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**SOME CRITICISMS AND COMMENTS
CONCERNING THE DOCUMENT ON THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION**

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SOME CRITICISMS AND COMMENTS

CONCERNING THE DOCUMENT ON THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION

By Livio Maitan

When the draft of the document on Africa, which I myself had drawn up, was discussed at a meeting of the United Secretariat last April, I found after a series of votes on parts of it that I finally had to abstain on the draft as a whole because the United Secretariat introduced a series of amendments which I could not accept.

The fact is that we were in agreement on the general line of the document, on the class nature of a number of African states at the present stage, on the tasks of the revolutionary Marxists -- the disagreement concerned the appreciation of certain tendencies existing in certain countries and their possible development. In order to clarify what it was about, it is necessary to closely examine the text, particularly the following passages:

(1) At the end of the section on Mali (page 16 of the English version) the document that was adopted says textually:

"Up to this point, its course clearly points to the establishment of relations with the privileged economic layers, including foreign ones. Only a deep-going popular revolution, bringing forward a revolutionary leadership, could open up a different perspective. Despite its specific traits and the progressive measures that have been carried out, Mali remains within the framework of structures fundamentally of the past."

This passage replaced the following passage in my draft:

"It (the ruling layer in Mali) could thus evolve either toward a neocolonialist bureaucracy -- in this case, within a more or less brief period, it would establish links with the economically privileged layers, including foreign ones -- or toward a bureaucracy similar to the bureaucracy of the workers states -- which would presuppose a consistent evolution toward collectivist structures. Concrete analysis proves that, at least at this stage, the second variant has not been realized and that Mali, despite all its specific traits and despite the progressive measures that have been carried out, remains within the framework of the fundamental structures of the past."

The nature of the difference is already apparent from this passage. The comrades of the United Secretariat did not consider it opportune or correct to indicate a variant, which in my opinion is objectively possible, even if there is nothing that permits it to be affirmed that it will actually be realized.

(2) Beginning with the last two sentences of paragraph four

on page 20, with regard to Egypt, the adopted text says:

"Does this mean that the creation of a workers state has occurred? No; for the following reasons:

"(a) The agrarian structures up to now have not involved any collectivist element, being based essentially on private property (cooperation not being practiced on the level of production), and the free buying and selling of land by the bourgeoisie up to a certain ceiling has not been excluded. If the existence of a private sector in agriculture is not in itself a criterion showing the nonexistence of a workers state, this peculiarity of Egyptian agriculture is nonetheless symptomatic.

"(b) Bourgeois layers of various origin remain which receive returns of a capitalist nature. They are often state 'rentiers' (revenue from companies in which the state is not the only stockholder, revenue coming from indemnification or interest on state bonds also distributed by way of indemnification).

"(c) Finally, private sectors remain (small and medium industry, trade, real estate).

"(d) The state structure inherited from the former regime remains largely intact.

"(e) There has been neither mass revolutionary action, nor an anticapitalist mobilization of the masses, who do not have a deep socialist consciousness; nor is there a revolutionary-socialist party, all the transformations up to now having been decreed from above.

"Under these conditions, despite the sweeping statization of industry, commerce and banking, Egypt still faces the problem of making a qualitative leap in order to establish a workers state. As yet, history has not furnished us with an example of any country achieving this without a deep-going popular revolution. Egypt will not prove to be an exception to the rule.

"Many forces are pressing Egypt in the direction of a new revolutionary upsurge -- the objective demands of economic development, the weakness of the old ruling classes, the country's position in the international situation, the pressure of the masses of workers and peasants. But there are powerful obstacles also -- the extremely bureaucratic character of the Nasser leadership, its active opposition to revolutionary mobilization of the masses, its deliberate policy of blocking the development of an alternative revolutionary-socialist leadership, the powerful levers still in the hands of imperialism (military-diplomatic pressure, plus concessions such as shipments of food), and the pervasive counterrevolutionary influence wielded by the old state apparatus.

"In addition, the fresh bureaucratic layer crystallizing in the

state apparatus is closely linked with the directing apparatus of the economy, giving it a vested interest in maintenance of the status quo. This layer is on the whole a conservative force despite its capacity to use a revolutionary and socialist phraseology and even to take quite radical measures."

The draft which I proposed was considerably different. It said, in fact, the following:

"It is clear that if the process, widely begun, should develop in consistent fashion, no matter what the intentions of the leaders, it would end in the elimination of capitalist relations and the introduction of collectivist relations, characteristic of a workers state. This stage has not been attained at the present period because:

"(a) the agrarian structures up to now have not involved any collectivist element, still being based essentially on private property (cooperation not being practiced on the level of production);

"(b) bourgeois layers of various origin remain which receive returns of a capitalist nature, often being state 'rentiers' (participation in companies in which the state is not the only stockholder, revenue coming from indemnification or interest on state bonds distributed by way of indemnification);

"(c) finally, out and out private sectors remain (small and medium industry, trade, real estate).

"It cannot be determined at present under what conditions the evolution of recent years could continue until a qualitative leap is reached and, with all the more reason, whether the present leadership can assure completion of the process, if only following subsequent changes within it, or if on the other hand the intervention of qualitatively new elements will prove to be necessary (revolutionary upsurge of the masses, formation of a new leadership, possibly combined with elements of the left in the present leadership).

"The objective demands of economic development, the weakness of the counterweight exercised by the old classes, the evolution of the international situation, the pressure of the masses of workers, peasants and plebians whose social weight has already played a role in the past, are likewise factors that operate in the direction of a continuation of the present process, including further transformation of the political and ideological orientation of the Nasser team.

"The very bureaucratic character of a leadership which has always sought for passive support and not a genuine revolutionary mobilization of the masses, plus certain means of pressure or of blackmail which imperialism still disposes of (imports of American surplus food granted under very advantageous conditions, for example) play in the opposite direction. It must not be forgotten particularly that the state apparatus has not fundamentally changed and that

It is still honey-combed with elements that were already on the scene under the former regime.

"More generally, the bureaucratic layer of the state has considerably crystallized, penetrating also to a great degree in the apparatus and the economic structures. Once again, we face a potentially bivalent layer, but which in any case exercises a conservative pressure."

The next paragraph remained about the same, my conclusion being:

"All this warrants the hypothesis that if the process should end, in the present general context, in the formation of a workers state, we would face from the beginning a bureaucratically deformed workers state with all the grave implications (economic, social and political) of such a deformation."

Here the difference is still clearer: I admit the possibility that Egypt could become a workers state through the play of factors that have operated up to now,* while the comrades of the United Secretariat prefer to recall certain "classic" conditions and to affirm in addition that "Egypt will not be an exception to this rule" without trying in the least way to demonstrate it. I will add that in the passage on the new bureaucratic layer crystallized in the state apparatus they exclude, the same as they did with regard to Mali, the possibility of two variants, they limit themselves to underlining the conservative character of this layer (in their analysis, it is only a question of a conservatism in a bourgeois-capitalist context, while mine applies the same notion in two different hypotheses) and they come to speak of an "interest in maintaining the status quo." But it is exactly this which I think must be disputed: in the present Egyptian context, even the bureaucratic layer, subjected only to the pressure of the status quo and its own interests, under very specific given conditions, can be pushed to adopt outright anticapitalist measures. Moreover, can one really say that within the past five years the ruling Egyptian layer has really clung to the status quo?

I will return later to the affirmation in the text: "As yet, history has not furnished us with an example of any country achieving this (a workers state) without a deep-going popular revolution," where the case has been forgotten of certain east European countries where the factor of "intervention" or "pressure" of the masses did not play

*We must mention here that the Israeli comrades -- particularly Said and Micha -- sent to the United Secretariat several months ago, letters and notes along the line, on the whole, of my draft. One note said in particular: "One cannot say that Egypt is already a workers state, but the economic and social changes that have taken place and are still taking place, are changing the nature of the state in this direction. Only a counterrevolution could turn the clock back."

a greater role than in Egypt. I shall limit myself to commenting on the enumeration of the "reasons" for which Egypt is not a workers state. With regard to point (a) (p. 20) what I said has been made more precise, improving the text and avoiding possible erroneous interpretations. The introduction of point (d) ("The state structure inherited from the former regime remains largely intact.") which corresponds to what my text said further on, is not justified if one wishes to make it a determining criterion: here also we have some antecedents, where the birth of a workers state went along, at least for a certain period, with the maintenance of the former state structures. But I object particularly to point (e) because the text outlines here an analysis of the social and economic structures, whereas the lack of mobilization of the masses or the absence of a revolutionary socialist party could at most explain why there have not been structural changes, but could not in itself be an element of economic and social analysis (I will return further on to the more substantial question, namely whether or not the lack and absence that is talked about constitutes an absolute criterion).

(3) A still more significant amendment is the one that was adopted in the final part of the text. The paragraphs going from "The African revolution as a whole..." (p. 33) to "revolutionary heritage of humanity" (p. 34) replace a whole part of my draft which said:

"Some major political and theoretical problems are posed at this stage with regard to the processes under way in certain countries and their possible outcome. These processes involve a tendency to expropriate all the imperialist properties, to prevent the birth and crystallization of national capitalist sectors (or to progressively eliminate them if they exist), to carry out agrarian reforms, to introduce a monopoly of foreign trade and to lay out economic plans, to strip the traditional ruling classes of all weight, to establish close relations with the workers states. At bottom there is a peremptory demand for an economic development which would make it possible to break the secular circle of a backward state. Now, this development cannot be begun without a rupture of the system of imperialist economy, without eliminating the role of a brake which the possessing classes exercise, without having recourse to the economic initiative of the state on a very wide scale.

