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ON THE STATE UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

ORGANISATION COMMUNISTE MARXISTE-LÉNINISTE

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ON THE STATE UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

The Political Resolutions of the Second Congress of OCML Voie Prolétarienne (VP) encapsulate our theoretical and political work and our experiences and debates on issues judged essential to the task of building up our organisation towards the creation of a communist party. As such, they do not erase the past and many of the questions that they fail to address or address only briefly are answered by referring back to other documents that predate the Second Congress. Nevertheless, because they constitute a synthesis and therefore necessarily a step forwards, these Resolutions will serve as the yardstick against which previous documents and theoretical work are to be measured.

OUR ON-GOING PROGRAMME AND STRATEGY REVIEW

When VP was founded in February 1979, we set ourselves the task of laying our theoretical foundations, with the guiding document stating that: "Marxist-Leninists still have to accomplish major theoretical tasks in order to crush opportunism theoretically and to guide its crushing in practice". This general declaration of intent reflected a certain vagueness concerning the objectives and the method that this task would entail and it was the international debate on the role and merits of Mao and the characterisation of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, later launched in Albanian in 1979, that shed some light on the matter. In a resolution dated July 1979¹, we stated: "[The general line of the International Communist Movement] cannot be established without developing the critique of modern revisionism. This calls for a critical study of the Third Communist International and Stalin's leadership in the USSR, an analysis of the sources of chauvinism and democratism around the experience of World War II and a study of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which is the greatest proletarian revolution of our time and whose contributions are essential for the proletariat to advance along the road to seizing power and consolidating that power."

We then went on to define our priorities in this regard involving a reappraisal of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat and an analysis of the crisis at the time and the theories surrounding the crises within the International Communist Movement (ICM). We made most progress on the first question, while falling behind on the second. Reappraising the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat called for a redefinition of the contents of the communist struggle, the process by which the transition from capitalism to communism takes place and the contradictions within the transitional society, ultimately leading us to reappraise our General Programme.

Such a reappraisal does not fall outside the realm of the class struggle and the concerns of the masses: the image of 'real socialism' has become severely diminished and the resulting absence of political perspectives capable of mobilisation plays a role in accelerating the waning of the workers' movement and the disarray of revolutionary organisations. And this is precisely what the ideological offensive by the bourgeoisie is all about: trying to bury the revolutionary perspective and the reference to communism once and for all by seizing on the ultimate failure of a given period of the communist movement to provide a liberal bourgeois explanation for it. The 'new philosophers', the 'new economists', the erstwhile militants, etc.; the traitors and the turncoats are turned into everyday media stars.

Despite being set as the immediate task in hand, the renewed definition of the General Programme and the objectives of the transition did not have an immediate miraculous effect. First, because a new line can never be fully accredited by its existence on paper alone. And second, because its effective translation into new practices encountered a series of adverse objective and subjective conditions that can be described as a 'backlash', but also owing to our own limits when questioning our theoretical and political legacy. Indeed, by reconsidering the communist programme and the transitional society, we had to renew our analysis of contemporary imperialism,

¹ Resolution of the Central Committee of the OCML Voie Prolétarienne on the unity of the International Communist Movement - July 7, 1979 - in "First reply to Enver Hoxha" <https://ocml-vp.org/article2169.html>

rethinking our strategic and tactical conceptions and breaking with a way of understanding both the internal and external workings of communist organising.

It was from 1981 onwards that the debate around all of these issues began within our ranks and the Second Congress only marks one particular stage in what is an on-going discussion. The reason why this debate has been so protracted and arduous is because we have torn down more than we have built up: by opening the floodgates to questioning our programmatic foundations, we effectively called everything else into question without providing any alternative solutions. We also came up against ingrained militant habits ('cast-iron' convictions), which may feel reassuring but are in actual fact counterproductive when set against the backdrop of the decline of the workers' movement.

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Introduction

In this article, we pursue our study of some of the key tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat as taught to us by the experience of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, in particular the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). In the previous article (see *La Cause du Communisme* N° 1), we examined the material basis of the existence of the bourgeoisie in the relations of production as they exist under socialism by critically examining “the Theory of the Productive Forces” that denies them. We showed how the ‘new bourgeoisie’ has used this theory to try to deny the continued existence of the bourgeois/proletariat class struggle throughout the period of transition to communism by advocating the capitalist road to development.

Here we shall address the question of the continuation of this class struggle with regards to the superstructure, focusing specially on the question of the state under socialism. On this issue, the revisionists usually express their political line in the following terms: after the proletariat and its Party have taken power through the success of the revolution, all that remains is to be done is to purge the State of the old bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements who necessarily still occupy important functions in the immediate wake of the revolution, together with a few bureaucratised ‘elements’ who become gentrified or infiltrate it. Once this has been achieved, a ‘correct political line’ suffices to guide the State in order for it to remain socialist forever, taken to mean that it no longer poses a threat in itself for the proletariat. Having thus become a mere instrument at the service of the proletariat, the State only remains to be used to manage the economy and organise the development of production. The stronger it becomes, the stronger the dictatorship of the proletariat. In line with the revisionist view that the establishment of socialist relations of production entails the wholesale abolition of the bourgeoisie, the state can be perfected until it becomes wholly ‘proletarian’ or ‘the state of the entire people’, depending on the case. Regardless of the different expression that they may use, what they all have in common is the idea that the state is a neutral instrument which need only be perfected and which must not under any conditions be allowed to wither away. However, in reality it is not simply the reflection of the existence of classes but also the very basis on which the new bourgeoisie reproduces itself and while the economic infrastructure certainly has a bearing on this, it is at the same time relatively autonomous from it.

Faced with this revisionist conception of the neutrality of the state, in this article we shall go on to show that the class struggle must and does inevitably continue within the state itself under socialism. Not least because its existence is determined by a type of social relations which, as we saw in our previous article, leads to the survival and reproduction of classes, whereby the class struggle must also be reflected in the state as a struggle for power between the advocates of the capitalist road and the advocates of the communist path (even if the state has been transformed). But also because the very state serves as a basis for the degeneration of the cadres and the rebirth of the new bourgeois, as particularly highlighted by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). For example, state ownership does not prevent private appropriation by those who hold power in the state (and who are also Party members in most cases): hence the emergence in the state (and the Party) of people who come to defend this appropriation from which they benefit in order to extend it and return to capitalism by wielding “the Theory of the Productive Forces” or other forms of the capitalist path (e.g. Yugoslavian self-management). It is true, therefore, that the very existence of the state, i.e. a special apparatus cut off from civil society, is in itself a form of social division of labour and thus a basis for the reproduction of the bourgeoisie.

What this article shows in essence is that while the socialist state is first and foremost an instrument of proletarian power, it is also a factor in the reconstitution of a new bourgeoisie and an obstacle to communism. Its transformation until it finally withers away is a question of class struggle.

1. Revolution: Seizing Power in the Superstructure

It is generally accepted that revolution involves one class seizing power from another. But of course the problem doesn't stop there. What follows on from there? "What is to Replace the Smashed State Machine?"² To this question Marxism replies: with an entirely new apparatus, the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will organise the exercise of power by the workers themselves and the withering away of the state throughout the protracted transition from capitalism to communism. On this point, Marxism has long since distanced itself from the anarchist current: "*We do not after all differ with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the aim. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of state power against the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the abolition of classes.*"³ Similarly, it has also long since separated itself from the reformists who dream of using the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie as it stands without the need to demolish it completely: "*The point is not at all whether the 'ministries' will remain, or whether 'committees of specialists' or some other bodies will be set up; that is quite immaterial. The point is whether the old state machine (bound by thousands of threads to the bourgeoisie and permeated through and through with routine and inertia) shall remain or be destroyed and replaced by a new one. Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the old state machine, but in this class smashing this machine and commanding, governing with the aid of a new machine. Kautsky slurs over this basic idea of Marxism, or he does not understand it at all.*"⁴

As we know, these fundamental theses were set out by Lenin in *The State and Revolution* (August 1917) and we need not return to them here. On the other hand, historical experience teaches us that it is not quite 'so easy' to build this new state, especially because it brings with it contradictions and serves a source of degeneration for those who fulfil its functions on a more or less permanent basis. When in August 1917 Lenin wrote in line with Engels that with the march towards communism "the state is slowly withering away", he meant that the transformation of the relations of production determines the withering away of the state, rendering it effectively 'useless'. But this should not be seen as a mechanical link. The state does not die out spontaneously because those who find it to their advantageous oppose its demise. There is a struggle on this ground too. As we shall go on to see, Lenin later recognised this when he wrote that to a certain extent the workers also had to revolt against the state on the grounds that takes a protracted struggle spanning several decades before the state (or rather the 'non-state') of the 'Commune' type that he envisaged in *The State and Revolution* would eventually "wither away".

In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin reiterates that the two key institutions of the State machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army⁵ and that the first decrees of the Paris Commune involved replacing them with the people in arms, the introduction of elected and revocable civil servants paid on a par with the workers, the abolition of parliamentarianism, etc., going on to state that, insofar as the 'distance' separating the special apparatus from civil society has effectively been reduced, then we have a new proletarian type of state that is beginning to wither and which is no longer a state per se but rather a 'Community' in the words of Engels.

Achieving this is not a matter of will alone nor having the right general ideas. Let us take Lenin's example in Russia. As early as 1918, the standing army had to be re-established in the face of imperialist attacks (Lenin set a figure of 3,800,000 men for it in 1919). At the same time, the Bolshevik authorities had no choice but to redeploy a number of Tsarist officers as well as many other specialists (engineers, etc.). Faced with the counter-revolution, drastic, urgent decisions had to be taken. The professional police (*Cheka*) was set up by decree on 20 December 1917, accorded material privileges, the right over life and death and special powers. In May 1918, faced with disarray in the countryside and famine, state officials, in this case the Commissariat (Ministry) for Supplies, were granted the right to overturn the decisions of local soviets and to take decisions for themselves.

² Lenin, "The State and Revolution" Ch. III,2

³ V.I. Lenin (1917) *The State and Revolution*, Collected Works, Volume 25, p. 381-492.
<https://www.marxists.org/ebooks/lenin/state-and-revolution.pdf> (p. 43)

⁴ Ibid (p. 80).

⁵ In France, there were 500,000 civil servants in 1571. Today [i.e. in 1982] there are around 3,000,000 (excluding employees in the nationalised sector employees and contract civil servants).

The urgency of the situation, the unprecedented difficulties caused by years of war (both imperialist and civil), the lack of conscience and education of the mass of the proletariat alienated by capitalist oppression and numerically weak all called for necessitated draconian measures ushered in with the Red Terror sparked by the assassination attempt on Lenin on 30 August 1918 all of which was done via the implementation of radical administrative measures.

Only the most mealy-mouthed critics can possibly imagine that the proletarian state can be built 'ideally' from scratch and claim that the Bolsheviks should not have taken such measures in such an extremely difficult historical context. Historical upheavals do not unfold unimpeded like the plot of a story. Although in *The State and Revolution* Lenin set out the broad guidelines for the birth, life and death of the proletarian state, it did not escape him that this could not be achieved 'at a stroke': "*Marx teaches us to avoid both mistakes; he teaches us to act with supreme boldness in destroying the entire old state machine, and at the same time he teaches us to put the question concretely [...] Let us learn revolutionary boldness from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures the outline of really urgent and immediately possible measures [...]*"⁶ and: "*There is no trace of utopianism in Marx, in the sense that he made up or invented a "new" society. No, he studied the birth of the new society out of the old, and the forms of transition from the latter to the former.*"⁷

And what are the difficulties that arise when rebuilding a new state immediately after the seizure of power? Let us continue with the Russian example.

We have already cited the importance of the military tasks which came to the fore between 1918 and 1921 requiring everything to be subordinated to the war effort, not to mention the herculean tasks of fighting famine and restoring a ruined economy, set back fifty years by the ravages of war. In this historical context of unprecedented destruction and disorder, what could the Bolsheviks use to rebuild a state? What did 'Soviet power' actually mean in the immediate future?

In the beginning, proletarian power cannot manage society without drawing on all sorts of specialists from the old regime such as engineers, scientists, technicians etc. who appropriated knowledge under capitalism. Here the fledgling proletarian state is faced with the problem that the overthrown old bourgeoisie retains, whereby "*The 'art' of state, military and economic administration gives them a superiority, and a very great superiority, so that their importance is incomparably greater than their numerical proportion of the population.*"⁸ And this bourgeoisie must be made use of to a certain extent because the proletariat cannot immediately 'simplify' the state apparatus as much as it should and straightway take over the management of all affairs. This is because the proletariat as a whole is neither sufficiently conscious nor educated. As Lenin reminds us, it is not enough to nationalise and confiscate "more than we have had time to count"⁹, in other words, more than the proletariat can effectively possess, control and manage itself (which requires more than revolution, but knowing how to take stock, count, analyse and manage). This relative incapacity of the proletariat inevitably leads to an administrative apparatus replacing it in part,¹⁰ an apparatus initially made up of those with the necessary knowledge. And this is clearly a source of degeneration: this apparatus tends expand of its own accord, cutting itself off from the masses and dominating them. This is what Lenin had to say in 1922 at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International:

"We took over the old machinery of state, and that was our misfortune. Very often this machinery operates against us. In 1917, after we seized power, the government officials sabotaged us. This frightened us very much and we pleaded: "Please come back." They all came back, but that was our misfortune. We now have a vast army of government employees but lack sufficiently educated forces to exercise real control over them. In practice it often happens that here at the top, where we exercise political power, the machine

6 V.I. Lenin (1917) *The State and Revolution*, Op. Cit. (p. 81)

7 Ibid (p. 35).

8 V.I. Lenin (1919) *Economics and Politics In the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* Collected Works, Vol. 30, pp. 107-117. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/oct/30.htm>

9 V.I. Lenin (1918) 'Left-Wing' Childishness, Collected Works, Vol. 27, pp. 323-334. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/may/09.htm>

10 Of course, the growth of the administrative apparatus can also be due to political errors on the part of the party, its inability to fully mobilise the masses or to the influence of the reformists on the soviets who tend to diminish the role played by the masses. This is an issue that we address throughout the rest of this article.

functions somehow; but down below government employees have arbitrary control and they often exercise it in such a way as to counteract our measures. At the top, we have, I don't know how many, but at all events, I think, no more than a few thousand, at the outside several tens of thousands of our own people. Down below, however, there are hundreds of thousands of old officials whom we got from the tsar and from bourgeois society and who, partly deliberately and partly unwittingly, work against us.” (Collected Works, Vol. 33, pp 415-432)

One cannot expect to build a Commune-style state straightaway when the ‘cook’ can’t manage the state immediately.

