

SPEECHES TO THE WORKERS CONFERENCE OF THE FCR

THE FRONTE COMMUNISTE REVOLUTIONNAIRE now reconstituted as THE LIGUE COMMUNISTE REVOLUTIONNAIRE, French section of the Fourth International held a workers' periphery conference last summer. The following speeches by Anton Udry and Ernest Mandel were written for this conference:

Self-management - dangers & possibilities

by
Ernest Mandel

The political formation of revolutionaries of my generation and the one immediately preceding it, was deeply affected by our experience of the Russian revolution. For the first time in history the working class of a vast country had taken power, abolished the domination of capital, and begun to construct a new society—a society which, before the eyes of the world proletariat, could become a new society, a socialist society.

Revolutionaries today are, of course, still aware of the historical significance of the Russian revolution and of its impact on the twentieth century. At the same time, however, because of the bureaucratic degeneration which has superimposed itself on the conquests of the October revolution, it no longer acts as a concrete inspiration to the international workers' movement, and particularly to the proletariat of the imperialist countries.

The difference is sharply illustrated by an opinion poll which was recently conducted in France to investigate what proportion of the population were in favour of socialism and which 'model' of socialism they would choose. More than half those interviewed wanted a socialist society but less than five per cent declared themselves for a society modelled on the Soviet Union. In a country where the French Communist Party (PCF) receives some twenty per cent of the popular vote, these figures are extremely revealing. Even amongst militants of the pro-Moscow Communist Party, the form of social organisation which prevails in the Soviet Union has evidently lost its appeal as a model—an ideal to be extended throughout the whole world.

What is more, it is precisely this sort of development which gives the neo-reformist parties of Western Europe a basis on which to justify their right opportunist policies. They declare that the Russian road to socialism is not applicable to Western Europe but, in so doing, they deliberately seize the opportunity to confuse two quite distinct issues. By reducing the 'peaceful road to socialism' and the model on which to build socialist society to one single question,

they attempt to win workers to an automatic acceptance of the former through their rejection of the latter.

The great influence of the concept of workers' self-management in the Western European labour movement also flows from the same basic fact. It is influential precisely because the majority of wage-earners want a socialist society, accept the necessity of transforming the framework of society, and are instinctively—and, in the case of a small layer, consciously—searching for an alternative to the Soviet model.

SHOULD REVOLUTIONARY MARXISTS SUPPORT SELF-MANAGEMENT?

The idea of self-management is, from the very start, a confused one. What most people instinctively understand by it, is a society in which relatively small groups, like workers in a single factory, organise all aspects of the running of their individual units. Health workers or teachers, for example, would thus organise at the level of their hospitals or schools, while consumers would be organised in boroughs or districts.

Quite clearly, this simplistic view of self-management is not of Marxist origin, but rather has its roots in Proudhon and anarcho-syndicalism. This goes a long way towards explaining why the initial reaction of revolutionary marxists has been, almost everywhere in Europe, one of suspicion and even outright hostility. Confronted with the choice between 'bureaucratic socialism' and 'self-management socialism', we have tended to reject both alternatives in favour of a third one of our own.

In retrospect, it seems to me that this was an intellectually, psychologically and, above all, politically incorrect reaction based upon an underestimation of the resonance which the conception of self-management would find in the West European labour movement and particularly in its left-wing. This is why, several years ago, we agreed to change our line of attack. Now we say that not only do we *fully*

support the idea of self-management but that it is, in fact, *we alone* who are for *real* self-management. Other projects which have been put forward of piecemeal self-management or by Proudhonist and anarcho-syndicalist currents constitute no more than a mere facade of real self-management. They simply give workers the *illusion* of self-management while actually obscuring a whole series of fundamental questions about the dynamics of economic and social existence in our epoch.

Our basic position, then, is that we squarely reject the type of bureaucratic socialism in which the working-class does not really exercise power, and fully support the idea of self-management to the extent that it embodies one very simple and fundamental premise: the workers must exercise power at all levels of society —at the level of the factory, at the level of the economy, in the non-productive spheres of social life and, above all, at the level of the state.

SELF-MANAGEMENT CANNOT BE REDUCED TO WORKERS MANAGING THEIR INDIVIDUAL FACTORIES

This leads us to a fundamental critique of those who advocate socialist self-management within individual factory units which, in practice, essentially amounts to no more than workers organising production and the allocation of the social surplus at the level of their factories. Proponents of this sort of self-management are, at best, utopians and, at worst, the sort of leaders who, realising what this sort of 'self-management' means, use it for their own ends.

