# The socialist revolution and the democratic revolution

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Revolutionary mass movements have challenged the existing order on three crucial occasions in the last decade. In 1989 the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe were demolished, in part by mass movements from below. At about the same time South African apartheid was destroyed by a mass movement, at the core of which stood the organised working class, led by the African National Congress. Most recently the 32 year old dictatorship of General Suharto was overthrown in Indonesia by a mass uprising spearheaded by a highly politicised student movement. But none of these revolutionary upheavals have been led by socialists and none have led to a challenge to capitalist social relations. Why? Is it because, as US State Department official Francis Fukuyama claimed after the revolutions of 1989, liberal democracy and capitalist economic relations are now the natural boundaries of historical change? Or are subjective factors, the strength and ideology of the left, the principal reasons why these movements failed to meet their potential?

This essay looks first at the period when the revolutionary challenge of the bourgeois revolution did indeed find its limit in the achievement of capitalist economic relations and a parliamentary republic. This is the era which runs from the English Revolution of 1649, through the American Revolution of 1776, to the French Revolution of 1789. Examination then turns to the great era when the organised working class made its appearance on the stage, raising the spectre of revolutionary change which could run beyond these boundaries and establish a socialist society. From Marx and Engels' experience in the revolutions of 1848 to Lenin and Trotsky's actions in 1917, an analysis is made of the way in which the unfinished business of the democratic revolution became fused in theory and in practice with the project of working class self emancipation.

But for all the great value that can be extracted from those occasions when workers became the principal directors of their own destiny, there have also been many occasions when they were not able to act in this way. Defeat has often robbed workers of this capacity, but so have political leaders within the working class who did not possess a strategy capable of releasing the potential for self liberation which working class struggle generates. Under these circumstances the dynamic of capital accumulation still produces great social crises which result in profound social transformations. The unification of Italy and Germany in the second half of the 19th century and the great wave of anti-colonial revolutions in the second half of the 20th century are examples. The role of a key layer of the middle classes in these latter transformations is examined in order to shed light on the conflict between the competing strategies of the socialist revolution and the democratic revolution, and their differing relationships to the wider class formations and conditions of capital accumulation in the revolutions of the last ten years.

The events of 1989 marked the end of an era in which Communist parties internationally carried the notion that working class movements in important parts of the world were excluded from the possibility of socialist revolution until after they had completed the tasks of the democratic revolution. But similar arguments continue to be advanced even without this agency promoting them, just as they arose in 1848 and 1917, long before the rise of Stalinism. Nevertheless, the absence of powerful Stalinist organisations reinforcing this ideological trend gives the socialist alternative a greater possibility of winning adherents than at any time since the early 1920s.

**The classical bourgeois revolutions: England, America and France**

The history of the great bourgeois revolutions can illuminate two crucial aspects of the modern relationship between the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution. Firstly, it can show with great force the radicalising dynamic which works at the heart of all revolutions. In all these revolutions those who made the revolution entered the conflict with a consciousness far removed from the notion of forcibly overthrowing the existing order. Only repeated internal crises in the revolutionary process eventually brought them face to face with this necessity. During this process of polarisation many individuals, indeed whole political organisations, moved dramatically from the left of the revolution to the right, or even from the revolutionary camp to the camp of counter-revolution.

This dynamic of radicalisation is as marked in the great proletarian revolutions as it is in the bourgeois revolutions. It is in this aspect that the similarities between the two are the most striking. But in the second comparison between the two sorts of revolution it is the contrasts which are most obvious. This concerns the differences between the socio-economic conditions under which the two sorts of revolutions take place: the bourgeois revolutions against a pre-capitalist social structure, the proletarian against a developed industrial capitalism. This framework ultimately governs the limits of the revolutionary process, providing the practical barrier in which the most radical programmes of the revolutionary

movement find their limit. Both aspects of this process are clearly expressed in the history of the first of the great bourgeois revolutions, the English Revolution.

The English Revolution 1640-1688: Alexis de Tocqueville once said that ‘the most dangerous moment for a bad government is generally that in which it sets about reform’.[1] But the fate of Charles I shows that resistance to reform can be just as dangerous. It was Charles’s determination to retain, indeed to strengthen, the absolutist cast of his regime in the face of social and economic change which was the immediate cause of the revolution. Marx, referring to John Hampden’s refusal to pay the Ship Money with which Charles attempted to overcome the financial crisis of the state, put the point like this:

*It was not John Hampden…who brought Charles I to the scaffold, but only the latter’s own obstinacy, his dependence on the feudal estates, and his presumptuous attempt to use force to suppress the urgent demands of the emerging society. The refusal to pay taxes is merely a sign of the dissidence that exists between the Crown and the people, merely evidence that the conflict between the government and the people has reached a menacing degree of intensity.*[2]

In the initial phase of the revolution, from the summoning of the Long Parliament by Charles I in 1640 to the outbreak of civil war in 1642, the broad parliamentary opposition polarised into those willing to take their resistance to the king to the point of armed conflict and those who would rather side with the king than countenance the threat to the existing order which civil war represented. But even in this first stage the beginnings of further polarisation are evident. For it was the London crowd, composed of the lowest levels of the ‘middling sort’ of small craftsmen and traders bolstered by servants and labourers, which drove the parliamentary resistance forward. And, by repulsion, they also obliged the king and his supporters to define themselves clearly as a reactionary political force.[3] This tripartite division is characteristic of bourgeois revolutions. The revolution is fundamentally a conflict between ‘the "rising" bourgeoisie and the established feudal or aristocratic class that it was seeking to displace from the levers of social and political control’. But, as George Rudé explains:

*there is more to it than that: in each of these revolutions…there was also an additional popular element that was also struggling for a place in the sun… In the English Revolution of the 17th century, there were not only the leaders of Parliament and the New Model Army, the Presbyterians and the Independents (all broadly representative of the ‘bourgeois’ challenge), but also the Levellers, Diggers and lower class sectaries, who offered some sort of challenge in the name of other, ‘lower’, social groups.*[4]

The divisions between the king’s supporters, the parliamentary leaders and the London crowd in the opening years of the revolution were the beginning of this process.

When civil war became a reality between 1642 and 1645 a further polarisation in the parliamentary ranks took place. This time it was between those who were willing to prosecute the war to the point of destroying the king and possibly the monarchy—the Independents grouped around Cromwell and Ireton—and, on the other side, the Presbyterians who only fought in order to weaken the king to the point where compromise once again became possible. Indeed, the Presbyterians claimed they were fighting for ‘king and parliament’. To these moderates Cromwell replied, ‘I will not cozen you with perplexed expressions in my commission about fighting for king and parliament. If the king happened to be in the body of the enemy, I would as soon discharge my pistol upon him as upon any private man’.[5] In this phase of the revolution the decisive act was Cromwell’s creation of the New Model Army, based on the experience of creating his own regiment of Ironsides. This was only possible by mobilising the lower orders of society. ‘I had rather have a plain russet coated captain that knows what he fights for and loves what he knows, than that which you call a gentleman and is nothing else’, as Cromwell put it.[6] But, having raised such forces, Cromwell was less content when they developed a political programme and an organisation of their own.

The third and final phase of radicalisation involved a further division in the parliamentarian ranks—indeed in the New Model Army, which emerged victorious from the civil war. The army itself became the key political body in the country after it defeated Charles at Naseby in 1645. London, the bank and armoury of the army, was the other key focus of political development. In both elements from amongst the very lowest of the bourgeoisie, the artisans, shopkeepers and small businessmen, and the ordinary soldiers, now formed organisations which mounted a political challenge to the strategy of the Grandees, the leading, and previously most radical, elements on the parliamentary side. The Levellers in London and the agents, or ‘agitators’ to use the contemporary term, elected by the mutinous regiments of the New Model Army increasingly operated as one. They developed in The Agreement of the People the most democratic programme seen during the English Revolution. In the debates held in Putney Church in 1647 these forces directly confronted their military commanders and social superiors in the original of all such great revolutionary exchanges. The Levellers and the

agitators won the ideological argument, but lost the power play. This was in part because the king's escape from captivity reunited the Grandees, the Levellers and the agitators in the second civil war.

Shortly before Charles's execution, Leveller John Lilburne was summoned before Cromwell and his Council of State to account for the Levellers' continued agitation in favour of their radical version of The Agreement of the People. Lilburne was, as ever, unyielding. He was told to retire, but from the next room he heard Cromwell say, 'I tell you, sir, you have no other way of dealing with these men but to break them, or they will break you…and so render you to all rational men in the world as the most contemptible generation of silly, low spirited men in the earth, to be broken and routed by such a despicable, contemptible generation of men as they are, and therefore, sir, I tell you again, you are necessitated to break them'.[7] Cromwell proceeded to do just as he promised, and a few months later the Leveller mutiny in the army was crushed by Cromwell at Burford churchyard in Oxfordshire.

Nevertheless, these same developments and the remaining challenge from the left also forced the Grandees to abandon compromise with the king and embark on the road which led through regicide to the establishment of a republic. And at this time there was one last attempt to radicalise the revolution further: the Diggers' dozen or so attempts, most famously at St George's Hill in Surrey, to found 'communist' communities. As expounded by their best known spokesman, Gerrard Winstanley, the Diggers' programme ran well beyond the democracy expounded by John Lilburne and the Levellers and raised the issue of social and economic equality. But if the social basis for the Levellers was shallow, the social basis for the Diggers was insufficient to sustain them as a movement, let alone underpin their programme and make it a viable project for the wider society. Certainly the moment was inauspicious: in 1649 the Levellers and agitators had been routed. But there was more to their rapid eviction by troopers and local gentry than bad timing. Even at the height of popular radicalisation there was no social class, because no underlying economic development had created such a class, which could provide a political actor capable of implementing the Diggers' radical dream. Their bequest to radicals who came after them, down to our own times, is the dream of political, social and economic freedom, even though they lacked the means to realise it in their own time.

History is full of such intimations of the future by social movements and individuals alike. Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of a 'helicopter' is one such magnificent presentiment of things to come, but hundreds of years of economic development were necessary before Leonardo's drawing could become a practical proposition. So it was with the Diggers. Nevertheless, we do not turn our back on the genius of Winstanley any more than we would on the genius of Leonardo. We look to combine their image of the future with what we now know to be the material means of making the image real.

The American Revolution 1776-1786: In the American Revolution of 1776 we see the same process of radicalisation taking hold during the course of the revolution, but the colonial relationship with Britain gave the forces and phases of revolutionary development a significantly different character. To begin with, the underlying economic causes of the American Revolution are partly to do with the economic development of the colonies, but the crisis itself cannot be understood in isolation from how this growth interacted with the imperial policy of Britain.

In 1763 Britain emerged victorious from its war with France for control of the North American colonies. But war debts concentrated the minds of the British ruling class on regaining full control of its colonial possessions and imposing new taxes. In 1764 the Currency Act and the Revenue (or Sugar) Act aimed to make colonial merchants pay in sterling rather than their own coin, and to slap duty on imported sugar even when, as had not previously been the case, it came from other parts of the British Empire. In 1765 the Stamp Act ruled that any transaction specified by the act was illegal unless the appropriate stamp was purchased. Legal, church, political and commercial documents, passports, dice and playing cards, books, newspapers and advertisements were all subject to taxation under the act. Furthermore, there was a directly political side to the act. Money raised under the act would stay in the colonies but would be directly under the control of Britain's appointed governors, not, as before, the colonial assemblies. Here was the origin of taxation without representation.

Even before the Stamp Act, a coalition of merchants, professionals and slaveowners together with artisans, labourers, farmers, servants and sailors had emerged to oppose Britain. At first their pamphlets and speeches were cautious, but they grew bolder—graduating from resistance to revolution and from protest to a war for independence—with each imperial crisis. Resistance to the Stamp Act was the first phase of radicalisation. A Stamp Act Congress brought nine colonial delegates to New York City to pass strongly worded resolutions and addresses to the king. But in the towns from which the delegates came, tax collectors were being tarred and feathered by angry crowds, protesters gathered at the foot of 'Liberty trees', and collective political organisations, the Sons of Liberty, sprang into being. The first of the various Sons of Liberty organisations were the Loyal Nine of Boston, and among their members were a printer, a brazier,

a painter and a jeweller. These artisans were joined by men like Sam Adams and, later, Tom Paine, intellectuals whose lives were closely intertwined with those of the artisans, but who were able to command both the respect and fear of the merchants and slaveowners of the revolutionary coalition.

The popular movement in America emerged sooner and reached its peak earlier in the revolutionary process than in the English Revolution. Colonial society allowed far greater freedom to speak, write and organise than did Stuart England before the summoning of the Long Parliament. Loyalism to Britain was probably weaker than loyalism to Charles I, and American revolutionaries had the English Revolution on which they could model their movement. In the upper reaches of the revolutionary coalition John Locke's theories of representative government, and of the population's ultimate right to revolt against tyrannical authority, were invoked. But at the plebeian end of the spectrum thoughts also turned back a century or so. Many of the colonies were originally peopled by Puritan refugees from Stuart tyranny and later by Cromwell's troopers. In 1774 one 'Joyce, Jun' appeared as 'Captain' of the 'Committee for Tarring and Feathering' in Boston, where most inhabitants would have caught the reference to the officer who took Charles I prisoner in 1647. About the same time farm families were frequently calling their newborn boys Oliver, to make plain their admiration of Charles's nemesis.[8]

Popular mobilisation defeated the Stamp Act, which was repealed the year after it was introduced. But Britain was by no means finished with the American colonies. Just as the Stamp Act was repealed the Declaratory Act was passed, insisting that Britain could 'make laws…to bind the colonies and people of America…in all cases whatsoever'.[9] In 1767 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Townshend, passed acts taxing paint, paper, lead, glass and tea. Colonial America responded with a tax strike which ran until 1770. Throughout this period popular mobilisations continued. They culminated in the event which precipitated the repeal of the Townshend duties, the Boston massacre of 5 March 1770. British Redcoats opened fire on an angry crowd of protesters, killing five of them. The dead give an accurate social cross-section of the movement: an African-Indian sailor, a ship's mate, a leather maker, a rope maker and an ivory turner's apprentice. Their deaths helped to cement the lower levels of the revolutionary alliance to their leaders.

The movement deepened and radicalised. And it did so again after the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, when protesters disguised as Mohawk Indians dumped tea, the one remaining commodity subject to Townshend duties, from ships into Boston harbour. Even before the Continental Congress met in 1774, Committees of Correspondence staffed by the same sort of people—indeed often by the very same individuals—who had formed the Sons of Liberty to resist the Stamp Act a decade earlier, carried the newly revolutionary message throughout the colonies.

By 1775 the committees had replaced the ruins of royal government as the effective power in the colonies, transacting 'all such matters as they shall conceive may tend to the welfare of the American cause'. Committees raised militias, organised supplies, tried and jailed the revolution's enemies and began to control goods and prices. They called mass meetings to 'take the sense of citizens', and they frustrated Britain's plans to regain control by calling an election for a provincial assembly by ensuring that radicals won. In January 1776 Tom Paine published a revolutionary manifesto, Common Sense, which used the plain language of ordinary artisans and farmers to urge the movement on to a final break with Britain. It sold 150,000 copies and its arguments were repeated wherever revolutionaries met to convince others that establishment resistance must give way to independence.

This decade long radicalisation could not help but alarm the elite figures who tried to stay at the head of resistance to Britain, even as they realised that Britain could not be beaten without such popular agitation. The War of Independence helped them to keep this movement within bounds. Unlike the conflict of 1642-1645 in England, this was not a civil war but a colonial war for independence from Britain. Consequently, the effect of the war was not to further polarise the revolutionary camp, as it had done the New Model Army or would do during the French Revolution, but rather the opposite. In the decade of popular protest which preceded the American War of Independence, class antagonism against the rich of colonial America ran along the same courses as fury at Britain. Once war broke out, the Colonial Army under George Washington increasingly replaced the guerrilla methods of the first battle at Lexington with regular army discipline enforced by the rich and powerful who dominated the officer corps. By contrast, the creation of the New Model Army required the 'internal coup' of the self denying ordinance against the aristocrats who had stayed with parliament, and the fact that the war was fought against fellow Englishmen fuelled social radicalism.

Popular disaffection with the war was, if anything, greater in America than in England, although in both cases some felt, wrongly but understandably, that it was a 'rich man's war' which would change little regardless of who won. Daniel Shays, a poor farm hand and former soldier, led a rebellion in 1786 which briefly raised the spectre of renewed popular radicalism. The rebels used the same tactics that had proved so effective against Britain, gathering in arms to close the local court house. But now their allies of 1774, the Boston radicals, were divided. Some, allied with conservative

merchants, ran the state government and sent loyal militiamen to scatter the Shaysites. Sam Adams was one such, helping to draw up a Riot Act and to suspend habeas corpus and so allow the authorities to keep prisoners in jail without bringing them to trial. One defeated Shays supporter pleaded, 'Tis true I have been a committeeman,' but, 'I am sincerely sorry …and hope it will be overlooked and pardoned'.[10] Unmoved by such sentiments, Adams argued, 'In a monarchy the crime of treason may admit of being pardoned or lightly punished, but the man who dares rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death'.[11] The Shays Rebellion never developed either the programmatic clarity of The Agreement of the People nor the political weight of Lilburne's organisation. Nevertheless, the parallel with the defeat of the Levellers at Burford is obvious.

The triumphant ruling class, led by the Federalists Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, moved to create a strong unitary state. They, like Cromwell, were successful for a decade before the restoration of the monarchy gave power back to the social centre of the ruling class. In Britain power came to an alliance of landowners and the bourgeoisie; in America to slaveholding landowners and, in a subordinate position, the predominately Northern bourgeoisie. But neither conservative dominated coalition would or could return to the pre-war settlement. And in both cases the bourgeoisie asserted itself within this more conducive framework in the longer run. In England in 1689 the ruling class frustrated renewed Stuart attempts at establishing monarchical power, and by 1832 the industrial bourgeoisie established complete hegemony over its old landowning partner. In America the epilogue was more dramatic than the prologue. The second American revolution, fought as the American Civil War, utterly crushed the power of the Southern landowning slaveocracy.

The French Revolution 1789: The French was the greatest and most complete of all the bourgeois revolutions, involving the mass of the population on a scale far greater than either the American or even the English Revolution.[12]

*The Declaration of the Rights of Man…set forth human and national rights with a feeling for their universality far surpassing the empirical statement of liberties made by the English Revolution of the 17th century. Similarly the American Declaration of Independence, although couched in universal language and natural law, still contained limitations restricting the application of its principles. The bourgeoisie who formed the Constituent Assembly believed that their work was grounded in universal reason, and the Declaration expressed this clearly and forcefully.*[13]

One reason for the unique depth and breadth of the French Revolution was that the bourgeoisie's cumulative experience of challenging the old order fed into French events. Thomas Jefferson was actually in Paris when the Declaration of the Rights of Man was written. Tom Paine and Lafayette, 'the hero of two continents', joined the revolution, although significantly both were on its moderate wing. More broadly, the French, like the Americans a decade or so before, drew on the political theory of John Locke and the Enlightenment tradition which owed so much to the impulse of the English Revolution.

