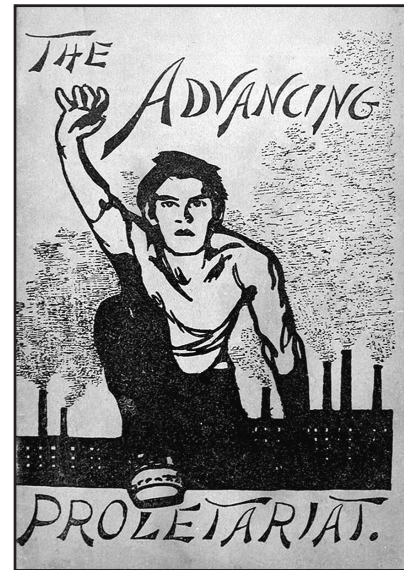




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THE MARXIST

ORGANIZATION

*C.L.R. James, Grace C. Lee,
& Cornelius Castoriadis*

INTRODUCTION

The whole world today lives in the shadow of the state power. This state power is an ever-present self-perpetuating body over and above society. It transforms the human personality into a mass of economic needs to be satisfied by decimal points of economic progress. It robs everyone of initiative and clogs the free development of society. This state power, by whatever name it is called, One-Party State or Welfare State, destroys all pretense of government by the people, of the people. All that remains is government for the people.

Against this monster, people all over the world, and particularly ordinary working people in factories, mines, fields, and offices, are rebelling every day in ways of their own invention. Sometimes their struggles are on a small personal scale. More effectively, they are the actions of groups, formal or informal, but always unofficial, organized around their work and their place of work. Always the aim is to regain control over their own conditions of life and their relations with one another. Their strivings, their struggles, their methods have few chroniclers. They themselves are constantly attempting various forms of organization, uncertain of where the struggle is going to end. Nevertheless, they are imbued with one fundamental certainty, that they have to destroy the continuously mounting bureaucratic mass or be themselves destroyed by it. ►

For some years after the war it seemed that the totalitarian state, by its control of every aspect of human life, had crushed forever all hopes for freedom, for liberty and socialism. Men struggled, but under the belief that the Welfare State was in reality only a half-way house to the ultimate totalitarian domination. A symbolical date was even fixed when this would be achieved all over the world, 1984.

Now, however, the Hungarian Revolution has uncovered, for the whole world to see, the goal to which the struggles against bureaucracy are moving. The Hungarian people have restored the belief of the Nineteenth Century in progress. They have restored to the revolutionary socialist movement the conviction that the future lies with the power of the working class and the great masses of the people.

It must never be forgotten that the Hungarian Revolution was successful as no other revolution in history was successful. The totalitarian state was not merely defeated. It

**“People all over the world,
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was totally destroyed and the counterrevolution crushed. It is the totality of the success which enabled the workers to do so much before the revolution was robbed of its victory by Russian tanks from outside. What then was the great achievement of the revolution?

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By the total uprising of a people, the Hungarian Revolution has disclosed the political form which not only destroys the bureaucratic state power, but substitutes in its place a socialist democracy, based not on the control of people but on the mastery of things. This political form is the Workers Councils, embracing the whole of the working population from bottom to top, organized at the source of all power, the place of work, making all decisions in the shop or in the office.

VI. THE MARXIST ORGANIZATION: 1903-1958

What then must we do? And first who are the we? We are the various groups in every country who have seen that the totalitarian state and the Welfare State are both varieties of state capitalism. We know that nothing but the reorganization of society from the ground up can check the accelerating disintegration.

Before the Spanish Civil War and World War II, many of us either belonged or subscribed loosely to various brands of Trotskyism or other Marxist politics. Now since the end of World War II, a whole new generation of socialists has arisen. Taught by events, we have to one degree or another understood that nationalization of production does not alter the basic framework of capitalist society, we have understood the menace of the State Plan, we have seen the Party for the prison that it is. Some of us reached a remarkable degree of theoretical understanding. But such standing remained ab-

grow and flourish (one would flourish) inside the old. The crisis now is between two societies. All the pontifications, calculations, projects, discoveries, alternative courses of action of economists about the rise of prices, inflation, balance of payments, productivity of labor, are just so much mystification and nonsense, necessary only to preserve the illusion that the rulers are in control and directing affairs.

While these solemn Druids and medicine men sing their various litanies about the great problem of inflation and deflation in England, it is perfectly obvious that in a highly-organized country, with a disciplined community, like Britain, the curse of inflation is not an economic problem at all but a political one.

Any government which had and deserved the complete confidence of the people as a whole would have little difficulty in bringing the inflation to an end. Official society cannot produce such a government. It has been calculated that if the British workers were freed in the factories, mines, and offices to organize production in the way that they and only they know, productivity could be increased by fifty percent.

