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## SOME PROBLEMS OF METHOD IN THE HUNGARIAN EVENTS

- Murray Forbes -

Toward the end of the article, "The Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising," (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 18, No. 1) Comrade Grey writes: "But if the proletarian vanguard learns all the lessons of Hungary and learns them thoroughly, it will prepare itself to lead the whole class in the next inevitable leap forward...The more clearly the proletarian vanguard assimilates the lessons of Hungary and the reasons for it -- the more surely 'it will not have been in vain.'" (page 5.) This excellent advice, unfortunately was not adopted by Comrade Vince as a guiding point for his own approach. The lessons that Vince learned and the lessons that he would imbue the vanguard with leads backward not forward.

### Problem of Method

All great events put to the test parties and theories, either confirming their viability and validity, or rejecting them and proving their fitness for the ash can of history. The revolution in Hungary was such an event. Here the gray of theory was confronted by the green of life.

It would be anti-climactic, as well as repetitious, to merely recount the minutia of the revolutionary events in Hungary. This has been amply stated and restated by numerous articles in our press, resolutions, discussion articles and internal discussion. I want to deal primarily with the problem of method.

How is it possible for people, presumably utilizing the same tools of analysis to arrive at two distinct and diametrically opposed conclusions -- an evaluation of the events in Hungary as revolution and counter-revolution? What is the nature of the method which arrives at the conclusion that "contrary to their own desires, the demonstration was swiftly converted into a full-scale, nation-wide counter-revolution throughout Hungary." (Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising, page 1). Vince characterizes this as an "unexpected result." Whatever else was unexpected his analysis and conclusion was not. How did Vince arrive at this conclusion? How is it possible for a Trotskyist to revile a revolution and apologize for its butchers? To understand this we must have recourse to his method

It is important to understand that Vince is not beginning with a new method. He is merely applying and elaborating an old and unrepudiated method first formulated by Comrade Marcy in his "Memorandum on the Unfolding War and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the New Phase of the World (Permanent) Revolution" written in 1950. In this document (to be referred to as the "Memorandum" hereafter), Marcy invokes Lenin's definition of the essence of the dialectic. "The essence of the dialectic," Lenin wrote and Marcy approvingly quotes him, "is the division of the one and the cognition of its contradictory parts."

The actual problem is not so much the cognition of the contradictory parts but the isolation of the "one" for the purpose of discovering its contradictory parts. We have to decide what our unit of investigation is going to be. This is not arrived at arbitrarily but determined by the process under investigation.

Marx, in order to lay bare the motion of capitalist society, choose the unit which contained all the essential features that differentiated capitalist society from other forms. The unit he abstracted was the commodity. All the social relationships, antagonisms and contradictions were congealed in the commodity, and conversely, were in turn revealed by the analysis of the commodity.

Marcy, attempting to follow Lenin's method also locates the "One" which he is going to analyze. He begins with the globe and announces that "each new event in the present struggle must be weighed on the global scale." (Political Resolution of 1953, page 1). Further in the same document he writes: "The global class struggle," is not to be understood "only as a literary or even a historical generalization but as guide to action."

"Our press," Marcy continues, "should more consistently employ the phrase 'global class war' in order more clearly to define the social character of our support to Russia, China, Eastern Europe and the revolutionary movement all over the world. It is a popular but precise formula for revolutionary defeatism."

In order to give this global concept some earthly substance he elaborates this idea in his document "The Global Class War and the Destiny of American Labor," written in 1953. "In the present epoch our class camp is not only constituted differently because it is a new historical period, but because it has a number of characteristics which distinguish it from the previous epoch." Truly an epochal conception. What is the essence of this unit? The distinguishing characteristic of the global conflict is its division into two social camps. "It is the class character of imperialism with its nerve center in the USA, which draws together all bourgeois states and all kindred social layers and mobilizes them for the war against the USSR. It is the class character of the modern working class as the grave digger and revolutionary successor to the bourgeoisie which is the umbilical cord that ties in the fate of the USSR with the fate of the world proletariat ... this flows from their common class denominator, from their sameness of their basic social substance, and from their relation to each other ... as separated stages of an uneven process of development ... the course of the unfolding war cannot but make the historical destiny of the USSR and the international working class more plainly congruent, the identity of their social and historical interests more visible, and the path of their development and direction more clearly outlined," (Memorandum, page 2) (Emphasis in the original, M.F.).

Everything is wrong here. Like Mistress Quickly, you know not where to have it. All the errors which Vince commits in his analysis of the Hungarian events are already contained, in germinal form, in

the last quoted sentence dealing with the congruence and identity of the social and historical interests of the USSR and international working class. Our class camp, in this global structure, finds its highest expression and personification in the USSR, China and East Europe AS THEY ARE. According to Marcy, and adhered to by Vince, "the touchstone of working class radicalism is more than ever the Soviet Union, and more and more, the world wide class struggle." (Political Resolution, page 4).

Let us see how Marcy deals with this "touchstone" which in reality is a highly contradictory phenomenon, but, remains in his hand a homogeneous and rigid whole. In the same resolution Marcy writes that "We are the best defenders of the USSR and of the whole global class camp. We do not for a moment yield this task to the Stalinists. We are opposed to their nationalistic, pacifistic illusory defense, a defense which no matter how personally heroic it may be on occasion, is inadequate (!), treacherous (!) and unworkable (!!). We defend the Soviet Union arms in hand against the White Guards of all countries. At the same time, we tirelessly explain that only the success of the global struggle, only the victory of the world revolution -- will finally guarantee the existence of the Soviet Union -- and other conquests as well." (Political Resolution, page 5.) Does the success of the global struggle include the revolutionary overthrow of the Bonapartist bureaucracy? If Marcy believes this the evidence is not forthcoming from his writings.

"The Militant should carry more articles on the progressive character of the economy of the USSR, at the same time explaining the fundamental nature of the economy, why the bureaucracy is secondary, i.e., why it is a workers state." Secondary to what?, the economy? But it acts as brake on the economy. From this viewpoint it is primary. The existence of the bureaucracy is precisely what characterizes the USSR as a degenerated workers state. We stand for its revolutionary overthrow. Until and unless it is overthrown the Soviet Union is not a healthy workers state. From this viewpoint too, the bureaucracy is primary. It is a primary feature also from the viewpoint of the consciousness it instills in the international working class.

