

PAUL MATTICK READINGS: “SPONTANEITY AND ORGANISATION” AND AN INTERVIEW WITH LOTTA CONTINUA

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SPONTANEITY AND ORGANISATION - PAUL MATTICK

"Taking refuge in the idea of spontaneity is indicative of an actual or imagined inability to form effective organisations and a refusal to fight existing organisations in a 'realistic' manner. For to fight them successfully would necessitate the formation of counter-organisations, which, by themselves, would defeat the reason for their existence."...

Spontaneity and Organisation

(Paul Mattick - 1977)

The question of organisation and spontaneity was approached in the labour movement as a problem of class consciousness, involving the relations of the revolutionary minority to the mass of the capitalistically-indoctrinated proletariat. It was considered unlikely that more than a minority would accept, and, by organising itself, maintain and apply a revolutionary consciousness. The mass of the workers would act as revolutionaries only by force of circumstances.

Lenin accepted this situation optimistically. Others, like Rosa Luxemburg, thought differently about it. In order to realise a party dictatorship, Lenin concerned himself first of all with questions of organisation. In order to escape the danger of a new dictatorship over the workers, Rosa Luxemburg stressed spontaneity. Both, however, held that just as under certain conditions the bourgeoisie determined the ideas and activities of the labouring masses, so under different conditions a revolutionary minority could do likewise. At the same time that Lenin saw this as a chance to usher in the socialist society, Rosa Luxemburg feared that any minority, placed in the position of a ruling class, might soon think and act just like the bourgeoisie of old.

Behind these attitudes there was the conviction that the economic development of capitalism would force its proletarian masses into anti-capitalistic activities. Although Lenin counted on, he simultaneously feared, spontaneous movements. He justified the need for conscious interferences in spontaneously-arising revolutions by citing the backwardness of the masses and saw in spontaneity an important destructive but not constructive element. In Lenin's view, the more forceful the spontaneous movement, the greater would be the need to supplement and direct it with organised, planned party-activity. The workers had to be guarded against themselves, so to

speak, or they might defeat their own cause through ignorance, and, by dissipating their powers, open the way for counter-revolution.

Rosa Luxemburg thought differently because she saw the counter-revolution not only lurking in the traditional powers and organisations but capable of developing within the revolutionary movement itself. She hoped that spontaneous movements would delimit the influence of those organisations that aspired to centralise power in their own hands. Although both Luxemburg and Lenin saw the accumulation of capital as a process that spawned crises, Luxemburg conceived the crisis as more catastrophic than did Lenin. The more devastating a crisis, the more embracing would be the expected spontaneous actions, the less the need for conscious direction and centralistic control, and the greater the chance for the proletariat to learn to think and act in ways appropriate to its own needs. Organisations, in Luxemburg's view, should merely help release the creative forces inherent in mass actions and should integrate themselves in the independent proletarian attempts to organise a new society. This approach presupposed not a clear, comprehending revolutionary consciousness but a highly-developed working class, capable of discovering by its own efforts ways and means of utilising the productive apparatus and its own capacities for a socialist society.

There was still another approach to the question of organisation and spontaneity. Georges Sorel and the syndicalists were not only convinced that the proletariat could emancipate itself without the guidance of the intelligentsia, but that it has to emancipate itself from the middle-class elements that control political organisations. In Sorel's view, a government of socialists would in no sense alter the social position of the workers. In order to be free, the workers themselves would have to resort to actions and weapons exclusively their own. Capitalism, he thought, had already organised the whole proletariat in its industries. All that was left to do was to suppress the state and property. To accomplish this, the proletariat was not so much in need of a so-called scientific insight into necessary social trends as of a kind of intuitive conviction that revolution and socialism were the inevitable outcome of their own continuous struggles. The strike was seen as the workers' revolutionary apprenticeship. The growing number of strikes, the extension of strikes, and their increasing duration pointed towards a possible general strike, that is, to the impending social revolution. Each particular strike was a reduced facsimile of the general strike and a preparation for this final upheaval. The growing revolutionary will could not be gauged by the successes of political parties, but by the frequency of strikes and the élan therein displayed. Organisation was preparation for direct action and the latter, in turn, formed the character of the organisation. The spontaneously-occurring strikes were the organisational forms of revolt and were also part of the social organisation of the future in which the producers themselves control their production. The revolution proceeded from action to action in a continuous merging of spontaneous and organisational aspects of the proletarian fight for emancipation.

By stressing spontaneity, labour organisations admitted their own weakness. Since they did not know how to change society, they indulged in the hope that the future would solve the problem. This hope, to be sure, was based on the recognition of some actual trends such as the further development of technology, the continuation of the concentration and centralisation processes accompanying capitalistic development, the increase of social frictions, etc. It was nevertheless a mere hope which compensated for the lack of organisational power and the inability to act

effectively. Spontaneity had to lend 'reality' to their apparently hopeless tasks, to excuse an enforced inactivity and justify consistency.

Strong organisations, on the other hand, were inclined to disregard spontaneity. Their optimism was based on their own successes not on the probability of spontaneous movements coming to their aid at some later date. They advocated either that organised force must be defeated by organised force, or held to the view that the school of practical every-day activity as carried on by party and trade union would lead more and more workers to recognise the inescapable necessity of changing existing social relations. In the steady growth of their own organisations, they saw the development of proletarian class consciousness and at times they dreamed that these organisations would comprise the whole of the working class.

All organisations, however, fit into the general social structure. They have no absolute 'independence'; in one way or another all are determined by society and help determine society in turn. None of the organisations in capitalism can consistently be anti-capitalistic. 'Consistency' refers merely to a limited ideological activity and is the privilege of sects and individuals. To attain social importance, organisations must be opportunistic in order to affect the social processes and to serve their own ends simultaneously.

Apparently opportunism and 'realism' are the same thing. The former cannot be defeated by a radical ideology which opposes the whole of the existing social relations. It is not possible to slowly assemble revolutionary forces into powerful organisations ready to act at favourable moments. All attempts in this respect have failed. Only those organisations that did not disturb the prevailing basic social relationships grew to any importance. If they started out with a revolutionary ideology, their growth implied a subsequent discrepancy between their ideology and their functions. Opposed to capitalism, but also organised within it, they' could not help supporting their opponents. Those organisations not destroyed by competitive adversaries finally succumbed to the forces of capitalism by virtue of their own successful activity.

In the matter of organisation this, then is the dilemma of the radical: in order to do something of social significance, actions must be organised. Organised actions, however, turn into capitalistic channels. It seems that in order to do something now, one can do only the wrong thing and in order to avoid false steps, one should undertake none at all. The political mind of the radical is destined to be miserable; it is aware of its utopianism and it experiences nothing but failures. In mere self-defence, the radical stresses spontaneity always, unless he is a mystic, with the secretly-held thought that he is talking nonsense. But his persistence seems to prove that he never ceases to see some sense in the nonsense.