"Under the social and political angle this process can be impelled by a revolutionary mobilization of the masses (Algeria, Zanzibar, Guinea in the first stage). But, under other conditions, a decisive impulsion can be given by leaderships of petty-bourgeois extraction grosso modo, enjoying prestige among the masses thanks to their role in the struggle for national emancipation. For such leaderships at least some tangible economic development is, among other things, a condition of survival and conservation of power.

"A progressive evolution of such kind proves possible under the following conditions:

"(a) that the indigenous possessing classes exist only in an embryonic state or undergo decisive weakening (due to multiple factors) or in any case prove incapable of accomplishing the most elementary tasks of economic propulsion; (b) that imperialism finds itself, in each specific case, unable to intervene in a determinant way either by military operations or by actions of political and economic 'dissuasion'; (c) that the ruling political layer is relatively homogeneous and effective and has at its disposal adequate political and organizational instruments; (d) last but not least, that even if the masses of workers and poor peasants do not mobilize actively, they are able to make all their social weight felt in support of the renovating leadership while at the same time constituting a 'deterrent' for the indigenous conservative classes and imperialism.

"In such a context, it proves possible that at a given stage and under particular political and conjunctural conditions, processes of such a nature end in a qualitative leap. It is possible that, far from ending in a stabilization or even temporary structuration of a neocolonial society, integrated in the world system of capitalism, they determine the birth of a workers state. In this case leaderships of petty-bourgeois and revolutionary-democratic formation would be more and more inspired by the historic demands proper to the working class and of the socialist movement; and from this fact the social content of their action would change qualitatively. The experience of Cuba moreover gave significant indications in this field also.

"For revolutionary Marxists it must nevertheless be clear that such a passage to a workers state, for example, in Egypt -- outside of Africa an analogous case is that of Burma -- would be the least favorable variant. Independently of the fact that the very realization of a qualitative leap remains uncertain (in practice, it has not taken place up to now in any country), a cold process, without the active revolutionary participation of the masses, would inevitably involve bureaucratization: the workers state would be bureaucratically deformed from its birth. This would risk seriously compromising real economic growth, the necessity of which is an essential stimulant of the process. Here emerges the contradiction of a bureaucratic leadership, here is affirmed the objective necessity of active participation of the masses, notably workers; as the condition for effective economic development and genuine socialist construction.

"The task of revolutionary Marxists is thus to struggle so that the processes which are unfolding in certain countries follow their profound revolutionary logic, without distortions, for the formation of genuine revolutionary parties of the workers and poor peasants, for workers management of the expropriated enterprises, against any crystallization and consolidation of a privileged bureaucratic layer."

The essence of the question should now be clear. I wish nevertheless to add some supplementary considerations, particularly with the aim of avoiding possible misunderstanding.

First of all, I shall recall that we wrote in a 1960 document with regard to possible specific bonapartism, particularly in Black Africa: "...this layer is in control of a force in itself, the state, without being under the precise influence, or control of a ruling class of which it should be the representative. It is by management of the state that this layer develops and acquires a social importance..." Next, with regard more particularly to the case where the origin of this layer may be more outrightly petty-bourgeois, it is necessary to remember that Marxism never identified the interests and the attitudes of the petty bourgeoisie with those of the bourgeoisie. It has never ignored the conflicts and even the revolts of the petty-bourgeois layers. It has underlined that given the economic and social structure of modern society, the petty bourgeoisie cannot play an autonomous role in face of the two fundamental antagonists. Traditionally, because of their own inconsistency, their ideology, their attitude of fear vis-à-vis the masses, the petty-bourgeois leaderships could not remain enclosed within the framework of bourgeois society, of the imperialist world system. Now, in the contemporary context, characterized by the weakness of the traditional bourgeois or possessing classes (in the countries in question), the extreme weakening of imperialism and the existence of workers states with all the well-known possibilities of economic and military aid, it is possible that a petty-bourgeois leadership, would be submitted to greater "progressive" pressures and that its "independent," "autonomous" politics would acquire a concrete content quite different from that of the past. In other words, it is possible that it would have the tendency to identify itself more and more with the historic requirements proper to the working class and the socialist movement, orienting in practice in that direction. It is clear nevertheless that to the degree that this tendency becomes concretized (the favorable social weight of the working class and the poor peasants is a determinant factor) the class nature of this leadership changes and it can be transformed either into a proletarian-revolutionary leadership or into a bureaucratic worker-peasant leadership.

It would be interesting to study the parallel between certain contemporary revolutionary movements (Cuba, in the first place) and certain movements of a preceding period which are analogous from a certain point of view (for example, the Mexican movement of Zapata) to see how the different evolution and outcome depended, in the final analysis, more on the historic world context than on their intrinsic forces and dynamics.

It remains for us to reply to a question that will quite likely be posed: must we then change or rectify our criteria on the conditions of the formation of a workers state?

We have already said that the comrades of the United Secretariat seem to forget certain acquisitions of our theoretical elaboration of the past. In effect, they base their negative position on the possibility of the formation of a workers state, notably in Mali and

Egypt, on two essential criteria: (a) the necessity of a "profound popular revolution"; (b) the necessity of a "revolutionary socialist party." But, as I already mentioned in passing, the first condition was not fulfilled in many countries of eastern Europe, where workers states were nevertheless born, and the second was not fulfilled in Cuba. In addition, it must not be forgotten either that the experience not only of the people's democracies, but also, to a different degree, of Yugoslavia and China, helped us to understand that the qualitative leap to a workers state can be realized even in the absence of a genuine democratic proletarian state apparatus.

Consequently it is not a question so much of introducing new criteria as of admitting a new application or a new combination of criteria already utilized during the past twenty years.

Someone could object that in the countries of Eastern Europe two factors played a role -- the bureaucratic-military intervention of the bureaucracy of the USSR and structural assimilation -- which does not exist in the cases we are now examining. It is necessary, nevertheless, to go beyond the specific forms and grasp phenomena on the side of their substance. The substantial side in Eastern Europe was that the national bourgeoisie was so feeble, the old structures so broken up, the possibilities of intervention by imperialism so meager that bureaucratic-military means without the revolutionary intervention of the masses proved sufficient to overturn capitalism. In the countries in question today, it is essentially on the evidence of the extreme weakness of the conservative forces -- both national and international -- that I base the hypothesis of formation, for example, of a workers state in Egypt in a relatively cold way, without the active revolutionary intervention of the masses at the crucial moment of the qualitative leap. I don't see why if we have accepted since 1960 an appreciation of the Cuban Revolution that poses in new terms the problem of the necessity of a revolutionary party to arrive at the conquest of power, one cannot now have a wider understanding, with much finer shadings and much more concrete, of the different variants of the role of the masses, which by all means -- I hope that I have indicated this rather clearly in my draft -- remains indispensable.

In addition, I believe that it emerges clearly from what I have written that such a perspective is not of a kind to demobilize the revolutionary cadres, to make them jobless, by attributing to others tasks that belong to them. Let the last two cited paragraphs be reread: any commentary would be superfluous.*

*From the formal and linguistic point of view, my draft was approximate: thus I invite the comrades to consider only the substance of what I want to say.

NOTE

I want to say something also on several minor points which were the object of amendments by the comrades of the United Secretariat:

(1) On page 18, in the last paragraph concerning Guinea, between "This whole process" and "has been accompanied by," I said:

"...which nevertheless, under the conditions of a country like Guinea, could experience sharp changes and even genuine overturns."

I think this should be retained, because my specification sought to underline once more the unstable character of the situation in this category of countries.

(2) On page 35 point (d), the human investment should not be mentioned in this passage, which concerns the problems and not the solutions. The same remark goes for the last part of (f) concerning the pool of raw materials.

(3) On page 36, the paragraph beginning "The abysmal record" is a transformation of a paragraph a little bit different from the first draft. I would mention in particular, beside the capitulations of the social democracy and the Communist parties, "from analyses of the African reality that are really schematic and mechanistic," which has disappeared from the final version, which speaks instead of an "inadequate knowledge" of the history and theory of Marxism among the African revolutionists. I prefer the first formulation.

(4) Finally on page 36, in the paragraph beginning "But this bad," I consider that the text of the first draft is more condensed and correct than the final text; thus the sentence "In this process ..." up to "other continents" should be replaced by the following:

"In this process, they will more and more take into account that the specific features of the revolution in their continent and in the different countries of this continent do not eliminate the fundamentally unitary and combined character of the tendencies which operate in the contemporary world and determine, in the final analysis, likewise the African evolution."

NASSER'S EGYPT -- ON THE WAY TO A WORKERS STATE?

By Joseph Hansen

In his contribution, "Some Criticisms and Comments Concerning the Document on the African Revolution," Comrade Livio Maitan advances the hypothesis that in certain countries like Nasser's Egypt, it may be possible for a workers state to emerge in a "relatively cold way, without the active revolutionary intervention of the masses at the crucial moment of the qualitative leap."