The best example of this is, indubitably, that developed by the Titoists in Yugoslavia, who have created an illusion of self-management which they equate with the distribution of decision-making powers among the mass of producers and consumers. On the one hand, they insist (and this is the very latest version of Titoism) that self-management is taking place not only at the level of the factory but even in each workshop and on each assembly-line, while, on the other, they insist even more strenuously that this must be counterbalanced by the ever-greater concentration of political power in the hands of the Yugoslav League of Communists and in their hands alone.

It is clear in this case that the fragmentation of the workers' economic power is a necessary precondition for the bureaucracy to retain a monopoly of power. These are just two sides of the same coin. It is precisely through posing such a totally atomised caricature of self-management on a scale which renders it impotent, that the bureaucracy can deprive the workers of political power at the level of the economy as a whole and concentrate it in their own hands.

This is why we maintain that to restrict self-management to single factories, let alone workshops or assembly-lines is to reduce it to a mere facade.

WE SHALL INHERIT A TECHNOLOGY WITH A POWERFUL CENTRALISING TENDENCY

The present level of the productive forces corresponds to a specific technology. We are not worshippers of this technology and, at the risk of seeming revisionist, I would say that, unlike comrade Lenin, we do not admire Taylorism or the assembly line and, above all, that we do not consider this to be the only possible form of advanced technology. It is a bourgeois myth that there is no alternative to the technology presently utilised in production. It is true that this technology is the one which provides the highest return on capital, but this does not make it the only one possible. It is quite possible to conceive of a scale of technologies based on any particular level of political and economic development. For the engineers and technologists of the colonial revolution this is often posed as an immediate problem. For example, in Cuba, where there aren't enough oil-based resources, the economists, inventors, engineers and chemists were faced with the need to develop in place of a petro-chemical industry a

sucro-chemical industry, that is to say a chemical industry based upon the waste products of sugar. Similar examples of technological innovations and revolutions are to be found in any other colonial or semi-colonial country.

It is, however, clear that while (in common with the anarchists) we hope one day to have a technology which allows relatively reduced units (to use Engels' formulation) of twenty or thirty thousand producers and consumers to live not autarchically but in such a way that they can control most of their affairs autonomously, present-day technology does not allow for this.

To look at a couple of examples: electrical generating stations which employ two or three hundred workers and technicians supply electricity to half a million people; one single machine can produce enough paper to satisfy the needs of one and a half to two million people. It is quite untenable to suggest that the economic problems related to this production can be resolved at the level of two or three hundred people just because they happen to work in this particular factory. In the case of this sort of factory, the way in which its production is distributed and the needs it must satisfy does not only concern the producers but also all the workers who are going to consume its products. There is absolutely no reason why workers in an electrical generating station should be given the right to dictate decisions concerning electricity which will be consumed by millions of workers.

There exists thus today, in the technology that the working class will inherit from capitalism on the day it takes power, a powerful centralising tendency, a tendency which is neither inevitable nor eternal and which can probably be pushed right into the background in the course of constructing a classless society. It is, however, precisely the technology which we inherit from capitalism with which we will have to start building a new society. In this context, it is absolutely utopian to want to fragment economic decision-making to the level of what can be decided in a single factory.

THE CHOICE IS NOT BETWEEN 'BUREAUCRATIC CENTRALISATION' AND 'DECENTRALISED SELF-MANAGEMENT'

Very many economic decisions concern whole series of social groups infinitely larger than a single firm; these decisions must be taken at the level of these groups —in other words, they must be centralised in a democratic way. We are proponents of democratically centralised self-management or, to put it another way, of planned self-management, not because we are centralisers by nature but because it's a matter of an objective necessity which corresponds to the realities of economic life.

This centralisation is inevitable because it is inherent in the anarchy of the present system, and independent of our desires. The choice we actually have is a fundamental one: unless economic centralisation is carried out in a conscious, that is to say planned and deliberate, way, it will arise in a spontaneous, anarchic way behind workers' backs.

The choice, therefore, is not between 'bureaucratic centralisation' and 'decentralised self-management'. The real choice which will confront us in the economic sphere after the overthrow of capitalism will be the choice between democratically centralised self-management based upon socialist planning and a so-called 'socialist' market economy in which the laws of the market continue for the most part to *enslave* the workers.

For this reason, we attack the Proudhonist proponents of self-management restricted to such and such a factory. We contend that they are lying to the workers when they say that it's enough to give workers decision-making power at the level of the factory to create a real deproletarianisation. What is the point of giving workers the power to make decisions when this turns out to be a mere sham and when the decisions taken at factory level are continuously revised and overturned by the operation of market laws —that is,

by the spontaneous centralisation which occurs through these laws when it is not effected through the planning of the economy as a whole.