But these direct and indirect ideological influences were not the main reason for the great reach of the French Revolution. The fundamental causes lay in the social and economic conditions under which the revolution took place. France was a much more economically advanced society at the time of its revolution than either England in the 1640s or America in the 1770s. Indeed, in 1789 in France the proportion of national product coming from industry and commerce (18 percent and 12 percent respectively) were similar to England and Wales at the same time. Even the proportion of national income coming from agriculture, at 49 percent, was only 9 percent higher than the figure for England and Wales.[14]

Yet this is only half the story. France's social and political development, unlike Britain's, stood diametrically opposed to its economic progress. France's class structure and the shape of its state remained caught in the long shadow of feudalism. The monarch's absolutist pretensions overawed most of the bourgeoisie (and even some of the aristocracy). But the most important dividing line ran between the aristocracy as a whole and the rest of society, whose leading non-noble element was the bourgeoisie. Abbé Sieyes' famous pamphlet What Is The Third Estate?, the initial manifesto and rallying call of the bourgeoisie, complained:

*all the branches of the executive have been taken over by a caste that monopolises the Church, the judiciary and the army. A spirit of fellowship leads the nobles to favour one another in everything over the rest of the nation. Their usurpation is complete; they truly reign.*[15]

This was no exaggeration: only nobles could be bishops or officers in the army. Nobles were exempt from taxes, which fell most heavily on a peasantry treated as little more than beasts of burden. Some historians have balked at describing

French society before the revolution as feudal because some of the features of the high feudalism of the Middle Ages had already disappeared. But this is to miss the point made so clearly by de Tocqueville at the time:

*Feudalism had remained the most important of our civil institutions even after it had ceased to be a political institution. In this form it aroused still greater hatred, and we should observe that the disappearance of part of the institutions of the Middle Ages only made what survived of them a hundred times more odious.*[16]

It was the intensity of the contradiction between the economic development of France and the unreconstructed nature of its social structures which underpinned the scale of the French Revolution. In the final analysis the bourgeoisie, often far from willingly or enthusiastically, found that the intransigence of the old regime was so great that they had to rouse far greater numbers of the small bourgeoisie, and the ordinary people and the peasants below them, if they were to be victorious. Yet in 1789 no leader of the French bourgeoisie realised how great a struggle would be needed to vanquish the old order, any more than Hampden or Adams had done before them. Once again, only successive crises and successive renewals of the revolutionary leadership revealed the full extent of what would be necessary to accomplish the revolution.

At first it even seemed as if sections of the aristocracy might be willing to participate in the work of reforming the old order. But by the time the king was forced to call the Estates General on 5 May 1789 the challenge of this 'aristocratic revolution' had run its course. In this first internal crisis the Third Estate nominally represented the whole of the non-noble, non-clerical nation. In fact they represented the bourgeoisie. Of the 610 delegates of the Third Estate, the biggest single element (25 percent) were, as in so many capitalist parliaments since, those professionally engaged in advocacy for the wealthy: lawyers. Some 13 percent were actually manufacturers; another 5 percent were from the professions; only 7 to 9 percent were agriculturalists.[17]

The Third Estate declared itself the leadership of what, at this stage, remained an attempt to force the king into reform without destroying the entire ruling institutions of society. The first radicalisation of the revolution took place as a minority of the Third Estate joined the majority of the clergy and the aristocracy to work for compromise. And, despite the fall of the Bastille and the first eruption of the peasant struggle which deepened the revolution at every turn, the remaining majority of the Third Estate, now renamed the Constituent Assembly, still searched for agreement with its enemies.

The king's flight to Varennes on 21 June 1791 made it clear to even the most ardent compromiser that no such agreement was possible. The nobility now fomented open counter-revolution at home and conspired with the crowned heads of Europe to wage war from abroad, hoping that the experience of war would unite the nation behind the traditional ruling class. 'Instead of civil war, we shall have war abroad, and things will be much better', wrote Louis XVI.[18]

The popular response to this threat took not only the aristocracy but also the existing leadership of the revolution by surprise. In 1792 the popular mobilisation against the threat of counter-revolution within and without sealed the fate of the monarchy and marked a further radicalisation of the revolution. The Girondins, named after the region of France they came from, insisted that the 'passive citizens', the lower orders of ordinary people, now be called upon to defend the nation and the revolution. But the mobilisation of the popular masses under the banner of the sans culottes and the enragés brought with it demands which the Girondins could not countenance. In Paris in May 1792 the 'red priest' Jacques Roux demanded the death penalty for hoarders of grain; a year later he was insisting, 'Equality is no more than an empty shadow so long as monopolies give the rich the power of life and death over their fellow human beings'.[19] This message was carried through Paris by means of direct democracy: the assemblies and meetings of administrative 'sections' of the city, the associated political clubs and left wing newspapers.

Under pressure from the aroused small bourgeoisie, journeymen and labourers, and the continued peasant risings, divisions emerged between the Girondins and the Mountain, the left wing deputies led by the Jacobins, so called because they occupied the upper tiers in the National Assembly. Fearful of the movement they had called into existence, the Girondins stood aside from the revolutionary movement of 10 August 1792 which overthrew the monarchy and the restrictive electoral system. It was a fatal abstention, and the fate of Girondins was sealed along with that of the king.

The Jacobins were the recipients of the laurels of 10 August. But the Jacobins themselves relied on the support of two different class fractions, the small bourgeoisie and the artisans on the one hand, and the day labourers and journeymen whom they employed, the sans culottes, on the other. The sans culottes had their own organs of mobilisation in the Paris sections which only in part overlapped with those organisations, like the Jacobin Club and its affiliates, which were more

or less fully under the control of the bourgeoisie. This alliance, and the popular mobilisation which underlay it, reached its high point in 1793-1794.

By 1793 the Jacobin revolutionary government finally constructed itself in such a way that it was capable of effectively and definitively dealing with its aristocratic enemy, in part by granting the popular demand for a law setting maximum prices for essentials (and also for wages). But at the very moment of victory the alliance between the Jacobins and the sans culottes, which made victory possible, fell apart. On the 22 June 1793 Jacques Roux spoke at the radical Cordeliers Club, demanding the punishment of speculators:

*If that article was not in the constitution…we could say to the Mountain; You have done nothing for the sans culottes, because it was not for the rich that they fight, it is for liberty…We adore liberty, but we do not want to die of hunger. Suppress speculation and we have nothing more to ask.*

At the same meeting another enragé, Jean Varlet, added:

*The sans culottes of Paris, Lyons, Marseilles and Bordeaux…alone comprise the people; we must thus establish a line of demarcation between the shopkeeper, the aristocrat and the artisan; the first two classes must be disarmed…tomorrow the people must triumph, tomorrow we must finish our work.*[20]

Even the Jacobins could not allow either an economic programme which limited the bourgeoisie in this way, or a redefinition of 'the people' which rested on sans culottes alone and thereby excluded the section of the bourgeoisie on which the Jacobins predominately relied. 'It is hardly surprising,' notes George Rudé, 'that the political ideas and social aspirations of such men should differ in important respects from those of proprietors, lawyers, doctors, teachers and businessmen who sat in the Convention or even from those of the smaller lawyers, tradesmen, and civil servants who predominated in the provincial Jacobin clubs and societies'.[21]

The sans culottes posed a danger to the French bourgeoisie greater than that posed by the Levellers to Ireton and Cromwell. The Levellers spoke of a radical form of petty bourgeois democracy, and so did the sans culottes. But the sans culottes raised the spectre of economic equality far more consistently and insistently, even if in a backward looking form. There was no equivalent of the laws of the maximum prices in the English Revolution. But even this was not the main distinction between the Levellers and the sans culottes. The differences lay not in the demands or the programmes of the Levellers and the sans culottes, but in the social forces which these political designations represented.

The Levellers were an organisation of the petty bourgeoisie in fact as well as in aspiration. Their leaders were never much troubled by any distinctive element contributed by those of the lower classes who chose to follow their banner. Nor had larger capitalists developed to the degree that they had in France, and therefore the distinction of interest between these different layers of the bourgeoisie was not so sharp.

Not so the sans culottes. They united petty bourgeois and craft workers in one organisation at a time when these layers found themselves pitted against a more developed layer of bigger capitalists. The sans culottes could not form a working class organisation, because this class did not yet have the capacity to frame its own demands and form its own movements. But they were an organisation which channelled the economic desperation of the common people, the wage labourers, journeymen and artisans who did not own the capital, even in the small amounts, which would have allowed them to count amongst the humblest of the bourgeoisie. Albert Soboul writes:

*Falling under the province of the popular classes through their conditions of existence and often their poverty, the artisans nonetheless possessed their own workshops, their little sets of tools and were looked on as independent producers. Having journeymen and apprentices under them and under their discipline accentuated their bourgeois mentality. But the attachment to the system of small production and direct sale opposed them irredeemably to the bourgeoisie. Thus among the artisans and shopkeepers who formed the bulk of the sans culottes movement and with whom the bourgeois revolution must end, there arose a social ideal in contradiction with economic necessities.*[22]

The sans culottes wanted restrictions on capitalist wealth and a republic of small proprietors; but they were small capitalists themselves (or under the influence of small capitalists) and could hardly constrain the accumulation of capital with any consistency. They demanded that they be kept in work and their wages be protected; but this only gave confidence to the journeymen whom they employed. Thus 'the demands of this class of artisans and shopkeepers were sublimated in passionate complaints, in spurts of revolt, without ever specifying a coherent programme'.[23]

As yet there was no class developed enough to provide the social base on which a coherent anti-capitalist programme could rest. The journeymen and wage workers were still mainly dispersed in small workshops with little division of labour, not clearly differentiated from the peasantry from which they sprang. Strikes predated the revolution, but no wider political programme was yet developed from this experience. Certainly journeymen and wage workers participated in the revolution as part of its most radical wing, but they did so under the political programme of their masters:

*The revolutionary vanguard was not composed of factory workers but…an alliance of small employers and the journeymen who lived and worked with them. This mixed social composition gave the popular movement…a series of contradictions that derived from its inherent ambiguity. The workers' view of the world was dominated by that of the petty bourgeois craftsman, which was ultimately that of the bourgeoisie. Thus workers did not form an independent group either in the realm of thought or action. They failed to realise the connection between the value of their labour and the level of their wages…they had not fully realised the social function of labour.*[24]

The leadership of the Jacobins, who perhaps form a more accurate French counterpart to the Levellers, found in the sans culottes a force they could employ in a way which their forerunners in 1647 did not, as a result of the greater economic development of France. And they also found greater need to make use of such a force as a result of the entrenched and determined resistance of their aristocratic enemy, less weakened by partial integration into capitalist economic development than the English aristocracy of the previous century. But, even for the most radical bourgeois democrats, the alliance with the sans culottes was a pact with the devil. And they reacted against it, even more furiously than Cromwell reacted against the Levellers, as soon as its necessity had passed.

The effect was similar in both cases, but the consequences followed more swiftly and decisively in the French case. Deprived of its most radical support, the revolutionary government became prey to its enemies on the right. Cromwell had ten years, and the full term of his life, before counter-revolution repaid him for the suppression of the Levellers. Robespierre survived a matter of months before Thermidor (as the month was called in the new revolutionary calendar, 27 July 1794 in the old calendar) repaid him for the suppression of the sans culottes. The Thermidorians introduced their new constitution with a familiar cry, first heard from Henry Ireton in the Putney Debates and later theorised by Thomas Hobbes, now uttered by 'the champion of the new rich', Boissy d'Anglas:

*We must be governed by the best men; those most suited to govern are men of good education and endowed with a great concern for the maintenance of order. You will rarely find such men outside the ranks of the propertied… A country governed by men of property belongs to 'the social order' whereas one governed by men of no property reverts to a 'state of nature'.*[25]

The radical left once again enjoyed a bright but brief Indian summer. In the footsteps of Winstanley and Shays came Babeuf. But this 'revolution after the revolution' was, again, different to its forerunners. If the sans culottes' programme ultimately expressed a nostalgic reaction of a half emerged artisan working class to the contradictions of capitalism, then Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals came close to connecting a utopian vision of communism, which gave it some continuity with the Diggers, with a class of wage workers far more developed than that in 17th century England. Moreover, in the Conspirators' organisation, despite the misleading indications of their title, the first dim outlines of modern working class political organisation can be traced.[26]

**What changed in 1848?**

Even before the outbreak of the 1848 revolutions Marx and Engels were clear on two points. The first was that the coming revolution would be a bourgeois revolution; that is, it would herald a capitalist state, hopefully democratic and republican in form. The second was that the bourgeoisie would have to be pushed to a decisive settling of accounts with the old order, since the growing strength of the working class made them fearful that unleashing the full power of the revolution would sweep them aside along with the feudal state. For Marx and Engels the revolution in Germany would be 'carried out under far more advanced conditions of European civilisation, and with a much more developed proletariat, than that of England in the 17th, and of France in the 18th century', and would therefore be 'the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution'.[27]

Thus in the early stages of the revolution Marx and Engels fought as the furthest left wing of the democratic revolution. But even The Communist Manifesto, written before the outbreak of the revolution, urged that although the working class should 'fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way', socialists should also 'instil into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat'.[28] Marx and Engels' approach at the start of the revolution was 'to spur on the bourgeoisie from an independent base on the left,

organising the plebeian classes separately from the bourgeoisie in order to strike together at the old regime, and to prepare this democratic bloc of proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and peasantry to step temporarily into the vanguard should the bourgeoisie shows signs of cold feet, by analogy with the Jacobin government in France of 1793-1794'.[29]

But this position was significantly altered by Marx and Engels as the 1848 revolutions developed. For the first three months of the German revolution it looked as though the bourgeoisie, though irresolute, might be pushed into decisive action. But the longer the revolution went on, the more timid and paralysed the bourgeoisie became. By the time of the 'June Days' all the exploiting classes, including the bourgeoisie and most of their democratic spokesmen, were ranged on the side of reaction. Marx and Engels were increasingly driven to the conclusion that only the exploited classes, the workers and the peasants, could drive the revolution forward. As Marx wrote in his paper, Neue Rheinische Zeitung, whose bourgeois backers were abandoning it because of its radical stance:

*The German bourgeoisie developed so sluggishly, so pusillanimously and so slowly, that it saw itself threateningly confronted by the proletariat, and all those sections of the urban population related to the proletariat…at the very moment of its own threatening confrontation with feudalism and absolutism… The Prussian bourgeoisie was not, like the French bourgeoisie of 1789, the class which represented the whole of modern society… It had sunk to the level of a type of estate…inclined from the outset to treachery against the people.*[30]

Faced with far greater treachery on the part of the bourgeoisie than they had at first expected, Marx and Engels altered their strategic position. Marx and Engels now concluded that independent action on the part of the working class and a more critical stance, on tactical issues as well as theoretical ones, toward the bourgeois democrats was essential. Marx's explanation of the attitude of the workers to the democrats is of great relevance:

*The workers must drive the proposals of the democrats to their logical extreme (the democrats will in any case act in a reformist and not a revolutionary manner) and transform these proposals into direct attacks on private property. If, for instance, the petty bourgeoisie proposes the purchase of the railways and factories, the workers must demand that these railways and factories simply be confiscated without compensation as the property of reactionaries. If the democrats propose a proportional tax, then the workers must demand a progressive tax; if the democrats themselves propose a moderate progressive tax, then the workers must insist on a tax whose rates rise so steeply that big capital will be ruined by it; if the democrats themselves demand the regulation of state debt, then the workers must demand national bankruptcy. The demands of the workers thus have to be adjusted according to the measures and concessions of the democrats.*[31]

As the revolution developed, political divisions within the revolutionary camp based on underlying class differences began to harden:

*It is the fate of all revolutions that this union of different classes, which in some degree is always the necessary condition of any revolution, cannot subsist long. No sooner is the victory gained against the common enemy than the victors become divided amongst themselves into different camps and turn their weapons against each other. It is this rapid and passionate development of class antagonism which, in old and complicated social organisms, makes revolution such a powerful agent of social and political progress.*[32]

In response to this polarisation Marx urged revolutionaries to concentrate on the independent political organisation of the working class, confident that the more powerful this became the more it would push the bourgeois democrats to the left whether they are in government or not. Marx hoped the movement of workers could become so strong that it could result in a revolution against the liberal democrats. Marx now believed, as he did not clearly believe before the 1848 revolutions, that this would be a socialist revolution.

It was this new perspective which led him to conclude that, since the state apparatus is not a neutral body that can simply be passed from one class to another, the working class must concentrate on building up its own state apparatus alongside and in opposition to that of the propertied classes. Organisations such as strike committees, local delegate bodies of workers and mass meetings will emerge from the struggle against the old regime. Where conditions of struggle allow, these will involve the formation of workers' militias, armed with what they are able to find or to take from the armed forces of the state. Marx described these 'counter-state' organisations as 'revolutionary local councils' or 'revolutionary workers' governments', and they cannot coexist with the bourgeois state for long without a decisive settling of accounts in which either the workers will smash the state or the state will smash the organs of workers' power:

*The German workers…must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organised party of the proletariat. Their battle-cry must be: the Permanent Revolution.*[33]

Thus we see that the perspective of permanent revolution did not originate with Trotsky in 1906, but with Marx in 1850. Here is the origin of the idea that there should be, from the beginning of the revolution and even while a workers' party is supporting 'democratic demands', a strategic perspective of independent working class socialist organisation, aiming first at the creation of dual power and then at a socialist revolution.

**The bourgeois revolution from above**

The 1848 revolutions definitively brought to a close the epoch in which the bourgeoisie were willing and able to act as a revolutionary class. After this date there were no more attempts by the bourgeoisie to lead the mass of the people in open revolution against the old order. But this did not mean that the bourgeoisie were now the effective political power, even in all the economically most developed countries. Nor did it mean that the dynamic process of capital accumulation came to a halt—far from it. Rather the effect of the bourgeois revolutions was to increase the tempo of capital accumulation and forge a world market, and therefore increase the competition between nation states, more completely than had previously been the case. Neither did the unwillingness of the bourgeoisie to provide political leadership for the mass of the population mean that popular revolts against the old order were a thing of the past.

Instead, there were two broad lines of causality which originated in 1848 and ran on through the 19th century. One was the element of continuing popular revolt, increasingly involving self conscious working class activity and organisation. The high tide of this current was reached in 1871 when the first successful workers' revolution flowered briefly in the Paris Commune. But even where such peaks were not scaled, popular and working class action could be seen—for instance, in the New Unionism of the 1880s in Britain and the growth of Marxist influenced unions and social democratic parties throughout Europe towards the end of the century.

The second process of change which followed 1848 was the bourgeoisie's continuing attempt to develop political and state forms adequate for the new conditions under which capital accumulation was now taking place. National unity and the attendant reshaping of the state machine to meet capitalist needs, a key prize won by the English, American and French revolutions, was now a pressing necessity for every capitalist class, especially since the competitive advantage which the forerunners gained from their revolutions was increasingly obvious to the laggards.

In the American Civil War, Lincoln sublimated popular mobilisation to the military struggle against the South, thus recasting American capitalism as a whole in the image of the Northern bourgeoisie. In so doing he forcibly unified the ruling class and enabled it to pursue its 'manifest destiny' of conquering the land to its west as far as the Pacific. In Italy, national unification and the creation of a bourgeois state involved popular mobilisation around the figures of Garibaldi and Mazzini, but this was kept within the limits of Cavour's constitutionalism. In Germany, Napoleon's armies had done much to clear the ground for Bismarck's state building enterprise. The defeat of 1848 allowed this process to surge forward with little popular impediment until the rise of the Social Democratic Party and the organised working class.

The importance of briefly signposting this process is to demonstrate that the bourgeoisie did not cease to pursue its own political goals, including those which involved major social transformations, when it renounced revolutionary methods of action. Neither did it wholly dispense with the desire to utilise the energies of social classes beneath it. It merely refused to give such classes revolutionary leadership. The bourgeosie feared their action, and yet at the same time sought to profit from the upheavals which popular movements created.[34]

**Lenin and Trotsky on the socialist revolution and the democratic revolution**

Lenin's initial estimation of the forces involved in the Russian Revolution is contained in his Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democrat__ic Revolution. This work obviously predates the experience of 1917; in fact it even predates his full absorption of the lessons of the 1905 Revolution. In some important respects it is a regression to a point less politically developed than that of Marx and Engels in 1850. In Two Tactics, Lenin argued that the economic and social conditions in Russia were not sufficiently advanced for the coming revolution to be a socialist revolution. The revolution would be bourgeois democratic in content:

*The degree of Russia's economic development (an objective condition), and the degree of class consciousness and organisation of the broad masses of the proletariat (a subjective condition inseparably bound up with the objective condition) make the immediate and complete emancipation of the working class impossible. Only the most ignorant people can close their eyes to the bourgeois nature of the revolution which is now taking place.*[35]

Lenin thought the Russian bourgeoisie was too weak to lead the democratic revolution in the way that the English bourgeoisie had done in the 1640s, or the French bourgeoisie had done in the 1790s. The working class would therefore have to lead an insurrection which would overthrow tsarism and establish a democratic republic. But for the working class to be able to perform this task it would have to be led by a revolutionary party which insisted on a political strategy free of compromises with the vacillating bourgeois democrats and their fellow travellers inside the organisations of the working class, the Mensheviks.