From the form of his contribution -- a detailed presentation of the original and amended paragraphs of the document submitted by the United Secretariat for discussion in the Fourth International (Theses on the Progress and Problems of the African Revolution) -- the impression could be gained that serious differences have appeared in the United Secretariat over the assessment of the situation and tasks in Africa. However, Comrade Maitan himself assures us that although his hypothesis was rejected, the highest body of the world Trotskyist movement, of which he is a member, is in complete agreement on the "general line of the document, on the class nature of a number of African states at the present stage, on the tasks of the revolutionary Marxists..."

The differences would thus appear to be part of the normal process of democratically determining a general line, in which one-sided, tentative, or dubious items are sifted out in favor of more correct and precise approximations. This process of collective thought is not yet finished in the development of the document under discussion; and one may expect additional changes to be made in the theses before they are finally adopted at the coming world congress of the Fourth International.* By the seriousness with which it carries out this process, the Fourth International gives proof of its internal democracy. The world Trotskyist movement differs considerably from organizations where texts prepared by the leaders are offered for mere ratification by the rank and file.

Comrade Maitan, in fact, argues only for leaving open what he considers to be a theoretical possibility -- one that has occurred nowhere up to now, as he himself indicates. Thus he does not disagree with the other comrades of the United Secretariat on how to characterize the present reality and the present tasks of revolutionary Marx-

*For instance, Comrade Maitan calls attention to an overstatement in one of the amendments to his original rough draft: "As yet, history has not furnished us with an example of any country achieving this [the qualitative leap to a workers state] without a deep-going popular revolution." It is evident that it would be more accurate in this statement to indicate the historic exception of military conquest at the hands of a workers state, as happened in Eastern Europe. We will return to this point later.

ists in Africa or anywhere else.

From this, I would conclude that the United Secretariat made a correct decision in taking the course it did. The reasons for the amendments can be deduced by reading the sections of the original rough draft drawn up by Comrade Maitan, which he quotes, and comparing them with the modifications agreed upon by the body as a whole. The changes of substance involve almost exclusively his hypothesis. On the one hand, a speculative idea was taken out of a resolution outlining current tasks and demanding the widest possible agreement consistent with basic principles. On the other hand, by separating a difference of this kind from the general line -- on which the United Secretariat, be it repeated, is unanimous -- conditions were enhanced for a free and fruitful discussion of the hypothesis on its own merits.

After these preliminaries, intended to indicate the frame of discussion, let us turn to the question itself.

First of all, it must be noted that the discussion is not a matter of doctrinal hair-splitting -- a complex real world confronts us and we have no choice as Marxists but to seek to give it correct reflection in theory so as to provide a firm basis for action. The truth is that some quite spectacular measures have been passed in a series of countries which cannot be dismissed with simple generalizations. A good summary of developments in Egypt can be found in Hassan Riad's informative L'Egypte Nassérienne,* from which we offer the following:

Sweeping Nationalizations

"At the end of this evolution, in 1963, the Egyptian economy had thus been almost completely nationalized...at least in its modern sectors. The banks, the insurance companies, transport, the mines and basic industries, foreign trade -- are, save for rare exceptions, statized; almost all the big concerns in light industry (textiles, agricultural and food industries, etc.), wholesale trade and the big stores are under a mixed economy. The formal conditions -- the abolition of the private property of big capital -- have thus been fulfilled for the socialist transformation of Egyptian society. If some vestiges of private property still officially remain, it cannot be held that maintenance of a sector of mixed economy, in an underdeveloped country, proves that the dominant character of the economic system is capitalist. Moreover, even in this mixed sector, the powers of the state are considerable -- the state names by decree the company management boards, and the national offices keep close watch over them.

*L'Egypte Nassérienne by Hassan Riad. Editions de Minuit, 7 rue Bernard-Palissy, Paris 6. 1964. 252 pp. 13,50 francs. In quoting from this study, we have provided our own translations.

"The 1961 laws very seriously limited the domain and powers of big private capital. It has already been mentioned that the law sets a maximum of 10,000 pounds [\$22,700] which an individual can own in stocks. In addition, the rate of the progressive income tax reaches 90% on everything above 15,000 pounds [\$34,050] a year. This measure does not affect a good part of the bureaucracy whose incomes are relatively modest, at least so far as legal incomes are concerned; but it unquestionably affects big private capital.

"The evolution which began in 1953 with the creation of the Council for Production, and which reached a serious take-off point in 1957 with the nationalization of French-British capital, has now almost been completed with the laws of 1961. Moreover, nothing shows that the regime will not go still further, that it will not liquidate the last vestiges of the private property of big capital, that it will not simply undertake outright nationalization of the companies in the mixed economy." (pp. 222-223)

The sweeping nationalizations in Egypt, placing the state in charge of the financial and credit system, the basic industries and trade, offer a real problem in classification. Exactly what is the correct label for the Egypt of today?

The Nasser government claims that Egypt has become a "socialist" country and many observers agree with this. Thus Hassan Riad continues his comments:

"This impressive evolution, the liquidation of the former bourgeois aristocracy, gave the impression that Nasserism would open the road to the progressive construction of a socialist society. This is, moreover, what Cairo's official propaganda claims. In accordance with this, the agrarian reform was to liquidate the 'feudal regime' in the countryside; convert rural society into a society of small proprietors; and, by organizing them into cooperatives, open up the road to a socialist evolution. The development of the economy, nationalized to an extent almost comparable to that of the Communist countries, would, within the framework of a plan, permit Egypt's historic backwardness to be liquidated, thus preparing the conditions for an out-and-out socialist society. Political figures, journalists, foreign tourists, taken to visit the ultramodern Kafreldawar textile plants, the Helwan steel mills, the construction site of the High Dam, depart, convinced of the immense effort, persuaded that the Nasserite regime has done as much as the other socialist regimes that have gone through the same phase, that of accelerated accumulation of capital in a backward country. The reservations which they express concerning the police regime, the religious fanaticism, does not lessen their conviction that despite everything the Nasserite regime can pride itself on major socialist accomplishments." (p. 223)

The Egyptian Communist party also came to this conclusion and decided that it would be logical to dissolve, the better to support Nasser. As its dying act, the central committee issued a declaration

last April, hailing the "socialist policy of Nasser" and stating that Nasser's party, the Arab Socialist Union, is capable of carrying out all the tasks of constructing socialism.

Another current of opinion, seeking to give better balance to the combination of authoritarianism represented by the Nasser regime and what appear to be measures of a socialist nature, at least in form, holds that Egypt must be characterized as a deformed workers state.

The Problem of the Qualitative Leap

These two positions are, in the final analysis, based on a single criterion -- that nationalizations in and of themselves, if extensive enough, make the state "socialist" or at least proletarian in character. Since very extensive nationalizations have occurred in Egypt, it thus follows, according to this way of thinking, that Egypt must be some kind of "socialist" or "workers" state.

If we were to ask those who hold either of these positions why it should be concluded that nationalizations per se are socialist or proletarian by nature, we would probably not get a very clear answer. Probably they would say that if 10% of industry is nationalized that's not socialist. After all, in many countries the post office and even the railways are run by the government and that doesn't mean we are dealing with a workers state. But 75%! That's something different... And what's qualitatively different? Well, that's hard to say, but would a capitalist state go as far as that?

Very likely an effort to determine if there are any other reasons except the extensive nationalizations that would require us to call Egypt a "socialist" or "workers" state "as of now" would not be of much interest to these analysts. For them the mere quantity of nationalizations is enough.

Fortunately, Comrade Maitan does not belong to this school. He agrees that Egypt as of now is neither a "socialist" nor a "workers" state. He is therefore not confronted with the problem of stating why nationalizations in and of themselves should automatically be held to be "socialist" or "proletarian" no matter what the related circumstances.

Unfortunately, for his hypothesis, however, this does not strengthen its claim to validity. His position is, we recall, that it is not excluded that "in the present Egyptian context, even the bureaucratic layer, subjected only to the pressure of the status quo and its own interests, under very specific given conditions, can be pushed to adopt outright anticapitalist measures." We ask with some curiosity, "Exactly what 'outright anticapitalist measures' does Comrade Maitan have in mind?"

Obviously he is not thinking of nationalizations alone, or he

would consider Egypt to be a workers state "as of now." Perhaps he envisages a sweeping change in the ideology of the layer now governing Egypt which would then be concretized in action? This is suggested by a sentence such as: "In this case leaderships of petty-bourgeois and revolutionary-democratic formation would be more and more inspired by the historic demands proper to the working class and of the socialist movement; and from this fact the social content of their action would change qualitatively."

But this stands in contradiction to the concept that "even the bureaucratic layer" in Egypt, "subjected only to the pressure of the status quo and its own interests" -- without any special inspiration -- could achieve the change. Comrade Maitan emphasizes this by asserting that in his opinion "...if the process, widely begun, should develop in a consistent fashion, no matter what the intentions of the leaders, it would end in the elimination of capitalist relations and the introduction of collectivist relations, characteristic of a workers state." (Emphasis added.) Moreover, when Comrade Maitan argues that "leaderships of petty-bourgeois and revolutionary-democratic formation" can become inspired by historic demands proper to the working class and the socialist movement, he is evidently thinking of formations like the movement headed by Fidel Castro in its early phases. Is it really possible to visualize "special circumstances" that might inspire the present bureaucratic layer in Egypt to raise the banner of revolutionary Marxism? The probability for such a miracle is zero.