Have the ‘new philosophers’ have resolved this contradiction by throwing socialism in the bin? Or indeed others who claim that since the party is in power and has a ‘correct line’, then the state established after the revolution is a purely ‘workers’ state.

Communists do not distort reality. They look it in the face as it truly is in order to transform it. This is why they must never lose sight of the aim of transforming the Soviet state. First, they organise the struggle for the workers to take workers’ control of the civil servants and the managers, not only with the aim of monitoring them and keeping them in check, ensuring that they act in accordance with the interests of the proletariat, but also to teach them how to manage affairs so that the workers themselves can gradually exercise power in place of the specialised apparatus of professional civil servants.

This was the struggle that Lenin waged for the rest of his life. In Section III we shall return to the fundamental idea that he ‘discovered’ in 1921 and set out in confrontation with Trotsky, namely that the Soviet state was not a purely ‘workers’ state and that the proletariat had to both defend it and defend themselves against it.

In order to wage this struggle, Lenin attached great importance to the education of the proletariat. But not just any education. Not a purely theoretical or technical education, which would only serve to convert a certain number of workers into new ‘specialists’ to take over from the previous bourgeois specialist and ultimately play the same role by becoming cadres themselves cut off from the masses, thus becoming a new bourgeois. But education aimed at creating ‘new men’, not cut off from production, from the proletariat and the class struggle (just as the GPCR would attempt to with concrete initiatives such as the May Seventh Cadre Schools, etc.): men capable of rallying and involving the masses in the exercise of power and relying on them as the driving force of history.

It was with this in mind that Lenin attempted to set up the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection in 1920 with the intention of training workers, including non-party workers, to control all the workings of the state and learn to manage it for themselves. In his last article towards the end of his life, Lenin remained clear-sighted and mapped out the path for the revolution to follow: *“Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects [...] The most harmful thing here would be haste. The most harmful thing would be to rely on the assumption that we know at least something, or that we have any considerable number of elements necessary for the building of a really new state apparatus, one really worthy to be called socialist, Soviet, etc. [...] In order to renovate our state apparatus we must at all costs set out, first, to learn, secondly, to learn, and thirdly, to learn [...]”*¹¹ Coming out of a terrible revolution in a largely backward country, ruined by years of war, ‘thrown backwards’ by the imperialists and having victoriously overcome the ordeals beset it thanks to an iron dictatorship exercised by the conscious proletariat, once peace was restored Lenin set the immediate task that the proletariat should set about transforming the State with the masses themselves beginning to take control of it (*“[...] we must devote to the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection in raising it to an exceptionally high level, in giving it a leadership with Central Committee rights, etc., etc.”* Ibid.) so that the State would be transformed into an independent state, beginning to bring it closer to the masses by purging it of its bureaucrats (*“[it] is that only by thoroughly purging our government machine, by reducing it to the utmost everything that is not absolutely essential in it, shall we be certain of being able to keep going.”* Ibid.). Despite all the detours and backwards steps brought to bear by the unprecedented difficulties of the Russian revolution, Lenin did not lose sight of the objective of building a new, proletarian state set to wither away. He remained

¹¹ V.I. Lenin (1923) *Better Fewer, But Better*, Collected Works, Vol. 33, pp. 487-502.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/mar/02.htm>

faithful to the principles of *The State and Revolution*, adapting them to the concrete situation in Russia. But as we shall see, this was not the path followed by his successors.

What we have here then is a glimpse of the difficulties which condition the birth of the new proletarian State whereby it is not nor can it be an 'ideal' Soviet State as Marx and Lenin conceived it up drawing on the lessons of the Paris Commune. The general direction they set out outlines in a strikingly accurate way the objectives to be achieved and the stages to be followed to achieve them (see *The State and Revolution*). But they could only provide broad outlines. Lenin, who led the Russian Revolution, began to learn the lessons of building a socialist state, clearly analysing the problems of the birth of the new state immediately after the revolution, leading him to naturally attached special importance to the role played by the old bourgeoisie. He analysed how the fledgling Soviet state had no choice but to make use of the old 'materials', i.e. the bourgeoisie who had monopolised 'skills' and the mass of workers who were not sufficiently conscious and educated to fully perform all of the functions of power at all levels, leading to the birth of a state which resembles the old one in many ways. Such problems will inevitably arise in France too. For despite the major differences with regards to Russia in 1917, notably a large and relatively educated proletariat, we must not forget the other side of the coin: the proletariat had been mainly educated by the bourgeoisie, sowing all sorts of reformist ideas within it. Such an influence will not disappear overnight (not to mention that of the mass of petty bourgeois largely boosted by imperialism and bound up with it).

But Lenin did not content himself with analysing the way that the old bourgeoisie insinuate themselves into the fledgling state. Above all, he drafted out an analysis of the contradictory nature of the socialist state, both an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but also, as a special apparatus cut off from the masses, the basis for the formation of a 'new bourgeoisie' via the bureaucratic degeneration of the cadres placed in leading positions. Lenin only lived to see the very beginnings of a socialist state, and it was above all Mao and the GPCR that shed full light on this phenomenon. It is this aspect, namely the contradictory nature of the socialist state, that we shall now go on to examine in the following two sections.

2. The superstructure: an issue in the class struggle

Under socialism, the superstructure (the state system, laws, ideology, etc.) plays a positive, active role. The proletariat can and must use it to transform social relations, which it obviously cannot do under capitalism, where the whole superstructure is in the hands of the bourgeoisie. And because the superstructure is not 'entirely proletarian', it can also serve as a hinge pin that the bourgeoisie can latch onto.

This is true, for example, of ideology and culture, which cannot be transformed immediately on the day power is seized and where the weight of the past remains strong for a long time to come. For not only can ideology only perish with the end of the social relations that give rise to it (and under socialism these still bear the marks of capitalism), but it also has a certain autonomy, a certain inertia in relation to its material bases and survives them to a certain extent.

The same is true of the party and the state, which revisionists tend to regard as purely technical instruments who strive simply only to reinforce their 'purity' and efficiency. But this is not how Marxism sees the problem.

Already in his day, Marx emphasised that the state certainly represents the power of a class, but also that it always acquires a certain autonomy in relation to the class that it represents. In particular, the proletarian state cannot from the very outset be the organisation of the whole class as a ruling class, but rather of its representatives who are themselves obliged, as we have seen, to surround themselves with an apparatus of unelected civil servants who are not 'representatives'. Hence Marx's remark to the effect that "*The governing class does not coincide with the ruling class.*" A worker who is a minister is no longer a worker, but a minister: the proletarian state always involves a social division of labour between those who govern and those who are governed which continues to exist even if the Soviet state has already considerably reduced the 'distance' between the special apparatus and the masses. Like all social divisions according to Marx, this division is the source of the reproduction of a

bourgeois class and constitutes an objective basis for certain cadres from amongst the least ideologically and politically firm but also ultimately the 'best' in the long term to seek to consolidate their advantages or at the very least to cling to them, finally becoming bureaucrats cut off from the masses, serving themselves rather than the people.

Lenin foresaw this phenomenon when he wrote: *"Our worst internal enemy is the bureaucrat—the Communist who occupies a responsible (or not responsible) Soviet post and enjoys universal respect as a conscientious man. As the Russian saying goes, "Although he never touches a drop, he sings false". He is very conscientious, but he has not learnt to combat red tape, he is unable to combat it, he condones it. We must rid ourselves of this enemy, and with the aid of all class-conscious workers and peasants we shall get at him."*¹² The Cultural Revolution highlighted the scope and importance of this degeneration.

In 1965, Mao said: *"The bureaucratic class is a class sharply opposed to the working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants. These people have become or are in the process of becoming bourgeois elements sucking the blood of the workers. How can they have proper understanding?"* .¹³

Can we speak of a new bourgeois class in reference to these bureaucrats? The opportunists refuse to admit it: for them, there is no bourgeois class under socialism. But nevertheless, because the socialist state controls the bulk of the economy, the bureaucrats involved in the state apparatus merge with company directors, managers, etc., or at least with those who, like them, have abandoned proletarian politics and slipped into defending their expert posts and the salaries and privileges that go with them. And since the objective basis exists for all these differences to exist between leaders, manual intellectuals, peasant workers, etc. (see *La Cause du Communisme* N° 1), this phenomenon will inevitably emerge in certain individuals as well as within the Party inasmuch as its members occupy the leading positions in the State and companies. Indeed, owing to its leadership position, the Party will see an influx of opportunists who will do anything to secure a place for themselves, aware that a being a card-carrying member will help their careers. In short, many people will offer the proletariat their 'knowledge' and their 'skills' and make revolutionary-sounding declarations whilst at the same time infiltrating the State and the Party and others who initially started off as revolutionaries will go on fall prey to bureaucratisation and bourgeoisification.

A bourgeois class when private ownership of the means of production no longer exists? Marx and Lenin teach us that a class is defined above all by its place with regards to the relations of production and the division of labour as well as by the ensuing distribution of products. The Russian and Chinese experiences clearly show that these people can collectively appropriate a significant share of the social production. Of course, under socialism, the bourgeoisie changes. Private capitalists no longer exist, only people who place their own privileged personal interests first by dint of their place in the social division. They have a political line: the capitalist road and "the Theory of the Productive Forces" (see *La Cause du Communisme* N° 1). They have their political representatives, namely the revisionist capitalist roaders within the Party. They have their goal: to seize power in the Party and the State and from there to establish State capitalism. This is why Marxism has always stated, just as Lenin did in *The State and Revolution*, that the antagonistic bourgeoisie/proletariat classes will continue to exist albeit in different forms until the social division of labour is abolished and communism is established. For even if individual ownership of the means of production and the old bourgeoisie are abolished, there remains a leading position (i.e. 'possession', the real mastery of the process) in the relations of production together with the advantages that stem from it, the common political interests and the goal pursued: in other words, all of the key elements that constitute a class.

Returning to the question of the state, it becomes clear that while not being under the control of the bourgeoisie, it remains partly 'bourgeois', protecting in a sense the basis of the bourgeoisie's existence, encapsulated by Lenin in line Marx in the phrase "a bourgeois state without bourgeoisie".

12 V.I. Lenin (1922) *The International and Domestic Situation of the Soviet Republic*, Collected Works, Vol. 33, pp 212-226. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/mar/06.htm>.

13 Cited in Dittmer, L. (2022) *China's Continuous Revolution: The Post-Liberation Epoch 1949-1981* (Footnote 52, p. 67).

Epoch <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft3q2nb24q&doc.view=popup&chunk.id=fnd0e3773>

As we have seen, many kinds of divisions remain in this process of production, e.g. between different forms of property via commodities exchanged for money based on the law of value, between intellectual and manual labour, workers and peasants, etc. These social divisions are the very bedrock of class reproduction and cannot be abolished forthwith. The task of the proletarian state is not only to actively organise their disappearance (a point that we shall return to), but also to oversee these relations, which can only evolve gradually. Engels described the bourgeois state as “*the organisation that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists.*” (*Anti-Dühring*)¹⁴. In the same way, the workers’ state must ‘protect’ the general interests of the proletariat against, for example, ‘leftist’ tendencies which seek to instantly abolish the role of the managerial staff, moving immediately on to communism simply by ‘decree’, deemed to magically abolish the law of value, differences, etc.

The State must be an instrument for reducing inequalities through laws and other State means, for example between richer and poorer regions or urban and rural areas or by establishing distribution according to needs in certain sectors such as healthcare and housing, etc. But it also condones and protects the ‘imprint’ left by capitalism which cannot be removed simply by decree, which involves the struggle between classes within the state. The capitalist roaders (the bourgeoisie mentioned above) will fight under whatever pretext necessary to maintain and develop inequalities by relying on everything in the superstructure that still serves the bourgeoisie, be it on the old ideas that still subsist or the socialist laws themselves that have protected the inequalities that must now be destroyed or the state and its civil servants charged with enforcing law and order, some of whom have a vested interest in resisting change.

In order to understand this better, let us take the example of right.

One of the key functions of the state is to devise and enforce right. Under capitalism, right is designed to protect private property and impede the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. We know that it is under socialism that the people can enjoy the most extensive rights and the real possibility of exercising them for the first time. We will not expand upon this here, suffice it to say that is necessary to move from this recognised possibility to genuine application in practice, which can only be achieved through class struggle.

When it takes power, the proletariat establishes a new right embodying the new social relations of society. There are two ways of building this right.

Are we to be satisfied with the initial gains, considering the issue of right only as the means of protecting of these gains and thereby effectively suspending right? Or shall we acknowledge instead that right has an active role to play in facilitating the revolutionary struggle (correcting the defects in the distribution of labour, limiting the effects of the law of value, organising workers’ power, etc.) and thus correcting it until it finally disappears?

In a socialist society, right has an undeniably positive role to play for the proletariat. Does this mean that it serves only the proletariat? That it is entirely ‘proletarian’? Not at all. Commenting on Marx in *The State and the Revolution*, Lenin shows that under socialism ‘equal right’ is still bourgeois right in that it fails to take into account the true inequality between individuals and their different positions they actually occupy in the division of labour. For example, the principle of “to each according to his work” allows for managers to earn more, enriching one more than another (also because one has a larger family, is weaker, etc.).

In fact, right is never entirely proletarian. In Marx’s words “*Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby*”¹⁵, therefore socialist right expresses the state of social relations in society and the social division of labour on which they are based. Right thereby acknowledges the progress made in these relations with regards to the old society, whilst protecting the remnants inherited from it.

14 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch24.htm>

15 K. Marx (1875) *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Selected Works, Vol. 3, pp. 13-30. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/>

In this sense, right is also always 'bourgeois' and the proletariat can only perfect it in one direction: its abolition. This is why, under socialism, the state, which must ensure respect for 'bourgeois' right whilst at the same time organising the struggle to transform it, is at the very heart of a bitter struggle where what is at stake is nothing less whether one is to progress towards communism, the abolition of classes, the elimination of the social division of labour or instead encourage this division, these classes and return to capitalism.

Since the state tolerates inequality, the capitalist roaders will find something in this right to defend their positions. Indeed, we saw many debates and struggles on this very issue during the Cultural Revolution, from the discussions in the factories about whether and by how much to reduce the salaries of managers to the temptation, rejected by the Party as premature, to go beyond the Constitution in Shanghai by creating a Commune inspired by the Paris Commune. Today, Chinese revisionists use the law to turn the clock back to the era of concessions to capitalists, clinging to the principle of "to each according to his work" in an attempt to justify the policy of bonuses, high salaries for managers, etc., and claiming that this principle is 'proletarian' and should not be touched. What this shows is that simply asserting that right is 'proletarian' without seeing its contradictory essence obscures the struggle of the proletariat which must right (as indeed the state) to its own benefit, only to destroy it.

