

CLR James and Raya Dunayevskaya (Johnson-Forest Tendency), 1950

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1. State Capitalism and World Revolution

Source: *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, by C.L.R. James in collaboration with Raya Dunayevskaya & Grace Lee; with a new introduction by Paul Buhle. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1986. Chapter XI, pp. 113-135. Original publication: 1950. *Note*: Asterisks were changed to numbered footnotes for greater clarity.

When we reach state-capitalism, one-party state, cold war, hydrogen bomb, it is obvious that we have reached ultimates. We are now at the stage where all universal questions are matters of concrete specific urgency for society in general as well as for every individual. As we wrote in *The Invading Socialist Society*:

“It is precisely the character of our age and the maturity of humanity that obliterates the opposition between theory and practice, between the intellectual occupations of the ‘educated’ and the masses.” (p. 14.)

All previous distinctions, politics and economics, war and peace, agitation and propaganda, party and mass, the individual and society, national, civil and imperialist war, single country and one world, immediate needs and ultimate solutions – all these it is impossible to keep separate any longer. Total planning is inseparable from permanent crisis, the world struggle for the minds of men from the world tendency to the complete mechanization of men.

State-capitalism is in itself *the* total contradiction, absolute antagonism. In it are concentrated all the contradictions of revolution and counter-revolution. The proletariat, never so revolutionary as it is today, is over half the world in the stranglehold of Stalinism, the form of the counter-revolution in our day, the absolute opposite of the proletarian revolution.

It is the totality of these contradictions that today compels philosophy, a total conception. Hence the propaganda ministry of Hitler, the omnipresent orthodoxy of Stalinism, the Voice of America. The war over productivity is fought in terms of philosophy, a way of life. When men question not the fruits of toil but the toil itself, then philosophy in Marx’s sense of human activity has become actual.

World War I plunged the world into complete chaos. Lenin between 1914 and 1917 established in theory: (a) the economic basis of the counter-revolutionary Social Democracy (The economic basis of imperialist war had been established before him.); (b) the Soviet democracy in contradistinction to bourgeois democracy. But before he did this, he had to break with the philosophical method of the Second International. He worked at this privately in a profound study of the Hegelian dialectic applied to Marx’s *Capital*, the proletarian

revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thirty years have now passed. Lenin's *method* of economic analysis is ours to use, not to repeat his findings. His *political* conception of complete abolition of bureaucracy and all ordering from above is today to be driven to its ultimate as the revolutionary weapon against the one-party state. But today the problems of *production* which Lenin had to tackle in Russia in 1920 are *universal*. No longer to be ignored is the philosophical method he used in holding fast to the creation of a new and higher social organization of labor as "the essence" of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is not the Marxists who have compelled society to face this issue. Today in every layer of society, the great philosophical battles that matter are precisely those over production, the role of the proletariat, the one-party state, and many of the combatants are professed dialecticians.

The crisis of production today is the crisis of the antagonism between manual and intellectual labor. The problem of modern philosophy from Descartes in the sixteenth century to Stalinism in 1950 is the problem of the division of labor between the intellectuals and the workers.

1.1. hugo

1.1.1. Rationalism: the Philosophy of the Bourgeoisie

The revolutionary bourgeoisie which established its power against feudalism could only develop a philosophy of history and of society in which, on the one hand, it spoke for the progress of all society, and on the other, for itself as the leaders of society. This philosophy can be summed up in one word: rationalism.

Rationalism is the philosophy of bourgeois political economy. It is materialist and not idealist in so far as it combats superstition, seeks to expand the productive forces and increase the sum total of goods. But there is no such thing as a classless materialism. Rationalism conceives this expansion as a division of labor between the passive masses and the active elite. Thereby it reinstates idealism. Because it does not and cannot doubt that harmonious progress is inevitable by this path, the essence of rationalism is uncritical or vulgar materialism, and uncritical or vulgar idealism.

In the springtime of capitalism this rationalistic division of labor was the basis of a common attempt of individual men associated *in a natural environment* to achieve *control over nature*. Today this division of labor is the *control in social production* of the administrative elite *over the masses*. Rationalism has reached its end in the complete divorce and absolute disharmony between manual and intellectual labor, between the socialized proletariat and the monster of centralized capital.

The specific political ideology developed by rationalism was democracy – equality of opportunity for all men to rise to the top, and hence equality in all spheres outside of production, before the law, at the polls and in the market.

