

**Charles  
Bettelheim**

**Class  
Struggles  
in the  
USSR**



**Second Period: 1923-1930**

[Section 7 -- Part 4,  
Sec. 3 and Part 5]

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NOTE: *The translation of this book into English has given the author the opportunity to check a number of his references and, as a result, to revise parts of the text.*

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## ***Contents***

[ Section 7 ]

***Part 4. The changes in ideological and  
political relations within the  
Bolshevik Party [cont.]***

- 3.** The Bolshevik ideological formation and  
its transformations 500

***Part 5. The "great change" and the emergence of new contradictions***

589

page 7

***Key to abbreviations, initials, and Russian words used in the text***

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Artel       | A particular form of producers' cooperative  |
| Cadet party | The Constitutional Democratic Party  |
| CLD         | See STO  |
| Cheka       | Extraordinary Commission (political police)  |
| Glavk       | One of the chief directorates in the Supreme Council of the National Economy or in a people's commissariat   |
| Gosplan     | State Planning Commission  |
| GPU         | State Political Administration (political police)  |
| Kulak       | A rich peasant, often involved in capitalist activities of one kind or another, such as hiring out agricultural machinery, trade, moneylending, etc. |
| Mir         | The village community  |
| Narkomtrud  | People's Commissariat of Labor   |
| NEP         | New Economic Policy  |
| NKhSSSRv    | National Economy of the USSR in (a certain year or period)   |
| NKVD        | People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs  |
| OGPU        | Unified State Political Administration (political police)  |
| Orgburo     | Organization Bureau of the Bolshevik Party   |
| Politburo   | Political Bureau of the Bolshevik Party  |
| Rabfak      | Workers' Faculty   |
| Rabkrin     | See RKI  |
| RCP(B)      | Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik): official  |

page 8

|            |  |
|------------|--|
|            | name of the Bolshevik Party, adopted by the Seventh Party Congress in March 1918 |
| RKI        | Workers' and Peasants' Inspection  |
| RSDLP      | Russian Social Democratic Labor Party  |
| RSDLP(B)   | Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolshevik)                                |
| RSFSR      | Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic  |
| Skhod      | General assembly of a village  |
| Sovkhoz    | State farm   |
| Sovnarkhoz | Regional Economic Council  |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Sovnarkom  | Council of People's Commissars  |
| SR         | Socialist Revolutionary   |
| STO        | Council of Labor and Defense  |
| Uchraspred | Department in the Bolshevik Party responsible for registering the members and assigning them to different tasks |
| Uyezd      | County  |
| Volost     | Rural district  |
| VSNKh      | Supreme Economic Council  |
| VTsIK      | All-Russia Central Executive Committee (organ derived from the Congress of soviets)                             |
| Zemstvo    | Administrative body in country areas before the Revolution  |

page 500

### ***3. The Bolshevik ideological formation and its transformations***

The dominant role played in deciding the outcome of the class struggles by the Bolshevik Party's interventions in the political, economic, and social life of the Soviet formation was due to the integration of the Party in these struggles and to the place it occupied in the system of government -- to its role, in fact, as the ruling Party. This means that the Party's interventions helped to impose a certain course of development upon most of the struggles, but not necessarily that this course was the one that the Party intended. The degree to which the course and outcome of these struggles coincided with the Party's aims depended on the adequacy to the real situation of the analysis, or the conception, of this situation on the basis of which the Party acted, and, above all, on the social forces that the Party was able to rally round its policy and to mobilize.

Basically, the nature and the forms of the Party's interventions were dominated by the system of ideas which, at any given moment, constituted, with their distinctive articulation, *the Bolshevik ideological formation*. This did not come from nowhere, but was the historical product of the class struggles and of the lessons (true or false) drawn from them, and of the political relations existing within the Party and between the Party and the various classes of society.

The Bolshevik ideological formation was not something laid down "once for all time." It was a complex social reality, objective and subject to change. It was realized in practices and forms of organization, as well as in the formulations embodied in a set of documents. This reality had definite effects upon those whom it served as an instrument for analyzing and interpreting the world, and also for changing the world. These effects differed in accordance with the internal con-

page 501

traditions of the ideological formation, the diversity of the places occupied in the social formation by those to whom Bolshevism served as a guide, and the different social practices in

which these persons were engaged.

Marxism-Leninism was the theoretical basis of Bolshevism, but cannot be identified with the Bolshevik ideological formation. That was a contradictory reality within which a constant struggle went on between revolutionary Marxist thinking, Marxism as constituted historically, and various ideological currents which were alien to Marxism -- parodying it, because they often borrowed its "terminology."

The distinctions thus made call for some clarification. They imply that the Bolshevik ideological formation cannot, as a whole, be treated as equivalent to Marxism-Leninism. They imply also that revolutionary Marxist thinking cannot be treated as equivalent, at all times, to Marxism as it was historically constituted in each epoch, on the basis of fusion between revolutionary Marxist thinking and the organized movement of the vanguard of the proletariat. Marxism constituted in that way signified a systematized set of ideas and practices which enabled the revolutionary working-class movement claiming to be Marxist to deal, in the concrete conditions in which it found itself, with the problems which it had to confront. These successive systematizations -- necessary for action, but including elements that were more or less improvised and corresponding to the demands, real or apparent, of a given conjuncture of the class struggle -- were the Marxism of each epoch: that of German Social Democracy, that of the Second International at the end of the nineteenth century, and, in the early twentieth century, that of the Third International, and so on.

At the core of Marxism as historically constituted, a variable place was given to revolutionary principles and conceptions resulting from scientific analysis carried out from the standpoint of the proletariat's class positions and based on the lessons drawn from the proletariat's own struggles. The outcome of this analysis and of these lessons is the scientific nucleus of Marxism. Marxist scientific thought was not

page 502

"brought from outside" into the working class. It was a scientific systematization of that class's own struggles and initiatives. It resulted from a process of elaboration which started from the masses and returned to the masses, and which involved a conceptual systematization.

Marxist scientific thought is not "given" once and for all: it has to be developed, enriched, and rectified on the basis of new struggles and new initiatives. Substantial rectifications are inevitable, for Marxist scientific thought, which can be called revolutionary Marxism, has to learn from the struggles waged by the working masses as they advance along a road never previously explored.

Revolutionary Marxism is not a system, but it does include elements of the systematic, thanks to which, in the contradictory reality which it constitutes, the scientific knowledge that is its nucleus plays the dominant role, enabling it to grasp objective reality and to act upon this with full awareness of what is involved.

The very development of revolutionary Marxism implies the existence of contradictions within it<sup>[1]</sup> and the transformation of these contradictions through a process which makes it possible for scientific knowledge to be corrected and completed as regards the element of objectivity which it grasps. Hence Lenin's formulation: "We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable: on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation-stone of the science which socialists *must* develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life."<sup>[2]</sup>

Like every other science, therefore, revolutionary Marxism undergoes a process of development. At every stage of this process some of the theoretical formulations or ideological

conceptions<sup>[3]</sup> which formed part of the revolutionary Marxism of the previous epoch are eliminated; they are thenceforth alien to it, which does not mean that they are necessarily eliminated at once and "definitively," either from Marxism as it is constituted historically in the revolutionary working-class involvement, or, still less, from the various ideological currents which, though alien to Marxism, play a role in the revolutionary movement.

page 503

The process of transforming revolutionary Marxism and the process of transforming Marxism as historically constituted in each epoch are not "parallel" processes. The former is the development of a science, whereas the latter is the transformation of an ideology which has a scientific basis. Under the impact of the difficulties experienced by the struggles of the working class, Marxism as historically constituted in each epoch experiences not only theoretical enrichment (connected with the development of scientific knowledge, itself due to social practice) but also impoverishment, through the fading, obscuring, or covering-up, to a greater or less degree, of some of the principles or ideas of revolutionary Marxism.<sup>[4]</sup>

All this helps to make a necessary distinction, and illustrates the meaning of a phrase of Marx's which was no mere witticism: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist."<sup>[5]</sup> By this he meant that he refused to identify his work with the Marxism of the German Social Democrats, or of some other "Marxisms" -- as we see from his reaction to the way his ideas were interpreted by some Russian writers. This refusal meant rejecting the reduction of his scientific discoveries to an ideological system such as that which German Social Democracy constructed in its necessary fight against Lassallism, and also in its compromise with the latter. This system doubtless corresponded to some of the needs of the German labor movement of the time, and was the starting point for successive changes (from which, in particular, the Marxism of the Third International emerged); but it excluded part of the heritage of revolutionary Marxism<sup>[6]</sup> (and sometimes "utilized" passages from Marx which did not correspond to the more mature forms of his work). The Marxism of German Social Democracy tended to "overlook"<sup>[7]</sup> some of the analyses made by Marx after the Paris Commune, regarding the forms of political authority, the state, the organizations of the working class, the forms of property and appropriation, etc.<sup>[8]</sup>

We have seen the struggle waged by Lenin to transform the Marxism of his epoch, in order to develop it and to bring back into it a number of fundamental theses of revolutionary Marxism (especially on the problem of the state), so as to combat "economism." We have seen, too, the obstacles and resis-

page 504

tances that this struggle encountered even inside the Bolshevik Party.<sup>[9]</sup>

The presence in the Bolshevik ideological formation of currents alien to Marxism<sup>[10]</sup> was a necessary consequence of the class struggle. At different times, these currents had a more or less considerable influence on Bolshevism. One of the characteristic features of Lenin's activity was his striving to expose the theoretical roots of the conceptions which he fought against. He applied this method also to the mistakes which he himself made and acknowledged: not restricting himself to a correction or to a self-criticism, he undertook an analysis. This was an essential feature of Lenin's practice, and one that tended to disappear from subsequent Bolshevik practice, which preferred usually to carry out "silent rectifications" that did not contribute to a genuine development of Marxism and left intact the possibility of falling into the same errors again.<sup>[11]</sup>

However, the currents in Bolshevism that were alien to Marxism did not necessarily disappear just because they had been criticized. Insofar as the social foundations on which they were based continued to exist, they themselves survived, though, as a rule, in modified forms.

The history of the Bolshevik ideological formation appears as a history of the transformation of various currents which composed the contradictory unity of Bolshevism, and of the relations of domination and subordination between them.

This was no "history of ideas," but the history of the effects upon the Bolshevik ideological formation of the changes in class relations and class struggles, and in the way that the Party was involved in these struggles. It included periods when the influence of revolutionary Marxism grew and periods when its influence declined. We cannot trace that history here: it would require a number of analyses which are still to be undertaken. But it is necessary to mention some of the characteristics of the process of transformation of the Bolshevik ideological formation, and to point out that when the influence of currents alien to Marxism grew stronger within it, the capacity of Marxism to develop was reduced, and it tended to "congeal," with ready-made formulas replacing those con-

page 505

crete analyses which are, in Lenin's words, "the soul of Marxism."

The transformations undergone by the Bolshevik ideological formation were due either to the development of new knowledge or to the inhibition of old knowledge. These transformations had as their internal cause the contradictions within the Bolshevik formation itself, but their actual movement was dictated by the class struggles that went on in the Soviet social formation, and by the impact that these struggles had on social relations and practices, especially on the conditions for mass social experiment. The changes undergone by the Bolshevik ideological formation produced, owing to the position held by the Bolshevik Party in the system of ideological apparatuses, reactions which affected the Soviet formation itself, by way of the Party's interventions.

Let it be noted here that in the concrete history of the Bolshevik ideological formation there took place a gradual inhibition of certain concepts which made it possible to analyze the movement of reproduction of commodity and capitalist relations, the existence of which is manifested through the forms "value," "price," "wages," and "profit." Gradually, these forms came to be treated more and more as "empty forms," "integuments," which were used for "practical" (or "technical") purposes (accounting in money terms, "efficiency" of management, etc.); whereas awareness of the social relations which they manifest (and conceal) was inhibited in the Bolshevik ideological formation. This inhibition corresponded to the increasing dominance of the ideological notions of bourgeois political economy: it was still possible to consider the problem of the quantity of value, but no longer to ask *why* such forms still existed. Here let us recall an observation of Marx's: "Political economy . . . has never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form. . . ." [12]

Yet it is only by asking such a question that one can go beyond empirical knowledge, covering the apparent relation between forms (reality as it seems to itself [*sich darstellt* ]), to real scientific knowledge, knowledge of the *real movement*.

page 506

Empirical knowledge can orient action in a general way, but only scientific knowledge can give it precise guidance, enabling it actually to achieve its aim, because such knowledge makes possible analysis, foresight, and action with full awareness of what is involved.

The inhibition, during certain periods, of some of the scientific knowledge making up revolutionary Marxism was a result of the class struggle, which engendered a variety of ideological currents. What happened toward the end of the NEP had decisive political significance: it reduced the Bolshevik Party's capacity to analyze, to foresee, and to act in full

awareness of what was involved.

Another observation needs to be made. The internal contradictions of Bolshevism, the struggles fought out within it between Marxism-Leninism and various other ideological trends, were not directly due to the different "tendencies" whose conflicts mark the history of the Bolshevik Party. These "tendencies" were themselves contradictory combinations of ideological currents that were present in the Bolshevik ideological formation.

The internal contradictions of Bolshevism made themselves felt in the ideology of the Party majority as well as in that of the various oppositions. The latter were differentiated by their particular ways of combining the ideas of revolutionary Marxism with ideas that were alien to it. As time went by, these combinations underwent variations that also affected the ideology of the Party majority, which was by no means always identical. Furthermore, the changes this ideology underwent did not correspond simply to a deepening of revolutionary Marxism or an extension of its influence within the Bolshevik ideological formation (as is suggested by the idea of a "linear development" which takes no account of the class struggle and its ideological effects). They corresponded also to the setbacks which restored life and prestige (in barely modified forms) to ideological configurations which had previously been recognized as being strongly marked by ideas alien to revolutionary Marxism. This was the case toward the end of the NEP, when the Party majority rallied round the idea of "maximum development of the production of means of pro-

page 507

duction,"<sup>[13]</sup> to be accomplished through *maximum accumulation* obtained chiefly by exacting "tribute" from the peasantry.<sup>[14]</sup>

These same ideas had earlier been promoted by Preobrazhensky and the Trotskyist opposition, and had been correctly condemned in the name of defense of the worker-peasant alliance.<sup>[15]</sup>

If we look at the principal documents approved at various times by the leading organs of the Bolshevik Party, together with the speeches, books, and articles of most of its leaders, we can see that the Bolshevik ideological formation was indeed a battlefield where revolutionary Marxism was constantly in combat with ideas that were alien to it.

During the first half of the 1920s, the principal formulations issued by the Party leaders, and embodied in the resolutions adopted at that time, either reaffirmed the essential theses of revolutionary Marxism or else constituted a certain deepening of basic Marxist positions. This was so as regards the demands of the worker-peasant alliance, the role to be assigned to the organizing of the masses in many different ways, the need to tackle the problems of building socialism, the indispensability of developing soviet democracy. During those years, the dominance of the ideas of revolutionary Marxism tended, on the whole, to grow stronger. However, as we have seen, a number of positions of principle or decisions taken failed to exercise any broad and lasting influence on the practices of the state machine and the Party. This was often the case with regard to democratic centralism, soviet democracy, economic and political relations with the peasant masses, and relations between the Russian Republic and the other Soviet republics.<sup>[16]</sup>

After 1925-1926, various changes affected the Bolshevik ideological formation, contributing to the reinforcement of ideological elements that were alien to revolutionary Marxism. The party then launched into an industrial policy which aggravated the contradictions within the state industrial sector, and engaged in practices detrimental to the firmness of the worker-peasant alliance. At the same time, it became *blinder* to the negative effects of these practices, which seemed to it to

page 508

have been dictated as "necessities" inherent in the building of socialism.

In order to make the foregoing more explicit we must survey some of the elements alien to revolutionary Marxism which were present in the Bolshevik ideological formation, and show the place that these elements occupied at different moments, together with some of their political consequences.

### ***I. The internal contradictions of the Bolshevik ideological formation***

I am not going to undertake here a systematic examination of the elements alien to revolutionary Marxism which were at work within the Bolshevik ideological formation, or to analyze the historical conditions responsible for their appearance and development. This would form the subject of a specific study which remains to be made. The following remarks are intended mainly to show the presence of certain elements which played an important part in the ideological struggles and the political interventions, and, in certain cases, to indicate some of the conditions in which they appeared. The limited purpose of these remarks means that the order in which they are set out is not intended to reveal the existence of some "central" ideological theme that may have played a dominant role in relation to the elements alien to revolutionary Marxism. The order in which the questions are examined is merely that which seems easiest -- starting with themes that are relatively well known and going on to deal with others that are less well known.

#### *(a) The economist-technicist conception of the productive forces and the primacy accorded to the development of technology* [17]

For revolutionary Marxism, the class struggle is the driving force of history, and so history, as long as classes exist, is the

page 509

history of class struggle.[18] This struggle leads necessarily to the dictatorship of the proletariat, itself a transition to the abolition of all classes, to a classless society.[19] Class struggles, like classes themselves, have as their material basis the forms and modes of production in which producers and nonproducers are integrated. They transform the conditions of production, cause new productive forces to emerge, break up old production relations, and engender new relations. Knowledge of the inner laws of the process of transformation of the production relations is not a necessary constituent factor in this process. The latter usually presents itself to the mind in ideological forms -- legal, political, religious, artistic, philosophical -- which result from the contradictions of material life. It is through these ideological forms that the struggles are usually fought out, and not necessarily on the basis of knowledge of real relations[20] which result from a materialist analysis of the movement of history. Characteristic of Bolshevism was its principled application of such an analysis. Nevertheless, in some Bolshevik documents, the interlinking of the different factors entering into the analysis (classes, production relations, productive forces) was not what was proper to revolutionary Marxism. We must pause to consider this question.[21]



(1) "Development of the productive forces" and "development of society"

A good illustration of what has just been said is to be found in Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*. [22] Although it is later in date than the period being studied in this book, I shall refer to it here because it is the most systematic exposition of what gradually became, after the late 1920s, the dominant conception in the Bolshevik Party. [23]

I shall start by indicating how those theses of *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* to which attention will chiefly be paid are situated in the general structure of this work. The first part of it, about which I shall say only a little, is devoted to expounding dialectical materialism. [24] Here we find recalled certain propositions of Lenin's regarding the role of *internal*

page 510

*contradictions* in the development of things. References to "struggle of opposite tendencies" and to "the class struggle of the proletariat" illustrate these propositions. Two points call for emphasis:

- a. In the second part of the work, devoted to historical materialism, [25] the class struggle as driving force of history barely gets mentioned.
- b. The first part contains an explicit critique of Bogdanov's "fideism," [26] whose incompatibility with Marxism is very briefly mentioned, [27] but in the second part we find no criticism of Bogdanov's "sociological" conceptions [28] (which were continued by *Proletkult* [29]). This deficiency is not unconnected with the actual content of the second part of the work, which we shall now examine.

The fundamental thesis propounded in the second part of *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* is that "the determining force of social development" is constituted by "the concrete conditions of the material life of society." This thesis is complemented by another statement -- that "the party of the proletariat must not base its activity on abstract 'principles of human reason,' but on the concrete conditions of the material life of society, as the determining force of social development: not on the good wishes of 'great men' but on the real needs of development of the material life of society." [30]

These propositions are presented as being in conformity with those formulated by Marx in his 1859 preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. [31] Actually, they include a number of specific features which give them a different meaning from that of Marx's revolutionary theses. To be observed, in particular, are:

- a. The use of the formulas "social development" or "development of society," thus presenting "society" as an *entity* developing historically. They take the place held in the 1859 preface by the expression, "process of social, political and intellectual life," [32] which emphasizes the conception of a social process and does not mention "society" either as "subject" or "object."
- b. The use of the expression "concrete conditions of the

page 511

material life of society," a vague notion to which Stalin's essay endeavors later on to give a more precise content (as we shall see).

- c. The introduction of the notion of "real needs of development of the material life of

society." This implies that there are "needs of society," not at the level of the *reproduction* of the production relations (where this notion is used by Marx, when he speaks of "social needs") but at that of some "development of society" on which "the party of the proletariat must base its activity."

This notion of "needs of development" is substituted for the objective contradictions and class conflicts, and also for the *needs of the masses*, on which the party of the proletariat must, in fact, base itself so as to ensure, not the "development of society" but the *revolutionary transformation of the production relations*.