Taking refuge in the idea of spontaneity is indicative of an actual or imagined inability to form effective organisations and a refusal to fight existing organisations in a 'realistic' manner. For to fight them successfully would necessitate the formation of counter-organisations, which, by themselves, would defeat the reason for their existence. 'Spontaneity' is thus a negative approach to the problem of social change and only in a purely ideological sense may it also be considered positive as it involves a mental divorce from those activities that favour the prevailing society. It sharpens critical faculty and leads to disassociation from futile activities and hopeless organisations. It looks for indications of social disintegration and for the limitations of class

control. It results in a sharper distinction between appearance and reality and is, in brief, the trade mark of a revolutionary attitude. Since it is clear that some social forces, relations and organisations tend to disappear and others tend to take hold, those interested in the future, in the new forces in the making, will emphasise spontaneity; those more intimately connected with the old ones will stress the need for organisation.

Even a superficial study of organised activity reveals that all important organisations, no matter what their ideology, support the status quo, or, at best, foster a limited development within the general conditions characteristic of a particular society in a particular historical period. The term status quo is helpful in clarifying the concept of rest within the concept of change. It must be regarded as is any theory or practical tool, and it has its uses quite apart from all its philosophical implications. It is clear, of course, that pre-capitalistic conditions, however transformed, are incorporated in capitalistic conditions and that, likewise, post-capitalistic conditions, in one form or another, are appearing within capitalistic conditions. But this refers to general development and though the specific cannot really be divorced from the general, it is continuously separated by the practical activities of men.

Status quo, as here applied to capitalism, means a period of social history in which the workers, within the conditions of a complex social interdependence, are divorced from the means of production and are thereby controlled by a ruling class. The particulars of political control are based on the particulars of economic control. So long as the capital-labour relationship determines social life, so long shall we find society basically 'unchanged', no matter how much it may appear to have changed otherwise. Laissez-faire, monopoly or state-capitalism are developmental stages within the status quo. While not denying differences between these stages, we must stress their basic identity and by opposing what they have in common oppose not only one or another but all of them simultaneously.

Development or merely change within the status quo may be 'good' or 'bad' from the time-conditioned point of view of the controlled. An example of the first would be the workers' successful fight for better living conditions and greater political freedom; of the second, the loss of both with the ascendancy of fascism - quite apart from the question of whether or not the first is a partial cause of the second. Participation in organisations that foster development within the status quo is often an inescapable necessity. It is therefore of no avail to oppose such organisations with a maximum programme realisable only outside the status quo. Nevertheless, before entering or remaining in 'realistic' organisations, it is necessary to inquire in what direction changes within the status quo may go and how they may affect the working population.

For a long time now trade unions and political labour parties have ceased to act in accordance with their original radical intentions. 'Problems of the day' transformed these movements and led to a situation in which there are no 'real' labour organisations despite the numerous pseudo-organisations still at large. Even the socialist wing of the movement conceives of reform not as a transition to socialism but as the means to a better, more agreeable capitalism, despite the fact that its literature often continues to employ socialistic terms. The fight for better living conditions within the market economy, because it was a fight over the price of labour power, transformed the labour movement into a capitalistic movement of labourers. The greater the proletarian pressure, the greater became the capitalistic need to increase the productivity of

labour by technological and organisational procedures and by the national and international extension of business activities. Like competition in general, the proletarian struggle, too, served as an instrument for increasing the pace of capital accumulation, for pushing society from one production level to another. Not only the leaders of labour but the rank and file, too, lost their early revolutionary aspirations as the rising productivity of labour accelerated capital expansion and allowed for both higher profits and better wages. Although wages diminished in relation to production, they increased in absolute terms and raised the living standards of great masses of industrial workers in the leading capitalist countries. Profits were augmented and capital formation was further hastened by foreign trade and colonial exploitation. This helped to stabilise the conditions of a rising so-called labour aristocracy. Periodically the process was interrupted by crises and depressions which acted, although blindly, as co-ordinating factors in the capitalistic re-organisation process. In the long run, however, the double-barrelled support of capital expansion by both working class and capitalistic competition led to a complete fusion of interests between labour organisations and the controllers of capital.

There were, of course, organisations that fought against the integration of the labour movement into the capitalistic structure. They interpreted reform as a step towards revolution and tried to engage in capitalistic activities and at the same time maintain a revolutionary goal. They saw the fusion of capital and labour as a temporary affair, to be suffered or utilised while it lasted. Their half-heartedness in matters of collaboration prevented their attaining organisational significance; and this, in turn, led them to emphasise spontaneity. Left wing socialists and revolutionary syndicalists belong in this category.

Some countries have higher living standards than others, the high wages of some labouring groups imply low wages for others. Equalising tendencies operating in competitive capitalism with regard to productivity, profit-rates and wage levels, tend to eliminate special interests and particular privileges. Just as the capitalists try to escape this levelling process through monopolisation, so organised labour groups try to secure their special positions despite the class-needs of the proletariat as a whole. These special interests are bound to become 'national' interests. By defending their political and economic organisations in order to retain the socio-economic privileges secured through them, the workers defend not only that particular stage of capitalistic development which guarantees their special position but also their nations' imperialistic policies.

In order to maintain the status quo, basic social relations are more 'efficiently' organised and re-organised. Present-day re-organisation within the social class structure is totalitarian in character. Ideology, too, becomes totalitarian both as a precondition and as a result of this re-organisation. Non-totalitarian organisations turn totalitarian in an attempt to preserve themselves. In totalitarian nations the so-called labour organisations act exclusively on behalf of the ruling classes. They do so in 'democratic' countries too, although in a less obvious manner and with a partly different ideology. Apparently there is no way to replace these organisations with new ones of a revolutionary character - a hopeless situation for those who want to organise the new society within the shell of the old and for those still bent upon 'improvements' within the status quo, since all reforms would now require totalitarian means. Bourgeois democracy within the conditions of laissez faire - that is, the social situation in which labour organisations of the traditional type could form and develop - either no longer exists or is on the way out. The whole

discussion around the question of organisation and spontaneity which agitated the old labour movement has now lost its meaning. Both types of organisations, those depending on spontaneity and those trying to master it, are disappearing. Propaganda for new organisations amounts to no more than the hope that they will spontaneously arise. Like the believers in spontaneity, the advocates of organisation, too, are now 'utopians' in face of the emerging totalitarian reality.