This position clearly had a number of strengths. The greatest of these was the assertion of the leading role of the working class in the democratic revolution and the insistence on the building of a revolutionary party carrying out socialist propaganda, even though socialism was not the immediate aim of the revolution. Such a strategy required sharp criticism of and political independence from both the bourgeois democrats, the emerging Cadet party, and the Mensheviks.

But for all Lenin's insistence on these crucial elements, his position in Two Tactics contains a weakness which allows for constant backsliding, especially by those who claimed to be Lenin's supporters but who did not share his revolutionary intransigence. For, if the revolution is to result in a bourgeois democratic settlement, if a 'democratic dictatorship' is the furthest stage to which the revolution can advance, then the working class is reduced to being the furthest left wing, the most consistent element, in the democratic revolution. Its political representatives would play the role of the Levellers in the English Revolution or the sans culottes in the French Revolution. This situation contains the inherent danger that the revolutionary party will underestimate the consciousness and activity of the working class, tailoring its slogans to the democratic tasks of the day and forgoing independent socialist agitation. If such a situation arises the party can become a force retarding the development of the working class by failing to formulate a strategy which crystallises its aspirations. Instead the party can channel the energies of the class into fighting for goals far short of those which workers are capable of attaining.

The crucial advance made by Trotsky in his 1906 work Results and Prospects was to point out that if one looked at Russian society in isolation from the world economy it seemed true that it was too economically backward to support a socialist society. Yet capitalist industry had developed to the point where tsarism was in a terminal crisis. Although industry had not developed on the scale of, say, Britain or Germany, where it did exist in Russia it existed in a very advanced form. So it was that St Petersburg's Putilov works (destined to become a 'citadel of Bolshevism' in 1917) was the largest and one of the most technologically advanced factories of its kind anywhere in the world. This is what Trotsky called 'combined and uneven development': the most advanced forms of capitalist development are transplanted, often by international investment, into the heart of underdeveloped countries.[36]

Trotsky went on to agree with Lenin that the Russian bourgeoisie was too timid to lead a democratic revolution, largely because the working class which had grown up around the new industries frightened the bourgeoisie with the spectre of a revolution which could sweep both tsarism and the bourgeoisie away in a single blow. Consequently, the working class would not limit itself to bourgeois democratic demands. When the working class fought it could only do so using working class methods: strikes, general strikes, workers' councils and so on. But these methods of struggle were as much directed against the bourgeoisie as they were against tsarism. They raised the question, 'Who will run the factory?' as well as the question, 'Who will run the state?' The revolution would therefore be a social revolution (ie an economic and political revolution), not simply a political (ie democratic) revolution.

Trotsky completed his analysis by showing that the socialist revolution would be able to sustain itself, despite Russia's backwardness, because Russia was part of the world economy, because the crisis of capitalism was international and, therefore, because the revolution could spread to the advanced capitalist societies of the West. In so doing it could provide the material base to develop a socialist society, making the revolution permanent. In other words, the democratic revolution, by virtue of its dependence on the working class as its leading force and by virtue of its international dimension, would immediately grow over into the socialist revolution.

This is, of course, exactly what happened in 1917. But in 1917 the Bolshevik Party was still operating the perspective of Two Tactics. This is why it tailed the provisional government and the Mensheviks between February and April 1917. This is why the entire leadership of the Bolsheviks thought Lenin was mad when he returned to Russia and, at the Finland station, made a speech calling for a second, socialist revolution. This is why Lenin's April Theses at first found

virtually no support among the Bolshevik leadership. Lenin had, in essence, accepted Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

**The Russian Revolution**

The main novelty which the Russian Revolution of 1917 added to this scene was that some socialists were, from the first, the willing assistants of the petty bourgeois democrats in their efforts to contain the revolution. The Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries (SRs) and, until Lenin's return to Russia in March 1917, a sizeable section of the Bolsheviks including Stalin and other leaders of the party, were willing supporters of the provisional government. The Mensheviks and the SRs at first performed this service from their seats in the Petrograd Soviet, but in April they formally joined the government. The Bolsheviks, despite the misgivings of some party members, supported the government without joining it. Only Lenin's April Theses rearmed the party by adopting the substance of Trotsky's (and Marx's) perspective of permanent revolution. From that point on the Bolsheviks were in opposition to the provisional government and solely concerned with strengthening the soviets, the independent organisations of the working class. As Trotsky wrote:

*In all past revolutions those who fought on the barricades were workers, apprentices, in part students, and the soldiers came over to their side. But afterwards the solid bourgeoisie, having cautiously watched the barricades from their windows, gathered up the power. But the February Revolution of 1917 was distinguished from former revolutions by the incomparably higher social character and political level of the revolutionary class, by the hostile distrust of the insurrectionists towards the liberal bourgeoisie, and the consequent formation at the very moment of victory of a new organ of revolutionary power, the soviet, based on the armed strength of the masses.*[37]

It was by strengthening the power of the soviets that the Bolsheviks both managed to defeat the Kornilov coup against the provisional government and lead a successful socialist revolution in October 1917. But victory did not go uncontested, and nor did the strategy of permanent revolution.

The great division between revolutionary socialism and Stalinism was fought over precisely this issue. Stalinism was a counter-revolutionary movement. To understand why, we have to look at the condition of Russia in the early 1920s. Internationalism was at the core of the October Revolution, not as an abstract moral injunction but as the very means of the revolution's survival. Lenin repeated again and again, both before October and afterwards, that the Russian Revolution could only survive if the revolution spread to the West:

*It is not open to the slightest doubt that the final victory of our revolution, if it were to remain alone, if there were no revolutionary movement in other countries, would be hopeless… Our salvation from all these difficulties, I repeat, is an all European revolution.*[38]

Trotsky repeatedly made the same argument.[39] It became the common coin of the Bolshevik party.[40] Most of all, Lenin and Trotsky hoped the revolution would spread to Germany. Had it done so it would not only have altered the whole international balance of class forces, making it impossible for the imperialist powers to continue their wars of intervention and unnecessary for the revolutionary government to cede the huge territories it lost in the peace of Brest-Litovsk. It would also have transformed the domestic situation of the revolution. Industry, and with it the numbers and confidence of the working class, could have been restored. The crucial alliance with the peasantry, on which the revolution depended, could have been maintained as manufactured goods were sent to the country to be exchanged for grain to feed the starving cities.

But without such an international victory, the Russian Revolution remained isolated. The working class, decimated by the civil war, the wars of intervention and the starvation and famine which followed, recovered at a snail's pace, if at all. Grain had to be requisitioned from the peasantry at the point of a gun. Eventually the regime introduced a partial restoration of the market—the New Economic Policy—which gave rise to a profiteering layer of bureaucrats and richer peasants. Indeed, the bureaucracy remained the only stable element in a society whose revolutionary institutions had been undermined by the terrible price the working class had to pay in the fight to defend them.

These are the conditions under which the Stalinist trend in the bureaucracy began to assert itself. It came to represent a class which set its face against the whole idea of internationalism: Stalin's slogan was 'Socialism in One Country'. As we have seen, Trotsky and Lenin had realised that if the revolution was to be a socialist revolution, rather than simply a democratic revolution which at best would issue in a capitalist economy and a parliamentary republic, it must spread to the advanced industrialised countries. This was the whole theoretical basis on which the Third International was formed.

Trotsky defended the principle on which the October Revolution had been, and could only have been, won: internationalism.

Once Stalinism broke the link between the possibility of socialist revolution at home and the fight to maintain it by spreading it internationally, the whole basis of the Bolsheviks' revolutionary policy in October collapsed. Stalin's 'Socialism in One Country' insisted that the Russian state could 'go it alone', and castigated Trotsky for 'underestimating the peasantry'. In the international arena this returned Bolshevik policy to the Menshevik position in 1917. The alternative model of revolution which Stalin propagated throughout the Third World was the 'two stage' revolution. The first stage was the democratic revolution, in which the working class should subordinate specifically socialist aspirations to a broad alliance aimed at achieving a democratic revolution. Only after this stage had been completed could socialist demands be raised. Stalin's approach meant that the revolution did not need the international working class to ensure victory, since a 'democratic revolution' could be achieved by a cross-class alliance of progressive forces acting within a purely national arena. Thus it became acceptable for socialists to argue that the working class should ally itself with the peasantry and 'progressive sections of the bourgeoisie' in future revolutions. In China in 1927 and in Spain in 1936 this led to disaster, because it subordinated working class revolution to bourgeois nationalists (Chiang Kai-shek) or bourgeois parliamentarians (the Republican parties in Spain). The result was counter-revolution and dictatorship in both cases.

The bourgeois revolution after the defeat of the Russian Revolution

The counter-revolution led by Stalin was, of course, not the only defeat suffered by the working class movement in the inter-war period. The rise of fascism centrally entailed a crushing series of working class reverses. In Italy, the 'two red years' of revolutionary struggle immediately following the Russian Revolution were ended by Mussolini's rise and the consolidation of fascism in the 1920s. The charge of the German Revolution took longer to dissipate, but ultimately the failure of the Stalinist dominated German Communist Party to resolve the crisis of the Weimar Republic in the working class's favour paved the way for Hitler to take power in 1933. The following year a belated workers' rising in 'Red Vienna' was crushed as the fascists took power. In 1936 the Spanish Revolution and the rising struggles around the election of the Popular Front government in France briefly raised the hope of turning the Nazi tide, but again the conduct of Stalin's Comintern destroyed the opportunity. The scene was set for world war.

The destruction engendered by the war, and the further demobilisation by the Communist Parties, especially in Italy, of the post-war wave of popular left wing struggles meant that the widespread revolutionary mood which attended the end of the First World War was present only in a muted form after the Second World War. Furthermore, sustained arms spending at a level quantitatively higher than during the inter-war period led to a 30 year period of economic expansion unparalleled in capitalism's past. In this respect the period after the Second World War was quite unlike the crisis ridden 1920s and 1930s. The international scene was also transformed during the long boom. The old European colonial powers, whether victors or vanquished, ended the war economically exhausted. Faced with twin pressures to open their markets to competition from newly dominant US corporations and from growing anti-colonial resistance, they were unable to sustain their empires. The second half of the 20th century became the great era of decolonisation, although economic power wielded by the imperial states proved to be as disabling for the mass of the population in the former colonies as the old set-up of direct rule had been.

These great anti-colonial transformations combined with the previous defeats suffered by the international working class movement and the economic growth which attended the long boom to throw the dynamics of the revolutionary process into a unique new pattern. The assumptions which lay behind Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution were called into question by these new developments. Trotsky's theory had been constructed between two poles. One was the fact that the bourgeoisie was incapable of recreating its revolutionary past under modern conditions, and therefore of carrying through the construction of a unified, independent capitalist state in the face of concerted opposition from pre-capitalist or colonial ruling classes. The second was that the working class would fill the political vacuum thus created, simultaneously solving the problems of the democratic and the socialist revolution. But what would happen if the first of these conditions, the objective weakness of the bourgeoisie, remained true while the second, the subjective potential of the working class, remained unrealised?

Trotsky could not have foreseen the unprecedented conditions which conspired to bring about just this situation after the Second World War. Nevertheless, such conditions required a fresh analysis. This was provided in Tony Cliff's pioneering essay 'Deflected Permanent Revolution'.[41] In analysing the Chinese Revolution of 1949 and the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Cliff demonstrated that in periods where the working class was unable to mount a challenge to the old order, and yet the old order was decomposing as a result of a wider social crisis, other social forces were able to play

a significant political role. The peasantry often provided the forces for popular mobilisation in these circumstances but, since modern revolutions are overwhelmingly urban events, they could not provide indigenous or effective political leadership. This leadership could be provided, however, by sections of the middle class intelligentsia—lawyers, state bureaucrats, teachers, literary figures, owners of small businesses, academics, and so on.

This layer had, in an earlier incarnation, often been a crucial element of the practical leadership of the classical bourgeois revolutions. The bourgeoisie proper does not often directly provide its own political representatives. The middle classes are often professionally engaged in forming general ideological conceptions of society, and live closer to the mass of the population whom they are trying to lead. They are, therefore, better political representatives of bourgeois political programmes than the oligarchs of the bourgeoisie themselves. This is a relationship which holds to this day: better for the ruling class that they be represented by a university educated grocer's daughter like Margaret Thatcher (and the lawyers who dominate the House of Commons) than that Rupert Murdoch and his fellow plutocrats attempt to directly represent themselves.

One of the great strengths of the analysis which Cliff provided was a political profile of this layer of people as they appear in modern 'developing' societies. The intelligentsia in these societies is peculiarly open to playing a leadership role in popular movements when the working class is quiescent. But the revolution made under these circumstances is a modernising, nationalist, anti-colonial revolution, not a socialist revolution.

*The intelligentsia is…sensitive to their countries' technical lag. Participating as it does in the scientific and technical world of the 20th century, it is stifled by the backwardness of its own nation.*[42]

Thus the intelligentsia turns its face against the ruling class, whose 'mismanagement', 'corruption' and 'cowardice' in the face of imperialism has brought the nation to this pass. Such individuals are in search of a new god, which they find in the abstract notion of 'the people', especially those sections of the people who have the greatest difficulty in organising for themselves, the peasantry.

*The spiritual life of the intellectuals is also in crisis. In a crumbling order where the traditional pattern is disintegrating, they feel insecure, rootless, lacking in firm values. Dissolving cultures give rise to a powerful urge for a new integration that must be total and dynamic if it is to fill the social and political vacuum, that must combine religious fervour with militant nationalism.*[43]

But this desire to be part of 'the people' and to end the subordination of the nation is always combined with a sense of superiority, the elite feeling that the masses are too backward or apathetic to accomplish a revolution for themselves:

*They are great believers in efficiency, including efficiency in social engineering. They hope for reform from above and would dearly love to hand a new world over to a grateful people, rather than see the liberating struggle of a self conscious and freely associated people result in a new world for themselves. They care a lot for measures to drag their nation out of stagnation, but very little for democracy. They embody the drive for industrialisation, for capital accumulation, for national resurgence. Their power is in direct relation to the feebleness of other classes, and their political nullity.*[44]

This political profile made the whole strategy of autocratic, state led capital accumulation very attractive for this social class throughout the 30 years of the long boom. China and Cuba were only the purest expressions of this trend. But, as Cliff noted, 'other colonial revolutions—Ghana, India, Egypt, Indonesia, Algeria, etc—more or less deviate from the norm. But…they can best be understood when approached from the standpoint of, and compared with, the norm'.[45]

As the post-war colonial revolutions ran their course, the long boom came to an end and the terminal crisis of the East European regimes set in, this model lost its attractiveness. But the class who saw modernisation as the key objective of popular movements did not disappear. And although its members no longer held to Stalinist derived economic models, they continued to see the state as the crucial vehicle for their political strategy. In some cases, for instance in South Africa, they remained caught within the old Stalinist ideology until the very collapse of Stalinism itself. As the leadership of the liberation movement, and the working class struggle as it revived, they influenced it accordingly. In Eastern Europe, where opposition necessarily defined itself against Stalinism, other ideologies were pressed into service and often had to contend with socialist and revolutionary alternatives for hegemony. In the Indonesian Revolution, very little of the old nationalist and Stalinist ideology survived the 1965 coup which brought Suharto to power, simultaneously overthrowing the nationalist founder of Indonesia, Sukarno, and crushing the Indonesian Communist Party. Some 32 years of dictatorship have united aspirant members of the excluded middle class around pro-democratic

sentiments. They now seek to benefit from the overthrow of Suharto by pacifying the movement which achieved it. So wherever other social forces, principally the working class movement, were weak or lacking in coherent, socialist political leadership, this crucial layer of the middle classes has continued to play a role long after its state capitalist ideological incarnation has passed away.

**The revolutions of 1989**

The causes of the East European revolutions of 1989 exist in three registers: firstly, the international register, which is the arena of economic and military competition with the West; secondly, the imperial register, which is the internal economic and political decay of the national economies and the Russian empire; and lastly, the class register, which is the way in which these forces expressed themselves as class struggles and political strategies.

The deepest and most lengthy processes which resulted in the East European revolutions are primarily to be found in the first register. In these regimes, the 'normal' political function of the state, the exclusive use of force in a given territory, was combined with the 'normal' function of a capitalist class, the exclusive right to hire and fire wage labour. They were therefore best defined as 'state capitalist'. In Eastern Europe such regimes resulted from the Russian occupation at the end of the Second World War. But although the Russian model and its East European copies saw the state capitalist method of industrial development at its most extreme, elements of this approach were clearly visible in many economies of the 1930s and 1940s. The international experience of the economic crisis of the 1930s, followed by the centralising imperative of total war, meant that state capitalist elements were strongly present in Hitler's Germany as well as in Stalin's Russia, in the New Deal United States as well as in wartime and welfare state Britain. This is why state led economic development became such an attractive model for post-colonial regimes as well.

The attraction was not wholly based on illusion. In the immediate post-war period the state capitalist regimes' economic expansion was faster than that of the Western powers. Indeed, the correlation appeared to be that the more state capitalist the regime, the faster the economic expansion. The index of industrial production in West Germany rose by seven times between 1950 and 1969—but Poland's rose by almost the same amount. Britain's rose less than twofold, while Hungary's rose nearly fivefold. France's increased by just over two times, yet in the same period Romania's index rose over 10 times.[46] Of course these figures only measure the rise in industrial production, not the absolute size of the various economies. Nevertheless, they show that the picture of the state capitalist economies as stagnant by their very nature is a myth.

In the same period, however, the world economy as a whole expanded massively, making it the most sustained period of growth in the history of capitalism. And the character of the world economy was transformed as it grew. Private monopoly and multinational firms came to dominate the Western economies as never before. International trade expanded as never before. These developments began to undermine the progress that was possible using state capitalist methods of accumulation. This was especially true for the autarkic state capitalisms of Eastern Europe, those states which had attempted the most complete isolation from the rest of the world market. Isolationist state capitalist methods had been very good at developing an industrial base from weak beginnings in a post-war world where the international economy was itself weak. But when the Western economies recovered and grew, and when international trade expanded, the isolated Eastern economies were at a disadvantage. Western corporations, whether private or state owned, were free to organise and trade on a global scale, searching for the cheapest raw materials, plant and labour, and for new and lucrative markets. The Eastern state corporations traded in a bloc which had always been weaker than its Western rivals, even in the pre-war years. Now non-convertible currencies, restricted resources and the imperial demands of the Russian state undermined their competitiveness on a world scale.

The very isolation of the Eastern state capitalist economies protected them from this fact for a time, but ultimately it was brought home to them in two crucial ways. Domestically, it was obvious that the industrial progress of the post-war period was not being converted into a 'second revolution' in consumer durables. Internationally, and this is where the second, imperial, register is important, the inability to keep up economically eventually meant an inability to keep up militarily. The state capitalist ruling class was losing the Cold War. Détente was the result: an attempt to transfer resources from the military to the civilian economy, the better to be able to develop military capacity in the future. The stakes in this game had become very high by the 1980s when Ronald Reagan proposed the Star Wars defence system and Mikhail Gorbachev, fearful of another huge hike in defence spending, countered with a series of disarmament proposals which he hoped the US could not refuse. He was right, but it was too late.

Gorbachev was too late because developments in the class struggle, the third register, were already closing the road to the kind of reform for which he hoped. To understand this process we have to look at how the economic crises of state

capitalism and the attempts by the ruling class, including the Russian ruling class, to deal with these crises were expressed in the class struggle. Poland is the key to this process—indeed, the key to understanding the whole dynamic of the revolutions of 1989.

This revolutionary narrative, however, begins much earlier. In the 1970s the then Stalinist leader of Poland, Edward Gierek, attempted a new strategy to deal with mounting unrest, notably the massive wave of strikes and factory occupations which had toppled his predecessor in December 1970. He tried to undertake a 'second industrial revolution' by borrowing from the West. New plant would be built with Western loans and repaid by exporting Western quality goods back to the West. The plan was a catastrophic failure, in part because the world economy was no longer expanding as it had done in the post-war period but actually entering the current prolonged era of slump and slow growth. In 1976 Poland's hard currency debt stood at $10 billion. Three years later it had reached $17 billion.[47]

Other East European leaders had tried the same 'consumer socialism' experiment—Janos Kadar in Hungary, Erich Honecker in East Germany—and by the late 1970s per capita debt in these countries had reached the same level as in Poland. Economic failure led to political change: Honecker tried cautious rapprochement with the Protestant Church, Kadar implemented a slight easing of restrictions on intellectual freedom.