Thus, the formulations present in this part of the essay replace the concepts of revolutionary Marxism with different ones, derived (in spite of apparent "similarities") from a different conception of the movement of history. In this conception, the dominant figure is the "concrete conditions of the material life of society," while knowledge of the "needs of development" replaces analysis of class struggles and contradictions.

As Stalin proceeds, he makes clear the significance of this dominant figure -- all the more dominant because it is said to be the "determining force of social development."

Among the "conditions of the material life of society" Stalin mentions, first of all, nature which surrounds society, geographical environment.<sup>[33]</sup> However, he declines to see this "environment" as "the chief force determining the physiognomy of society" because "the changes and development of society proceed at an incomparably faster rate than the changes and development of geographical environment."<sup>[34]</sup> After mentioning also "growth of population" as being among the "conditions of material life of society", and after rejecting the idea that it can be "the determining force of social development," Stalin says: "This force, historical materialism

page 512

holds, is the *method of procuring the means of life* necessary for human existence, *the mode of production of material values*. . . .<sup>[35]</sup>

In this formulation, as can be seen from the whole passage, a "technicist" element predominates. It makes the mode of production (*and not the contradictions in it*) the principal force of "social development." The mode of production is not conceived as the contradictory unity of the relations of production and the productive forces, but as an organized sum of elements or aspects which the passage enumerates. One of these aspects is constituted by the "productive forces" (themselves made up of the following "elements": the instruments of production, the people who operate them thanks to a certain "production experience" and "labour-skill"). The other "aspect" is the "relations of production."<sup>[36]</sup>

This enumeration, which mentions neither classes nor social contradictions, throws no light on what is the "chief force" of "the development of society." The latter is, first, simply affirmed, and then identified with the *development of production*, of which it is said that it "never stays at one point for a long time."<sup>[37]</sup> In its turn, this "development" is identified with the "development of the productive forces," which thus appears as the *deus ex machina*, the source of all "development of society": for it is said that the latter always depends on the development of the productive forces which itself depends primarily on the instruments of production.<sup>[38]</sup>

At this point we find ourselves faced with formulations differing radically from those of revolutionary Marxism, for which the historical process is determined, in the last analysis by class contradictions. The material basis of these is not mere *change* in the instruments of production but the *contradictions* in the economic basis (the contradictory unity of the production relations and the productive forces), and they develop by way of the ideological

forms which these contradictions themselves engender. Revolutionary Marxism does not ascribe the development of the productive forces to a spontaneous process, or to "contradictions" external to the mode of production, counterposing "society" to "nature."

page 513

However, according to the conception developed in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, it is the *instruments of production*, and the changes which these undergo as a result of the ceaseless development of production, that determine changes in society.<sup>[39]</sup> Social classes and their struggles do not play the role of driving force here -- indeed, in this part of Stalin's work they do not figure at all.<sup>[40]</sup> As for production relations, they appear to lead, somehow, an existence which is *external* to the productive forces: they merely "influence" the development of these forces "accelerating or retarding" it, but this development must, "sooner or later," lead to the transformation of these relations, so that they eventually "come in to correspondence with . . . the level of development of the productive forces" -- otherwise there occurs "a crisis of production, a destruction of productive forces."<sup>[41]</sup>

This outline of the conception of "social development" which is given in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* has been necessary for more than one reason. First, because the systematic form of this work makes it possible to consider what relation the ideas contained in it bear to Marx's analyses. Secondly, because this work poses the problem of the objective basis for the increasing predominance of the conceptions which it contains.

The remarks which follow are an attempt to answer these two questions. They concern also some other contradictory aspects of the Bolshevik ideological formation, which will be dealt with later.

(2) *The conception of "social development" as an effect of the development of the "productive forces," and Marx's analyses*

The formulations of *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, summarized and discussed in the foregoing pages undoubtedly bear some relationship to certain writings by Marx. This gives them a sort of "Marxist authenticity," the narrow limits of which need to be recognized, however, if we do not wish to

page 514

fall into a "talmudistic" notion of Marxism which tends to reduce it to a commentary on, or a rearrangement of, quotations isolated from their context. We need to distinguish in the writings of Marx and Engels between what was radically new, contributing vitally to the formation of revolutionary Marxism, and what was merely repetition of old ideas, or provisional points of transition toward revolutionary positions and analyses.<sup>[42]</sup> Concretely, as regards the relations between social changes (and more especially changes in production relations) and changes in the material conditions of production, we find in the works of Marx and Engels two major categories of formulation.

The earlier category affirms essentially a materialist view of history, stressing that history is not the outcome of men's ideas but of the conditions of production. This is, very broadly, the position of Marx in his youthful writings, particularly *The German Ideology* and [The Poverty of Philosophy](#), which date from 1846 and 1847, respectively.<sup>[43]</sup> This same position is set forth strikingly in a letter addressed by Marx on December 28, 1846, to one of his Russian correspondents, Pavel Annenkov, who had emigrated to France. In this letter Marx says:

Assume a particular state of development in the productive forces of man and you will get a particular form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular stages of development in production, commerce and consumption, and you will have a corresponding social constitution, a corresponding organization of the family, of orders or of classes, in a word, a corresponding civil society, and you will get particular political conditions which are only the official expression of civil society.<sup>[44]</sup>

*Taken by itself*, this formulation makes the totality of social relations and practices the "expression" of the "productive forces." "Society" is here presented as an "expressive totality," which is not contradictory, and the changes in which seem to depend upon "development in production." The central role played by the revolutionary struggle of the masses in the process of social change does not appear here, whereas it is stressed by Marx in those of his writings which develop a

page 515

revolutionary and dialectical materialist position. The content of *these* writings is incompatible with a conception of "society" forming an "expressive totality," for they show that the driving force of history is the movement of internal contradictions and the class struggles. These formulations are set forth in a particularly striking way in the [Manifesto of the Communist Party](#), but they are not absent from earlier writings, including the letter to Annenkov which I have just quoted.

Only gradually do formulations consistently expressing materialist and revolutionary positions become dominant in Marx's writings. And even when this has happened, the earlier type of formulation re-surfaces (which should not surprise us), at least in modified forms. This is what we see, for instance, in the case of the 1859 [preface](#) to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. This preface presents a dialectic of contradiction between productive forces and production relations which leaves the reader to assume the existence of a "development" of the productive forces that is autonomous, so to speak, with its movement partly unexplained. It nevertheless remains true that, in this work, the transformation of social relations is not related *directly* to the "development of the productive forces," but to the contradictions which this development entails, and to the *ideological forms* in which "men become conscious" of the contradictions and fight out their conflicts.<sup>[45]</sup>

In volume I of *Capital*, however, some formulations very close to those of 1846 are still present. Certain ones even sometimes accentuate the importance attributed to technology. Thus, Marx writes: "Technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from these relations."<sup>[46]</sup>

In such passages, social relations and their changes are apparently ascribed to technology, while the social conditions governing the changes in technology are passed over in silence.

The writings which break away from the difficulties bound

page 516

up with the juxtaposition of two types of formulation are those in which Marx ascribes the movement of history, and so, also, the development of the productive forces and even of "technology" *to the changing of social relations and the struggles between classes*. These formulations go much further than those quoted already: they are at the heart of revolutionary Marxism.

On this point I shall confine myself to two examples, taken from writings of 1865 and concerned with the development of *capitalist relations*. Dealing with this question, Marx shows that capitalist relations do not result from a "technological change" but from class struggle -- in

this case, bourgeois class struggle. This change corresponds to what Marx calls "the formal subsumption of labour under capital," which involves constraint to perform surplus labor. Marx points out that *when capital begins to subordinate wage labor and in this way develops new social relations, it does so on the basis of the existing technology*. As he says, "technologically speaking [Marx's emphasis -- C. B.] the labour-process goes on as before": what is new is "that it is now subordinated to capital."<sup>[47]</sup>

It is precisely on the basis of these new (or modified) relations that *new productive forces develop*, namely, those that correspond to the development of machine production. Marx writes: "On the basis of that change, . . . specific changes in the mode of production are introduced which create new forces of production, and these in turn influence the mode of production so that new real conditions come into being."<sup>[48]</sup>

Here we see a real dialectical movement, in which *what changes first* is *not* the "productive forces," or the "instruments of production," but *social relations*, and this as the result of class struggle, of bourgeois class struggle. We are therefore *very far away* from the affirmation made in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* that changes in production "always begin with changes and development of the productive forces, and in the first place, with changes and development of the *instruments of production*."<sup>[49]</sup>

It is one of the distinctive features of revolutionary Marxism that it reckons with the possibility and necessity of first of all

page 517

changing production relations, in order to ensure, under certain conditions, the development of the productive forces. It was toward the end of the 1920s that this feature of revolutionary Marxism tended to become inhibited from the Bolshevik ideological formation, in favor of a *mechanical materialist* position, which emphasized in a *one-sided* way the changing of the instruments of production.<sup>[50]</sup>

(3) *The objective basis of the increasing predominance in the Bolshevik ideological formation of a conception of "social development" set in motion by technological changes*

We need to ask the question: what happened toward the end of the 1920s which accounts for the tendency for mechanical materialist conceptions to become predominant in the Bolshevik ideological formation? Or, to go further, what was the objective, social basis of this tendency?

Briefly, we can say that this basis was provided by the nature of the relations that developed between the Bolshevik Party and the masses. Toward the end of the 1920s these had become essentially relations of *exteriority*. This is clear where the peasant masses were concerned (and they formed by far the majority of the population), since the Party was almost completely absent from the rural areas. But it is true also, even though to a lesser degree, where a large part of the working class was concerned, for a high proportion of the most politicized elements of that class, once they had joined the Party, were very quickly absorbed into the various apparatuses, so that they left the working class.

During the 1920s, the Party struggled to prevent this state of affairs from becoming established, but the successes achieved were very limited.

The nature of the relations between the Bolshevik Party and the masses was due, in the first

place, to the conditions which existed at the beginning of our period, at the start of the NEP; to the chaos and disorganization that prevailed at that time; to

page 518

the massive predominance in the machinery of state of elements alien to the working class, over whom the Party exercised only formal control; and to the split that had occurred between the Soviet power and the majority of the peasantry at the end of "war communism"; etc.[51]

Subsequently, lack of experience, and the weight of the ideological elements alien to revolutionary Marxism which were present in the Bolshevik ideological formation, prevented decisive successes being achieved in the development of firm relations of interiority between the Party and the masses.

As a result, the Bolshevik Party was able to render only limited aid to the struggle of the masses for a revolutionary transformation of social relations, the struggle which alone could open the way to a socialist development of the productive forces.

This struggle did exist, being carried on by the most advanced elements of the masses in town and country, but, through not being sufficiently united and supported by the Bolshevik Party, it did not lead to revolutionary changes. The Party's lack of attention to and adequate support for the struggles of the poor and middle peasants had particularly serious consequences in this connection. The same applies to the Party's inability to help the production conferences to result in a revolutionizing of the production relations.[52]

Toward the end of the NEP period it was thus difficult to secure a further increase in production through a mass struggle bringing about a change in production relations. Under these conditions, increased production seemed to depend above all upon a rapid "modernization" of technology, realized by means of massive investment, the resources for which would be mobilized by state action, and it was from this "modernization" that the *transformation of social relations* was expected to follow. The stress laid upon the role of technology corresponded, at the same time, to the growing weight in society of the technicians and cadres, separated from the masses -- especially the heads of the big enterprises and of the state's central economic organs.

The situation which developed in this way constituted *the*

page 519

*objective basis for the strengthening, within the Bolshevik ideological formation, of elements alien to revolutionary Marxism.* This strengthening not only contributed to decisive importance being accorded to technology and technicians, and to state centralization, but also had the result that Bolshevism reformulated the relations between ideological and technological changes.

*(b) Ideological changes and technological changes*

One of the tasks that the Bolshevik Party strove to carry out was to ensure that the masses mastered revolutionary ideas, which presupposed rejection by the workers and peasants of the old ideas -- religion, superstitions, acceptance of hierarchical relations, etc. However, the way that this task was undertaken by the Party shows that, within the Bolshevik ideological formation, there were increasingly dominant, toward the end of the 1920s, mechanical materialist conceptions which trusted above all in changes in the *conditions of production* to bring about a "change in ideas," or, as it is sometimes put, a "change of mentality."

An especially significant example of this mechanistic conception is provided by the way the problem of the penetration of socialist ideas among the peasantry was treated. Stalin discussed this problem in his speech "[Concerning Questions of Agrarian Policy in the U.S.S.R.](#)," on December 27, 1929, when the policy of mass collectivization was being put into effect.

In this speech, Stalin said:

A great deal of work has still to be done to remould the peasant collective farmer, to set right his individualistic mentality and to transform him into a real working member of a socialist society. And the more rapidly the collective farms are provided with machines, the more rapidly will this be achieved. . . . *The great importance of the collective farms lies precisely in that they represent the principal base for the employment of machinery and tractors in agriculture, that they constitute the principal base for remoulding the peasant, for changing his mentality in the spirit of socialism.*<sup>[53]</sup>

page 520

This formulation shows that the transition to collectivization was not regarded as having to result from a process of struggle which, through self-education of the peasant masses, would ensure the development of the ideas of socialism among them. On the contrary, it was *the use of machinery and tractors* that was to be the *means* to "set right" the "individualistic mentality" of the peasants. Similarly, the "great importance of the collective farms" was not that they would entail a change in production relations but that they were "the principal base for the employment of machinery and tractors."

According to this conception, therefore, it was not the peasants who were *to transform themselves* through class struggles and the lessons they drew from their experience, with the Party's help, but the peasants who were to be *transformed* because they were to be *acted upon by means of technology.*<sup>[54]</sup>

In presenting the problem of the ideological transformation of the peasantry in terms not of class struggle but of preliminary material changes,<sup>[55]</sup> Stalin was not defending a merely "personal" position. This position was then the one held by almost the entire Party. And it was a position that related not to the peasantry only, but also to the working class. The Party looked forward, as a result of the numerical growth of the working class, its integration in *modern technology*, and the *development of the towns* (that is, as a result of a certain number of material changes), to a transformation of the "ideas" of a working class which was of immediately peasant origin. Hence, for example, a resolution of the plenum of April 1928, which considered as essential for the building of socialism "the rapid growth of large-scale industry on the basis of modern technology . . . , the growth of the towns and industrial centres, the growth, in quantity and quality alike, of the working class."<sup>[56]</sup>

The nature of the mechanical link thus alleged to exist between ideological changes and technological changes (including those affecting habitat) may be seen as a "particular case" of the thesis which sees in the "development of the productive forces" the driving force of the "development of society." However, this is not entirely correct, for what is involved here is not so much the *ideological superstructure*

page 521

corresponding to a certain *mode of production* as the "psychology," the "mentality," of the workers and peasants, and the "action" upon this of the environment, and, above all, of the *instruments of production* and the technological characteristics of the *labor process*. Here we are dealing with positions which are remote from revolutionary Marxism, and which lead to the posing of "psychological" problems while a decisive role is accorded not to class struggles but to the technological conditions of the labor-process.<sup>[57]</sup>

The effects of the growing predominance of "economist-technicist" conceptions were manifold. They helped to give prevalence to the idea that in building socialism what was most important was "building its material basis," and that it was necessary to adopt a policy of accelerated industrialization in which absolute priority must be given to heavy industry. These conceptions favored the decisive role attributed to the development of machine production and "modern" technology: hence the slogan of the 1930s, "technique decides everything,"<sup>[58]</sup> which opened the way for strengthening the position of the technicians and granting a privileged role to "science" and scientists.

Above all, conceptions such as these inhibited the role of proletarian class struggle and revolutionary mass action, replacing it with the struggle for production and for the development of the productive forces, which were expected to produce the most radical social changes, *including the disappearance in due course of the division between manual and mental labor.*<sup>[59]</sup>

The growing predominance within the Bolshevik ideological formation of the conceptions mentioned was due *fundamentally* to the contradictions which were developing in the Soviet formation, and the limited means available to the Bolshevik Party for dealing with them through action by the masses. Under these conditions the Party, in order to cope with the problems confronting it, strove to increase production as quickly as possible by means of technological changes, and it expected that these would result in ideological changes that must strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In this way, oblivion came to be increasingly the fate of

page 522

Marx's analyses showing the necessity, if the revolution was to advance, of ideological changes that were not at all the outcome of technological changes, but rather of revolutionary mass struggle, smashing the old social and ideological relations and making possible the building of new relations. Such a struggle was not a "struggle of ideas" but a class struggle, destroying old *practices* and old *social relations*, realized in *ideological apparatuses*, and making possible the building of new relations and new practices.

As regards the formation and development of ideas, that is, of ideological relations and the practices associated with them, we must distinguish between Marx's writings about the *ideas which correspond to a mode of production which is already dominant* and those which deal with the development of *revolutionary ideas*.

The writings in which Marx deals with the "dominant ideas" are the better known -- such as the passage where he says that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force."<sup>[60]</sup> If the writings that Marx devoted to the dominant ideology are the most numerous, this is because it was of decisive importance politically, in the period when he was writing, to combat the idealist prejudice according to which the dominant ideas could be "swept away" without *struggling against the material domination of the class whose dominance was strengthened by these ideas*. The fewness of the writings in which Marx deals with the development of revolutionary ideas is due no doubt, to the very small amount of experience available in his time that was relevant to the conditions for this development, the conditions enabling the proletariat to exercise its ideological *hegemony*.<sup>[61]</sup>

In any case, the analyses of Marx,<sup>[62]</sup> and also those of Lenin, devoted to the conditions for the development and appropriation of revolutionary ideas by the masses are relatively few. However, quite apart from the relative frequency or infrequency of a particular kind of writing in Marx's works, what accounts for the pushing into the background, in the Bolshevik



ideological formation, of the decisive and indispensable role of action by the masses in the changing of social relations in general, and ideological relations in particular, is the *increasing role played in reality by the State*, which gave rise to the idea of the "revolution from above."

(c) *The idea of the "revolution from above"*

This idea appeared in fairly clear-cut form for the first time in the resolution of the Sixteenth Party Conference which ratified the First Five-Year Plan. This resolution declared that the building of socialism required the concentration not only of the forces of the Party and of the working class but *also* -- what was new -- of *the forces of the State*.<sup>[63]</sup> In this resolution the building of socialism was shown as calling not for the development, first and foremost, of the initiative of the masses, and consequently the withering-away of the state -- what Marx meant when he showed that the State is a power separated from the masses, appropriating their forces in order to use these against them -- but, on the contrary, and contradicting the lessons of the Paris Commune and of [The State and Revolution](#), for strengthening of the State.<sup>[64]</sup>

In this way there emerged the thesis of a "revolution from above," to be accomplished not by the masses but by the State, on the "initiative" of the latter, to which the masses were merely to give their "support."

The idea of the "revolution from above" was explicitly present in the official account of the large-scale collectivization carried out from the end of 1929 on. Speaking of this, the [History of the C.P.S.U.\(B.\)](#) approved by the CC declared that, "The distinguishing feature of this revolution is that it was accomplished *from above*, on the initiative of the state, and directly supported *from below*. . . ."<sup>[65]</sup> However, we know from Marx and Engels that a "revolution" accomplished from above, even if it be supported by the masses, is no true revolution.<sup>[66]</sup>

Thus, at the end of the NEP period, the role of the State became primordial, both in reality (where it was determined

page 524

by the evolution of class relations, which favored the development of the most up-to-date techniques and the State's centralization of financial resources) and in the Bolshevik ideological formation. At this second level we observe a profound transformation of this ideological formation, which entailed increasing departure from the positions of revolutionary Marxism as these were set out in the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin (especially in *The State and Revolution* ).<sup>[67]</sup>

It is not possible to review here all the passages in revolutionary Marxism which deal with the question of the State, especially in relation to the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, these passages and the theses they set forth are so important, and they were so thoroughly inhibited from the Bolshevik ideological formation from the end of NEP on, that a few of them must be mentioned.