Let's look at a simple example: investments in a particular branch of industry — the production of shoes. There are only two alternatives. On the one hand, one can try to draw up a socialist plan. An assessment is made of needs (making allowances, of course, for a certain amount of stock and export) and of productive capacity. If there is a discrepancy between the two, then the productive capacity must be increased; that is to say, investment must be increased so that needs can be satisfied.

On the other hand, one can neglect to draw up such a plan. Each factory producing shoes or, for that matter, electric motors, decides its investment autonomously with the familiar consequences of over- and under-production. There is only the most infinitesimal probability that the decisions taken separately in twenty or thirty factories will accurately satisfy needs. This is why a so-called 'socialist' market economy, in which self-management is limited to the level of the factory, is doomed to reproduce a whole series of the evils of capitalism, including its greatest attack on the working class — unemployment. It is only necessary to look at the Yugoslav example to see that this is the case.

This is why we are in favour of democratically centralised and planned self-management, or, to get to the root of the problem, of economic power exercised at the level of the class as a whole, and not exclusively, or even mainly, by each tiny sub-group of that class.

THE SURVIVAL OF COMPETITION MEANS THE DIVISION OF THE WORKING CLASS.

However, the matter does not rest there. Not only is self-management limited to the level of the factory, workshop or assembly line, an illusion from an economic point of view, in that the workers cannot implement decisions taken at this level against the operations of market laws, but, worse still, the decisions taken by the workers become more and more exclusively restricted to decisions about profits, as can be clearly seen in Yugoslavia. The fundamental principle underlying self-management, which is the *liberation of labour*, whereby workers dominate the process of production, decide for themselves the speed of the assembly line and the organisation of work in the factory, and which is part and parcel of the sort of socialist society we are trying to build, is *unrealisable* in an economy which allows the survival of competition.

As the Yugoslav example shows only too clearly, the survival of competition imposes certain unavoidable imperatives on the units of production. They are faced with an unenviable decision. On the one hand, they can accept the logic of rationalisations: reduction of the labour force, speed-up, and so on. On the other, they can reject this logic, thus condemning certain units of production to operate at a loss and to pay wages far below average rates.

The only solution to all these questions is to regulate industry *at a social level*, thus allowing for an effectively planned economy consciously run by the working class as a whole, and for the process of deproletarianisation to advance.

CLASS POWER NOT 'GROUP-POWER'

The basis of the problem which I have attempted to elucidate is, thus, quite simple: for us, the notion of the class power of the proletariat exists in a very real sense precisely as *class power* and not the *power of groups*. To a large extent, these two conceptions are mutually exclusive. The more power is given to groups, the less is the power of the class as it is split into groups fighting amongst themselves.

So here we have another consequence of the reintroduction of competition on the road to socialism: given a market economy and autonomous decision making by productive units, there will be competition with groups of workers from different factories competing with each other,



Watches from the Lip factory at Bessancon being sold at the Renault plant in Billancourt. Lip workers organised their own distribution and used the proceeds to finance their struggle.

often very fiercely. From the outset factories do not have the same productivity so, if they compete with each other and each factory retains what it calls the 'fruits of its labour' what it is in fact keeping is its *revenue* determined by its initial financial situation. Whether its initial endowment in terms of fixed capital, tools, machinery, equipment and even local situation was a matter of luck or of social factors, there is no possible justification for those who are fortunate enough to work in above average factories to enjoy an economic advantage over those who are employed in below average factories.

If the decision-making and advantages of each particular factory are left to the workers of that factory to deal with (even if, as in the case of Yugoslavia, a token 'national solidarity tax' is levied), a situation of blatant inequality is created within the working-class, and when there exist *blatant inequalities*, it follows that the collective struggle of the working class as a whole for its common interests is broken down by the internecine struggles of different groups of workers.

It is, thus, to deceive the workers to lead them to believe that they can manage their affairs at the level of the factory. In the present economic system, a whole series of decisions are inevitably taken at higher levels than the factory, and *if these decisions are not consciously made by the working class as a whole, then they will be made by other forces in society behind the workers' backs.*

AT WHAT LEVEL SHOULD DECISIONS BE TAKEN?