Official society cannot afford such freedom. This is the true maturity of human society, the golden age and the promised land, that modern men are at last in a position to manage all their material affairs so that they can now devote themselves to the development of themselves as human beings and not to the development of capital. Ideas will now play their proper part in the lives of men. Today when all the bullfrogs rival each other in their loathsome croakings about increasing the standard of living, we can best sum up the past and the future in the following propositions which formed a landmark in our struggle towards understanding.

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- (a) All development takes place as a result of self-movement, not organization or direction by external forces.
- (b) Self-movement springs from and is the overcoming of antagonisms within an organism, not the struggle against external foes.
- (c) 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.
- (d) The end towards which mankind is inexorably developing 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.

This is the philosophy of the Marxist organization, the dialectical method, a methodological guide but no more. The organization will not seek to propagate it nor to convince men of it but to use it so as the more quickly and clearly to recognize how it is concretely expressed in the lives and struggles of the people. ■

This wee pamphlet brings together two selections taken from Facing Reality, The New Society: Where to Look for It & How to Bring It Closer. Collected here is the "Introduction" and the chapter titled, "VI: The Marxist Organization: 1903-1958." These selections have been taken from the following edition: C.L.R. James, Grace C. Lee, and Cornelius Castoriadis, Facing Reality The New Society: Where to Look for It & How to Bring It Closer (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., 2006).

These developed into vast combines and cartels until today the national capital of any country is in one form or another state capital. But the process of concentration still continues. The national state capitals reach out towards the formation of continental units. The present conflict is essentially a conflict between the two most gigantic concentrations of capital in the world today, the United States and Russia, for the complete domination of all world capital.

To achieve this they force into their orbit by force, fraud, or cajolment, all national units. Lenin found the exact phrase for them in 1918 when he forecast the coming of "vast state capitalist trusts and syndicates" contending for world mastery. His old definition of imperialism as surplus capital seeking higher profits in countries is now dead, and is used only by Stalinists seeking to exclude imperialist Russia from their denunciations of

Today it is not mere profits of investment that are at stake. The territory and the manpower, the very traditions as well as the material production of the various countries of the world, advanced as well as backward, are needed. What is taking place, therefore, is that capital, which always had men in its grip, has been accumulated to such an extent, intensively and extensively, that it now operates by complete mastery of men. The vast state capitalist trusts and syndicates hurl themselves against each other to be shattered, only to reorganize themselves in unstable combinations, vainly seeking that complete centralization which is the nature of capital to forever seek and never achieve. Lenin did

16 not deny the theoretical possibility of world capital being totally centralized but, as he said, a great deal would happen before then. It is happening.

Even judging the system from its own point of view it is already exhausted. Having drawn the whole world into its orbit, it is incapable of supplying the undeveloped countries with the capital needed to develop them. Thus, as with so many other great issues long debated in Marxism, the theoretical problem of whether capitalism would collapse from lack of markets or lack of productive power is solved in life for all to see.

But side by side with the chaotic movement to concentration goes the socialization of the labor force. There is no need to elaborate this. In Marx's words, the labor force is constantly growing in numbers, is united, disciplined, and organized by the very mechanism of capitalist production itself. Sooner or later it would have to rid mankind of the increasing misery imposed upon it by capital.

In social terms this means displacing the human beings who refuse to abandon their privileged positions as agents and directors of capital. Human personality, social and political institutions, international diplomacy, human grandeur and human weakness, all, in their infinite and from one point of view ungraspable and unpredictable variety, are to be seen within the context of this view of modern development. The alternative is the doctrine of Hebrew nomads on original sin, with the hope of redemption by summit talks.

Today there are no longer any mysteries in the conditions of social existence nor in that science of human affairs whose right name is political economy. In his famous chapter of *Capital*, the last but one of the first volume, Marx stated, so that a child could understand, that the new society would

strait, as it was bound to be: it is the movement of masses which turns theory into life.

Now throughout the world, new life and hope have been awakened by the events in Russia, in Poland, and the revolution in Hungary. But beclouding the new perspective is the fact that during the past thirty years the record of these Marxist organizations has been one of unrelieved failure. The work that has been done has been prodigious.

The determined attempt to make and maintain contact with workers, the publication of pamphlets, theoretical journals, weekly papers, and political resolutions; the agonized scrutiny and rescruity of Marxist classics, the national conferences, the international conferences it would occupy an international commission for ten years to be able to give any intelligible account of the magnitude of the efforts. The results have been pitiful. Tens of thousands of devoted fighters for socialism have exhausted themselves and ended their struggles in disillusionment, often in bitterness, and not infrequently in the most savage hatred of all they had for decades given their lives to.