The first point to be recalled is that "the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat" is only *that* in so far as it is, at one and the same time, a state *and not a state*, with the second aspect more important than the first, and becoming more and more important as proletarian power is strengthened. Hence Engels' remark in March 1875, in a [letter](#) to Bebel: "The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. . . . We would therefore propose to replace state everywhere [in the Gotha Programme] by *Gemeinwesen*, a good old German word which can very well convey the

meaning of the French word '*commune*.'"<sup>[68]</sup>

Marx's observations in *The Civil War in France* are also highly significant. They deal with those features of the proletariat's political rule which make it possible for this rule to become increasingly *a non-state*, by causing the *separation* between the machinery of government and the masses to disappear. In the conjuncture of the class struggles at the end of the 1920s these very features (which had not been strongly present in the preceding years) tended themselves to disappear.

In *The Civil War in France*, drawing lessons from the Paris

page 525

Commune, Marx contrasted the forms of proletarian rule with state forms which make possible the oppression and exploitation of the working people. He shows how the "centralized state machinery," with its "military, bureaucratic" and other organs, "entails [enmeshes] the living civil society like a boa constrictor." To this machinery there corresponds "the regulated plan of a state power, with a systematic and hierarchic division of labour." It gives rise to a "state interest" which is administered by a bureaucratic body of "state priests with exactly determined hierarchical functions." Marx sees this bureaucratic body as a "deadening incubus," "a host of state vermin," which "serves as a means of annihilating . . . all aspirations for the emancipation of the popular masses."<sup>[69]</sup>

Analyzing the Paris Commune, he shows that it not only brought about the elimination of the bourgeoisie's political power but was also a *revolution against the State itself*. He says explicitly: "This was . . . a revolution not against this or that, Legitimate, Constitutional, Republican or Imperialist form of state power. It was a revolution against the *State* itself, of this super-naturalist abortion of society," upon which is based a "centralised and organised governmental power usurping to be the master instead of the servant of society." It was because it was a revolution against the State, "the reabsorption of the state power by society . . . by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organised force of their suppression," that the Commune was "the political form of their social emancipation," or "the political form . . . of the liberation of labour from the usurpation [slaveholding] of the monopolists of the means of labour." Marx explains that "the Commune is not the social movement of the working class . . . but the organised means of action." It "does not [do] away with the class struggles through which the working classes strive for the abolition of all classes, and therefore of all [class rule] . . . but it affords the rational medium in which the class struggle can run through its different phases in the most rational and humane way. It could start

page 526

violent reactions and as violent revolutions. It begins the *emancipation of labour* -- its great goal -- by doing away with the unproductive and mischievous work of the state parasites. . . ."<sup>[70]</sup>

We know that, after October 1917, the Soviet political system, which at first reproduced many of the features of the Paris Commune, underwent changes which resulted in the masses becoming more and more separated from the organs of power. Lenin analyzed this evolution at the time and stressed the necessity of *returning to the principles of the Commune* -- though, in the complex situation at the end of "war communism" this necessity seemed to him less urgent than the efforts which were indispensable if the country was to be saved from famine and chaos.<sup>[71]</sup> During the NEP period the need to go back to the principles of the Paris Commune was reasserted, but without this resulting in any definite proposals. It was mainly a question of "restricting" and "checking on" bureaucracy rather than of doing away with it. After 1928-1929, when rapid industrialization together with collectivization taking the form of a "revolution from

above" were seen as the first-priority tasks, there was no more talk of the Paris Commune. On the contrary, emphasis was laid upon strengthening the State and on the authority of its functionaries, integrated in a highly hierarchical system of relations. This was a change in the Bolshevik ideological formation which inhibited an essential component of revolutionary Marxism.

This inhibition did not take place in the "realm of ideas," it was the result of *real changes* and, above all, of *uncontrolled contradictions* which led to *increasing use of coercion in dealing with the masses*. The strengthening of state forms of rule which accompanied this process, together with the support given by a section of the masses to the policy of collectivization and industrialization, did indeed make it possible to obtain a certain number of *remarkable material results*. This contributed to the development of *voluntarist illusions*, which we have already noted were characteristic of the period which

page 527

saw the end of the NEP and the beginning of the implementation of the First Five-Year Plan.

(d) *Juridical form of ownership and production relations*

Identification of juridical forms of ownership with production relations, against which Lenin had warned the Party,<sup>[72]</sup> and which was related to the "illusions of jurisprudence" spoken of by Marx,<sup>[73]</sup> was, as we know, one of the essential features of the "simplified Marxism" which was tending to become dominant in the Bolshevik ideological formation. After the end of the 1920s the significance of a certain number of theses of revolutionary Marxism concerning the problems of forms of ownership and forms of appropriation was increasingly obscured. The development of Marx's views on this subject, therefore, could not but be "forgotten." This circumstance makes it necessary for me to recall what the nature of that development actually was.

Fundamentally, until the beginning of 1850, Marx and Engels stressed the role to be played by state ownership in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. This was their position in the *Manifesto*. After 1850, however, formulations concerning state ownership became less and less frequent, and what Marx and Engels put in the forefront was the concept of *social appropriation*. Thus, in his 1895 introduction to *The Class Struggles in France*, Engels pointed out that it was in this book, and in *The 18th Brumaire* that Marx first declared himself for "the appropriation of the means of production by society."<sup>[74]</sup> Considering the role previously assigned by Marx to state ownership, and the contrast later so firmly made by him (especially after the Paris Commune) between "state" and "society," this formulation is highly significant.

However, the Bolshevik ideological formation as it was at the end of the 1920s "overlooked" this distinction, for practical purposes. The twofold result was that production relations

page 528

were identified with ownership, and state ownership with social appropriation.

In fact, these identifications had seemed "obvious" to many Party members since the period of "war communism." This "obviousness" acquired new, decisive importance from the end of 1925 on, in connection with the increasing role of state intervention in the economic basis (the first annual plans, in the form of "control figures," the increase in investment by way of the state budget, etc.). Numerous undialectical formulations regarding the working of the state-owned enterprises made their appearance.

This happened, for example, in Stalin's political report of December 1925 to the Party's Fourteenth Congress. In this report, as we know, the problem of the socialist character of the state-owned enterprises was approached in an undialectical way, in the form of questions and answers, along the lines of "either this or that," and not of "this and also its opposite."<sup>[75]</sup>

Yet the problem lay precisely in the fact that, under conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the state-owned enterprises could be *both socialist enterprises* (because of the leading role that the working class could play in them) and *state-capitalist enterprises*, in so far as the specific form of working-class rule is not a state form, and in so far as the bourgeoisie had not disappeared but only changed its form of existence. The bourgeoisie was also present in the state-owned enterprises because of the reproduction in them of the capitalist division of labor and the distribution relations corresponding thereto, and so, likewise, of "bourgeois right."<sup>[76]</sup>

Actually, the identification, purely and simply, of state ownership with social appropriation, and the failure to distinguish between form of ownership and production relations, prevented the making of analyses that were essential if a clear-eyed struggle was to be waged against the development of a new bourgeoisie within the enterprises and in the machinery of the State and the Party. This bourgeoisie was one of a new type, in that it did not possess *juridical private property* -- a circumstance, which did not hinder it, however, from dispos-

page 529

ing, de facto, of the means of production.<sup>[77]</sup> And it is *facts* that count, not *juridical categories*.

*(e) The contradictory forms of existence of commodity relations and the illusory "treatment" of the contradictions connected with these forms*

During the struggle waged by the Bolshevik Party from 1926-1927 on in order to subject the development of the productive forces to an overall plan, a conception became strengthened which tended to *counterpose the "plan" to the market in an undialectical way*.

The consolidation in the Party's thinking of this ideological pair of terms, "plan" and "market," contributed to an increase in the internal contradictions of the Bolshevik ideological formation and blunted the capacity to analyze the real contradictions.

To grasp the nature of the problems involved here, we need to begin by reminding ourselves what the system of relations was that was formed between enterprises during the NEP period, and which was to be reproduced later in a new form. Basically, these were *commodity relations*, and that was true as well of the relations between the enterprises and their workers. The first set of relations took the form of *price* and the second the form of *wages*. These forms were engendered by the contradiction between the private and independent character ("working for oneself") of the work performed and the social character of production.

However, as a result of the development of Gosplan's activity and the framing of the economic plans, *commodity relations assumed two contradictory forms*. On the one hand, a form with prices and wages which seemed to proceed from the "free" functioning of the "market" and the forces which come into conflict therein; on the other, a form corresponding to the fixing "by the plan" of prices, wages, and (in principle) quantities of goods to be produced.

page 530

In so far as commodity relations survived, with the conditions ensuring their reproduction, these were *two forms of existence of commodity relations*. One of these forms implied that the economic basis was operating in comparative independence; the other, that the operation of the economic basis was subjected, more or less completely and really, to *political imperatives*. These were two forms of motion developing on the basis of one and the same contradiction -- that which was expressed in the existence of prices and wages. One of these forms tended to "resolve" the contradiction a posteriori (*ex post*), the other to "resolve" it a priori (*ex ante*). These forms of motion, based upon the same contradiction, were therefore, although contradictory, not mutually exclusive. What tended to separate them was that the first form ensured *its own reproduction* whereas the second *could* help to prepare (given conditions going beyond "planning" and involving transformation of the production processes themselves) *its own disappearance*, by helping to make production a *directly political activity: direct production for society, which implies a plan that is no longer based upon commodity relations but results from cooperation between the producers on the scale of society*.<sup>[78]</sup>

Correct treatment of the *contradictory unity of two forms of commodity relations* requires that the existence of this unity and of these contradictions be acknowledged, and, consequently, that the "plan" (in the conditions in which it is formulated and put into effect) *not* represented formally as a category "external" to commodity relations, as the realization of "the essence of organization."

In the conditions of the fierce struggle that was waged from the end of the 1920s on to ensure "domination by the plan," however, an ideological slippage took place which tended to present this "domination," even when prices and wages still existed, as *equivalent to the "abolition" of commodity relations*. This ideological slippage was also connected with the strengthening of the state bourgeoisie in process of formation (constituted within the apparatuses of the State and the Party) through practices which gave priority to *accumulation* over

page 531

*the initiatives of the direct producers*, to dead labor over *living labor*. This ideological slippage was conditioned theoretically by inhibition of the primacy of contradiction over unity.<sup>[79]</sup>

The idea of economic planning as "abolition" of commodity relations "obliterates" one of the essential conclusions to be drawn from Marx's analyses, namely, that commodity and money relations can disappear only as the result of a long struggle culminating in an overturn of production relations, political relations, and ideological relations, and "the appropriation [by man] of his own general productive power."<sup>[80]</sup>

This "obliteration" implies that the contradictory unity of the two forms of existence of commodity relations is now thought of as signifying opposition between two "objects," the "plan" and the "market," and that decisive significance is attributed to this opposition. By seeing the "contradiction between plan and market" in this way one loses sight of the primary importance of class contradictions as well as of the conditions, objective and subjective, necessary for the disappearance of commodity and money relations and the development of production which is directly social, and therefore dominated by politics.

The ideological forms which developed under these conditions tended to identify the struggle between the capitalist road and the socialist road with the struggle between the "anarchy" of the market and "harmonious development" ensured by planning. These ideological elements are seen explicitly at work in the writings of Preobrazhensky, who contrasted "the law of value" (associated with "private economy") and "the socialist planning principle" (associated with the "state sector" of the Soviet economy).<sup>[81]</sup>

According to this economist, the extension of planning is bound up with the struggle "to

increase the means of production belonging to the proletarian state," so that, under the conditions of the NEP, when a non-state economy existed, it was necessary to struggle "for the maximum primitive socialist accumulation."<sup>[82]</sup>

Thus, instead of the real problem of the struggle between

page 532

the capitalist road and the socialist road, we find formulated, undialectically, the contrast between the law of value and the "planning principle," between private economy and state economy. *The extension of the latter is somehow expected automatically to inhibit commodity, money, and capitalist relations*, and engender an entirely new reality, analysis of which is no longer to be a matter for political economy (or for historical materialism), but for "a different science which is itself transitional between political economy and social technology,"<sup>[83]</sup> one which replaces analysis and treatment of contradictions with handling of problems of "organization."

The ideas expressed by Preobrazhensky were formally rejected by the Bolshevik Party, but, in fact, the conception employed in *The New Economics* influenced the Party to an increasing extent. There developed toward the end of the 1920s *an ideology which regarded the plan as a "form of organization" that was capable by itself of "transcending" social contradictions*. This ideology helped to "subordinate" the treatment of class contradictions to the "fulfillment" of the objectives of economic plans, and brought in its train some profoundly negative social and economic consequences, especially in strengthening the influence of the "technicians," "organizers," and "planners."

In an apparently paradoxical way, the myth of a plan capable of "transcending" social contradictions helped to strengthen *the monetary and financial illusions* which had already developed at the beginning of the NEP.<sup>[84]</sup> An ideological element thus took shape which was utterly alien to Marxism, even in its most superficial forms.

The strengthening of monetary and financial illusions was manifested vigorously in 1927-1928. It led to the idea that the problems of industrialization would be "solved" as soon as the financial resources needed for industrialization had been obtained. This "monetary illusion" caused the higher political authorities to fail to reckon with the indications provided by the forecasts of material balances -- to regard it as unimportant that these forecasts revealed the prospect of a series of shortages and bottlenecks making materially impracticable some

page 533

of the projects which it was possible to "finance." From the spring of 1927, under pressure from increasingly acute contradictions and the "state-of-emergency" atmosphere which was developing, the monetary illusion became more and more dominant: money now being *formally* "subordinated" to the "plan," the power to "deal with contradictions" which was attributed to the latter seemed to reinforce the illusory "power" of money. Hence the surprising result that, through the combination of planning with money, *exchange value came to predominate over use value*. In this way a component of the Bolshevik ideological formation appeared which encouraged the Party leaders to set targets that were materially unrealizable. Part of the planning apparatus, more directly at grips with the material problems involved, tried to oppose this tendency -- but less and less vigorously, because such opposition was soon labeled "anti-Soviet activity."

In 1930 the role of the monetary illusion was such that the Gosplan journal published an article in which this appeared: "The planning of investments is based on costs expressed in money terms. The elements of material and technological concretisation are almost entirely

absent. The plan presents exclusively the money credits assigned for building and equipment: as for *what* equipment will be needed, and *when* such-and-such machinery will be required, that will become clear only in the course of the execution of the plan." [85]

Closely linked with the ideological factor mentioned was the slogan which appeared at that time: "tempos decide everything." According to this formula, the higher the growth rates, the better the situation. This slogan complemented the monetary illusion. It expressed the ruling preoccupation with "quantity": quantitative growth was more important than the changing of social relations, and the latter was appreciated essentially for the "quantitative" effects which were expected to follow from it. [86]

In reality, the stress upon "quantity" is also, in another form, a feature of the "technicist" ideology. That these ideological forms could play so important a role in the system of ideas and in the practice of the Bolshevism of the late 1920s

page 534

testifies to the depth of the political and ideological crisis resulting from the breakdown of the worker-peasant alliance which was beginning to happen at that time. This crisis incited to a "flight forward," bound up with the illusion that, thanks to technology, organization, planning, and money "subordinated" to planning, a whole series of objectives would become attainable.

And so the internal contradictions of the Bolshevik ideological formation were deepened, and positions were strengthened that were in conflict with revolutionary Marxism -- with the Marxism-Leninism which was the theoretical basis of Bolshevism.

At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the existence of the contradictions in the Bolshevik ideological formation which have been discussed above *contributed* to the strengthening of other ideological and political elements that were also alien to revolutionary Marxism. These were the *ideological and political effects* of the contradictions mentioned, and it is these that we must now examine.

## ***II. The ideological and political effects of the development of the internal contradictions of the Bolshevik ideological formation***

What is covered by the expression "ideological and political effects" must be explained through two preliminary observations:

(1) I here call "ideological effects" a certain number of changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation which were connected with the previous ones, in that they were "necessary" in order to maintain a certain coherence among the increasingly dominant ideological forms and between these and the Party's practices. These effects concerned mainly the status and structure of *dialectical materialism*.

(2) I here call "political effects" the consequences entailed,

page 535

on the political plane, by the growing role which the changes already examined assigned to certain ideological notions such as that of the Party's "monolithic" character. More broadly this expression refers to the *political role* of the Bolshevik ideological formation in its *changed*

form.

Essentially, the changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation tended to inhibit some of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, to *reduce Bolshevism's ability to use revolutionary Marxism as an instrument for analyzing reality*. Under these conditions, the Bolshevik ideological formation in its changed form served, with ever greater frequency, to *"justify" after the act the adoption of political lines which were no longer based on a rigorous concrete analysis of reality*. It then functioned as a "system of legitimation," as a grid of ideological notions which one "applied" to reality, and not as a set of concepts to be used in a living analysis. This was one of the consequences of the appearance in the Soviet Union of a "simplified" or "congealed" form of Marxism,<sup>[87]</sup> which departed from revolutionary Marxism.

In the last analysis, of course, the changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation and its role resulted from objective contradictions, and from class contradictions first and foremost. In their turn, however, through not having been subjected to critical analysis, these changes reacted upon the Soviet social formation by impoverishing the Marxism upon which the Bolshevik Party relied, and favoring both a mechanistic view of reality and interventions which had effects other than those the Party expected -- effects of major political importance.

We must stress here an essential point, namely, that these "political effects" did not apply only in the USSR, but also tended to operate on the *international plane* : for the Bolshevik ideological formation, with the changes that it underwent, was the ideological form through which the Comintern and its various sections defined, as a rule, their political line. The changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation nevertheless played such a role internationally only in so far as they corresponded, at bottom, to the types of relations which the Comintern's sections maintained with the realities of their

page 536

own countries, and to the practices to which these sections were committed. The best proof (*a contrario*) of this is offered by the fact that the changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation and in the ideology of the Comintern failed to produce the same effects (development of sectarianism and of *ouvriériste* and ultraleft attitudes) in the Chinese Communist Party (which was linked increasingly with the peasantry and engaged in revolutionary war) as it did in the Communist Parties of Europe and America. That became quite clear after 1935, when the Chinese Communists developed their revolutionary line on a broad front, under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung.

*(a) Organic totality, interdependence, and contradictions*

Among the various changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation which ensured a certain degree of coherence among the ideological notions which tended to become dominant from the late 1920s, the most important was the affirmation of a *principle of totality*. This was, indeed, the *first principle* affirmed by Stalin in his exposition of "the Marxist dialectical method."<sup>[88]</sup>

According to this principle, dialectics regards nature as "a connected and integral whole, in which things, phenomena, are organically connected with, dependent on and determined by each other."<sup>[89]</sup>

"Nature" is thus presented as an organic totality in which coherence and unity take precedence over contradiction. This being so, one cannot understand any of the changes undergone by the objects and phenomena which make up nature if these changes are "isolated from surrounding phenomena."



Correlatively with the idea of an *organic totality* there is thus affirmed an *interdependence* of phenomena, presented through the concept of an *environment* which is supposed to condition every phenomenon.<sup>[90]</sup> External causes of change take precedence of internal causes. When, *only at the end* of his exposition of the "principal features" of Marxist dialectics,

page 537

Stalin says that "internal contradictions are inherent in all things and phenomena of nature," and that the conflict of opposites "constitutes the internal content of the process of development,"<sup>[91]</sup> this appears *as a mere supplement to a body of principles already set forth*, and is not articulated with them. It serves as a mode of "observation" and not as *a principle of explanation*.

The fundamental question of the *unity of opposites* is thus not raised, so that the propositions put forward in Stalin's essay are remote from those which Lenin formulates in his *Philosophical Notebooks*, especially when he says: "In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites."<sup>[92]</sup>

The political consequences of the conception of dialectical materialism expressed by Stalin are all the more important because, after describing "the Marxist dialectical method" in relation to "nature" in the way we have seen, he proceeds to "the extension of the principles of dialectical method to the study of social life."<sup>[93]</sup> The ways in which this extension is effected are not very explicit, but Stalin's formulations, including those devoted to historical materialism, show that "society," too, is to be seen as an organic whole, the development of which is due to external causes operating as an environment.