It may seem that what I am saying is similar to the arguments used by the CGT (the French Communist Party trade union) in its polemics against the CFDT (the socialist trade union) and socialist self-management current. This is not at all the case. It is not a matter of counterposing an ideal of 'bureaucratic centralisation' to the myth of 'self-management in one factory'; rather, it is a question of challenging the apparently inevitable choice presented by the limited framework of the debate between bureaucratic centralisation and decentralisation in a market economy. It is a matter of defending the real marxist solution of democratically centralised self-management.

We do not support centralisation for its own sake. We don't at all believe that centralisation implies the necessity of a new division of labour within the working class between a small group of managers, professional administrators and bureaucrats on the one hand, and the majority of the working class on the other, incapable of centralising its own management in a democratic way. We support democratically centralised, planned self-management also as a manifestation of workers' democracy organised around

interconnected workers councils as broadly-based as possible to involve the maximum number of workers in the exercise of power.

If we reject the idea that the most democratic form of self-management is that based on the individual factory, it is because it is only in a complex structure where self-management takes place at all levels of economic and social life, that it is possible to involve the maximum number of workers at different levels of decision-making. We have a very simple formula to apply in this context: *decisions must be taken at the level where this can be done most effectively*. It is unnecessary to call a European congress of workers' councils to work out a bus time-table for Coventry; the workers of Coventry are quite capable of working that out for themselves without the interference of any bureaucratic institutions. There's no need to organise a national congress of workers' councils to organise production in a particular workshop: the workers in that workshop are quite capable of sorting that out on their own.

On the other hand, when it comes to making decisions about investment in the shoe industry, or how to fight pollution of waterways, then a national or even international congress of workers' councils is necessary, since this sort of decisions can only be taken at a national or international level. This is what we mean when we talk about the articulation of decision-making bodies. In economic matters each decision must ideally be taken at the level at which it can be most effectively and efficiently implemented.

DEFINING A FRAMEWORK OF RELATIVE CONSTRAINTS

Obviously, there are certain constraints which detract from this conclusion. I have been very critical of the Yugoslav example, but it is not necessary only to speak badly of it. By comparison with the Stalinist experience it represents a great step forward and one which allows us to give a convincing answer today to that form of bourgeois demagoguery, which is still the most prevalent 'refutation' of socialism, that the workers cannot and, what is more, do not want to run their own firms. Look at Yugoslavia, one can reply, they've now been doing it for 20 years! We have a lot of criticisms and we would do it differently, but all the same, they have proved that it's possible.

In this sense, Yugoslavia presents us with a very positive experience and one which we mustn't be pushed into condemning more strenuously than the bureaucratic organisation of industry in the Soviet Union. This said, however, the Yugoslav example allows us to distinguish a whole series of necessary constraints for the effective functioning of an articulated system of self-management of the kind I have outlined above. Let us take two examples.

I have just said that the organisation of production in a particular workshop must be the concern of the workers in that workshop. This remains true but it is necessary to be more precise: this must take place *within a framework of social labour legislation which will have been established by a national, or even international, congress of workers' councils*. If the workers in a workshop want to work a 54-hour week, I see no reason why they should be allowed to; a certain framework must be worked out nationally to limit the amount of local variation.

The same goes for the Coventry bus system. When I said that the workers of Coventry would have a free hand in deciding how to run their own transport system, this must obviously be seen in the context of the total allocation of funds for public transport in England as a whole and, more specifically, for that particular part of England. If this condition were not imposed, then a decision taken on the question of transport in Coventry could impose a whole series of *de facto* priorities on the national plan. This would, in turn, limit the sovereignty of the working class as a whole in the allocation of resources. These constraints, therefore, are absolutely indispensable to the

exercise of workers' power *as a class* rather than the power of various sub-groups which could neutralise, or even undermine, the power of the class as a whole.

'IMAGINATION TO POWER'

Despite the concrete examples, what I have just said might still seem rather abstract. This is because we are all prisoners of a particular ideology and a particular way of looking at economic existence and even everyday life; our education has accustomed us to the *actuality* of capitalist society. We are all prisoners of conceptions of the way life is organised which correspond to the reality of *capitalist* society.

The students at the Sorbonne in 1968 wrote on the walls the slogan '*l'imagination au pouvoir*' (imagination to power). They expressed what is for revolutionaries a very profound axiom: it is necessary to exercise an enormous amount of imagination today, in the context of capitalism, to begin to conceive of a totally different form of economic reality in which a whole series of social attitudes, which don't even exist today, will become part of the everyday life of the producers who constitute the vast mass of the population in the advanced capitalist countries.