Trotsky's contribution to this question retains its complete validity today. "The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or that area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution." (In Defense of Marxism, page 19). This is how Trotsky characterized the nature of the Kremlin oligarchy in a period when it had not yet resorted to violence against working class revolutions as it did in East Germany, Poland and now in Hungary. Where for Trotsky the politics of the Kremlin was the "chief obstacle" to the world revolution, for Marcy it merely assumes a "secondary" characteristic which moreover takes the form of being "inadequate" and "unworkable."

Is it possible, that Marcy and Vince view the problem of the bureaucracy as secondary from the viewpoint of the MILITARY defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack? We shall see shortly when we deal with Vince's approach to the Hungarian events. In the meantime Marcy views the bureaucracy as "inadequate," "unworkable," and "incompatible" with revolutionary defense of the USSR. These are merely QUANTITATIVE characterizations. But it is its QUALITATIVE nature that must be opposed -- its counter-revolutionary character.

Vince, in his own way, continues and deepens this concept of the inadequacy of the bureaucracy when he writes that "if a bourgeois leadership took over the seats of the government, the first duty of the workers would be to chase them out, not support them. (Actually the workers under a Trotskyist leadership would do this far quicker than the Red army would.)" (Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising, page 5). For us it is not merely a problem of QUANTITY -- how much time -- but a QUALITATIVE one -- how it will be achieved and what is to replace it. Vince would prefer the bureaucrat to the capitalist. We, for our part, would mobilize the proletariat against both.

"Our active, concrete, realistic defense of our own class camp in the global war, is meaningless without the most uncompromising defense of the USSR." This confusion, between the military and political needs of the Soviet Union finds its fruit in the approach of the Marcy tendency to the events in Hungary.

It is a significant fact that nowhere in the documents of this tendency is there any reference to the "global" struggle of the international proletariat against Stalinism as the best defense of the remains of October. Vince underscores this when he writes that, "we should strongly reiterate our defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism, and our subordination of the task of overthrowing the bureaucracy to this defense. We should arm the advanced workers ideologically for the coming great conflict which Hungary may have brought closer. In the long run (?), the bureaucracy cannot successfully defend the Soviet Union itself, not to mention Hungary. Only genuine proletarian revolutionists can do this." (Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising, page 5). Only in the long run? But in the immediate period? against the workers of East Germany, Poland and Hungary? does the bureaucracy appear to reveal a heroic and altogether adequate capacity to engage in the defense of the USSR?

Marcy, we saw, began with the division of the "One." However, the unit he choose for investigation was not an abstraction from reality but an abstraction without reality, an abstraction which dissolved the concrete globe into an abstract one. The formula, "global class conflict" and "our class camp" has provided the Marcy tendency with everything but an insight into REAL HISTORICALLY CONDITIONED events. They approach reality as if it were a ready made thing lacking only the classification of a global distinction. Reality, as a highly explosive and contradictory reality, not only between each sphere but within each sphere, does not exist for them. The formula of "our class camp" far from providing a method of analysis has even blinded them to that which is really "ours" in "our class camp."



The generalization most closely approximating the reality of the present epoch is the uneven and combined character of historical development and the specific form it takes -- the permanent revolution. It is entirely insufficient to speak of "our class camp" and "not our class camp" without pointing out the similar and dissimilar features inherent in both camps, without revealing the antagonisms not only between each camp but also the contradictions within each camp, without viewing the interconnections and conditioning forces that one exerts upon the other. Each global unit, to borrow Marcy's terminology, if we are to deal with the real globe, is composed of nations at different levels of development, of pre-capitalist, capitalist and transitional economies; of classes at different levels of experience and struggle; of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary parties; of normal and abnormal revolutions; of typical and non-typical phenomenon; in short, of uneven and combined development. The combined character of development is conditional and relative; the uneven character of development is unconditional and absolute. But it is the unity of these two opposites that give rise to the most explosive features in modern society finding its sharpest expression in the permanent revolution.

Our unit of investigation is revolution -- the historical world framework within which it unfolds, its specific properties, levels of development and motive forces. Our analysis of the revolution proceeds not only from what IS but also from what it is BECOMING, to follow its development from IDENTITY to ANTAGONISM, from national unity to civil war.

The theory of the permanent revolution asserts, in the first instance, that the revolutionary process does not stop at the boundaries of bourgeois democracy but irresistably continues on toward socialism under the impulsion of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Secondly, that this struggle begins within the boundaries of one country but does not remain confined to it but presses outward toward other countries. It finds its expression in the world revolution. The theory of the permanent revolution proceeds from the nature of the epoch as the highest stage of capitalism and the eve of socialist revolutions.

The revolutions in Yugoslavia, China, the events in East Germany Poland and now, Hungary, reveals another feature of the permanent revolution -- always implicit but now made explicit by recent events -- a genuine revolution against either imperialism or Stalinism cannot confine itself to fighting either one without, at the same time, undermining and destroying the other. Just as imperialism and Stalinism reinforce and complement each other, so does a revolution mutually undermine both.

Both imperialism and Stalinism share a common hatred of the historical initiative of the masses intervening in the realm of history to determine their fate. Examine, as an example of a test tube case, the parallel counter-revolutionary intervention of imperialism in the colonial struggle, and the counter-revolutionary intervention of Stalinism in East Germany, Poland and Hungary. The two are parallel movements which begin from different social premises, but which are, at

the same time, complementary developments of revolution and counter-revolution. The colonial struggles against imperialism and the revolutionary struggles of the working class against Stalinism merge as moments in the world revolution. The combined efforts of the international proletariat to cast off the yoke of oppression reveals also the unevenness in the struggle -- the different tempos and intensities, the different economic and political bases from which each begins, the different levels of consciousness, different political tendencies and leaderships, spontaneous as well as organized demonstrations -- yet, at the same time similar forms of struggle -- the general strike, mass uprising and the formation of revolutionary organs of class power. The colonial masses, combatting imperialism strike a death blow at Stalinism. The Hungarian masses, combatting Stalinism, strike a death blow at imperialism. Our analysis must proceed from this two-sided struggle to conquer power.

### The Nature of the Hungarian Revolution

The proletarian character of the Hungarian revolution has been contested by various tendencies. They have attempted to deny the revolutionary character of the Workers and Student Councils and Revolutionary Committees. Both its admirers and defamers have sought to identify these councils as bourgeois organs of power. Both the Social Democrats and the Stalinists converge upon Hungary from apparently two different angles, yet find a common denominator.