The "development of society" thus appears to depend mainly upon the changing of its relations with nature, these relations consisting above all in the productive forces, so that the development of the latter is seen as the driving force of social changes.<sup>[94]</sup>

*(1) The fight for socialism and the fight for contradictions*

The notion of *organic totality* presumes that *unity* takes precedence over *contradiction*. The more this notion became dominant in Bolshevik writings of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the more "society" appeared to be an "organization" or a "system," so that the Party's interventions in the social

page 538

process tended to be thought of not in terms of dealing with contradictions but in terms of "measures of organization and planning" of the social process. Hence the slogan of the 1930s: "Organization decides everything." Along with this there appeared many formulations resembling those of Bogdanov<sup>[95]</sup> (whose theses were nevertheless formally condemned). But this "convergence" must not lead us to an idealist interpretation which would one-sidedly stress the Bogdanovist "origin" of these formulations.

To be sure, the influence of Bogdanov's ideas upon many Bolsheviks is undeniable, and it is not hard to find formulas directly borrowed (perhaps "unconsciously") from Bogdanov. Thus, in his *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Stalin used a typically Bogdanovist expression when he speaks of the "organising . . . value of new ideas."<sup>[96]</sup>

What is essential, however, is the set of social conditions which caused ideas resembling Bogdanov's to acquire ever greater importance from the late 1920s on. These conditions were

due to a certain situation in the class struggle which accorded decisive weight to the State as the apparent "organizer" of social changes.<sup>[97]</sup>

(2) *The dominance of unity over contradiction*

The thesis of the dominance of unity over contradiction (inherent in the idea of "society" functioning as a "totality" whose transformations are determined by changes in its relations with the "environment") holds a central position in the altered conception of "dialectical materialism" which emerged (implicitly or explicitly) after the late 1920s. This thesis of the primacy of unity over contradiction tended to play a decisive ideological role in so far as it was "extended" or "applied" to whatever might be considered as constituting "an object." It thus tended to inhibit Lenin's thesis that "the splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts . . . is the essence (one of the 'essentials,' one of the principal, if not the principal, characteristics or features) of dialectics."<sup>[98]</sup>

page 539

The thesis of the primacy of unity over contradiction is "rightist-leftist" in character. Depending on the conjuncture of the class struggle, it functions either as a "conciliatory" thesis providing a "basis" for renunciation of struggle, especially inside the Party (in the name of *unity at any price*), or, as was the case at the end of the 1920s, as a thesis providing a "basis" for sectarianism, for "ruthless struggle" (in the name of *a unity which seems preservable only by excluding all contradiction*). The first type of effect is rightist, while the second looks as though it is "left," by virtue of the "rigorousness" of its consequences: it implies *negation of the diversity of contradictions, and of their universality*.

In the situation of extreme tension which existed at the end of the NEP period and at the beginning of the 1930s, the thesis of the primacy of unity over contradiction was accepted by the majority of the revolutionary elements in the Party and the working class, and it developed "ultraleft" effects.

A few concrete examples will serve to show what these effects were in the conjuncture of the period.

The most immediate effect (which was one of "legitimation") concerned the *conditions in which the Party worked*: it, corresponded to the assertion of the *political thesis* of the necessarily *monolithic* character of the Party.

The theme of the "monolithic" character of the Bolshevik Party was actually tackled in a systematic way at the end of, 1928. It played a key role in Stalin's speech of November 19.<sup>[99]</sup> In this speech he correctly pointed out the difference of principle separating the Bolshevik Party from the Social Democratic parties (in their class basis, in their ideology, and in the organizational forms resulting from these). However, when speaking about the way the Party worked, he "summed up" this difference *not by referring to the role of democratic centralism but by mentioning the necessarily "monolithic" character of the Party.*<sup>[100]</sup> But the idea of a "monolithic" party not only conflicts with the experience of Marxism-Leninism, it is illusory. The Party is inevitably traversed by contradictions especially by those forced upon it by its role as the instrument through which the proletariat is able to *unite the broad masses under its leadership*, so that, in one way or another, the

page 540

interests of the different strata making up these masses produce an effect within the Party.

Divergent points of view necessarily appear when these contradictory interests have to be evaluated, and the problem is how to arrive correctly at an agreement between views reflecting the differing aspirations of masses whose support is needed if the revolution is to continue to progress. This was why Lenin wrote, in his *Letter to the Congress* : "Our Party relies on two classes and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable if there were no agreement between these two classes."<sup>[101]</sup>

If the "monolithic principle" is carried to its logical conclusion, the Party deprives itself of the means of uniting the broad masses, because it is *led to reject, in practice, the principle of democratic centralism*. This latter principle presupposes, indeed, *that different ideas can be centralized* after being examined and critically discussed. Genuine application of this principle demands recognition of the need to ensure the *contradictory unity of centralization and democracy, and of the fact that the first term can possess meaning only under the domination of the second*. "Monolithism" rejects this principle in the name of a formal "unity" which is to be secured, in an always illusory way, by means of *ruthless* struggle. This struggle to obtain "perfect" unity tends to weaken the dictatorship of the proletariat, *isolate* the working class from the rest of the masses, intensify administrative coercion of the masses, and develop the machinery of repression.

In the short term, one-sided stress on unity and centralism at the expense of democracy may make it possible to win quick successes, especially in the field of industry and technology. In the long term, it produces effects which are harmful to the working class, and even to the leading role of the Party. The strengthening of the machinery of repression tends to develop its independence of the Party, and to increase its interference in Party life, especially in connection with purges. Eventually, therefore, the fight for "monolithism" becomes *a weapon in the class struggle*, a weapon which, after it has made it possible "to solve rapidly" a certain number of problems, serves the bourgeois forces in society, because it hinders consolida-

page 541

tion of the Party's leading role and its strengthening through clear ideological struggle.

While the thesis of the primacy of unity over contradiction serves to "legitimize" a "monolithic" conception of the Party, it is obviously not what "produces" this conception. The latter develops on the basis of *objective conditions* : it is essentially a consequence of the development of class struggles which the Party is unable to direct, and which it can affect only by strengthening its unity through coercion.

This was shown by the changes which were introduced into the way the Bolshevik Party worked after the Kronstadt rebellion, the strikes at the beginning of 1921, and the peasant revolts of the winter of 1920-1921, in a period when Lenin said of the peasantry that "their dissatisfaction with the proletarian dictatorship is mounting."<sup>[102]</sup> In a period such as that was, Lenin considered that the rules which had governed the Party's functioning until then should be modified, and oppositional activity within the Party reduced.<sup>[103]</sup> It was then that measures were adopted which *restricted* this activity. Nevertheless, opposition was not *forbidden* but *regulated*, and means of expression were provided for those who disagreed with the majority.<sup>[104]</sup> There was then no question of any "monolithic" conception of the Party. However, the measures taken in the particularly difficult situation at the beginning of 1921 could serve as the starting point for practices aiming at "monolithism."

Actually, all through the NEP period, opportunities to express divergent views within the Party were being restricted more and more, so that gradually they ceased to have anything in common with what had once been normal practice. The immediate reason for this change in political relations was the Party's weakness in the rural areas. This was seen as the sign of a still dangerous situation which gave reason for seriously limiting the scope for discussion in the.

Party. This situation *tended to obscure the idea that it could be right to swim against the stream*. It often caused oppositionists themselves to renounce the expression of their views, and even to say that they could not be in the right "against the Party." In this way a

page 542

certain practice became established, of which Trotsky gave an example when, while not repudiating his views, he nevertheless declared, before the Thirteenth Congress (in 1924): "Comrades, none of us wishes to be right, or can be right, against his Party . . . I know that one cannot be right against the Party. One can be right only with the Party and through the Party."<sup>[105]</sup> Although discussions did still take place during the NEP period, none of them was *carried through to the end*: disciplinary measures were taken before the theoretical roots of the divergences had been revealed and the Party as a whole had given its judgment on the substance of the problems involved. The main reason for this was not -- at the beginning, at least -- the "disciplinary" measures applied to oppositionists, or the repression to which they were subjected. What was dominant, and explains why the discussions were not carried through to the end, or were conducted in language comprehensible only to a few, was the concern common to all sides to affirm the unity of the Party, a concern dictated above all by the Party's difficult position in the countryside, and fear lest this should threaten the Soviet power.

The result was that *the unity which was achieved remained formal. It was not based on an ideological struggle which could have made for a unity that was profoundly real*, and consequently the same debates kept on starting up again. The conception of unity which was formed in this way assumed acceptance, implicitly at least, of the primacy of unity over contradiction. This was the terrain on which arose the thesis of "monolithism," an idealist thesis which denied the universality of contradictions and the need for living unity in the Party.

The principle of "monolithism" was asserted when the situation became especially dangerous, owing to the peasants' resistance to the emergency measures. During the years of extreme tension connected with the collectivization of agriculture "from above," this principle became a dogma, for the tension caused the Party to unite its forces as much as possible, not on the basis of broad discussion but in the form of obedience or constraint.<sup>[106]</sup>

page 543

### (3) *The tendency to identify the Party with the State and with the proletariat*

The specific conditions under which the Soviet revolution developed caused a tendency to appear very soon which, in imagination, identified the Bolshevik Party with the proletariat. These conditions were, especially, those which Lenin described when he said in 1919 that the soviets, instead of being "organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced section of the proletariat. . . ."<sup>[107]</sup>

This phrase of Lenin's reflected a real state of affairs. He was to refer to it again and again, until his very last writings, and to appeal for the situation to be changed. This appeal was still finding echoes in the NEP years, with the efforts that were made to "revitalize" the soviets.<sup>[108]</sup>

Lenin's words clearly acknowledge that there was a *difference* between "the advanced section of the proletariat" and the working people as a whole. He did not identify the one with the other, even while claiming that the Party was the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Many of Lenin's writings emphasize that *this instrument cannot be identified with the proletariat, and that contradictions may develop between them, contradictions which only the practice of a mass line can prevent from deepening*.

While the concrete problems raised by the relations between the Party and the class were not "solved" by the formulations of the years 1919-1922, their existence was, nevertheless, admitted, and some elements of solution (though necessarily still only provisional) were put forward. In 1923 and the following years these problems continued to be debated, but the terms in which these debates were conducted did not usually help to clarify them. Indeed, the tendency to "identify" the Party with the proletariat grew stronger and stronger. Thus, the Twelfth Party Congress adopted a resolution declaring that "the dictatorship of the working class cannot be assured otherwise than *in the form of dictatorship of its leading vanguard, i.e., the Communist Party.*" [\[109\]](#)

page 544

This identification implied that *recognition of the role and place of contradiction was replaced by the thesis of an abstractly presented unity*, denying the existence of differences and contradictions.

It is significant that one of the most systematic defenders of this conception was Zinoviev, who, as we know, wavered between openly rightist positions and "ultraleft" ones. One of the passages in which the identity between the State, the working people, and the Party was asserted most formally by Zinoviev reads as follows: "The State is the workers, the advanced section of the workers, the vanguard. We are the State!" [\[110\]](#)

In 1924 Zinoviev gave formal expression to the same theme when he wrote:

The consensus of opinion about the dictatorship of the proletariat can be expressed in the following propositions. It is the dictatorship of a class if we look at the matter from the social and class point of view. It is the dictatorship of the Soviet state, a Soviet dictatorship, if we look at the matter from the point of view of *juridical* form, i.e., from the specifically state point of view. It is the dictatorship of a party if we look at the same question from the point of view of leadership, from the point of view of the internal mechanism of the whole vast machine of a transitional society. [\[111\]](#)

This formulation implies *identification* of the dictatorship of the proletariat with the dictatorship of the Soviet state and the dictatorship of the Party. It *obliterates*, in illusory fashion, the problems which arise from contradictions between class and Party, between class and state, and between state and Party. Such an identification can be conceived only if one's theoretical premise is the primacy of unity, and even of identity, over contradiction.

In a number of his writings of 1924 Stalin opposed this identification and reaffirmed the thesis that the Party was the "instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat." At that time, however, the conditions necessary if the Party was to remain that "instrument" were not actually stated. [\[112\]](#)

At the beginning of 1926, in *Problems of Leninism*, Stalin

page 545

returned to this question, again refusing to identify the Party with the proletariat:

Although the Party carries out the dictatorship of the proletariat, and in this sense the dictatorship of the proletariat is in essence the "dictatorship" of its Party, this does not mean that the "dictatorship of the Party" (its leading role) is identical with the dictatorship of the proletariat, that the former is equal in scope to the latter. . . . Whoever identifies the leading role of the Party with the dictatorship of the proletariat substitutes "dictatorship" of the Party for the dictatorship of the proletariat. [\[113\]](#)

Stalin went on to admit, explicitly, that contradictions could develop between the Party and the working class if certain conditions were not fulfilled. [\[114\]](#)

When, however, at the end of the NEP period, contradictions became acute between the Party and the various sections of the people, including the working class, *these contradictions were not frankly analyzed*, but passed over in silence.

This silence implicitly accepted the thesis which had been explicitly rejected, identifying the Party with the proletariat. This implicit identification gradually became dominant, providing a theoretical "basis" for the practice of "revolution from above."

The process of identifying, in imagination, the State with the Party and both with the proletariat (and later the Party with the whole people), by continuing to develop, in objective conditions which aggravated the contradictions between the Party and the masses, led increasingly to the idea that any opposition to the Party line (and even any criticism of the line) must be due to the activity of "enemies of the people."

Given these conditions, asserting the primacy of unity and denying the universality of contradiction resulted increasingly in denial also of the existence of contradictions among the people. Thereafter, all opposition seemed to originate in *external* contradictions, connected with the imperialist environment. Any divergence of view was opposition, and any opposition was *the act of a foreign agent*. Such conceptions were the product of objective contradictions the existence of

page 546

which was denied, they were determined by practices which placed the Party above the masses, but the thesis of the primacy of unity over contradiction (presented as a "Marxist" thesis) was the *theoretical condition* thanks to which the social practices in question could be thought of as arising from the needs of a proletarian policy.

(4) *The tendency to identify the Party with Marxist theory*

The thesis of the primacy of unity over contradiction was the condition making it possible to twist Lenin's thesis on the revolutionary proletarian Party, to *change* the thesis of the union (always contradictory) between Marxist theory and the Party<sup>[115]</sup> into a thesis of the *unity* (without contradictions) of these two. This change tended to come about as soon as the principle was accepted that the Party was necessarily "always right,"<sup>[116]</sup> thereby withdrawing the Party from criticism by the masses -- and the Party leadership from criticism by the rank and file. When this happened, as it did in the USSR in the late 1920s, the Party alone had the right to state what was or was not "theoretically correct," and, in order to eliminate any risk of "divergent interpretations," to concentrate "authority in matters of theory" in the Party leadership. This concentration reduced the possibility of genuine development of Marxism, even if the Party leadership was defending a revolutionary line, for this development calls for broad ideological class struggle and the opportunity for different analyses to be debated.<sup>[117]</sup> The tendency to equate the Party with Marxist theory (of which it is seen as the embodiment) leads, if persisted in, to the weakening of Marxism. The existence of such a tendency in the USSR had objective bases, as we know, but it did not seem "acceptable" except on the basis of the primacy of unity over contradiction.

At the same time, the identification of the Party with Marxist theory caused the Party to be less and *less alert to initiatives and ideas coming from the masses*, though such alertness is essential if theory is to be enriched and mistakes put right. A

page 547

process thus began which caused the Party to act no longer as an educator itself in need of educating, but as an "authority" *giving orders*. The development of this form of action favored the use of repression against some sections of the people, so as to "bring" them to follow the Party's directives, even when they were not ready to do this.

(5) *The identification of theory with reality*

The transformation of dialectical materialism by inhibiting the primacy of contradiction over unity brought with it the possibility of another ideological effect, namely, the identification of theory with reality. The need for practice and scientific experiment tended consequently to be denied: theory was supposed to be capable, by itself, of "saying what is." When it functioned in this way, dialectical materialism in its changed form appeared to be a "science of the sciences," capable of deciding what was "science" and what was not, and seeming even to offer the possibility of "deducing" scientific knowledge from its own principles. This was the function that "dialectical materialism" tended to fulfill in and after the 1930s, when it served to "settle" scientific disputes -- for example, to "legitimise" Lysenko's conceptions in the name of abstract principles.<sup>[118]</sup>

The identification of theory with reality, if taken to its logical conclusion, is equivalent to an idealist position: it eliminates the revolutionary implications of dialectical materialism and gives victory to a fundamentally conservative notion, namely: "All that is real is rational." Dialectics tends to operate no longer as an instrument for criticizing and changing "what is," but as an instrument for legitimizing it.<sup>[119]</sup> When we analyze the way "dialectical materialism" functioned in the USSR after the end of the 1920s, we see that a tendency pointing in this direction became more and more active. The objective basis for this tendency was the system of social contradictions which was developing at that time, and the place that the Bolshevik Party occupied in that system through the practices in which it engaged, especially because of the

page 548

weakness of its relations with popular initiatives, starting with those of the peasant masses.

(b) *The tendency to reduce Marxism to a form of "evolutionism"*

Toward the end of the 1920s an "evolutionist" interpretation of Marx's theory dominated the Bolshevik Party more and more. To appreciate the change that this entailed in the Bolshevik ideological formation we need to recall that Marx's theory is something quite different from an enumeration or description of the "stages" through which every "society" *necessarily has to pass*.<sup>[120]</sup>

Marx categorically repudiated this interpretation, as when he replied, in 1877, to criticisms of his theory formulated by the Russian writer N. Mikhailovsky.<sup>[121]</sup> Speaking of this writer, Marx says:

For him it is absolutely necessary to change my sketch of the origin of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophical theory of Universal Progress, fatally imposed on all peoples, regardless of the historical circumstances in which they find themselves, ending finally in that economic system which assures both the greatest amount of productive labour and the fullest development of man. But I must beg his pardon. This is to do me both too much honour and too much discredit. In various places in *Capital* I have alluded to the destiny which overtook the plebeians of ancient Rome. They were originally free peasants cultivating each on his own account his own parcel of land. In the course of Roman history they were expropriated. The same movement which separated them from their means of production and subsistence brought about not only the

formation of the great landed estates but that of great holdings of money capital as well. Thus, one fine morning there were on the one hand free men deprived of everything except their labour power and, on the other, to exploit this labour, the holders of all acquired wealth. What happened? The Roman proletarians became, not wage-earners, but an idle *mob* . . . and beside them there developed a mode of production which was not capitalist

page 549

but based on slavery. Thus, events which were strikingly analogous, but which took place in different historical circumstances, led to entirely dissimilar results. By studying each of these evolutions separately, and by comparing them afterwards, the key to these phenomena can easily be found, but one will never succeed with the "open sesame" of an historico-philosophical theory of which the supreme virtue consists in its being *supra-historical*.<sup>[122]</sup>

Marx here comes out categorically against any interpretation of his analyses which tends to make of them an "historico-philosophical theory" imposing on every people the necessity of passing through a determined succession of modes of production. In his correspondence with Vera Zasulich, Marx was to condemn once more, in 1881, the idea of an "historical fatalism" making every people pass through a succession of the same modes of production.<sup>[123]</sup>

Marx's theory rules out any "general theory of the evolution of human societies," because it recognizes that social reality is characterized not by the existence at each moment of one simple contradiction but, on the contrary, by a *real multiplicity of contradictions*.

The reduction of the movement of history to a succession of simple contradictions, necessarily engendering each other in a predetermined order, corresponds not to the movement of materialist dialectics but to that of Hegelian dialectics. *Though the latter does not rule out an apparent diversity of contradictions, it assumes that all the contradictions present at one time in a "society" are merely the "expression" of one fundamental contradiction.* Such a conception leads to the idea of "linear" and "irreversible" development.

The Marxist characterization of social formations by the existence of a *real multiplicity of contradictions* implies, on the contrary, that *systems of specific contradictions* may take shape, which develop under *particular conditions*, and in which this or that element may, at any given moment, play a *dominant* role.<sup>[124]</sup> The real multiplicity of contradictions conditions the *possibility of several paths of "development,"* of periods of "stagnation" or "retreat," the form and duration of

page 550

*which depend on the way in which the class struggles concretely proceed, especially on the ideological plane.*

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, under the impact of the *reformist practices* of the principal parties belonging to the Second International, the influence of idealism tended to obscure the radical difference between Marx's theory and any sort of "evolutionism." Thereafter, all reforms were conceived as being "contributions" to a fated "evolution." The influence of the evolutionist ideas of Darwinism and Positivism obviously helped, also, to "inhibit" the specific nature of Marx's analyses, the impossibility of reducing them to any sort of evolutionism.