To some, however, the existence of Bolshevik Russia seems to contradict both the statement that the old labour movement has disappeared and the contention that discussion about organisation and spontaneity has become meaningless because of altered social conditions. After all, those who stressed organisation had their way in Russia and continue to exert their power in the name of socialism. They may regard their success as a verification of their theory and so may also those reformist organisations that became government parties as, for instance, the British Labour Party. They may regard their present position not as a transformation into totalitarian capitalism but as a step towards the socialisation of society.

The Labour Government and its supporting organisations merely demonstrate, however, that the old labour movement has been brought to an end by its organisational success. It is quite obvious that the Labourites' sole concern is in maintaining the status quo. They are, of course, still engaged in re-organising the political and governmental structure, but the defence of capitalism has become the defence of their own existence. And to defend capitalism means to continue and to accelerate the concentration and centralisation of economic and political power camouflaged as the 'nationalisation' of key industries. It involves social changes which both increase and secure the manipulative and controlling powers of capital and government and which integrate the labour movement into a developing network of totalitarian organisations that serve none but the ruling classes.

If organisations such as those that dominate the British labour movement gain political influence and do not use it for revolutionary ends, it is not because their 'democratic ideology' forbids them to come to real, as distinct from governmental, power by means other than majority consent. Their own organisations, 'democratic' only in terminology, are determined by a bureaucracy and closely resemble the capitalistic democratic structure which presupposes the absolute rule of the owners and controllers of capital. Neither do they fear what strength remains in their capitalistic adversaries; their conservatism stems directly from their own organisational interests which are bound up with the pre-totalitarian stage of capitalistic development.

The totalitarian evolution of these organisations is a small-scale repetition of the transformation of the liberal into the authoritarian society. It is a slow and contradictory process and implies an inter-organisational struggle as well as a fight against competing political movements. It takes place at a time when the international extension of the capitalistic concentration process turns monopolistic into nationalistic interests; when the world economy is the monopoly of a few nations or power blocs and the direct control over production and marketing that exists in each advanced nation is being realised on a world-wide scale. Under these conditions, the labour movement is no longer able to support capital expansion solely by fighting for its special group interests. It must become a national movement and must partake in the re-organisation of the world economy in accordance with changing power relationships. However, the labour movement, hampered by tradition and having vested interests of its own finds it difficult to turn

from a mere supporter of nationalism into a driving force of imperialism. New political movements spring up to exploit this inflexibility and, where it persists, to replace the labour movement by a national-socialist movement.

To be sure, the national-socialist movement is 'national' only in order to be imperialistic. Bourgeois 'internationalism' that is, the free world market, was a fiction. It was 'free' only because it was free from competition against the leading industrial nations and the international trusts. Capital expansion while delimiting competition on the one hand spread competition on the other; old monopolistic positions were destroyed in favour of new monopolistic constellations. If monopolistic interferences in the 'free' world market hindered capitalistic expansion, at the same time they forced newly-developing nations, and arising private interests within them, to establish their own competitive monopolistic restrictions in order to secure for themselves a place within the world economy.

The fight to enter the 'free' world market, as well as the struggle to keep all newcomers out, hastened general capitalistic development at the price of a growing disproportionality of the economy as a whole. The discrepancy between the total social forces of production thereby released and the privately-and nationally-determined organisation of world-production and trade became the wider the more capitalistic progress was made. Unable to arrest the growth of the productive forces because of the competitive situation, re-organisations of the world economy in accordance with the changing distribution of economic power proceeded by way of crises and wars. This led, in turn, to a renewed emphasis on nationalism although all political and economic issues are determined by the capitalistic nature of the world economy. Nationalism is merely the instrument for large-scale competition; it is the 'internationalism' of capitalist society.

Proletarian internationalism was based on an acceptance of the fictitious 'free-trade' principle of the bourgeoisie. It conceived of international development as a mere quantitative extension of the familiar national development. Just as capitalist enterprise broke through national boundaries, so the labour movement gained an international base without changing its form or activities. The only qualitative change that could be expected in the wake of the quantitative changes was the proletarian revolution, and this because of the idea of the polarisation of society: which means that an always smaller number of rulers would face an always growing mass of the ruled. Logically, this process could lead either into absurdity or to the social expropriation of individual expropriators.

If the fight over the price of labour power was regarded as resulting in the steady growth of proletarian class consciousness and the creation of an objective base for socialism, the whole of the capitalist concentration process was also welcomed as a necessary developmental step in the direction of the new society. Large-scale business, cartellisation, trustification, financial control, state-interferences, nationalism, and even imperialism were held to be signposts of the 'ripening' of capitalist society toward social revolution. If it encouraged the reformists to envision the legally-won control of government as a sufficient requirement for social change, it also made it possible for revolutionaries to hope that even under less 'ripe' conditions socialism could be instituted through the capture of governmental powers. The quarrels between socialists and Bolsheviks were over tactical issues and did not affect their basic agreement that capitalism's 'last stage' could be transformed to socialism by governmental actions. If the socialists seemed to

wait for 'progress' to run its course and hand the government over to them, the Bolsheviks were out to make progress and make it faster.

The Russian defeat in the first world war and the widely-supported need to 'modernise' Russia in order to secure her national independence led to the collapse of Czarism and to a revolution that brought the 'progressive elements' to power. The more aggressive wing of the socialist movement soon concentrated power into its own hands. To hasten the socialisation process, the Bolsheviks forced the population to act in strict accordance with their political programme. From their point of view it did not matter whether their decisions were still of a capitalistic character so long as they were in line with the general capitalistic development towards state-capitalism and so long as they increased production and maintained the Bolshevik government which was seen as a guarantee that in the end, despite all inconsistencies, compromises and concessions to capitalistic principles and capitalist powers, a state of socialism could be decreed from above. The point was to keep the government revolutionary, that is, in Bolshevik hands and to preserve its revolutionary character through rigid indoctrination of its members with a basically unchanging ideology. By fostering a fanaticism able to oppose all deviations the Bolsheviks attempted to keep the organisational machine more powerful than all its enemies. Government dictatorship, supported by a dictatorially-directed party and a hierarchical system of privileges, was regarded as the inescapable first step in the actualisation of socialism.