Social Democracy regards any movement against Stalinism as bourgeois and anti-communist. This reveals first, their lack of confidence in the historical capacity of the working class to assert their historic future, and secondly, their fear of the actual movement of the proletariat. They seek at every available opportunity to inundate the working class with a false consciousness, that Socialism equalling Stalinism can only be fought and defeated by counter-posing bourgeois democracy to it. They seek, to prevent, by all means, the proletariat from viewing their struggles as genuine struggles for socialism. They want to create the impression within the ranks of the fighters, that no struggle is actually taking place or is capable of achievement as a result of their efforts. Socialism is unattainable. The preservation of bourgeois democracy is the only alternative to Stalinism-Socialism. If the ideological shafts of Social Democracy fail to penetrate the consciousness of the proletariat or colonial masses, the ballistical logic of the machine gun and hand grenade, of let us say, Guy Mollet, acting as a saviour of bourgeois democracy, helps obliterate that same consciousness.

The Stalinists, identifying their own Bonapartist regime with Socialism, assert that any struggle against Stalinism is, ipso facto, a struggle against Socialism. The Stalinists, too, are in mortal dread of the independent initiative of the workers. Their aim is to preserve their bureaucratic privileges. They too seek to inculcate the proletariat with the false consciousness that their struggles are foredoomed to failure and can only land them in the swamp of bourgeois democracy and the lap of Allen Dulles and the CIA. The Social Democrats and the Stalinists form a sort of mutual admiration society -- intermittantly to be sure. The Stalinists too utilize the implacable

logic of the machine gun when the subtle logic of rhetoric fails. Both tendencies are objectively united on immobilizing or crushing the masses -- as the case may be.

What did the peculiarity of the Hungarian revolution consist of? This was the first revolution, national in scope, taking place within the framework of the Bonapartist bureaucracy; the first case of Dual Power on the basis of stratified property. The revolution in Hungary marks the highest development, to date, of the struggle of the proletariat to relegate the incubus of Stalinism to the limbo of the past. Where we previously witnessed the remarkable capacity and initiative of the masses to intervene in the historic process against capitalism, even without a conscious leadership (Warsaw uprising), or against their leadership, and, therefore, forcing the leadership to transcend the limits of the struggle (Yugoslavia and China), the events in Hungary marked the most developed expression of the intervention of the masses in the historic process against Stalinism within the framework of Stalinism itself. In contrast to the sporadic and localized actions of the previous encounters (Vorkuta, East Germany, Poznan), this marks the first NATIONAL uprising. While the other struggles marked the prologue Hungary marks the first chapter. It marked the dress rehearsal of "our class" in the "global class conflict" against a barbaric feature of the old society -- Stalinism.

The revolution in Hungary was a political revolution, not a social one. Its aim was not the overthrow of existing property forms but the overthrow of the bureaucratic caste. As a matter of fact, the revolution did break out with that aim in mind. It began as a movement for reforms and concessions primarily of the work norms, the democratic participation of the workers in the production process, a greater freedom of discussion and criticism following the 20th Congress, removal of Soviet troops and friendship with the Soviet Union on the basis of equality.

The broad masses were too naive, too trusting (in their support of Nagy), too Christian. At the beginning, there was no persistence in their protests; they lacked a clear perspective of aim; they lacked a clear understanding of the fact that only the most vigorous continuation of the armed struggle could guarantee the success of the revolution. The movement lacked an organization of revolutionary workers to place themselves at the head of the insurrection and to guide the offensive and organize the struggle against the Stalinist authorities. Even though the student and peasant elements proceeded the actual intervention of the working class in the events, the class which stamped it with its specific features and proved decisive for its continuation, development and strength was the proletariat. It GREW INTO A PROLETARIAN INSURRECTION. The students and peasantry did not counterpose its weight to that of the working class, but acted in unison with them, and under its hegemony as allies. It was the next phase of the revolution, when the AVH and the troops of the Red Army decimated the ranks of the student and workers movement, that the demand for the overthrow of the bureaucratic clique was projected.



Only those who identify the bureaucracy with the property forms on which it rests can claim that the overthrow of the caste constituted a "nation-wide counter-revolution." The true character of the revolution was revealed by the form it took -- revolutionary councils -- and by its method of achievement -- the mass strike. The councils came into spontaneous existence just as they did in 1905 and 1917 in Russia and in 1942 in Yugoslavia. They were organs of insurrection, of revolutionary power representing 9/10th of the population. They arose out of a mass strike and represented the masses in action.

A situation of Dual Power was created. Side by side with the bureaucratic state machinery, which was established by military-bureaucratic means in 1945, arose a weak but undoubtedly real and growing structure -- the councils. Unlike the regimes of Rakosi, Gero, Nagy and Kadar, which rested on military force and police power, the councils were based on the workers, students, peasants and soldiers. On the one side was the power of Budapest-Moscow, on the other side was the power of Gyor-Miscolc. Here is how Peter Fryer, who came to Hungary a Stalinist and left as an advocate and friend of the revolution, describes it.

"...The network of councils which sprang up everywhere in Hungary during the uprising may be accounted the biggest single gain of the whole revolution...In both their origin and their manner of functioning they are a striking new example of the way the masses of the people spontaneously threw up their own organs of struggle and of self-government in the course of every genuine popular uprising. If these councils, elected by the free (and in most cases secret) vote of miners and factory workers, have been slandered as under the influence of 'counter-revolutionary elements,' 'adventurers, fascists and the sworn enemy of the people,' this is first of all because they refuse to act as an instrument of the Kadar government in deceiving and oppressing the people...Secondly, the workers' councils provided the basis, if only in embryo, for a workable revolutionary alternative to the Soviet imposed Kadar regime..." (Hungary and the Communist Party: An Appeal Against Expulsion). In his book, "Hungarian Tragedy," Peter Fryer emphasizes the fact that "...They (the Workers Councils -- M.F.) were at once organs of insurrection -- the coming together of delegates elected by factories and universities, mines and Army units -- and organs of popular self-government, which the armed people trusted. As such they enjoyed tremendous authority, and it is no exaggeration to say that until the Soviet attack of November 4 the real power in the country lay in their hands." (page 51.)

The events in Hungary were once again a striking confirmation of the irreconcilable conflict between the bureaucracy and the workers. One of the main lessons of the Hungarian events was that the bureaucracy could not share power with the workers. The argument of the Stalinists that there were fascist and restorationist elements involved in the uprising, and that their weight and role determined the trend and nature of the uprising cannot be taken seriously. It only served as a cover for them to drown the demonstration of the armed population in a sea of blood. It is enough to remember that no similar ferocity was shown by the Stalinists against restorationist elements in the coalition cabinets after the Second World War. The

Stalinists in that period used the restorationist elements in cabinets which they helped to construct against the armed masses.