Marxism-Leninism eliminates everything which, by distorting Marx's theory, may reduce it to an evolutionism. But a tendency to carry out such a "reduction" made itself felt when the Bolshevik Party took the road of "revolution from above." Some of Stalin's formulations encapsulate the conceptions on this point which gradually became dominant in the Bolshevik Party. Examples are the formulation which refers to the idea of a succession<sup>[125]</sup> of modes of



production, *presented as "natural "* (from which follows the idea of the need, always, for "steps forward"), and the formulation according to which a retreat to an earlier phase would be "senseless, stupid and unnatural."<sup>[126]</sup>

This idea makes of history *a succession of linear advances which take place irreversibly*. It does not allow it to be seen that *struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road is inevitable*. It tends to render inconceivable the possibility of a "restoration of capitalism," or to allow this to be conceived only as a consequence of external aggression. Thereby, the capacity of the Party and the masses to combat the danger of capitalist restoration due to internal social forces is gravely compromised.

To the effects of the changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation which have just been discussed we must add those which, while connected with those changes, resulted mainly from the strengthening of the "*ouvriériste* " component in Bolshevism.

page 551

(c) *The development of the effects of the ouvriériste component in the Bolshevik ideological formation* <sup>[127]</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century a line of demarcation separated the *proletarian* positions of revolutionary Marxism from the *ouvriériste* positions of other components of the organised labor movement.<sup>[128]</sup> Revolutionary Marxism gives primacy to the *political role* which the proletariat must play in order to bring about change in the relations of production. It shows that, if it is to play this role, the proletariat must fulfill a function of *leadership*, and that it can do this because there are *other classes* which can be its *allies* in the socialist revolution. *Ouvriériste* conceptions refuse to consider the primacy of the political role of the working class. They treat as secondary the question of class alliances and emphasize *one-sidedly* the defense of the workers' immediate interests -- or else they appear to assume that, *in any case*, the working class, by virtue of its place in production and its specific forms of organization, stands "spontaneously" at the head of the revolutionary processes in countries where industry plays a sufficiently considerable role.

*Ouvriérisme* can take on many different forms. Its existence is not necessarily obvious to members of the organizations of the working class who want to fight for socialism. From this point of view, the fight which Marx and Engels had to wage against the *ouvriérisme* of Lassalle and his supporters is highly significant. A quick survey of this fight will enable us to appreciate better the nature of the contradictions which developed within the Bolshevik ideological formation with special acuteness at the end of the 1920s.

A particularly explicit *ouvriériste* formulation is to be found in the draft program which was produced to serve as the basis, in 1875, for the formation of a socialist workers' party in Germany, and of which Marx wrote an important critique.<sup>[129]</sup> He attacked a paragraph in the draft which declared that "the emancipation of labour must be the work of the working class, relatively to which all other classes are only *one reactionary*

page 552

mass."<sup>[130]</sup> To this formulation Marx counterposed that of the *Communist Manifesto*, which, while describing the proletariat as being the only "really revolutionary class" confronting the bourgeoisie, recognizes the *dual nature* of the "middle classes," including the peasantry, who are *both* reactionary in so far as they depend upon the old modes of production and revolutionary in view of their "impending transfer into the proletariat."<sup>[131]</sup>

Marx stresses the contrast between these two formulations. He shows that statements such as that which figures in the Gotha Program, presenting the proletariat as the *only* revolutionary class, entail serious consequences. One of them is the *isolating* of the working class, *depriving it of allies*, and so *preventing it from playing a leading role*. Another is the orienting of the Party towards a policy which is concerned mainly with the immediate material advantages that the working class can derive from its struggles, since it is assumed not to be concerned with relations of alliance with other classes. Under these conditions the predominant political line can easily assume a *statist* character.<sup>[132]</sup> Since the working class does not practice a policy of alliances, *it has to impose the effects of its policy on the other classes, and, for this purpose, to use state coercion* -- which actually implies an unavowed "alliance" with the agents of this coercion. Finally, the "state framework" of the activity assigned to the working class, and the material privileges which it is thus called upon to win for itself, serve as the basis for a *nationalist orientation*,<sup>[133]</sup> breaking with the internationalist demands which are inherent in any revolutionary proletarian struggle.

The existence of an *ouvriériste* component in the Bolshevik ideological formation manifested itself concretely on more than one occasion. One of its material bases was the quite special integration of the Party in the working class, which was a consequence of the particular magnitude assumed, in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, by struggles peculiar to the working class. This *ouvriériste* component had for its theoretical condition the specific role often ascribed in the Party to the technological forms of industrial production in the formation of class consciousness.<sup>[134]</sup>

page 553

Historically, the *ouvriériste* component in the Bolshevik ideological formation was more or less influential depending on the conjuncture of the class struggle. It grew strong during "war communism," when Bukharin, Trotsky, and others spoke in a one-sided way of the working-class character of the Soviet state, gave priority to production, and underestimated the requirements of the struggle needed in order to *win the masses* for the aims of the revolution.<sup>[135]</sup> It grew weaker at the beginning of the NEP period, when the necessity of strengthening the worker-peasant alliance became vital for the Soviet power (although for many Party members this was seen as only a temporary, tactical necessity, not a strategic necessity for the whole period of transition to socialism). It grew strong again toward the end of the NEP period, owing to the sharpening of the contradictions and to the illusion (engendered by the strengthening of the *state machine*) that these contradictions could be resolved by means of rapid accumulation realized through state coercion: this accumulation, it was assumed, would strengthen the working class by increasing its numbers, and by changing the "mentality" of the peasantry and bringing about total "*unity*" between them and the working class as a result of their use of modern means of production which would put industry and agriculture *on the same technological foundation*.

The principal political and ideological effects of the strengthening of the *ouvriériste* component in the Bolshevik ideological formation must now engage our attention.<sup>[136]</sup> I shall begin by examining its effects on policy regarding recruitment to the Party.

### (1) *Policy on recruitment to the Party*

At the time of the Thirteenth Party Congress (May 1924) *ouvriériste* conceptions wielded a certain influence, in connection with the role played at that time by the Party's organizations in the great industrial centers of Leningrad and Moscow, which were led by Zinoviev and Kamenev, respectively. That congress adopted a resolution which defined the aim of a 50 percent working-class membership of the Party. (Molotov

page 554

even thought in terms of raising the working-class proportion to 90 percent.) The resolution required that the target of 50 percent be reached within twelve months.<sup>[137]</sup> It was not reached.

A temporary weakening of the *ouvriériste* component in Bolshevism was shown at the Fourteenth Congress (December 1925), being reflected in the adoption of a new line on recruitment, which gave a bigger place to the peasants. However, the ideological resistance of the middle cadres of the Party was such that recruitment of peasants remained, as we have seen, very slight.

The *ouvriériste* component in the Bolshevik ideological formation was shown also in the fact that greater significance was attributed to *class origin* than to *class position*. Consequently, there was a tendency to deny that poor and middle peasants could take up, ideologically, *revolutionary proletarian positions*, whereas these were supposed to develop "spontaneously" among workers employed in industry.

This mechanistic conception can be carried so far that in effect it is transformed into its opposite. It leads easily to the view that industrial work leaves *so deep an imprint* that it is enough for a person to have been engaged in it for a certain time for him to be "definitively" established in "proletarian positions" -- hence the importance attributed to "*working class origin*," as against *actual occupation, that is, present integration in production relations*.

Thus, *ouvriériste* conceptions tend to identify one's ideological class position with one's original class situation. This identification was current among the supporters of Proletkult, and it became gradually accepted on a fairly wide scale, even after Proletkult had ceased to exercise any real influence. It was clearly formulated in Pletnev's article entitled "On the Ideological Front," where he said that "scholars, artists, engineers, etc.," *who have emerged from the working class will produce a "proletarian class culture and no other"* -- a culture quite different from that produced by their counterparts of bourgeois origin. As Lenin remarked, this was "utter fiction."<sup>[138]</sup> Such a fiction confers upon cadres who are of

page 555

working-class origin -- or who have merely spent some time working in industry -- a working-class "essence" which is supposed to endow them with qualities they can never lose. It is in the personal interest of these cadres to support this fiction. What the latter actually does is to contribute to abandonment of the struggle aimed at ending the separation between manual and mental work, and to underestimating the need for all cadres, even those "of working-class origin," to take part in manual work.<sup>[139]</sup>

## (2) *The role assigned to technology and form of "evolutionism"*

In the Bolshevik ideological formation, *ouvriériste* conceptions were often combined with a conception of social development which gave a front-rank role to "technological progress," and consequently to technicians.

During the first phase of the NEP (down to 1925) the ideological elements which accorded this role to technology and technicians were not specially influential. In that period the problem of technological change was not yet on the agenda: the essential task was to get the existing factories working. Nevertheless, even then, these ideological elements produced certain political effects. This was the case with the *order of priority* followed in the reactivation of the factories which had ceased to function in 1920-1921. The dominant tendency was to try and get

back into operation, first and foremost, the *large-scale enterprises*, the most up-to-date -- which was not always politically correct. Lenin many times directed the Party's attention to the role that should be played by *small-scale industry*, especially rural industry, which served the peasants directly. The Party's official decisions took account of this principle, but, *in practice*, these decisions were applied only reluctantly. *The pressure of the managers and technicians of the large-scale enterprises* tended to hold back their application, in the name of efficiency and of the "*technological superiority*" of large-scale industry.

page 556

Similarly, from the start of the NEP, there was the problem of the "scientific organization of work." The way that this problem was approached shows clearly the influence of "*technicist*" elements in ideology. In order to appreciate how this influence was exerted we must first recall the way in which questions of technology were dealt with after the end of 1925.

At that time the period of "restoration" was regarded as having been completed: thereafter, the problem known as "reconstruction" was to be the order of the day. Discussion of this problem was concentrated chiefly on how much was to be invested in industry, on the respective priorities of the various branches of industry and agriculture, and on the way in which investment would be financed. The question of the technology to be used in the new factories was, however, hardly touched on. It was, in a sense, decided in advance, for it seemed "*self-evident*" that this technology must be the most "advanced," the most "highly mechanized" possible, and that the model of the very large enterprise must be preferred to any other. (In those days they spoke of "giant factories," just as, later, they were to speak of "giant *kolkhozes*"). It was implicitly accepted that this technology and these factories were most likely to "produce" a revolutionary proletariat devoted to the cause of socialism. The presence of "*ouvriériste-technicist*" conceptions is all the more obvious here<sup>[140]</sup> because the implicit "choice" made *considerably increased the amount of investment needed* in order to obtain a certain volume of production, and also necessitated *massive imports*. The Soviet Union was, in fact, not then in a position to produce for itself all the "up-to-date" equipment which this orientation made it necessary to acquire. This was to have obvious effects on the policy followed in relation to the peasantry, entailing, first, restriction of the supply of goods to them, and then increased exactions from agriculture without any counterpart, *so as to increase the exports needed in order to pay for foreign equipment*.

Other political and social effects also require our attention, namely, those which developed at the level of the production

page 557

process, and concerned the bigger place taken in social life by the *technicians, specialists*, and "*experts*." These effects followed from the special role which assertion of the primacy of the most "up-to-date" technology assigned to dead labor (embodied in machinery) and technical knowledge (historically "concentrated" in the engineers and technicians), to the disadvantage of the living labor contributed by the immediate producers, by the workers themselves.

We can now look back at the way in which, in the first years of the NEP, the problem of the "scientific organization of work" was taken up, and show the contradictions which developed in this connection. It is significant that the persons who were, in the first place, responsible for this "organization" were former activists of Proletkult<sup>[141]</sup> and that their efforts produced two apparently contradictory tendencies<sup>[142]</sup> which, moreover, ended by *merging under the direction of the technicians*, at a conference of NOT held on March 10, 1924.

This conference adopted the theses put before it by Kuibyshev,<sup>[143]</sup> condemning as anti-Marxist the identification of NOT with "a complete system of the organisation of work" and

emphasizing, together, *mechanization, rationalization of production, and intensification* of labor. NOT became thereafter more and more a matter for specialists -- though this did not, of course, prevent the holding of workers' production conferences, at which problems of increasing productivity were also discussed. Those specialists took charge of the organization of work and "improved" the wage system by developing the system of payment of bonuses -- but also of the imposition of penalties and fines. In this way the obvious "rightist" effects of the *ouvriériste*-technicist conceptions emerged.

After 1926, power in the domain of the organization of labor was practically taken away from the trade unions and concentrated more and more in the hands of managements and specialists. Emphasis was now laid much more on technology than on liberating the initiative of the workers. A social and political consequence of this line was that technicians and

page 558

experts were made privileged persons, both as regards remuneration<sup>[144]</sup> and as regards authority.<sup>[145]</sup>

### (3) *Distrust of, or disdain for the peasantry*

What was characteristic of the NEP was the will to consolidate the worker-peasant alliance, but this will was obstructed where many Party members were concerned by a profound distrust of the peasantry. This distrust was due, in part, to the tension which developed between the Soviet power and the peasants during "war communism." Stalin warned Party members working in the rural areas against this when he stressed, in 1924, the need for Party members to show confidence in the non-Party peasant and to treat him as an equal.<sup>[146]</sup>

But distrust of the peasantry had its roots also in the *ouvriériste* conceptions which were present in the Bolshevik ideological formation. This was not expressed only in an "ultraleft" form. It even assumed, quite often, an openly "rightist" form, implying disdain for the peasantry and a sort of appeal for unity between workers and intellectuals against the peasantry. There are some writings by Maxim Gorky which express this tendency very clearly. They are worthy of particular attention because Gorky, who at first showed reserve toward the October Revolution, later came to support the Soviet power. In the early 1930s this writer enjoyed great prestige among most Party members, and especially among the leaders.

It is therefore to be recalled how Gorky thought of the Russian peasantry, and how he contrasted the peasant with the "townsman," whom he described (regardless of the social class to which this person belonged) as alone capable of "progress" and "reason." In a work entitled *The Russian Peasant*, which he wrote in 1922, Gorky said: "The townsman's labour is varied, stable and enduring. . . . He has subordinated the forces of nature to his high aims, and they serve him like the jinns of the Eastern fables served King Solomon. . . . He has created around him an atmosphere of reason. . . ."<sup>[147]</sup>

page 559

With this "townsman" Gorky contrasts the peasants, about whom, he says "my thoughts weigh very heavily upon me."<sup>[148]</sup> In his eyes, it is generally true that "the people want to eat as much as possible and work as little as possible, they want to have all rights and no obligations."<sup>[149]</sup> He considers that these characteristics are especially applicable to the Russian peasants, who, moreover, he says, are opposed to all progress: "The village greets with distrust and hostility those who attempt to introduce into its life something of themselves, something new, and it rapidly expels them from its midst."<sup>[150]</sup>

In the pages that follow, expressions of disdain accumulate. For Gorky, the "psychology" of the Russian peasant is concentrated in the saying: "Don't run away from anything, but don't do anything."<sup>[151]</sup> He quotes a Russian historian who says, describing the peasants: "'a multitude of superstitions and no ideas.' This sad judgment is confirmed by the whole of Russian folklore."<sup>[152]</sup> As he sees it, the Russian peasantry has no historical memory of its own revolts. It has forgotten those who led them -- Bolotnikov, Stephan Razin, Pugachev: "All this left no trace either on the Russian peasant's daily life or on his memory."<sup>[153]</sup>

So far as the peasant masses are concerned, the Russian people seem to him incapable of change, and he adds: "I think that a feeling of particular cruelty, cold-blooded . . . is exclusively peculiar to the Russian people."<sup>[154]</sup>

There is no point in going on: all the clichés of the bourgeoisie and landowners terrified of peasant revolts are to be found in Gorky's writings.

Subsequently, though he did not repeat such crude formulations, disdain and fear of the peasantry continued to be a feature of his thinking. And it was this same disdain and fear of the peasantry which influenced some Party members who passed easily from an anti-kulak policy to a policy of repression against the peasantry as a whole.

True, from 1928 on this "slippage" took place under pressure of the accumulated difficulties arising in relations between the peasantry and the Soviet power, especially when the interests of the peasant masses were sacrificed to the aim of achieving the maximum tempo of industrialization. But

page 560

what made this slippage possible, that is to say, acceptable to the majority of Party members, was the reactivation of ideological elements which led them to conclude that "civilization" had to be imposed on the peasants by means of a "revolution from above" and the application of measures aimed at checking on the peasants' activity by surrounding them with cadres who, so far as possible, were of urban origin. In fact, even the machines which were supposed to be capable of changing the peasants' "mentality" were not entrusted *to them*, but were concentrated in "machine-and-tractor stations," and operated by technicians and workers, not by the collective farmers themselves.

The ideological elements of distrust in relation to the peasantry which were reactivated in 1928-1929, and which had a decisive influence at that time, were already at work, though in a minor key, during the first years of the NEP, and obstructed the creation of a genuine *political alliance* with the peasants. They contributed to making the worker-peasant alliance seem a mere *tactical* necessity, essentially temporary, and not a fundamental *strategic* necessity.

The interpretation of the NEP as a mere tactical necessity is to be found in many writings produced long before the "great change," and even in Stalin's writings, although, as we know, he called upon Party members at that time to show confidence in the peasants. Thus, in the speech he made at the Thirteenth Conference of the Moscow Region, on January 27, 1925, he said: "The peasantry is the only ally that can be of direct assistance to our revolution *at this very moment*. It is a question of direct assistance just now, at the present moment."<sup>[155]</sup> And he added, a little later:

As you yourselves are aware, this ally is not a very staunch one; the peasantry is not as reliable an ally as the proletariat in the developed capitalist countries. But, for all that, it is an ally. . . . That is why, *particularly at the present moment*, when the course of development of revolutionary and all other crises has slowed down somewhat, the question of the peasantry acquires exceptional importance.<sup>[156]</sup>

About a year later, on February 9, 1926, Stalin returned to this question, in replying to three correspondents. In this

page 561

reply, he made explicit what he had implied in January 1925, so expressing political distrust toward the peasantry as a whole:

It seems to me that you are somewhat offended at my calling the peasantry a not very firm ally, an ally not as reliable as the proletariat of the capitalistically developed countries. . . . Must I not tell the truth bluntly? Is it not true that, at the time of the Kolchak and Denikin invasions, the peasantry quite often vacillated, siding now with the workers, now with the generals? And were there not plenty of peasant volunteers in Denikin's and Kolchak's armies?[157]

These formulations clearly show principled distrust toward the peasantry, who were seen as an ally neither firm nor reliable. They suggest the possibility of a split in the worker-peasant alliance, which might occur if a situation of international revolutionary crisis were to develop to a sufficient degree in the "capitalistically developed countries" (as the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern expected in 1929), making "unnecessary" the political line of active alliance with the peasant masses.

(4) *The alliance between workers and intellectuals and the "rallying" of the old intelligentsia*

The conception which ascribed a revolutionary role to the proletariat not because of the nature of the class contradictions in which it is integrated but because of its connection with "modern technology," with "town life" and, indirectly, with "science," easily led to putting "on the same plane" the working class and those who were seen as working "to develop science." More generally, this conception helped to make the intellectuals appear as a political "vanguard." In a minor form, this conception was present in the Bolshevik ideological formation. It appeared in a major form in some of Gorky's writings. Some extracts from these deserve to be quoted, as they enable us to define an ideological trend which played a significant role in the Soviet Union.

page 562

In his essay on *The Russian Peasant*, Gorky did not shrink from writing, in defiance of all historical truth, that "the *whole* of the *Russian* intelligentsia . . . for almost a whole century has manfully attempted to set on its feet the ponderous Russian people, lying lazily, negligently and lucklessly on its soil. . . ."[158]

According to Gorky, the *Russian* intelligentsia carried out in this way a task of decisive importance, starting to awaken "common sense" among the peasants. The political implication of this conception of the historical role played by the intellectuals was clearly expressed by Gorky in a later work of his, written in 1924, when he said:

The fundamental obstacle on the path of Russia's progress towards Europeanisation and culture is the fact of the overwhelming predominance of the illiterate countryside over the town, the zoological individualism of the peasantry, and its almost complete lack of social feelings. The dictatorship of the politically literate workers *in close alliance with the intelligentsia* was in my view the only possible escape from a difficult situation, especially complicated by the war which brought still further anarchy into the countryside. . . . *The Russian intelligentsia* -- the educated people and the workers -- was, is, and will long remain, the only cart-horse that can be harnessed to the heavy load of Russian history.[159]

Here Gorky opposed to Lenin's conception of an alliance between the workers and the peasants a quite different conception, that of an alliance between the working class and the Russian intelligentsia.