Yet despite the infinite variety of the circumstances, the struggles, and the failures, the whole tragic experience can be summed up today with extreme simplicity. They all considered these organizations and themselves as the nucleus of the party, the one and only party, the vanguard party which was destined in time to lead the struggle for socialism.

This is what ruined them. And the rejection, the conscious, vigilant, implacable rejection of this conception is the indispensable basis of the great work for socialism which is crying to be done and which can be done only by us.

Leninism Today

Let us define our terms with absolute precision. We are those intellectuals and workers who have been able to see the historical process as a whole. The workers in particular are those workers who, while continuing to be workers and having no other wish in life to be anything but workers, see trade unionism and parliamentary politics merely as a means to an end, the end being the establishment of the socialist society.

However much these intellectuals and workers might differ on doctrinal points, they have been in general governed by the great experience of the Russian Revolution and the writings and example of Lenin. The work of Lenin is one of the great political triumphs of mankind and the first stage in the emancipation not of any particular class but of human society in general. The work of no Marxist, not even of Marx himself, is of such importance for us today. But the study of Leninism and our own experiences should confirm us in what the Hungarian Revolution has unmistakably shown: the specific organizational theory of Leninism, the theory of the Vanguard Party, must now be rejected root and branch.

It was a particular theory, designed to suit a specific stage of development of society and a specific stage of working class development. That stage of society is now past. The theory, and the practice that went with it, are now an anachronism, and, if persisted in, lead to one form or another of the counter-revolution. The first thing we must do is to purge ourselves of it.

The Theory of Marxist Organizations: 1903

What was Lenin's theory? Here it is in the clearest and most unambiguous statement of that great master of political exposition. It comes from his *What Is To Be Done?* written in 1903.

In order to be fully prepared for his task the working class revolutionary must also become a professional revolutionary ... We do not recognize our duty to assist every capable worker to become a professional agitator, organizer, propagandist, literature etc., etc. In this respect we waste our strength in a positively shameful manner; we lack the ability to husband that which should be tended and reared with special care. Look at the Germans; they have had a hundred times more forces than we have. But they understand perfectly well that the 'average' does not too frequently promote really capable agitators, etc., from the ranks. Hence they immediately try to place every capable working man in such conditions as will enable him to develop and apply his abilities to the utmost: he is made a professional agitator, he is encouraged to widen the field of his activity, to spread it from one factory to the whole of his trade, from one locality to the whole country. He acquires experience and dexterity in his profession his outlook becomes wider, his knowledge increases, he observes the prominent political leaders from other localities and other parties, he strives to rise to their level and combine within himself the knowledge of working class environment and freshness of socialist convictions with professional skill, without which the proletariat cannot carry on a stubborn struggle with the excellently trained enemy. Only in this way can men of the stamp of Bebel and Auer be promoted from the ranks of the working class.

No one can misunderstand that. The whole theory is that of training a corps of elite workers. If the theory was carried to extremes in Russia, it was because, as Lenin writes almost immediately after: "...what takes place very largely automatically in a politically free country must in Russia be done deliberately and systematically by our organizations." It was the police state of Tsarist Russia (and afterwards the perils surrounding the revolution) which forced this conception into narrow channels.

When we have detachments of specially trained working class revolutionaries who have gone through long years of preparation (and of course, revolutionaries 'of all arms'), no political police in the world will be able to contend against them, for these detachments of men absolutely devoted and loyal to the revolution will themselves enjoy the absolute confidence and devotion of the broad masses of the workers.

The rigidity of the Leninist organization in Russia was due to the police nature of the Tsarist state. His ideal was the German Social-Democracy, and it was an ideal of specially selected, specially trained revolutionary socialists, agitators, revolutionaries.

and it can be given to the proletariat only by the Marxist organization or intellectuals and scientists working in close collaboration with it.

The valuable elements in all fields of contemporary culture can be preserved and made available only in the light of a new totality, a new vision of the world, and of humanized relations throughout the length and breadth of society. To do this, if only ideologically, demands an assimilation of this culture in the light of both the experiences and activities of the proletariat. All those who do not proceed from this basis end up as whining or Utopian snipers at capitalist culture, even when they do not actually defend it.

The Prostitution of Education

The utter futility of believing that it is possible to improve official society except upon the basis of new relations resting upon proletariat and the great masses of the people, the mental paralysis which inevitably overtakes all who try to do this, is proved by the frenzied and unspeakably disgusting activity which is now taking place in the West under the lying slogan of education.

The patient work of generations of educators, all pointing to the conclusion that the isolation of children and youth from the practical aspects of social life distorts both mind and body, the search for roads to integrate from the very start intellectual and social life, all this is now placed on the shelf. Instead, billions of dollars are now to be spent in a vast indoctrination and injection of the youth of Western civilization with the scientific virus.