Today, from end to end of the world, men know that democracy is bankrupt. What is to take its place they do not know. The alternative seems to be planned economy and one-party state. This is *the* philosophical question.

But the philosophy of planned economy and one-party state is distinguishable from that of the bourgeoisie only by its more complete rationalism. The labor bureaucracy in power or out of it sees the solution to the crisis of production in scientific progress, greater output. It consciously seeks to plan and organize the division of labor as the means to further accumulation of capital. In ideology it is ready to expropriate those representatives of private property who stand in the way of this complete rationalization.

But didn't this bureaucracy develop out of the working class? It did and it could only have developed out of the working class. It is a product of the modern mass movement, created by the centralization of capital, and holds its position only because of this movement. At the same time it cannot conceive the necessity for abolishing the division of labor in production, the only solution to the crisis in production. By a remorseless logic, therefore, representation of the proletariat turns into its opposite, administration over the proletariat. The end of bourgeois rationalism is this crisis of the revolution and counter-revolution in production.

1.2. hugo

1.2.1. The Hegelian Critique of Rationalism

There are various critiques of rationalism. *All* base themselves on Hegel. *All* are primarily concerned with the proletariat.

Until the epoch of the French Revolution, the philosophy of uncritical materialism and uncritical idealism was not seriously challenged. It was the emergence of the active masses in the French Revolution, on the one hand, and on the other, the counter-revolution carried to its completion by Napoleon, which created a crisis in this ideology.

As early as 1781, a challenge to rationalism had already come from backward Germany. For the French and English petty-bourgeoisie, rationalism had a material base, the advances of modern industry. The powerless German petty-bourgeoisie, however, could criticize rationalism because for them it was only theory. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* posed the contradiction between advancing science and human freedom. It was the first introduction into the modern world of dialectic which begins with the recognition of contradiction. But Kant wrote before the French Revolution and Napoleon. He could therefore believe in the

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solution of the contradiction by a moral elite, all men who obeyed the moral law of acting in accordance with the general interest. The uncritical or vulgar idealism of rationalism was replaced by critical or moral idealism.

Hegel, on the other hand, having seen the revolution and counter-revolution, could entertain no such reliance on men of goodwill. He began by placing contradiction squarely in the center of reality. Thereby he rejected rationalism, either in its traditional bourgeois form or its petty-bourgeois Kantian variation. Hegel refused even to argue with anybody who doubted that contradictions are real.

In brief, Hegel's critique of rationalism asserts:

(a) Contradiction, *not* harmonious increase and decrease, is the creative and moving principle of history. Society cannot develop unless it has to overcome contradiction.

(b) All development takes place as a result of *self*-movement, *not* organization or direction by external forces.

(c) Self-movement springs from and is the overcoming of antagonisms *within* an organism, *not* the struggle against external foes.

(d) It is *not* the world of nature that confronts man as an alien power to be overcome. It is the alien power that he has himself created.

(e) The end toward which mankind is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms is *not* the enjoyment, ownership or use of goods, but self-realization, creativity based upon the incorporation into the individual personality of the whole previous development of humanity. Freedom is creative universality, *not* utility.

Between 1914 and 1917 Lenin, for the first time, mastered this.

These dialectical principles which were the heart of Hegel's system are absolutely revolutionary. After the French Revolution, no further progress in thought could be made without holding fast to the principle of creativity and the contradictory process by which this creativity develops. The next step forward in human thought had to be the appropriation of these principles by the revolutionary masses, dialectical materialism. Any other path meant barbarism and intellectual disintegration. The Paris Commune and Marx's *Capital*, these are the heights reached by society in the nineteenth century. On the other side, what? Cavaignac, Napoleon III, Bismarck; Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, Rimbaud, the counter-revolutionary regime of state-capital and the desperate soul-searching intellectuals.

It is fashionable to use Marx's statement that he stood Hegel on his head to transform Marx into a vulgar materialist preoccupied with technological progress and the stomachs of the masses, expanded production and increased consumption. It is today the most dangerous

perversion of all Marx stood for. Marx himself in his fight against vulgar materialism reaffirmed that "the Hegelian contradiction (is) the source of all dialectic." Without the dialectic of Hegel, the idealism of Hegel could not be destroyed. But the dialectic of Hegel could be retained and expanded only by the concept of the creative activity of the masses. On this basis the dialectic became in Marx's hands a revolutionary theoretical weapon against bureaucracy in all its forms, but primarily and particularly in the process of production.