How will right disappear?

Litigation is the essential element underpinning legality, is based on opposing private interests rooted in turn in the different positions occupied by people in production.

With proletarian power, collective forms of property and exchange begin to reduce right by reducing antagonisms. As everyone learns to manage the affairs of state, the need for specialised administration in general begins to disappear. Lenin rightly said: "The more complete democracy is, the sooner it will become superfluous".¹⁶ The possibility for society to give "to each according to his needs" gradually eliminates the need for right as far as distribution is concerned as rise in the level of consciousness makes it possible to achieve the administration by people themselves, each guided by the same unity of purpose.

But this will not happen of its own accord without a struggle. On the one hand, the proletariat must constantly subvert right, which always involves a compromise with the vestiges of the past and the bourgeoisie. On the other, the bourgeoisie clings to existing right which continues to protect the social division of labour and hence its existence as a class.

This struggle will involve the superstructure as a whole, entailing a contradiction under socialism by serving the proletariat (as and when the class struggle is waged properly), whilst at the same time continuing to protect and allow the bourgeoisie to reproduce itself. Indeed, it is within the very the socialist superstructure itself that the bourgeoisie will build its most important bases for regaining power. From this point of view, the GPCR was a great historic initiative designed to transform the socialist superstructure. In particular, it highlighted the profoundly erroneous character of the theses of the International Communist Movement, which regarded the proletarian state as a new god: on the grounds that it was run by communists, there was nothing left to transform.

Marxism-Leninism lays bare the contradictory nature of the state and concludes that the proletariat can and must use it to destroy it. It is insofar as the state serves as an instrument of the proletariat to achieve its destruction that it serves as a tool in the hands of the proletariat. It is this particular aspect of the problem that we shall now go on to examine.

¹⁶ *The State and the Revolution*, Op. Cit.

3. The socialist state and the dictatorship of the proletariat

Here go on to pick up in more detail the question of the state where we left off in Section 1, with Lenin grappling with the problem of the old bourgeoisie and the onset of the phenomenon of 'bureaucratisation'. We shall see how a correct political line can enable the proletariat to use the state that it rules to transform it and work to destroy it.

It would obviously be to fall prey to anarchist thinking to solely emphasise the negative side of the socialist state alone, failing to recognise that after the revolution it no longer serves the same class, provided of course that: i) it is led by a real communist party guided by a genuine programme of transition to communism; and ii) that it also differs from the old bourgeois state in the forms of its apparatus, the latter having already been replaced to a certain extent by the proletariat (then bringing with them the toiling masses) grouped together into organisations that prepare for and carry out their effective participation in the exercise of power.

Under capitalism, the working class can only fight 'from below'. However, having seized power, it endows itself with a state that also enables it to fight 'from above' to achieve its albeit as yet distant goal of communism. As this point is specifically addressed in chapter 6 of our brochure *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as the Only Transition to Communism* ['La dictature du prolétariat seule transition au communisme'] we will only discuss certain aspects of it here.

a) The socialist state at the service of the proletariat!

We can explain how the proletariat organises a new state for its own benefit by taking democracy as an example.

We know that under capitalism "*the modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that 'they cannot be bothered with democracy', 'cannot be bothered with politics'; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.'*"¹⁷ While bourgeois democracy proclaims equality in political life, what it really generates class inequality in the production and distribution of wealth, with the true exercise of rights actually reserved for those who dominate production.

After the revolution, democracy becomes "*Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people.*"¹⁸ As such, for example, the First Constitution of the USSR¹⁹ withheld the right to vote and the right to be elected from "*Persons who employ hired labour in order to obtain from it an increase in profits; Persons who have an income without doing any work [...]; Employees and agents of the former police [...].*" It set the number of the representatives in the soviets at one deputy per 25,000 electors in the towns and one per 125,000 in the country. The "*[...] Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic abolishes all dependence of the Press upon capital, and turns over to the working people and the poorest peasantry all technical and material means for the publication of newspapers, pamphlets, books, etc., and guarantees their free circulation throughout the country.; For the purpose of enabling the workers to hold free meetings [it] offers to the working class and to the poorest peasantry furnished halls, and takes care of their heating and lighting appliances [it] considers work the duty of every citizen of the Republic, and proclaims as its motto: 'He shall not eat who does not work'*" and "*[it] grants all political rights of Russian citizens to foreigners who live in the territory of the Russian Republic and are engaged in work and who belong to the working class.*"²⁰ It is not, therefore, a question of recognising equal formal rights for all, but rather of guaranteeing a material basis to limit the genuine exercise of these rights to certain specific classes only.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 *Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic* (1918): Article 2, Chapter 5(14-20); <https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/constitution/1918/index.htm>

20 Ibid. Article 4, Chapter 13(65); Article 2, Chapter 5(14-20).

This 'small' example shows how right, guaranteed by the State and proletarian forces, facilitates the exercise of proletarian power. We could take many others, such as the role of the economic plans, the army, etc., to understand how the new State organises proletarian power against its enemies, whereby the proletariat must defend and support its State.

But one cannot stop there, which would be tantamount to believing that a constitution and laws alone would suffice to ensure the victory of the proletariat, provided that the whole State apparatus responsible for applying them was in 'good hands'. Let us continue with our example of democracy. Many petty-bourgeois elements imagine that once democracy has been secured for the mass of workers the course of society could be regulated peacefully by the simple exercise of the right to vote, ensuring power for the majority: *"The petty-bourgeois democrats, those sham socialists who replaced the class struggle by dreams of class harmony, even pictured the socialist transformation in a dreamy fashion — not as the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but as the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become aware of its aims."*²¹

But that is precisely the crux of the problem. The majority (which includes all the working masses) cannot instantly become 'conscious of its aims'. Were that not to be the case and were the petty bourgeois mass itself communist, then there would obviously be no need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Democracy is a means of organising the power of one class over another. And the same is true of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the means by which the working class organises itself as the ruling class by drawing the intermediate masses alongside it in the struggle against the bourgeoisie and for their own transformation (the attitude adopted by the dictatorship of the proletariat towards the bourgeoisie is one of violence and coercion).

The difference with regards to the bourgeois dictatorship is that the proletariat can exercise a democracy that is a thousand times more real for the working masses because its profound historical interests are not antagonistic to theirs, whereas the bourgeoisie only represents the interests of a minority of exploiters. This is why democracy is essential formal under bourgeois rule, constantly curtailed and called into question and can only function thanks to a cumbersome, complex and secretive state apparatus: *"Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple 'machine' [...]"*²²

The challenge of democracy is to educate the working class itself regarding the tasks of exercising real power and to convince the hesitant intermediate masses who remain under the influence of bourgeois ideas to shift from maintaining their situation to marching towards communism. Persuading the petty bourgeoisie masses to rise up against the bourgeoisie is no mean task, as illustrated, for example, by the reluctance of factory managers, students, etc., to participate in productive work, to go to the countryside, etc. And if the proletariat loses the initiative in this battle, then the bourgeoisie will seize it, rallying the intermediate elements in the light of the advantages still granted them by bourgeois right.

This is why the ability to achieve democracy in the sense of leading the masses to build the communism that will liberate them depends upon the political line applied by the Party, i.e. on its ability to determine at each stage of socialist construction the transformations required to lead the toiling masses to fight the bourgeoisie, together with the contradictions between the masses and the bourgeoisie with the emphasis on dealing with the latter and the actions needed to convince the masses and isolate the bourgeoisie. Or, as Lenin put it: *"In the sea of people we are after all but a drop in the ocean, and we can administer only when we express correctly what the people are conscious of. Unless we do this the Communist Party will not lead the proletariat, the proletariat will not lead the masses, and the whole machine will collapse"*.²³

At this point in our discussion, the question of the nature of the state can be summarised in the following terms: It is an instrument of revolution 'from above' providing the proletariat with the material means to exercise its power (the press, culture, the army, planning, control, etc.), in other words, to continue its struggle against the bourgeoisie. But at the same time it remains a 'state apparatus', a machine that is certainly much more

21 *The State and the Revolution*, Op. Cit.

22 Ibid.

23 V.I. Lenin (1922) *Eleventh Congress Of The R.C.P.(B.)*, Collected Works, Vol. 33, pp. 237-242.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/mar/27.htm>

democratic than the old one inasmuch as it involves the masses in the exercise of power, but which also protects and reproduces the bourgeoisie to a certain extent. It is, therefore, also necessary for the masses to use the means afforded them by state power, turning them against the state in order to transform it and make it wither away. Let us now on to explore this particular point.

b) Transforming and withering away the socialist state

Transforming the soviets into effective organs of power was not an easy task. The Russian Constitution of 1918 stated that: *“The power must belong entirely to the toiling masses and to their plenipotentiary representatives: the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies”* (Art. 1, Chapter 4(7)). And yet, five years later, in 1923 Lenin declared that the State apparatus *“is to a considerable extent a survival of the past and has undergone hardly any serious change. It has only been slightly touched up on the surface [...]”*.²⁴ In Section 1 we already discussed Lenin’s struggle to transform this State, which was still overrun by former bourgeois elements and bureaucrats from the Tsar’s era in the face of whom the communists were relatively few in number and insufficiently educated (speaking of the capital itself, Moscow, Lenin said, for example: *“[...] if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap.”*) (Ibid.).

How can we combat this bureaucracy that hampers and fails to implement decisions, leading to disorder and failure?

- When faced with problems, the revisionist approach is to set up new apparatuses to control the old ones, looking to strengthen the machinery when the system fails, only serving to further worsen the problem the evil. In the end, it separates the apparatus even more from the masses and strengthens the position of the cadres, experts and specialists, in other words, the pool which the bourgeoisie draws upon to regenerate itself. Whether we like it or not, this path leads to the restoration of bourgeois power.

- Lenin, on the other hand, took a different path. He did not seek to strengthen the state apparatus, nor did he to blame it for all of the ills and seek smash it immediately as would the anarchists, but rather to transform it.

In 1921, he set out the problem in a completely creative and extremely interesting way showed that it was necessary both to defend the State in order for it to remain in the hands of the proletariat, whilst at the same time to fight against this State ‘from below’ to transform it. Faced with Trotsky, who claimed that there was no longer a bourgeoisie and that the state was a “workers’ state”, Lenin replied :1) *“[...] ours is not actually a workers’ state but a workers’ and peasants’ state”*²⁵ because the Russian revolution was not purely proletarian but involved the poor peasants in the anti-feudal and democratic tasks yet to be accomplished²⁶; and 2) *“[...] ours is a workers’ state with a bureaucratic twist to it”, where a bourgeoisie was forming anew. From this, Lenin concluded that the workers should both defend this state and defend themselves against it: “We now have a state under which it is the business of the massively organised proletariat to protect itself, while we, for our part, must use these workers’ organisations [i.e. the unions] to protect the workers from their state, and to get them to protect our state”*.²⁷

Given the importance of this thesis and in order to understand it better, it is worth recapping the argument which opposed Lenin to the ‘Workers’ Opposition’ and Trotsky at the time regarding this issue.²⁸

24 V.I. Lenin (1923) *How We Should Reorganise the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection*, Collected Works, Volume 33, pp. 481-86. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/23.htm>

25 V. I. Lenin (1920) *The Trade Unions, The Present Situation and Trotsky’s Mistakes*, Collected Works, Vol. 32, pp. 19-42. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/dec/30.htm>

26 This is a problem also posed by the Chinese revolution. The GPCR clearly showed that the democratic stage of the Chinese revolution attracted a certain number of bourgeois democrats to the struggle even within the Party owing to the revolutionary programme at the time.

27 *The Trade Unions, The Present Situation and Trotsky’s Mistakes*, Op. Cit.

28 Ibid.

The Workers' Opposition

As early as the Fifth Congress (1920), the members of the 'Workers' Opposition' denounced the bureaucratisation of the party and the state. Lenin agreed with this criticism (CW Vol. 32, p. 191)²⁹, but not with the solution proposed by the Workers' Opposition, namely the practically immediate abolition of the state and the Party, which he categorically opposed a year later at the Tenth Congress. The Workers' Opposition demanded that "*The organisation of the management of the national economy is the function of an All-Russia Congress of Producers organised in industrial unions which shall elect a central body to run the whole of the national economy of the Republic.*"³⁰. The Workers' Opposition demanded that "*The organisation of the management of the national economy*" should be run by "an All-Russia Congress of Producers", to be elected through "production Unions". It called for the abolition of the entire centralised State apparatus and civil servants and proposed that the state should become a "*free association of producers in self-governing communities*".

In this way, the Workers' Opposition eliminated the whole question of the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat with the stroke of a pen. Lenin replied that the producers are also the mass of peasants and semi-proletarians, thus diverging from the idea of the necessary domination of the proletariat alone. This harps back to the petty bourgeois anarchist theses of 'pure democracy' which could immediately solve all problems, each 'producer' supposedly being fully conscious of the revolutionary tasks, no longer under the spell of bourgeois ideology and thus free to be self-governing. This is not even true of the proletariat alone, where only the advanced elements united in a party are conscious of the goal to be reached and the means to achieve it. Therefore, according to the Workers' Opposition there is no longer any role for the party in educating and organising the proletariat nor for the proletariat in educating the working masses, as if the conditions had been met and classes ceased to exist, making it possible to advance immediately to communism, whereas in reality the fluctuations of the petty bourgeois and supposedly proletarian masses would have free rein in the soviets, ushering in the bourgeois line. It is 'the soviets without the Bolsheviks' that all bourgeois reformists dream of. And since the state does not disappear simply by dint of the merits of democracy, in such a scenario the democratic form only serves to rally the intermediate masses behind the bourgeoisie, recreating a bourgeois state as demonstrated by Yugoslav-style 'self-management'.

Lenin's reply to the Workers' Opposition was that it was quite right to seek to combat bureaucracy and the bourgeois degeneration of the state and to strive to encourage the proletariat to take over the administrative functions. But the first condition for this is to work to train proletarians to become minimally capable and conscious: "*If the Party has no confidence in the working class and does not allow workers to occupy responsible posts, it ought to be ousted! [...] we are on our last legs for want of men and we are prepared to take any assistance, with both hands, from any efficient man, especially if he is a worker. But we have no men of this type [...]*"³¹.