Let us again look at an example. The comrades who wrote the manifesto of the *ex-Ligue Communiste*, revising Lenin's old formula, explained that socialism is Soviets plus automation. For my part, I would go even further and argue that in the second half of the twentieth century, socialism is Soviets (that is to say workers' councils), automation and television. In television, we have at our disposal an instrument of direct democracy quite unthinkable for Marx, Lenin or even Trotsky, for the simple reason that none of these comrades could know anything about television and none of them could have invented it!

Today we live in a world at a specific level of technology and we must assess the extent to which its various forms could be put to the service of workers' democracy—of a totally different form of economic organisation. It would be eminently possible, for example, to organise a national conference of workers' councils in the shoe industry, the proceedings of which could be simultaneously relayed to all factories in that sector. It would then be possible, if one of the delegates said something which didn't correspond with the mandate given him in his particular factory, for the comrades in that factory to pick up the phone, ring up the conference, and say, 'comrade, you're lying' or equally, 'you are betraying us, you're not putting our line and we intend to deal with you immediately.'

Here we have the basis for a qualitatively more advanced implementation of an old conception of Marx and Lenin: the possibility of *recalling* elected delegates who fail to stick to their mandate. Previously, such a recall could only be effected after an interval; with the use of television outlined above, it would be possible to exercise the right of recall *not after the event*, but *instantaneously* by simply lifting the phone and giving a report directly to the people at the conference.

One only has to consider the techniques which the bourgeoisie uses today in its TV shows, quizzes and parlour games as a means of passing the time and of 'tranquillising' the masses, to realise the amazing potential of television as an instrument of real mass-communication. Just think how such techniques could be applied to the organisation of economic and everyday life. What a phenomenal instrument of direct democracy it could be! To my mind, there is absolutely no reason why our conception of self-management should be any less democratic than one based on self-management at the level of the individual factory. Quite the converse is true, for our conception is related to the taking of the really *fundamental decisions*.

MEASURES TO UNDERMINE BUREAUCRATIC TENDENCIES

We deliberately prioritise the question of reducing the working-week and of workers' participation in economic and social life and decision-making, rather than make it a priority to involve all of them in harder and harder and more and more exhausting manual work, as certain Maoists propose.

These comrades tell us that a real workers' power has been established in China just because the workers participate, *from time to time*, in meetings to discuss questions of management, and the management participates in manual labour *for one day a week*. What this implies, in reality, however, is the perpetuation of a division of labour between those who produce and those who manage, and it is precisely this division which constitutes the basis for bureaucratisation and which we want to overcome as quickly and as completely as possible.

This is why we prioritise a radical reduction of the working day (in industrially advanced countries, at least, half-day working should be introduced immediately after a socialist revolution) so that the workers will have the time to seriously occupy themselves with the management of their own affairs.

This, of course, does not mean that any particular worker should spend his whole time rushing from conference to conference; this would mean that he would not be working anymore and, consequently, would again perpetuate the division of work and management. Quite the contrary! To the measures elaborated by Marx in his writings on the Paris Commune and by Lenin in *State and Revolution* as means of fighting bureaucratisation, we should add a new one in our socialist constitution: on all the highest organs of economic and political power, that is to say, the national and international congresses of workers' councils, there must be a *certain minimum proportion of workers still involved in production* who only attend the congress for a few weeks of the year. In order to constitute an effective weapon against bureaucratisation this proportion must be fixed at a very high level — between, say, two thirds and three-quarters of the delegates.

This last point is well illustrated in relation to Yugoslavia. Often the majority of delegates on workers' councils at factory level have been workers. At regional congresses, delegations from the workers councils often include some 30 to 40% of workers actively engaged in production. When *from time to time* there is a national congress of workers' councils — maybe every fifteen years (Yugoslav bureaucrats are evidently very cautious!) — only two or perhaps three per cent of the delegates will be really clerical workers or supervisory staff. This isn't necessarily the result of some plot; rather it is the inevitable result of a 48-hour week and of leaving intact a form of economic organisation quite conducive to any ongoing involvement of workers in the management of their affairs.

A reduction in the working day, however, is not the only necessary material precondition for the workers to take the running of society and the economy into their own hands. There are several others which are very important.

A COMPLETELY NEW TYPE OF EDUCATION IS REQUIRED.

Radical changes will be necessary in education. The whole framework of the educational system will have to be transformed so that the whole of the working class is assured of at least a certain minimum of social, cultural and all-round technical education. It will be necessary to completely rethink the whole social role of education.