As we wrote in *World Revolutionary Perspectives*:

"Hegel saw objective history as the successive manifestation of a world-spirit. Marx placed the objective movement in the process of production. Hegel had been driven to see the perpetual quest for universality as necessarily confined to the process of knowledge. Marx reversed this and rooted the quest for universality in the need for the free and full development of all the inherent and acquired characteristics in productive and intellectual labor. Hegel had made the motive force of history the work of a few gifted individuals in whom was concentrated the social movement. Marx propounded the view that it was only when ideas seized hold of the masses that the process of history moved. Hegel dreaded the revolt of the modern mass. Marx made the modern proletarian revolution the motive force of modern history. Hegel placed the guardianship of society in the hands of the bureaucracy. Marx saw future society as headed for ruin except under the rulership of the proletariat and the vanishing distinction between intellectual and manual labor." (p. xx.)

Hegel could not carry the dialectical logic to its conclusions in the socialist revolution because he did not and could not base himself on the advanced industrial proletariat. He saw and described with horror the fragmentation and loss of individuality by the worker under the capitalist division of labor. But the workers whom he knew were not the organized, disciplined and united proletariat which had by Marx's time begun to announce itself as the new organizer of society and which we know so well today.

Hegel could not know these and therefore he could not envisage universal freedom for the masses of men. The result was that in politics, economics and philosophy, he was compelled to reinstate the old rationalistic division of labor between the intellectual elite and the masses. Hegel did not only imply this. He stated it. The universal bureaucratic class, the intellectual class, must rule society. Again, as we wrote in *World Revolutionary Perspectives*:

"Concrete universality for the mass of men was impossible. It was a mighty decision to take. But Hegel did not flinch. Only the state, said Hegel, could embody universality for the community. But *in particular* the state was a defense against the revolutionary masses. Hegel had seen them and their activities in European history and now the French Revolution had shown that nothing could ever come of it. So it had been and it would ever be. At each stage, therefore, a few chosen individuals represented the abstract spirit of mankind. Universality had to be restricted to these. This was the basis of Hegel's idealism. But with the clear insight

of a great scholar of both past and contemporary history, and by his mastery of his method, he analyzed and drew his analysis to its conclusions. The state would have to organize production. The chaos of capitalist production would have to be disciplined by organizing the separate industries into corporations. The state would be the state of the corporations. Universality being impossible to all men, the state bureaucracy would embody universality and represent the community.” (p. xix.)

So that in the end, the greatest of all the bourgeois philosophers, the most encyclopedic mind that Europe had produced, the founder of the dialectic, in Engels’ words, the maker of an epoch, could not transcend his historic barrier and was recaptured in the rationalist trap from which he had sought so profoundly to extricate European thought. Hegel destroyed all dogmatisms but one – the dogmatism of the backwardness of the masses. Once the revolutionary solution of the contradiction escaped him, he clung to the bureaucracy. The intellectual elite would rescue society and discipline the revolting masses. Reinstated were uncritical materialism, a purely material existence for the masses, and uncritical idealism, the solution of social crisis by the intellectual bureaucracy.

We today who have seen Stalinism and the labor bureaucracy the world over can first fully comprehend this, Marx’s essential critique of Hegel. [1] Only the revolutionary proletariat, said Marx, can appropriate the dialectical logic of Hegel. Hegel himself, because he held fast to the intellectual elite, ended up, despite his thoroughgoing analysis of contradiction and negativity, in the crass materialism and crass idealism of the state bureaucracy.

Today Hegel’s idealism or Marx’s dialectical materialism are no longer theory. The elite, the organizers, the administrators, the leaders, confront the self-mobilized proletariat. Counter-revolution and revolution oppose one another without intermediaries. Modern society offers no third camp between complete totalitarianism and complete democracy.

1.3. hugo

1.3.1. Rationalism: the Philosophy of Stalinism

The philosophy of Stalinism is the philosophy of the elite, the bureaucracy, the organizers, the leaders, clothed in Marxist terminology. It is the extreme, the historical limit of the rationalism of the bourgeoisie, carefully organized to look like a new revolutionary doctrine.

Stalinism, the ideology of state-capitalism, is the reinstatement of uncritical materialism and uncritical idealism. The materialism is in the accumulation theory: the kernel of all Stalinist-Titoist philosophy is that the worker must work harder than he ever did before. The idealism is in the theory of the party: the leaders, the elite, must lead as they never did before.