Finally, if this calculation of the mathematical probabilities turns out to be wrong, what would be the decisive criterion for testing the appearance of a genuinely socialist outlook in the Nasserite group -- or a sector of it? Nothing less than mobilizing the active revolutionary intervention of the masses in the example set by Fidel Castro! But then this is not what Comrade Maitan has in mind. He visualizes a "qualitative leap" without the involvement of the masses.

The nature of this qualitative leap thus remains quite obscure. Yet it is absolutely decisive to the validity of the hypothesis. It involves nothing less than the one or more criteria which Comrade Maitan considers to be essential in determining the nature of a workers state, deformed or otherwise.

It may appear strange that we should ask Comrade Maitan for specifications on the content of "outright capitalist measures"; surely the nature of these are well enough known among revolutionary Marxists! It must be agreed that ordinarily we take elementary things for granted and do not ask that they be repeated over and over as in a kindergarten or in a group of ultraleft sectarians who can never get past the ABC's. In this case, however, Comrade Maitan's hypothesis concerns a basic matter -- the criteria for determining a workers state. He introduces something new, the concept of a "cold" process and this at once raises a series of fundamental questions. Comrade Maitan himself had to refer to these in his contribution to the dis-

cussion; and, of course, they are explicitly involved in the theses on the African revolution. Thus to insist on this point is quite in order.

The absence of specifications on the nature of the "qualitative leap," as advanced in Comrade Maitan's hypothesis, is not at all compensated for by arguments attacking the essential nature of the criteria included in the theses on the African revolution submitted for discussion by the United Secretariat.

A minor example is Comrade Maitan's criticism of the criterion included by the United Secretariat as a test in determining the class nature of the present Egyptian state: "The state structure inherited from the former regime remains largely intact."

Against this, Comrade Maitan recalls "antecedents, where the birth of a workers state went along, at least for a certain period, with the maintenance of the former state structures." This is accurate. The state headed by Lenin and Trotsky in 1917 was called a workers state before the old administration had been smashed and the capitalist economy overturned. However, the recognition that a workers state had been born in October 1917 was based on the program of the Bolsheviks and political confidence in the will and integrity of the Bolsheviks to carry it out. A comparable situation can hardly be said to exist in Nasser's Egypt. It is difficult therefore to understand the relevancy of Comrade Maitan's observation. His contribution to the discussion clearly shows that he would place no political confidence in Nasser even in the strictly hypothetical case of his unconsciously fathering a deformed workers state.

It should be added that in Eastern Europe, China, and in Cuba, the world Trotskyist movement did not recognize the existence of a workers state until the old state structure had actually been smashed. The reservations of the Trotskyists were due to their lack of political confidence in the leaderships in these countries, a consequence either of their record (the Kremlin) or their stated programs (China and Cuba). There is no good reason whatsoever for discarding this criterion in the case of Egypt, Mali, etc., at least so far as the present ruling layer is concerned.

The Case of Eastern Europe

Let us turn to Comrade Maitan's objection to including "a deep-going popular revolution" as a criterion in determining the birth of a workers state. The difference over this point is quite important.

I would say that outside of a case of military conquest, this criterion is essential in determining whether or not a workers state has been born. A workers state is based not only on nationalizations but, among other things, on the revolutionary consciousness of the masses, a reciprocal of the revolutionary consciousness of the leadership. The great school for the masses in achieving this level is a

popular revolution -- a profound collective experience in mobilizing against the ruling class and its system in order to put an end to it and to consciously open up new historic possibilities. In judging a workers state as a whole, the degree of consciousness of the masses must be taken into account as one of the decisive items. (Comrade Maitan objects to this. However, the socialist consciousness of the masses has been of key importance in maintaining the Soviet Union as a workers state and was so regarded by Trotsky.)

Comrade Maitan's hypothesis is that Egypt -- and not only Egypt -- can become a workers state without such a popular revolution. As an argument he points to the case of Eastern Europe following World War II, where, he contends, "the factor of 'intervention' or 'pressure' of the masses did not play a greater role than in Egypt."

Since this analogy is closely connected with Comrade Maitan's strongest argument, it is important to understand it. I will begin by noting the dubiousness of the analogy. When Eastern Europe was occupied by Soviet troops, the big question was what the fate of the countries there would reveal about the character of the Soviet Union after the many years of Stalinist degeneration. If they remained capitalist in structure and continued under Soviet occupation, this could signify a rapid end for the Soviet Union as a workers state. When the Kremlin finally undertook the series of anticapitalist measures that converted the countries of Eastern Europe into deformed workers states, this proved, as the Trotskyist movement said at the time, that the embers of the October Revolution were still alive. Eastern Europe was converted into a "glacis" -- an outer slope of the Soviet fortress. This was the primary significance of the overturns there. They testified that the Soviet Union was still a workers state.

The conversions were carried out by bureaucratic-military means under the direct control of the bureaucracy standing on the Soviet property forms inherited from the October Revolution, dilapidated though they had become under Stalin's dictatorial rule. Even then, it is not altogether accurate to ascribe the initiative in the process to the Soviet bureaucracy.

As the Soviet armies defeated the German imperialist troops and swept into the countries that had suffered terrible years of Nazi occupation, native fascist regimes and the horrors of the second world war, they were greeted with an enthusiasm that reached the proportions of popular uprisings in some cities. There could be not the slightest mistake concerning the revolutionary socialist import of the jubilation of the masses in Eastern Europe over the Soviet victory. This was particularly clear to Stalin. He sought to bottle up this elemental force with its dangerous meaning for his own rule. Some sectors of the Soviet troops gave the masses of Eastern Europe their first direct taste of the bitter meaning of Stalinism. This was followed by plundering and stripping the countries, even entire factories being carted away.

At first Stalin's policy was to maintain capitalism in Eastern Europe against the will of the masses. This was one of his great crimes, for if the Kremlin had responded to the initiative of the masses in Eastern Europe, the advance of the revolution there would have dovetailed with the popular uprisings in Western Europe and the whole continent would have gone socialist as early as 1947.

Nor were the masses entirely missing when Stalin finally did issue the order to go ahead with the overturn of capitalism in Eastern Europe as a reply to Churchill's and Truman's initiation of the cold war. Stalin had to rely in part on native leaders of the masses in these countries. This phase was then followed by the liquidation of these potential "Titoists" or "Trotskyists" in a series of frame-up trials -- further evidence in its way of the "dangerous" socialist consciousness of the masses.

It was still not possible abroad, however, to be absolutely sure that this consciousness had not been destroyed by Stalinism until decisive confirmation of its continued existence was provided by the Hungarian uprising in 1956, when the masses in a spontaneous uprising themselves organized revolutionary councils which placed the preservation of nationalized, planned economy at the top of the slogans of the political revolution. This popular upsurge was so mighty that only Khrushchev's tanks, cheered on by Mao, could put it down.

What does this analogy tell us about Egypt? Not a great deal, it would seem -- unless Comrade Maitan visualizes that Egypt might be occupied by Soviet armies under the command of a Soviet bureaucracy still guided by policies of the kind followed by Stalin immediately following World War II. Is this very likely?

But, in order to preserve the analogy for the sake of argument, let us concede that such a remotely possible event is not absolutely excluded, even in a world coming ever closer to nuclear war. What happens then to the hypothesis on the possible revolutionary role that might be played by the "bureaucratic layer" in Egypt? And "through the play of factors that have operated up to now"? And "no matter what the intentions of the leaders"?

"Weakness" as a Point of Origin

Of course, Comrade Maitan may respond that all of this is ridiculous. He is perfectly familiar with the role played by the Kremlin and Soviet armed force in the conversion of Eastern Europe into deformed workers states. His point did not deal with that. The analogy he was drawing was between the weakness of the old structures in Eastern Europe and those in the countries in question today: "The substantial side in Eastern Europe was that the national bourgeoisie was so feeble, the old structures so broken up, the possibilities of intervention by imperialism so meager that bureaucratic-military means without the revolutionary intervention of the masses proved sufficient

to overturn capitalism. In the countries in question today, it is essentially on the evidence of the extreme weakness of the conservative forces -- both national and international -- that I base the hypothesis of formation, for example, of a workers state in Egypt in a relatively cold way, without the active revolutionary intervention of the masses at the crucial moment of the qualitative leap."

Comrade Maitan's hypothesis is obviously based on very abstract considerations. The conservative forces were weak in Eastern Europe; a workers state was born there. The conservative forces are weak today in a whole series of countries; therefore...

But Marxist theory is concrete. The weak feudal-capitalist structure in Eastern Europe went down under the combined blows of war, mass revulsion to the war, mass support for a Soviet victory, a mass upsurge with the arrival of the Soviet armies, the rise of indigenous revolutionary leaderships, a decision by the Kremlin (a very real power) to go ahead -- all this, plus the application of bureaucratic-military means.

Let us advance a step further. A series of workers states, beginning with Yugoslavia, have appeared in a different way. In all of them, popular revolution acted as the decisive power that toppled the old structures -- none of which proved to be very solid in face of a profound mass upsurge.