Beyond the growth of monopolistic organisation, state interferences in the economy and the organisational requirements of modern imperialism a tendency towards totalitarian control operated in all countries, particularly in those suffering under more or less 'permanent' crisis conditions. If the capitalist crisis, like its economy, is international, it does not hit all countries equally hard nor in identical ways. There are 'richer' and 'poorer' countries with regard to material, human and capitalistic resources. Crises and wars lead to a re-shuffling of power positions and to new trends in economic and political development. They may be expressions of power relocations already actualised or of instruments for bringing them about. In either case the capitalistic world finds itself decisively changed and differently organised. New organisational innovations become general, though not necessarily similar, by way of the competitive struggles. In some countries new forms of social control, ushered in by a high capital concentration, may be predominantly of an economic character, in others they will take on political appearance. Actually there may be more advanced centralistic control in the former than in the latter. But if this is the case, it only forces the less centralistically-determined nations to increase their political control capacities. A fascistic regime results from the social struggles that accompany internal difficulties and from the need to compensate, by way of organisation, for weaknesses not shared by capitalistically stronger nations. The political authoritarian regime is a substitute for the lack of a 'freely'-developed centralistic system of decision making.

If totalitarianism is a result of changes within the world economy, it is also responsible for the now world-wide tendency to supplement economic force by political-organisational means. In other words, the development of totalitarianism can be understood only in terms of the capitalist world situation. Bolshevism, Fascism and Nazism are not independent national products but national reactions to changed forms of world competition, just as the trend towards totalitarianism in 'democratic' nations is in part a reaction to the pressures for and against imperialistic activities. Of course, only the larger capitalistic countries are independent

competitors for world control; numerous smaller nations, already out of the race, merely adapt themselves to the social structure of the dominating powers. Still, modern society's totalitarian structure developed first not where it was commonly to be expected - where there was high economic power concentration - but in the weaker capitalist nations. The western-trained Bolsheviks saw in state-capitalism, the last stage of capitalist development, an entrance to socialism. To reach the entrance by political means necessitated their dictatorship, and to make it effective meant to be totalitarian. The fascist regimes of Germany, Italy and Japan represented attempts through organisation to make up for what was lacking in terms of traditional capitalistic strength, to find a short-cut to large-scale competition, since the general economic development prevented them either from increasing or keeping their shares in world exploitation.

Approached from this point of view, the whole capitalist development has been moving toward totalitarianism. The trend became apparent with the beginning of the present century. The media for its realisation are crises, wars and revolutions. It restricts itself not to special classes and particular nations, but involves the population of the world. From this point of view, it may also be said that a 'fully-developed' capitalism would be a world-capitalism, centralistically controlled in totalitarian fashion. If realisable, it would correspond to the socialist and Bolshevik goal of world government, planning the whole of social life. It would correspond also to the limited 'inter-nationalism' of capitalists, fascists, socialists and Bolsheviks who envision such partial organisations as Pan-Europe, Pan-Slavism, Latin-Bloc, numbered Internationals, Commonwealth, Monroe-Doctrine, Atlantic Charter, United Nations and so forth, as necessary steps towards world government.

In the light of today, nineteenth century capitalism appears to have been an 'undeveloped' capitalism, not fully emancipated from its feudalistic past. Capitalism, challenging not exploitation but only the monopolistic position of a particular form of exploitation, could truly unfold itself 'within the shell' of the old society. Its revolutionary actions were aimed at governmental control merely in order to break through feudalism's restrictive borders and to secure capitalistic liberties. The capitalists were thoroughly occupied with and satisfied by their extension of world trade, their creation of the proletariat and industry and their accumulation of capital. 'Economic freedom' was their chief concern and as long as the state supported their exploitative social position, the state's composition and separateness were none of their concern.

The relative independence of the state was not a main characteristic of capitalism, however, but merely an expression of capitalistic growth within incomplete capitalistic conditions. The further development of capitalism implied the capitalisation of the state. What the state lost in 'independence' it gained in power; what the capitalists lost to the state they regained in increased social control. In time the interests of state and capital became identical, which indicated that the capitalist mode of production and its competitive practice were now generally accepted. State-wide, nationally-organised capitalism made it apparent once more that it had subdued all opposition, that the whole of society, including the labour movement - and no longer merely the capitalist entrepreneurs - had become capitalistic. That the capitalisation of the labour movement was an accomplished fact was manifest in its increasing interest in the state as the instrument of emancipation. To be 'revolutionary' meant escaping the narrow 'trade union consciousness' of the period of Manchester-capitalism, fighting for the control of the state and increasing the latter's

importance by extending its powers over ever wider areas of social activity. The merging of state and capital was simultaneously the merging of both with the organised labour movement.

In Russian bolshevism we have the first system in which the merger of capital, labour and the state was accomplished through the political maneuver of the radical wing of the old labour movement. In Lenin's view, the bourgeoisie itself was no longer able to revolutionise society. The time for a capitalist revolution in the traditional sense had passed. In order to escape colonial status, the imperialistic stage of capitalism forced backward nations to adopt as their developmental starting point what, under laissez-faire conditions, had been considered the possible end of the competitive processes. Backward nations could liberate themselves not by traditional means of capital development but by political struggles in the Bolshevik pattern. Challenging not the capitalist system of exploitation but only its restriction to particular groups of entrepreneurs and financiers, the Bolshevik party usurped control over the means of production through control of the state. There was no need to submit to the historical scheme of money-making and capital-amassing in order to reach social control positions. Exploitation did not depend on laissez-faire conditions but on the control of the means of production. It should be even more profitable and secure with a unified and centralised control system than it had been in the past under the indirect control of the market and with sporadic interventions of the state.

If in Russia the totalitarian initiative came from the radical labour movement, it was because of its close proximity to Western Europe, where similar processes were under way, although they were dealt with in reformist, non-revolutionary fashion. In Japan the initiative was taken by the state and the process took on a different character with the old ruling classes being made the executors of state policies. In Western Europe the capitalisation of the old labour movement and its influence on the state had reached such a point, particularly during the war years, that this movement was drained of initiative with regard to social change. It could not overcome social stagnation (caused partly by its own existence and accentuated by the depressive results of the war), without first radically transforming itself. Attempts at bolshevisation failed, however. Unlike the Russian, the Western bourgeoisie possessed a greater flexibility within the 'progressive' democratic institutions and operated upon a wider and more integrated social base. It was in Germany, capitalistically the strongest country of all the nations which were defeated in the first world war and neglected by the division of its spoils, in which fascism developed last. But bolshevism had pointed the way to power through party-activity. Totalitarian control by way of the party - the possibility of party-capitalism - was demonstrated in Russia. New political parties, partly bourgeois, partly proletarian, operating with nationalistic-imperialistic ideologies and with more or less consistent state-capitalistic programmes came into being to face the old organisations as new 'revolutionary' forces. With a mass-base of their own, fed by the insoluble crisis, with less respect for legality and traditional procedures and with the support of all the elements that were driving for an imperialistic solution of the crisis conditions, they were able first in Italy and later in Germany to defeat the old organisations. Even in America, the strongest capitalist nation, attempts were made during the Great Depression to secure the state's newly-won increased authority by the creation of mass-support for government-directed class collaboration policies.