The legitimate demands of the workers and the rest of the population were met, alternately, with naked police force and military measures, or with concessions and promises of concessions. Both means pursued the same end, namely, to prevent the Hungarian workers from emerging as an independent political force.

### How Counter-Revolution is Derived From Revolution

Vince decries the events in Hungary. "On October 23 the students and workers of Budapest demonstrated for the liberalization of the totalitarian Stalinist regime. Contrary to their own desires, the demonstration was swiftly converted into a full-scale, nation-wide counter-revolution throughout Hungary." (The Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising, page 1.) How does Vince arrive at this characterization? By the fact that the first duty of the working class "...was to defend their own dictatorship from the amorphous democratic majority that was taking power away from them under Nagy. Their first duty was to keep the proletarian dictatorship. Apparently nobody understood this." (Ibid., page 1.) Apparently someone did understand this. What Vince euphemistically refers to as "their own dictatorship" was defended -- by the Stalinists. What Vince calls upon the workers to defend was not "theirs" but the bureaucracy's. Not at all identical.

Vince in calling for the defense of this dictatorship, was in effect, calling upon the workers to defend and maintain their own subjugation. This is not the advice of a revolutionist. By using the phrase "their own dictatorship" Vince identifies the bureaucracy with the needs of the revolution. A revolutionary grasp of the problem would have led to an entirely different formulation: "Against the bureaucracy which has expropriated the Hungarian workers politically and which parades their bureaucratic rule as the proletarian dictatorship. For the defense of the workers councils which in fact constitutes 'their own dictatorship.' Against the bureaucracy and for the extension of the world revolution."

Vince was confronted by a unique situation -- two workers states existing alongside of one another -- one deformed, the other not yet formed but expressing the real aspirations of the masses. Which to defend? Vince chooses the deformed state apparatus in the form of Kadar. Why? Because it is better to have bureaucrats than capitalists, Vince informed us earlier. But is there any evidence that these bureaucrats were indeed confronted by a danger of capitalist restoration? In what form? By what force? Vince admits that "...The working class had no conscious desire for capitalism of course." (The Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising, page 1.) Of course! Was it unconscious then? But what forms, what symptoms did this unconscious process assume? Was there any attempt to restore bourgeois forms of production and property? Was there any attempt to restore bourgeois organs of state power? By whom? Mindszenty? The Small Holders Party? The West?

It was counter-revolutionary, Vince insists, because it was not begun by the working class under a revolutionary leadership, and there was a danger that White Guardist elements might divert the revolutionary desire of the workers. This is sophistry. There are no inflexible and absolute boundaries either in nature or in society. Both are characterized by the process of becoming, of constant transformation and change. But the transformation of a process or an event into its opposite, while at all times possible, must be studied concretely to determine the direction of its transformation. There is no a priori way of determining what an event will change into without taking into consideration the forces involved and the conditions surrounding its transformation.

The Hungarian events could have been transformed into a counter-revolution. But did it occur in the actual unfolding of events? The nature of a revolution is determined, in its totality, not by the class that begins it, but by the class that carries it through. The students and peasants could not, by themselves, have given the events in Hungary such a national scope and intensity. The permanent revolution once again asserted itself. Regardless of which class begins the actual struggle, the working class must carry it through. So it was in Hungary.

### Problem of Leadership

The counter-revolutionary nature of the events, continues Vince, was due "...to the fact that there was no Marxist leadership (party) to direct the struggle...It was due to Stalinism unwittingly welding the opponents and supporters of communism into a common national bloc against both Stalinism and communism." (Class Character, page 1.) How was it possible for Stalinism to accomplish such a job of welding? Obviously, because there was no revolutionary party to explain the distinction between Stalinism and communism. But why was there no revolutionary party? Because Stalin had learned the trade of welding too well. In short, the nature of the insurrection is deduced from the level of consciousness, and the level of consciousness is inferred from the nature of the events. An object lesson of how to appear profound by indulging a penchant for verbal gymnastics. The source of Vince's error is his confusion over the distinction of the party and the class.

What is the essence of the Marxist interpretation of the inter-relationship between a class and its leadership? "In reality leadership is not at all a mere 'reflection' of a class or the product of its own free creativeness. A leadership is shaped in the process of clashes between the different classes or the friction between the different layers within a given class...in cases where the old leadership has revealed its internal corruption, the class cannot improvise immediately a new leadership, especially if it has not inherited from the previous period strong revolutionary cadres capable of utilizing the collapse of the old leading party." (Leon Trotsky, "The Class, The Party and The Leadership" -- Fourth International, December 1940.)

The masses who sought at all times to blast their way to the correct road, found it beyond their strength to produce in a few short weeks in the very fire of battle, a new leadership corresponding to the demands of the revolution. There was no revolutionary party, cadre or individual with sufficient experience, clearly defined revolutionary program and authority to give the revolution the organization it needed to overcome the limitations of its spontaneous character. But its spontaneity only reveals its shortcomings and weakness. It reveals the limitation of the revolutionary wave. Its spontaneous character cannot stigmatize it as counter-revolutionary, unless one seriously accepts the lucubrations of Vince in the role he assigns Cardinal Mindszenty and the Small Holders Party.

The tragic element in the revolution was the lack of leadership. But it is incorrect to identify and blur the difference between the objective factor and the subjective factor operating in the revolutionary arena. The party, the subjective factor, organizes, prepares and leads the revolution. It unites and makes conscious the separate stages in the revolutionary process into a unified and composite whole. It exposes the weakness and decay of the ruling class, or caste, the treachery of their ideological representatives within the ranks of the working class and confronts the working class with the perspective of its own historic destiny.

The party cannot create the objective conditions of the revolution, the contradictions within the economy and the socially intolerable conditions that result from it. Revolutions break out when the ruling class can no longer rule in the old way, when the ruled class no longer wants to be ruled in the old way, when a social crisis grips both ruler and ruled which draws into its vortex even the most backward layers of the population. "Revolution is the mid-wife of every old society pregnant with a new one." If there is no party on the scene to organize the revolutionary process the problem of revolution or counter-revolution is posed more sharply and the danger of derailment, distortion, confusion and demoralization is greater. The objective forces can and do break through the subjective limitations. But the price the revolution has to pay is much costlier and extends over a longer period of time. This is not meant to minimize the role of the party, but merely to place it in its proper context.