In both Eastern Europe and in all the subsequent overturns, up to the most recent one in Cuba, the weakness of the conservative forces was relative to the opposing forces. In Eastern Europe a shattered native capitalist structure and an imperialism weakened by mass revolts in Europe and the "Get Us Home" movement of the American troops, collided with Soviet power freshly victorious over German imperialism. In the other overturns, the old structures were overwhelmed by mobilized, insurgent masses, the mightiest power on earth.

Comrade Maitan's hypothesis advances something new; namely, the possibility of workers states now appearing in a series of countries without either the direct military intervention of a power like the Soviet Union or the power of a popular revolution bringing the masses in strength onto the political scene. Comrade Maitan's hypothesis is that a petty-bourgeois formation can substitute for both of these powers.

It is to be noted that this reasoning places the petty-bourgeois formation a priori on the side of progress, automatically against the weak conservative forces; and this regardless of whether the petty-bourgeois formation is itself conservative-minded. The assumption of the automatic progressiveness of such formations, however, remains to be proved. Up to now, as Comrade Maitan agrees, little evidence can be found for it. To cite from a 1960 document evaluating the bonapartism of the ruling layer in countries of Black Africa can scarcely substitute for hard facts. The evaluation may

have been in error or Comrade Maitan may be drawing unwarranted implications from it. The truth is that the hypothesis remains in the realm of speculation.

By Gradual Steps?

One of Comrade Maitan's concepts is only adumbrated. This is the idea that a workers state can be achieved through a "cold process"; i.e., through gradual steps that "end in the elimination of capitalist relations and the introduction of collectivist relations, characteristic of a workers state."

What Comrade Maitan means precisely is far from clear. The gates seem open to all kinds of surmises. Since the revolutionary mobilization of the masses is not required, according to this hypothesis, does "cold process" include the idea of achieving a workers state -- deformed though it would be -- by peaceful means? What are the possibilities that must be left open on this to fit in with the hypothesis?

We note, in passing, that Nasser is not exactly peaceful in his attitude toward the proletariat and the peasantry. "The evolution towards 'socialism' must proceed without a class struggle," says Anouar Abdel-Malek, describing Nasserism in his book Egypte Société Militaire. "The organs of struggle of the working class and the fellahs are abruptly dismantled -- no Communist party, no trade unions built and led by the workers themselves. The left is invited to dissolve itself into the single party, by way of the concentration camps; and the dissolved unions are reconstituted by the state in the form of a single union for each trade or profession, their leaders chosen and named by the apparatus, their essential field conceived to be primarily that of providing the regime with masses to be manipulated against imperialism, not directed against the class in power. From the beginning, the agrarian reform, instituted from above, aimed at neutralizing direct action by the fellahs." (p. 364)

It is true, of course, that parallels can be found in Stalinist practice; and repressive measures of this kind would not necessarily deny a country the label of "workers state" -- a "degenerated" or "deformed" workers state, it is understood. But in the absence of the political criteria associated with the appearance of a democratic proletarian power, the economic and sociological criteria become all the more important, and along with it the question of the qualitative leap.

As the ultimate generator of the hypothetical "cold process," Comrade Maitan appears to have in mind not so much the "intrinsic forces and dynamics" of the indigenous petty-bourgeois formations as the "historic world context." If we grasp the idea correctly, the state bureaucracy headed by Nasser, for instance, could hypothetically serve as a transmission belt in a process having as its end result "a consistent evolution toward collectivist structures." The power

source is a dual one: on the one hand, the weakness of imperialism and its bad examples; on the other, the rising strength of the workers states and the inspiration of their achievements.

I would be the last to deny the increasing repercussions of the mounting contrast between the two systems. It has become a very powerful factor in world politics and will inevitably increase in importance. It is undeniable, too, that indigenous ruling circles in many parts of the world have been affected by it in addition to the masses, although in a different way. Besides seeking to play the two camps against each other, the rulers of the "neutralist" countries, for instance, tend to bow in the Soviet direction by instituting "plans" and making liberal use of the "socialist" label.

It is something else again to visualize this process as so omnipotent that the apparatus of a capitalist state, like the one headed by Nasser, might gradually increase its imitation of Soviet institutions until the masses wake up one morning and see that somehow or other their country has been converted by its rulers to collectivist structures.

The hypothesis is similar to the hypothesis of "convergence." According to this theory, the Soviet Union is gradually, in an evolutionary way, taking on many of the "good" characteristics of Western capitalism, such as its alleged appreciation of "human" values, while Western capitalism is meanwhile gradually, in an evolutionary way, taking on some of the "good" characteristics of the Soviet Union, such as "economic planning." Eventually, according to this theory, the two societies will become scarcely distinguishable. It is a rose-colored variation of 1984 (which pessimistically saw the two societies developing their bad aspects toward an identical outcome). The basis of the hypothesis of "convergence" is that competition serves as a pressure on the ruling layers of each of the two societies to adopt the best features of the other. In this singularly abstract view of the world of today, such items as the nuclear armaments race are, of course, conveniently left out of consideration, as is the little matter of qualitative leaps in the alleged process of "convergence."

But if we are to advance the hypothesis of a "cold process" for achieving a workers state in countries like Egypt, it would seem quite important to show its difference from the hypothesis of "convergence," the defects of which are rather glaring.

To do this, it is necessary to find a qualitative difference between the two concepts. This can hardly be done by claiming that "convergence" does not operate in the case of the Soviet Union and the United States but does operate in the case of certain countries in the colonial world, although only in one direction -- the gradual accumulation of collectivist structures.

The decisive proof that "convergence" will never lead to identity between the USSR and the USA is that the imperialist power would

have to undergo a qualitative change, marked by a proletarian revolution. The USSR, on the other hand, would have to undergo a qualitative change in the opposite direction -- a social counterrevolution. The alternatives stand in polar contradiction to each other; and some kind of mishmash is excluded.

But the same reasoning holds for any variation applied merely to countries like Egypt. The gradual accumulation of changes in the direction of a workers state would at some point have to pass through a qualitative leap. What is it? Unfortunately, as we have already noted, this is left out of Comrade Maitan's hypothesis. It suffers from the same weakness as the hypothesis of "convergence."

A "Potentially Bivalent Layer"?

The key concept in the hypothesis that perhaps in Egypt and similar countries a workers state might be born through a "cold process," is the idea that the midwife will be the existing state bureaucracy "through the play of factors that have operated up to now."

The state bureaucracy is viewed as a "potentially bivalent layer." It can evolve in either of two directions -- either toward a "neocolonialist bureaucracy" or toward "a bureaucracy similar to the bureaucracy of the workers states." Comrade Maitan calls this hypothesis "the possibility of two variants." The favorable variant would signify that "the class nature of this leadership changes and it can be transformed either into a proletarian-revolutionary leadership or into a bureaucratic worker-peasant leadership."

The majority of the United Secretariat, as Comrade Maitan reports, excluded "the possibility of two variants," limiting themselves "to underlining the conservative character of this layer." In defense of his hypothesis of "two variants," Comrade Maitan offers the analogy of the revolutionary movement in Cuba and certain earlier movements such as the one led by Zapata in Mexico.

What these revolutionary movements have in common with Nasserism is difficult to see. Zapata scarcely represented a conservative state bureaucracy. Castro's course speaks completely against Comrade Maitan's speculation. Castro organized and led to success a deep-going popular revolution and this was one of the essential criteria by which the world Trotskyist movement determined that a workers state had been born in Cuba. Still more -- in the process of carrying out this revolution, the petty-bourgeois currents that might be considered to be "Nasserist" in character, split away, turned against the revolution, went into exile, and some of them became highly active counterrevolutionaries.*

*Comrade Maitan brings forward in connection with his reference to Cuba the absence of a revolutionary-socialist party there. But in the theses on Africa the United Secretariat listed the absence of a revolutionary-socialist party in Egypt as part of the evidence that

How then did Comrade Maitan happen to bring forward the analogy of movements led by revolutionists like Castro and Zapata? Simply, it would appear, because they began with a radical petty-bourgeois ideology. They were of petty-bourgeois origin. The Nasser group likewise can be described as of petty-bourgeois origin. Clearly the petty bourgeoisie, taken as a whole, is "potentially bivalent." We thus reach the broad generalization that "in the contemporary context...it is possible that a petty-bourgeois leadership would be submitted to greater 'progressive' pressures and that its 'independent,' 'autonomous' politics would acquire a concrete content quite different from that of the past." In brief, that a class known to be bivalent, can, under the effect of the mounting pressures of today, be more easily pushed in a progressive direction than in the past. Concretely, for example, a Nasserite government may give birth to a deformed workers state through a "cold process."

The main logical defect in this reasoning, as I see it, is the assumption that what is true of a whole is likewise true of its parts. In short, Comrade Maitan does not distinguish between two quite different petty-bourgeois tendencies. One is the current that tends to move in the direction of revolutionary socialism. Castro is the outstanding current example of this, but it is not something novel, as Comrade Maitan correctly observes. In fact Marx and Engels themselves were representatives of it. The other current, however, strongly tends to link its fate with capitalism. This variant is not considered by Comrade Maitan; he draws a sharp line between the petty bourgeoisie as a whole and the bourgeoisie as a whole, in face of the fact that the petty bourgeoisie has served historically as a source of origin for the bourgeoisie and is still performing this function in a not inconsiderable way although with much dimmer prospects for many would-be candidates than during the rise of capitalism.