The Bolshevik Party never formally accepted this view, but, in the contradictory whole which constituted the Bolshevik ideological formation, ideas close to those formulated crudely by Gorky were present and were *manifested on the plane of practice*.

One of the first expressions of this ideology is to be found in a resolution adopted by the Thirteenth Party Congress, in May 1924, after Lenin's death.<sup>[160]</sup> The principal aspect of this resolution is its *ouvrièrisme*. It calls, in a one-sided way, for mas-

page 563

sive recruitment to the Party from among the working class.<sup>[161]</sup> On the other hand, it says practically nothing about the need to recruit members from among the poorest sections of the peasantry.

However, there was another aspect to this resolution which was later to assume great importance because it corresponded to the new situation which a section of the intelligentsia was soon to occupy in the Party. This second aspect appears in the paragraphs dealing with Party members of nonworker origin. The resolution says that they must be removed from the Party "if they have not shown themselves to be Communists by improving the work of some organisation of the state, the economy etc., and have not had direct contact with the worker and peasant masses."<sup>[162]</sup>

In this document, being a "Communist" has nothing to do with taking up a class position, with adherence to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, or with a way of living and acting which follows from this position and these principles, since it is possible to show oneself a "Communist" by improving the work of organizations of the State, the economy, etc. This criterion opens the Party's doors to intellectuals, administrators, and specialists who carry out "correctly" their tasks in the state machine, regardless of their class position and whether or not they adhere to the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat. This was an "opening" toward the intelligentsia which echoed Gorky's preoccupations (without explicitly coinciding with them).

The same Thirteenth Congress passed another resolution<sup>[163]</sup> certain passages of which pointed the same way. This was the appeal which the Congress addressed "to the advanced rural intelligentsia, and especially to the rural schoolteachers and the agrarian specialists," as the "vehicle in the countryside of the policy of the Party and the Soviet power."<sup>[164]</sup> This appeal was issued not to the poor and middle peasants, but to a section of the intelligentsia, which, until then, had shown itself mainly anti-Communist.

Nine months after the Thirteenth Party Congress, in January 1925, Zinoviev spoke at the first congress of schoolteachers

page 564

held under Soviet rule. After recalling the hostile attitude maintained until shortly before this time by the schoolteachers, Zinoviev said: "We can now say to the working class of our country that the schoolteachers and the working class have understood each other and finally come to an agreement, that the teachers of the U.S.S.R. and the Communist Party have concluded an unbreakable alliance."<sup>[165]</sup>

These sentences did not describe reality, but they set forth a program which closely resembled Gorky's thesis. This program set the aim of "winning" the peasants through the



schoolteachers, who were called upon to be "the vanguard of the countryside" -- which presupposed according to Zinoviev, that they did not become the "spokesmen" of the peasants (not, at any rate, of the peasants as "traders").<sup>[166]</sup>

In the months that followed, various strata of the intelligentsia "rallied" to the Soviet power. In March 1925, the VTsIK, meeting, by way of exception, at Tiflis, received a delegation of doctors who presented a declaration of loyalty. One of the members of the VTsIK, Petrovsky, greeted this event as a manifestation of the alliance between "labour and science." In May 1925 the Third Congress of Soviets received a delegation of university rectors, an event which was also seen as a "rallying" by a section of the intelligentsia. Finally, in September 1925, when the two-hundredth anniversary of Russia's Academy of Sciences was celebrated, the "reconciliation" of the world of learning with the Soviet power was made the theme of many articles and speeches, including a speech by Zinoviev to the Academy itself.<sup>[167]</sup>

Actually, these "rallyings" did not mean in the least that the intelligentsia as a whole accepted the prospect of socialism. What was happening was, in the main, a rallying to an established political authority, the recognition of an accomplished fact. That this fact was recognized was certainly a great victory for the Bolshevik Party, but it was of an ambiguous nature. Most of the members of the intelligentsia who "rallied" in this way aimed either at ensuring their survival in material conditions which were on the upgrade, or at installing themselves in the machinery of state. And, in so far as this installation took

page 565

place without the intelligentsia having been ideologically transformed, and without this machinery having been revolutionized, the overwhelming majority of the intellectuals functioned as agents of bourgeois practices, both on the plane of management of enterprises and on that of teaching, scientific and technological research, art, and literature.

The maintenance of these practices affected at the same time the *new* intelligentsia, the new cadres of proletarian origin, and thus constituted a factor, in the reproduction of bourgeois social relations, the existence of which was one of the objective bases of a bourgeois path of development. The latter did not necessarily coincide with an extension of the "private" enterprises, but could fit in quite well with the rise of large-scale state-owned industry.

(5) *The accelerated and one-sided development of large-scale industry, and Great-Russian chauvinism*

From 1928-1929 the "maximum" (actually one-sided) development of large-scale state-owned industry, to be equipped with the "most up-to-date" technology, created an objective situation that was still more favorable to penetration by many members of the old intelligentsia into the economic and administrative apparatuses of the Soviet state. True, this penetration had its ups and downs, for the vigilance of the Bolshevik Party regarding bourgeois intellectuals remained acute. Nevertheless, the decisive problem, that of ideological influence of the old intelligentsia upon the "new Soviet intellectuals," could not be dealt with by vigilance alone.

What was needed here was a struggle to transform the ideological apparatuses and *against the separation between mental and manual work* -- and this struggle was not undertaken. It was all the less undertaken because the numerical growth of the new intelligentsia gave rise to the illusion that this stratum, being partly of working-class origin, did not run the risk of falling under the influence of bourgeois ideology --

page 566

their class origin serving, somehow, to "safeguard" their class position.

In fact, this was not so, and the new intelligentsia -- integrated in apparatuses which reproduced the essentials of the social relations characteristic of the old university, scientific, technological, and even administrative apparatuses -- was largely dominated by the ideology of the old intelligentsia. One of the components of that ideology was Russian nationalism. It was this that determined many of the "rallyings" which took place when the great industrial projects of the First Five-Year Plan were drawn up and put into effect. The emphasis placed on these projects and on the role of "vanguard technology" revived the bourgeois nationalism of the old intelligentsia. In their view, the priority realization of these projects was not destined to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat but to turn Russia into a "modern great power," a "Europeanised" country, as Gorky put it.

The bourgeois nationalism of the old intelligentsia which rallied to the Soviet power at that time, and the influence it exercised upon Soviet scientists, researchers, and technicians, and, through them, upon many cadres, favored the reactivation of that "Great-Russian chauvinism" which was already present in the Bolshevik Party, as Lenin had pointed out in 1922.<sup>[168]</sup>

Thus, the series of changes which took place after 1928 in the Soviet social formation entailed very important changes in the Bolshevik ideological formation. Some of the political consequences of these changes made their appearance comparatively soon. These were the ones I have mentioned. Others took some years to make themselves felt, and will have to be analyzed later.

### Notes

1. The problem of these contradictions was discussed in volume I of this work, especially pp. 469-475. [p. [502](#)]
2. Lenin, *CW*, vol. 4, pp. 211-212. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Lenin's "[Our Programme](#)" in *Articles for "Rabochaya Gazeta"*. -- DJR] [p. [502](#)]

page 567

3. The presence of ideological notions in every science accounts for the need for rectifications. It means that the pair of concepts, "science and ideology," does not describe two contrasting poles which are mutually exclusive, but two opposites which interpenetrate. A system of scientific knowledge is what it is insofar as the elements of science in it predominate over the elements of ideology. The non-exclusive character of science and ideology explains why Lenin was able to speak of Marxism as "the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat" (*CW*, vol. 31, p. 317 [*Transcriber's Note*: See Lenin's "[On Proletarian Culture](#)". -- DJR]), and why Marx could say that the proletarian ideology is that which the proletariat has to recognize as correct because it *corresponds* to the place occupied by the working class in the production relations. [p. [502](#)]

4. A problem arises here: may not the process of the impoverishment and obscuring of the principles and ideas of revolutionary Marxism, which can affect Marxism (as historically constituted through its merging with the working-class movement) attain such a degree (in the case of a particular ideological and political trend) that what results has no longer anything but an illusory connection with revolutionary Marxism? Undeniably, this can happen. This process then engenders a "revisionism" which is merely a parody of Marxism. The appearance of a "revisionism" has as its corollary the appearance of a Marxism of the new epoch which joins battle with it. On this subject G. Madjarian makes an important observation: "The fight against 'revisionism' cannot be waged by conserving, or, rather, by merely reappropriating, Marxism as it existed historically in the previous period.

Far from being the signal for a return to the supposed orthodoxy of the preceding epoch, the appearance of a 'revisionism' is a symptom of the need for Marxism to criticize itself ("Marxisme, conception stalinienne, révisionnisme," in *Communisme*, May-August 1976, p. 44). [p. 503]

5. Said by Marx in the later 1870s, and quoted by Engels in his letter of September 7, 1890, to *Der Sozialdemokrat* (Marx and Engels, *Werke*, vol. 22, p. 69). [p. 503]
6. Hence, for example, the critiques by Marx and Engels of the "Gotha" and "Erfurt" programs drawn up by the German labor movement. [p. 503]
7. This "overlooking" was sometimes conscious falsification. Thus, in the 1891 German edition of *The Civil War in France*, edited by Engels, the latter spoke plainly of "the Social-Democratic philistine," but in the versions printed at the time

page 568

the word "Social-Democratic" was replaced by "German," so as to hide from readers the divergences between Engels and the Social Democratic Party. The manuscript of this work is in the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow: the "correction" is not in Engels' handwriting (Marx and Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, pp. 34 and 301, n. 18). [p. 503]

8. The divergences between Marx's revolutionary theory and the Marxism of German Social Democracy were not usually "proclaimed" by Marx and Engels, but nevertheless they did not hide them. They wrote of them not only in their critiques of the Gotha and Erfurt programs but also on a number of other occasions. To make a survey of these divergences (which were not, as a rule, expressed explicitly), it is necessary to refer to several writings. Here I will mention only: Marx's interview for the *Chicago Tribune*, January 5, 1879, on "Social-Democracy, Bismarck and the Anti-Socialist Law" (published in German in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, vol. XII, no. 1 [1964]; in Russian in *Voprosy Istorii R.P.S.S.*, no. 10 [1966]; and in French in Marx and Engels, *La Social-Démocratie allemande*, Collection "10/18," Paris, 1975, p. 97); Marx's notes on Bakunin's book *Statism and Anarchy* (*Marx and Engels and Lenin on Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*, pp. 147-152); and some observations by Engels in his 1885 article "[On the History of the Communist League](#)" (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. 2, pp. 173 ff.). [p. 503]
9. See volume I of the present work, especially pp. 20-32; 113 ff.; 368 ff.; 497 ff. [p. 504]
10. One of these currents was, as we shall see, Bogdanovism, the ideological system worked out by Bogdanov (see below, p. 570, n. 26). In modified forms, this current was constantly present in the Bolshevik ideological formation. [p. 504]
11. In his foreword to D. Lecourt's book *Lyssenko*, L. Althusser makes some important points on this subject (p. 13). [p. 504]
12. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 173-174. [p. 505]
13. See the resolution on the Five-Year Plan adopted in April 1929 by the Sixteenth Party Conference, in *K.P.S.S. v rezolyutsiyakh*, vol. 2, p. 453. [p. 507]
14. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 167. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[Plenum of the C.C., C.P.S.U.\(B.\)](#)". -- DJR] [p. 507]
15. As we have seen, this "condemnation" had been, however, largely political and "organizational," without the thorough *analysis* which would have enabled theoretical knowledge and revolutionary Marxism to make progress. This was pointed out

page 569

by Mao Tse-tung when, speaking about the late 1920s and early 1930s, he said that "at that time the Soviet Union had won victory over the Trotskyites,

- though on the theoretical plane they had only defeated the Deborin school" (Mao, talk on March 10, 1958, at the Chengtu Conference of the Chinese Communist Party; in Stuart R. Schram, ed., *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, p. 97 [my emphasis -- C. B.]. The "Deborin school" was a philosophical trend condemned by Stalin in 1930 for "Menshevik idealism."). [p. 507]
16. Some of these questions had arisen already in Lenin's lifetime, as has been shown in volume I of the present work (e.g., pp. 419 ff., 523 ff.).
  17. I here discuss a theme already touched upon in volume I of the present work (pp. 23-29). [p. 508]
  18. These are fundamental themes in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of Marx and Engels, developed in their principal subsequent writings. [p. 509]
  19. Marx, letter to Weydemeyer, March 5, 1852 (*Selected Correspondence*, p. 86); see also the writings assembled by E. Balibar in his book *Sur la dictature du prolétariat*, pp. 207 ff. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Balibar's [On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat](#). -- DJR] [p. 509]
  20. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 21. [p. 509]
  21. It is true that not all the writings of Marx and Engels show with the same rigor the connection between the processes of social reproduction and of social transformation (e.g., certain formulations in the 1859 [preface](#) to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* are not free from ambiguity). This is why we need to consider the writings of Marx and Engels, and Marxism as it has existed historically, as a contradictory combination of formulations and analyses which are revolutionary (in their content and in the conclusions that can be drawn from them) and others which are less rigorous. The latter are, as a rule, provisional and transitional expressions of the thought of Marx and Engels, and of those who have sought to carry their analyses further, but they do not form part of revolutionary Marxism. It was historically inevitable that this should be so, and that the second category of formulations and analyses should have also played a part in Marxist writings after Marx's time, especially in periods when the development of the revolutionary movement of the masses was not itself helping to draw a line of demarcation between the different writings of Marx and Engels. I return to this question later (above, p. 514). [p. 509]
  22. Stalin, *Leninism*, pp. 591 ff. This essay was first published in

page 570

- September 1938 as part of the [History of the C.P.S.U.\(B.\): A Short Course](#). [p. 509]
23. Another interesting aspect of this work is that it was written not in the heat of polemic but after the main battles fought under the theoretical banner of its theses were over, at a moment when it was not necessary to "overstress" certain formulations in order to carry more conviction -- at a moment, too, when a first summing-up of what had been done under the banner of these theses could be attempted. [p. 509]
  24. Stalin, *Leninism*, pp. 591-660. [p. 509]
  25. *Ibid.*, pp. 600 ff. [p. 510]
- Alexander Bogdanov was born in 1873. He belonged to the Bolshevik wing
26. of the RSDLP. At first close to Lenin, he drew away from Bolshevism after the revolution of 1905. In 1907 he formed an ultraleft faction, which published the journal *Vpered*. He was at that time an Otzovist (on this point, see volume I of the present work, p. 117) and was criticized as such by Lenin. He then broke with Bolshevism. Already before 1907 Bogdanov had published (between 1903 and 1906) a neo-Kantian book which was wholly un-Marxist: *Empiriomonism*. Lenin attacked the empiricist and idealist-fideist conceptions in this work in his [Materialism and Empiriocriticism](#) (1909).
- The subsequent development of Bogdanov's ideas was set out synthetically in his book on "tectology," which appeared in two volumes in 1913 and 1917. It confirmed his break with Marxism and dialectics: to

contradiction he counterposed "equilibrium" and "organisation."

In 1917 Bogdanov returned to Russia, where he gave the first impulse to the Proletkult ("Proletarian Culture") group: see below, note 29. In 1922-1923 he opened the New Economic Policy, leading the group called "Workers' Truth." He was arrested, but released soon afterward. In 1924 some writings of his in which he expounded his economic and social ideas were published by the State Publishing House and the Communist Academy. Subsequently he devoted himself, as a doctor, to scientific research, and died in 1928. [p. 510]

27. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 600. [p. 510]
28. The absence, in such a work, of a critique of these "sociological" ideas of Bogdanov's is obviously not accidental (see below, pp. 572-574, n. 39). [p. 510]
29. *Proletkult*, a movement founded after the revolution of Feb-

page 571

ruary 1917, sought to represent "proletarian culture" and promote its progress. It was led by persons close to Bogdanov. After the October Revolution it acquired a certain importance, tending to develop its own political line, based on Bogdanov's ideas -- non-Marxist conceptions presented in Marxist "terminology."

Proletkult defended mechanistic positions in ideology. It saw the development of proletarian class consciousness as based primarily on *production practice*, and not on class struggle. It systematically underestimated the effects of the capitalist division of labor on the proletariat and was inclined to deny the necessary role of theory and of the proletarian party.

After October, Lenin considered it necessary to fight Bogdanov's ideas again, especially in the form which they assumed in Proletkult, an organization which was joined by some Bolsheviks. He waged this fight on the ideological and organizational planes. His interventions against Proletkult culminated in a circular from the CC, dated December 1, 1920, placing the Proletkult movement under the direction of the Commissariat of Education, thereby reducing its importance. These interventions led also to Bukharin's writing, with Lenin's agreement, a severe ideological critique (*Pravda*, November 22, 1921) and articles published in *Pravda* on October 24-25, 1922, and January 4, 1923, over the signature of Y. Yakovlev, which were directly inspired by Lenin. The second of these articles was entitled, significantly: "Menshevism under the Mask of Proletkult." On these matters, see *Ästhetik und Kommunikation. Beiträge zur Politischen Erziehung*, nos. 5-6 (February 1972), pp. 149, 200-201; also Karl Eimermacher, *Dokumente zur Sowjetischen Literaturpolitik 1917-1932*; and Lenin's correspondence with Bukharin about Proletkult, in Lenin, *Über Kultur und Kunst* (a collection of his writings on these subjects). Some of Lenin's critical writings on these questions were published for the first time in the symposium *Voprosy kultury pri diktature proletariata*, reproduced in *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, nos. 5-6 (February 1972), pp. 113 ff. See also Lenin, *O literature i iskusstve*, pp. 470-472; and *CW*, vol. 35, p. 554 [Transcriber's Note: See Lenin's note of September 27, 1922 "[To N. I. Bukharin](#)". -- DJR], and vol. 45, pp. 392-393. [Transcriber's Note: See Lenin's [Letter to Members of the Politbureau of the R.C.P.\(B.\) C.C.](#)". -- DJR] [p. 510]

30. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 602. [p. 510]
31. See above, pp. 508 ff. [p. 510]
32. Marx, *A Contribution*, p. 21. [p. 510]

page 572

33. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 604. It will be observed that this formulation makes use of the pair of concepts "nature" and "society," which are treated as being "external" to one another, but with the second of them presented as an

"environment." In this way the formal conditions are set up for a pseudo-dialectics contrasting two "entities" between which relations are external in character (I shall come back to this question, above, pp. 536 ff.) and which can develop between them "a process of exchange." This theme is also explicitly present in Bukharin's book *Historical Materialism* (published in 1921). In this work we see clearly that if the problem of "social development" is presented like that, it *tends* to show this development as depending on changes in the relations between "society" and "nature," these changes being ascribed to the "development of the productive forces." Thus, Bukharin writes: ". . . the internal structure of the system [i.e., the internal equilibrium of a society -- C. B.] . . . must change *together with the relation existing between the system and its environment. The latter relation is the decisive factor* ; for the entire situation of the system, the fundamental forms of its motion . . . are determined by this relation only" (ibid., p. 79). In the chapter entitled "The Equilibrium Between Society and Nature" Bukharin adds that the productive forces determine social development because they express the interrelation between society and its environment, and that in this interrelation is to be found the "cause producing a change in the system itself" (ibid., p. 107).

A similar pseudo-dialectics is employed in Bogdanov's *Vseobshchaya organizatsionnaya nauka (tektologiya)*, a German translation of which (*Allgemeine Organisationslehre: Tektologie*) appeared in Berlin in 1926.