But Poland had sustained the longest and deepest tradition of mass working class resistance to the state, and it was this which was to be the decisive factor in the overthrow of Stalinism. In 1976 workers were once again involved in a huge wave of strikes against price increases. Several thousand workers of the Ursus tractor factory in Warsaw marched to the rail lines, ripped them up and stopped the Paris-Moscow express. In Radom, south west of Warsaw, workers burnt down the Communist Party headquarters. The price rises were withdrawn, but the workers paid for their victory in other ways: thousands were sacked, many jailed and, in Radom and Ursus, those who kept their jobs were beaten back to work between lines of truncheon wielding police.

To defend the workers in the aftermath of the 1976 strikes, activists and intellectuals formed the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR, by its Polish initials). In September 1977, a year after KOR was founded, it began to produce its own newspaper, Robotnik (The Worker). On May Day 1978 the Founding Committee of Trade Unions on the Coast was announced in Gdansk, and it soon began producing its own paper, Robotnik Wybrzeza (The Worker on the Coast): 'KOR worked very much as Lenin recommended (in What is to be Done?) the conspiratorial communist party should work, raising the political consciousness of the proletariat in key industrial centres'.[48] The activists drawn together in these and other similar initiatives were to become the leadership of Solidarity in the wake of the greatest of all Polish strike waves in 1980. Their political development was crucial to the whole process of revolution in Eastern Europe.

The workers' movement which gave birth to Solidarity was insurrectionary in its scope. In July 1980 the government announced another round of price rises, and again these were met with a series of rolling strikes. Despite the regime's attempt to pacify the workers with a wage increase, the strikes spread. By August they had reached Gdansk, and the Lenin shipyard was occupied in response to the sacking of The Worker on the Coast activist Anna Walentynowicz. The yard management conceded the occupiers' demands, but the occupation continued in solidarity with the local strikes which the action at the Lenin yard had sparked. An Inter-Factory Committee (MKZ) was established for the whole of Gdansk. The strikes and occupations spread, involving mines and steelworks in southern Poland for the first time. So too did the MKZs, springing up one after another across the whole country. In September they united in one national organisation, Solidarity. The government was forced to negotiate an unprecedented agreement, the '21 points', granting a host of reforms, most importantly the right to 'independent, self governing trade unions'.[49]

This unprecedented rupture in the authority of a Stalinist state effectively created a situation of dual power. The state tried, but failed, to undermine Solidarity in the months after the initial strike wave. And Solidarity for its part came to take on more and more of the actual running of society. One KOR activist paid eloquent testimony to this fact, though he saw it as more of a problem than an opportunity:

*At this moment people expect more of us than we can possibly do. Normally, society focuses on the party. In Poland nowadays, however, society gathers around the free trade unions. That's a bad thing. Thus there is an increasing necessity for us to formulate a political programme. It would be a good thing if the party took the lead and removed the people's expectations from our shoulders. But will it do so now? In the eyes of the people the new trade unions should do everything: they should fill the role of trade unions, participate in the administration of the country, be a political party and act as a militia.*[50]

Unless Solidarity was willing to meet these expectations by overthrowing the government it was bound to gradually disappoint its own supporters. Worse, it began to limit the actions of its rank and file in the name of not provoking the government. Worse still, such a policy divided and exhausted the movement, giving the ruling class its chance to regain the initiative and organise the military coup headed by General Jaruzelski in December 1981.

What brought the Solidarity leadership to act in this way? Why did they not support the demands of the rank and file, and of the radicals within the Solidarity leadership, and use the power which they acknowledged the union to have to overthrow the government? Crucial to this decision was the political strategy developed by the KOR leadership in the period before Solidarity was created. Jacek Kuron is perhaps the pivotal, certainly the emblematic, figure in this story.

Kuron was a longstanding militant with an impressive record of opposition to the Polish regime. As early as 1965 he had written, with Karol Modzelewski, the pathbreaking Open Letter to the Party. This document, which still has an impressive power when read today, was a Marxist critique of the Polish state. Similar in its social analysis to the theory of state capitalism, it insisted on revolutionary conclusions: it called for a return to genuine workers' councils, the arming of the workers, and an 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'. Indeed, it went on to call for 'the organisation of workers' circles, nuclei of the future party'.51 But by the time he played a leadership role in KOR and then Solidarity Kuron had abandoned this revolutionary perspective. Why?

Paradoxically, the economic and social fate of the state capitalist regimes played an important part. The economic success of Stalinism in the 1950s and 1960s allowed the opposition in Poland and throughout Eastern Europe to think that what was necessary was a renewal of socialism, a return to the genuine Marxist tradition and to the democracy of the early Russian Revolution. Even those who broke completely with the notion of 'reform Communism', as Kuron did, could not help but be influenced by the evidence that state ownership was a viable economic model. Furthermore, Kuron developed his position and maintained it during a period of international working class advance, but abandoned it when the great wave of international struggles had been defeated, after the Prague Spring and the Polish struggles of the early 1970s as well as the May events in France.

The Open Letter had argued that the threat of armed Russian intervention would be met by the spread of the revolution to the rest of the Eastern bloc. It could therefore paralyse the Russian ruling class's ability to intervene. By 1980, however, Kuron was defending the reformist perspective precisely by reference to the Russian military threat. Just as the Western left was abandoning the revolutionary perspectives of 1968 in favour of the reformist perspective of the 'long march through the institutions', so Kuron was coming to believe in a 'self limiting revolution', in which the institutions of civil society would be built up within the old order, gradually forcing it to accommodate to liberal democratic norms.

Kuron's change of heart was equally marked on the question of party organisation. The Open Letter had been unambiguous on this issue:

*In order that the working class can have the chance to play the leading role, it must be conscious of its distinct, particular interests. It must express them in the form of a political programme and organise itself—as a class fighting for power—into its own political party or parties.*[52]

But by the time KOR was founded Kuron and fellow activist Adam Michnik were writing a series of essays calling for a 'New Evolutionism'. KOR itself was renamed the Committee for Social Self Defence, and although the central role of the working class was never abandoned, as it would have been difficult to do given the combativity of Polish workers, this force was now to be harnessed to a gradualist political strategy. New political allies were to be sought, especially among the intellectuals gathered around the Catholic Church. This new 'popular front' reformism had little need for the revolutionary organisation outlined in the Open Letter. When, in the midst of the crisis which engulfed Solidarity in 1981, radicals began to call for the formation of such a party Kuron spoke against them.[53] As we shall see, such ideas were not peculiar to Kuron but became the common coin of oppositions throughout Eastern Europe in the 1980s.

The military coup of 1981 was a brutal refutation of this perspective—or at least it should have been. Yet the reformist vision continued to be held by the leaders of Solidarity even as they were imprisoned and chased into the underground by Jaruzelski's troops. But if the 1981 coup was a defeat for Solidarity, it was not a victory for the regime. The Polish ruling class was so burnt by the cost of imposing martial law that it seems to have concluded that it could not repeat the experience. Marian Orzechowski joined the Central Committee of the Polish CP in 1981, its politbureau in 1983, and was effectively the party's last foreign minister. He says:

*I personally feel that 13 December 1981 had been a hugely negative experience for the army and the police. I had discussions with General Kiszczak and General Siwicki that martial law could only work once. The army and the riot police could not be mobilised against society. Most of the party leadership realised this… You couldn't rerun martial law.*[54]

The Russian ruling class had, ironically given Kuron's fears, been unwilling to act and seemed to have drawn the conclusion that it would henceforward not be possible to intervene against civil unrest in its empire. The 'Sinatra doctrine', 'I Did it My Way', as Gorbachev's spokesman Gennady Gerasimov would later call it, was sung to a Polish tune. General Jaruzelski himself recalls:

*Gorbachev on many occasions said that Polish changes were an impulse to perestroika… He often requested materials about what we had tried and tested… I was closely linked to Gorbachev. We spoke to one another without reserve, saying that old men like Zhivkov [of Bulgaria] and Honecker [of East Germany] did not understand a thing.*[55]

And as the crisis sharpened again with the 1988 strikes, Gorbachev had an immediate political motivation for continuing to support the Polish government's decision to attempt to hang on to power by compromising with, rather than cracking down on, Solidarity. Polish foreign minister Orzechowski again:

*When in February 1988 I told him [Gorbachev] that the position of Jaruzelski was under attack, he was very worried…Gorbachev realised that if economic reforms in Poland were to collapse, his hardliners could argue that deviation from the principles of socialism must lead to catastrophe. He came to Poland in June 1988 to provide moral support. At every meeting with Jaruzelski, Gorbachev approved of what was happening in Poland.*[56]

This underlines the degree to which the ultimate cause for the change of political heart towards Solidarity was rooted in economics: Poland and other East European states were now connected to Western regimes by trade and debt. Poland's external debt totalled over $38 billion in 1988, the highest in the Eastern bloc. Armed intervention would endanger both trade and loans. It would therefore worsen an already dire economic crisis, thus precipitating civil unrest, the very thing intervention was meant to suppress. Beyond these internal consequences the whole project of détente would have been destroyed by Russian police action in Eastern Europe.

Solidarity itself maintained an underground structure. Renewed strike action in 1988 left the Polish regime with no other option but to try and negotiate its way out of the impasse. Despite continuing strikes—which Lech Walesa tried to demobilise—student protests, and protests from the radical wing of Solidarity, 'round table' negotiations with the government began in January 1989. Kuron's response to the radical critics of the 'round table' strategy reveals the degree to which he had now adopted a fully articulated reformist strategy:

*Many of our friends, members of the opposition in Poland, asked us, 'Why did you go to the roundtable discussions? Wouldn't it have been better to continue organising people and to increase the potential for social explosion—a social explosion which would wipe out the totalitarian system?' Our answer was 'no'. We don't want to destroy the system by force…the road to democracy has to be a process of gradual evolution, of gradual building of democratic institutions.*[57]

The round table went ahead and resulted, in June 1989, in elections which the regime thought it might win, especially as they were rigged in its favour. In the event Solidarity swept the board with an electoral victory far greater than many in Solidarity had imagined possible. The path to the 'velvet revolutions' in Eastern Europe now lay open. But Jacek Kuron was right when, looking back from 1990, he wrote:

*The real breakthrough took place in 1980, when a massive wave of strikes led to the founding of Solidarity, an independent union that the government was forced to recognise. This was truly the moment when the totalitarian system in Poland was broken.*[58]

At the same time as these events were unfolding in Poland, the Hungarian ruling class was feeling its way towards a similar reconstruction of the political regime. Indeed, six days after Solidarity swept the board in the Polish elections, the Hungarian Stalinists opened their own round table discussions about reform. A week later over 100,000 people gathered at the reburial of Imre Nagy, the murdered leader of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. But there was comparatively little popular mobilisation in Hungary in 1989, and certainly no recreation of the workers' councils of 1956. Yet if the Hungarian events do not tell us very much about the role of the working class in the revolution, the very quietude of the transition in Hungary allows us to see the reconstruction of the ruling class in its purest form.

In the 1970s Hungary followed many of the same policies and confronted many of the same problems as Gierek's Poland. Opening the economy to the West meant accepting Western loans and increased indebtedness. Hungary's external debt rose from $0.9 billion in 1973 to $5.8 billion in 1978.[59] But the Hungarian ruling class pushed on down this road, combining economic liberalisation with a degree of intellectual liberalism. Elemer Hankiss, a Hungarian academic and, after 1989, head of Hungarian television, writes:

*In the 1970s in certain places a kind of social democratisation began. Already during the late 1960s in Hungary the Kadar regime introduced a more tolerant policy to the opposition and society in general. It allowed a 'second economy' to evolve; it allowed a process of cultural pluralisation to emerge, though of course it did not allow political pluralisation.*[60]

The formal economy continued to slide into deeper crisis during the 1970s and 1980s, but the 'second economy' grew. The number of independent craftsmen in Hungary was 50,000 in 1953. By 1989 it had risen to 160,000. In the 1970s there were reckoned to be 2 million Hungarian families involved in the 'second economy'. The numbers of entrepreneurs, shopkeepers and their employees rose from 67,000 in 1982 to almost 600,000 in 1989. Of course, these figures are tiny compared to the formal economy, and the economic activity these forces generated could not reverse economic decline. Their importance is sociological and ideological, not economic. They were one indicator showing the Hungarian ruling class a way out of the crisis.[61] By the mid-1980s this growth was combined with limited but real political change. A popular groundswell, unsuccessfully resisted by the state, got genuinely independent candidates elected in the 1985 general election. Independents won 10 percent of parliamentary seats. This was unheard of in any Stalinist state and was another straw in the wind for a ruling class which at that very point must have been absorbing the lessons of the Solidarity era in Poland.

The question of whether or not the whole Hungarian ruling class would attempt a transition to a more market oriented form of capitalism would be decided by the behaviour of the upper echelons of the state bureaucracy and the managers of the major industrial enterprises. In this respect Hankiss notes, 'Since the writing appeared on the wall in 1987, the Party and state bureaucracy have been trying to convert their bureaucratic power into a new type of power which will be an asset that can be preserved within a new system, namely in a market economy or even a democracy.' The result 'may be called the rise of a kind of 19th century grande bourgeoisie'.[62] This class is an amalgam of different elements of the old ruling class. Firstly, the state bureaucracy of the old order used its family ties to diversify its power:

*There are various ways of converting to new power if you are a Kadarist oligarch… The characteristic oligarchic family in the mid-1980s was the father or grandfather, a party apparatchik, a high level party or state official; his son a manager of a British/Hungarian joint venture; his son in law with a boutique in Vaci Street; his daughter an editor for Hungarian television; his nephew studying at Cambridge or Oxford; his mother in law having a small hotel or boarding house on Lake Balaton, etc… These family businesses are absolutely top secret. However, we did discover more than 250 businesses belonging to this kind of diversified oligarchic family, and there must be several hundred more.*[63]

Secondly, as soon as the dam broke in 1989, party bureaucrats found they 'could convert power on an institutional level', and so they began to transform high value properties and real estate, including party buildings, training centres and holiday complexes, into semi-private or joint stock companies. And besides the party bureaucrats proper there were also the managerial bureaucrats, the 'Red Barons', who were busy relocating themselves as private capitalists.

This process naturally led to a generalised consciousness on the part of the ruling class: 'A third way for the regime to convert power was, ironically, to transform the Hungarian economy into a market economy. This…has been carried out in such a way that this new grande bourgeoisie profits most from the new laws'.[64] Indeed, this consciousness predated the upheaval of 1989 and provides a crucial part of the explanation of the peaceful nature of the transition in Eastern Europe. The political institutions of Eastern Europe were transformed in 1989, but the ruling class was not overthrown and no new mode of production was advanced by the revolutions. Rather, the ruling class transformed one method of capitalist accumulation, the autarkic state capitalist method, for another method of capitalist accumulation which involves a combination of private monopoly, orientation on the world market and a continuing element of state ownership and regulation. That is, a reproduction of the really existing capitalism of the West, but not the fantasy 'free market' model of ideological fame.

The relationship between this new model of capital accumulation which arose within the womb of the old state capitalist model and the quietude of the political changes of 1989 is well expressed by Hankiss:

*I have tried…to answer the question, 'Why did they not shoot?'… Let me focus on one single factor which played an especially important part in the Hungarian (and to a lesser extent in the Polish) process of transition: loss of interest in preserving the party. In the late 1980s a substantial part of the Hungarian party and state bureaucracy discovered ways of converting their bureaucratic power into lucrative economic positions and assets (and also indirectly into a new type of political power) in the new system based on market economics and political democracy… When in the late 1980s they discovered the possibility of…becoming part of an emerging new and legitimate ruling class or grande bourgeoisie, they lost interest in keeping the Communist Party as their instrument of power and protection. And, as a consequence, on the night of 7 October 1989 they watched indifferently, or assisted actively in, the self liquidation of the party.*[65]

This process of self transformation by the ruling class is probably more extreme in Hungary than elsewhere in Eastern Europe and none of it is conceivable without the actions of the Polish working class in 1980-1981 and again in 1988. It was the Polish workers' struggle which both demonstrated to the ruling classes of Eastern Europe the impossibility of continuing to rule in the old way and the penalty that might be paid if they persisted in trying to do so. Furthermore, it was the experience of Solidarity combined with Russia's own economic problems and the consequent need to break into the world economy which created the Sinatra doctrine of non-intervention. And this in turn created the space in which the Hungarian and other ruling classes could recompose themselves.

The Hungarian events did, however, contribute one vital link to the chain of the East European revolutions. Early in 1989 the still ruling Hungarian Communist Party decided to open its border with Austria. It was a dramatic move which broke apart the then intact Eastern bloc. The then Minister of Justice, Kalaman Kulcsar, explained why his government acted:

*We wanted to show that we meant what we were doing and saying. Poland and Hungary were then the only two countries on the road to reform and it was by no means excluded that others in the Warsaw Pact would try something against us. We were pretty sure that if hundreds of thousands of East Germans went to the West, the East German regime would fall, and in that case Czechoslovakia was also out. We were not too concerned about Romania, the only danger to us came from the DDR [East Germany]. We took the step for our own sakes.*[66]

But even though the Hungarian government correctly foresaw the international implications of opening the border, they did not see the domestic consequences. Kulcsar again: 'Our internal situation changed completely. Suddenly conscious of the strength of its position, the opposition was able to advance the date of the elections, and that was the end of the party'.[67] Even so, it was still not clear in all cases that a peaceful transition was inevitable, as the case of East Germany shows.

The East German ruling class instantly understood the meaning of the Hungarian decision to open the borders. When a Hungarian government delegation met its East German counterparts and told them of the decision, Erich Mielke, the head of the Stasi secret police, 'called it treason'.[68] The East German leader Erich Honecker described it as 'nothing short of treachery'.[69] Some 24,000 East Germans left the country by this route between 10 September and the end of that month.

East Germany was the western watchtower of the Russian Empire. Its fate was always closely tied to the fate of the empire which created it from a Cold War partition. Two thirds of East Germany's trade was with Russia. Honecker himself remembers being told by Russian leader Brezhnev in 1970, 'Never forget that the DDR cannot exist without us; without the Soviet Union, its power and strength, without us there is no DDR'.[70] East Germany could not simply be 'hollowed out' by its own ruling class in the way that the Hungarian regime had been. Neither had there been the long tradition of combativity by which the Polish working class had worn down the resistance of its ruling class.

Consequently the East German regime fell as a result of the decay of the empire which sustained it and the simultaneous pressure, both through mass demonstrations and mass emigration, of its ordinary people. The fact that the regime did not attempt a violent counter-revolution was not a result of lack of will on the part of its leaders. It was the result of the fact that imperial decay ran just ahead of popular mobilisation, eroding the regime's capacity for repression.

The East German state marked its 40th anniversary on 6 October 1989. Gorbachev arrived to attend the celebrations. Neues Forum, the dissident civil rights organisation, had already been banned shortly after its formation the previous month. Some 1,000 people were arrested the day Gorbachev arrived, and another 3,456 during the few days of his visit. To mark the anniversary a triumphal torchlight procession marched past a saluting stand in Berlin on the night of 6 October. But, though they marched to order, the crowds could not be made to chant to order. Instead they chanted 'Gorbi, Gorbi'. The following morning Gorbachev and Honecker held their final private meeting. In the corridor afterwards Gorbachev deliberately let slip a phrase which, although it was not his intention, damned the East German

state: ‘Whoever acts too late is punished by life’. He then delivered a speech to the SED (Communist Party) central committee which was a oblique attack on the speed of reform in East Germany, beginning the process of upheaval in the SED leadership which would see Honecker replaced by Egon Krenz on 18 October.