The collapse of the fascist nations in the second world war did not alter the totalitarian trend. Although the independence of the defeated nations is at an end, their authoritarian structure

remains. Only those aspects of their totalitarianism that were directly concerned with independent war-making have been destroyed or subordinated to the needs of the victorious powers. Although the seats of control have shifted and new methods have been invoked, there is more authoritarianism in the world today than there was prior to and even during the war. Moreover, 'victorious' nations like England and France find themselves in the same position today as the defeated nations after the first world war. It appears that the whole development of Central Europe between the two wars will be repeated in England and France.

Totalitarianism, however, is no longer restricted to the political ambitions of new organisations but is fostered by all active political forces. In order to compete internally against fascist and Bolshevik tendencies, the prevailing organisations must, themselves, adapt totalitarian methods. Because all internal struggles reflect imperialistic rivalries, war-preparations push society still further towards totalitarianism. Because the state controls more and more of the social and economic activities, the defence of private and monopolistic interests requires the strengthening of their own centralistic inclinations. In brief, the social forces that were released in two world wars and that are attempting to find solutions within the status quo, all tend to support and to develop a totalitarian capitalism.

Under these conditions, a revival of the labour movement as it has been known in the past and as it still exists in emasculated form in some countries is clearly out of the question. All successful movements, under whatever name, will try to adhere to authoritarian principles. Whether social control is exercised in the form of state-monopolistic alliances, fascism or party-capitalism the degree of power in the hands of the controllers signifies the end of laissez-faire and the extension of totalitarian capitalism. Of course, it is improbable that capitalism will ever reach an absolute totalitarian form; it had never been a laissez-faire system in the full sense of the term. All that these 'labels' designate are the dominant practices within a variety of social practices and differentiations in organisation in accordance with the ruling practice. It is clear, however, that the new powers of the state, highly-concentrated capitalism, modern technology, the control of the world economy, the period of imperialistic wars and so forth make necessary for the maintenance of the capitalistic status quo a social organisation without opposition, a comprehensive centralistic control of the socially-effective activities of men.

If the end of the old labour movement made the question of organisation and spontaneity meaningless, as seen by this movement and dealt with in its controversies, the question may still be meaningful in a wider sense quite apart from the specific problems of working class organisations of the past. Like revolutionary outbursts, crises and wars also have to be considered as spontaneous occurrences. More information exists and greater experience has been accumulated with regard to crises and wars, however, than with regard to revolution.

In capitalism, the ordering of society's fundamental requirements regarding production and the proportioning of social labour towards the satisfaction of social needs is largely left to the automatism of the market. Monopolistic practices disrupt the mechanism, but even without such interferences this form of socio-economic practice can serve only the peculiar 'social' needs of capitalism. The kind of indirect relation between supply and demand established by the market automatism refers to, and is determined by, the profitability of capital and its accumulation. The conscious 'ordering' aspects of the monopolies, concerned as they are with their own special

interests only, increase the irrationality of the system as a whole. Even state-capitalistic planning first of all serves the particular needs and the security of its ruling and privileged groups, not the real needs of society. Because the actions of capitalists are determined by profit requirements and by special, not social interests, the actual results of their decisions may differ from their expectations; the social result of various decisions, individually-determined, may disturb social stability and defeat the intentions behind such decisions. Only some, not all, social consequences of individualistic actions are known in advance. Private interests forbid a social organisation which could provide a reasonable certainty about the main consequences of its actions. This implies a social development of growing frictions, disproportionalities, postponed re-organisations leading to violent clashes between old and new interests, to crises and depressions which seem to be spontaneous occurrences because of the lack of organisation to deal with society from a social, non-class point of view.

There is no possibility within the status quo of organising social activities in the interests of society as a whole. New organisations are only expressions of shifting class positions and leave the basic class relationship unaffected. Old ruling minorities are replaced by new ruling minorities, the proletarian class is broken up into various status groups, layers of the middle-class disappear, others rise to greater influence. Since all social practical, concrete activity, if it is social at all, is social only in effect and not by design - by 'accident' so to speak - there exists no force in society whose own continuous growth delimits the social 'anarchy' and develops a more complete awareness of social necessities and opportunities, which could lead to social self-determination and to a truly social society. In a way, then, it is the number and variety of organisations in capitalism which prevent the organising of society. This means that not only must all unco-ordinated and contradictory activities result in expected or unexpected crises, but also that the activities of all people, organised as well as unorganised, are more or less 'responsible' for spontaneous outbursts in the form of crisis or war.

There is no way, however, to retrace in all its important details the process that led to crisis or war, and thus explain, after the fact, what particular activities and their arrangements within the developmental processes determined the catastrophe. It is easier, and for capitalistic purposes sufficient, arbitrarily to select a starting point, such as that the war led to crisis and the crisis to war, or less sophisticatedly, to point to Hitler's idiosyncrasies or to Roosevelt's hunger for immortality. Wars appear both as spontaneous outbursts and as organised enterprises. The blame for their outbreak is laid at the doorsteps of particular nations, governments, pressure groups, monopolies, cartels and trusts. Yet, to put the entire blame on specific organisations and particular policies for crises and wars means to overlook the real problem here involved and indicates an inability to meet it effectively. To point to the organisational elements involved without stressing their limitations within the 'anarchic' total social setting promulgates the illusion that possibly 'other organisations' and 'other policies' could have prevented such social catastrophes even within the status quo. The status quo, however, is only another term for crises and wars.

There was, to be sure, some kind of 'order' observable in capitalism and a definite developmental trend based on this 'order'. It was provided for by the growing productivity of labour. Increased productivity, starting in one or more spheres of production, led to a general modification of the productive level of society and to consequent alterations in all socio-economic relationships. The

changes were reflected in altered political relations and led into a changed relationship, less or more contradictory, between the class structure and the productive forces of society.

What are the forces of production. Obviously, labour, technology, and organisation; less obviously, class frictions and therefore ideologies. In other words, productive forces are human actions, not something separate that determines human actions. Therefore, a previous line of development need not necessarily be followed. Social situations may be arrested or conditions may be created that destroy what has previously been built. But if the 'social goal' were the extension and continuation of a previous developmental tendency, history might indeed be the story of 'social progress' through the unfolding of its productive capacities.