This is the situation at the beginning of socialism when the proletariat as a whole is not yet conscious. Then "*[...] the Party [...] absorbs the vanguard of the proletariat, and this vanguard exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat. [...]. But the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised through an organisation embracing the whole of that class [i.e. the union], because in all capitalist countries (and not only over here, in one of the most backward) the proletariat is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts (by imperialism in some countries) that an organisation taking in the whole proletariat cannot directly exercise proletarian dictatorship.*"³² As the organisations of the working masses, the trade unions are 'cogs' which serve to intermesh the vanguard with the masses. The whole question here is how to mesh with the masses: how to involve them in the exercise of state power in the communist way, rather than recreating a new trade union or 'self-managed' bureaucracy to replace the existing bureaucracy of state officials. When Lenin says that "*Within the system of the dictatorship of*

29 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/pdf/lenin-cw-vol-32.pdf>

30 V.I. Lenin (1921) *Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.), IV. 10. Report on Party Unity and The Anarcho-Syndicalist Deviation*, Collected Works, Vol. 32, pp. 165-271.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/10thcong/ch04.htm>

31 V. I. Lenin (1924) *Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.). Summing-Up Speech on the Report of the C.C. of the R.C.P.(B.)*, Collected Works, Vol. 32.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/10thcong/ch02.htm>

32 *The Trade Unions, The Present Situation and Trotsky's Mistakes*, Op. Cit.

the proletariat, the trade unions stand, if I may say so, between the Party and the government"³³ he is expressing the situation as it stands at the beginning of the transition when the soviets formally hold power but where only the vanguard has the capacity to truly exercise it and where its role is to train the working masses through the soviets to exercise it. Lenin sets out the problem perfectly: the decline of the state requires management by the masses themselves, but this in turn calls for consciousness and education (or "Red and Expert" as the Chinese would say). And this not something that can be achieved by decree.

Trotsky

Trotsky also opposed this dialectic in his own way by upholding the idea of the the "workers' state". His position can be summed up as follows: *"Since this is a workers' state without any bourgeoisie, against whom then is the working class to be protected, and for what purpose?"*³⁴ (as we shall see, this is the position supported today by the Party of Labour of Albania and all those who criticise the GPCR and Mao in this regard). As far Trotsky is concerned, it therefore follows that combative trade unionism demands (or any form of workers' struggle against the state) is pointless. The state must be proletarian and inevitably will be if and when it is led by pure Marxists. Hence his position on the unions: their specific role is no longer to organise the working class in order to organise production and as such they must be 'dissolved into the state'. Production had to be militarised, iron-fisted discipline had to be introduced and 'a climate of production' had to be instilled. Lenin replied that Trotsky was forgetting that *"Politics must take precedence over economics" because "without a correct political approach to the matter the given class will be unable to stay on top and, consequently, will be incapable of solving its production problem either."*³⁵ The Soviet state is not a pure "workers' state". The fact is that it gave rise to bureaucracy, whereby it remains necessary for the unions to continue to fight to defend the material and moral interests of the working class and for the working class to learn through this struggle to manage production and the affairs of the state against the state itself. It is not the job of the unions to force workers to produce for Trotsky's 'workers' state', but to educate them to undertake the tasks of production in a communist way (i.e. in a conscious way with true ownership of the means of production in order to fulfil the needs of all). To this end, the Party must guide the trade unions in order for them to function as "schools of communism".

As we stated at the beginning of this article, Lenin attached great importance to the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, even calling for its leaders to be granted the same rights as those of the Party's Central Committee, going on to say that in order to combat bureaucracy *"We must improve the general conditions of existence so that hundreds of thousands and thousands of workers pass through the school of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate and learn to manage the State (because nobody taught us that) and can replace the hundreds of thousands of bourgeois bureaucrats"*.

Thus, from the Revolution of 1917 until his death, Lenin clarified and enriched Marxist theory regarding the question of the state, laying the foundations for the continuation of class struggle under socialism, summarised in Point 17 of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) *Letter in 25 Points* as follows:

- a) The overthrown exploiters always try to regain power.
- b) New bourgeois elements are constantly and spontaneously generated in the petty-bourgeois atmosphere
- c) The imperialist encirclement also determines the class struggle
- d) New bourgeois elements emerge in the ranks of the Party and the state.

The dictatorship of the proletariat involves the organised struggle against the bourgeoisie. But while the state apparatus must be an instrument in this struggle, for a long time it remained a relatively autonomous apparatus, cut off from the masses, effectively providing cover and a base for the new bourgeoisie. Hence the need both to defend it and to combat it, i.e. to constantly transform it. The path to follow is that of strengthening the real exercise of power firstly by the proletariat and then by the working masses as they rally themselves to fight alongside the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Democracy facilitates this alliance, with the power of the Party

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 V. I. Lenin (1921) *Once Again on the Trade Unions, The Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Buhkarin*, Collected Works, Vol. 32, pp. 70-107.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/jan/25.htm>

gradually expanded to the power of the conscious proletariat and then to the working masses. The dictatorship of the proletariat truly becomes the exercise of power by the proletariat as and when it is able to replace the special state apparatus itself as the state becomes increasingly absorbed into the society marching towards communism. The state must not be strengthened as a special apparatus (which would only hasten the reproduction of a new bourgeoisie), seeking instead to 'dilute' it by gradually transferring its special tasks to the proletariat and then the masses (which, as we explained in our previous article, is inevitably linked to the transformation of the relations of production themselves). The more the state 'disperses' in this way, the more it becomes 'non-state' and moves towards its disappearance. This is the way to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat.

4. Stalin's mistakes on the question of the State

In our previous article on the theory of the productive forces, we saw how Stalin believed that the bourgeoisie no longer existed once forms of property had become collectivised, declaring in 1936 that: "*The capitalist class in the sphere of industry has ceased to exist. The kulak class in the sphere of agriculture has ceased to exist. And the merchants and profiteers in the sphere of trade have ceased to exist. Thus all the exploiting classes have been eliminated*".³⁶ As for the peasants and intellectuals, the demarcations between them and the working class "*are disappearing..., the distance between these social groups is diminishing more and more... society (where) there are no longer antagonistic classes, is composed of two friendly classes of workers and peasants*" (Ibid.). This is the idyllic picture Stalin painted of a society in which the law of value, market exchanges and a very sharp division between intellectuals and manual workers persisted (with even widening gaps and many other profound contradictions). He even went so far as to claim that the question of "who will win" had been definitively resolved.³⁷

For his part, while fighting persistently for the on-going necessity of the state, Lenin did not lose sight of either the final objective (its demise) or the major defects of the Soviet State. He analysed the reality as it stood and refrained from presenting the halts, compromises and detours that the concrete situation had forced him to take as the socialist ideal. For Stalin, however, there was only pure socialism, a 'proletarian state', stating in 1936 that "we now have a fully formed multinational Socialist state" (Ibid.). In 1939, he reiterated that on the home front the only outstanding task for the State was "*the work of peaceful economic organization and cultural education*"³⁸. Again in 1952 at the Nineteenth Congress, Malenkov placed the party's tasks solely in the economic sphere, starting with "*Continu[ing] to steadily strengthen the economic power of our state*"³⁹, with the qualities of a communist defined as "*putting the interests of the state above all else*"⁴⁰. In the light of the many declarations at least from 1936 to 1952, it is clear that Stalin wholly identified the interests of the revolution with those of strengthening the State and the dictatorship of the proletariat was synonymous with strengthening the state apparatus. For example, at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930 he spoke of the "*The highest development of state power with the object of preparing the conditions for the withering away of state-power*"⁴¹, then in 1933 he wrote: "*The state will wither away, not as a result of weakening the state power, but as a result of strengthening it*

36 J. Stalin (1936) *On the Draft Constitution of the USSR*, Works, Vol. 14.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1936/11/25.htm>

37 Stalin went even further in 1946 when he stated that: "Communism in one country' is perfectly possible, especially in a country like the Soviet Union" (*Replies to Questions put by Mr. Alexander Werth, Moscow, Correspondent of the 'Sunday Times'*).

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1946/09/24.htm>).

38 J. Stalin (1939) Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Eighteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.)

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/03/10.htm>

39 G.M. Malenkov (1952) *Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) to the XIX Party Congress*. In M. Svitlana & A. Erdogan (s.d.) *XIX Congress of the CPSU (B) Documents and Materials* (p. 87). https://www.academia.edu/44512572/19th_Congress_Documents_of_the_CPSU_B_October_5_14_1952

40 J. Stalin (1939) *Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Eighteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.)*, Works, Vol. 14. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/03/10.htm>

41 J. V. Stalin (1930) Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.), Works, Vol. 12, pp. 242-385. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1930/aug/27.htm>

to the utmost.” (*The Results of the First Five-Year Plan*⁴²), right up to 1950 when he wrote: “[...] the land of the victorious revolution should not weaken, but in every way strengthen its state, state organs, intelligence organs and army, if that land does not want to be crushed by the capitalist encirclement” (*Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*⁴³).

This is Stalin’s main tenet, that of the imperialist encirclement, one that he repeated at every Congress. While not failing to recognise this as a very stark reality, does preparing the defence of the Revolution really only entail strengthening the police, the army and the apparatus? Is there not a people’s war with a kind of army different from the bourgeois army? Does this mean breaking up the soviets and strengthening the power of the ministries and directors in every field? Of course not: this is to embark upon the bourgeois path (which, as we shall see in a later article, also neglects to organise the world revolution against war) by strengthening the ‘special apparatus’ instead of expanding the direct action of the masses (As Marx himself said: “*Together with the thoroughness of the historical action, the size of the mass whose action it is will therefore increase.*”⁴⁴). Stalin’s theory can ultimately be expressed in plain language as follows: on the home front all is well between friendly classes and all that remains to be done is to strive to increase production. At this point, although the state could actually be abolished (according to Stalin at the Eighteenth Congress in 1939), it must in fact be strengthened even further because of external enemies. Let us look at some of the implications of this position:

1) As we have seen, a bourgeoisie will still reproduce itself under socialism. And given that there is always an antagonistic struggle between those who favour the capitalist path and those who favour the communist path, it ensues that decisions, plans and directives are not necessarily implemented as planned nor have the desired effects. There is resistance. Assuming that these directives, decisions, etc. are correct, of all of these difficulties, Stalin only sees only the external difficulties given that there are only friendly classes within. It is “[...] the bourgeois states and their organs, which send spies, assassins and wreckers into our country and are waiting for a favourable opportunity to attack it by armed force”.⁴⁵ And against saboteurs, spies, etc., he does not organise a political struggle, resorting instead to the police, counter-espionage and the strengthening of the state.

2) For Stalin, the state had to manage society. Hence the importance attached to making it ever stronger, ever more capable of this ‘peaceful management’. To achieve this, the ‘experts’ had to be promoted, since it was the specialists in the apparatus rather than the masses who managed everything ‘from above’. Hence Stalin’s statement “Cadres decide everything”. Hence the many privileges granted to the cadres (salaries, bonuses, housing, supplies, etc.) which only accelerated their transformation into the new bourgeoisie. The question to be resolved then becomes that of the right choice and the right education of the cadres (but without transforming their situation in relation to the masses, without asking where the ‘right line’ they should apply comes from). And when Stalin considers the phenomenon of bureaucratism, as he did at the Nineteenth Congress, he attributes it to “*ideological backwardness*” and “*foreign ideologies*”.⁴⁶ As such, this bureaucracy has no material basis and that was needed, therefore, was to remedy the ideology through appropriate education in order to perfect the cadres. The selection and education of cadres, purges and the execution of spies (namely, the self-same cadres when education has failed to prevent the resurgence of their erroneous positions): that is the policy of state-building. It should be noted that this idea of ideological backwardness is particularly pernicious when it is used – as in Stalin’s case – to conceal the existence of material bases for the existence of an ideology and a bourgeois political path under socialism.

3) This denial of the class struggle and of the material basis for the reproduction of a new bourgeoisie obviously disarmed the proletariat. Not only did it not know whom to fight, it was not even asked (except to defend the fatherland against external enemies). When, differences and opposition to Party policy arose as a result of the inevitable contradictions, for Stalin they could only be caused by enemies working for foreign powers and were

42 J. Stalin (1933) *The Results of the First Five-Year Plan*, Works, Vol. 13.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1933/01/07.htm>

43 J. Stalin (1950) *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1950/jun/20.htm>

44 K. Marx (1845) *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism*,

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/ch06.htm>

45 J. Stalin (1939) *Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Eighteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.)*, Works, Vol. 14. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/03/10.htm>

46 G.M. Malenkov (1952) *Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) to the XIX Party Congress*. Op. Cit. (p.102)

therefore dealt with by violence, even if they were in reality contradictions within the people, between the proletariat and its allies.

Democracy is no longer seen as a means of involving the working masses in the struggle against the bourgeoisie (including against that which reproduces it in the economic base and superstructure) since the latter is assumed to have been definitively annihilated. Democracy is no more than formal; the soviets are useless. All that remains is to organise the 'peaceful work' of production under the aegis of the state, seen as proletarian whereby everything that comes 'from above' must be correct and anything that opposes it is suppressed by violence.

We can see how Stalin used the method of strengthening the state apparatus to combat the defects inherent to the very existence of this apparatus, advocating the need to strengthen the bureaucracy to fight the bureaucracy. In doing so, he applied a 'remedy' that only aggravated the problem further; a 'remedy' which resulted in draining workers' organisations (soviets, trade unions, etc.) in favour of the state apparatus, reinforcing the division of labour and the role of cadres. In short, a 'remedy' that accelerated the formation of a new bourgeoisie rather than reducing it. Stalin believed that such a bourgeoisie was not inevitable under socialism, which led him to act in such a way as to strengthen it. The more he eliminated 'spies and agents of foreigner powers' by bureaucratic methods, the more they were reborn. When Khrushchev came to power, it was a whole class that supported him because the ground had been prepared. In the same way, the theoretical foundations were also laid for the concept of the "state of the whole people" (see the 1936 Constitution in particular).⁴⁷

5) The Party of Labour of Albania: Remaining Faithful to Stalin's Mistakes (Second Reply to Enver Hoxha)

The question of the reproduction of a new bourgeois class within the state apparatus and the Party under socialism is obviously primordial: if this class did not exist, then the Khrushchevs and Deng Xiaopings of this world would not be able to regain power. Under socialism, it is essentially from within the Party and the state that the bourgeoisie can regain power, by flying the red flag and repeating its revolutionary professions of faith (and from there tearing down the barriers that stand in the way of its growth in the economic base). No bourgeois faction can openly oppose socialism by brandishing a programme brazenly calling for the restoration of capitalism without incurring a counterresponse from the Party and the people, and so they have to resort to a myriad guiles and diversions. That is why it is so important for communists to recognise and teach the masses to recognise where the bourgeoisie is and to say: "The bourgeoisie exists, that's where it is", rather than reconciling with it or tolerating it (as the PLA, the Workers' Communist Party of France (PCOF) and Eugène Varlin, etc. say)⁴⁸. On the contrary, it is clearly the best way to fight it.