But as the succession was being decided in the old way, very different things were happening in the streets. On 7 October violent arrests accompanied a 6,000 strong march in East Berlin; the next day 30,000 marched in Dresden. On the same day, 8 October, special security forces were put on alert. For the following day’s demonstration in Leipzig huge numbers of police, plus ambulance and hospital services, were mobilised. Honecker is reported to have ordered the use of live ammunition. On 9 October 50,000 marched in Leipzig. There was no shooting. Honecker’s order to shoot had been lost by one vote at the central committee.[71] Local district party bosses also refused to carry out Honecker’s orders any longer.[72]

It is not clear who led the opposition to Honecker’s plan at the highest levels—Krenz, the Russian leaders, or both—but it is obvious why the governing class as a whole were no longer willing to follow Honecker. He had been publicly deserted by Gorbachev, and his rivals were already beginning to campaign for his removal. No one thought that the end of the regime was at hand, merely that the new line from Moscow must be respected. Honecker had lost the trust of Moscow and with it the confidence of his fellow rulers. Consequently, the East German government stayed its hand.

The effect of such governmental paralysis was dramatic. A week later, on 16 October, 100,000 marched in Leipzig. By 23 October the marchers were 150,000 strong; by 30 October 300,000 marched. On 4 November 500,000 attended a rally in East Berlin as tens of thousands left the country through the now open border. In an attempt to stem the tide the regime announced, on 9 November, that border crossings to West Germany were open. The unexpected consequence was that crowds gathered on both sides of the Berlin Wall and began to dismantle it with picks, hammers and chisels. A round table on the Polish model followed, but its only real achievement was to set the date for elections: 18 March 1990. Helmut Kohl and the Christian Democrat machine filled the void left by the collapse of Stalinism, winning the election and setting their own stamp on the process of German unification.

For events to have taken a left wing direction during the East German revolution would have required a left wing organisation and ideology of rare consistency. In the polarised ideological atmosphere of a partitioned country, only an alternative as clear and consistent as eithe__r the old Stalinist certainties of Honecker or the Western imperial realpolitik of Helmut Kohl, and equally opposed to both, could have sustained support. The East German opposition had few of these qualities. One of the founders of Neues Forum, Jens Reich, recalls the atmosphere of the opposition in the early 1980s:

*The new opposition was individualistic and bohemian, and composed of a kaleidoscope of ‘counter-culture’ social groups: hippies, Maoists, anarchists, human rights groups, greens, gays, lesbians, the protesting ‘church from below’—a very colourful mixture…in fact, to professional people, frankly somewhat alien! My wife Eva and I felt like fish out of water.*[73]

Of course, it is perfectly possible that out of such a milieu a core of people could emerge who clarify their ideas, formulate a revolutionary strategy and start to build links with workers. This, for all their ultimate weaknesses, was the path taken by KOR in Poland. But this was not the path taken by the people who founded Neues Forum. Jens Reich argued that those who represented an ‘extreme rejection of the status quo…really could not become a mainstream political force.’ They were ‘too isolated from the culture of the bulk of the population’. Instead:

*We had to reach out to a more ‘respectable’ middle aged generation, to give them the courage to come out of their snail shells…We wished to ensure that we were properly representative; to ensure that Neues Forum incorporated not only clergymen, not only Berliners, not only intellectuals, not only young dropouts from the social ghetto. This criterion brought us together…a cross-section of normal people with normal professions and different political leanings.*[74]

Such a strategy was initially successful, but as the revolution radicalised, and as global political issues quickly came into play with the fall of the Berlin Wall, Neues Forum was thrust aside by more robust political forces. From the one side it was undermined by Helmut Kohl’s pro-market capitalist ideology and the huge CDU and state machine that he could mobilise. But, even though many East Germans rejected this model, and many more came to reject it as they experienced life under ‘really existing capitalism’, Neues Forum could not even present itself as an adequate vehicle for discontent. And so, from the other side, it was undermined by the reconstituted social democratic SED, now called the Party of Democratic Socialism.

This is not the inevitable fate of the kind of petty bourgeois groups who formed the core of Neues Forum. They can often play a very effective political role, as we saw from the theory of deflected permanent revolution, by benefiting from the impotence of the two major classes. Or, as in the case of the KOR activists in Poland, they can ally themselves to the working class. Or, as in the Hungarian case, they can align themselves with a section of the ruling class, although this option allows them very little distinctive political profile. The East German opposition could not align themselves with the ruling class, did not align themselves with the working class and were a dispensable commodity as far as the West German ruling class was concerned. They bloomed briefly in the revolution of the flowers, but wilted quickly in the heat generated when real class forces came to dominate the scene.

The fall of the Berlin Wall signalled that the end of the state capitalist system in Eastern Europe was only a matter of time. Jan Urban, a leading figure in Czechoslovakia's Civic Forum, recalls:

*Poland, Hungary and now East Germany were moving. What about us? On 9 November 1989 the Berlin Wall was breached. Now it was completely clear that Czechoslovakia would be next on the list.*[75]

The difference between the Prague Spring of 1968 and the revolution of 1989, as far as Urban is concerned, is that '20 years ago it was predominantly a matter of a crisis of legitimacy within the governing Communist elite in one country of the Communist bloc. In 1989…it was the Czechoslovak variant of the crisis of legitimacy of whole Communist system'. Although the Czechoslovak regime did not accumulate debt on the Polish scale it did, consequently, create a 'painful internal debt…so the structure and equipment of industry became unmaintainable. The transportation system was old, services undeveloped and natural environment devastated'.[76] In common with other ruling classes in Eastern Europe, the Czechoslovak ruling class was losing faith in the state capitalist method of accumulation. The onset of perestroika in Russia from the mid-1980s deepened this mood.

There had long been dissident groups in Czechoslovakia. The most famous of them was Charter 77, patterned on KOR in Poland but more oriented on achieving 'civic rights' and less on working class activity. But the real mobilisation of the mass of the population only really took hold after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Throughout 1988 and 1989 many thousands signed petitions of protest against the Czechoslovak regime, the largest of which were organised by the church. Demonstrations did not attract more than 10,000. Indeed, as late as 28 October 1989 this was the number in Prague's Wenceslas Square when at the same time Leipzig was seeing demonstrations of 150,000 to 300,000. These demonstrations, and the ones that followed, were met with beatings and mass arrests by the police.

Sections of the regime clearly hoped they could stage manage a transition which would maintain nearly all their power. They needed to reform the political system by separating party, state and economic structure and, at the same time, win Gorbachev's approval. But events ran beyond their control, although not so far beyond as to endanger the whole process of transition to capitalist parliamentary democracy. On 17 November riot police made a violent attack on a Prague demonstration, and a carefully planned security operation was mounted to make it seem as if a student, Martin Smid, had been killed. The incident was meant to be reported by the dissident press. The security forces then planned to produce the unhurt student, discredit the opposition and pave the way for 'reform Communist' Zdenek Mlynar to replace Husak as president. At the same time a StB security service briefing was arguing:

*Use influential agents to intensively infiltrate opposition parties. Aim to disinform the opponent. Compromise the most radical members of the opposition and exacerbate divisions within the opposition. At the same time, create conditions for StB officers to obtain civil service promotions and posts at selected companies.*

The narrower part of this plan, to replace Husak, failed for two reasons. Firstly, Mlynar refused to play his allotted part, even though Gorbachev sought to persuade him. Secondly, and more importantly, after the fall of the Berlin Wall the mass movement took on a momentum which swept aside such plans for an orderly succession.[77]

A week after the Berlin Wall came down the numbers protesting in Prague rose to 50,000. Two days later, on 19 November, they doubled to 100,000. The next day the numbers doubled again to 200,000. Four days later, 24 November, 500,000 demonstrated in Wenceslas Square and listened to Alexander Dubcek, the disgraced leader of the Prague Spring in 1968. The same day the entire politbureau of the CP resigned.

On 25 November, another crowd of 500,000 gathered to hear Civic Forum leader Vaclav Havel and Dubcek speak. On 27 November three million workers took part in a two hour general strike, and 200,000 demonstrated in Wenceslas Square. The result of this massive spasm of popular activity was that Civic Forum announced the suspension of the demonstrations and the government conceded free elections. Within a week a majority reformist government took over.

The Civic Forum leaders were thrown to the head of the movement, but they did not create it. Indeed, it was not until 19 November 1989 that 400 activists founded Civic Forum. But the long history of dissent by the leaders of Civic Forum, many of whom were Charter 77 activists, made them natural figureheads, symbols of the revolt. But it could not be said that they actively and organisationally prepared the revolt in the way that the KOR activists prepared for, and then built and led, Solidarity. The deficiencies of organisation and ideology were made good by the cumulative weight of the revolutions in Eastern Europe, which led directly to massive mobilisations and the internal decay of the regime. Jan Urban's recollections make explicit both the rapidity of the regime's collapse and the limited aims of the opposition:

*The entire political power structure collapsed in front of our eyes. We didn't want to allow the state to collapse with it, so we had to act. There was no one else to do so. There were even moments when we had to support some Communist Party officials against whom we had just fought.*[78]

Martin Palous, a philosopher at the university in Prague and one of the founders of Civic Forum, describes a similar experience:

*Civic Forum leaders were constantly shocked that their proposals, dreamlike, turned into reality. It gave everyone a false impression that they were really marvellous politicians… The party structure of communications and power disintegrated.*[79]

The crucial weakness lay in the 'popular front' style political strategy which the Civic Forum leadership had long espoused. Urban again:

*In a few hours we had created, from the far left to the far right, a coalition with only one goal: to get rid of Husak… We did it ourselves, and having done so, we found out it was not enough. Now we had to change the whole system! We decided that the best way to achieve this was through free elections.*[80]

Here the forces which determined the fate of the Czechoslovak Revolution stand out in high relief. An exhausted empire was collapsing. The national regime fell apart under the impact of popular mass mobilisations. The working class was willing to take part in general strike action under the leadership thrown to the fore by the revolution itself. But these leaders previously committed themselves to a perspective which limited the revolution to achieving the kind of political structure which dominates the Western powers. They chose to pursue this aim by a cross-class alliance stretching from the political left to the far right. At the crucial juncture they found that this ideology, and the consequent lack of real roots among the mass of the working class, led them to suspend further mass mobilisations and strikes. What followed was an accommodation between the Civic Forum leaders and members of the ruling class which allowed that class as a whole, barring only a few symbolic political figures, to maintain its power by utilising the new political and economic methods of exploiting the working class.

The Christmas revolution in Romania was significantly different from the revolutions in the rest of Eastern Europe. The violent overthrow of the Ceausescu regime requires careful analysis. Certainly, the Romanian regime was engulfed by the rising tide which had already swept away nearly all the East European dictators by the time it overcame Ceausescu. Demonstrators in Romania chanted, 'We are the people', copying those in East Germany. But if the mass movement was inspired by and had much in common with the other revolutions of 1989, the state against which it was pitted was significantly different.

Romanian state capitalism was an unreconstructed and unreformed model. External debt had peaked in the early 1980s and been reduced by means of impoverishing the working class. By 1988 food and fuel rationing was in operation. In Bucharest electricity was reduced to one kilowatt per day per household. The Romanian regime had been less undermined by growing economic links with the West. There was some of the gradual demoralisation obvious elsewhere in Eastern Europe, but it found an impenetrable barrier at the core of the state machine in the tightly knit clique of the Ceausescu family circle. Ceausescu had a long history of distancing himself from Russian foreign policy and defence strategy, and had no sympathy with 'reform Communism' of any description. This independence from Moscow earned Ceausescu the admiration of Western rulers and resulted in the granting to Romania of 'most favoured nation' trade agreements with the US. Consequently, when faced with unrest the Romanian regime was far more inclined to take the traditional stance of East European rulers—military repression, the response of Jaruzelski in 1981 rather than the response of Jaruzelski in 1989.

The revolt came late in the East European revolutionary calendar when, on 15 December 1989, pastor Laszlo Tokes of the town of Timisoara was served with a deportation order. Tokes was an ethnic Hungarian, a fact that was significant

for two reasons. Firstly, Ceausescu had announced the previous year a ‘systemisation’ plan for agriculture which involved the demolition of 7,000 of Romania’s 12,000 villages, many of them in areas heavily populated with ethnic Hungarians. Secondly, a diplomatic war between Hungary and Romania had been raging ever since Hungary began its reform programme, and Ceausescu responded with a series of hardline public criticisms. A few months before the deportation order was served on Tokes, Hungarian television had broadcast an interview with the pastor.

The day after the deportation order was served, 16 December, several hundred blockaded Tokes’ house to stop it being enforced. The following day Ceausescu ranted to his Political Executive Committee about the necessity of opening fire with live ammunition: ‘I did not think you would use blanks; that is like a rain shower… They have got to kill hooligans, not just beat them’.[81] The same day the Securitate police opened fire, killing 71 protesters. In the following days the protests grew in Timisoara and around the country. Troops withdrew from Timisoara on 20 December after workers threatened to blow up the petrochemical plant, and 50,000 demonstrated and sacked the CP headquarters. The next day Ceausescu’s power collapsed after a staged rally turned into a protest demonstration. The scale of resistance required more than the Securitate to repress it, but the conscript army refused to intervene. The Securitate did fight back, firing on demonstrators. Fighting spread, and during the course of the revolution 700 lost their lives. Ceausescu tried, on 22 December, to address a crowd outside the CP central committee building. The crowd broke into the building and Ceausescu had to flee by helicopter from the roof. The army joined the battle against the Securitate as crowds captured the TV and radio stations. Ceausescu and his wife were captured and shot three days later, on Christmas Day 1989.

The newly formed National Salvation Front dominated the provisional government, which also included some ‘dissidents’ and religious leaders. Romania was one of the most repressive states in Eastern Europe. Its dissidents were hardly numerous or well organised enough to be called a movement. There existed no widely recognised programme of reform even among the intelligentsia. There was no KOR, no Charter 77, no Neues Forum. The National Salvation Front was therefore not a dissident organisation, but one of the groups competing for power which emerged from the old governing class. Given the vacuum of political leadership, such a group was always most likely to be composed of former Stalinists who knew the system and were able to take it over more or less intact. The National Salvation Front’s president, Ion Iliescu, was a former leader of Ceausescu’s youth organisation from the 1960s; the NSF’s second in command was a former Securitate officer and diplomat; another senior NSF figure, Silviu Brucan, was a former editor of the party daily paper and an ambassador. Their ‘opposition’ to the regime was limited to the fact that they had all quarrelled with Ceausescu in the past.

The background of some of the leading figures of the revolution, and their relationship to the apparatchiks of the NSF, is revealing. Ion Caramitru took part in the invasion of the TV studios. He was a well known actor and head of Romania’s National Theatre. Octavian Andronic was a cartoonist and news editor of the party paper Informatia before he launched the free paper Libertatea during the revolution. Nicolae Dide made film sets before he helped storm the central committee building. Later he became a parliamentary deputy. Petre Roman was a professor at the polytechnic when he pushed into the central committee building with the first wave, making his way to the balcony to famously declare that the people had taken power.

The relationship between these middle class activists and the core of the old regime that survived in the NSF is described by geologist Gelu Voican-Voiculescu. He was involved in fighting around the Intercontinental Hotel. He remembers coming to the TV centre the following day: ‘I entered the television centre, just like that, someone off the street. By five o’clock I was one of Iliescu’s team, and five days later I was deputy prime minister. It’s almost unimaginable!’[82] Petre Roman found that his brief moment of revolutionary heroism gained him a similarly swift induction to the elite. At a meeting in the central committee building he remembers, ‘The former top bureaucrats of the Communist system were gathered and I remember how everyone was of the opinion that Iliescu should assume responsibility… Among the old guard, Brucan, General Militaru and so on, I was the only one to come from the street’.[83] Nicolae Dide also remembers the scene inside *the central committee building:*

*In the afternoon Iliescu arrived, and that was the point where we lost the revolution. We gave it to him not because we wanted to but because we were not good at revolution. For about two hours we had been an alternative government, the first government of the revolution. When Iliescu and company entered the building they spread out… General Gheorge Voinea appeared. He said, ‘I want to talk to the revolutionary political structure.’ All of us remained rooted on the spot. None of us had any conception of political structure. At that moment Petre Roman stepped up from behind us, to say, ‘We are here.’ And he took General Voinea off to meet up with Iliescu and his friends to form the National Salvation Front and then they went off to television. General Voinea was part of it. And that’s the way they did it.*[84]

Thus a paradox was created: the most complete revolutionary experience of 1989 resulted in the least fundamental social change of 1989.

**The velvet restoration**

The experience of revolution in Eastern Europe in 1989 was a mixture of achievement and disappointment. The real achievement of the 1989 revolutions is that they overthrew a dictatorial political system and replaced it with a form of government in which working people have the right to join trade unions which are not state controlled, to express themselves and to organise politically with a freedom they did not have under the Stalinist regimes. The disappointment is that such a powerful international revolutionary movement ended with the installation of a new economic and political order which preserved the wider power of the ruling class, enabling it to renew the process of capital accumulation by further exploiting the working population. This disappointment can be seen in two spheres; firstly, in the disillusionment of many of the leading figures of the 1989 revolutions, and secondly, in the economic exploitation and political exclusion of the mass of workers throughout Eastern Europe.

Many of the leading opposition figures now look on the results of the 1989 revolutions with a profound sense of disillusionment. Most still regard the limits which they imposed on the revolutionary development as necessary, but they regret the effects of what Adam Michnik calls ‘the velvet restoration’. Comparing the mood in Poland in the 1990s with previous periods of restoration, Michnik writes:

*The mark of restoration is sterility. Sterility of government, lack of ideas, lack of courage, intellectual ossification, cynicism, and opportunism. Revolution had grandeur, hope and danger. It was an epoch of liberation, risk, great dreams and lowly passions. The restoration is the calm of a dead pond, a marketplace of petty intrigues and the ugliness of the bribe.*[85]

And it is the conduct of Solidarity itself which Michnik holds mainly responsible for this state of affairs:

*One does not have to like the Solidarity revolution anymore… With that revolution the time of Solidarity and Walesa had passed. The great myth turned into caricature. The movement towards freedom degenerated into noisy arrogance and greed. Soon after its victory it lost its instinct for self preservation. That is why the post-Solidarity formations lost the last elections… Let us emphasise this: it is not so much that the post-Communist parties won as the post-Solidarity parties lost.*[86]

But Solidarity lost its imagination and its ability to preserve itself because the aims to which it was limited by its leaders had been achieved—a capitalist economy and a fragile and corrupt parliamentary system. Only a deeper revolutionary policy could have maintained Solidarity’s engagement with its base, but this was precisely the policy that Michnik was instrumental in jettisoning from Solidarity in the 1980s.

Michnik is not alone in his disillusionment. Jens Reich of Neues Forum says:

*Strange to say, I am not happy and neither are others around me. Now that the state is decaying, people begin to yearn for some of its more sympathetic traits. In a peculiar way, many of us feel homesick for that inefficient and lazy society which is so remote from the tough and competitive society into which we have been thrust.*[87]

Reich laments that ‘one cannot deny it makes a difference whether a young mother, made late for work by her child’s sudden illness, can stay at home and afterwards excuse herself without fuss, or whether such a commonplace family event puts her under considerable stress because there is no spare labour capacity at work…and she knows that she will find little sympathy or understanding of her plight’. Others, like Jan Urban of Czechoslovakia, see ‘real problems before us’, and that ‘economic difficulties await us’. These include ‘nationalist frictions’ and ‘clashes with dissatisfied workers’. But for Urban this is simply the price which has to be endured in order to secure the ‘beginnings of parliamentary democracy’.[88]

If all that were being recorded here were the disappointments of a few revolutionary dreamers then their sentiments might only be of limited interest. But that is not the case. These are some of the leaders of the 1989 revolutions, and the programme with which they entered those events was anything but extreme. They held a view of the West which incorporated an idealised view of parliamentary democracy and a misapprehension that the kind of economic performance demonstrated by the US in the 1950s was the norm for any capitalist economy. What they got was the crisis

ridden, monopoly dominated, anti-welfare capitalism of the 1990s wedded to barely reformed state machines, glossed by a thin varnish of parliamentary representation within which corruption has become rife.