It has no relevance whatever to education, but is in reality a operation having no other purpose than to catch up and overtake the enemy in the production of weapons of destruction, for which very purpose the Russians instituted their program. Thus these two enemies grow more like each other every day. Only the Marxist organization basing itself on the proletariat can attempt a synthesis and transcend the essentially bourgeois antagonism between humanism and technology.

Our Unshakable Foundations

If the development of society has posed before us the crisis of contemporary society as essentially problems of human relations, if the Marxist organization itself will remove from living Marxism what is now dead, the organization never forgets its own essential foundations. We shall conclude, therefore, with a brief statement of the main lines of Marxism, whose essential truth is not weakened confirmed every day.

Capital, contrary to previous societies, can live only by accumulation. Marx discerned in capital accumulation two laws, twin sides of the same movement, the law of concentration and centralization of capital and the law of the socialization of labor. There is no one (except a well-educated Marxist) who cannot today see these laws in full operation. From commercial capital, the capital of trade, capital concentrated into units of individual industrial capital which created the world market.

stands in the way. The true analysis of the future is to show that the most expansive aspirations of the past are now possible. Such is the already existing community of labor and the achievements of science that the fusion of manual and intellectual labor has become a necessity, for society as a whole as well as for the individual personality. The Marxist organization can demonstrate that the mass of men can progress only if their creative instincts and inheritance are fully applied to the practical tasks of every day. Even the earlier formula of Marx that the future development of man rested upon the shortening of the working day no longer applies. The great problem of the leisure of socialist man which the abstract theoreticians have now added to their other burdens is a hangover from an earlier age.

The herculean struggle for the shorter working day, the mathematical division between time for work and time for self-development is a capitalistic product pure and simple. When man uses his creative faculties to the full in his work, that distinction ceases to be an antagonism and becomes a simple scheduling of various forms of social activity. Complete universal education for all, mastery of all the processes of production, freedom to carry on political discussions in the place and during the time of work, readiness to work hard when it is required and to relax and be social whenever possible, these are now the concrete, practical needs and demands of workers.

What are these but the embodiment in life of the formula of the mature Marx when he wrote that modern industry would collapse unless it replaces “the detail-worker of today, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs, are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.”

The Marxist organization in the middle of the Twentieth Century, standing on the shoulders of its predecessors, has this immeasurable advantage over them, that it has before its eyes, concretely and in the flesh, the dehumanized gangsterism of official society and the men and manners to replace it.

Marxism and Culture

The organization has the task of bringing to the proletariat those elements of traditional and contemporary culture which are needed for that full and total expansion of human living which is now realistically possible and needs only the socialist society to come into being. In every department of human life today, anthropology, medicine, architecture, biology, chemistry, and education, in all its manifold aspects, discoveries and understanding of far-reaching importance have been already made. A few bold pioneers even sometimes try to put some of these into practice. In every case they find and frequently declare (most often in guarded language) that it is impossible for mankind to make use of the knowledge which is already in its hands as long as the present structure of society continues. This information is needed by the proletariat above all other classes in society

Now, half a century after, what do we see? The trained professional agitator, the revolutionary socialist type of Lenin's day is today the basis of the bureaucratic machines of the unions, the political parties, and the governments. Society has moved on since that time and these elite types have now become the greatest obstacles to that release of popular energy and creative power which has always been the most powerful motive force in the creation of a new society.

Propaganda of the so-called “Free World” against totalitarianism has obscured the fact that this particular social and political type is not necessarily a Communist. According to the political climate of the country he lives in, he may be a Communist or a rabid anti-Communist. In the United States or in Britain, you will find him on every rung of the ladder of the union or the Labor Party. Often selfless and devoted, he is not infrequently engaged in a desperate struggle against a union or political bureaucracy. But his only perspective is that of substituting a more democratic, more capable, more honest set of bureaucrats.

On whichever side of the Iron curtain he is, he is the mortal enemy of the shop floor organization, of Workers Councils in every branch of the national activity, and of a Government of Workers Councils as the essence and content of a new society. Whether he is Communist or anti-Communist, for him the working class is incapable of acting successfully without a trained and dedicated leadership. Here is the Marxist dialectic in its most profound content. The social type, the specific personality which formed the spearhead of the workers' movement and socialism at the beginning of the century is today the solid core of the bureaucratic reaction in every section of the working class movement.