No one is more conscious of this than the Stalinist bureaucracy itself. At the center of all

ideological campaigns in Stalinist Russia is the attitude of the workers toward their work:

“People ... consider labor as something *alien* to them ... regard their work joylessly or indifferently ... contrive to give society less output and worse quality and to take from the government and from society as much as they can.”

The Stalinists call these workers:

“... our loafers, our triflers, our grabbers, flouting labor discipline, looking sullenly askance at their work – which leads to flaws in output, to damaged equipment and tools, to breakdown in production schedules, and to other *negative* manifestations which retard the increase of production.” [2]

For the Stalinist bureaucracy, state-property converts labor "from the drab burden it was under capitalism into a matter of honor and glory, a matter of prowess and heroism." The intelligentsia tells the workers: You work. The workers, on the other hand, continue to resist speed up and the discipline of accumulated capital, statified or otherwise. This is called by the Stalinists "the old outlook on labor," a "capitalist survival in the popular consciousness." This is no longer a question of Soviet youth and textbooks in political economy. It is now the workers counterposing to the bureaucracy another "ideology" which the Stalinists admit "may spread to alarming dimensions."

The Stalinists recognize the urgent necessity of mobilizing "all the vehicles of ideological work" to combat this "outlook and conduct" and to "educate the workers in the spirit of self-sacrificing work for the national weal." To the outlook and conduct of the workers, the bureaucracy must counterpose its own outlook and conduct. The conduct is the unbridled savagery of the police-state; the outlook is undisguised rationalism, "a materialistic outlook upon life ... an exclusively scientific concept of the universe."

In June, 1947, the Central Committee of the CPSU withdrew from circulation a textbook on the *History of Western Philosophy* by Georgi Alexandrov, which in 1946 had won a Stalin prize. Zhdanov, who spoke for the Central Committee at a national conference of "philosophical workers," made it clear that philosophy was no longer an "academic" question but of "enormous scientific and political significance." [3] The "gravest dangers" ("much graver than you imagine") threatened unless the philosophical front was reorganized along two main lines: (a) the rewriting of the history of philosophy as the history of science; and (b) the divorce of Marx from Hegel and the purging of Hegel from philosophic discussion. Six months later there appeared an outline of how "A Soviet History of Philosophy" ought to be written. [4]

The main enemy of social progress from the days of the ancient Orient and Greece to the present was discovered to be the idealism of superstition. Revolutionary ideology was equated with the materialism of scientific progress. Quoting Stalin, Marxism was described

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as retaining only "the rational kernel" of Hegel's dialectic logic, "so as to give it a contemporary scientific appearance."

On the surface it appeared that the Stalinist intervention was to defend the materialism of Marx against the idealism of Hegel. In reality the theoretical threat came from the revolutionary dialectical logic. In political economy the Stalinists seek to defend the classless nature of state-property and planning. The theoretical enemy is the theory of state-capitalism. In philosophy they seek to propagate the fiction of the classless nature of rationalism and materialism. The enemy is the proletariat resisting labor discipline by the bureaucracy.

Again and again Zhdanov attacked Alexandrov for "objectivism." The Stalinists are terrified by the obviously growing conviction that there is in Stalinist Russia an "objective" basis for the "struggle of opposites, the struggle between the old and the new, between the dying and the rising, between the decaying and the developing." Such an objective basis could only be the class struggle. Hence they must purge Marxism of the Hegelian concept of the objectivity of contradiction.

Materialism without the dialectics of objective contradiction is idealism. If development does not take place by the overcoming of objective contradiction, then everything depends on the subject, the leaders, the elite, the bureaucracy. Zhdanov, the vulgar materialist, had therefore to demand that the philosophical workers produce a "new aspect of movement, a new type of development, a new dialectical law." This exceptionally new, exceptionally subjective, revision of Marxism was titled: "Criticism and Self-Criticism: The Special Form of Struggle Between the Old and the New." Zhdanov stated unambiguously the inseparable connection between the new subjectivism and the Stalinist denial of the class struggle in Russia:

"In our Soviet society, where antagonistic classes have been liquidated, the struggle between the old and the new, and consequently the development from the lower to the higher, proceeds not in the form of struggle between antagonistic classes and of cataclysms, as is the case under capitalism, but in the form of criticism and self-criticism, which is the real motive force of our development, a powerful instrument in the hands of the Party. This is, incontestably, a new aspect of movement, a new type of development, a new dialectical law."