47 In my opinion, this analysis clearly means that part of the article on Stalin that appeared in *Pour Le Parti* N°21 is mistaken, even if it does not constitute an assessment of all of Stalin's activity and life. It would also prove interesting to discuss the philosophical foundations underpinning Stalin's positions, but we do not have the space to do so in this article: the negation of dialectics and idealism; the state is socialist by definition whereby everything else must flow from it; there is no need to analyse its contradictory reality, forcing reality to fit into the definition instead, crushing anything untoward. For Stalin, right and the state could be 'neutral' instruments entirely devoted to the construction of the new society, provided they were in the hands of infallible leaders with a correct line. Here reality and its inherent contradictions are eliminated. All that remains is the power of the Idea: "[the] ideological method, also known as the a priori method, which consists in ascertaining the properties of an object, [...] which does not alter matters; these simplest elements are at best of a purely conceptual nature. The philosophy of reality, therefore, proves here again to be pure ideology, the deduction of reality not from itself but from a concept." (Engels Anti-Dühring).

Thus, based on the concept of a 'pure' socialist state, provided it is led by a just line, Stalin came to deny the analysis of the contradictory nature of the object, representing the bourgeoisie.

48 See Annex 2 on the position of groups defending the Albanian position on this issue.

We have already criticised the theses of the PLA on this subject.⁴⁹ Since then, an article by Foto Çami (a member of the CC of the PLA) has appeared in *Albania Today* (1980, N° 2)⁵⁰, which attempts to put some order into Hoxha's muddled thinking. Foto Çami's arguments can be summarised as follows:

1) The exploiters had been liquidated and under socialism *"only their leftovers as individuals linger on"*.

2) *"[...] new bourgeois elements emerge, but they do not turn into a new bourgeois class in every instance."* On what material basis and in what places do such "elements" emerge? A mystery. Çami ironically refers to "bourgeois right" in inverted commas which he also refers to as *"the so-called bourgeois right."* It is unsurprising that he should choose to ignore this issue since he maintains that a principle such as payment according to one's work is not bourgeois as long as it is not breached. In fact, the whole article indicates that bourgeois influences come primarily from outside the country: *"outside the country there is the great and all-round ideological, political, economic and military pressure of the capitalist and revisionist world, which does not pass without having its impact on our people"*. Moreover, "our people" are on the whole all friends because *"[...] when the antagonistic classes have ceased to exist in the life of society, there can be no talk of the domination of one class over other classes, because in our country today relationships between the working class, the cooperativist peasantry and the people's intelligentsia are not relationships of domination and subjugation, oppression and exploitation, but relationships based on alliance, mutual collaboration and aid."*

3) Accordingly, bourgeois elements exist rooted in remnants of the old days and foreign influences, but there are no antagonistic contradictions and no class struggle *"waged as a struggle between antagonistic classes"* because in socialism antagonistic classes have been "liquidated"! And why is there no longer a bourgeois class? Because the means of production have been collectivised. Bourgeois 'individuals' *"do not constitute a class in themselves, because now they are bereft of all political power and the means of production"*. As if a class could be defined by whether or not it holds political power! As if collective ownership of the means of production alone is enough to eliminate the different places occupied by people involved in the production process, in the social division of labour which is the very basis of classes! Who has control over the production process, who has real 'ownership' of this process, who has the dominant place in the relationship between people and nature and, therefore, in the relationships between people? Çami doesn't even acknowledge these questions.

In fact, the bourgeois "elements" whose existence derives from a specific place in social relations and which have their own political expression (viz. revisionism) are indeed an active class. It's one thing to say that a correct political line and a properly waged struggle can prevent this class from seizing power and restoring capitalism across the board, quite to argue that it can impede its very existence is nothing but idealism is pure and simple.

4) What does this mean for the dictatorship of the proletariat as conceived by Foto Çami? That need only be exercised against the vestiges of the past and external enemies because *"In socialist society, where these classes have ceased to exist, antagonistic contradictions do not stem from the nature of the socialist order itself. They emerge and exist as a product of the leftovers of the old bourgeois society inside the country and the pressure of the capitalist-revisionist encirclement from outside"*. With regards to the petty-bourgeoisie and the intermediate masses, there is nothing but harmonious cooperation (no question of their hesitations, no question of the "petty-bourgeois" atmosphere, as Lenin put it, which revives the bourgeoisie at every moment). All that remains is the famous "ideological backwardness" which once again prevents the bourgeoisie from being identified and uprooted.

If "bourgeois ideas" linger on, it's not only because old ideas take longer to change than the material basis from which they stem. For these bourgeois ideas do not merely persist; they also reproduce themselves. And if they are able to do so, it is because there is a material basis for their existence under socialism. Denying this reality is like trying to cure a cancer with aspirin (however high the dose).

49 See our publication *Première réponse à Enver Hoxha* ['First Reply to Enver Hoxha'] published in July 1979 which discusses de Hoxha's work *Imperialism and the Revolution*

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hoxha/works/imp_rev/toc.htm

50 "Problems of Socialism in the Light of the Marxist-Leninist Theory"

<https://neodemocracy.blogspot.com/2017/11/problems-of-socialism-in-light-of.html>

This leads Foto Çami's to conclude that all that it now remains for the proletariat is to "govern the state", which he describes as "backbone of the dictatorship of the proletariat." (rather than the direct exercise of proletarian power over the whole of society). And the state takes care of external enemies. The state and the Party are perfected by educating the cadres. These are the terms in which the struggle against backward ideas is couched

5) As far as the Party itself is concerned: "This class struggle in the party is objective, unavoidable [...]. However, [it] is not expressed in every instance and in an unavoidable manner as a struggle between two lines." Foto Çami goes on to explain that there is indeed a class struggle in the Party against "traitor and hostile elements" as a result of foreign pressure. But not a struggle between two lines, because "it is important to distinguish clearly and not to confuse the subjective motives of our people (sic.!) with the objective consequences of their wrong views and stands".

Here Foto Çami addresses the important question of distinguishing between those who adopt erroneous positions but are perfectly capable of correcting them and the irredeemable elements, the leaders of the bourgeoisie.

Faced with this problem, Mao Zedong advocated allowing time for these positions to express themselves in order to target the struggle against a handful of representatives of the bourgeoisie in such a way that through the ideological and political struggle led by the proletarian headquarters the masses would gain experience, learn to sort the wheat from the chaff, the bourgeois from the proletariat in order to enable the healthy but misguided elements to mend their ways.

Such an approach effectively takes into account the different 'subjective motives' of those who adopt erroneous positions whilst leaving no leeway for weakness when combating the bourgeois content of ideas and behaviour. This struggle must be waged both in the realm of ideas AND in the material realm from which such ideas stem. Foto Çami, on the other hand, sees things differently. He puts the question in such a way that it is unimportant if "our people" have bad ideas as long as their 'subjective motives' are sound. All one has to do is carry out the struggle amongst friends to offset the "ideological backwardness". And since there are only "friendly classes" in Albanian society, this peaceful struggle can only exceptionally manifest itself as a struggle of lines, in which case it would be a battle of the lines between the defenders of the Albanian homeland and the spies, the agents of foreign powers!

(Note in passing the connection between the national content of such a line struggle and the use of terms such as "our people").

The Albanian position therefore boils down to this:

- either you declare that there is no line struggle, downplaying the differences (there are now only friendly classes) and fail to mobilise the masses for "so little";
- or you become impatient with the reiterated emergence of opposition. Since socialist society is bereft of antagonisms, they can be nothing but 'spies'.

In either case, the true roots of the phenomena are obscured, taking bureaucratic decisions without being able to rally the masses around a real objective. Socialist democracy, which consists precisely in drawing the working masses into the struggle, is drained of its content. It cannot fulfil its role as an instrument at the service of the masses for them to become aware of and masters of their destiny through struggle because the Party cannot guide the masses to grasp the very root of phenomena and to overcome them by transforming them.

Mao defends the diametrically opposite position, involving teaching the working masses to identify "where the bourgeoisie is" and to distinguish the contradictions within the people, from the contradictions between the people and their enemies both internally within socialist society and internationally. It has often been observed that given his immense prestige and authority, Mao could have beheaded Liu Shaoqi or Deng Xiaoping with a single gesture as in any 'Moscow show trial'. But what would the masses have learned from that? How would they have been transformed into the masters of the world if they had not been drawn into the immense struggle of the Cultural Revolution? And what would Mao and the communists themselves have learnt about the real roots of the bourgeoisie and about the capitalist roaders if they had not mobilised the masses, driving everyone to take a stand, forcing 'all the demons out into the open'?

Whatever the past merits of the PLA, its diatribe against Mao and the Cultural Revolution shows that there is an important dividing line today between Marxist-Leninists and opportunists: whether we return to Stalin's floundering and the mistakes of fifty years ago (faced, it's true, with problems that were new at the time); or whether we forge onwards by drawing on all the rich experience of the GPCR, the main lines of which shall now briefly recap.⁵¹

6. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

The GPCR appear out of nowhere. Mao said that it was the form "*finally*" found for the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie under socialism. "Finally", because it was only after many other attempts (the Three-anti and the Five-anti campaigns, the Great Leap Forward, the Socialist Education Movement, etc.) that the GPCR saw the light. It was only in the 1960s that Mao became fully aware, during the course of the GPCR itself, of the extent of revisionist degeneration, the social bases of the new bourgeoisie and the need to mobilise the masses, including against the "headquarters" of the Party and the state.

Founded at the time of the Third International, from which it had obviously suffered the full influence, and with Stalin's USSR as its only historical example of socialist construction, the CCP could not from the outset understand and then extricate itself from their mistakes.

However, as far back as 1957 Mao wrote one of his fundamental works *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*. Up until that time and having realised the democratic stage of the Chinese revolution, China was advancing along the road to accomplishing the tasks of the socialist revolution regarding the collectivisation of the ownership of the means of production. In this area (as in that of the mode of development of the productive forces) it followed the example of the USSR. It was then, with collectivisation essentially achieved (still in two forms, i.e. collective ownership and state ownership) that Mao wrote this work in which for the first time he clearly set out that contrary to Stalin's theses "*In socialist society, class contradictions still remain and class struggle does not die out after the socialist transformation of the ownership of the means of production. The struggle between the two roads of socialism and capitalism runs through the entire stage of socialism. To ensure the success of socialist construction and to prevent the restoration of capitalism, it is necessary to carry the socialist revolution through to the end on the political, economic, ideological and cultural fronts.*"⁵²

In 1963, point 17 of the *Letter in 25 Points* set out the basis for the existence of the bourgeoisie under socialism, as we have seen above (see end of Section III). And many other texts establish that, under socialism, the struggle for state power between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat remains alive. All that remained, as we have said, was to find a way of waging this struggle in order to flush out an enemy adept at disguising himself.

The GPCR initially focused on the superstructure (Daubier⁵³ notes that the Chinese term 'cultural' covers a much wider spectrum than its French equivalent). It began with a struggle against bourgeois ideas and conceptions in the fields of culture, art, education and ideas, namely those areas where bourgeois influence remains particularly strong and where the bourgeoisie can best work to regain power. As Mao said in 1966: "*To overthrow a political power it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counterrevolutionary class. Although the bourgeoisie has been*

51 It should be noted that the attack by the PLA (and its ilk) on Mao is based philosophically on a criticism of the Marxist-Leninist 'One Divides into Two' principle. Çami rejects the idea of "negating unity" and declares that under socialism the thesis of the unity of classes prevails ('two become one'): "Here we have to do mainly with a unity of opposites in which both sides of the contradiction are generally progressive, and their essential interests coincide." This is the metaphysical thesis of the fusion of the terms of the contradiction in order to eliminate it, instead of the dialectical thesis of the triumph of one of the terms over the other (and their transformation). In other words, the thesis of the peaceful integration of the bourgeoisie under socialism.

52 Mao Tse-Tung (1964) *On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World: Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU (IX)*.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1964/phnycom.htm>

53 J. Daubier (1974) A history of the Chinese cultural revolution.

*overthrown, it is still trying to use old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavour to stage a comeback.”*⁵⁴

From then onwards, Mao also argued that this struggle in the superstructure was about power, whilst not abandoning the thesis that the ills afflicting socialism in China stemmed from a simple lag between ideas and the objective world which is why he did not launch a simple campaign to educate the cadres. He used the method of “*arousing the masses boldly*” which prevented the revisionists from limiting the GPCR to a mere “academic movement” where senior cadres came to preach their ‘Marxism’ to others. It was then that the revisionists began to unmask themselves by opposing the mobilisation of the masses.

Mao and the communists behind him used this method of “arousing the masses boldly” to transform the Party and the State.: “[...] *our objective is to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road [...]*”⁵⁵ In 1966, the enemy was defined as capitalist roader senior officials who represented the new bourgeoisie and who sought to establish state capitalism for their own benefit, the contours of which the GPCR sought to curtail. The Central Committee held on 31 October 1968 established that “*The struggle centres on the question of political power, the question of the fight for leadership between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the question of whether the leadership of the Party and state is to be in the hands of Marxists or of revisionists*”⁵⁶.

Not only for want of space but primarily because it would require a prolonged process of research which is only just begun in the international communist movement, we are unable to retrace the entire history of the GPCR here. Nevertheless, the following general lines have already been established. Starting from the revolution in the superstructure, Mao and the communists who followed him led this revolution to the upheaval of social relations in all areas in conjunction with the struggle to regenerate and rebuild the Party itself and to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat, in particular by reducing the role of the ‘special apparatuses’ of the state.⁵⁷

They led the masses to attack the very ground on which the bourgeoisie was reborn under socialism, leading the struggle both practically and theoretically (as demonstrated in particular by the great campaigns against the theory of the productive forces and the campaign on the dictatorship of the proletariat in 1975).⁵⁸ They enriched Marxism with new facts concerning the basis of the existence of the new bourgeoisie and how to combat it. While we cannot cover here the full scope richness of the initiatives undertaken between 1965 and 1975 in China, what we can say is that everything that we and others can say today about living and true socialism does and must rest on the achievements of the GPCR.