Today, there exists a particular model of education in which one spends either between ten and thirteen years or between sixteen and twenty-five years being educated. This isn't a model fixed for all time; it is quite possible to con-

ceive of a completely different sort of education spread over the whole of adult life, involving a continuous development in workers' abilities and skills.

To give credit where credit is due, this is one of the few spheres in which the Soviet economy has introduced significant changes; it is certainly the case that the Soviet Union is the most advanced country in the world when it comes to the amount of effort put into generalising education and training of workers. The intentions behind this achievement, unfortunately, were not so inspiring: the Soviet system is geared to the promotion of *individual* workers who are in this way permanently detached from the working class; what else is the situation of a worker who, upon finishing his studies, becomes a technician and aspires to the bureaucracy. The social and ideological climate of Soviet society is not conducive to the endurance of a sufficient degree of class solidarity for a worker who has gained some technical qualifications to consider himself still, above all, as a member of the working class. Thus this technical education, although more widespread in the Soviet Union than anywhere else in the world, exists, even there, at the expense of class solidarity and exclusively for the sake of permitting the promotion of individuals.

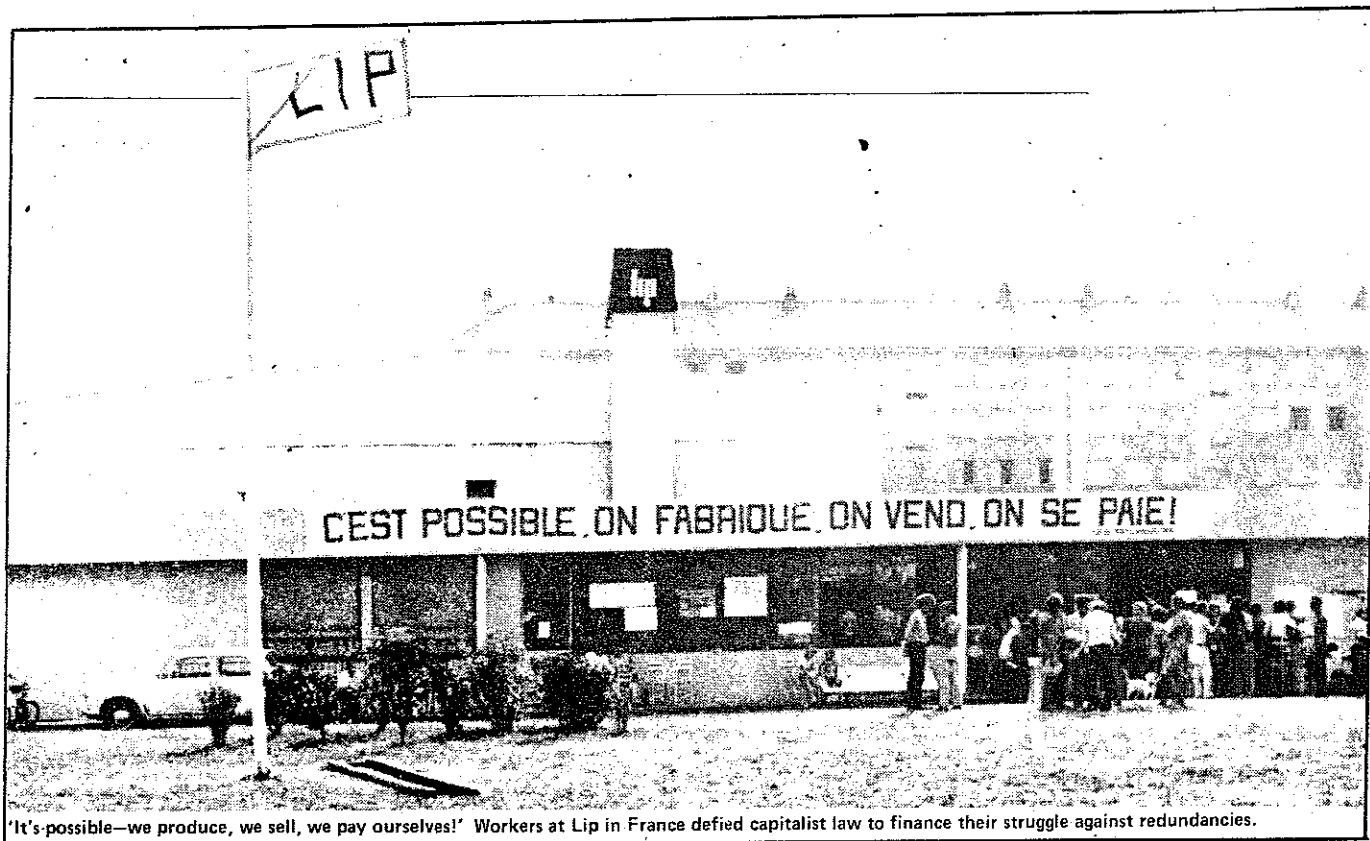
POLITICAL PARTIES AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

The second crucial question, then, is that of the social and, above all, political dimensions of self-management. Immediately, we are posed with a problem: is self-management compatible with the existence of working-class political parties? Can it be reconciled with the sorts of political struggle which we know within the framework of bourgeois democracy?