In 1949, the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR delivered the new ideology which Zhdanov had ordered. [5] The development of Soviet society was identified with the consciousness, the theory, the plan, the policy, the foresight of the Communist Party, the Soviet state. The new idealism was proclaimed unequivocally:

"Herein lies the strength and significance of our party, of scientific theory, of socialist consciousness."

The steps of Hegel's decline are here undeviatingly retraced. Hegel, who did not know the socialized proletariat, began by regarding all history as the history of the philosopher, of

consciousness and self-consciousness, and ended with the state bureaucracy. The Stalinists use almost the identical phrases.

The proletariat's role in the struggle for socialism is to work harder and harder, while the leadership and organization are left to the "criticism and self-criticism" of the elite, the bureaucracy, the party. Everything depends on the party, on the bureaucracy's consciousness and self-consciousness of correctness and incorrectness, *its* direction, *its* control, *its* foresight. The masses are merely at the disposal of the party as they are at the disposal of capital.

This is the Stalinist philosophy in every sphere, political economy, politics, history, education, literature, art. The *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, published before World War II, was the first comprehensive statement of the primacy of the party, of political consciousness over objective economic development, applied to the development of Russia before, during and after the revolution. In 1943 *The Teaching of Political Economy in the Soviet Union* was hailed as the reorganization by economists of all their work according to the model of the *History*. Since the end of World War II, and particularly with the philosophic systematization of the new idealism in 1947, the ideological mobilization of the bureaucracy has been total. The Stalinist bureaucracy unambiguously proclaims the one-party State of the Plan as the vital foundation of the Soviet system.

To believe that this vigorous offensive in every sphere is a question of nationalism is a mistake as crippling as the belief that Stalinism betrays the revolution by social-patriotic support of the national state. In every country the Stalinists represent bureaucratic manipulation of the proletariat by the elite, the bureaucracy, the party. They are the extreme limit of the rationalism of the bourgeoisie, uncritical materialism and uncritical idealism. Never before has so gigantic a state mobilized itself with such murderous vigilance to keep the proletariat at work while the leaders and organizers plan. This is the most deadly enemy the proletariat has ever had. Rationalism and counter-revolution have become one.

1.4. hugo

1.4.1. The Ideological Crisis of the Intermediate Classes

The totality of the crisis has given manifold forms to the counter-revolution. The most deadly, the most insidious, the most dangerous is the Stalinist counter-revolution because it springs from the proletariat and cloaks itself in Marxist terminology. The most obviously reactionary, the most easily recognizable is the counter-revolution of the middle classes. Because capitalism in its present stage, state-capitalism, faces them with complete liquidation and absorption into the proletariat, they propose the complete destruction of capitalism and return to a new medievalism, based on natural inequality. This is the program of the Christian Humanists, militantly anti-rationalist, militantly anti-democratic.

Like all forms of anti-rationalism, Christian Humanism leans heavily upon the Hegelian dialectic. The Hegelian concept of objective contradiction – the source of all dialectic – is transformed into a subjective conflict in the individual between sin and salvation, between individual imperfection and divine perfection. The crisis is moral and the solution must be moral, faith in divine authority.

The Christian Humanists describe with brutal accuracy and prophetic dread the fragmentation of the workers in large-scale production and therein the threat to the very life of society. Nothing else could give them their crusading obsession that rationalism has reached its ultimate, the destruction of society itself. But the Christian Humanists cannot see the proletarian solution. That is the hopeless dilemma out of which they have created a philosophy of complete regression to religious idealism.

The Christian Humanists have a systematic political economy. They propose decentralized self-governing corporations of private property with every worker in his place. They have a philosophy of history. They believe in the eternal ambiguities of the human situation and the impossibility of ever attaining human freedom on earth. They have a theory of politics. The natural and ideological elite must rule, the masses must not have absolute sovereignty. Since evil and imperfection are eternal, they say, the alternatives are either limited sovereignty or unmitigated authoritarianism.

