation of a *thing,* money, to itself ... It becomes a property of money to generate value and yield interest, much as it is an attribute of pear trees to bear pears ... In M-M' we have the meaningless form of capital, the perversion and objectification (Versachlichung, reification) of production relations in their highest form ...

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. III, p. 384

In the case of the simplest categories of the capitalist mode of production (and even more of commodity-production, in the case of commodities and money) we have already pointed out the mystifying character that transforms the social relations, for which the material elements of wealth serve as bearers in production, into properties of these things themselves (commodities), and still more pronouncedly transforms the production relation into a *thing*, (money). *All forms of society, in so far as they reach the stage of commodity production and money circulation, take part in this perversion.*

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. III, p. 806

To the latter (the producers) therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things.

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. I, chapter 1, section 4 (Allen & Unwin, 1938 edition, p. 44)

d

Labour power, therefore, is a commodity, neither more nor less than sugar. The former is measured by the clock, the latter by scales.

K. Marx, *Wage Labour and Capital,* S.W. vol. I, p. 82

Labourers ... must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity like every other article of commerce.

K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* S.W. vol. I, p. 40

We must now examine more closely this peculiar commodity, labour power. Like all others it has a value. How is that value determined? The value of labour power is determined, as in the case of every other commodity, by the labour time necessary for the production, and consequently also the reproduction, of this special article.

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. 1, chapter 6 (Allen & Unwin, 1938 edition, p. 149)

The value or worth of a man is as of all things his price—that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his power.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* quoted favourably, in above passage, by K. Marx.

e

The contradiction of the capitalist mode of production lies precisely in its tendency towards an absolute development of the productive forces which continually comes into conflict with the specific conditions of production in which capital moves, and alone can move.

K. Marx, *Capital,* vol. III, p. 252

Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. The integument is burst asunder. The knell of private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.

K. Marx, *Capital,* S.W. vol. I, p. 460

This antagonism between modern industry and science on the one hand, modern misery and dissolution on the other, this antagonism between the productive powers and the social relations of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming, and not to be controverted.

K. Marx, *Speech at the Anniversary of the People's Paper,* S.W. vol. I, p. 360

Revolution is only possible in the periods when both these factors, the modern productive forces and the bourgeois productive forms, come in collision with one another ... A new revolution is possible only in consequence of a new crisis. It is however just as certain as this crisis.

K. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France,* S.W. vol. I, p. 231

f

... Capitalist production begets, with the inevitability of a law of Nature, its own negation.

K. Marx, *Capital,* S.W. vol. I, p. 460

The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment *considers* as its aim. The question is *what the proletariat is,* and what, consequent on that being, it will be *compelled* to do.

K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Holy Family,* p. 53

Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself.

K. Marx, *Capital,* S.W. vol. 1, p. 460

g

It was difficult to find a compact 'quote' illustrating this point. The general thesis is abundantly illustrated, however, in a specific field, in the way Marx constantly denounces vulgar political economy (throughout *Capital*, for instance) while constantly praising the application of 'science and technique' to industry.

h

In fact the *realm of freedom* actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases: thus in the very nature of things it *lies beyond the sphere of actual material production* ... Beyond (the realm of necessity) begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which however can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite.

K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, pp. 799-800

i

For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production.

K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, S.W. vol. I, p. 39

These productive forces themselves, with increasing energy, press forward to the removal of the existing contradiction ...

F. Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, S.W. vol. II, p. 146

Their deliverance from these bonds is the one precondition for an unbroken, constantly accelerated development of the productive forces.

ibid, p. 152

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, ie. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, S.W. vol. I, p. 53

Nationalisation (and even 'planning') followed, becoming the 'concrete content' of the 'expropriation of the expropriators'.

i

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society, which is thus in every respect—economically, morally and intellectually—still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly the individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions have been made— exactly what he gives to it ... he receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour ... and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labour. The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another.

The right of the producers is *proportional* to the labour they supply: the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an *equal standard*, labour. But one man is superior to another physically or mentally and so supplies more labour in the same time, or can labour for a longer time ... *This equal right* is an unequal right for unequal labour ... it *tacitly recognises unequal individual endowment, and thus productive capacity, as natural privileges.* It is therefore a right of inequality in its content like every right.