Today the working class has no need of these proletarian Jesuits. It has arrived at a stage where absolute freedom of organization; complete democracy, is not an aspiration, but the very context, the warp and woof of its daily existence. Administration as such has become alien to it. It is this, rooted in the developing structure of capitalism itself, which has gradually transformed the union and labor party administration from an instrument of the working class into a thing-in-itself, and inevitably, Therefore, into an instrument of reaction. In the quarter of a century following the decline of the Russian Revolution, the organizations of intellectuals and advanced workers signally failed to do what their predecessors did in the generation preceding the Russian Revolution. And this is because they have been trying to do what no longer needed to be done and what therefore could not be done. What then is the role of the Marxist organization today?

The Marxist Organization Today

First of all, the Marxist organization has no need whatever to justify to anybody its existence and its activities. In every country, in all periods of modern capitalism, workers and intellectuals have felt the need to organize themselves in order to advance the cause of socialism. They continue to do so at the present time and they will continue to do it as long as class society exists.

Socialist Consciousness and Organization

The Marxist organization is Marxist only to the extent that it takes as its point of departure this fundamental idea which has been demonstrated by the whole history of modern society: that the proletariat is neither “trade unionist” nor socialist only by instinct. On the contrary, the proletariat, by the very circumstances of its existence in modern society, develops forms of life, of action, of consciousness, of human relations, which are socialist, which constitute socialism, the one and only socialism. Socialism is nothing other than the self-organization of the proletariat carried to its ultimate limit. The proletariat of today tends to develop this self-organization in its day-to-day existence. The development of the proletariat under capitalism leads it towards socialist consciousness, and if it didn't lead to there, all talk about socialism would be idle chatter and nothing else.

This can be plainly seen on the historical scale. The commune in 1871, the Russian Revolution of 1905, the Russian 1917, the Spanish Revolution, the Hungarian Revolution, these are only the most dramatic stages of the struggle of the proletariat to organize itself independently, and to reconstruct the totality of social relations. They are the stages of a dialectical progression, dialectical because the achievements of each period are absorbed and surpassed in the period following.

6 The idea that the independent organizations of the masses must replace the bureaucratic bourgeois apparatus of the state was first realized by the Commune. It was pushed to further limits by the Soviets of 1905 and 1917. The immense merit of Marx and Lenin was not that they invented this idea, which they would not have been able to do in any case. It was that they were able to recognize the importance of the actual steps taken by the workers, to elaborate the idea and to defend it against reactionary ideologists.

The idea of workers' management of factories, first advanced by the Russian Factory Committees of 1917, was re-invented by the workers of Catalonia in 1936-1937 and has now been brilliantly reaffirmed by the Workers Councils of Hungary in 1956. Our task is to recognize its fundamental importance, to elaborate it and to defend it. The recognition of this socialist creativeness among workers must not be confined to great historical occasions. Today it is far more important to recognize it in the sphere of day-to-day activity. We have already pointed out that in the factories workers develop methods and forms of cooperation, of mutual help and solidarity, of organization, which already anticipate socialist relations. Here also the task of a revolutionary organization is, first, to recognize these forms, to explain the significance of them, and to let itself be guided by them in what it is doing and in what it is saying.

The idea that the emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves is the literal and the total truth. It is not enough to say that the working class alone has the necessary force to realize its emancipation, as if the working class were the steam of an engine with intellectuals as mechanics and engine drivers. The reality is that it is the working class alone which is able to produce the organization, the forms and ideas which emancipation demands.

cookshops of the future. It is sufficient to watch carefully what the workers are actually doing, and what they are aiming at, and to draw the conclusions.

Particularly the Marxist organization must denounce with merciless contempt those theorists who demand in advance guaranteed and insured perspectives and particulars about the content and forms of parties, states, and all other forms of organization in the socialist society.

No new society was ever formed in this way. It is as if a drowning man with the water already in his mouth demanded a certificate of navigation before allowing a boat's crew to save him.

The supposedly insuperable problem of planning the complex life of a modern society is seen in its true perspective when we realize that modern calculating machines, properly charged, can rapidly give an answer to the consequences of certain procedures and thus supply a single factory, a whole industry, or a whole population with the material on which to make its decisions.

**The first necessity of democracy
is accurate information...
the main task of any government
is to collect information and so organize it
and present it to the people that they are able
to make their decisions and their choices.**

The super-planners of today, arrogating to themselves enormous powers of deciding and enforcing the relation between production goods and consumption goods, will become the accounting functionaries of tomorrow, reduced to the modest role of giving information. 13 The great conflict between East and West which threatens humanity with destruction is a conflict originating in official society, maintained by official society, and will end only with the end of official society.

The end of official society in any part of the world will rapidly bring its end in the other. For each of these is necessary to the other and they draw reciprocal sustenance from their mutual crimes and threats. Witness the united terror of Moscow, Washington, and Berlin at the thought of a revolution in Eastern Germany. To show this and to expose the social and human solutions to the artificial problems of official society is the task of the Marxist organization. Let those for whom these socialist solutions are Utopia continue to cower and wallow in their realism.