The extent of the failure of capitalist democracy in Eastern Europe is captured in the economic statistics. In all the major economies of the area, except Poland, real GDP was lower in 1997 than in 1989. In Hungary it is 10 percent lower; in the Czech Republic 11.4 percent; in Romania 17.8 percent; and in Russia there has been a drop of over 40 percent. Real wages in the same economies dropped by between 8 and 54 percent between 1989 and 1995. Full employment gave way to unemployment of over 10 percent in most of the economies, excepting Russia (3.4 percent), Romania (6.3 percent) and the Czech Republic (3.1 percent). The numbers suffering low incomes have risen to between 20 and 60 percent of the population across the region.[89] Looking out over this vista the Financial Times' Philip Stephens was forced to concede:

*The common assumption was, and still is, that the defeat of communism marked the triumph of democracy. In fact, the victor was capitalism…the EU's contribution to the creation of a democratic Russia has amounted to a few billion euros and the despatch of a handful of economists from the Chicago School. And to Moscow's former satellite states, the union has offered plentiful promises and precious little else.*[90]

This is what lies beneath the disappointment of the revolutionaries. The mass unemployment, the destruction of welfare rights, the speed up and intensification of the work process have created this mood. Two major social forces have emerged to fill the vacuum where the revolutionaries had no further programme to deal with these issues. The first is reformism, often embodied by the reconstituted Communist parties of the old order. The second is nationalism and national rivalry, which has made two countries of Czechoslovakia and ignited internal conflict across the former Eastern bloc. But by far the most catastrophic effect of the 1989 nationalist revival has been the break up of Yugoslavia.

The destruction of Yugoslavia is, as much as any of the more trumpeted gains of 1989, a child of the revolutions of that year. Firstly, like Romania, there was an enormous upsurge of class struggle inspired by the other East European revolutions. And the former Communist ruling class met this challenge by playing the nationalist card, notably in Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo. But this process was enormously accelerated by the acts of the Western powers who were keen to dismember the country. Germany led the way, flushed by its unexpectedly easy victory in shaping the unification of the country, by encouraging the independence of wealthy Slovenia. But at every step of the way in the last decade all the major powers have concentrated their efforts in the continued dismemberment of the area, finally provoking in 1999 the first war involving the main imperial powers on European soil since 1945.

Thus the disillusionment of the revolutionaries of 1989 was qualitatively different from that which afflicted their forebears. The Levellers, the Sons of Liberty and Babeuf were disappointed because their programmes could not be realised. The Bolsheviks' programme was simply defeated by counter-revolution. But the democratic revolutionaries of 1989 were disappointed because their programmes were realised. The fault lay in the programme, not in the limits of the objective situation or the power of the forces opposing them.

**South Africa and the ANC: the bitter fruit of freedom**

It might seem that there were few similarities between the Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and the apartheid state in South Africa. Yet there were strong likenesses in certain crucial areas—both societies were industrialised by a process of strong state direction and in relative isolation from the world economy. South African apartheid, like Stalinism, faced its terminal crisis because it was unable to transform this method of capital accumulation when new realities faced it in the 1970s and 1980s. And the South African ruling class, like its East European counterparts, tried to meet the opposition of a revolutionary mass movement with a strategy of partial reform and negotiation.

Deep racial segregation marked the South African state all this century, but it became codified and further institutionalised in 1948 with the ascendancy of the Afrikaner National Party in the elections of that year. This system endured the major challenge which resulted in the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. But in the 1970s the Soweto uprising and the rise of the black consciousness movement, followed in the 1980s by the growth of independent black trade unions, marked successive phases in the crisis of apartheid.

During this 30 year period the structure of South African capitalism was transformed in some vital respects. In the pre-war period South African capitalism had been dominated by its agricultural and mining sectors. In 1936 these contributed a total of 34 percent of GDP, compared with manufacturing and construction's 13 percent. But industrial development during and after the war, sponsored by state direction of industry and import controls, transformed the

economy so that the manufacturing and service sectors became predominant. By 1970 agriculture and mining had dropped to a total of 18 percent and manufacturing and construction had risen to 27 percent of GDP.[91]

Protectionism had been a feature of the inter-war South African economy, as of many others. The Second World War saw tremendous growth of manufacturing industry behind the natural protective wall of the war economy. By 1957 local capital formation accounted for 97 percent of total investment and represented a reinvestment of 30 percent of national income.[92] But after the war South African industry faced increased international competition both within its borders and from other African states. Protectionism was increased in 1959, and after Sharpeville import controls were introduced: 'Policies of domestic procurement, especially in strategic products such as armaments, energy and transport, also contributed to local expansion'.[93] This method of state led, protectionist development did result in high growth rates for a whole era. But there was a price to be paid, and the price grew greater the more the economy developed. As Merle Lipton notes:

*Hothouse development behind protective barriers was for some years effective in maintaining profitability, new investment and growth in manufacturing. But it raised the cost structure of the whole economy, as expensive SA goods had to be used in preference to cheaper imports. As the economy developed and diversified, the costs of protection became clearer, not just to consumers, but also to businessmen, because their inputs were also protected and therefore costly.*[94]

State control of the economy was closely linked to apartheid. The maintenance of segregation in the labour market, on which white petty bourgeois and working class support for the state depended, could only be maintained through state direction of industry and isolation from the international economy. Opening the economy to international competition would have meant that South African firms would have had to compete more directly with foreign companies which did not have the burden of apartheid to carry, either in terms of higher wages for whites or the low skills and training of blacks.

But the longer the South African variant of state capitalism remained unchanged, the more it exhibited some of the same signs of crisis as the economies of Eastern Europe. Growth rates declined, as they did throughout the world when the long post-war boom ended. But the resulting problems were made worse by the nature of apartheid. From 1946 to 1970 average annual growth in manufacturing was 7 percent; from 1969 it declined to 2.6 percent; by 1977 it was negative. The restriction of the internal market, an unavoidable consequence of apartheid's impoverishment of the black population, further limited growth. A restricted internal market encouraged manufacturers to look abroad for sales—yet the protected nature of the South African economy meant that their goods were not competitively priced in international markets. Thus the contradictions of apartheid resulted in a massive expansion of borrowing from the international banking system.

Some sections of the South African ruling class had long believed that partial reform of apartheid was necessary. The words of Anton Rupert, chairman of the Anglo-American conglomerate, were representative of this view: 'We cannot survive unless we have a free market economy [and] a stable black middle class.' Eventually a majority were driven to this conclusion by a mixture of economic imperatives and the threat of revolution from below. Yet even while they reached this conclusion, and even while arguments about the speed and direction of reform continued amongst them, a majority of the ruling class also remained convinced that their economic security, and therefore the role of the state as the guarantor of safe conditions for capital accumulation, could not be endangered by the reform process. To the extent that either reform or pressure from below threatened the fundamental existence of private property, the ruling class turned its face against compromise.

This explains the chequered history of attempts at 'top down' reform of apartheid. Prime minister Vorster's attempts at reform and at détente with the frontline African states in the 1970s collapsed in the face of the Angolan war and the Soweto riots. A new clampdown followed. The Riekert and Wiehahn reports, both issued in 1979, renewed reform by trying to develop a black business class and a stable working class which could act as a consumer base for a modern capitalist economy. The most important aspect of these proposals was the Wiehahn report's provision for the legalisation of independent black unions, which expanded enormously through the early 1980s.

The expansion and militancy of the black independent unions was decisive in convincing the ruling class that unreconstructed apartheid was resulting in the build-up of revolutionary pressure within the system. But only when it seemed possible to separate the reform of apartheid from any threat to capitalist property did the majority of the ruling class accede to the reform project. Crucial in confirming to the ruling class that reform of apartheid and a challenge to

capitalist relations of production were not the same thing was the attitude of the leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

The ANC was born in 1912 as a predominantly middle class led organisation focused on constitutional change: ‘The ANC…drew its leadership largely from the small urban elite—teachers, priests, lawyers and doctors. Its policy was termed "moderate"—removal of discrimination, constitutional means of change, the gradual extension of a qualified franchise’.[95] The relationship with the Communist Party and the ascension to the ANC leadership of former Youth League members Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu radicalised the organisation in the late 1940s. In 1955 the ANC adopted the Freedom Charter, the document demanding a number of democratic and civil rights reforms which remained the foundation of ANC politics until the final victory over apartheid in the early 1990s.

The guiding principle of the Freedom Charter, the ANC’s general strategy, and the politics of the Communist Party which informed both, was the stages theory of revolution. The principal argument of this approach is that South African society was in all essentials a colonial society, ‘colonialism of a special type’ as the SACP described it, in which the colonial ruling class resided within the borders of the colony. The first stage of the revolution would be a democratic anti-colonial struggle, and only after this struggle was complete would it be possible to fight for socialism. In the course of defending the Freedom Charter in 1956 Nelson Mandela put it like this:

*The Charter does not contemplate economic and political changes. Its declaration,‘The people shall govern’, visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of the country, be they workers, peasants, professionals, or petty bourgeoisie.*[96]

As Mandela makes clear, the adoption of the stages theory not only precluded a struggle for socialism, but also effectively submerged specifically working class activity in an all-class ‘popular front’. Furthermore, the aim of such an ‘anti-colonial’ movement was to rid the country of apartheid, but not to smash the capitalist state. As Ronnie Kasrils, leader of the ANC’s armed wing, explained in 1990:

*There are revolutionary movements which, at their foundation, addressed the question of seizing state power. These immediately recognised and analysed the use of state power and the need to develop a force to seize state power. With us that was not the ethos.*[97]

This broad commitment to a national democratic revolution was combined with a wide range of rhetoric—running from appeals for insurrection to demands for compliance—and an equally variable series of tactics, spanning guerrilla struggle and peaceful negotiation. Which of these strategies were prominent in ANC propaganda was determined by the nature of the struggle between the mass movement and the regime. When guerrilla struggle became fashionable on the left in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution it also became much more central to the ANC’s approach. When the massive growth of the trade union struggle became the dominant feature of the South African mass movement in the 1980s, the ANC necessarily had to adapt its approach accordingly. But throughout the various phases of the ANC’s political development the overarching theoretical framework remained constant: a stages theory of the revolution in which socialist demands had little immediate relevance. Indeed, it was this conception of the democratic revolution which made such catholic attitudes toward the agency and strategy of the revolution possible. After all, if an alteration of the political regime was the limit of the revolution, then it was possible to imagine that a variety of social forces and strategies might achieve such a goal. If, however, the aim had been socialist revolution, then working class self activity would have determined both agents and strategies with much greater precision.

The ANC’s approach did not go uncontested. Perhaps the greatest challenge to the authority of the ANC and the SACP came with the growth of the independent unions in the early 1980s. These unions, first gathered in the Federation of South African Trades Unions (FOSATU), were originally highly democratic in structure, workplace based and militant. The activists who led them at first developed an approach to the struggle which laid far greater stress on working class self activity, and on socialist ideas in general, than had previously been common in the ANC.

The SACP and its trade union organisation, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), were at least as surprised by this development as was the regime. The SACTU had held that the South African state was virtually ‘fascist’, and that no genuine trade unions could grow in this atmosphere. As late as June 1982 a SACTU position paper was arguing:

*SACTU was forced underground. And there is nothing to suggest that the apartheid regime will ever tolerate a strong, progressive and open trade union movement for very long. It would be a mistake to act on this basis.*[98]

The new unions created an alternative pole of attraction inside the working class movement and provoked an enormous and critical debate about the future of the revolution. FOSATU general secretary Joe Foster and president Chris Dlamini forcefully argued that the experience of anti-colonial revolutions proved that the regimes they created did not give workers power or even guarantee the most basic demands of the working class. 'Worker liberation can only be achieved by a strong, well organised worker movement,' Dlamini stated. Following a visit to Zimbabwe, he observed that the people were liberated but the workers were not.[99] The ANC and the SACP reacted sharply to this challenge insisting that the CP was the party of the working class:

*Dare FOSATU ignore this? And dare it ignore the confusion and division it will sow in the ranks of the working class if it sets up a new 'workers' movement' in competition with or alongside the still living Communist Party?*[100]

The debate between the 'workerists' from the new unions and the 'populists' of the ANC continued up and through the expansion of the independent union movement to include the huge National Union of Mineworkers, among others. The enlarged federation was called the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Even at this point:

There was still a great deal of antipathy towards the SACP and their two stage national democratic revolution strategy. Some saw the SACP…formulations as diluting specific working class concerns in its alliance with the ANC and of placing the struggle for socialism on the back burner. The SACP itself continued to argue that 'workerism' was necessarily 'reformist' and lashed out at the 'workerists' who mooted the idea of forming a specifically workers' party as not dedicated to the 'overthrow of capitalism'.[101]

Ultimately the SACP and the ANC were able to win both this argument and the allegiance of the best 'workerists', like Moses Mayekiso, the general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, because they could provide a wider political perspective than their opponents. The 'workerists' were right in their criticisms of the SACP/ANC strategy, but they had no theory about how the struggle for socialism and the struggle against apartheid could be combined in a way which did not subordinate one to the other. This allowed the SACP leaders to portray themselves as more 'revolutionary' and more 'political' than their workerist rivals. SACP central committee member Jeremy Cronin recalls this debate:

*The party intervened around…the so called populist-workerist debate by saying: The way forward lies neither through workerism in the narrow sense of economism or syndicalism nor through populism… We need a class perspective, we need to defend socialism, but also the national liberation struggle was the immediate struggle to be fought.*[102]

The syndicalist approach of the workerists played into the SACP's hands. The workerists' inability to show how the working class struggle was central to a broader assault on apartheid and capitalism, that is to develop a strategy drawing on the insights of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, was a decisive weakness. Instead, they saw the unions as defending workers' interests 'within the wider popular struggle', as Joe Foster put it during a crucial policy debate.[103] Neither could they show that they had an alternative and superior model not only of working class self activity but also of revolutionary organisation. Thus they were always at an ideological and organisational disadvantage when dealing with the SACP. The experience of the socialists in the South African unions, like that of KOR activists in Poland, is testimony to the fact that faith in rank and file militancy is only the beginning of a revolutionary perspective. To bring such a project to a successful conclusion in the face of rival political projects, a broader revolutionary theory, and a party which attempts to win a minority within the class to that theory, is necessary.

In the absence of such a commitment on the part of the workerists, the ANC was able to incorporate the massive social force represented by the new unions into its democratic revolution strategy. The ANC gained a huge and decisive addition to its arsenal by this adoption:

*The intensity of grassroots struggle continued well into 1986. The ANC and its internal UDF [United Democratic Front] allies were riding high…With the added strength of COSATU an attitude of supreme confidence reigned that liberation, or as the nationwide slogan proclaimed, 'People's Power', was just around the corner.*[104]

The ANC never abandoned the rhetoric of revolutionary struggle. Indeed, the decline in the international significance of guerrilla struggles (and its obvious ineffectiveness in the South African case) combined with the rise in organised working class resistance, both in the unions and the townships, to propel the ANC into adopting an insurrectionary language more akin to the classical Marxist tradition. There was talk of 'dual power' as the basis of a revolutionary challenge to the regime. But such an approach could never become the settled strategy of the SACP or the ANC without the wholesale rejection of the stages theory of revolution. Only when smashing the capitalist state becomes the objective

can the question of dual power be raised seriously. If removing apartheid and establishing a non-racial parliamentary capitalist regime is the objective then the mass movement is only necessary to compel change in the political superstructure. Thus the mass movement of the 1980s became the adjunct of a strategy aimed at a negotiated settlement, just as the ANC's previous adherence to the armed struggle had been. In 1985 Oliver Tambo told a radio audience:

*They [domestic capital]…want to reform the apartheid system in such a way that the result is a system that secures their business but is minus racial discrimination. And that is…a system that falls short of the stipulation of the Freedom Charter… Well, we do not think that such a system is different.*[105]

But a year later Tambo was arguing that the ANC's aim was not 'military victory but to force Pretoria to the negotiating table'.[106]

Despite the state of emergency declared by P W Botha in June 1986, the union-dominated struggles of the 1980s were the final, crucial conflict which propelled the regime down the path of reform. The victory of the SACP in the ideological battles inside the union movement during the 1980s meant that COSATU now shadowed the national negotiations in the industrial sphere. COSATU signed accords with the state and began participation in the National Manpower Commission, devoting increasing energies to institutionalising bargaining arrangements with the state and the employers. But there were also other factors at work.

As part of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Iceland in 1986 it had been unofficially agreed that aid to Third World clients would be scaled down. The cessation of Russian and East German aid in everything from weapons to the printing of journals was a blow to the ANC and a further pressure in the direction of a negotiated settlement. The 1988 New York agreement involving Russia, Cuba, the US and South Africa ended the war in Angola. It was a defeat for South Africa and so helped to create a willingness to reform. But the New York agreement also underlined the fact that Russia was no longer willing to support the ANC's armed struggle. And in the wake of these developments the US sponsored a massive propaganda offensive through a variety of non-governmental organisations. Financial assistance was channelled through a 'Human Rights Fund' and a 'Labour Union Training' operation. This last organisation was controlled by the African-American Labour Institute of the US union federation AFL-CIO, previously denounced by the SACP as a CIA front. More aid poured in through the 'Special Self-Help Fund' for 'community development', projects for students to be educated in the US, and the National Endowment for Democracy's fund for 'strengthening democratic institutions', another project thought to have close CIA links.[107]

The crucial element, however, was the growing sense among South Africa's rulers that the ANC would negotiate a settlement which would leave their fundamental economic power untouched. As Zach de Beer, executive of the giant Anglo-American corporation, had put it in 1986:

*We all understand how the years of apartheid have caused many blacks to reject the economic as well as the political system. But we dare not allow the baby of free enterprise to be thrown out with the bathwater of apartheid.*[108]

It was on precisely this crucial point that the ANC's stages theory of revolution allowed it to compromise with the desires of capital. In 1987 the ANC's national executive unequivocally stated:

*Once more we would like to affirm that the ANC and the masses of our people as a whole are ready and willing to enter into genuine negotiations provided they are aimed at the transformation of our country into a united and non-racial democracy.* ***This, and only this, should be the objective of any negotiating process.***[109]

The path to the eventual majority rule settlement was still the subject of great conflict between the mass movement and the regime. But this conflict was no longer over whether or not there would be a social revolution in which capitalist relations would be challenged. Now the conflict was reduced to one in which the contending parties fought to decide who would have how much power inside a new parliamentary capitalist system. The de Klerk regime was quite willing to use the violence of the security forces, and to stir up reactionary forces like Inkatha, to force the ANC into accepting a more disadvantageous settlement than it wanted. The ANC for its part realised that it could not operate effectively without mass mobilisation as a counterweight to the violence of the state. This was its sole bargaining counter of any real value. But on both sides it was understood that these forces were now adjuncts to the negotiations. Just 12 weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, de Klerk used the state opening of parliament to announce the unbanning of the ANC and the SACP. This, and the freeing of Nelson Mandela nine weeks later, was a watershed. The regime could not go back to full blooded apartheid and the ANC would not go forward to a struggle against capitalism. Even those who were critical of the slow pace and inadequate gains made in the negotiations, like Ronnie Kasrils, saw the mass movement as a tool

which could create a ‘Leipzig option’ in which ‘de Klerk is propelled out the exit gate’. That is, the democratic revolution would be attained by faster, ‘bottom up’ methods.

Even this was not to be, but not because the popular movement lacked the desire to take this path. There was constant dissent and outbreaks of struggle which threatened to break the limits of the ANC/SACP’s strategy. Even SACP central committee member Jeremy Cronin later admitted that ‘there was a tendency to underemphasise socialism… I think the party underrated the mass support, particularly working class support, for socialism’.[110] And this estimate is supported by survey evidence stretching back through the 1980s and 1970s showing sustained support for revolutionary ideas among a substantial section of black militants and workers:

*The Buthelezi Commission found ‘a growing climate of revolutionary ideology’, with violence becoming a ‘respectable option’, particularly among the educated. However, militancy was not necessarily correlated with racist or undemocratic views… Hanf concluded that ‘the more democratic a black South African is, the stronger his demands for political rights, and the readier he is to adopt non-peaceful means to attain them’… Marxism has become influential among younger blacks, and surveys showed a growing hostility to capitalism, though this may have been mainly to white capitalism.*[111]

Yet the ANC’s hegemony, and its two stage theory, survived. Indeed, it survives to this day with opinion poll support well above 50 percent in the population as a whole and 70 percent among blacks. But nearly a decade after the ANC entered negotiations the bitter fruits of compromise are easy to see. The central promise to build a million homes has still not been delivered, in part because of corruption and mismanagement by the new black elite, but mainly because resources have not been made available. It is the same story with the provision of education. Unemployment, at more than 40 percent, is higher than it has ever been.[112] And in 1997 state expenditure on health was a smaller percentage of the total budget than it was in 1991.[113]

This is the tragedy of a working class movement which both objectively had the power and subjectively had the willingness to overturn the capitalist system. Yet it is still suffering the same injustices and deprivations under the black bosses it elected as it did under the white bosses it did not elect. But such is the reality of power in capitalist societies, as workers in the parliamentary capitalist regimes of the West have long experienced. Whatever power parliament possesses is easily negated by the economic power of the capitalist class. Changing the skin colour of government ministers may signify a defeat for racism, but it does not alter the fundamental fact of class exploitation and oppression for the vast majority of black South Africans.