In tackling these questions, before we even consider anything else, it is necessary to dispel for once and for all the stalinist myth that each social class can only be represented by one political party, and, hence, since only one party can represent the proletariat, that there is only room for one political party, in the process of building socialism. This sort of sophistry has nothing in common with Marxism or Leninism. For a start, it is clearly shown by history that since social classes are not politically homogeneous they are often represented by not one but several different parties; furthermore, the process of building socialism is an entirely new one, giving rise to completely new problems of economic, political, social, cultural, biological and moral policy. To believe that any one person — whoever it might be — can produce all the necessary answers out of a hat is just to deceive oneself and, what is more, to demonstrate an incredible naivety.

On the contrary, we must vindicate the conception of competing ideas and tendencies, of political struggles for choices and options not envisaged in the 'sacred texts' of marxism. If we got together all the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, and some of Rosa Luxemburg's for good measure, we'd have quite a little library but we would by no means find all the answers we needed there. Enormous problems are thrown up in the process of constructing a socialist society and it is only going to be through political struggle, theoretical and ideological debate and practical experience that these will be resolved. For this reason, socialist political democracy is absolutely essential to minimise wastage, to reduce the numbers of errors made and, above all, to cut down to a minimum the time taken to rectify mistakes.

A second argument which must also be refuted is one put forward by a pseudo-self-management current. They tell us that if political parties continue to exist, they will manipulate meetings and that the Congresses of Workers Councils will not be real congresses of councils but rather congresses of political currents who will waste their time in sectarian wrangling. Political parties, they say, will take decisions behind the workers' backs. We would argue that this again is a myth: what are really manipulative are con-



'It's possible—we produce, we sell, we pay ourselves!' Workers at Lip in France defied capitalist law to finance their struggle against redundancies.

gresses where large numbers of worker-delegates take part in unprepared and unstructured debates. In such debates, real decision-making is impossible because the options are not clearly articulated. The workers can choose between three, four or five propositions which are put to them but they can't choose between a thousand, especially if these are put forward in the form of shouted interruptions or demagogic outbursts. The absence of parties, of organised workers' tendencies, which could come to congresses with clear proposals, platforms and programmes would simply put a premium on demagoguery and prevent workers from choosing between coherent and clearly formulated positions.

This is why self-management is impossible without real socialist democracy which also must imply not only the right to vote and the existence of trade unions independent of the workers' state, but also the jealous safeguarding of freedom of the press and freedom of assembly, organisation and demonstration for the workers.

In essence, the possibility of workers making real decisions depends on their access to real information—to *contradictory* information—without any limitation or monopoly; this, in turn, can only be realised if various political currents are allowed to formulate proposals and make them known for the workers to accept or reject. This is a model many times more democratic than that thrown about by many proponents of 'self-management socialism' who, by retaining a market economy on the one hand, and restricting the freedom of political organisation for currents inside the workers' movement on the other, would create an inevitable tendency towards new monopolies and new forms of alienation for the whole of the working-class.

SOCIALISM IN ONE FACTORY?

For those of us brought up in the struggle against the idea that it is possible to build socialism in one country, the conception of 'molecular self-management', of 'mini-socialism in one factory' has little attraction. Some currents, however, defend these sorts of positions and attribute our positions to dogmatism; they argue that unless workers gain experience of management before the socialist revolution, they will not be able to learn from one day to the next, upon the transfer of power. The experience of small-scale self-management under capitalism, they explain, is

useful education and preparation. Many examples are quoted, some of which are not without value. There is the much vaunted case of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in Glasgow. Here was a case of a firm which had collapsed under the management of the bosses; when it was taken under workers management the results were, however, disastrous. After a while, the workers themselves were forced to create the very redundancies amongst themselves which they had been trying to stop the bosses from enforcing when they took over the yards.

There have been many examples of workers co-operatives that went wrong; there have even been some that have 'succeeded'—in capitalist terms that is! All that they have succeeded in, however, has been to transform themselves into profitable capitalist enterprises, operating in the same way as other capitalist firms.