The Realism of Socialism

Yet the Marxist organization in performing the necessary task of visualizing the content of socialism subordinates itself neither to a statistical conception of society, nor speculations to reassure the timorous. It already has the immense experience of the last forty years on which to draw, the discoveries and achievements of modern science are available, and above all it knows that the future lies with the development of things becoming subordinate to the development of man.

It is sufficient that all the old handicaps and barriers to a truly human existence are gone and only official society

The Continuity of Marxist Theory

The Marxist organization has the responsibility for preserving and extending the theory of Marxism. The preservation of the theory of Marxism is not, and never has been, purely a study of books and text. Every new step forward of the proletariat illuminates not only the future but the past. Thus only the closest contact with the contemporary experiences of the proletariat and of society as a whole can give a profounder understanding of what was achieved, both in practice and theory and, far more important today, what is to be discarded.

It is here that a task of heavy responsibility and enormous scope opens before the Marxist organization. Much that was pure theory in the early days of Marxism has now become common knowledge among the vast masses of people. The intensive development of capitalism, the maturity of the proletariat, the immense advances of science in the last generation, all this leaves some of the most cherished formulae of Marx and Lenin far behind.

Careful as they were in their forecasts of socialism, they were limited by the economic development of their day and the mechanistic conceptions of the time. Such a formula as Marx wrote in the Critique of the Gotha Program, limiting consumption to bourgeois relations, even though the relations of production were socialized, has no relevance today where, in the advanced countries, the workers are, even under capitalism, striving to establish a socialist equality.

12 The conception of Marx and Lenin of a period transitional to socialism is equally without meaning today in advanced countries.

To continue to hold up these as guides to the future is reactionary and can come only from those who look for socialism everywhere except in the only place where it can be found, in the daily activities of the working class, even under capitalism itself. There is no period of transition to socialism after the establishment of Workers Councils in every branch of the national activity and Government of Workers Councils. Once those are established, the only transition can be to the degenerated Workers State, the profoundly degenerated Workers State, the immeasurably degenerated Workers State, and so on, to employ the verbal acrobatics by which Trotsky sought to disguise his support (critical, more critical, most critical) of Stalinism.

The period of transition to socialism is the present period. This is particularly true of economic relations. All the problems that the Bolsheviks grappled with, after power had been achieved, have been posed under state capitalism, before the taking of power.

The Anachronisms of Marxism

The Marxist organization alone is capable of getting rid of the anachronisms in Marxism. It is absolutely impossible to overestimate the enormous energies and creative power that have been generated in the great masses of the world's population today. Only the dead weight of official society holds it down. It is not the business of the Marxist organization to invent what Marx scornfully called recipes for the

The Blindness and Failure of "The Vanguard"

It is absolutely imperative to put an end to the legend of "the vanguard" which has dominated the revolutionary movement for so many decades with such catastrophic results. No one denies that, as in every group of human beings, differentiations exist within the proletariat itself, in regard to clarity of ideas and attitudes, continuity in action, militancy, etc.

But today the idea is inherent in the traditional organizations and in the majority of all present-day groups that there must be a body of sharply differentiated individuals who must separate themselves from the working class and so form a permanent organization which is more conscious, more militant, more coherent in its actions than the great mass of the workers. This is pure and simple delirium.

The people who consider themselves as "the vanguard" are not in general more conscious than the "backward" working class, except from one point of view which is extremely narrow and limited and which in the end, on account of its limitations, becomes a negative element. These self-styled leaders are conscious on the purely "political" level, in that they know (generally very badly) the history of the workers' movement and the elements of Marxism reduced to their most simple formulae; they are interested in international politics; they know the names of the chief ministers of such a country, and the number of deputies of such and a party.

But they are in general unconscious of what constitutes the most profound realities of capitalist society, the realities of production. Often even when they come from the working class and remain in the factories, they undergo a curious optical inversion in that they can no longer see what takes place in the factory, being totally occupied in carrying out a political line which they bring from outside. Their usual aim, irrespective of anything else, is to make the workers adopt the line and slogans of the political organization to which they, men of "the vanguard," belong.

Even when they do not undergo this perversion, they are sometimes unconsciously led to consider that the elements who are the most exploited and "the most backward" among the workers have little to contribute to the struggle and nothing to contribute to the ideas of socialism. This is their greatest error and its falsity is shown by the whole past history of workers' struggles and what is going on under their very noses today

Who Are The Backward Ones?

But the final judgment on the concept of "the vanguard" considered from its point of view is contained in the history of workers' revolutions, those revolutions which should have been the supreme justification of "the vanguard" and which should have proved its necessity and placed the seal on its historic role. Instead, this history is a merciless condemnation of "the vanguard."