[p. 511]

34. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 604. [p. 511]
35. Ibid., pp. 605-606. [p. 512]
36. Ibid., p. 606. According to Stalin, the "unity" of these two aspects is realized in "the process of production of material values" (ibid., p. 607) -- which implies that they are, to begin with, external to each other. [p. 512]
37. Ibid., p. 607. It will be observed that the problem of reproduction of the production relations, a fundamental point in Marx's analyses, is never mentioned. [p. 512]
38. Ibid., p. 608. [p. 512]
39. The fundamental role here attributed to the instruments of production calls for special attention, because it has a number of

page 573

ideological and political implications (to which I shall return). We notice again the similarity between Stalin's formulations just quoted and those of Bogdanov. For the latter, indeed, the productive forces tended to be reduced to *technology*. Thus, in 1923 he wrote: "In the first place, a development takes place in the domain in which man directly confronts nature, in the domain of the technological relations between man and nature, in the domain of the productive forces" (Bogdanov, "Principles of Organization of Social Technology and Economy," in *Vestnik Kommunisticheskoy Akademii*, vol. 4 [1923], p. 272, quoted in *Geschichte der Politischen Ökonomie des Sozialismus*, by a group of Leningrad University writers, p. 59). Here, as can be seen, "productive forces" are reduced to "technological relations."

The similarity between the role ascribed in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* to the instruments of production and some of Bogdanov's formulations brings out the contradictory relations that existed between Bolshevism and Bogdanov's ideas. These were both relations of the *presence* (albeit denied) of modified forms of Bogdanovism within the Bolshevik ideological formation, and relations of exteriority. These specific relations, and the prestige which Bogdanov continued for a long time to enjoy in the Bolshevik Party, explain the equally contradictory, and unusually "carefully expressed" judgments on Bogdanov pronounced by the Party's leaders.

Thus, in his speech of December 7, 1927, at the Fifteenth Party Congress, Stalin mentioned the names of some former members of the Party who had left it as a result of serious divergences. Among these was Bogdanov, concerning whom he uttered this appreciation, with which none of the others were honored: "He was one of the most prominent leaders of our

Party" (Stalin, *Works*, vol. 10, p. 380 [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[The Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.\(B\)](#)". -- DJR]). This formulation was remarkable when one remembers that Bogdanov had broken with the Party long before, and had gone on developing conceptions which were officially considered to be incompatible with Bolshevism.

Again, in 1928, when Bogdanov died, Bukharin published in *Pravda* (April 8) an article paying homage to the *theoretician* who had passed away, saying that he had "played an enormous role in the development of our Party and in the development of social thought in Russia."

In the same article, however, Bukharin described Bogdanov

page 574

as a "semi-Marxist," adding that his "divergence from orthodox Marxism and from Bolshevism became . . . for Bogdanov a personal tragedy" (Cohen, *Bukharin*, pp. 15, 414).

In his contribution to *Geschichte der Politischen Ökonomie des Sozialismus* (chapter 3), L. D. Shirokorad recalls the great polemic in the 1920s against Bogdanov's conception of the productive forces, but he considers it possible to state that this polemic ceased at the beginning of the 1930s because by then "the influence of non-Marxist traditions in the elaboration of this category" had been, "in the main, overcome" (p. 77). If we look closely we find that the polemic ceased, in fact, because eventually a convergence came about between the positions thereafter defended by Bolshevism and the Bogdanovist conception of the productive forces and their role. (In the Russian original of the book quoted -- *Istoriya politicheskoy ekonomiki sotsializma* -- the page references are 62 and 88.)

[p. 513]

40. All that we find are "the labouring masses," who are "the chief force" only in "the process of production" (Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 608), and do not figure as the agents of social change. This is why, says Stalin, "historical science . . . must above all devote itself to the history of the producers of material values" (*ibid.*). [p. 513]
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 608-609. [p. 513]
42. See above, p. 569, note 21. [p. 514]
43. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, pp. 19-539, and vol. 6, pp. 105-212. [p. 514]
44. Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 40. [p. 514]
45. Marx, *Contribution*, p. 21. [p. 515]
46. Marx, *Capital* (London), vol. I, p. 493. [p. 515]
47. Marx, "Results of the Immediate Process of Production," appendix to *Capital* (London), vol. I, p. 1026. [p. 516]
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 1064-1065. [p. 516]
49. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 608 (my emphasis -- C. B.). [p. 516]
50. The obscuring of the role of production relations was overdetermined by the increasing identification of these relations with the juridical forms of ownership (see above, pp. 527 ff.). [p. 517]
51. Those conditions were analyzed in volume I of the present work. [p. 518]
52. See above, pp. 217 ff. [p. 518]
53. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 171 (my emphasis -- C. B.). [p. 519]
54. It will be observed that Stalin attached the formulation that he put forward to an extract from Lenin's report on the tax-in-kind to the Tenth Party Congress. An essential point in that report

page 575

was Lenin's denunciation of "dreamers" who (during the period of "war communism") "thought the economics basis, the economic roots of small farming could be reshaped in three years" (Lenin, *CW*, vol. 32, p. 216

[*Transcriber's Note*: See Lenin's [Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.\(B.\)](#). -- DJR]).

Lenin emphasized that what was decisive was the transforming of the peasants' mentality and habits, which required time, and necessitated that they learn to *organize themselves* and *administer*. True, in order to strengthen his argument against harmful haste, Lenin added that the changing of peasant mentality would have to have also a *material basis*. It is not difficult to see that this meant something quite different from changing the "mentality" of the peasants through the use of machinery and tractors.

[p. 520]

55. We know that, in fact, the changeover to collectivization did not wait for mechanization -- and that was correct. What was not correct was that the tempo at which collectivization was developed was essentially the result of harsh coercion of the peasant masses. [p. 520]
56. *K.P.S.S. v rezolyutsiyakh*, vol. 2, p. 391. This passage echoes strikingly the claims made by Bogdanov, who, in an article published in 1918 by *Proletarskaya Kultura*, declared that proletarian consciousness, the "working together in comradeship," would "deepen with the development of technology, . . . broaden with the increase of the proletariat in the towns, in gigantic industrial enterprises" (*Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, nos. 5-6 [February 1972], p. 81). We know that Lenin's attitude to the development of large towns was very different. In an interview with H. G. Wells he said that there was no future for them under socialist conditions (*Russia In The Shadows*, pp. 133-134). [p. 520]
57. We have already seen that positions such as this reproduced those of Bogdanov and, more generally, of *Proletkult*. Thus, in an article published in *Pravda* on September 27, 1922, by one of the leaders of the movement, and annotated critically by Lenin, we read:

The class consciousness of the proletariat is formed in the process of capitalist production, that is where collective class psychology is born. . . . This "being" determines the class consciousness of the proletariat. It is alien to the peasant, the bourgeois, the intellectual . . . The peasant depends, in the process of his individual work, upon the forces of nature. . . . The proletariat enjoys completely clear relations with the external world. . . . On these

page 576

statements Lenin merely notes, in the margin: "And what about the religion of the workers and peasants?" (*Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, nos. 5-6 [February 1972], pp. 116-117; Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 570-571).

The simplistic formulations of Bogdanovism encouraged the proletariat to *isolate* itself from the rest of the masses, in the name of a *unique "existential experience"*. They led those who were influenced by these formulations to *look on the peasants with distrust*, to see in them unreliable allies for the working class and to regard the NEP as a dangerous "concession" which must be taken back as soon as possible. Conceptions akin to this were obviously at work in the second half of the 1920s. [p. 521]

58. This slogan appeared in Stalin's speech, on "the tasks of business executives," to the leaders of industry, on February 4, 1931 (Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 43 [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[The Tasks of Economic Executives](#)". -- DJR]). See the remarks of B. Fabrègues, "Staline et le matérialisme historique," in *Communisme*, nos. 22-23 (May-August 1976), p. 60. [p. 521]

- The theme of a "spontaneous" disappearance of the division between manual and mental labor was not explicitly developed by the Bolshevik Party, but it was implicit in the absence of any concrete struggle to prepare for this disappearance, or even any reflection on the conditions for such a struggle.

This theme was explicitly developed by Bogdanov, who wrote, for example:



In so far as . . . the machine is improved and made more complex, and becomes more and more a mechanism functioning automatically, which requires living supervision, conscious intervention, constant active attention -- the unification of the two types [of labor, manual and mental] becomes more obviously necessary. . . . Henceforth, this tendency to synthesis is manifested sufficiently to paralyze the influence of the previous separation between "spiritual" and "physical" labor in the workers' thinking (Bogdanov, *Allgemeine Organisationslehre*, p. 55, quoted in *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, nos. 5-6 [February 1972], p. 95).

The same theme is met with in Bogdanov's work *Art and the Working Class*, where he writes: "Mechanised production 'heals,' so to speak, the basic cleavages in the nature of work." Emphasizing the role of the machine, Bogdanov adds that the worker "is in command of this mechanical slave. The more

page 577

complex and perfected the machine, the more the worker's task is reduced to one of supervision, examination of all the phases and conditions of the machine's operation, and intervention in its operation when this becomes necessary."

On the basis of this conception, it is not surprising to find Bogdanov saying that "it is only in the development of labour in the development of the forces of production, that lies the fulfilment of the socialist ideal" (quoted in F. Champarnaud, *Révolution et contre-révolution culturelle en U.R.S.S.*, pp. 429, 439). [p. 52b]

60. *The German Ideology*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 59. [p. 522]

61. Proletarian *hegemony* is necessary for the *transition* from capitalism to communism. This hegemony must be distinguished from *domination*. We know that the idea figures in Lenin's analyses (see volume I of the present work, pp. 93-94). It was developed by Gramsci: but it is not clear whether for Gramsci it had exactly the same meaning as for Lenin. [p. 522]

62. It is not possible to present these analyses here: that would provide the subject for a distinct piece of research. Let us merely recall the passage in which Marx notes that "the existence of revolutionary ideas in a particular period presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class" (*The German Ideology*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 60), pointing out that what is needed for a revolution is "the formation of a revolutionary mass which revolts not only against separate conditions of the existing society but against the existing 'production of life' itself, the 'total activity' on which it was based [i.e., the totality of social relations -- C. B.]" *ibid.*, p. 54).

Marx emphasizes that, in this struggle, *the revolutionary class changes itself*, and that this change is indispensable if it is to be able to build a new society: here we are very far away from an ideological transformation resulting from the struggle for production, technological changes, and "education." To be recalled, too, in this connection, is the passage from Marx quoted in volume I of the present work, p. 177. [p. 522]

63. *K.P.S.S. v rezolyutsiyakh* (1954 ed.), vol. 3, p. 195, quoted in Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, vol. 2, p. 446. [p. 523]

64. This conception was to be reaffirmed at the Sixteenth Party Congress. It led, in 1929, to explicit revision of one of the fundamental theses of Marxism concerning the withering away

page 578

of the state -- a thesis which Stalin said was "incompletely worked out and inadequate" (see volume I of the present work, p. 30). He offered no

- "justification" for this revision other than the fact of what had happened. [p. [523](#)]
65. *History of the C.P.S.U.(B.)*, p. 305. [p. [523](#)]
66. Marx used the expression "revolution from above" to describe the policy of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte in an article of 1859, "Reaction is Carrying out the Programme of the Revolution" (Marx and Engels, *Werke*, vol. 13, p. 414); and Engels, in his *Critique of the Erfurt Programme*, described the effects of Bismarck's policy in 1866 and 1870 as "revolution from above" (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. 2, p. 436). On this point, see Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, vol. 2, pp. 446 ff. [p. [523](#)]
67. Lenin, *CW*, vol. 25, pp. 381-491. It is noteworthy that the *History of the C.P.S.U.(B.)*, which gives a systematic survey of Lenin's principal writings, refrains from giving any presentations of *The State and Revolution*. [p. [524](#)]
68. See volume I of the present work, p. 461. The whole letter is extremely interesting (Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 352-357). [p. [524](#)]
69. Marx, "[First Outline](#) of *The Civil War In France*," in Marx and Engels, *On The Paris Commune*, pp. 149-150. [p. [525](#)]
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 153, 156. In these same pages Marx says that the sweeping away of the "state parasites" implies that the new form of rule means "doing away with the state hierarchy altogether and replacing the haughteous [sic] masters of the people by its always removable servants, . . . paid like skilled workmen . . . doing their work publicly, acting in broad daylight, with no pretensions to infallibility, not hiding itself behind circumlocution offices . . ." (*ibid.*, pp. 154, 155). [p. [526](#)]
71. See volume I of the present work, especially pp. 329 ff. and 490 ff. [p. [526](#)]
72. On Lenin's statements and on the role subsequently ascribed to juridical forms of ownership, by the Bolshevik Party, see volume I of the present work, especially pp. 20 ff. and 143 ff. [p. [527](#)]
73. It is in [The Poverty of Philosophy](#) that Marx deals most systematically with this subject, but it constantly recurs in his major writings, as also in those of Engels, especially those produced after the Paris Commune. [p. [527](#)]
74. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. I. p. 188. [p. [527](#)]

page 579

75. See above, pp. 302-303. [p. [528](#)]
76. Let me recall that Lenin pointed out the variety of forms of existence of capitalist relations in the Soviet state enterprises: the failure to keep the salaries of the technicians and specialists down to the level of the workers' wages; the existence of a single manager, nominated by the central bodies and solely responsible for the running of the enterprise; the "financial autonomy" which enabled the enterprise to dispose of part of its profits. See volume I of the present work, pp. 54, 54 n.; 156; 166; 509-510. [p. [528](#)]
77. Enterprises controlled by this bourgeoisie of a new type are what is called in China "capitalist enterprises with a socialist signboard." What is carried on in them is "private production" pursued under cover of state ownership. The functioning of such enterprises tends to reproduce the features of enterprises belonging to big joint-stock companies (or to the capitalist state), regarding which Marx observed: "It is private production without the control of private property" (*Capital* [Moscow], vol. III, p. 429). [p. [529](#)]
78. Such cooperation implies that the "plan" is worked out essentially from below upward -- that it results from centralization and coordination of initiatives and proposals coming from the producers themselves. [p. [530](#)]
79. I shall come back to this point in the next section of this chapter. [p. [531](#)]
80. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 705. A longer extract from this passage will be found above, p. 49. [p. [531](#)]
81. The idea of struggle between market anarchy and harmonious development through planning is presented in Preobrazhensky's *The New Economics*, pp. 55-66. [p. [531](#)]

82. Ibid., p. 58. This maximum accumulation was to be obtained by charging prices which ensured a transfer of value to the state sector (ibid., pp. 147 ff.). [p. [531](#)]
83. Ibid., p. 63. The idea of "social technology" is one of the key ideas in Bogdanov's book on "tectology." [p. [532](#)]
84. See above, pp. 62, 64 ff. [p. [532](#)]
85. *Reznik in Planovoye Khozyaistvo*, no. 1 (1931), p. 49. [p. [533](#)]
86. Marx observes that bourgeois economists are interested only in the magnitude of value, not in how it is determined, for "under the coarse influence of the practical bourgeois, they give their attention, from the outset, and exclusively, to the quantitative aspect of the question" (*Capital* (London), vol. I, p. 141). [p. [533](#)]

page 580

87. See volume I of the present work, pp. 19 ff. [p. [535](#)]
88. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 592. This exposition forms the first part of his essay, already quoted, on *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*. [p. [536](#)]
89. Ibid. [p. [536](#)]
90. Ibid. [p. [536](#)]
91. Ibid., p. 595. [p. [537](#)]
92. Lenin, *CW*, vol. 38, p. 223. [p. [537](#)]
93. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 595. [p. [537](#)]
94. See note [33](#), above. [p. [537](#)]

95. For Bogdanov the category of "organization," with all its organicist implications, was fundamental, and this led him to endow "society" (the more or less complete realization of the essence of organization) with the status of a *subject in history*. He wrote: "In technology *society* struggles with nature and masters it. Society organises the external world in accordance with the interests of *its* life and its development. In the economy, *society* organises the relations of collaboration and distribution among men . . ." (quoted in Champarnaud, *Révolution*, p. 441 [my emphasis -- C. B.]).

With Bogdanov we have an idealistic philosophy of history dominated by a "principle of organization," in the biological sense. According to this, *organization strives to realize itself* through history. Class societies are merely imperfect "realizations" of the principle of organization, owing to the contradictions that prevail in them and undermine them. But *the principle of organization must triumph in the end*. This triumph will be brought about by the socialist revolution, which puts an end to contradiction and ensures the victory of organization.

The proletariat thus figures as the *agent of realization of the idea of organization*, and socialist society as *the form of realization of an essence* which has been at work since the beginning of human society and will eventually be fulfilled. This fulfillment implies, in its turn, the emergence of a new "essence of Man." The idealistic character of this ideological construction, which corresponds to a specific philosophical humanism, is perfectly plain (see Lecourt, *Lyssenko*, p. 158, n. 20).

This idealistic construction enables Bogdanov to elaborate a "model" of socialist society which is characterized by centralization, rationalization, and the planning of tasks. The role of

page 581

the masses who make history is absent from this conception, while the role of the organizers and planners becomes fundamental. [p. [538](#)]

96. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 603. [p. [538](#)]

Let us recall here that Bogdanovism developed after a temporary ebbing of the revolutionary workers' movement, when, under the conditions of the Stolypin reaction and of a bourgeois agrarian policy, it was especially difficult for the labor movement to join forces with the peasant masses. In

this situation a small group of former Bolsheviks, headed by Bogdanov, worked out an ideological system which "glorified" the relative isolation of the working class of Russia. They issued ultraleft slogans and declared that the Russian proletariat would be able to play a leading role not through alliance with the peasantry but through the special position as organizer with which its special relationship with modern technology was supposed to endow it.