One of the most outstanding of these achievements was the development of Marxism regarding the contradictory nature of socialist society as a society where the struggle between the capitalist and communist paths continues albeit under the new conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. For instance, the famous Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution dated 16 May 1966 states that the GPCR is a struggle between two classes for power. And as we have seen, it was on this precise question that the differences between revisionists and Marxists then came to a head. The Circular states, for example, that: “[...] *there is no construction without destruction. Destruction means criticism and repudiation; it means revolution. It involves reasoning things out, which is construction. Put destruction first, and in the process, you have construction*”, indicating that many things still remain to be destroyed in all things referred to as

54 Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Peking Review, Volume 9, N° 33, 12 August 1966, pp. 6-11.

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1966/PR1966-33g.htm>

55 ‘Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’, Peking Review, Vol. 9 N° 3, 12 August 1966, pp. 6-11.

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1966/PR1966-33g.htm>

56 ‘Communique of the Enlarged 12th Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China’, Peking Review (1968), Vol. 11, N° 44.

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1968/PR1968-44s.htm>

57 Regarding several aspects of the struggle to change social relations, see our China Dossier in *Pour Le Parti* N°s 19 and 20.

58 See twelve texts on the dictatorship of the proletariat See Peking Review, Vol. 18, N°s 9-16 (28 February-18 April 1975): <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/index.htm#1975> (As published in French: <http://ocml-vp.org/article1207.html>)

'socialist' (e.g. socialist social relations, the socialist state, etc.) in order to move on to communism and that the transition to communism is not a linear, gradual and smooth transition, but rather a continuous revolution in stages. The state in particular cannot remain as it is. The Central Committee held on 8 August 1966 highlighted the "*many new things have begun to emerge in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*" (see footnote 58), going on to state that the new "*organs of power of the proletarian Cultural Revolution*", namely the groups and committees of the cultural revolution, should be directly elected by the masses according to a system "*like that of the Paris Commune*". The aim was to strengthen the exercise of power by the proletariat, the dictatorship of the proletariat, by reducing the distance between it (and its allies) and the state 'apparatus'.

This was not without its difficulties. For example, in the major industrial city of Shanghai, where the GPCR had won over the workers *en masse*, it came up against the management cadres, the Party apparatus in situ and the most privileged sections of the workers on whom they relied. By the end of 1966, the revolutionary workers had organised themselves into a *Workers Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters*. The conservative cadres then attempted to attack the rebel movement by discrediting it, wreaking havoc and disrupting production. They encouraged workers to go on strike to demand higher wages, improved working hours, etc., saying that workers should not be denied anything because they should be the masters, effectively seeking to limit the scope of action of the workers to the factories and economic demands alone whilst at the same time predicating that revolution and production were incompatible.⁵⁹

The left (led in Shanghai by Zhang Chungqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen) counterattacked and at a vast meeting held on 6 January 1967 attended by a million people, the conservative leaders were ousted and a new political power was proclaimed: the Shanghai People's Commune, where, in 1967, the question of wresting power from the capitalist roader leaders path really came to the fore. It was not simply a question of ideological reform or education.

This initial Shanghai People's Commune was later reformed as the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, a form of power organisation based on principles acceptable to the whole of China. The Workers' Shanghai could not remain isolated. Compromises had to be found throughout the country with different forces and the level of consciousness of the masses was certainly far from having reached that of Shanghai everywhere.

These Revolutionary Committees spread throughout the country and were charged with "*exercising leadership in everything*".⁶⁰ These were new organs of power based on the Triple Alliance made up of the revolutionary rebels, the people's army (and militia) and cadres who had supported the movement, with the 'rebels' and the cadres to be designated by the masses. This Triple Alliance represented a compromise (particularly with the army), a stage, and a new political balance necessary to consolidate the GPCR by isolating the right and rallying the intermediate forces.

At the same time as these new organs of power were being set up, important struggles were underway to undermine the economic bases underpinning the reproduction of the new bourgeoisie.

Although important questions such as material incentives and the application of the principle of 'to each according to his work' were the object of hard-fought battles, the struggles were not limited to the field of distribution (until then, it had been claimed that once collectivisation was complete with only the problem of egalitarian distribution remaining to be resolved). These struggles concerned all aspects of the social division of labour, both in the relations of production and in the more general relations between the masses and

59 During the Cultural Revolution, the bourgeoisie was renowned for resorting to the tactic of appearing under cover of an apparently 'left-wing' line but was in fact right-wing. For example, in 1969, Liu Shaoqi attempted to deflect the attacks levelled against him and his cronies as "high officials capitalist roaders" by blaming the small and medium-sized cadres for all of the mistakes: "Down with the cadres responsible for all ills! Since the Party 'has a just line', its top officials cannot be accused! This method of 'broadening the target' to better camouflage the real enemies 'from above' was unmasked by the slogan "Attack the majority to protect the minority". It boiled down to this: given that there is no bourgeois class under socialism, let's attack the petty bourgeois to the death - they are the cause of all our ills. Later, in 1966, the right-wingers tried to use the vast movement of exchanges of experience and the movements of Red Guards throughout the country to push the workers to abandon production *en masse* in order to wreak chaos and discredit the GPCR.

60 To paraphrase the title of an article published in 1968 by Yao Wenyuan *The Working Class Must Exercise Leadership in Everything* (Annex 3).

management, between society and the state, between infrastructure and superstructure, etc. For example, in addition to the issue of state power (who runs things) and new forms of the state, all kinds of initiatives were taken, such as sending students *en masse* to the countryside from June '68 onwards, sending workers to university, overhauling teaching and medicine (barefoot doctors), opening May Seventh Cadre Schools for managers in October 1968 (see Appendix III), etc. In the end, it all came up against formidable resistance (no doubt stronger than anticipated) from many cadres whose privileges, prestige and routine were affected, which Zhang Chungqiao described in the following words: *"In their world outlook they have not yet overstepped the bounds of small production and of the bourgeoisie. They do approve of the dictatorship of the proletariat at a certain stage and within a certain sphere and are pleased with certain victories of the proletariat, because they will bring them some gains; once they have secured their gains, they feel it's time to settle down and feather their cozy nests. As for exercising all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, as for going on after the first step on the 10,000-li long march, sorry, let others do the job; here is my stop and I must get off the bus. We would like to offer a piece of advice to these comrades: It's dangerous to stop half-way! The bourgeoisie is beckoning to you. Catch up with the ranks and continue to advance!"*⁶¹ These managers, who the revolution had promoted to more or less important positions and who had no desire to push on towards the elimination of the 'differences' from which benefitted them, wanted to stop there, 'halfway'. But if you don't go down the road of communism, you go down the road of capitalism. There can be no 'social' stability because the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat always rages bitterly on. Under socialism there is no relation of production that reproduces itself as under capitalism. "Standing still means going backwards", as the old song goes, which is why the bourgeoisie makes quick to 'beckon' to those who hesitate to press onwards! The fact that the mass of cadres within the state apparatus and the Party were not really truly committed to the GPCR and convinced of its validity is demonstrated by the relative ease with which the revisionist leaders led by Deng Xiaoping were able to regain full power after Mao's death. Many observers spoke of the 'relief' with which they (and certainly some of the less advanced masses) greeted this event. Peace at last! Finally, the struggle to rein in their specific role and the privileges that went with it was over! This 'relief' is certainly due more to this than to the 'leftist excesses' that may have targeted some individuals (and which are unavoidable in a period of such upheaval).

Given our current level of information, we are unable to explain precisely why the battle to develop the dictatorship of the proletariat was ultimately lost in China. Nevertheless, we can already put forward a number of explanations that will help us to see things more clearly and to answer the question: Was the GPCR a just initiative and did Mao lead it correctly on the whole?

1) It is necessary to recall an objective difficulty: in China the peasantry and other sectors of the petty bourgeoisie represented a huge mass in the face of a relatively small proletariat. By actively participating in the first democratic phase of the Chinese revolution, these sectors (including certain fractions of the national bourgeoisie) carved out an important place for themselves in the state apparatus and in society (and even within the Party itself), bringing with them their ideology, their politics, etc. (To those who are 'taken aback' by the compromises reached with certain fractions of the bourgeoisie until around 1956, one may well ask whether they were equally 'taken aback', for example, by Lenin's New Economic Policy, given that one can't expect any kind of concrete analysis of the revolution from such pundits).

2) The CCP was fully a part of the International Communist Movement of its time, namely the Third International. As a result, China initially adopted the USSR model. However, what distinguished Mao was that he was never a mere 'follower', having triumphed with his line of the people's war as early as the 1930s, although admittedly it did take him time to learn the theoretical and practical lessons from Stalin's mistakes (primarily spurred on by the arrival of Khrushchev). Nor indeed was the break with revisionism immediately 'total' or 'complete', which would have been unfeasible. It is nevertheless true that Mao's CCP was quite clearly the first to wage this theoretical and practical battle (despite claims to the contrary by the PLA, as texts and facts testify) and also the one that has taken it furthest up to the present day. Prior to the GPCR, no one had understood, nor could explain, the material, class bases of revisionism and its true nature. Everything that can be said, everything that will be explored in depth regarding this crucial issue is thanks to the GPCR.

61 See Chang Chun-chiao [Zhang, Chunqiao] (1975) *On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship Over the Bourgeoisie* <https://www.bannedthought.net/China/MaoEra/G4/ZhangChunqiao/OnExercisingAll-roundDictatorshipOverBourgeoisie-1975.pdf>

3) Political mistakes may have most likely been made by the communist leaders grouped around Mao (particularly The Four). It is difficult to make an accurate assessment of this issue, since all of the criticisms levelled against 'The Four' today come from revisionists who believe that there is not necessarily a bourgeois class and a bourgeoisie/proletariat contradiction in a socialist country, whereby they accuse 'The Four' of 'excessive' attacks, and of upholding 'anarchist' and 'petty-bourgeois' positions, etc. Sometimes these accusations take on a seemingly 'leftist' liushaoshist hue: 'The Four' would have been wrong to speak of the bourgeoisie because the focus must be on the petty-bourgeoisie- see note 59. That being so, on the subject of political errors we can pose the following problems:

3.1 The PLA, and many others in its stead, basically argue the following: the fact that the bourgeoisie existed in China, particularly within the Party and the state, is proof that political mistakes had been made, that it was tolerated, that it was conciliated and that it was '*happily invited*' to exist there. For, were the proletariat to have exercised its '*iron dictatorship*' and had the leaders adopted the correct line, then the bourgeois class would have been banished. Obviously, 'if' one could immediately eliminate classes and move on to communism, there wouldn't be too many problems! As if a political line or the iron will of this or that leader could thwart the existence of a class! A correct political line can prevent the bourgeoisie from regaining power. However, as far as the existence as a class per se is concerned, it is precisely the material bases of its existence that must be eliminated in order for it to be eliminated in turn. With these theories such as these, we are awash in idealism!

3.2 A correct political line is not even an absolute guarantee against a bourgeois victory in a particular battle and defeat can still happen, depending on the national and international balance of power. Were that not to be the case, then the revolution would resolve once and for all the question of 'who will win' under socialism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. If the bourgeoisie triumphs in China today, it is because it was able to defeat the correct political line of the GPCR in the Party. Take the example of the Paris Commune. Marx never said that if the Communards had not made mistakes, had marched immediately on Versailles, taken the gold from the Bank of France, etc., that they would certainly have won, rallying the peasants and holding on to power, etc. The Paris Commune was the first of its kind in the world. The Paris Commune was the first experiment in proletarian dictatorship. "*Although the mass revolutionary movement did not achieve its aim, he regarded it as a historic experience of enormous importance, as a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, as a practical step that was more important than hundreds of programmes and arguments. Marx endeavoured to analyse this experiment, to draw tactical lessons from it and reexamine his theory in the light of it.*"⁶² Although the GPCR did not achieve its goal, it still retains the same immense historical significance as the Commune. Just like Marx in his day, we too must 'learn from its example' without the pedantry of the idealists who so glibly claim that the fact that it failed was due those who launched and led the GPCR being nothing but petty-bourgeois!

3.3 Of course, it would be equally absurd to claim that these leaders immediately knew how to solve ALL of the problems and that they didn't waver or make any mistakes! To our mind, they have failed to solve or have badly solved two difficult problems:

3.3.1. The first concerns the precise delimitation of the forces of the revolution and in particular the question of the petty-bourgeoisie, the intermediate masses. It was right to isolate the target of the bourgeoisie, the capitalist roader officials in high office. It was right to combat those who claimed that only the problem of the petty-bourgeoisie remained, focusing its attacks on it whilst ignoring the bourgeoisie itself. But the right position is not to say on the contrary that '90% of the population' is revolutionary and fully supports the GPCR. While the texts published during the Cultural Revolution and up to 1975 clearly reveal the material basis of the existence of the petty-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie and explain how the bourgeoisie can rally the petty-bourgeoisie to the line of widening differences in order to regain state power (see, for example *On the Social Basis of the Lin Piao Anti-Party Clique*⁶³), they fail to draw a clear distinction between these classes. Similarly, the assertions regarding 'the revolutionary masses' sometimes seem to mask the delimitation from the proletariat, whilst at the same time proclaiming that the latter "*must lead everything*". We have seen that under socialism there are non-proletarian strata whose existence is based on social relations which bear traces of capitalism. For example, cooperative peasants (property in common) or the petty-bourgeoisie, small managers and employees in the commercial, financial, state, education and cultural sectors, etc. This petty-bourgeoisie wavers between the socialist and the

62 Lenin (1917) *The State and the Revolution*, Op. Cit (p. 27) Underlined by us.

63 Yao Wenyuan (1975) *On the Social Basis of the Lin Piao Anti-Party Clique*, Hongqi, No. 3.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/yao-wenyuan/1975/0001.htm>

petty-bourgeois. This petty-bourgeoisie wavers and dithers, not fully embracing the arduous tasks of continuing the revolution. These material bases mean that it is not separated from the bourgeoisie by a Great Wall of China (any more than, under capitalism, there is a clear divider between the highest paid managers at Renault and the engineers on the one hand and the lower-level managers on the other). Nevertheless, all revolutionary tactics require the painstaking work of class analysis in order to identify one's enemies and distinguish the proletariat from its (more or less hesitant) allies. Otherwise, the differences become blurred and the masses are viewed as 100% revolutionary, all the more so since during the GPCR when the proletariat was very successful in rallying the masses behind it. This is disingenuous and only serves to weaken the proletariat's awareness that rallying and transforming the petty bourgeoisie entails struggle. And when the petty-bourgeoisie at any given moment leans towards the bourgeoisie, does not act in a revolutionary way as it had hoped, does not immediately follow the Party's directives, then it can be qualified as bourgeois (because it does not see the existence of the intermediate element) and violence can be used against it.