These are the philosophic values which have helped de Gasperi in Italy and the M.R.P. and de Gaulle in France to rally around them the desperate middle classes. In increasing numbers, established university intellectuals in the United States are attracted to the same conceptions, radiating from the University of Chicago. There are individual nuances among the Christian Humanists, but as an all-embracing philosophy, Christian Humanism prepares the middle classes to resist to the end the proletarian revolution and to adapt themselves at decisive moments to Fascism. (Of this Rauschning in Germany has given eloquent testimony.) Hence, it is a useful weapon in the hands of big business and the diminishing magnates, so diminished today that more than ever they are dependent upon the middle classes for a mass base. In the United States, the Christian Humanists (for example, Peter Drucker) will join with the labor bureaucracy to keep the mass of workers in their place at the base of the hierarchy in production.

For the workers Christian Humanism is no problem. Their degradation in production goes far beyond the moral capacity of any individual to aggravate or alleviate. They attack the labor bureaucracy for precisely that for which the Christian Humanists support it. However, for seducing intellectuals by the wholesale repudiation of rationalism and for attracting them to Fascism, Christian Humanism plays an important role in the war of ideologies springing from the total crisis in production today.

The rationalism of the bourgeoisie has ended in the Stalinist one-party

bureaucratic-administrative state of the Plan. In their repulsion from this rationalism and from the proletarian revolution, the middle classes fall back upon the barbarism of Fascism. The anti-Stalinist, anti-capitalist petty-bourgeois intellectuals, themselves the victims of the absolute division between mental and physical labor, do not know where to go or what to do. Unable to base themselves completely upon the modern proletariat, they turn inward, pursuing a self-destructive, soul-searching analysis of their own isolation, alienation and indecision. They too appropriate the Hegelian dialectic, interpreting it as an unceasing conflict in the individual between affirmation and negation, between deciding for and deciding against.

These intellectuals are the most cultivated in the modern world, in the sense of knowing the whole past of human culture. Having achieved what the idealism of Hegel posed as the Absolute, they are undergoing a theoretical disintegration without parallel in human history. In France this disintegration has assumed the form of a literary movement, Existentialism. In America it takes the form of a mania for psychoanalysis, reaching in to all layers of society but nowhere more than among the most urbane, sensitive and cultivated individuals. In Germany the intellectuals cannot choose between Christian Humanism and psychoanalysis, whether guilt or sickness is the root of the German catastrophe. This is total unreason, the disintegration of a society without values or perspective, the final climax to centuries of division of labor between the philosophers and the proletarians.

1.5. hugo

1.5.1. Philosophy Must Become Proletarian

There is no longer any purely *philosophical* answer to all this. These philosophical questions, and very profound they are, Marxism says can be solved only by the revolutionary action of the proletariat and the masses. There is and can be no other answer. As we have said, we do not propose to do right what the Stalinists have failed to do or do wrong.

Progress in Russia, says Zhdanov, is criticism and self-criticism. The state owns the property, therefore the proletariat must work and work and work. The proletarian revolution alone will put state-property in its place.

In the United States the bourgeoisie extols all the advantages of democracy, the bureaucracy those of science. The proletarian revolution alone will put science in its place and establish complete democracy.

The evils that Christian Humanism sees, the problem of alienation, of mechanized existence, the alienated Existentialist, the alienated worker, internationalism, peace – all are ultimate problems and beyond the reach of any *ideological* solution.

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The revolution, the mass proletarian revolution, the creativity of the masses, everything begins here. This is Reason today. The great philosophical problems have bogged down in the mire of Heidegger, Existentialism, psychoanalysis, or are brutally "planned" by the bureaucracies. They can be solved only in the revolutionary reason of the masses. This is what Lenin made into a universal as early as the 1905 Revolution:

"The point is that it is precisely the revolutionary periods that are distinguished for their greater breadth, greater wealth, greater intelligence, greater and more systematic activity, greater audacity and vividness of historical creativeness, compared with periods of philistine, Cadet reformist progress."

He drove home the opposition between bourgeois reason and proletariat reason:

"But Mr. Blank and Co. picture it the other way about, They pass off poverty as historical-creative wealth. They regard the inactivity of the suppressed, downtrodden masses as the triumph of the 'systematic' activity of the bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie. They shout about the disappearance of sense and reason, when the picking to pieces of parliamentary bills by all sorts of bureaucrats and liberal 'penny-a-liners' gives way to a period of direct political activity by the 'common people,' who in their simple way directly and immediately destroy the organs of oppression of the people, seize power, appropriate for themselves what was considered to be the property of all sorts of plunderers of the people – in a word, precisely when the sense and reason of millions of downtrodden people is awakening, not only for reading books but for action, for living human action, for historical creativeness." (*Selected Works*, Vol. VII, p. 261.)