The revolution in Hungary did not have enough time at its disposal to mature and to prove which trend would have finally conquered -- revolution or counter-revolution. Counter-revolution triumphed in the form of the Red Army and the Kadar regime. But the dominant trend of the events as they took shape, and from the internal logic of the explosion that was generated by the contradictions of the social life of Hungary, proved without doubt that the revolutionary trend predominated. The role of the restorationists remained subordinate throughout.

The tragic element was the lack of leadership. But the significant factor was the tremendous historical initiative that the Hungarian masses displayed. This was an ATTEMPT to smash the incubus of Stalinism and represented a tremendous leap forward in the historic revolutionary movement. The Hungarian masses proved that a genuine revolutionary struggle against Stalinism is possible. They displayed

the same kind of historical initiative that Marx hailed in the movement of the Parisian workers in 1871. "What elasticity, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisian! ...History has no like example of a like greatness." Lenin, attacking Plekhanov's failure to understand the heroic struggle of the workers against the Czar in 1905 writes that Marx "...sings a veritable hosanna to the 'HEROIC' Paris workers led by the Proudhonists and Blanquists... The HISTORICAL INITIATIVE of the masses is what Marx prizes above everything else. Oh, if only our Russian Social-Democrats would learn from Marx how to appreciate the HISTORICAL INITIATIVE of the Russian workers and peasants in October and December 1905!" (Preface to Letter to Kugelmann) (Emphasis in the original-M.F.) Oh, if only our global experts could learn to appreciate the HISTORICAL INITIATIVE of the revolutionary proletariat in one small segment of the globe.

The Hungarian revolution presented us with a profoundly dynamic process, with the various episodes and phases of the revolution shifting rapidly, with various sectional and episodic leaders and groups coming forward and being displaced. Uniting the episodes was the framework which characterized the nature and the trend of the insurrection -- the basic role of the proletariat and the form it took in the Workers Councils. It was through this form that all the demands and actions were funneled through and coordinated. The content of the events were affirmed by the form it took.

But, insists Vince, "they did not mention the defense of the Soviet Union." (Character of the Hungarian Uprising, p.1) (Underline in the original - M.F.) Therefore? Therefore, these fighters are not of our class camp. Why? Because Vince is busy applying and concretizing Marcy's method. "Our actual, concrete realistic defense of our class camp in the global war, is meaningless without the most uncompromising defense of the USSR." (Political Resolution of 1953 submitted by Marcy, Grey and Wilson) Further on, in the same resolution, this concept takes on global dimensions. "We defend the Soviet Union arms in hand against the White Guards of all countries. At the same time we tirelessly explain that only the success of the global struggle, only the victory of the world revolution -- will finally guarantee the existence of the Soviet Union -- and other countries as well." (Ibid. p.5) For the sake of an ill-defined revolution to take place in the indefinite future, a living revolution is stigmatized as counter-revolutionary. The sectarian, who tries to level multi-dimensional life into the shape of one dimensional existence in order to fit it into the procrustean bed of rigid schemata, finds it easy to spread himself out globally on paper, but shrivels up before a real national uprising.

The problem to be solved is how to proceed from the national to the global, how to inter-link partial struggles with the world revolution, how to conduct an uncompromising defense of the world revolution, how to understand that the revolution begun in Hungary, represents a "dress rehearsal" for the revolution of the proletariat against Stalinism. The accusation, that the events in Hungary represented counter-revolution, remains completely unfounded.



Defense of the World Revolution and the Remains of October

The most glaring admission that the minority identifies the interests of the bureaucracy with the needs of the world revolution is formulated by Vince. "The Kadar government, imposed by Russian bayonets though it is, represents a deformed workers state, and is not at all counter-revolutionary in the sense used by the MILITANT. This will not prevent Kadar from making all kinds of bourgeois concessions, however, to propitiate the 'revolution'...Kadar's motivations are never from principle, of course, but from the Bonapartist self-interests of a workers' state bureaucracy (my emphasis -- M.F.). In typical Bonapartist fashion, he made constant class appeals to the workers in the first days after November 4 in order to win them from the counter-revolution; then, after encouraging the already existing workers councils, he dispersed the first attempted nation-wide 'workers parliament' (November 21). Following Nagy's example, he may call more and more bourgeois elements into his cabinet (although keeping a stronger control over them). And like his predecessors did for the last ten years, he may try to win Mindszenty's support for the regime..." (Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising, page 24.)

Here we have it. The Kadar regime is revolutionary because it is based on "Russian bayonets," but the Nagy regime is the personification of counter-revolution because it represents a regime of concession wrenched by the workers from the Stalinist satraps through their councils. The Kadar regime, which presumably embodies all the vices of the Nagy regime and which may even call "more and more bourgeois elements into his cabinet" represents the apex in the revolutionary struggle. This is entirely consistent with the idea we saw expressed previously by Vince, that it is better to have bureaucrats than capitalists (even though there has been not a shred of evidence that capitalists were trying or would prove capable of taking over the seats of the government). The key to the minority's framework of reference is the Soviet authority which exists in the instrumentality of a "workers state bureaucracy" and by the grace of "Russian bayonets."

"Workers councils are class instruments of the workers. But a deformed workers state is also an instrument of the workers. The workers councils must have the purpose to reform the state in a leftist direction; they must be more revolutionary, they must be more opposed to capitalism (e.g. United States capitalism) than the leadership they are opposing. We can welcome the formation of the workers councils and oppose any one preventing their meetings, etc. We can contend within these councils against the social democrats and the bourgeois party supporters, we can contend to win these councils to a revolutionary line..." (Class Character of the Hungarian Uprising, p. 11.)

Workers councils are class instruments but, then, so too is a deformed workers state. A person ravaged by general paresis is a human being, but so too is the doctor who seeks to cure him. From the viewpoint of general physiology the logic is impeccable. But would we trust the former to act in the capacity of a doctor? We are not merely opposed to Stalinism because it is less militant

against capitalism or less democratic. It is not a question of QUANTITY -- more or less --, but of QUALITY. Stalinism is antithetical to the socialist revolution. It is the transmission belt for the ideology of capitalism in the ranks of the working class. It derails the struggle for socialism and betrays the revolutionary aspirations of the masses. Stalinism imbues the proletariat with an anti-communist consciousness, and helps to reinforce bourgeois ideology. Stalinism is the form counter-revolution takes in the epoch of the death agony of capitalism. Stalinism is a cancerous growth on the body politic of history. Our task is not merely to check this growth but to destroy the tissue. Vince is interested in therapy (reform). We insist on surgery (revolution).