That capitalism came into being presupposed a certain growth of the social productive forces, an increase in surplus labour and the capacity to support a growing non-producing class. To speak in terms of 'growing productive forces' as the determinant of the total social development was particularly apt under the commodity-fetishism of laissez-faire capitalism, for under its economic individualism it seemed as if 'productive forces' developed independently of capitalistic wishes and necessities. The insatiability for accumulation developed with productive forces rapidly and their enhancement allowed for continuous re-organisation of the socio-economic structure, and, in turn, the re-organisations acted as new incentives for a further raising of social productivity. It was said that capitalism, historically speaking, had justified itself because of its 'blind' but progressive development of the productive forces of society, among which the modern industrial proletariat was considered the greatest.

If it should appear that a full release of society's productive capacities would make possible the formation and maintenance of a classless society, it is perfectly clear that the immediately privileged classes will not give up their present-day control just because of the probability of a future socialist society. At any rate, on such an issue the owners and controllers of production cannot act as a 'class'; a 'revolution by consent' is nonsense. Accumulation for the sake of accumulation continues and leads to further capital and power concentration, that is, to capital destruction, to crises, depressions and wars. For capitalism simultaneously develops and retards the productive forces and widens the gap between actual and potential production. The contradiction between class structure and productive forces excludes the 'freezing' of the prevailing level of production as well as its expansion toward a real abundance.

If for no other reason than force of custom it appears probable that the immediate future, like the immediate past, will be characterised by further growth of the productive forces. This implies the sharpening of competition, despite all attempts at partial or complete control of production. Although larger capitalistic units have absorbed numerous smaller enterprises and secured temporary monopolistic conditions for the whole industries and combinations of industries, this process has merely intensified international competition and the struggle between the remaining non-monopolistic enterprises. In state-capitalism competition takes on a different but most all-inclusive form, because of the complete atomisation by the terroristic state machine of the mass of the population and in the bureaucracy itself because of the hierarchical structure of its organisation.

The application of new technological and organisational forces of production necessitates additional social controls. The disorganisation of the proletariat marks the beginning of the process that leads to the total atomisation of the whole population and to the state monopoly of organisation. At one pole we find all organised force concentrated; at the other pole, an amorphous mass of people unable to combine for a fight in their own interests. In so far as they are organised, the masses are organised by their controllers; in so far as they are able to raise their voices, they speak with their masters' words. In all organisations, the atomised mass of people face always the same enemy, the totalitarian state.

The atomisation of society requires an all-encompassing state organisation. The socialists and Bolsheviks considered capitalist society inefficiently organised with regard to production and exchange and in other, extra-economic respects. The emphasis on organisation was emphasis on social control. Socialism was to be first of all the rational organisation of the whole of society. And an efficiently organised society excludes, of course, unforeseen activities capable of issuing into spontaneous occurrences. The spontaneous element in society was to disappear with the planning of production and the centralistically-determined distribution of goods. Not only the Bolsheviks, but the fascists, too, spoke of spontaneity only so long as their power was not absolute. When all existing social layers submitted to their authority, they became society's most thorough organisers. And it was precisely this organising activity that they designated with the term socialism.

The contradiction between class structure and productive forces remains, however, and therewith the inescapability of crisis and war. Although the inactivated masses can no longer resist totalitarianism in traditional organised fashion, and although they have not evolved new weapons and forms of action adequate to the new tasks, the contradictions of the social class structure remain unresolved. While giving temporary security, the terroristic authoritarian system also reflects the increasing insecurity of totalitarian capitalism. The defence of the status quo violates the status quo by releasing new, uncontrolled, or uncontrollable activities. The most powerful controls over men are really weak when compared with the tremendous contradictions that rend the world today. Though all contradictions now oppose one organisation, capitalist society was never so badly organised as it is now when it is completely organised.

If there is no guarantee that socialism must necessarily evolve in the course of further social development, neither is there any reason to assume that the world will come to an end in totalitarian barbarism. The organisation of the status quo cannot prevent its disintegration. As there is no absolute totalitarianism, openings for attack remain within its structure. The real social significance of its noticeable weaknesses is still obscure. Some points of disintegration, although theoretically conceivable, are still unobservable and can be described only in very general terms. Just as the modern class-struggle theory required for its formulation not only the capitalistic development but also the actual proletarian struggles within the capitalist system, so it is probably necessary first to observe actual attempts at revolt under totalitarianism in order to be able to formulate specific plans of action, to point to effective forms of resistance, and to find and exploit the weaknesses of the totalitarian system.

The apparent hopelessness and insignificance characteristic of all beginnings is no reason for despair. Neither pessimism nor optimism touch the real problem of social actions. Both attitudes

do not decisively affect the individual's actions and reactions, determined as they are by social forces beyond his control. The interdependence of all social activity, while being a medium of control, also sets limits to all controlling activities. The labour process, in both its organisational and technological aspects, depending as it does simultaneously upon anonymous forces and direct decisions, possesses enough relative independence through its changeability to make centralistic manipulations difficult. The totalitarian manipulators cannot free themselves of specific forms of the division of labour which often delimit the powers of centralistic control. They cannot defy definite degrees of industrialisation without endangering their own rule.

Resistance will thus be exercised in manifold forms, some meaningless, some self-defeating, and others effective. While some present-day forms of action may be disregarded, older forms may be revived because of certain outward similarities in the totalitarian structure with former authoritarian regimes. If trade union policy no longer implies action 'on the point of production' but manipulations between governmental bodies, effective new ways of sabotage and struggle may be found in industry and in production generally. If political parties express the trend towards totalitarianism, a variety of organisational forms is still conceivable for assembling anti-capitalistic forces for concerted actions. If such actions are to be adapted to totalitarian reality as attempts to overcome that reality, stress must be laid upon self-determination, agreement, freedom and solidarity.

The search for ways and means to end totalitarian capitalism, to bring self determination to the hitherto powerless, to end competitive struggles, exploitation and wars, to develop a rationality which does not set individuals against society but recognises their actual entity in social production and distribution and allows for human progress without social struggles, will go on in the empirical, scientific manner dictated by seriousness. It seems clear, however, that for some time to come the results of all types of resistance and struggle will be described as spontaneous occurrences, though they are nothing but the planned actions or accepted inactivities of men. Spontaneity is a manner of speech, attesting to our inability to treat the social phenomena of capitalism in a scientific, empirical way. Social changes appear as climactic outbursts of periods of capital formation, disorganisation, competitive frictions and long-accumulated social grievances that finally find their organisational expression. Their spontaneity merely demonstrates the unsociality of capitalism's social organisation. The contrast between organisation and spontaneity will exist as long as there exists a class society and attempts to end it.

Paul Mattick (1977)

Interviewed in 1977 by Italian radicals, the late veteran council communist speaks on crisis, politics, organisation and revolution.