On every occasion "the vanguard" has found itself far behind in relation to the action and ideas of the masses

in the revolution; on every occasion, instead of showing the road, they have dragged lamentably in the rear, trying with great difficulty to adapt themselves to events; on every occasion it is the most exploited elements, the most "backward," the most humble, who have been the most audacious, the most creative, the ones who have carried the movement forward without faltering as far as it was able to go, and sometimes further. Such was the considered judgment of Lenin in 1917.

A vanguard is a vanguard only in special circumstances and in relation to certain very narrow purposes. It has no advantage in itself. There is not, and cannot be, any permanent selection of a group of individuals able to direct the working class. In ordinary times the only chosen body of leaders who can lead the workers is the one which helps to keep them under the yoke of capitalist exploitation. What else is the daily function of Stalinists and other union bureaucrats? And periods of great social crisis are periods of great social crisis precisely because workers are no longer listening to leaders but are acting independently in independent organizations.

Not only is the Marxist organization not a "body of leaders." The problem of leadership is a false problem. Men have always had and will always have leaders. A member of the Marxist organization can be and often is the leader of many thousands of men. But during and after the struggle for socialism, there is no other leadership than the workers organized in Workers Councils.

Bolshevism and Stalinism

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Every nail in this coffin must be driven firmly home.

The old type of Marxist organization had certain beliefs about itself. It believed that it represented the general interests of the proletariat to the degree that these general interests are opposed to the particular interests of special categories of workers. It believed that it represented the international point of view as opposed to national particularism. It believed that it represented the "maximum" and the ultimate, total objectives of the workers' struggles to the degree that these are in opposition to the "minimum" demands of the day-to-day struggles. All these beliefs led to the conclusion that the organization was the true subject; that is to say, the motivating force of history.

And if the organization was the subject of history, the proletariat was the object. In this conception the organization, in philosophical terms, was the Universal. This conception of the organization is inherent in the extreme views that Lenin expounded in *What Is to Be Done?* He repudiated them later, but not with the force and thoroughness which were needed to prevent them from doing infinite mischief. In the hands of Stalinism, which had no use for the great theoretical strides forward Lenin had made in his Notebooks during the war and *State and Revolution*, these views became the chief theoretical weapon of the counter-revolution. There is no excuse whatever for Trotsky, in 1938, saying that scientific socialism is only the conscious expression of the elementary and instinctive drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on Communist foundations.

The relation between theory and revolutionary organization on one side, and the action and organization of the

Anthony Eden did not know its own military capabilities. After nearly seventy-five years of British occupation of Egypt, it did not know what the response of the people of Egypt would be to a British invasion.

Khrushchev did not know what was brewing in Hungary and Poland until it was too late. The American Government has consistently misunderstood and misjudged the scientific attainments of Russia. The catalogue is endless. The Governments cannot inform the people even if they wanted to, because they do not themselves know.

Colossal as is this task of informing the workers, the Marxist organization must undertake it because nobody else can. Despite the poverty of its resources at the start, it has the immense advantage of having the great knowledge and experience of the proletariat at its disposal, and particularly on fundamental economic and social matters this is the most authentic source of information in any country. By diligent attention and study it can learn to sift out the truth from the din by which official society seeks to deafen the people and twist them to its own ends.

The Independence of the Organization

The Marxist organization, however, is no mere reporter of facts about the socialist activity of the proletariat, or detector and publicist of the systematic falsifications of official society.

It has and must of necessity have an independent view of its own. First of all, there are no facts in the abstract. All facts, and the selection of facts, must necessarily be governed by a view of society. The inestimable strength of the Marxist organization today is that in every situation, in every crisis, national or international, it sees not only the decadence and disorder of official society but also, intertwined, the elements of the socialist solution. This knowledge is the origin of its very existence as an organization and it can be effective and grow only by using it in the struggle to reach this understanding and insight, the complete acceptance of socialist power and socialist ideas as originating and flowering primarily in the working class itself, the immense energy, determination, and training which will be needed to maintain this assault against one of the most powerful strongholds of official society, this can only be fully achieved by resolutely putting forward the point of view of the organization whenever the occasion requires it, in large matters or in small. Later in this document we shall go into elaborate detail, based on experience, of the possibilities, difficulties and dangers of such a course in practical terms.

But the independent views of the Marxist organization consisting of a fusion of workers and intellectuals, are an integral part of the new society. This society has, and will always have varying levels of comprehension, perspective and policy. This does not mean what it would mean in the familiar bourgeois or Stalinist ideology, that the organization takes the lead over the less literate, less vocal mass. It means the opposite, that the organization makes known its independent views and fights for them as a contribution to that democratic interchange and confrontation of opinion which is the very life-blood of socialist society.