That was the first Russian Revolution. In the Second the proletariat created the form of its political and social rule. Now the whole development of the objective situation demands the fully liberated historical creativeness of the masses, *their* sense and reason, a new and higher organization of labor, new social ties, associated humanity. That is the solution to the problems of production and to the problems of philosophy. Philosophy must become proletarian.

Yet there is a philosophical task in itself strictly philosophical. The doctrine of negativity and the whole system of Hegel, the specific doctrines of Marx, philosophical, political economy, party, all are geared to precisely this situation, this impasse in every sphere which only the proletarian revolution can solve. This is the task today, and politically and philosophically you cannot separate it from production. The field is open, the proletariat, in so far as it is ready to listen, is willing to hear this. Organized schools of bourgeois thought are vulnerable from head to foot. In France, philosophers, historians, scientists, and writers are active protagonists in heated debates over humanism (is it the total rationalism of Stalinism, or Christian Humanism, or Existentialism?); which of the three is the heir to Hegel?

Often intellectuals turn toward Marx and Lenin and Hegel. They meet Stalinism which *spends incredible time, care, energy and vigilance in holding Marx and Lenin within the bounds of their private-property state-property philosophy*. The Stalinists repeat interminably that dialectics is the transformation of quantity into quality, leaps, breaks in continuity, opposition of capitalism and socialism. It is part and parcel of their determination to represent state-property as revolutionary. In 1917, when the struggle in the working class movement was between reform and revolution, these conceptions may have been debatable. Today all arguments fade into insignificance in face of the actuality. The critical question today, which the Stalinists must avoid like the revolution, is how was the October Revolution transformed into its opposite, the Stalinist counter-revolution, and how is this counter-revolution in turn to be transformed into its opposite. This is the dialectical law which Lenin mastered between 1914 and 1917, the negation of the negation, the self-mobilization of the proletariat as the economics and politics of socialism.

The Stalinist bureaucracy is determined that not a hint of the revolutionary doctrines of Hegel, Marx, Lenin should ever go out without *its* imprint, *its* interpretation. The social cooperativeness and unity of modern labor does not allow it any laxity from its cruel and merciless state-capitalist need to make the workers work harder and harder. No hint of the *revolutionary* struggle against bureaucracy must come to workers or to questing intellectuals. Yet every strand of Marx's and Lenin's methodology, philosophy, political economy, lead today directly to the destruction of bureaucracy as such.

Some petty-bourgeois professors and students, theoretically, in history, philosophy and literature, are struggling through to a Marxist solution. The proletariat constantly tries to create itself as the state, i.e., no state at all. But Stalinism is the deadly enemy of both. It is the armed conscious active counter-revolution.

The proletariat, like every organism, must from itself and its conditions develop its own antagonisms and its own means of overcoming them. Stalinism is the decay of world capitalism, a state-capitalism within the proletariat itself and is in essence no more than an expression within the proletariat of the violent and insoluble tensions of capitalism at the stage of state-capitalism. One of the most urgent tasks is to trace the evolution of the counter-revolution within the revolution, from liberalism through anarchism, Social-Democracy, Noske, counter-revolutionary Menshevism, to Stalinism, its economic and social roots at each stage, its political manifestations, its contradictions and antagonisms. Unless Stalinism is attacked as the most potent mode of the counter-revolution, the counter-revolution of our epoch, it cannot be seriously attacked. But once this conception is grasped in all its implications, philosophical and methodological, then Stalinism and its methods, its principles, its aims, can be dealt a series of expanding blows against which it has no defense except slander and assassination. Our document gives only a faint outline of the tremendous scope of the revolutionary attack on Stalinism which the theory of

state-capitalism opens up. It is the very nature of our age which brings philosophy from Lenin's study in 1914 to the very forefront of the struggle for the remaking of the world.

1.6. hugo

1.6.1. Orthodox Trotskyism

From all this the Fourth International has cut itself off by its state-property theory.