LOTTA CONTINUA INTERVIEW WITH PAUL MATTICK - TTIC

WE SEEM TO BE ENTERING INTO A NEW PERIOD OF SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CRISIS. WHAT ARE THE NEW FEATURES OF THIS PERIOD, IN COMPARISON WITH THE 1930's?

ANSWER: The basic reasons for the current crisis are the same as those which caused all previous capitalist crises. But all crises have also specific features with respect to their initiation, the reactions released by them, and their outcome. The changing capital structure accounts for these peculiarities.

Generally, a crisis follows in the wake of a period of successful capital accumulation, wherein the profits produced and realized are sufficient to maintain a given rate of expansion. This state of capitalistic prosperity requires a steadily increasing productivity of labor, large enough to offset the relative decline of profitability resulting from the changing capital structure. The competitive and therefore blind pursuit of profit on the part of individual capitals cannot help but ignore the changing capital/labor composition of the social capital. The crisis erupts, when an arising disproportionality between a required rate of profit for the social capital and its necessary rate of accumulation forbids its further expansion. This underlying but empirically unascertainable discrepancy comes to the fore in terms of market relations as a lack of effective demand, which is only another expression for a lack of accumulation on which the effective demand depends.

Prior to 1930 periods of depression were answered by deflationary procedures, that is, by letting the "laws of the market" run their course in the expectation that sooner or later the declining economic activity would restore the lost equilibrium of supply and demand and thus revive the profitability of capital. The crisis of 1930, however, was too deep and too extensive to allow for this traditional way of coping with it. It was answered by inflationary procedures--that is, by governmental interventions in the market mechanism, up to the point of international warfare, for the restructuring of the world economy through a forced centralization of capital at the expense of weaker national capitals, and by the outright destruction of capital in both its monetary and physical forms. Financed by way of government deficits, that is, by inflationary methods, the results were still deflationary, but on a far larger scale than had been accomplished previously by passive reliance on the "laws of the market." The long depression period and the second world war, and the attendant enormous destruction of capital, created conditions for an extraordinarily long period of capital expansion in the leading Western nations.

Both deflation and inflation led then to the same result, to a new upswing of capital, and were subsequently and alternately utilized in the attempt to secure the newly-won economic and social stability. Undoubtedly, it is possible by way of deficit-financing, that is, by way of credit, to enliven a stagnant economy. But it is not possible to maintain the rate of profit on capital in this manner and thereby perpetuate the conditions of prosperity. It was then only a question of time until the crisis-mechanism of capital production would reassert itself. By no means is it obvious that the mere availability of credit to expand production is no solution to crisis, but a fleeting make-shift policy with only temporary "positive" effects. If not followed up by a genuine upswing of capital, based on larger profits, it must collapse in itself. The "Keynesian remedy" has led merely to a new crisis situation with growing unemployment and growing inflation- both equally detrimental to the capitalist system.

The present crisis has not as yet reached that degree of devastation which, in the 1930's, led from depression to war. Although unable to overcome the current crisis, the anti-depression measures alleviate to some extent the social misery caused by the decline of economic activity. But in a stagnating capitalist economy, these measures become themselves elements in its further deterioration. They make it more difficult to regain a starting-point for a new upswing. Also the degree of international "integration" of the capitalist economy, by way of liberal trade policies and monetary arrangements, is steadily undermined by the deepening depression. Protectionist tendencies disturb the world market still further. As the depression cannot be overcome, except at the expense of the working population, the bourgeoisie must try all available means, economic as well as political, to reduce the living standard of the workers. The increase of unemployment, though of some help, is not enough to cut wages sufficiently to increase the profitability of capital. The incomes of all non-capitalist layers of society must be reduced, the so-called welfare measures diminished, in an attempt to reach that profitability of capital which allows for its further expansion. Although a rapid rate of inflation has this effect, it also finds its limitations in the increasing anarchy of capitalist production and in society in general. As a permanent policy it threatens the existence of the system itself.

IN THIS CONNECTION, HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF THE LEFT, ESPECIALLY THE COMMUNIST PARTY; WHAT IS THE MEANING OF EUROCOMMUNISM?

ANSWER: One must distinguish between the "objective left" in society, that is, the proletariat as such, and the organized left, which is not strictly of a proletarian nature. Within the organized left, at any rate in Italy, the Communist Party holds the dominating position. At this particular time, it most probably determines "left policies" despite opposition from other organizations either to its left or to its right. But the Communist Party is not a communist organization in the traditional sense. Long since it turned into a social-democratic formation, a reformist party, at home within the capitalist system and therefore offering itself as a supporting instrument. Practically, it exists to satisfy the bourgeois aspirations of its leadership and the need, of its bureaucracy, by mediating between labor and capital in order to secure the social status quo. The fact of its large working class following indicates the worker's unreadiness, or unwillingness, to overthrow the capitalist system and their desire to find, instead, accommodation within it. The illusion that this is possible supports the opportunist policies of the Communist Party. Because a prolonged depression, threatens to destroy the capitalist system, it is essential for the Communist Party, as well as for other reformist organizations, to help the bourgeoisie to

overcome the crisis conditions. They must therefore try to prevent working-class actions which may delay, or prevent a capitalist recovery. Their reformist and opportunist policies take on an open counter revolutionary character as soon as the system finds itself endangered by working-class activities that cannot be satisfied within the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The "Eurocommunism" sported by the Communist Party has no meaning because communism is not a geographic but a social category. This empty term marks an attempt on the part of European communist parties to differentiate their present attitudes from past policies; it is a declaration that the former, albeit long forgotten, state-capitalist goal has, been given up in favor of the mixed economy of present-day capitalism. "Eurocommunism" is a request for official recognition and for full integration into the capitalist system, which implies, of course, an integration into the various nation-states that comprise the European territory. It is a quest for larger "responsibilities" within the capitalist system and its governments, and a promise not to disrupt the limited degree of cooperation reached by capitalist nations in the European context, and to abstain from all activities that may disturb the apparent consensus between the East and the West. It does not imply a radical break with the state-capitalist part of the world, but merely the recognition, that this part, too, is not interested in the extension of state-capitalist system by revolutionary means, but rather into a fuller integration into the capitalist world-market, despite the remaining socioeconomic differences between the private- and the state-capitalist systems.

WHAT POSSIBILITIES ARE THERE FOR REVOLUTIONARY ACTION, OR ACTION WHICH WANTS TO PREPARE FOR A FUTURE REVOLUTION? WHAT POSSIBILITIES DO YOU SEE FOR WORKERS, UNEMPLOYED, STUDENTS, THE LEFT-WING GROUPS?