Bogdanov's philosophical theses provided theoretical conditions (abandonment of dialectical materialism) which made it possible to give an appearance of legitimacy to the "ultraleft" conceptions of the period. See on this two articles by Lenin: "[Certain Features of the Historical Development of Marxism](#)," in *Zvezda*, December 23, 1910, and "[Stolypin and the Revolution](#)," in *Sotsial-Demokrat*, no. 24 (1911), in *CW*, vol. 17, pp. 39-44 and 247-256). [p. 538]

98. Lenin, *CW*, vol. 38, p. 359. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Lenin's "[On the Question of Dialectics](#)". -- DJR] [p. 538]
99. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 255 ff. ("[The Industrialisation of the Country and the Right Deviation in the C.P.S.U\[B\]](#)"). [p. 539]
100. *Ibid.*, p. 293. [p. 539]
101. Lenin, *CW*, vol. 36, p. 594. On this point, see also volume I of the present work, p. 323. [p. 540]
102. *Ibid.*, *CW*, vol. 32, p. 178. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Lenin's "[Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.\(B.\)](#)". -- DJR] See also volume I of the present work, especially pp. 234, 398, 402. [p. 541]
103. At the Tenth Party Congress Lenin said "Comrades, let's not have an opposition *just now!*" (*CW*, vol. 32, p. 200 [my emphasis -- C. B.]). [p. 541]
104. These decisions were embodied in the "Resolution on Party Unity" adopted by the Tenth Party Congress, regarding which Lenin spoke of "an extreme measure that is being adopted specially, in view of the dangerous situation" (*ibid.*, p. 258). [p. 541]
105. Quoted in Carr, *The Interregnum*, p. 363. [p. 542]

page 582

106. At that time open debate ceased, and there were many cases of "rallying" to the general line. The contradictions in the Party seemed to have been "eliminated." In reality, they were reproduced in new forms: but that happened in connection with the problems of a period outside the limits of the present volume. [p. 542]
107. Lenin, *CW*, vol. 29, p. 183. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Lenin's "[Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.\(B.\)](#)". -- DJR] See volume I of the present work, pp. 271-272. [p. 543]
108. See above, p. 346. [p. 543]
109. Quoted in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 237 (my emphasis -- C. B.). [p. 543]
110. Zinoviev, *The Anti-Soviet Parties and Tendencies* (1922), quoted in Alexander Skirida, *Kronstadt 1921: Prolétariat contre bolchevisme*, pp. 26-27. Zinoviev was actually quoting Lenin's political report to the Eleventh Party Congress, on March 27, 1922 (*CW*, vol. 33, p. 278). [p. 544]
111. *Pravda*, August 23, 1924, quoted in Carr, *Socialism*, vol. 1, p. 104, n. 3. [p. 544]
112. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 6, pp. 186-188. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[The Foundations of Leninism](#)". -- DJR] This passage stresses the "spirit of discipline" with which the proletariat must be filled, and the Party's role as educator, but does not say anything about the role of the masses in educating the Party. [p. 544]
113. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 8, p. 41. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[Concerning Questions of Leninism](#)". -- DJR] [p. 545]
114. *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 49, 51, 53, 56. On this question see the article by Fabrègues in

*Communisme*, no. 24. [p. 545]

115. Meaning the thesis expounded by Lenin in 1902 in *What Is To Be Done?*, where he defended the theory of the union, through the Party, of Marxist theory with the labor movement (see Lenin, *CW*, vol. 5). This is not the place to discuss all Lenin's theses in *What Is To Be Done?* or the corrections to them which he made later on. [p. 546]
116. See above, p. 542. [p. 546]
117. Thus, Marx speaks of the need for "free scientific inquiry" (*Capital*, vol. I, p. 92), and declines to "submit" to the ideas of the German Party. Similarly, Mao Tse-tung says that "it is . . . necessary to be careful about questions of right and wrong in the arts and sciences, to encourage free discussion and avoid hasty conclusions" ("On Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," in *Four Essays on Philosophy*, p. 114). [p. 546]
118. Lecourt, *Lyssenko*, pp. 60 ff. Lecourt shows (pp.92 ff.) the *social foundations* of Lysenkoism. [p. 547]
119. A. Badiou draws attention to this point when he notes that what

page 121

he calls "the promotion of the principle of totality" (resulting from nonsubordination of the "laws of dialectics" to the primacy of contradiction over identity) may well serve to facilitate infiltration by metaphysics (*Théorie de la contradiction*, p. 38). [p. 547]

120. This interpretation began to appear as soon as Marx's ideas became widespread. It is found in the different variants of "economism." At the beginning of the twentieth century it was generally accepted in the Second International. But it is alien to Marxism-Leninism. Thus, Lenin's formulation of the theory of the "weakest link" in the imperialist chain, which made it possible to see tsarist Russia as the "locus" of the first victory of the socialist revolution, implies rejection of an evolutionist interpretation of Marx's ideas, an interpretation which was usually linked with dominance of the problematic of the productive forces. (See volume I of this work, pp. 32 ff.) [p. 548]
121. These criticisms appeared in an article published in October 1877 in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*. Marx's reply is known to us from a copy sent by Engels to Vera Zasulich, and which appeared in a journal published by Russian revolutionary émigrés in Geneva, *Vestnik Narodnoy Voli*, no. 5 (1886). [p. 548]
122. Quoted in Blackstock and Hoselitz, eds., *Marx and Engels on The Russian Menace to Europe*, pp. 217-218. Marx's reference is to his study of primitive accumulation as this took place in Europe. [p. 549]
123. *Ibid.*, p. 278. See also volume I of the present work, pp. 214 ff. [p. 549]
124. Thus, Engels showed the specific role played in the fate of the Roman world of the later Empire, and right down to the ninth century, by the fact that it "despised work as slavish" (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. 2, p. 314). [p. 549]
125. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 607. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "Dialectical and Historical Materialism". -- DJR] [p. 550]
126. *Ibid.*, p. 596. These formulations imply the idea of a "natural order" of *succession of modes of production*, meaning that it is not men who make their own history. *History appears as a "subject" of which men are merely the instruments*. So early as in *The German Ideology* Marx condemned any turning of history into a "subject," when he wrote: "History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which uses the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces, handed down to it by all preceding generations. . . . This can be speculatively distorted so that later history is made the goal of

page 584

- earlier history. . . . Thereby history receives its own special goals and becomes 'a person ranking with other persons' " (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 50). [p. 550]
127. On the connections between *ouvrièrisme* and "technicist" conceptions, see above, pp. 516 ff., and 518 ff. [p. 551]
128. Proletarian positions start from the place of the proletariat in the relations of production (and in the process of production), from its *total separation* from the means of production. *ouvriériste* positions start from the place of the working class in the labor process, its role in relation to tools and machinery: they are thus "technicist" in character. [p. 551]
129. Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* was written in 1875. At first, the leaders of the German Social Democrats opposed its circulation, and it was not published until 1891 by the Party journal, which even then "censored" parts of it (see Engels' [letter](#) to Kautsky, February 23, 1891, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. 2, pp. 38-39). Subsequently Marx's original text was reconstituted on the basis of his manuscript. [p. 551]
130. *Ibid.*, p. 20. [p. 552]
131. *Ibid.* [p. 552]
132. In the Gotha Programme the statist character of the line put forward is expressed in the formula: "The German workers' party strives . . . for the free state" (*ibid.*, p. 22). Marx comments that this must mean a state which is "free" in relation to the workers -- as it is already, he adds, in the German Empire and in tsarist Russia (*ibid.*, p. 25). [p. 552]
133. Hence the formulation in the Gotha Programme stating that "the working class strives for its emancipation first of all within the framework of the present-day national state." This state ment also contradicts the *Communist Manifesto*, which says that the workers' struggle is international in content and national only "in form" (*ibid.*, p. 21). [p. 552]
134. See above, note 2. [p. 552]
135. See volume I of the present work, pp. 391-392. [p. 553]
136. The consequences examined here are those which directly affected the Soviet Union itself. The consequences for the international Communist movement are not considered: they would require treatment at considerable length. [p. 553]
137. *XIII-y Syezd RKP(b)*, (1963), pp. 505, 606; quoted in Rigby, *Communist Party Membership*, p. 137. [p. 554]

page 585

138. *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, nos. 5-6 (February 1972), p.119; Lenin, *O literature*, pp 572-573. [p. 554]
139. Owing to the mechanistic and metaphysical nature of this conception, the categories of "change" and "transformation" are pushed into the background, whereas in dialectical materialism they occupy a central position. When this "inhibition" reaches a certain stage, it favors the replacement of ideological struggle by a policy of repression. [p. 555]
140. This presence had, of course, social bases. The preference given to very large, "up-to-date" production units seems to correspond to the role played by the heads of the enterprises, a role the importance of which seems to have been proportionate to the size of the enterprises they controlled. [p. 556]
141. It is to the point to note that the role played by supporters of Proletkult in the development of "NOT" was fully in accordance with Bogdanov's ideas. Thus, in the article entitled "On the Ideological Front" (*Pravda*, September 27, 1922), written by V. Pletnev, a spokesman for Proletkult it is clear that Bogdanov's ideas about "organization" lead to the masses being treated as "material" falling within the competence of "specialists." Pletnev says that, after the October Revolution, specialists are needed not only in the domain of technology and the economy: "The age we live in assigns us the task of forming a new type of savant: the *social engineer*, the engineer specialising

in organisation, who is able to cope with phenomena and tasks which are getting bigger and bigger" (*Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, nos. 5-6 [February 1972], pp. 120-121). In his annotation of this article Lenin put two query marks against this proposition (see Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 574-575).

The same ideological tendency was shown in the formulation describing the proletarian writer as an "engineer of souls." Here we see again how the ideology of technology and organization becomes transformed into the ideology of technicians and organizers. [p. 557]

142. See above, pp. 238 ff. [p. 557]
143. *Trud*, March 11 and 12, 1924, and *Byulleten II-oy Vsesoyuznoy Konferentsii po NOT*, pp. 27-36, quoted in Carr, *Socialism*, vol. I, p. 384. [p. 557]
144. See above, pp. 248 ff. [p. 558]
145. At the beginning of 1926 this authority was, nevertheless, far from firmly established. The increasing gap between the in-

page 586

comes of the workers and those of the engineers, specialists, and managers gave rise to hostility on the part of some workers. Faced with this development, the Party called for strengthening labor discipline. Stalin demanded that the workers cease to show distrust toward the cadres and managers of industry, who, he said, were performing a task which required that they be "surrounded with an atmosphere of confidence and support" and not "castigated" or "kicked" (Stalin, *Works*, vol. 8, pp. 144, 146 [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[The Economic Situation of the Soviet Union and the Policy of the Party](#)". -- DJR]).

These formulations show that the increasing concentration of authority in the hands of the specialists and administrators was coming up against a certain resistance from the workers. As we have seen, the role and authority of the specialists and administrators was challenged on a number of occasions, especially at the beginning of 1928, with the development of the production conferences (see above, pp. 222 ff.); but we have seen, also, that the role played by these conferences soon diminished. [p. 558]

146. "[The Party's Immediate Tasks in the Countryside](#)," in Stalin, *Works*, vol. 6, pp. 315 ff. [p. 558]
147. R. E. F. Smith, ed., *The Russian Peasant 1920 and 1984*, pp. 13-14. [p. 558]
148. *Ibid.*, p. 12. [p. 559]
149. *Ibid.* [p. 559]
150. *Ibid.* [p. 559]
151. *Ibid.* [p. 559]
152. *Ibid.*, p. 13. [p. 559]
153. *Ibid.*, p. 15. [p. 559]
154. *Ibid.*, p. 16. [p. 559]
155. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 7, p. 26. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[Concerning the Question of the Proletariat and the Peasantry](#)". -- DJR] [p. 560]
156. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29 (my emphasis -- C. B.). [p. 560]
157. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 99. [*Transcriber's Note*: See Stalin's "[The Peasantry as an Ally of the Working Class](#)". -- DJR] [p. 561]
158. Smith, *The Russian Peasant*, p. 26. (I have emphasized the words "whole" and "Russian," which seem to me typical of Gorky's thinking -- C. B.) [p. 562]
159. Gorky, in *Russky Sovremennik*, vol. I (1924), p. 235, quoted in Carr, *Socialism*, vol. I, pp. 122-123 (my emphasis -- C. B.). [p. 562]
160. The resolution "On the Immediate Tasks of Party-Building," *K.P.S.S. v rezolyutsiyakh*, vol. 1, pp. 820 ff. [p. 562]
161. In this respect the resolution merely ratified the decision, taken not long before, to increase the Party's membership through a wide campaign of recruitment, known as the "Lenin enrol-

page 587

ment." Such mass-scale recruitment ran counter to Lenin's views, as expressed in a letter to Molotov in which he warned against the negative consequences of too rapid recruitment from among a mass of workers who, at that time, did not form a true proletariat, since many of the persons working in the factories were "petty-bourgeois who have become workers by chance" (Lenin, *CW*, vol. 33, p. 254). The situation described by Lenin was not basically different in early 1924. [p. 563]

- 162. *K.P.S.S. Vrezolyntsiyakh*, vol. I, p. 833. [p. 563]
- 163. "On Agitation and Propaganda Work," in *ibid.*, pp. 871 ff. [p. 563]
- 164. *Ibid.*, p. 875. [p. 563]
- 165. Quoted in D. Lindenberg, *L'Internationale communiste*, p. 317 (my emphasis -- C. B.). [p. 564]
- 166. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-327. [p. 564]
- 167. Carr, *Socialism*, vol. 1, pp. 121-122. [p. 564]
- 168. See volume I of the present work, pp. 420-426. [p. 566]

page 588 [blank]

page 589

## ***Part 5***

### ***The "great change" and the emergence of new contradictions***

It would be pointless to attempt to recapitulate here the results of the foregoing analyses. It is, however, necessary to discuss, for the last time, some of the explanations which have been and are still being offered for the "final crisis of the NEP." Depending on the explanation one accepts, one appreciates differently the real content of the "great change" at the end of 1929 and its class consequences.

One of the most widely accepted interpretations of the "final crisis of the NEP" states that, after 1928, a continuation of the NEP would have doomed agricultural production (and especially the production of grain for the market) to stagnation and even decline, thereby preventing the necessary development of industry. This is the way the situation was appreciated at the time by the Bolshevik Party. It was reaffirmed in the [\*History of the C.P.S.U.\(B.\)\*](#) which was approved by the CC in 1938 and in which we read the following:

All the signs pointed to the danger of a further decline in the amount of marketable grain. . . . There was a crisis in grain farming which was bound to be followed by a crisis in livestock farming. The only escape from this predicament was a change to large-scale farming which would permit the use of tractors and agricultural machines . . . , to take the course of amalgamating the small peasant holdings into large *socialist* farms, collective farms, which would be able to use tractors and other modern machines for a rapid advancement of grain farming and a rapid increase in the marketable



surplus of grain.<sup>[1]</sup>

This "economistic" interpretation cannot be sustained. At the end of the 1920s the potentialities of NEP farming were still considerable, and could have been quickly mobilized.

page 590

For that purpose it was necessary to isolate the kulaks politically and to give systematic aid to the poor and middle peasants, in particular by making available to them a minimum of the instruments of labor they needed, so that they might enter voluntarily and effectively upon the road to collective farming. Substantial positive results could have been quickly attained in that way, provided that there was no attempt to impose "from above" upon the peasants tempos and forms of organization which did not yet correspond to their aspirations. Experience showed that, by acting otherwise, by coercing the peasant masses, the kulaks were not isolated, while the development of "large-scale mechanized production" failed to give the expected stimulus to grain production and stockbreeding. On the contrary, for several years these branches of agriculture went down and down -- which nevertheless did not prevent industry from advancing at a fast rate.

Even today, though, we find repeated the interpretation of the "great change" as having been an "economic necessity" imposed by the "inevitable" stagnation and decline of agricultural production at the end of the NEP and by the contradiction which developed, as a result, between agriculture and industry. This interpretation is put forward today by Soviet economists and historians. Thus, in a work published in Moscow in 1964, the Soviet historian Yakovtsevsky repeated the thesis of the "exhaustion" of the potentialities of NEP agriculture and the resulting contradiction with the needs of industrialization. He wrote:

The lagging of agriculture behind industry . . . showed that the impulse to development given to agriculture by the October Revolution had, in the main, been exhausted. The old social basis -- small-scale individual peasant farming -- could no longer be the source of further development for agriculture. An urgent necessity had been created for agricultural production to move over on to the rails of large-scale collective farming.<sup>[2]</sup>

But it is one thing to assert the historical necessity, if socialism is to be built, developing collective farming, and quite another to assert, as this writer does, that there existed in

page 591

1927-1929 an "urgent necessity" to increase agricultural production through collectivization. This assertion is all the more senseless in that, as has been pointed out, the actual fall in essential agricultural production which occurred after the "great change" of 1929 did not prevent a massive increase in industrial production.

The foregoing "economistic" interpretation is frequently combined with a more "political" one which presents the problem of the necessity of the "great change" in terms of the threat from the kulaks, which is alleged to have increased toward the end of the NEP owing to the increased economic role of the rich peasants. This combination of the two interpretations is used by J. Elleinstein when he writes, dealing with the situation at the end of 1927: "Industrialisation was still inadequate and agriculture was marking time, while the role of the kulaks was increasing in the countryside, like that of the Nepmen in the towns."<sup>[3]</sup>

As regards agriculture "marking time" this was due precisely to the adoption of measures which departed from the NEP line and provoked discontent among the peasant masses. As for the role played by the kulaks, this was a limited one, economically, and could easily have been reduced by relying firmly on the aspirations of the poor and middle peasants and helping them to organize themselves. The thesis of a constant and "inevitable" strengthening of the kulaks, to

which accelerated and immediate collectivization was the only answer, does not square with the actual situation. In 1927 the relative weight of the kulak farms in agricultural production was far from being decisive, and mobilization of the existing potentialities of the small- and middle-sized farms could quickly have reduced this weight, together with the dependence of the poor and middle peasants on the rich ones.<sup>[4]</sup> If it is possible to speak of a "strengthening of the kulaks" in the last years of the NEP, this is so only if we mean a certain increase in their *political influence* which resulted from the mistakes made by the Bolshevik Party in its relations with the poor and middle peasants.

The interpretation according to which the "great change"

page 592

was due above all to a mass rallying by the middle peasants to collective farming was put forward chiefly at the end of 1929. It does not stand up to an examination of the conditions in which collectivization took place, to observation of the rapid fall in the percentage of households collectivized which followed any relaxation of administrative pressure, or to consideration of the admitted "necessity" of carrying through collectivization in the form of a "revolution from above."

In fact, the way that the turn to accelerated collectivization was effected, and the way in which collectivization was carried out (with extensive use of methods of coercion) resulted from the "demands" of *a certain form and a certain tempo of industrialization*. These "demands" compelled the establishment of forms of organization of the peasantry and of agriculture (*kolkhozes* as large as possible, giant *sovkhozes*, machine-and-tractor stations) through which the state would be better able to *obtain in "sufficient" quantity* the agricultural produce which it needed, and *at prices which did not detract from the financing of investment in industry*.

The forms of agricultural organization set up after the abandonment of the NEP were such as to offer the possibility of levying from the peasantry a "tribute" sufficiently high to enable the industrialization plan to be realized. This expectation was only partly fulfilled. Owing to the conditions in which they were established, these forms of organization did not, for several years, enable essential agricultural production to be increased: but they did integrate the peasantry in a set of relations which deprived them of the ability to decide what they would or would not deliver to the state. The latter thenceforth possessed means of coercion through which it could force the peasants to supply it with quantities of produce corresponding more or less to the forecasts laid down by the central planning organs. These quantities could be, at certain times, so large that both the peasants' subsistence and the expanded reproduction of agriculture were endangered.<sup>[5]</sup>

Thus, the "crisis of the NEP" and the "great change" to which this led were determined above all by a policy of industrialization which aimed at very rapid growth rates for industry

page 593

and the introduction of the most "up-to-date" technology possible. This policy led, *in fact*, to the sacrificing of agriculture to the development of industry.<sup>[6]</sup>

This industrialization policy and the forms of collectivization which it called for were not at all dictated by the "general laws of the building of socialism" or by the "principles of Marxism." They resulted from *a complex social process in which what was most important was the relations between classes*. Here a decisive role was played by the evolution of relations between the working class, the Party, and the leaders of industry -- especially after the end of 1928, when the positions of the leaders of industry were strengthened, together with bourgeois

forms of labor discipline. An equally important role was played by the evolution of relations between the peasantry, the Soviet power, and the working class. These developments, with the changes that resulted from them, were directly due to class struggles. The outcome of these struggles depended partly on the past history of the contending classes and the conditions in which new social forces were emerging (in the apparatuses of the Party and the State, and also in the economic apparatuses). It depended partly, also, as we have seen, on the *ideological relations in which these classes were caught*, relations bound up with the history of these classes, and on changes in the Bolshevnik ideological formation. These changes determined (in the absence of any previous experience of socialist industrialization) the way in which the Party appreciated the meaning and implications of the economic and social contradictions, and also the way of dealing with these contradictions that seemed correct, or possible. It was in this unique history, which was also that of a revolutionary ideological formation, that the "crisis of the NEP" and the solutions found for it had their roots.

The uniqueness of this history does not, of course, signify that no *universal lessons* can be derived from it. These lessons concern the effects of class struggles upon the reproduction and transformation of social relations, of the economic basis, and of the superstructure. They concern also the class consequences of these changes, the way in which Marxism and

page 594

revisionism, the socialist road and the capitalist road, come into conflict, and the conditions for victory of one over the other.

In volume III of this work we shall see what were the principal long-term consequences of the changes undergone by the Soviet formation in the early 1930s. As for the more immediate consequences, which will also be examined in the next volume, it is important to emphasize at once their contradictory aspects. On the one hand there was the complete defeat of the private bourgeoisie, the numerical increase of the Soviet proletariat, the modernization of the economy, and a tremendous industrial advance, which contributed to the advance of the forces fighting for socialism throughout the world. On the other hand, the worker-peasant alliance was gravely weakened, the industrial development of the USSR became more and more one-sided, and the primacy accorded to technology tended to strengthen the role played by the technicians and by the administrative and economic apparatuses, and even by the apparatus of repression. Thus, contradictions of a new type emerged. The subsequent changes undergone by the Soviet social formation were determined by the class struggles which were to develop amid these new contradictions and by the way in which the Bolshevnik Party was to reckon with these contradictions and to try and handle them.

### Notes

1. [History of the C.P.S.U.\(B.\)](#), pp. 286-287. [p. 589]
2. Yakovtsevsky, *Agrarnye otnosheniya*, p. 297 (also in *Recherches internationales*, no. 85 [no. 4 of 1975], p. 59). [p. 590]
3. Elleinstein, *Le Socialisme*, p. 88. [p. 591]
4. *The History of the C.P.S.U.(B.)* mentions, moreover, that at the end of the NEP period "the process of the splitting up of the large farms . . . was still going on" (pp. 286-287). [p. 591]
5. This was the case at the beginning of the 1930s, a point to which I shall return in volume III. [p. 592]
6. It is necessary to say "*in fact*" because, according to the "plans," agriculture was also supposed to develop rapidly. [p. 593]

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