The deformed workers state is, in the last analysis, an instrument of the workers to the degree that it defends the property forms against the capitalists. In Hungary, the deformed workers state sought to protect the bureaucratic privileges against a revolution.

The concept of acting as a left pressure within the councils is a trap for the workers who would attempt it. So long as the state remains deformed and acts as an instrument of the bureaucracy, the councils can play no other role than to be instruments of that bureaucracy. It is only in opposition to the bureaucratic state machinery that the councils can fulfill their role as the nuclear power of revolution.

The councils must destroy the bureaucratic state machinery and replace it with genuine organs of class rule. More precisely, the revolution which establishes itself in the form of workers councils must have as its principal task the overthrow of the deformed workers state, which represents the form of counter-revolution. Vince reduces the political revolution to a problem of administrative correction. Parenthetically, it may be remarked, that here again we witness the minority's evaluation of Stalinism at closer range. Within the task of reforming the state they see a struggle taking place only between the workers and the social democrats and capitalist elements. Not a word about the struggle of the workers against the Stalinists. Russian authority has replaced the sacred bull.

The events in Hungary fortified and buttressed the revolutionary struggle against the Bonapartist bureaucracy. The entire problem of Hungary, as well as Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, flows from the counter-revolutionary nature of the Kremlin regime. From a "global" appreciation of the Kremlin oligarchy, and from a "global" mode of defending the Soviet Union, the minority derives a counter-revolution out of the forces seeking the revolutionary replacement of Stalinism.

Defense of the USSR must be understood in terms of the independent politics of the proletariat. We are not a government party but a party of irreconcilable opposition. "The defense of the USSR coincides for us with the preparation of world revolution.

Only those methods are permissible which do not conflict with the interests of the revolution. The defense of the USSR is related to the world socialist revolution as a tactical task is related to a strategic one. A tactic is subordinated to a strategic goal and in no case can be in contradiction to the latter." (In Defense of Marxism, pp.17-18.)

"We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy), and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution."

We separate, fundamentally, our defense of the USSR as a workers state from the bureaucracy's defense of the USSR. We do not give unconditional support to the diplomatic and military activities of the Bonapartist bureaucracy. "In reality for a long time we have not defended the Kremlin's international policy, not even conditionally, particularly since the time that we openly proclaimed the necessity of crushing the Kremlin oligarchy through insurrection." (ibid. p.55)

In a letter to Max Shachtman Trotsky wrote that "... if the USSR is involved in the War on the side of Germany, the German revolution could certainly menace the immediate interests of the defense of the USSR. Would we advise the German workers not to act? The Comintern would surely give them such advice, but not we. We will say: 'We must subordinate the interests of the defense of the Soviet Union to the interests of the world revolution'". (ibid. p.40.)

We defend the remains of October against the restorationist attempts of imperialism. But the proletarian masses are not and cannot be restorationists; that is why the defense of the USSR cannot imply the defense, the justification or critical support for the military actions of the bureaucracy against the revolutionary movement of the masses. Where revolutionary uprisings take place against the Stalinist satraps, we remain revolutionary defeatists in relation to the USSR. Even in time of war, and independently of the repercussions it may have on the immediate developments of hostilities, we must support every insurrectionary movement of the masses against the Soviet bureaucracy, if this movement corresponds to the advance of the world revolution.

An independent development of the revolution in the world arena represents a blow against imperialism, a thousand times more fatal, than any advance here or there of the Soviet armies. In time of peace as in time of war, any policy which lessens the

cohesion of the proletarian forces, lowers their level of class consciousness and their confidence in their own strength, diverts them from their revolutionary objectives or utilizes them for aims which are not of their own class, must be pitilessly fought, whatever semblance of military justification might be alleged in this or that concrete situation.

We defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack but at the same time we defend the world revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy. We do not indentify the revolution with its usurpers. While imperialism does not merely fight the bureaucracy but also the conquests of October, the bureaucracy does not merely defend the conquests of October, but also its own privileges and power. Our approach must, at all times, take into consideration both sides of the question.

### The National Question

From an incorrect estimate of the nature of Stalinism and the defense of the world revolution flows an incorrect estimate of the national struggle.

Hungary was an oppressed nation fighting for national independence. Our first duty as revolutionists is to support a national struggle for independence against Stalinism. Trotsky, writing about the Polish events in 1939, pointed out that "We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 20.) If the Marcy tendency accepts this, then having said A they must say B. Against seizures means for self-determination up to and including separation.

Hungary was overrun, together with other East European countries after the Second World War by the Red Army. The overturn of the property relations was not accomplished by a program which the people could support but by bureaucratic-military means. The ruling strata was placed in power with the aid of the Red Army. The power of the Hungarian state rested on the fact that it was staffed by the Kremlin's satraps and enforced by the notorious AVH. The domination of the Soviet bureaucracy was not merely political but economic as well. In Hungary, as well as in many of the other East European countries, the Stalinists have the status of conquerors. This status sealed by treaties and underwritten by the Western imperialists, is paid for in indemnities, reparations, special trade treaties and outright pillage. They have exploited the masses and economies of Eastern Europe in a way which differs in degree if not in substance from the imperialist brigands. The rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy has proved to be an obstacle to the solution of the national question.

The bureaucracy has not succeeded in solving this question but only in suppressing it. This remains a burning and explosive problem because the Kremlin has not succeeded in convincing the Hungarian masses -- or for that matter the masses in any of the

other Eastern European countries -- in the superiority of Moscow's centralism. It is not only impossible, but impermissible to impose centrifugal unity upon a nation that has no way of expressing its will. The explosion in Hungary proved that repressive force does not attenuate the problem but aggravates it. The original demands of the workers and students revealed that they wanted to determine their own national and historic status without the aid of an oppressive force.

Trotsky's contribution to the national question sheds a great deal of light on the present day relationship between the Soviet bureaucracy and the countries of Eastern Europe. Trotsky's articles on the Ukraine, written more than a decade ago points the way to the theoretical clarification of the national question that has erupted in Hungary. In answering a sectarian critic of his, Trotsky seemed to anticipate the arguments of the present minority. It is worth while quoting at some length:

"The critic repeats several times my statement to the effect that the fate of an independent Ukraine is indissolubly bound up with the world proletarian revolution. From this general perspective, ABC for a Marxist, he contrives however to make a recipe of temporizing passivity and national nihilism. The triumph of the proletarian revolution on a world scale is the end product of multiple movements, campaigns and battles, and not at all a ready-made precondition for solving all questions automatically. Only a direct and bold posing of the Ukrainian question in the given concrete circumstances will facilitate the rallying of petty-bourgeois and peasant masses around the proletariat just as in Russia in 1917." (Fourth International, December 1949.)