ANSWER: Revolutionary actions are directed against the system as a whole -- for its overthrow. This presupposes a general disruption of society which escapes political control. Thus far, such revolutionary actions have occurred only in connection with social catastrophe, such as were released by lost wars and the associated economic dislocations. This does not mean that such situations are an absolute precondition for revolution, but it indicates the extent of social disintegration that precedes revolutionary upheavals. Revolution must involve a majority of the active population. Not ideology but necessity brings the masses into revolutionary motion. The resulting activities produce their own revolutionary ideology, namely an understanding of what has to be done to emerge victoriously out of the struggle against the system's defenders. At the present time the possibilities for revolutionary action are extremely dim, because the chances of success are practically nil. Because of previous experiences, the ruling classes expect revolutionary activities and have armed themselves accordingly. Their military power is not as yet threatened by internal dissent; politically they still have the support of the large labor organizations and of the majority of the population; they have not as yet exhausted the mechanisms for manipulating the economy, and, despite an increasing international competition for the shrinking profits of the work economy, they are united world-wide against proletarian upheavals wherever they may occur. In this common front are also to be found the so-called socialist regimes; in the defence of their own exploitative class relations.

While a socialist revolution at this stage of development seems more than doubtful, all working-class activities in defense of their own interests possess a potential revolutionary character because capitalism finds itself in a state of decay that might last for a long time. No one is able to

predict the dimensions of the depression for lack of relevant data. But everyone faces the actual crisis and has to react to it, the bourgeoisie in its way, the working class in opposite ways. In periods of relative economic stability the worker's struggle itself hastens the accumulation of capital, by forcing the bourgeoisie to adopt more effective ways to increase the productivity of labor, so as to retain a necessary rate of profit. Wages and profits may rise together without disturbing the expansion of capital. A depression, however, brings this simultaneous (though unequal) rise of profits and wages to an end. The profitability of capital must be restored before the accumulation process can be resumed. The struggle between labor and capital now involves the system's very existence, bound as it is to its continuous expansion. Objectively, the ordinary economic struggle takes on revolutionary implications and thus, political forms, because one class can only succeed at the expense of the other. The working class does not need to conceive of its struggle as the road to revolution, within a state of persistent capitalistic decline its struggles take on revolutionary connotations quite apart from all awareness.

Of course, the workers might be prepared to accept, within limits, a decreasing share of the social product, if only to avoid the miseries of drawn-out confrontations with the bourgeoisie and its state. But this might not be sufficient to bring about a new economic upswing and therewith not enough to halt the growing unemployment. The division between employed and unemployed, while a capitalist necessity, turns into a capitalist dilemma with a steadily growing unemployment under conditions of economic stagnation and decline. If one wishes to suggest to the workers how to react to the deepening crisis, all that could be said is to organize both employed and unemployed into organizations under their own direct control, and to fight for immediate needs, regardless of the state of the economy and the class-collaborationism of the official labor movement. In other words to fight the class struggle as it is fought by the bourgeoisie. The advantage on the part of the bourgeoisie, its state apparatus, must be matched by a greater power, which, at first, can only be the continuous disruption of the production process, which is the basis of all capitalist power, and by relentless activities of the unemployed to force from the bourgeoisie the means of existence. As far as the radical students and revolutionary groups are concerned, in order to be effective at all they must submerge themselves in the movements of the workers and unemployed; not to realize any special program of their own, but to articulate the meaning of the impending class struggle and the directions it has to take due to the imminent laws of capital production.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR VIOLENCE, AND IN PARTICULAR FOR ARMED STRUGGLE, IN RADICAL ACTIVITY?

ANSWER: This is not a question which can be answered by allotting to violence either a positive or negative role. Violence is imminent to the system and thus a necessity for both labor and capital. Just as the bourgeoisie can only exist by virtue of its control over the means of production, so it must defend this control by extra-economic means, through its monopoly over the means of suppression. Already a refusal to work makes the possession of the means of production meaningless, for it is only the laboring process which yields the capitalist profit. A "purely economic" struggle between labor and capital is therefore out of the question; the bourgeoisie will always supplement this struggle with violence wherever it threatens its existence by seriously threatening the profitability of capital. It does not allow the workers to choose between non-violent and violent methods of class struggle. It is the bourgeoisie, in possession of

the state apparatus, which determines which one it will be on any particular occasion. Violence can only be answered by violence, even if the weapons employed are unequal to the extreme. No question of principle enters here, but merely the reality of the social class structure.

However, the question posed is whether or not the radical elements in anti-capitalist struggles should take the initiative in the use of violence, instead of leaving the decision to the bourgeoisie and its mercenaries. There might be situations, of course, which find the bourgeoisie unprepared and where a violent clash with its armed forces might favor the revolutionaries. But the whole history of radical movements shows clearly that such accidental occurrences are of no avail. In military terms, the bourgeoisie will always have the upper hand, unless the revolutionary movement takes on such proportions as to affect the state-apparatus itself, by splitting or dissolving its armed forces. It is only in conjunction with great mass movements, which totally disrupt the social fabric, that it becomes possible to wrest the means of suppression and therewith the means of production from the ruling classes.

The futility of badly-matched military confrontations has not been able to prevent them. There do arise situations, moreover, where such confrontations release the trigger for greater things and may lead to mass movements, such as are generally the preconditions for revolutionary violence. It is for this reason that it is so dangerous to insist upon non-violence and to make violence the exclusive privilege of the ruling class. But here we speak of highly critical situations, not such as exist presently in the capitalist countries, and also about large and sufficiently armed forces able to wage their struggle for a considerable length of time. In the absence of such highly critical situations, such actions amount to no more than collective suicide, not unwelcome to the bourgeoisie. They may be appreciated in moral or even aesthetic term, but they do not serve the course of the proletarian revolution, except by entering into revolutionary folklore.

For revolutionaries it is psychologically quite difficult, if not impossible, to raise their voices against the futile application of "revolutionary justice" by terroristic groups and individuals. Even Marx, who despised all forms of nihilistic actions, could not help being elated by the terroristic feats of the Russian "Peoples' Will". As a matter of fact, the counter-terror of revolutionary groups cannot be prevented by mere recognition of its futility. Their perpetrators are not moved by the conviction that their actions will lead directly to social change, but by their inability to accept the unchallenged, the perpetual terror of the bourgeoisie unchallenged. And once engaged in illegal terror, the legal terror forces them to continue their activities until the bitter end. This type of people is itself a product of the class-ridden society and a response to its increasing brutalization. There is no sense in forming a consensus with the bourgeoisie and condemning their activities from a proletarian point of view. It is enough to recognize their futility and to look for more effective ways to overcome the ever-present capitalist terror by the class actions of the proletariat.

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