Moreover, Comrade Maitan leaves out of account the fact that if revolutionary pressures have increased enormously on a world scale in recent years, the counterpressures have likewise mounted. Never before has American imperialism proved itself so ready to intervene in the internal life of other countries by all possible means; never before has the Kremlin proved so passive. These factors powerfully influence the state bureaucracies of the countries in question, even if they seek to find greater elbow room for themselves by playing on international rivalries.

under Nasser the masses have not been deeply engaged or mobilized. In the case of Cuba, the masses were mobilized by the Castro team which then moved toward the organization of a revolutionary-socialist party in the very process of the revolution. The analogy with Cuba thus speaks once again in opposition to Comrade Maitan's hypothesis. He, most certainly, will not contend that Nasser has given indications of following the example of Castro in either leading a popular revolution, mobilizing the masses and keeping them mobilized, or taking the path to revolutionary Marxism and deciding to organize a revolutionary-socialist party.

In seeking analogies of real meaning in our effort to understand developments in Egypt and certain other countries, the Mexico of Cárdenas and the Argentina of Perón might offer some fruitful insights. In fact, an illuminating analogy might be found much closer to home -- the regime of Muhammad Ali. An account of the efforts of this interesting figure to modernize Egypt may help advance our discussion. We quote from Egypt in Revolution by Charles Issawi:

Muhammad Ali's Egypt

"The 'Founder of Modern Egypt', Muhammad Ali (1805-49), attempted to effect a transition from the subsistence economy prevailing at the beginning of the nineteenth century to a 'modern' complex economy. In this he failed, but instead started Egypt on the road leading to an export-oriented economy. The methods pursued by him are very reminiscent of those used in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the last forty years.

"First, there was a revolution in the system of land tenure. Tax-farming was abolished and peasants paid their taxes directly to the government; large estates, often of uncultivated land, were granted to relatives or followers of Muhammad Ali; and the prevailing method of communal ownership was replaced by one in which peasants enjoyed de facto, though not yet legally recognized, rights of ownership.

"Secondly, irrigation works were undertaken, which increased the land under cultivation and, what was more important, made it possible to replace basin irrigation by perennial irrigation and thus produce valuable crops that require summer water.

"Thirdly, the planting of long-staple cotton was started on a commercial scale in 1821, and it found ready markets in Europe. By 1824, over 200,000 cantars of cotton were being exported, and in 1845 the figure of 345,000 was reached.

"Fourthly, communications were developed, mainly in order to facilitate foreign trade; especially notable were the improvement of the port of Alexandria and its linking by canal to the Nile.

"Fifthly, trade was conducted under a system of monopoly. Muhammad Ali bought crops from farmers at low fixed prices and resold them to foreign exporters at great profits. He also directly imported about two-fifths of the goods brought into Egypt.

"A similar monopoly was used in an attempt to build up a modern industry. Machinery was imported from Europe together with technicians, and by 1830 factories were turning out cotton, woollen, silk, and linen textiles, sugar, paper, glass, leather, sulphuric acid, and other chemicals. A well-run foundry met the needs of the government armament plants and arsenal, and simple machinery and spare parts were produced. Investments in industrial establishments up to 1838 amounted

to about £12 million. Some 30,000-40,000 persons worked in the factories, an impressive figure in a total population of about 3 million, and the number engaged in handicrafts was considerably greater.

"The productive apparatus thus built up, with its very large bureaucracy, as well as the army and navy, required men trained in modern techniques. To meet this need, over 300 students were sent to Europe, and several times as many studied in the newly opened schools of medicine, engineering, chemistry, accountancy, and languages and in the military and naval colleges.

"In brief, Muhammad Ali was trying to carry out a programme of forced industrialization. His success was thanks primarily to the administrative protection that he gave to his infant industries, which did not, however, outlive that protection. The investment capital required was obtained from the profits of his monopoly of internal and export trade and from taxation and forced loans, and the losses of industrial enterprises were covered from the same sources. The necessary unskilled labour was conscripted and paid low wages, while foreign technicians and skilled workers were attracted by high salaries. A market for the output of the factories was provided by the armed forces, by import substitution, and by displacing some handicrafts.

"Other points of resemblance with recent programmes of rapid development should be mentioned. First, the level of living of the population certainly did not rise, and more probably declined, as a result of Muhammad Ali's intensive and often mismanaged investment and of the consequent inflation; the hardships entailed by this and by militarization caused thousands to flee the country in spite of his efforts to seal the frontiers. Nevertheless, a very good case can be made for Muhammad Ali; perhaps unwittingly, but judging from some of his remarks quite possibly consciously, he was trying to lay the foundation for a balanced, diversified economy that in time would have greatly raised the level of living. However, his prime interest was in building up a modern army and navy to safeguard his position and extend his influence. Hence the compulsory reduction of his armed forces in 1841, following his defeat at the hands of the Great Powers, removed most of the incentive that had made him seek to industrialize Egypt. At the same time the enforcement of the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1838 permitted foreign traders to buy and sell anywhere within the Ottoman dominions, including Egypt. Simultaneously deprived of Muhammad Ali's protection and encouragement and exposed to the competition of European industry, his factories began to decline and did not survive his death in 1849." (pp. 21-24)

Despite its length, this account, it must be granted, scarcely sounds dated. It should be proof enough that cogent analogies can be found to help illuminate the mysteries of Nasser's Egypt. Muhammad Ali's experiment offers no difficulties to Marxist analysis. It was a case of using the state power to establish conditions for the growth of indigenous capitalism at an otherwise impossible rate. It would

not have altered the substance of the matter to put a "socialist" label on the regime.

The Reality Today

Illuminating as such an analogy may be, it cannot substitute for an analysis of actual developments in Egypt. On this, some pertinent facts can be found in Hassan Riad's book. Despite certain limitations, this is a very good study by an author striving to break out of the sterile pattern of thought imposed by the Egyptian Communist party.

Of primary importance is the nationalist thrust of the takeovers. They were not undertaken as an essential step in the conscious concretizing of a revolutionary-socialist program. The first holdings to be seized belonged to British, French and Jewish interests (following the imperialist attack by Great Britain, France and Israel in 1956). The holdings of Belgians, Greeks, Lebanese, Syrians, etc., went next. The ultimate main beneficiary was the Egyptian officer caste represented by Nasser.

The initiative in the 1952 coup d'état which started this process and which Riad calls a "kind of national bourgeois revolution" -- with emphasis on the "national," as opposed to foreign interests -- came from the "petty bourgeoisie."

"The secret Free Officers Movement of some 250 members was composed of petty bourgeois disappointed in the monarchy or the Wafd and embittered by the defeat in Palestine," he writes. "Although the association included several representatives of the left intellectuals, it was dominated by traditionalists who had rejected Communism out of attachment to their religion. On gaining power, these officers, of modest origin, had no definite program.

"For some years," Riad continues, "they did what the bourgeoisie would have done if they had had the courage to dethrone Farouk. After all, the West respected the religious traditionalism of the Free Officers and that was enough. The brutal demands of certain Western chancelleries, marked by initiation of the Baghdad pact, the repeated overtures of the Soviet Union, led to the crisis of 1956-57. The problems were settled by force and Egypt won. What followed this test of strength was a real revolution.

"Through a bureaucratic process that began in 1953, a new bourgeoisie, of petty-bourgeois origin had already been forming. The officers, their relatives and friends grabbed posts in the administration after driving out the aristocrats of the former regime. But things would not have gone very far without the nationalizations of 1957 and the brutal expulsion of the foreigners, which placed the state at the head of the majority of the big enterprises. The managers of the public enterprises took on the role of the big bourgeoisie. It was through this bureaucratic road that the second bourgeois gen-

eration was constituted.

"In 1957-58, as we have seen, a process of fusion began between this new Nasserite bourgeoisie, of petty-bourgeois origin, and the former bourgeoisie of aristocratic origin." (pp. 220-21)

Within the fusion, however, the new elements gained the upper hand, a development that was strengthened by the nationalization of Egyptian enterprises, particularly the key Misr group in 1961. With the "outright expropriation of the former Egyptian big bourgeoisie," the latter now hopes only for the "right to be able to integrate itself in the new state bureaucracy."

As for the current situation in Egypt, Riad paints a sobering picture:

"We have shown that the Egyptian village has not become a place of small proprietors. Despite the agrarian reform, great inequalities remain: 80% of the peasants remain without land or almost without any and only about one-third of their labor power is employed. The political power of the aristocracy, which was formerly based on the intermediate layers, has merely been replaced by that of the state bureaucracy which still bases itself on this relatively privileged minority. The cooperatives, which bring together only the exploiters, that is, 20% of the rural population, constitute in the view of the central power, the transmission belt for the dictatorship of the bureaucracy and the wealthy over the poor rural masses. In the cities, more than half of the population -- quasi-permanent unemployed, small craftsmen, subproletariat -- are likewise condemned to absolute misery and only one-third of their labor power is employed.