This is precisely what occurred in Hungary. For the first time since the forcible oppression of Hungary by the Soviet bureaucracy the petty-bourgeois and peasant masses rallied around the proletariat in the struggle for national independence.

Anticipating our present minority Trotsky continues:

"True enough, our author might object that in Russia prior to October it was the bourgeois revolution that unfolded, whereas today we have the socialist revolution already behind us. A demand which might have been progressive in 1917 is nowadays reactionary. Such reasoning, wholly in the spirit of bureaucrats and sectarians, is false from beginning to end." (ibid) "The sectarian simply ignores the fact that the national struggle, one of the most labyrinthine and complex but at the same time extremely important forms of the class struggle, cannot be suspended by bare references to the future world revolution... Piling one dire accusation indiscriminately on top of another, our critic declares that the slogan of an independent Ukraine serves the interests of the imperialists (!) and the Stalinists (!! ) because it 'completely negates the position of the defense of the Soviet Union'. It is impossible to understand why the 'interests of the Stalinists' are dragged in. But let us confine ourselves to the question of the defense of the USSR. This defense could be



menaced by an independent Ukraine only if the latter were hostile not only to the bureaucracy but also to the USSR. However, given such a premise (obviously false), how can a socialist demand that a hostile Ukraine be retained within the framework of the USSR... Yet our critic apparently recognized the inevitability of a political revolution against the Bonapartist bureaucracy. Meanwhile this revolution, like every revolution, will undoubtedly present a certain danger from the standpoint of defense. What to do? Had our critic really thought out the problem he would have replied that such a danger is an inescapable historic risk which cannot be evaded, for under the rule of the Bonapartist bureaucracy the USSR is doomed. The very same reasoning equally and wholly applies to the revolutionary national uprising which represents nothing else but a single segment of the political revolution." (ibid.) The Marcy tendency would do well to ponder this.

### Conclusion

The effect of the Hungarian revolution has found its repercussion in the ranks of the Communist Party and the entire radical and labor movement. It has created a response of revolutionary ferment in other parts of the world. The revolution in Hungary served to reveal the full extent of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism and at the same time served to reveal the magnificent capacity of the proletariat to defend not only former conquests but to surge forward to new ones. This alone will have justified the events. The revolution failed to unfold according to an a priori schema. What to do? The task of the revolutionist is to help the revolutionary process from one stage to the next and to imbue it with the consciousness of its inherent capacity.

Marcy's method closes the door on the revolutionary process. It leads to an objective defense of the Stalinist status quo, and serves to paralyze and disarm the workers. Marcy and the entire minority see only the shortcoming of the revolution -- what it failed to do according to a predetermined scheme -- and brand it as counter-revolution.

Our method, while taking into consideration the limits of the revolution, grasp the fact that this only represented the first stage of the political revolution and not the last; its spontaneous character not the result of conscious revolutionary organization. This was the dress rehearsal, not opening night. Our method seeks to clear the road to the revolution, to render an approach to the revolution easier for the masses, to draw the revolution closer and to assure its triumph. Our method seeks to find a bridge from real imperialism and the real Bonapartist bureaucracy to real socialism and how to mobilize the masses, in the given historical situation, for the conquest of power. In this respect the Hungarian workers, students, peasants and soldiers have shown how it is possible to storm the heavens.

April 18, 1957

## THE QUESTION OF NORMS

By M. Bernz

The present method in the Party, through its leading practitioners, has conceded itself to have been a little late on occasion. This quantitative imperfection always contained the possibility of becoming qualitative: from being a little late in its social characterizations, it might someday turn into being a little wrong.

In its conception of a recent Hungarian Revolution, and of a Russian Revolution against the bureaucracy, the Majority, even if it has a factually correct position underfoot, also has with it, a possible bridge from one class camp into another. This represents the real danger in the present positions. Between any imputation of capitulation to either the bureaucracy or the bourgeoisie, there is no symmetry whatsoever; for these positions have not arisen in some academic vacuum: they have arisen here, under the full material weight of only one of these forces.

The pattern of "little lateness," we know, began over a decade ago. Leaving aside the vicissitudes of its development, let us proceed to the substance of its outcome:

Out of the events of Eastern Europe and East Asia, came a conception of class, state, and revolution, which is accurately represented by the norms or criteria by which we now socially determine states. These, it is conceded, are not the same as applied with the Russian Revolution. These comrades admit that they have shifted the axis of judgment somewhat. On what authority? On their own, evidently. For there is no sign, anywhere, that they have made any theoretical derivation of their norm from that of Lenin.

Actually, they make use of two norms. Just how one is translatable into the other, is also obscure. And since they are used in succession -- one coming into play as the other is dropped -- there is no reason to believe that they function as norms at all.

The first norm they apply is the one they understand to be the subjective factor: the revolutionary party, program, and the like. Skill in its use is readily acquired. If no revolutionary party, leadership, and the rest: then, no revolution. How is the party determined to be revolutionary or otherwise? An examination of its writings, its utterances -- even its intentions, discloses this; in other words, the determination is a priori.

While the conditions of this norm were nowhere met, a number of proletarian states were nevertheless born during the period of its application. How? By dumping it for another norm: the degree of nationalization. This holds that a certain degree of nationalization is compatible with capitalism; and beyond that, compatible with only such forms as characterize a workers' state.

Starting with a criterion which operates a priori, they end with one that operates a posteriori. While claiming to be Marxists,

able to socially characterize by prior analysis, they end as bourgeois pragmatists, able to characterize only after the event. The "little lateness" thus becomes a little understandable.

Thanks to this method, an interesting feat is posed for the Marxist imagination: A Chinese capitalist state, run by Stalinists, in order to survive as a state at all, had to summarily proletarianize itself. This, if it means anything, means that a state power uses this or that class, indiscriminately, in order to survive as a state power. To squirm out of this with double-talk calling itself dialectics, forgets that what formalists call the law of the excluded middle, is that point in the dialectic where quantity has no choice but to turn into quality -- where the fish on the hook can squirm no more.

What, however, do these unlikely tales of social transformation actually mean? It means that these comrades, when they speak of a capitalist state with a Stalinist regime, mean something not quite a capitalist state. Possibly they mean a "non-capitalist" state? Or an "anti-capitalist" state? Whatever they mean, we are now being brought closer to the real content of this subjective factor of theirs.