**The left and the Indonesian Revolution**

Indonesian society in the 1950s and 1960s, the two decades after independence from the Netherlands, was dominated by a state bureaucracy which became the leading force in investment and corporate ownership. No great landed families existed as they had done in Europe and Latin America. Consequently, the state bureaucracy which led the industrialisation process was not subordinated to the same degree to a pre-existing conservative oligarchy. The middle classes, the other crucial contending class force in earlier transitions to capitalism, were also weak. The middle classes were composed of a small layer of professionals and intellectuals allied to a wider group which depended almost entirely on the state bureaucracy for their employment. This state machine and its huge military industrial complex increasingly dominated Indonesian society, from independence under Sukarno, through Suharto’s bloody coup in 1965, until the 1980s.

Over this period the international economic climate changed dramatically, and so did the economic role of the state. As the world economy grew in the post-war period the Indonesian state adopted the autarkic, isolationist model of development common to the Stalinist states and many post-colonial Third World regimes in the 1950s and 1960s. As late as the early 1980s the economy was more highly regulated and controlled than at any time since the 1930s. But in the late 1980s and into the mid-1990s, just at the end of the 15 year period in which the South East Asian boom doubled Indonesian GDP, the state moved towards a strategy of promoting international investment and attracting foreign investment. This process was accelerated in 1982 and 1986 by the decline in state controlled oil revenues, which had helped boost annual growth to 7 percent between 1973 and 1981.114 The result was greater reliance on private investment. The finance sector was deregulated and state monopolies in banking, television, airlines and public utilities were brought to an end. The result was a massive surge in private corporate capital during the 1980s.[115]

The resulting overproduction produced an economic crash which was, in turn, a major cause of the May 1998 revolution. The fate of the revolution is caught up with the transformation of the class structure which accompanied the earlier

economic growth. The rise of a newly confident middle class is obvious from the sight of the canyons of corporate skyscrapers which line the main highways of Jakarta, interspersed with luxurious, air conditioned shopping malls whose patrons go home to the new security guarded and enclosed housing developments. The number of new apartments aimed at the middle class and corporate elite, and worth between US$100,000 and US$500,000, rose from 753 in 1985 to 8,427 in 1992.

This new middle class remains tied to the state in many ways and certainly looks to the state to protect it from 'the mob'. But in recent years it has also chafed against the limits of the old Suharto power structure. Such divisions have limited the political effect of this class:

*It is little wonder that middle class reformers have made such limited political progress in the last 40 years. Internally divided, dependent upon the state and fearful of social and economic chaos, they have largely been immobilised.*[116]

But the economic transformation of the last two decades has built up pressure on the regime from the middle class. Some of this pressure is not directly political: demands for efficient public services, medical facilities, rational building codes and so on. One account, written before the overthrow of Suharto, noted:

*…stronger demands from the 'new capitalists' who are not part of the large conglomerates for a level playing field, a more transparent regulatory regime, and stricter control over the business activities of the families of high government officials. Such demands…have been increasingly heard during the 1990s, reflecting the growing strength and confidence of the indigenous middle class, working in the private sector as white collar employees, as employers or as independent, own account workers.*[117]

These demands meshed with the kind of pressures from the major powers that we have seen also existed in South Africa:

*By attempting to ignore…politically unpalatable but nevertheless important new issues within its supposedly all encompassing corporatist structures the state has allowed room for institutions and expertise outside its apparatus to take the lead. This has resulted in rapid expansion of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in areas such as legal aid and human rights, environmental matters, community development and social research. Often receiving foreign funding, especially from Western European foundations, NGOs now employ many highly qualified younger generation lawyers, economists, managers, researchers and organisers.*[118]

This layer of the middle class and their allies in the ruling class were certainly not the moving force behind the overthrow of Suharto. But once that had been achieved by other forces, their political representatives, whether in the elite already or figures who had been excluded from it during previous dynastic quarrels, moved to ensure that their own agenda dominated the movement. They, like a previous generation of middle class activists in the deflected permanent revolutions discussed earlier, could only act because of the space created by other classes. And, unlike their forebears, the Communist Party had not been their political organisation nor revolutionary nationalism their ideology. For this generation the NGOs and academic forums provided much of the organisation, and the 'Western values' of democratic civil, society and free market economics provided the ideology.

So who did create the revolutionary situation which allowed the middle class politicians to act? In May 1998 the Suharto dictatorship was broken by a mass student movement which coincided with, and gave political direction to, an uprising of the urban poor. There has been some discussion on the Indonesian left about whether the fall of Suharto can be called a revolution at all. The evidence usually adduced to support the claim that nothing approaching a revolution took place in May 1998 is that Suharto was deposed by a kind of 'internal coup' within the governmental machine, and that the figures who replaced him at the apex of government, President B J Habibie and armed forces chief General Wiranto, were both members of the Suharto elite.

It is certainly true that there was no social revolution in May 1998. No class was overthrown, no mode of production transformed. But was there a political revolution in which the nature of the governmental system was changed? The fact that the immediate cause of Suharto's resignation was that all his 14 senior economic ministers refused to serve in his cabinet and his senior army officer told him the security situation was bleak does not prove the case one way or another.[119] The key question is why these long serving elite figures acted in this deeply uncharacteristic way. After all, the regime was a personal dictatorship and nothing of this kind had ever happened before. The governmental elite acted in this way because the student demonstrations, the occupation of the parliament building and the urban riots made it plain that if Suharto did not go then the entire economic system, as well as the existing political system, stood under

threat. The elite reacted to the economic crisis and under pressure from below—and so began a process of transformation which has not yet run its course.

The Habibie regime is a classic example, on the political level at least, of a provisional government. The parallels with the provisional government in Russia after the February 1917 revolution are especially striking. The February revolution resulted in a regime that preserved much of the tsarist state while forcing the abdication of the tsar himself, just as the May revolution in Indonesia resulted in a regime which preserved much of the Suharto state while forcing the abdication of Suharto himself. The provisional government of 1917 was led by Prince L'vov, a member of the tsarist aristocracy, and in 1998 the Indonesian government formed in May 1998 was led by a 'prince' of the Suharto 'aristocracy', B J Habibie. The Russian capitalist class, with the conditional support of the officer class of the army which was central to the tsarist state, hoped that the new regime would stabilise the situation and preserve their power:

*The February revolution of 1917 which overthrew the Romanov dynasty was…welcomed and utilised by a broad stratum of the bourgeoisie and of the official class, which had lost confidence in the autocratic system of government and especially the persons of the tsar and his advisers; it was from this section of the population that the first provisional government was drawn.*[120]

The Habibie government represented very similar forces with very similar intentions. The first provisional government in Russia was almost exclusively composed of ruling class figures. Indeed, the Bolsheviks' paper Pravda denounced the provisional government as 'a government of capitalists and landowners',[121] just as socialists and others in Indonesia today denounce the Habibie government as a continuation of Suhartoism without Suharto.

That the provisional government came during successive crises throughout 1917 to include socialist ministers was a product of the force exerted on it from the outside by the revolutionary movement. Such 'socialist' evolution had nothing to do with the intrinsic nature of the provisional government itself. Indeed, if we look at the policy of the provisional government, rather than at its personnel, it becomes obvious that the fundamental nature of the government was not changed at all by the inclusion of socialist ministers. The government continued to prosecute the imperialist war, continued to oppose the seizure of the factories by the workers and the land by the peasants, and continued to resist the pressure of the workers' councils. It continued on this path after the socialists joined it, just as it had done before they arrived.

Nevertheless, for all these striking similarities between the provisional government of 1917 and the Habibie government, there are also some equally striking differences. Most importantly the provisional government of 1917 represented a break between an old semi-feudal governmental layer around the tsar and a more modern pro-capitalist layer represented by the provisional government. This break was a product of the highly uneven and rapid social development in Russia before the revolution.

In Indonesia the situation is different because capitalist development before the revolution lasted much longer and is more deeply entrenched than in Russia in 1917. The most important index of this fact is the development of the working class: in Russia in 1917 it numbered 12 million out of a total population of 160 million; in Indonesia today it numbers some 86 million out of a total population of 200 million. In short, the Russian working class in 1917 was 10 percent of the population, whereas in Indonesia it represents 43 percent of the population. If we look at the proportion of GDP contributed by the agricultural sector of the economy we see the same extensive growth of industry from another angle. According to the World Bank, agriculture accounted for 53.9 percent of Indonesian GDP in 1960. This fell to a mere 19.5 percent by 1991. In the period 1975-1993 alone the contribution of agriculture to total GDP fell by 50 percent. In 1993, according to the Asia Development Bank, it stood at only 18.4 percent. Russian agriculture was still standing at 19 percent of national product in 1960, a full 53 years after the revolution.[122]

Even before the Indonesian revolution, one commentator noted that 'growing numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled wage workers in the non-agricultural sectors of the economy were demanding more autonomous worker organisations which could press for better wages and working conditions'.[123] This reflects the changing profile of the Indonesian working class where there has been a 'particularly striking…increase in the proportion of the labour force comprising employees in both industry and services.' Indonesia, like many developing countries, still possesses a huge pool of surplus and semi-employed labour—the urban poor. But the economic growth of recent decades has had an effect even here: 'Accelerated economic growth…from the late 1960s has pulled labour from…the traditional economy into wage employment in modern enterprises run along capitalist lines'.[124] This is important because the popular base of middle class politicians like Megawati is often composed of the urban poor and the smallest of the petty bourgeoisie who live among them. But the growing weight of the working class enables socialist arguments to carry greater weight among

these sections of the population than they would have done before, provided such arguments are clearly articulated by socialist organisations who do not allow the liberal bourgeoisie an open field.

The increasingly capitalist nature of Indonesian society can also be seen if we look at the ruling class. The Suharto regime was dictatorial and militaristic as far as its political form was concerned, but it was not a semi-feudal regime in its economic content. Nor did it rest on semi-feudal landowning classes. It was a fully capitalist regime intent on using the state machine to develop the economy and break into the world market. This difference becomes politically important when we consider the nature of the Habibie regime. The Russian bourgeoisie wanted to clear away the tsarist excrescences and remodel the state machine, although in the event they were too cowardly to do so. The Indonesian bourgeoisie has even less reason to want to interfere with the state which Suharto built. This is obviously true of Habibie, Wiranto and their like because they have been loyal servants of this state from the beginning. But it is also true of the liberal opposition of Megawati and Amien Rais. They represent would-be alternative governmental parties. They certainly do not represent an alternative class to the present government. The Financial Times had this to say at the time of Megawati's party congress in Bali last October:

*The upside of this for foreign investors is that Mrs Megawati…rejected appeals to restrict access to foreign investors, hamper the free market or break up the conglomerates which dominate the Indonesian economy but are also, in times of crisis like this, the main source of cash.*[125]

Amien Rais's economic programme is not qualitatively different to that of Megawati, who he joined in an electoral alliance in May 1999. The desire of Megawati and Amien Rais to run the Indonesian state with as little alteration as possible does not mean, however, that they will not give voice to demands for reform if they believe that raising such issues are necessary to unseat Habibie. But they will prefer to do this with as little threat to 'order' as possible, they will pray that they can do so constitutionally, that the popular movement will not force them to make uncomfortable choices. They hope that demonstrations, riots and strikes will give way to peaceful, 'democratic' development. One Western diplomat accurately captured Megawati's dilemma:

*The elite feel they can trust her. But her base is clearly with the poor people. People who have been disempowered, who want wealth and power sharing. She can't be both a leader of the elite and the poor.*[126]

If, however, the mass movement does not agree to fulfil its allotted role as stage army and voting fodder for the liberal opposition there is little doubt that the fundamental loyalties of both Megawati and Amien Rais will be to the Indonesian ruling class and its state.

Certainty in this question rests in part on the analysis of the similarities and differences between Russia in 1917 and Indonesia today. In Russia the bourgeoisie really did need to clear away elements of a pre-capitalist state machine. Even so, they were still too cowardly to do so. The Indonesian bourgeoisie already has a capitalist state machine. Some sections of the bourgeoisie may now wish for a governmental reform which will re-establish the credibility of their state in the eyes of the mass of the population and at the same time hoist their party into power. But the Indonesian liberal bourgeoisie are even more afraid of the popular movement than the Russian bourgeoisie were, because they in no sense represent a fundamentally different class and have no desire for a fundamentally different state.

The only forces that can maintain the forward momentum of the revolution are the workers, students and urban poor who have been the sole source of all its progress to date. And, of these forces, the workers are by far the most important. But this raises the question of what attitude socialists should take to the democratic demands which dominate the revolution at the moment. This question became centrally important when the movement, which subsided after the overthrow of Suharto, revived on an even grander scale in demonstrations at the November 1998 meeting of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR).

The sessions of the MPR focused discontent with the Habibie government's lack of commitment to real change. The mass of workers and students clearly saw how tied to the old Suharto state the new regime remains. This transformed the call for the overthrow of the Habibie government from being the property of relatively small and fragmented demonstrations in September to being the popular aim of mass demonstrations in November 1998. In wide layers of the movement the demand for 'reformasi' gave way to the call for 'revolusi'. These demonstrations, the largest of which involved hundreds of thousands, culminated in the killing of 18 protesters by the Indonesian army and marked a new stage in the Indonesian Revolution.

The November demonstrations failed to unseat the government and replace it with a 'proper' provisional government as many of the organisers hoped it would. But the Habibie regime's attempt to break the opposition movement in a 'Tiananmen style' crackdown also failed. The killings outraged many students, workers and urban poor but did not break the movement. The armed forces were weakened by internal divisions as some army units either sided with the demonstrators or remained neutral, including elements of the elite marine units. All these factors meant that the Habibie government, already unstable, was propelled down the road of reform.

The elections, which there had been plans to delay, were called for June 1999. Early in 1999 a pledge was given that a referendum would be granted on autonomy for East Timor. East Timorese and other political dissidents began to be released from jail. The People's Democratic Party (PRD), the party furthest left on the Indonesian political spectrum, was legalised and allowed to stand in elections, although some of its leading figures remain behind bars. All these reforms were urged on by the US, backed up by Australia. As in South Africa, a variety of NGOs, often with links to the opposition, have been urging on the rapid transition to capitalist democracy.

But the regime did not just trust the outcome of the elections to pro-democratic sentiment. It has reshaped the armed forces, giving the police a separate structure it did not have before. It recruited hundreds of thousands of 'civilian militia', armed with shields and bamboo canes, and under military command. And it continued to spread religious and ethnic conflict through agents provocateurs. The aim is not to totally suppress the movement in the Suharto manner, but to keep it within the bounds of the election process and so destroy the possibility of a revolutionary alternative arising among the mass of the population, a fear common in ruling circles at the start of 1999.

The Indonesian bourgeoisie, including its liberal wing, is in an analogous position to the bourgeoisie that Marx described in 1848. It is even now 'grumbling at those above, trembling at those below'. Megawati and Amien Rais are, like their German precursors, 'revolutionary in relation to the conservatives and conservative in relation to the revolutionaries, mistrustful of their own slogans, which were phrases instead of ideas, intimidated by the…revolution yet exploiting it; with no energy in any respect, plagiaristic in every respect'.[127] But the Indonesian liberal bourgeoisie is not in this condition because it is tied to an old feudal order by its late development, but because it is tied to an already developed capitalist state, which they want to reform but not to overthrow. They are also confronted by a working class of far greater size than that which so terrified the German bourgeoisie in 1848.

The Indonesian student movement and the left have been caught off guard by these developments. They did not see the Habibie government as a provisional government, but as a continuation of the Suharto state, and so did not expect this 'democratic' development. On the contrary, they expected the state to resist any such change and assumed that it would have to be fought for in a 'proper' democratic revolution. Early in 1999 it became apparent that the student movement was divided on this issue. Some wanted to continue fighting under the previous year's slogans, 'Down with Habibie' and 'End the political role of the armed forces', in order to push for a real provisional government. Some wanted to settle for making sure that the elections were 'free and fair', and so volunteered as election monitors. The PRD seemed split between standing in the elections because the masses were clearly looking to them and boycotting the elections because they were not called by a democratic provisional government.

The solution to this quandary is to be found in the history of previous revolutions. Every revolution, including every socialist revolution, begins with the battle for democratic demands. Socialists should be in the forefront of the fight for all kinds of democratic reforms. The characterisation of the Indonesian state as capitalist and of the Indonesian bourgeoisie as wedded to the state is simply meant to show the limits of democratic politics, the speed with which socialist politics can emerge in the course of the further development of the revolution, and the importance of raising socialist politics. More important still is that socialists raise democratic demands in a different way to those who are simply adherents of the 'democratic revolution' and use very different methods and techniques in organising to achieve these demands.

In 1848 Marx insisted that workers stay one step ahead of the liberal opposition and that their demands, while 'democratic', should have a specific class content which sets the workers at odds with the liberal democrats. This is why in Indonesia today socialists should not just echo the slogans of the popular movement, slogans which are quite acceptable to Megawati and Amien Rais. For instance, 'End the dual function of ABRI [the armed forces]' should always be combined with the slogan, 'Cut the arms budget, feed the starving.' The second slogan is still a 'democratic demand' in a certain sense, but it raises issues specific to the working class and combines them with an attack on the state which Megawati and Amien Rais will be reluctant to endorse.

And for Marx this approach to the tactics and slogans of the day was part of a wider strategic understanding that a socialist revolution was the goal to which the movement was headed. He did not talk of the workers forming a provisional government, nor did he speculate on what shape a provisional government formed by the bourgeois democrats would take. Marx and Engels understood that class polarisation was dividing the democratic camp. Engels noted that all revolutions begin with a cross-class 'democratic unity' against the old order. But, as the revolution develops, the initial phase, the 'revolution of the flowers', gives way to political divisions within the revolutionary camp based on underlying class differences. This has been the case in all previous revolutions, including the very first bourgeois revolutions.

But in all the revolutions after 1848 there was the potential for this class differentiation to develop to the point where workers created their own distinctive organs of power: workers' councils. Of course there are no workers' councils in Indonesia, and therefore no organised form of dual power. Yet it is not true to say that the Habibie government, or the government formed after the elections, could rule without having to take account of the power of the mass movement. The demonstrations which coincided with the meeting of the MPR clearly forced the government onto the defensive, at least in the short term. The crucial question is how this power can be consolidated into an institutional form which commands the allegiance of wide layers of the working class, and which can become an organising centre of opposition to the government.

One thing seems clear: a 'real' or 'democratic' provisional government cannot simply be declared. The students' attempt to create an alternative 'parliament' during the November demonstrations was a valuable propaganda weapon, but a real alternative to the Habibie government will have to built from the bottom up, not just proclaimed. Local meetings of activists including students and workers could have begun such a process. Even if these beginnings of workers' power cannot yet be built, socialists can argue that they should be built and gather around them the best militants in the movement, even if they are a small minority of the working class, on the basis of this programme of action.

For an illustration of this process at work we can turn to the experience of French workers during the strikes of 1995. These strikes involved an all out strike by rail workers combined with a series of one day public sector general strikes. The strikes were called in opposition to the austerity plans of then prime minister Alain Juppé which increased workers' retirement age, raised the taxes paid by the poor, increased health charges and cut welfare benefits. The strikes were massive by comparison with any struggles in France since 1968, but still far from a revolutionary situation. And while the reformist left in France was represented by two large organisations, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, the forces of the revolutionary left were small. Nevertheless, French workers began to form rank and file forums in a way which is instructive.