"The political power, yesterday in the hands of the bourgeois aristocracy, of Levantine and foreign capital, has passed into the hands of a state bureaucracy. This power is not that of the petty bourgeoisie as a whole, but only a group which has emerged from the petty bourgeoisie, the group of Free Officers and the high civil functionaries linked to them. The form of this new power is state capitalism, which has progressively replaced the liberal capitalism of the bourgeois aristocracy." (pp. 223-24)

As for the rate of growth under Nasser, despite the goals set by the Plan, it has not gone beyond 3% a year. "The best that can be expected is that with the help of quite considerable foreign aid, the Nasserite regime may reach an annual rate of growth of 3.5% to 4%." (p. 225) Three-fourths of this is required to keep up with the expansion of population; the balance goes to the state bureaucracy.

A phenomenon well worth noting is the role of corruption in the state apparatus:

"The corruption...is neither a vestige of the past, nor the fruit of deviations nor a sign of objective difficulties in a transi-

tion period. It is essential for the functioning of the system itself, an objective law. Of course, corruption was not unknown to either traditional Egypt or the colonialist monarchy. But it was not a central phenomenon of the economic mechanism; the economy was ruled by other objective laws, those of the capitalist market, of profit-seeking, of competition. But the main motor of the economic machine of the Nasserite state is the personal appetite of the rulers and their capacity to create a supporting group. In a system of this kind, corruption, complementing the insufficient remuneration of a bourgeoisie of money-hungry functionaries, becomes an objective necessity." (p. 227)

The state administration is proliferating at a rapid rate. This corresponds to the need to maintain a political equilibrium among the groups formed around the officers who headed the coup d'état. "It likewise corresponds to the individualist ideology of the petty-bourgeois faction that seized power. In a parallel way, a new private bourgeoisie has appeared -- businessmen took advantage of the emigration of the Jews to seize important enterprises that had not been nationalized. To do this they had to pay a 'tithe' to the officers by bringing them into their business. In this way a great many dignitaries, under title of managers of state firms, are also interested in private businesses." (p. 88)

The outlines of the tendency to throw up a new bourgeoisie are clearly visible here. This tendency is traced by Riad to the very origin of the regime:

"As a matter of fact, the Nasserite bureaucracy did not emerge from a mass movement, from a revolutionary party built in the struggle, but from a coup d'état carried out by a handful of conspirators. They were recruited from above in the existing bodies -- the army and the civic administration. To assure their positions, the main dignitaries of the regime built up groups in the same way. Each 'office' was granted by the president to one of his men as a kind of fief to enable him to 'live' and to 'provide a living' for his group. The very language of the members of the regime betrays this concept of the government: akl ech, a livelihood. This is the way the nominations accompanying successive reshufflings are characterized. The system remains profoundly individualist: no party discipline limits the abuses and coordinates action. Each one is the sole boss in his domain. Under these conditions, the planning comes to nothing. The Plan is only the day by day addition of desiderata from all sides, without any coherence, without any strategy of development having been worked out beforehand by the higher political bodies. The technicians are then brought in to present as well as possible, in a form meeting propaganda requirements, the whole package of decisions of the leaders of the economic groups on which the political equilibrium of the system rests.

"The aspiration for a single party corresponds to the need to create a body to arbitrate the various interests of the ruling groups.

and their followings. This need, which is felt most keenly by the supreme authority, the president, is ceaselessly counteracted by the bureaucracy. And, in this sense, the failure of the single party reflects the failure of the regime." (pp. 227-28)

Nasser's police regime has aroused the hostility of the proletariat despite some improvements in their position. As for the petty-bourgeois masses who were at first favorable, while they have "unquestionably been affected by the religious, chauvinist, pan-Arabic and reactionary propaganda, they have remained, as a whole, hostile to the regime, or at least apathetic." (p. 231)

Riad's Hypothesis

In the light of this reality, how should we characterize Nasser's Egypt? Hassan Riad has definite opinions on the subject. He believes we are dealing with a case of "state capitalism" and the rise of a "new local ruling class." (p. 238) His concept of this class is not clearly presented and it is hard to tell whether he believes it is a mere transitional phase in the gestation of a new bourgeoisie of the standard type or whether it is something utterly new and unforeseen, like the "managerial class" which was once in vogue among radical intellectuals as a label for the Soviet bureaucracy. Riad, however, states flatly that Egypt "is not on the road to becoming a people's democracy..." (p. 228) which would imply that he visualizes "state capitalism" in Egypt as a forcing bed for a bourgeoisie comparable to the one in Mexico or Argentina.

He does see the state bureaucracy in Egypt as a "third type" of bureaucracy, different from both the state bureaucracy analyzed many times over by the Marxists and from the bureaucracies of the workers states of Europe and Asia. Moreover, he sees this "third type" of bureaucracy as a rather widespread phenomenon: "In a certain number of African and Asian countries, of which Nasserite Egypt without doubt constitutes the most advanced example, the political power has been monopolized by a new bureaucracy emerging after independence is won. Circumstances have permitted petty-bourgeois groups to seize power for themselves. These groups then became transformed into a bureaucracy which, when they succeed in statizing the economy, as in Egypt, become genuine possessing classes, of a new type, incapable, due to their origin, of preparing the passage over to genuine socialism." (p. 226)

In the long run, in Riad's opinion, the "state bourgeoisie" can only become an "appendage in the Third World to the imperialist bourgeois, replacing the former local ruling classes which it dethroned in a more or less radical way, in their role as intermediary, local agent of imperialism." (p. 240)

The incapacity of this "new-type" bureaucracy to open the way to socialism is ascribable in Riad's opinion to the "reactionary ideology" inherited by the new bureaucracy from its history and origin.

Of the various flaws in Riad's study, we have room to mention only one which is especially pertinent to the question under examination. The category of a degenerated or deformed workers state is missing from the conceptual framework of his analysis. This leads to some curious results.

Riad has no trouble, of course, in determining a normal workers state on the basis of its economic, sociological and political characteristics as a whole. But what about an abnormal one?

He hinges everything on the nature of the bureaucracy. If it is a good bureaucracy on the whole, it is a workers state. If it is a bad bureaucracy on the whole, it is not.

Thus, in the case of the Soviet Union, which he defends as "socialist," he is compelled to idealize the bureaucracy. It is "linked to the masses," he declares, and is "animated" by a highly modern and progressive "ideology," and is building a "fully and genuinely socialist society" (p. 226) "despite the excesses of Stalin" (p. 242). His criteria for a workers state quite clearly include a "revolutionary proletarian ideology" among the ruling layer. Thus he is led to say: "The fate of the bureaucratic privileged Soviet elite has always been linked, by their historic origin, to the construction of socialism. Their attachment, despite all the deformations due to them, to the revolutionary proletarian ideology testifies to this historic origin and this solidarity in fact." (p. 242)

In a quite logical way, Riad makes this subjective criterion the key one for determining the character of the state in Egypt. Despite the veneration of "socialist" phraseology, the ruling caste is in substance capitalist in its outlook, in his opinion. Despite the apparently "socialist" form given to the economy by the nationalizations, this caste has fused with the old bourgeoisie and is utilizing the state in the general interests of a new capitalist ruling class in formation, one which will eventually clearly prove itself to be an appendage of Western imperialism.

On purely formal grounds it could be argued that Riad would have difficulty countering the position that Egypt "as of now" should be considered to be a deformed workers state on the basis of the extensive nationalizations. However, Riad would clearly carry the day on the basis of his concrete data on the sociological composition of the ruling layers and the direction of their evolution.

The Trend Is Clear

The final answer to Riad's views on the nature of Nasser's Egypt will, of course, be provided by reality itself, and here we may resume our discussion with Comrade Maitan. If Marxist theory is worth anything at all as a weapon in the class struggle, it is in providing timely prevision of the future. Comrade Maitan's point is that in forecasting the future, we must leave open the variant of a

"bivalent" bureaucracy in Egypt (and elsewhere) which can turn in either of two directions -- toward sowing a new bourgeoisie or toward giving birth to a workers state. He agrees that the latter variant has not as yet appeared anywhere; moreover that the state bureaucracy is conservative. We have cited considerable evidence from an authority on Egypt, who has made a close and conscientious study, showing that the trend is not toward the establishment of a workers state in Egypt under Nasser's rule. The evidence is just the contrary. If we project the current trend of the bureaucratic layer, subjected to the pressure of the status quo and its own interests, it is quite clear that what will emerge in Egypt eventually is a new bourgeoisie, one that was fostered and promoted by the capitalist state now existing in Egypt. Why shouldn't the Fourth International forecast this variant and exclude from an official resolution a hypothesis that is supported by neither past experience, current evidence nor solid theoretical considerations?

Taking another look at Comrade Maitan's hypothesis in the light of the above considerations, it would seem that it is not unrelated to Riad's thesis about the appearance of a new type bureaucracy, which can emerge from the petty bourgeoisie. Riad puts a negative sign on this bureaucracy, rejecting the possibility that it can open the way to what he calls a "peoples democracy." Comrade Maitan, starting from virtually the same premise, foresees instead a possible variant on which a positive sign must be placed -- precisely because it is petty bourgeois, it can prove responsive to class pressures of opposing kinds and thus go in either the neocolonialist direction, to which Riad limits it, or in a proletarian direction.