This is undoubtedly the source of certain sectarian attitudes for which Mao apparently reproached 'The Four'. This also no doubt accounts for the excessive role that seems to have been ascribed to ideology and right. When the masses are 100% revolutionary, there was a tendency to favour re-education to avoid slowing down the revolution, seen as being held back by ideas whilst at the same time paying less attention to the necessary transformation of the very existence of the petty-bourgeoisie. While we must not forget all that the GPCR did in this direction (technical workers, barefoot doctors, the role of the working class in education, etc.), the question arises as to whether the organisation of the domination of the proletariat within the organs of power, the strengthening of its own organisations (i.e. the party, the militia, etc.) without which it can find itself 'overwhelmed' in the petty-bourgeois masses, has been correctly answered. This is an important question and the issue at stake is whether it is the proletariat or the bourgeoisie who takes the lead and rallies the petty-bourgeois masses. This is why Mao said that if people like Lin Biao came to power, they would easily re-establish capitalism.

3.3.2. This question of the power of the working class, most notably within the Party and the state, is the second problem of the GPCR. As we have seen, the whole question of the real strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat depends on the level of class-consciousness and on its capacity to genuinely exercise power. It was doubtless because this consciousness was insufficiently widespread throughout China that it proved impossible to generalise the Shanghai Commune. It was necessary to rebuild a state apparatus in line with the prevailing objective and subjective conditions. And this had to be done with the 'materials' available, i.e. compromises, former cadres, the army and other forces (Cf. the 'three-in-one' combination). This is a problem on the same scale as that faced by Lenin regarding the need to make use of part of the old state apparatus. Mao refused to reject all the cadres, saying that many were good, others relatively good, etc. Nevertheless, some of them (we do not know the extent of the purges of 1978-80) supported Deng Xiaoping.

All of these questions remain difficult problems to be resolved during the construction of socialism and to which the writings by Mao or 'The Four' that we are aware of do not provide fully satisfactory answers. As they did not have the opportunity of hindsight, it is up to us to try to draw all of the lessons from the GPCR that can enrich Marxism.

Under no circumstances, however, can any errors or unresolved questions alter our opinion of this historic experience of huge import. The Paris Commune had led Marx to 'correct' his theory and his programme *The Communist Manifesto*. Contrary to what had been said until then, it had become apparent that: "the working class must break up, smash the 'ready-made state machinery', and not confine itself merely to laying hold of it". The GPCR also provides us with a 'correction' of great importance regarding the question of the state under socialism: objective bases necessarily exist for the bourgeoisie to be re-formed both within the state and within the party itself.

If we analyse this experience and seek to learn from it rather than merely expecting to 'conjure up' socialism from scratch, then we will learn several valuable lessons:

1) The revolution must continue under socialism. It is a class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat for power that continues long after the forms of property have been collectivised, until classes are abolished, until

*“the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations”*⁶⁴ (K. Marx).

2) The bourgeoisie always reproduces itself under socialism, not only in the relations of production which bear the hallmarks of capitalism and which are ‘protected’ by ‘bourgeois right’, set within the special apparatuses of the State and the ruling Party⁶⁵ and throughout the superstructure as a whole. Hence the need to link the struggle for the transformation of the relations of production (in particular the division of labour) to the struggle for the destruction of the state apparatus. Raising the level of consciousness of the proletariat and thereafter the working masses both requires and facilitates real democracy, real participation of the masses in the affairs of state. It is the task of the Party to guide the proletariat along this road, up to and including bombarding the ‘bourgeois headquarters’ within the Party and the State in order to further strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. This path is contrary to the path of strengthening the special apparatus of the state itself, of the conception of ‘improving the state’, wrongly referred to as a ‘worker’s state’ for the sake of convenience.

3) The class struggle of the proletariat under socialism calls for the need to bring together the initiative of the working masses with the leadership of the Party (or its Proletarian Centre): to combine support for the state with the struggle against the state; to combine violence against the bourgeoisie with the alliance and the training for struggle of the intermediate masses who must be transformed.

The most difficult thing is to know where and who the real enemies are because under socialism, the bourgeoisie always advances behind the red flag. The mobilisation of the masses for the pursuit of revolution is the only way to compel everyone to take a stand and to educate the masses themselves through experience.

Charles Paveigne, July 1980.

64 K. Marx (1850) *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850 (Part II)*

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/ch03.htm>

65 On the need to distinguish as far as possible between party and state (“leadership” and “management”), see E. Hoxha’s interesting “Mati speech” (“The masses build socialism, the party makes them aware”) from the time when he was influenced by the G.P.C.R. experience.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: Excerpts from the article ‘From Bourgeois Democrats to Capitalist-Roaders’ *Peking Review*, N° 13, 26 March 1976 (pp. 6-8.)⁶⁶

by Chih Heng

The individual referred to as “the capitalist-roader in the Party who refuses to mend his ways” is of course Teng Hsiao-ping (Deng Xiaoping).]

(...)

The new-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party are two revolutionary stages whose character, targets and tasks are essentially different. The former took place in the old China of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. The principal contradiction it aimed to resolve was the contradiction between the masses of the people including, workers, peasants, the petty and national bourgeoisie on one side and imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism on the other. Therefore, it was anti-imperialist and anti-feudal bourgeois democratic revolution in character. Its task was to strive under the leadership of the proletariat to overthrow the rule of imperialism, the feudal landlord class and the bureaucrat-comprador bourgeoisie in China, and to lead the revolution to socialism.

With the victory of the new-democratic revolution, the character and principal contradiction of the Chinese society changed. The contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie became the principal contradiction in our country. This contradiction not only exists in society at large but is also reflected in the Party. The socialist revolution we are carrying out is a revolution waged by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes. The spearhead of the revolution is directed mainly against the bourgeoisie and against Party persons in power taking the capitalist road. Its task is to replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat, use socialism to defeat capitalism, and through protracted class struggle gradually create conditions in which it will be impossible for the bourgeoisie to exist, or for a new bourgeoisie to arise, and finally eliminate classes and realize communism. The founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 marked the beginning of the socialist revolutionary stage.

If one’s ideology still remains at the old stage and views and treats the socialist revolution from the stand and world outlook of bourgeois democrats, one will become a representative of the bourgeoisie, a capitalist-roader and a target of the socialist revolution.

After the victory of the new-democratic revolution in China, the ideology of some people in the Party remained at the stage of the democratic revolution and they did not want to continue the revolution along the socialist road. Isn’t this true of the capitalist-roader in the Party who refuses to mend his ways? He and his followers are afraid that the socialist revolution will bring them under fire and will affect private ownership, bourgeois right which they cherish, the traditional ideas they want to uphold and their bourgeois class stand and world outlook. They therefore become representatives of the bourgeoisie. The deeper the socialist revolution goes, the sharper becomes the contradiction between them and the revolution and between them and the workers and poor and lower-middle peasants who persevere in continuing the revolution. As the socialist revolution moves forward, they fall back and oppose revolution.

It is precisely the capitalist-roader refusing to mend his ways who opposed agricultural co-operation and the people’s commune and supported “the fixing of farm output quotas for individual households with each on its own.” Later, he set himself up against the Great Cultural Revolution and suppressed the revolutionary mass movement, and now made every effort to reverse correct verdicts and restore capitalism.

⁶⁶ “From Bourgeois Democrats to Capitalist-Roaders” *Peking Review*, N° 13, 26 March 26, 1976, pp. 6-8.
<https://www.massline.org/PekingReview/PR1976/PR1976-13a.htm>

(...)

After the victory of the democratic revolution, the issue is whether to stop the revolution at the old stage and not going forward or to persist in making socialist revolution and strive for the goal of communism, that is, whether or not to persevere in making revolution against the bourgeoisie. Herein lies the fundamental difference between proletarian revolutionaries and bourgeois democrats and between Marxists and revisionists. The struggle between the two lines within the Party during the socialist period precisely centres on this issue.

Why does the capitalist-roader in the Party who refuses to mend his ways so resent the Great Cultural Revolution? Why does he regard the socialist new things which have emerged in the Great Cultural Revolution as a thorn in his flesh and something to be got rid of at all costs? Why is he so reluctant to part with the capitalist and revisionist trash which was repudiated in the Great Cultural Revolution, and is so eager to reinstate it? This is because, as Chairman Mao has said, **“the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is in essence a great political revolution carried out under the conditions of socialism by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes.”** This great revolution smashed the two bourgeois headquarters of Liu Shao-chi and Lin Biao, criticized their revisionist line, brought the capitalist-roaders in the Party under fire, made the bourgeoisie in the Party the target of the revolution, criticized the ideologies of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes, and transformed education, literature and art and other parts of the superstructure not in conformity with the socialist economic base. All these run counter to the bourgeois interests represented by the capitalist-roader in the Party who has refused to mend his ways and to the capitalist road he is so eager to take. Because of this, people like him have inevitably become opponents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

The birthmarks of the old society remain in socialist society as is the case with bourgeois right and the three major differences between worker and peasant, between town and country and between manual and mental labour. These provide the soil and conditions for engendering the bourgeoisie and capitalism. The long-term task in the period of socialism is to restrict bourgeois right and gradually wipe out the vestiges of the old society. The deeper the socialist revolution goes, the more imperative it is for us to put forward this task and set about to accomplish it.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: **“Our country at present practises a commodity system, the wage system is unequal, too, as in the eight-grade wage scale, and so forth. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat such things can only be restricted. Therefore, if people like Lin Biao come to power, it will be quite easy for them to rig up the capitalist system. That is why we should do more reading of Marxist-Leninist works.”** This instruction of Chairman Mao’s reflects the desire and demands of the proletariat and the revolutionary people to push the socialist revolution forward. At the same time it arouses fear and opposition from people whose ideology still remains at the stage of the democratic revolution. They want to retain these fundamental aspects of bourgeois right. These people come out in opposition when the revolution hits them directly by moving to restrict those aspects of bourgeois right which they wish to uphold. Why does this capitalist-roader who refuses to mend his ways hate the socialist new things which restrict bourgeois right in various fields? Why does he censure in every way the criticism of material incentives and of regarding knowledge as private property and other ideas arising from bourgeois right? Why is he so afraid of raising the question of restricting bourgeois right and why is he dead against it? It is because he represents the bourgeoisie and wants to safeguard and strengthen bourgeois right and safeguard and expand the basis on which the bourgeoisie is engendered and survives.

(...)

ANNEX II: ‘The May 7 Cadre School’ Peking Review N° 19, 12 May 1972 (pp. 5-7).⁶⁷

[This unsigned article is reprinted from Peking Review, #19, May 12, 1972, pp. 5-7.]

A NEW thing born in the Great Cultural Revolution, “May 7” cadre schools are all over China. Every province, municipality and autonomous region as well as many special administrative regions, counties and cities, all have

⁶⁷ <https://www.massline.org/PekingReview/PR1972/PR1972-19a.htm>

this type of school. More than a hundred belong to the departments under the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council.

Those who have been sent to the school include veteran cadres who went through the Long March, the War of Resistance Against Japan or the War of Liberation; cadres who joined the revolution after liberation; those who went from their homes to schools and from there to government offices and who were lacking in practical experience; and young cadres who had been Red Guards. While at cadre school, they get their regular wages and the same welfare facilities as when they are on the job. The term generally is for a year or so, the least six months, the most two to three years.

Versatile Activities

Regardless of seniority or how high a post held, everyone is an ordinary student, a "May 7" fighter. At the Chingkou "May 7" Cadre School in Kirin Province, the former director of the agriculture bureau becomes a pig-breeder, the former secretary of the city Party committee a carpenter, a department head a cart driver and a county head a cook.

Students' lives are many-sided. They do productive manual labour as well as study. They criticize the bourgeoisie and do mass work. The school also organizes militia training and cultural and sports activities. Some schools set aside time for students to study their vocations or raise their general educational level.

The "May 7" cadre school is a school for training cadres at their posts in rotation.

How does the school accomplish its tasks? How do students study? It can be generalized as follows:

Studying Marxist-Leninist Works. In the light of the revolutionary struggle and their ideology, the students study the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin and Chairman Mao's works to raise their level of Marxism and their consciousness of the struggle between the two lines, thereby raising their ability to distinguish between genuine and sham Marxists.

The students at the Huangho "May 7" Cadre School in Honan spend half a day studying and the other half doing manual labour. In the busy farming season, they work during the day, studying in the morning or evening. Last year they studied the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and *The State and Revolution* as well as *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*. They pay special attention to linking theory with practice and often organize group discussions and criticism meetings.

Participating in Class Struggle. Students at cadre schools take part in class struggle and in criticizing the bourgeoisie to temper themselves. They often link their work and ideological problems with their mass criticism of swindlers like Liu Shao-chi, of the theory of the dying out of class struggle, the bourgeois theory of human nature, the theory of productive forces, idealist apriorism, the theory that doing manual labour is a punishment and the theory of going to school in order to get an official post. Some cadre schools carry out various political movements in step with the movements in the units they belong to. Some have sent students to rural people's communes to take part in or help local people carry out a political campaign like attacking active counter-revolutionaries, campaigns against embezzlement and theft, extravagance and waste and speculation.

Taking Part in Productive Labour. Cadre schools devote themselves mainly to agricultural production. Where conditions allow, they branch out into forestry, animal husbandry, side-occupations and fisheries. At the same time they go in for small industries such as machine-repairing, manufacturing of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, paper- and brick-making, and sugar-refining.

Every cadre school has cultivated land—much was once wasteland—ranging from hundreds to thousands of *mu*, parts of which are reclaimed tracts along sea coasts or lakeshores and on barren hillsides and alkaline slopes. Inner Mongolia's Ikh Chao League cadre school converted much sandy land into fertile fields by covering the sand with layers of mud. **"Plain living and hard struggle"** and **"self-reliance"** is the motto of all the cadre schools.

The object of students taking part in industrial or agricultural productive labour is not only to create material wealth for the country but mainly to better their ideology and to transform their subjective world as they transform the objective world.

Cadres of the General Office of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee turned the building of their school into a process of edifying their thought. Instead of choosing a ready-made site, they preferred to build it

from scratch. They turned 5,000 *mu* of lakeshore and other wasteland into fields, and built dormitories and factories on their own. They dug canals, wading knee-deep in mud. They went into icy streams to get sand and braved eye-stinging smoke to burn limestone in the kilns. They fought floods to save people's lives and property. They met all these trials head-on to gain the revolutionary spirit of "fearing neither hardship nor death."