The philosophical root of Trotsky's mistake is not new, it is not difficult when fully explained. The categories, the forms established by the proletarian revolution in 1917, he took as permanent, fixed. The October Revolution had undoubtedly manifested itself most strikingly in opposition to bourgeois society by the abolition of private property and the institution of planning in the sense of ability to direct "capital." Trotsky drew the conclusion that this was the distinguishing mark of the proletarian revolution. The reformist bureaucracy was attached to private property, defense of the national state, slavishly served the bourgeoisie, capitulated to it in crisis. He drew the conclusion that all labor bureaucracies in the future would do the same, more or less. The revolutionary party established state-property and was defeatist toward the national state. Hence only revolutionary parties could do the same. Trotsky did not recognize that although the October Revolution took these forms, the forms were not permanent. There were antagonisms within them which would grow and develop with the class struggle, presenting the revolution in new modes. His philosophical method is known and clearly defined by Hegel the method of synthetic cognition.

Today, the reading of Lenin shows that he never at any time allowed himself to slip from seeing socialism as proletarian *power*, using all necessary and objective forms but carefully distinguishing the *fundamental universal* of proletarian power from the concrete molds into which history had forced that specific revolution. For Lenin *the* readiness of Russia for socialism was the appearance of the Soviet, a new form of social organization.

Trotsky, however, did not see what took place between 1944 and today. He is not in any way responsible for the philosophical methods of Pablo and Germain.

Pablo has simply substituted *degeneration* for the universal of proletarian power. This road is the road to ruin whether by way of Stalinism or otherwise. Lenin's *State and Revolution* is not a "norm." It was the universal drawn from analysis of the class struggle on a world scale and generalized. It was an indispensable necessity of thought, by means of which Lenin could grasp the concrete reality of 1917. Thought is and *must be* a relation between the class, in our case the proletariat, the concrete conditions (Russia in 1917) and the universal. Without the universal of proletarian democracy, as Lenin pointed out with the utmost emphasis in 1916 against the imperialist economists, the bourgeois crisis produces inevitably

a "depression or suppression of human reasoning." There is only "the effect of the horrible impressions, the painful consequences..." Lenin was not talking psychology. It was, he insisted, the method of *thought* which was at stake.

In 1950 the universal is as far beyond 1917 as 1917 was beyond the Paris Commune. A serious analysis of Stalinism will show that it is precisely the advanced objective relations of society which compel the counter-revolution to assume this form and dress itself in Marxism, fake action committees and all. We have to draw a new universal, more concrete and embracing more creative freedom of the masses than even *State and Revolution*.

It is at this time that Pablo not only fails to do so but repudiates *State and Revolution*, proposing instead that proletarian politics be guided for centuries by the barbarous degradation in Russia and in the buffer states of Eastern Europe. It is the end of any philosophic method and the most serious of all theories of retrogression. In this mentality can be seen the germs which in maturity make the complete Stalinist – absolute hostility to capitalism as we have known it but a resigned acceptance that Marx's and Lenin's ideas of proletarian power are Utopian. No more deadly deviation has ever appeared in our movement.

Germain has no philosophical method for which we can spare space and time. He bounces from side to side, affirming theories, dropping them and building new ones, listing innumerable possibilities, analyzing not the laws of capitalism but Outer Mongolia and the decrees of Mussolini in Northern Italy, gripped in that most terrible of all logics, the logic of empiricism; effective only in this important sense that his undisciplined verbiage and shifting generalizations prepare minds for some such brutal solution as Pablo's.

In a dark time Trotskyism maintained the continuity and struggled for the essentials of Bolshevism. Its errors are not irreparable. Today it faces two roads: Pablo's road and the road of "Johnson-Forest." The longer the hesitation, the greater the price that will be paid.

August 4th, 1950.

1.7. hugo

1.7.1. Notes

[1.](#) Cf. "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," *Three Essays by Karl Marx, Selected from the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*, p. 31; *Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right, Marx-Engels Gesamt-Ausgabe*, Abt. 1, Bd. 1, 1st Halbband. For English extract, see *World Revolutionary Perspectives*, pp. xxi ff.

[2.](#) Communist Education of the Worker and the Elimination of Capitalist Survivals from the Popular Consciousness" by S. Kovalyov, published as *Ideological Conflicts in Soviet Russia*

CLR James and Raya Dunayevskaya (Johnson-Forest Tendency), 1950

by Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1948 (emphasis added).

[3.](#) "On the History of Philosophy," *Political Affairs*, April, 1948.

[4.](#) Published by the Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1950.

[5.](#) *The Role of Socialist Consciousness in the Development of Soviet Society* by F. V. Konstantinov, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1950.