The chief flaw in this hypothesis, as I have sought to show, is that it leaves out specific origins, thus lumping together groups emerging from the officer caste of the bourgeois state and plebian revolutionaries who begin, for example, with guerrilla warfare. The two are far from identical. Associated with this is the assumption, it appears to me, that purely objective factors can override even political consciousness so that a workers state could be born despite the contrary intentions of its founders and without the intervention of the masses. There is a tendency here, I feel, to separate out the objective factors, to give them a certain independence and therefore a weight they do not possess. The objective factors must still operate through class forces which respond according to their own intrinsic dynamics. That is why the historic tasks of the working class cannot be performed by the petty bourgeoisie although the working class can carry out tasks properly belonging to older classes that have retrogressed. The undue delay of the proletarian revolution in the imperialist centers has, of course, given rise to all kinds of distortions and anomalies on a world scale, but the interrelationship between the objective and subjective factors still holds true in all its main lines including the birth of workers states.

I leave aside other flaws, belonging more properly to the political level, involving the perspectives of the movement and how Com-

rade Maitan's hypothesis affects these. Although they are extremely important, they are derivative if we approach the subject from its theoretical side.

There is one implication in Comrade Maitan's hypothesis, however, that can hardly be overlooked. If it is possible for the state bureaucracy in countries like Egypt to set up a deformed workers state in a "cold way," what is really wrong with the hypothesis that the state bureaucracy in a country like the Soviet Union can set up proletarian democracy in a "cold way"? One of the main assumptions in both hypotheses appears to be pretty much the same; i.e., that the state bureaucracy can prove responsive enough to objective pressures to undertake progressive modifications that willy-nilly cross the point of qualitative change.

I do not at all wish to give the impression that Comrade Maitan has changed his mind about the way proletarian democracy will be restored in the Soviet Union -- through a political revolution undertaken by the masses. I simply call attention to an important logical implication of his hypothesis concerning inherently progressive possibilities in state bureaucracies in a considerable belt of countries.

"Statism" and the Officer Caste

A few further observations:

(1) The history of Egypt goes back in unbroken continuity for six or seven thousand years. During this immense time, as in other "hydraulic societies," the state always played a dominant role in the economy. "The tendency toward unity, centralism, concentration, a pyramidal hierarchy, reached into all domains," writes Anouar Abdel-Malek in Egypte Société Militaire. "The power, master of the water, also held the land, which it consented, at times, to place in usufruct with those whom it favored. The central state tolerated no provincialism, no feudal system; the Mamelukes themselves, once they conquered power in Cairo, hastened...to undertake responsibility...for what the Egyptian state could not neglect without ruining the source of everything -- the life-giving water....The state, master of the political power, whose head was the incarnation or the representative of the divinity, held in its hands the economic system, of which it was the sole possessor throughout history until capitalism erupted, three-quarters of a century ago." (p. 338)

How should something going back to the Pharaohs be weighed in estimating current trends in Egypt? Has capitalism, imposed relatively recently by foreign imperialist interests, completely destroyed the age-old tradition in such a short time? This seems dubious. The life of the peasants still centers on the land and its relation to the Nile. Throughout the capitalist period the maintenance and extension of the irrigation system has been given high priority by the state. The Nasser regime has, if anything, placed even greater stress on

public works, as the High Dam eloquently testifies. The insistence of most commentators on the role of Egypt's "population explosion" in Nasser's projects tends to obscure this background.

If Egypt's ancient pattern remains as at least a psychological heritage, can it be said to favor the creation of a workers state without a basic upheaval emanating from the exploited masses? No doubt the Egyptian people are predisposed to accept strong public regulation of their economic life, even to view it as a natural necessity; yet the deep conservatism of this tradition would seem to favor development of a new exploiting class in continuation of the old -- a national bourgeoisie imbued from birth to see the state as the chief instrument for safeguarding and advancing its own general interests, which are also bound up with extensive public works. The possibility of a Muhammad Ali would appear to have deeper sources than just pure accident.

(2) In Egypt, as in a number of other countries, we are confronted with extreme instances of "statism" (the term Trotsky preferred in contradistinction to "state capitalism," which long ago lost really precise meaning). This is an important development that deserves careful study on the theoretical level as well as active political attention. In the final analysis, the monstrous growth of statism is a symptom of the overripeness of capitalism for socialism. An increasing number of countries have no alternative but to mobilize the state power for economic ends even if these are still held within the confining and chaotic orbit of capitalism. The main lesson to be drawn from Nasser's Egypt is the ease with which a deep-going popular revolution there could put a workers and peasants government in power, with reverberations far exceeding those of the Cuban Revolution.

(3) The role of the officer caste, or a sector of it, in advancing "statism" in the colonial and semicolonial countries is significant. It has been a prominent feature all the way from the Mexico of Cárdenas and the Argentina of Perón to Nasser's Egypt and Ne Win's Burma. While the bulk of the military figures involved are of petty-bourgeois origin (upper petty bourgeois generally), the army, as an institution, acts in these circumstances as the rather naked embodiment of the bourgeois state.

The officer caste intervenes in trying to solve the overall economic and political problems of the bourgeoisie, bringing to the task a certain ruthlessness, characteristic of the military mind, and a readiness to resort to desperate measures and dangerous gambles. They may even provide openings which revolutionary-socialist forces could turn to advantage. Cárdenas expropriated the oil industry and turned it over to management by the trade unions, following it up with similar measures for the railways. Perón quite consciously headed the formation of mass trade unions. It would be a considerable mistake, however, to conclude from this that the officer caste of a bourgeois army can inaugurate a workers state. The virulent "anti-Communism," only too prevalent among these careerist-minded

layers, is not without its reason.

(4) The greatly increased role of the officer caste, as witnessed in many countries today, may have progressive consequences at times, but these remain uncertain at best. The military institution tends to become more and more inordinate in size and pretensions, absorbing an ever greater share of the national budget. That this serves legitimate national defense needs is largely pretense; what is most significant is the tendency to foster reactionary currents in the internal life of the nation. An often repeated pattern has been the strengthening of the ultraright-wing formations in the army itself. At a certain point these can erupt with startling speed, and completely reverse -- at least for a time -- what appeared to be a gradual evolution in a promising direction. It would be fatal to overlook this very real possibility in certain countries. Recent events in Algeria should serve as a serious warning on this.

(5) It is not excluded that history will eventually offer an example of a workers state being born in a relatively painless way. After the United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, Germany and Italy have gone socialist, it may well be that the rulers of a country like Iceland (if they have not already been retired to a balmy climate) will decide to bid for the honor of being the first ruling class to willingly retire from the scene. Speculation on such pleasant possibilities, however, should not be permitted to affect the task of establishing the necessary preliminary conditions. This involves some quite recalcitrant formations.

Notes on the Draft Theses on the Progress of the African Revolution

(South Africa)

By G. V. G.

The NEUM gained some support, especially in the Western Cape, in the period immediately after 1948. Because of the class collaborationist policies pursued by the Stalinists and the ANC, it made gains among the more advanced sections of the urban proletariat and also among the peasantry in the Transkei. But, its sectarian attitude toward the developing national movement resulted in its isolation. While, first the ANC then the PAC grew into genuine mass movements, the NEUM and its affiliated organizations began to stagnate and to crumble away. This is reflected in the move away from NEUM of the tendency around Kenneth Alexander -- they sought to substitute revolutionary action for the continuous in-fighting of the NEUM. The NEUM failed completely to build a viable underground movement and a tried and tested alternative leadership to take over when the "legal" leadership was removed from the battlefield by arrests and exile.

South Africa presents a unique testing ground for the theory of permanent revolution. With its advanced industrial economy and a numerically strong urban proletariat all the objective conditions for a speedy transition from the national to the socialist revolution exists as in no other African territory. Because of the migrant labour system, a strong physical bond exists between the town workers and the rural areas. The proletariat are uniquely placed for leadership in the struggles ahead.

The repressive character of the white government has emphasized the national aspects of the revolution and pushed in the background the question of socialism. Only a revolutionary socialist vanguard, basing itself on the programme of the Fourth International can give the leadership the situation requires. Such a party does not exist in South Africa today but there are innumerable cadres who have been educated in the spirit of the Fourth International who can form the skeleton around which the party will take on flesh and blood. This requires, however, integration into the mass national movement -- which today means, first of all, the PAC and participating in all those struggles for transitional demands which strengthen the revolutionary aims of the people and lead them to socialism.

The revolutionary vanguard will support demonstrations against the pass laws; it will actively help to organise the workers into trade unions; support the demands for increased wages and civilised working conditions, while preparing the workers for strike action which will have political as well as economic demands. Under the repressive laws of South Africa, every strike by African workers becomes an act of rebellion and calls into question the control of State power. The revolutionary vanguard will systematically work to

arm the workers and prepare them for armed resistance to the white-ruled state machine.

While supporting all struggles against the Apartheid laws and for the extension of bourgeois-democratic rights to all sections of the people, the revolutionary vanguard will link these demands to the economic and social demands of the workers and to the necessity of taking power. Because of the absence of an indigenous bourgeoisie, the objects of the bourgeois revolution can only be achieved by a government of workers in close alliance with the peasantry. The revolutionary vanguard will therefore oppose all so-called solutions which are designed to confuse the issues, such as the proposal to replace the "hard" government of Verwoerd with a "soft" government of De Villiers-Graaf or Oppenheimer under pressure of "world opinion." The revolutionary socialists will put forward transitional demands to conform with each stage of the struggle as it develops, developing within the national mass movement the core from which will grow the independent revolutionary party which will lead the struggle to victory.