As different sections of public sector workers came out on strike they began to pull out other sections, fuse their separate strike committees and call local assemblies of workers. What follows is the story of one teacher in one local area of Paris. His school had just voted to go on strike:

*We went down to the local postal depot which was out on strike. There were about 100 of them having a meeting in the canteen. It was amazing, everyone was applauding us, just a little school! They proposed a local demonstration on Thursday morning, before the national march, to go around the local workplaces. Everyone thought that was a great idea and it was decided straight away to contact other local strikers. Armed with leaflets we set off on a tour of local workplaces—the office of the Paris water company, where a delegation walked straight in while the rest chanted outside, a large residential nursing home, where a group of the home's workers comes to the door, nearly all low paid, women and black, the big Monoprix supermarket, into which about 20 striking teachers, postal workers, bus workers and school students marched.*[128]

Such work made it possible to organise a meeting of 500 workers from workplaces across the locality a few days later. This meeting set up a regular coordinating committee. Similar initiatives were taken in other areas of Paris and in other cities. In Rouen, western France, the rail workers held daily 'general assemblies' at the goods yard, where other workers were invited to participate and argue out plans to fight the government. Something similar happened in Dreux, a town of 35,000 people 60 miles from Paris:

The rail workers pushed for a new, open form of struggle against the Juppé plan… Discussions took place in front of comrades from other parts of the private and public sector.

*The small premises by the railway line became a humming beehive of activity where everything was debated—how to carry the movement forward, the preparation of demonstrations, providing daily meals, the organisation of the creche*

*for strikers' children…and the making of links with other sectors. The railway workers went to meet the postal workers, the hospital workers, the gas workers, the teachers, the council workers. And then everyone found themselves together in front of private factories with loudhailers, songs, red flags, leaflets with the call for the general strike in the public and private sectors.*[129]

Such councils of action have arisen, frequently spontaneously, in every revolutionary upheaval: in Germany in 1918, in Hungary in 1919, in Italy during the two red years, 1919 and 1920, in Spain in 1936, in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia and France in 1968 and in Portugal in 1974. They are non-party bodies representing as wide a cross-section of the working class struggle as possible. There may be long periods when they are dominated by moderate socialists who want to compromise with the provisional government, as the Russian soviets were dominated for much of 1917 by the Mensheviks and SRs. The outcome of the Russian Revolution was decided by whether or not the revolutionaries won a majority in the soviets during the course of the revolution. When they did, it enabled them to lead the soviets in smashing the provisional government.

**What is the People's Democratic Party strategy?**

The People's Democratic Party (PRD) is the best known left wing organisation in Indonesia and its members have a brave record of opposition to the Suharto regime. Its strategy has widespread support far beyond its own membership. What is the PRD's assessment of the Indonesian Revolution? The statements, manifestos and interviews with PRD leaders available on the party's publications and website give a clear account of the PRD's strategy.[130]

The overwhelming majority of PRD statements, including the 'Manifesto of the PRD' issued in July 1996, talk in terms of fighting for 'a government that is democratic and people-oriented' and of the need 'to unify and mobilise the existing democratic forces'.[131] In discussion of the PRD's approach to the June 1999 elections, Muhammad Ma'ruf, editor of the party's fortnightly magazine, Liberation, says, 'We would like the elections to be organised democratically by a provisional government'.[132] In a recent interview Ma'ruf explains, 'The PRD, Student and People's Committee Against the Dual Function of the Armed Forces, KOBAR, and KPM (Megawati Supporters Committee) are campaigning for a democratic coalition government comprising forces that have struggled consistently for democracy'.[133] The attainment of a 'democratic provisional government' is undoubtedly the PRD's immediate aim, and so discussion of specifically anti-capitalist struggles and of working class self activity is a secondary factor in these statements. There is no discussion of fighting to set up councils of action as sources of independent working class power in opposition either to the provisional government of Habibie or to any future, more democratic provisional government.

US based PRD supporter Malik Miah believes that the Indonesian Revolution is a 'democratic revolution' which aims at the establishment of 'a more democratic capitalist regime'. He argues, as do many in Indonesia, that there is no possibility, given the current consciousness of the Indonesian working class, for socialist arguments to gain an audience: 'There is no discussion about overthrowing the market or establishing a government based on a planned economy. That consciousness does not exist there any more than it exists…in the United States'.[134]

It follows that all socialists can do in this situation is 'build a stronger democratic movement' by raising 'demands to further isolate Habibie and the military from the masses'. This sentiment is echoed by the PRD central committee document entitled 'Let's Create Democracy Without ABRI's Dual Function', in which it is argued that there are positive benefits for the armed forces if they stay out of politics, such as 'ABRI will no longer be confronting their own people because they are devoting themselves to the interests of certain social groups'.[135] Malik Miah believes that this strategy is founded on the experience of the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution:

The real lesson of the Russian Revolution was the programme followed by the Bolsheviks before 1917… The pre-1917 programme was to end tsarist rule and establish a bourgeois democratic republic.

*It was that correct programme (see Lenin's Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, discussing the 1905 revolution) that laid the basis for the toilers to have a chance to achieve their own rule. Lenin always defended that strategy. In fact, it was the socialists who disagreed with the Bolshevik strategy and took a more leftist position who were not able to build a party before 1917.*[136]

Let us take these points one by one. As we have already seen, it is only partially true to describe the Indonesian Revolution as a 'democratic revolution'. Indonesia's revolution is democratic in the sense that it has overthrown a dictatorship and that the Habibie government was forced into making democratic reforms. Actually it would be more accurate to say that the mass movement has de facto created a degree of political freedom which the Habibie regime has

been forced to endorse. Indonesia's revolution is also democratic in the sense that all the major political currents, from Habibie through Megawati to the PRD, now express themselves in favour of democratic government of some kind.

But the Indonesian Revolution is not a simply a democratic revolution in the sense that this term has been used in the Marxist tradition. For Marxists, the democratic revolution refers to conditions in which it is objectively impossible to go beyond the limits of a capitalist economic system and a parliamentary republic. These conditions prevail where a feudal or semi-feudal class still controls and shapes the state, where the working class is too weak to take power, and where the bourgeoisie is the main opposition to the old order. These were the conditions under which the classical bourgeois revolutions, like those in 17th century England, and in America and France in the 18th century, took place. The democratic revolution in these cases was not merely a political phase, created by the subjective weakness of the working class and its political representatives, but a social transformation. It is therefore more properly called a bourgeois revolution, the culmination of the economic and social transition from feudalism to capitalism, not simply a democratic transformation of the political superstructure.

The 1848 revolutions occurred when the further development of capitalism had created a more powerful and numerous working class than had existed during the classical bourgeois revolutions. This development alarmed the bourgeoisie to such an extent that they became more afraid of the class rising beneath them than they were of the old order standing above them, as we saw that Marx and Engels discovered at the time. In 1917 Lenin once again discovered that even in backward Russia the working class would have to directly proceed to simultaneously solve the problems of the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution. The fact that there were 'phases' in the development of the consciousness of the working class in 1917 was not a result of objective economic barriers to the socialist revolution. Workers always begin a battle with faith in their traditional leaders, because these leaders tend to reflect the compromises with the system which are the inevitable experience of most workers most of the time under capitalism. But these factors and the consciousness that arises from them only mark the workers' point of departure; they do not place any limits on the distance they may travel under the impact of revolutionary struggles and the urgings of that organised minority of the class which is its revolutionary leadership.

The social structure of Indonesia is much more advanced than that of Russia in 1917. Indonesia is a capitalist country with a massive working class. More than 30 years ago this working class could support a Communist Party of three million members. Indonesia has no feudal landowning class. The army is controlled by capitalist bureaucrats. The Indonesian state is a capitalist state. Megawati and Amien Rais are bourgeois democrats but they do not face a feudal or semi-feudal state; they face a capitalist state run by the very same class from which they themselves come. What separates Megawati and Amien Rais from Habibie and Wiranto is a difference of political strategy, not a class divide of any kind. This is why the two forces so easily compromise with each other all the time.

Is it at least true, as many on the Indonesian left assert, that the Indonesian working class lacks the consciousness that will permit discussion of a socialist solution to the crisis? It seems obvious that this assertion cannot be true. It hardly seems likely that a class which is suffering from the ravages of a market produced crisis of the depth of that now afflicting Indonesia will be unwilling to listen to criticisms of pro-capitalist policies. Is it really being argued that when the IMF, one of the leading international capitalist agencies, enforced the removal of the rice subsidy there was no Indonesian worker willing to listen to anti-capitalist agitation? When the whole revolutionary movement considers ABRI to be its main enemy, and when this same military machine dominates the state and defends the capitalists' property from the starving, is it really impossible to combine democratic and anti-capitalist demands?

Moreover, in a country whose Communist Party was the largest outside the Stalinist states it seems clear that, despite the destruction of the left in 1965, a memory of what it stood for will persist among a sizeable minority of workers. Proof of this was inadvertently provided by ABRI's attempt to start 'red scare' in late 1998. The military claimed that the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was mounting a comeback and that it was infiltrating the PRD. In response The Jakarta Post ran an opinion poll asking respondents if they believed that the PRD was infiltrated by the PKI and if they equated 'radicalism' with 'communism'. The responses were as follows: 75 percent said they did not equate radicalism with communism and 73 percent said they did not think that the PRD had been infiltrated by the PKI.[137] The form in which these questions were posed does not allow us to draw many conclusions about whether or not people supported radicalism, communism or the PRD, although in one of the survey's most interesting findings, 22 percent said that they believe that 'communism is very much alive as an ideology'. But it does allow us to prove conclusively that a broad cross-section of Indonesians are aware of the issues and are quite willing and able to engage in debate about them. Among these there certainly exists a militant minority capable of forming a genuinely revolutionary organisation.

Indeed, opinion about the current consciousness of the Indonesian working class seems to be divided in the PRD itself. Although wishing to limit the current demands of the movement to the call for a democratic provisional government, Muhammad Ma'ruf argues that the current consciousness of the movement is running beyond this perspective: 'Workers' unrest in particular is increasing everywhere. These last weeks there have been four demonstrations each day in Indonesia. All of them were political and are directed against government leaders at regional and local level'.[138] And when asked in an earlier interview about the 'thirst for Marxist ideas among campus students in Indonesia', Ma'ruf replies:

*That is true. For 32 years, under the Suharto regime, people were not allowed to learn about Marxism. The government has always said that Marxism is bad, vile, atheist and so on, so many students are anxious to find out what was actually taught by Marx… Following the May uprising which overthrew Suharto, more and more students have begun to develop a high level of political consciousness. Even on the city buses there are people selling books and photocopied material—usually attacking Suharto.*[139]

So even though Ma'ruf contradicts his own report by saying that 'the workers' consciousness is still low', he does not share the pessimism common on the Indonesian left about the consciousness of those in the mass movement. Indeed, his more recent statement following the November demonstrations raises issues which normally receive little attention in PRD material. Ma'ruf argues that 'no face of capitalism can bring a solution. The only government that can solve the economic catastrophe is a government that is 100 percent supported by the people and that puts into practice an economic programme that is 100 percent controlled by the people.' He continues:

*We are in favour of an uninterrupted movement, an uninterrupted revolution. The struggle for democracy means a freeway for socialism. A strategic demand for the actual situation is the building of people's councils at every level… In our propaganda we can make no illusions in bourgeois democracy. We must propagate socialism widely. For instance with the nationalisation of crony capitalism the workers will gain experience about how to nationalise all capitalism. The people's councils will be the instrument to put the socialist programme into practice.*[140]

There is much to welcome in this approach, even though it is not the general approach of the PRD. But, even here, there are still some important issues which need to be clarified. Peoples' councils—it would be better to call them councils of workers, students and the poor, or simply councils of action—should not been seen as the base on which a new 'democratic' provisional government rests, as Ma'ruf has argued.[141] They are organisers of struggle of the working class against the provisional government, even if the political leadership of the provisional government is composed of democrats or socialists. The councils of action can only become governmental bodies if they smash the capitalist state, headed by the provisional government. Until that time, no matter how many administrative functions they begin to take over from the government, they remain primarily organisers of the struggle against the provisional government.

Any provisional government which comes to office before the soviets take power, even if it were to be composed exclusively of members of the PRD and possessed of the best intentions in the world, would still be faced with a state machine which is capitalist and an economy which is still run by the capitalists. Not until the workers' councils are strong enough to overthrow both the provisional government and the bosses in the factories can revolutionaries think of being part of the government. This is the whole lesson of Lenin's State and Revolution and of the practice of the Bolshevik Party between February and October 1917. Without this perspective Trotsky's epitaph for the struggles in France in the 1930s might also come to apply to the Indonesian Revolution:

*Recent history has furnished a series of tragic confirmations of the fact that it is not from every revolutionary situation that a revolution arises, but that a revolutionary situation becomes counter-revolutionary if the subjective factor, that is, the revolutionary offensive of the revolutionary class, does not come in time to aid the objective factor.*[142]

And if this tragedy comes to pass, the ethnic and religious rivalries, on which the army and the electoral parties are already playing, can take centre stage. This has already begun to happen since the fragmentation of the student movement earlier this year. It will not cease unless the Indonesian ruling class can recreate the boom conditions which suppressed these divisions before the crash of 1997. And if this unlikely eventuality does not come to pass then capitalist democracy will not enjoy even the limited stability it has achieved, at enormous cost to the working class, in South Africa and Eastern Europe. Neither could the major powers stand aside and watch a renewed crisis unfold in Indonesia without intervening. Richard Nixon famously described Indonesia as 'the greatest prize in South East Asia'. Its importance to the West has risen since then. That is why the US police commanders are now training their Indonesian counterparts in riot control, why Japan is considering sending police to Jakarta, and Australia has mobilised troops to Darwin ready to intervene in East Timor. All of this is regarded by China with the greatest suspicion. Liberation for

workers and the oppressed of Indonesia or descent into a crisis of the Yugoslavian type are the alternatives which rest on the outcome of the current struggles in Indonesia.

**The prospects for revolution**

Not every revolution involves the same range of political forces as the East European, South African and Indonesian cases. The Iranian Revolution of 1979, for instance, was ultimately dominated by a very different Islamic ideology to the parliamentary capitalist ideology that triumphed in Eastern Europe and South Africa, although this fact has served to disguise a more fundamental similarity in the class forces which made that outcome possible. Neither is it the case that the transition from authoritarian rule to capitalist democracy is in some way the inevitable outcome of modern economic trends. China, the most populous country on earth, is set on a course of 'totalitarian market capitalism'. The Tiananmen Square massacre reminds us that the price that opposition forces can pay for adopting a 'democratic revolution' strategy can be a great deal higher than a velvet restoration. Indeed, just such a counter-revolutionary solution still hangs over the Indonesian Revolution as one of its possible fates.

The pattern of revolution in the last ten years is also distinct from developments in the parliamentary democracies of the West. All the 20th century revolutions examined above took place in collapsing dictatorships. In these cases the reformist and centrist currents necessarily emerge as interior to the revolutionary camp. This was true of the Mensheviks, the ANC, KOR and the PRD. In the West reformism is already organisationally and politically distinct and feels no need to adopt revolutionary language or methods in the face of an intransigent authoritarian regime. Here, consequently, the undermining of reformism involves a longer process of work by existing revolutionary organisations which utilise united front tactics to win layers of workers away from established labour party type politics. Yet, even while such work is in progress, any revolutionary crisis in the West will throw up new left reformist and centrist currents with similar programmes to KOR, the ANC or the PRD. Learning from their mistakes today can save Western revolutionaries from defeat tomorrow.

But, after all the qualifications have been duly noted, the patterns described in this article are now common enough to justify close examination. Moreover, there have also been similar transformations from authoritarian rule to capitalist democracy in Brazil, Chile, South Korea the Philippines, Portugal and Spain, to mention only some of the most important examples in the last 30 years. The Portuguese Revolution was the equal of any the events of the last ten years in carrying the same explosive charge of popular mobilisation. Others did not. But much of what happened in these cases can best be understood using the framework described here. So what are the principal lessons of recent attempts to revive the idea of the democratic revolution as we face a new century?

In the English, American and French revolutions the level of industrial development and the restricted size, organisation and consciousness of the working class prevented any socialist solution to the conflicts which emerged within the revolutionary camp. But for the revolutions in Eastern Europe, South Africa and Indonesia this was not the case. Each of these countries is an industrialised society in which the ruling class is a capitalist class and the working class is not only a substantial proportion of the population but also has behind it a considerable history of self organisation and a developed class consciousness.

The revolutionary crises which have occurred in these societies in the past decade have been crises of capital accumulation. A particular form of state led capital accumulation which was laid down in the post-war period has proven an inadequate vessel for the renewed conditions of worldwide capital accumulation which have emerged in the period since the end of the long boom in the late 1970s. In each case, authoritarian regimes previously thought impervious to revolt from below were brought to the ground. In the decisive stages of the confrontation in Poland and South Africa the organised working class was a key element in that revolt.

Once the rebellion was under way a process of polarisation within the revolutionary camp took place, much as it had done in all the revolutionary situations analysed in this account—1649, 1776, 1789, 1848 and 1917. What determined the eventual outcome in all these cases was the way in which the revolutionary leadership which emerged in the course of these struggles interacted with the class battles of which they were a part. What separates the early bourgeois revolutions from the later revolutions is that the organisation of the revolutionaries in the first case mainly emerged only in the course of events and it mainly represented a programme of the bourgeoisie, not an alternative to it. With KOR in Poland, the SACP in South Africa and the PRD in Indonesia the fact that such organisations existed and influenced even quite small numbers before the outbreak of large scale struggles allowed them to become the political beneficiaries of those struggles—even when the objective logic of events pointed in quite another direction than these organisations' declared strategies.

The industrial struggles in Poland and South Africa in the 1980s might have raised the spectre of social revolution, and this may even have been the more or less conscious aim of the activist rank and file in these struggles (just as it is of the PRD today in Indonesia). These same activists were nevertheless drawn to organisations like KOR and the SACP. And to the extent that KOR and SACP strategies became hegemonic they actually demobilised the struggle by settling for achievements far short of those which the movement was actually capable of attaining. The same would have happened in Russia in 1917 had the Bolsheviks not replaced the Mensheviks as the dominant force in the workers' movement.

Even those organisations with an orientation on rank and file workers were unable to overcome the problems with which they were confronted by the development of the revolution. In these cases there was a political failure to correctly apprehend the implications of the debate over the socialist revolution and the democratic revolution. KOR had an orientation on the working class, and so did the activists who built the independent unions in South Africa in the early 1980s. And many of the best activists in the PRD and the student movement in Indonesia today also acknowledge the importance of organising workers. But the key activists in KOR came to see Solidarity as the engine of a democratic revolution, and did not maintain their earlier commitment either to the goal of a socialist revolution or to building a revolutionary party. In South Africa a syndicalist orientation on rank and file workers could provide no adequate alternative to the political strategy offered by the SACP—and so eventually became absorbed by it. Even though many of the activists in the new unions were socialists highly suspicious of the ANC's downgrading of working class struggles, they had neither the ideological reserves nor the party organisation to provide an alternative. Similarly, in Indonesia an orientation on workers is essential to any socialist project, but in itself building militant union organisation will not provide an alternative to the PRD's democratic revolution strategy.

This points to the high premium to be placed on theoretical clarity and organisation in the revolutionary movement. In all the cases examined here a small and determined minority have exerted massive influence during a revolutionary crisis. But they have only done so by expressing a political programme which reflects the class interests of one major force in the revolution, or by interposing themselves in the vacuum created by contending class forces which have neutralised each other. In many cases, though not all (the Bolsheviks being the most notable exception), these groups were predominantly middle class in origin. This need not be decisive for their political orientation if they choose ideologically and practically to build among the working class, as KOR chose to do. What is decisive is whether they then choose to build on a reformist or a revolutionary basis, and whether they correctly apprehend the class forces involved in their own revolution. This essay is an attempt to help socialists make those judgements correctly.

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**Notes**

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28 Ibid, p97.

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30 K Marx, The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution, ibid, pp193-194.

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62 Ibid, p26.

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66 See interview with Kulcsar in D Pryce-Jones, op cit, pp224-225.

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