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subjectively by every organized social force in official society. Only in a Marxist organization can such workers find the possibility of developing their talents without fear of being prostituted to bureaucratic ends. Only the Marxist organization can have the means, the forces, and the independence to keep the workers aware of what is taking place in their worldwide, universal, but uncoordinated (except at critical moments) efforts to create the new society. Finally, only the Marxist organization recognizes this daily activity as socialism.

Required: Information of the Official Society

The Marxist organization has another task, that of providing information about official society. Official society falsifies all information intended for the great mass of the people, first because it is in its very nature to do so. Any elite must of necessity consciously falsify the information it gives to the mass. But the falsity of the information handed out by both the public and private bodies of official society is false for a deeper reason. Official society does not know and has no means of knowing or even of understanding the actual facts of its own existence.

A French Prime Minister asserts that the cost of the war in Algeria is 1,000 million francs a year. An ex-Prime Minister contradicts him flatly and declares that the cost is 2,000 million francs a year. The boasted forum of democracy, question time in the House of Commons, sees the Opposition inquiring from the Prime Minister whether planes loaded with hydrogen bombs are flying over Britain and the Prime Minister unable to give a straight answer on this matter which literally involves the life or death of millions of people.

It is only since de-Stalinization that people have come to know what was always obvious to any student of Stalin's writings and speeches his incredible, his stupendous ignorance of the most elementary economic matters at home, and politics and war abroad. The Press Conferences of the President of the United States have become not only an embarrassment but a burden to American reporters who have to make not only sense, but even sentences of his ramblings and stutterings.

If tomorrow it was discovered that the President had died long ago and someone resembling him had been substituted to win power for the party, most Americans would shrug their shoulders, so great is the cynicism and distrust of all official pronouncements among the people. It cannot change as long as society is organized as it is.

The first necessity of democracy is accurate information. In fact, it is not too much to say that in present-day society the main task of any government is to collect information and so organize it and present it to the people that they are able to make their decisions and their choices. Without this, all talk of democracy is a farce.

As it is, the governments of official society do not know the economic facts of society because the most important of these facts, the attitudes, capacities, willingness, or otherwise, of workers, is deliberately concealed from them and they have no way of penetrating the wall of defense which workers build around themselves. The Government of Sir

proletariat on the other, cannot be a relation between the conscious and the instinctive. The Bolshevik Party of Lenin was the greatest political party the modern world has known. In its heroic days it was incontestably the party of the proletariat and there is no greater testimony to this than the fact that before it could enslave the Russian proletariat, Stalinism had to destroy the party almost to a man, discredit, disgrace and vilify its leaders, rewrite the history of the Revolution, and suppress or reinterpret its historical documents. But even this party in the last analysis was a type of parliament with representatives of the workers divided into debating factions, increasingly removed from the actual conditions of social and particularly proletarian life. Today a party on that model in an advanced country can be nothing else but an instrument of oppression, tyranny, and failure.

Who has not learned this after the Hungarian Revolution should cease his criticism of Stalinism, union bureaucrats, and parliamentary labor leaders, for he belongs with them and their function of safeguarding official society from Workers Councils in every branch of the national activity.

Required: Information of the New Society

The first duty of the organization is to place at the disposal of the working class all possible means, material and intellectual, of expressing itself, its own conditions of life, and its own aims.

Material means, because bourgeois society is organically organized so as to inhibit, repress, and when necessary, persecute and destroy all attempts by workers even to express an independently proletarian attitude to society. The labor bureaucrats, Stalinist or democratic, do this not only as a direct result of the very structure of society, but because any such independent expression immediately calls into question their own leadership, and obviously can have no other purpose.

All objectively reactionary tendencies in bourgeois society reach their ultimate expression in Stalinism, where they assume their most finished and conscious form. It is in Stalinism, therefore, that they can be most fruitfully studied. The shifts and turns of Stalinist policy can be traced easily enough to the needs of the Kremlin, on whose power Stalinism depends to get into power ultimately. But the method used is one of deliberately confusing and corrupting the intelligence and the will of the workers so that in the end they learn to leave everything to the Party and its slogans.

However powerful the independent efforts at self-realization in individual factories or units of production, they remain isolated from factory to factory, from nation to nation. Any attempt to form organizations or even to acquire independent material means of expression is at once set upon by political representatives of the various bureaucracies within the working class itself, incorporated or suppressed by the power of the machine, and very often of official society itself. Workers are at their very best in collective action in the circumstances of their daily activity or crises arising from it.

The individual talent for gathering, coordinating, and publishing information on independent activity of national and international scope is inhibited and stifled objectively and