In its earliest and most unabashed form, it meant simply this: that only sections of the Fourth International could lead real social transformations. From this, it could not but become a formula for stalling off the proletarian characterization of states transformed by Stalinism; and this with the expectation and hope that a Trotskyist movement would arise in them; or with the expectation -- and maybe hope that these states would be crushed by or bargained back to capitalism. When the transformations within them overstrained the credulity of those who otherwise preferred to call them capitalist it was clear that the subjective factor, unless it could be fitted with a reverse gear, had to be laid aside for the moment. So a new norm, that of nationalization, was introduced. It sounded enough like the time-honored formula for the Soviet Union to pass with those who failed to notice that the guts had been slightly shifted, out of it. Moreover, it needs nothing more than the deft touch of a rough-and-ready bookkeeper to be applied. And here too, it seems to flow from a famous comment of Trotsky's on an equally famous comment of Engel's. However, for these comrades' purposes, these celebrated comments remain at best inconclusive; especially as they help their criterion not one whit in socially differentiating Burma, for instance, from China.

But back to our bookkeeping: Of course, some sort of event has to, and can easily be selected to mark the qualitative turning-point in the nationalization process. For this, some point where it made an appreciable spurt forward will do; especially if it can be associated with some action initiated by the bourgeoisie, thus indicating that the Stalinists cannot do much revolution-wise, anyway and need a kick from the capitalists to do even that; which also gives the good old subjective factor a plug, and hints at something like a triumphant revival for it if we only wait long enough; which scarcely begins to explain what happened already.

Unless it is not clear by this time: Our norms for social determination do not rest on the axis of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie, as they presumably should. Rather is it a simple axis of Trotskyism versus Stalinism. This is what is so important about the subjective factor. That is, until it gets in the way.

Without dwelling upon the time Tito's state had to be hastily proletarianized to pit it against Stalin's, and the recent instance when it might have prevented pitting the Hungarian freedom fighters against the bureaucracy, let us see how a Trotsky viewed the relation between a state and its economic forms. And here, we find, there is little about property forms becoming proletarian simply because some degree of nationalization was attained. The Old Man understood the relationship, as it applied to the Soviet Union, somewhat as follows: "the property forms are proletarian -- because they issued from a proletarian revolution." This recognizes that a political act, an expropriation of the powers of the bourgeoisie's political representatives, a replacement of their state, had to precede the expropriation of the properties of the capitalists themselves.

Wherein does any of this appear in these comrades' method of determination? No one asks for a literal aping of the Old Man's procedure. Quite the contrary. But whence comes the effrontery of determining the answer in advance, of adjusting the norms accordingly, and of then going through the motions of applying them? These comrades' criterion for China and Eastern Europe is not wrong only because it is not a criterion. It measures only itself; or more exactly, it measures only their anxiety lest we be rendered an obsolete political organization. And thus motivated, unwittingly or not, they suspend over our heads what they are fearful of meeting face-to-face.

What should have been the method for socially determining these states? And how would it have been a responsible extension of the historically-tested method? Going back to the Commune, for instance, very little of our comrades' subjective factor was there evident; and yet, a proletarian state was briefly established by it. Moreover, it evidently weighed less in its establishment than in its preservation; for the superior organization of the bourgeoisie swiftly asserted itself, and enabled them to destroy what they were unable to prevent. More than half-a-century after, the Stalinist-led partisans in France and Italy also held power in their hands. But their hands were not the state. A class power, to be definitively consummated, must achieve centralization; and must rear itself upon the seat of the old power; for that seat is more than a symbol. With all the power of a thousand soviets, the power is not simply multiplied, but is qualitatively transformed when it is thus consummated. And part of that transformation is the negating of the mass power in the direction of specialized powers, of the extremities in favor of the center that holds them together; and this even under Bolsheviki, well before it expresses itself degeneratively in something like Stalinism.

What then is so important about the subjective factor? It is

not the form: the leadership, the party, the program. It is the function, the end it has to serve. What is this end? The Russian Revolution demonstrated it: to supplant the organized coercion of the bourgeoisie with that of the proletariat. This is what Mensheviks, what Social-Democrats failed to understand. This is what the Stalinists fail to understand. And their understanding falters not because of intellectual limitations; but because they were and are based upon proletarian formations which are themselves based upon, or partly upon capitalism, and which, consequently, must rest content to merely modify the bourgeois power.

It was otherwise with the Bolsheviks. For neither they, nor the working class strata they represented had any stake in the continuation of Russian capitalism. They, unlike the others, could and had to be revolutionary, and with it, internationalist. With the Soviet bureaucracy, it can also be so. A need which was able to rise from the objective to a clear subjective expression with the Bolsheviks, also exists objectively for the bureaucracy, but is unable to achieve such an expression before falling into self-contradiction; and thus it comes to be fulfilled in actions which bypass what we call a revolutionary program; and they do so through a party and leadership which, in a similarly formal sense, neither knows nor cares what it is effecting socially, thereby. The offspring of such misunderstanding was, for them, "peoples' democracies;" for us, "non-capitalist states."

The present Majority, in its way, says as much in connection with the Hungarian events. Just as the Soviet bureaucracy received its state and social character ready-made from the Bolsheviks, so too did the Hungarian insurrectionists get their state ready-made from the bureaucracy. If the struggle of one includes the protection of its property forms, so too must the struggle of the other; and included in their protection, are their extension. The social characterization of the actions of either of these, then, according to these comrades themselves, does not hinge upon any subjective factor. Nor can it hinge upon any degree of nationalization -- at least for them; for the Soviet Union is more "nationalized" than Hungary, its bureaucracy more "nationalized" than the Hungarian freedom fighters. What then is the criterion which enables them, without crossing the class line, to pit the freedom fighters against the bureaucracy? It turns out to be the very one they have hitherto avoided: a prior revolutionary action. They simply refuse to concede to the bureaucracy what they so promptly concede to the Hungarian masses. In this connection, it is well to recall a point made by Marx's most distinguished predecessor: that an idea or method is not rendered false through contradiction from another idea or method; it is false because it has fallen into contradiction with itself.

Since what we have here is a method, these comrades are in no sense right in Hungary while remaining wrong on the previous questions. The method puts the same stamp upon all its products. In Hungary, it was the objective factor, the objective movement which characterized the event. And its direction was to the right of the



Soviet bureaucracy. And while there are unquestionably revolutionary currents in the buffer zone, and more especially in the Soviet Union itself, these cannot, and cannot safely become the mainstream of development until encircling capitalism has fallen into its own economic and political crisis.

(April 28, 1957)