Going Among Workers and Peasants. Students often leave their schools for short stays in nearby people's communes or factories. Living, eating and working alongside workers or peasants, they learn from them and carry out social investigations among them at the same time. They also do mass work, such as organizing workers and peasants to study philosophy, helping them get some general education and aiding local Party organizations carry out Party rectification and Party building. All these activities aim at raising their ideological level and reforming their world outlook.

Transforming Man

Cadres come to the schools in turns. They go back to their original posts after "graduation," or are transferred to new work. Practice has shown that their stay at cadre schools, brief as it is, is excellent training. The great majority of students come out of the schools changed in outlook in more ways than one.

One artist at the Kuantang Cadre School in Hunan Province who had joined revolutionary work straight from school had not liked to draw peasants because he considered their weatherbeaten faces no objects for art. After entering the cadre school, he had a chance to live and eat with peasants, and made some social investigations into their lives. He found out the tragic histories of many peasant families in the old society under the exploitation of the landlord class. His sentiments changed, and he began to have a great compassion for the once-downtrodden peasants. He said: "Before, I looked at things according to bourgeois aesthetic standards; the more I drew, the farther from the labouring people I got. Now, the more I draw peasants, the closer I feel to them."

Lin Hsiang-wei, vice-director and chief engineer at a designing institute in Hunan, had designed a highway bridge which wasted tons of bricks because he wanted it fancy. The workers criticized him, without convincing him he was wrong. After going to the Kuantang Cadre School, he happened to be working at a brick-kiln. A rush assignment in summer had him drenched in sweat and covered with dirt in the sweltering heat day after day. Only then did he fully realize what it meant to make one brick. He said with genuine feeling: "It's only after you've taken part in labour that you get to feel akin to the workers and peasants." During a fierce rainstorm, Lin ran to the kiln and covered up the clay molds, though he got soaking wet. He often expresses his determination to continue to make revolution and thoroughly transform his old ideas, to become an intellectual welcomed by the workers, peasants and soldiers.

Veteran cadres with much revolutionary experience also gain a great deal from going to cadre school. It puts them back in the war years and helps them get rid of bureaucratic airs and the inactivity that crept up on them in peace time. It rejuvenates them.

Fang Fu-chin, a veteran of the 25,000-li Long March of the Chinese Red Army in 1934-35, was one of the first to enrol at the Meitsun Cadre School under the Kwangchow Railway Bureau. Once there, he was reminded of the militant life he used to lead in the Chingkang Mountains, Yen-an and Nanniwan in the early days of the revolution. Invigorated, he joined the rank and file in climbing mountains to fell trees, and went wherever the difficulties were greatest. Out of consideration for his years, comrades often told him to take a rest. He refused, saying: "You may replace me in labour, but that'll never transform my ideology."

Yang Li-feng is a new cadre from a poor peasant family. She entered college in 1960 wearing a pair of simple cloth shoes her mother had made for her. Under the influence of the revisionist line in education, she developed the bourgeois idea of wanting to get up in the world. So she put the cloth shoes at the bottom of a chest. When schoolmates asked her to tell them her family history, she refused, ashamed of past poverty.

At the Hsiushuihotzu People's Commune in Faku County, Liaoning Province, Yang took part in peasant activities to recall past bitterness and praise the new life. She told commune members how her feelings had changed after going to college. The peasants helped her, saying: "You must understand that you've not only forgotten your family's bitter past, but that of your class. You've not only put away the cloth shoes, but the true qualities of the

labouring people.” Enlightened, Yang plunged into productive labour with renewed zeal and wore her cloth shoes again.

After coming out of cadre schools, most cadres are full of life, keep in close touch with the masses and have a good style in their work and way of living. The masses of workers, peasants and soldiers welcome their progress made in this period of “studying once again.” They say: “We have full confidence in cadres who can work both at the top and down at the grass roots, and who keep close to the people.”

Origin of Cadre Schools

“May 7” cadre schools were set up in all parts of the country according to Chairman Mao’s May 7, 1966 Directive.*

In 1968, when the Proletarian Cultural Revolution was developing in depth, the question of how to carry forward the cadres’ ideological revolutionization and revolutionize government institutions was discussed on a wide scale. In October that year Chairman Mao issued the call: **“Going down to do manual labour gives vast numbers of cadres an excellent opportunity to study once again; this should be done by all cadres except those who are old, weak, ill or disabled. Cadres at their posts should also go down in turn to do manual labour.”**

Cadres at every level all over the country enthusiastically responded to this call and asked to go to the most difficult places to do manual labour and to **“study once again.”** The “May 7” cadre schools were set up to meet these needs, and in the single month of October alone new ones appeared almost every day.

The guiding thought of these cadre schools which upholds the system of cadre participation in collective productive labour was pointed out by Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee long before 1968.

Cadres doing productive labour is the fine tradition of the Chinese Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army, as today it is the tradition of the People’s Liberation Army. In an army of the people, officers and soldiers help the masses in manual labour wherever they are. After liberation, cadres in government and Party organizations have learnt to carry forward this tradition. The system of cadre participation in collective productive labour for fixed periods has been in effect since 1958, and cadres have been taking turns in going to the countryside or factories.

In 1964, after summing up the experience of revolutionary struggle in China and studying the positive and negative experiences in the international communist movement, Chairman Mao pointed out: **“By taking part in collective productive labour, the cadres maintain extensive, constant and close ties with the working people. This is a major measure of fundamental importance for a socialist system; it helps to overcome bureaucracy and to prevent revisionism and dogmatism.”**

* This directive pointed out that the **“army should be a great school.... In this school, our army should study politics and military affairs, raise its educational level, and also engage in agriculture and side-occupations and run small or medium-sized factories.... Our army should also do mass work.... Also our army should always be ready to participate in the struggles to criticize and repudiate the bourgeoisie in the cultural revolution.”** It also called on people in other fields to **“learn other things”** while mainly engaging in their own work. **“They should also learn industrial production, agricultural production and military affairs. They also should criticize and repudiate the bourgeoisie.”** They must study **“politics and raise their educational level.”** **“Those working in ... Party and government organizations should do the same.”**

ANNEX III: ‘The Working Class Must Exercise Leadership in Everything’

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<https://www.massline.org/PekingReview/PR1968/PR1968-35-WorkingClassLeadership.pdf>

By Yao Wenyuan

A great high tide of struggle-criticism-transformation is coming. The publication of Chairman Mao's latest instructions and the systematic entry, under leadership, of the mighty army of industrial workers into schools and all other units where struggle-criticism-transformation has not been carried out well are signals of the coming high tide. This high tide follows the work on a number of tasks, including the establishment of revolutionary committees in provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, mass criticism and repudiation and the purifying of the class ranks. It will bring about profound changes in all fields, fiercely storm all those parts of the superstructure which do not conform to the socialist economic base, educate the masses, smash the hidden reactionaries, carry the great proletarian cultural revolution forward to all-round victory and greatly stimulate the development of the social productive forces.

The important task now confronting the revolutionary committees at all levels is to do the work of struggle-criticism-transformation conscientiously and well, and without losing any time. In order to accomplish this task, it is imperative to persist in leadership by the working class and to "bring into full play the leading role of the working class in the great cultural revolution and in all fields of work."

The slogan of replacing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat was put forth from the very time when Marxism began to take shape in the mid-19th century, one hundred and twenty years ago. Only imperialism, the landlord class, the bourgeoisie and their agents — the revisionists, old and new — are opposed to this thoroughgoing revolutionary slogan. The Communist Party of China takes this slogan as its basic programme. In order to realize this slogan, it is essential to unite with the non-worker masses, mainly the peasant masses, the urban petty bourgeoisie and those intellectuals who can be remoulded, and to lead them forward.

Throughout the entire process, the great proletarian cultural revolution has been under the sole leadership of one class only, the working class. Our Party is the vanguard of the proletariat. The proletarian headquarters headed by Chairman Mao and with Vice-Chairman Lin Biao as its deputy leader represents in a concentrated way the interests of the working class, the poor and lower-middle peasants and the masses of labouring people; it is the only centre of leadership for the whole Party, the whole army, the whole nation and the masses of revolutionary people. Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and all his instructions reflect the pressing demands of the working class and of the hundreds of millions of revolutionary people and embody the proletariat's firm and strong leadership of the whole great proletarian cultural revolution. It was the leadership of the proletarian headquarters headed by Chairman Mao that made it possible to launch the great proletarian cultural revolution in which hundreds of millions of revolutionary people are taking part. To persist in working-class leadership it is essential, first and foremost, to ensure that every instruction from Chairman Mao, the great leader of the working class, and every order issued by the supreme fighting command of the working class are carried out swiftly and smoothly. The theory of "many centres," that is, the theory of "no centre," mountain-stronghold mentality, sectarianism and other reactionary bourgeois trends undermining working-class leadership must be opposed. The revolutionary committees in all places are organs of power of the dictatorship of the proletariat. All units should accept leadership by the revolutionary committees. It is impermissible to allow in our country the existence of any "independent kingdom," big or small, which is counter-posed to Chairman Mao's proletarian headquarters. The old Peking Municipal Party Committee, this watertight and impenetrable "independent kingdom" which resisted Chairman Mao's instructions, was a means used by the gang of big conspirators, China's Khrushchov and company, to oppose working-class leadership and restore capitalism. This "independent kingdom" was completely smashed by revolutionary storms. This historical lesson in class struggle should be borne in mind by all revolutionaries. The citizens of "independent kingdoms," big or small, under the control of bourgeois elements in various parts of the country should also study this lesson.

The workers' propaganda teams are entering the field of education. This is an earth-shaking event. Schools were the monopoly of the exploiting classes and their children from ancient times. Conditions improved somewhat after liberation, but in the main the schools were still monopolized by bourgeois intellectuals. Some students from these schools have been able for various reasons to integrate themselves with the workers, peasants and soldiers and serve them (generally speaking, because they themselves or their teachers are comparatively good or because of the influence of their families, relatives or friends, but chiefly because of the influence of society). Some others have not. In a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is a serious situation — the bourgeoisie contends with the proletariat for leadership. When the young Red Guard fighters rose in rebellion

against the handful of capitalist roaders within the Party during the current great proletarian cultural revolution, the reactionary bourgeois forces in the schools for a while got hard blows. But shortly afterwards, certain people were again active in secret. They incited the masses to struggle against each other, and set themselves to sabotage the great cultural revolution, disrupt struggle-criticism-transformation, undermine the great alliance and the revolutionary "three-in-one" combination and obstruct the work of purifying the class ranks and of Party rectification. All this has aroused dissatisfaction among the masses. The facts show us that under such circumstances it is impossible for the students and intellectuals by themselves alone to fulfil the task of struggle-criticism-transformation and a whole number of other tasks on the educational front; workers and People's Liberation Army fighters must take part, and it is essential to have strong leadership by the working class.

Chairman Mao recently pointed out: "In carrying out the proletarian revolution in education, it is essential to have working-class leadership; it is essential for the masses of workers to take part and, in co-operation with Liberation Army fighters, bring about a revolutionary "three-in-one" combination, together with the activists among the students, teachers and workers in the schools who are determined to carry the proletarian revolution in education through to the end. The workers' propaganda teams should stay permanently in the schools and take part in fulfilling all the tasks of struggle-criticism-transformation in the schools, and they will always lead the schools. In the countryside, the schools should be managed by the poor and lower-middle peasants — the most reliable ally of the working class."

This instruction of Chairman Mao's indicates the orientation and road for the educational revolution in the schools. It is a sharp weapon for thoroughly destroying the bourgeois educational system. The masses of young students should enthusiastically welcome the taking over of the school front by the working class, its participating in struggle-criticism-transformation and its always leading the schools.

The working class has rich practical experience in the three great revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment. It most bitterly hates all counter-revolutionary words and deeds against socialism and against Mao Tse-tung's thought. It utterly hates the old educational system which served the exploiting classes. It most strongly opposes the "civil war" activities of certain intellectuals in damaging state property and obstructing struggle-criticism-transformation. It thoroughly detests the habit of empty talk and the practice of double-dealing, where words and actions do not match. Therefore, when they combine with fighters of the Chinese People's Liberation Army — the main pillar of the dictatorship of the proletariat — the masses of the working class will be most powerful in stopping all erroneous tendencies contrary to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and most effective in resolving all kinds of problems which have been described as longstanding, big and difficult. Contradictions that the intellectuals have been quarrelling over without end and unable to resolve are quickly settled when the workers arrive. As regards the handful of villains who have been hiding behind the scenes and inciting the masses to struggle against each other, only when the workers and Liberation Army fighters take a hand in this matter is it possible to lay their counter-revolutionary features completely bare.

"It's quite enough for the workers to run factories." This is an anti-Marxist viewpoint. The working class understands that it can achieve its own final emancipation only by emancipating all mankind. Without carrying the proletarian revolution in education in the schools through to the end and without rooting out revisionism, the working class cannot achieve its final emancipation and the danger of capitalist restoration and of the working class being again exploited and oppressed will still exist. It is the bounden duty of the politically conscious working class to take an active part in the great cultural revolution in all fields and to ensure that Mao Tse-tung's thought occupies every front in culture and education.

"Let us liberate ourselves. There is no need for the workers outside school to join in." What the 16-Point Decision states is that the method "is for the masses to liberate themselves." Are the workers not included in the "masses"? Is the working class not your own? All genuine proletarian revolutionaries — not those who pay lip-service to deceive people—regard the working class as their own and as the most advanced section of the masses of the people with the highest political consciousness. The "three-in-one" combination of workers, soldiers and the revolutionary activists in the schools is the most reliable guarantee for the masses to liberate themselves. Whoever looks on the workers as a force alien to himself is, if not muddle-headed, himself an element alien to the working class; and the working class then has every reason to exercise dictatorship over him. Some intellectuals who are self-proclaimed "proletarian revolutionaries" oppose the workers whenever the working class touches on

the interests of their tiny "independent kingdoms." There are still quite a few people in China like Lord Sheh who was fond of dragons but was frightened out of his wits when a real dragon paid him a visit. These are the people who look down upon the workers and peasants, like to put on airs and think themselves great. As a matter of fact, they are just modern Lord Shehs. It is essential for the workers and People's Liberation Army fighters to go to those places where intellectuals are concentrated, be they schools or other units, to smash the complete domination by intellectuals, occupy the "independent kingdoms," big or small, and take over those places where the advocates of the theory of "many centres," that is, the theory of "no centre," are entrenched. In this way, the unhealthy atmosphere, style of work and thinking that exist among intellectuals in concentrated groups can be changed and thus there is the possibility for intellectuals to remould themselves and achieve liberation.

(...)