Further one worker is married, another not: one has more children than another, and so on and so forth. Thus with an equal performance of labour, and hence an equal share in the consumption fund, *one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another,* and so on ... These defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society, as it is when it has just emerged after prolongued birth pangs from capitalist society ...

(Only) in a higher phase of communist society ... can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.

K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, S.W. vol. II, pp. 23-24

as we see it

1 Throughout the world, the vast majority of people have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives. They sell their labour power while others who own or control the means of production accumulate wealth, make the laws and use the whole machinery of the State to perpetuate and reinforce their privileged positions

2 During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalisation of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically altered the status of the worker as worker. Nor have they given the bulk of mankind much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and policemen, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free

3 The trade unions and the traditional parties of the left started in business to change all this. But they have come to terms with the existing patterns of exploitation. In fact they are now essential if exploiting society is to continue working smoothly. The unions act as middlemen in the labour market. The political parties use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends. The degeneration of working class organisations, itself the result of the failure of the revolutionary movement, has been a major factor in creating working class apathy, which in turn has led to the further degeneration of both parties and unions

4 The trade unions and political parties cannot be reformed, 'captured', or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. We don't call however for the proclamation of new unions, which in the conditions of today would suffer a similar fate to the old ones. Nor do we call for militants to tear up their union cards. Our aims are simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles and that the control and organisation of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The *forms* which this self-activity of the working class may take will vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry. Its basic *content* will not

5 Socialism is not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution. It means equality, real freedom, reciprocal recognition and a radical transformation in all human relations. It is 'man's positive self-consciousness'. It is man's understanding of his environment and of himself, his domination over his work and over such social institutions as he may need to create. These are not secondary aspects, which will automatically follow the expropriation of the old ruling class. On the contrary they are essential parts of the whole process of social transformation, for without them no genuine social transformation will have taken place

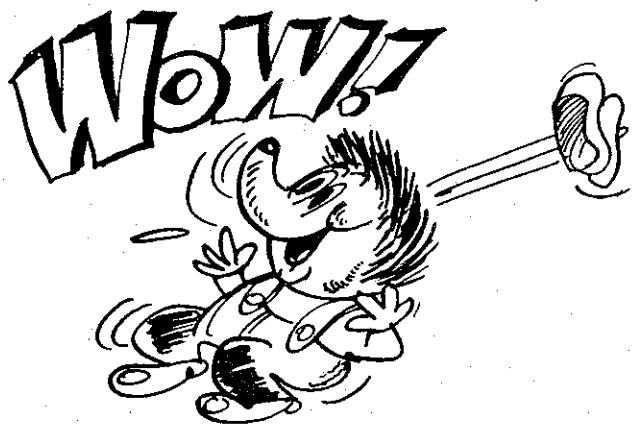
6 A socialist society can therefore only be built from below. Decisions concerning production and work will be taken by workers' councils composed of elected and revocable delegates. Decisions in other areas will be taken on the basis of the widest possible discussion and consultation among the people as a whole. The democratisation of society down to its very roots is what we mean by 'workers' power'

7 *Meaningful action*, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists their demystification. *Sterile and harmful action* is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others—even by those allegedly acting on their behalf

8 No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle and our present rulers are unlikely to be an exception. Power will only be taken from them through the conscious, autonomous action of the vast majority of the people themselves. The building of socialism will require mass understanding and mass participation. By their rigid hierarchical structure, by their ideas and by their activities, both social-democratic and bolshevik types of organisations discourage this kind of understanding and prevent this kind of participation. The idea that socialism can somehow be achieved by an elite party (however 'revolutionary') acting 'on behalf of' the working class is both absurd and reactionary

9 We do not accept the view that by itself the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness. On the contrary we believe that its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organisation which challenge the established social order and established pattern of thought. These responses are implicitly socialist. On the other hand, the working class is fragmented, dispossessed of the means of communication, and its various sections are at different levels of awareness and consciousness. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to help give proletarian consciousness an explicitly socialist content, to give practical assistance to workers in struggle and to help those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another

10 We do not see ourselves as yet another leadership, but merely as an instrument of working class action. The function of **Solidarity** is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalise their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and of its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed



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