There are some examples, however, which allow us to go into this question more deeply, and for which revolutionary marxists require a more developed response. I will intentionally consider the most paradoxical of such examples, which is to be found today in Francoist Spain. The Mandragore company employs 12,000 workers in a series of workers co-operatives in the Basque country and is Spain's largest manufacturer of refrigerators. The firm is self-managed and, at first sight, it seems a phenomenal success. The workers have disposed of the foremen, reduced the line speeds and introduced a whole series of measures to create better working conditions such as implementing a 37 to 38 hour working week. Despite all this, the firm remains very profitable; apparently it is a spectacular economic success.

But this is not all. Taking account of the classical critiques which marxists have made of workers co-operatives, a rule has been introduced to the effect that wages in the factory cannot exceed by more than 10% the wages paid in that part of Spain, so that the firm doesn't take on an exploitative relationship with the rest of the working class. This would otherwise become almost inevitable in the case of successful productive units, as the example of certain Israeli *kibbutzim* illustrates very clearly. Such units have become collectives of capitalists which even go so far as employing workers without letting them enter the co-operative, and paying low wages while keeping for themselves

their shares in the prosperity of the co-operative. Any possibility of this has, thus, been eliminated in the Mandragore co-operatives.

Why, given all this, should we conclude that this has been anything but a valuable experience. The answer is quite obvious and, in the case of Mandragore, it almost hits one in the face; none of the successes at Mandragore could have been achieved within the framework of a capitalist economy without the acquiescence of the banks, of all the economic institutions and above all, the state, which in this instance is not even a bourgeois democracy but a dictatorship. Without this acquiescence the Mandragore experiment would not survive a single day! A firm which employs twelve thousand workers and produces refrigerators for almost half the Spanish market, quite clearly requires a continuous credit facility from the banks. It is integrated into the banking system and is thus dependent on the backing of the central bank in consort with local and regional banks. It can only exist to the extent that it is tolerated by the capitalist regime as a whole. For this reason, there is no way in which it can pose any solutions for the working class as a whole. It is an experience which is tolerated by the bourgeoisie because of the local relationship of forces until such a time as a conflict arises, at which point it will either have to capitulate or it will be suppressed.

It is, therefore, dangerous for the working class to become involved in this type of experience; at the very best it can constitute a 'pilot scheme' for a tiny minority, the effect of which is to divert the energy of the working class from a dynamic of ever-extending struggles to one dominated by requirements of 'production' which has nothing in common even with syndicalism, let alone revolutionary marxism.

When the boss wants to create redundancies and the workers respond by occupying their factory, by transforming their passive strike into an active one by seizing

'booty' as they did at the Lip watch factory in France, we must see these developments as *forms of struggle and ways in which consciousness is raised*, and not as economic solutions. In this context, it is necessary to determine what actions are most favourable to the concentration of effort on the extension of the struggle rather than on the solution of technical problems of production and distribution which inexorably lead along the road to sectoral interests which will ultimately come into conflict with the interests of the working class as a whole.

PREPARE THE WORKERS TODAY FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT TOMORROW:

Does this mean that we reject any notion of preparing workers now for the problems of self-management they will face after the revolution? Absolutely not; a working class which has only had experience of strikes for higher wages and electoral campaigns will find itself at a considerable disadvantage when it is confronted with the task of running the economy at a regional, national and international level. We realise that preparation and education are essential for these tasks, but this will not be achieved through dead-end attempts at mini self-management under capitalism. The working class will prepare itself for self-management through the struggle for workers' control and the self-organisation of its struggles. When workers begin to exercise control over the capitalist management of their factories, to take control of their unions, to take the organisation of strikes into their own hands with the greatest possible degree of workers' democracy, they are enrolling themselves into the only real school of self-management which is open under capitalism.

This education in practice will not be limited to gaining technical knowledge in preparation for self-management but will also concern the central precondition for this self-management: the raising of their capacity for self-organisation and for struggle—the raising of their collective class consciousness and solidarity.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN EUROPE

STRUGGLE

by Anton Udry

THE TASKS OF REVOLUTIONARIES IN EUROPE

This conference is an indication of the profound changes which are taking place in the international working class movement today. In dozens of industries, and in new sectors like the banks and hospitals, a layer of revolutionary militants, capable of directly initiating and leading struggles of a very advanced character, is emerging.

This development highlights the modification in the relationship of forces between the workers' vanguard and the trade union bureaucracy which has taken place since 1968. The ripening of this process in the course of dozens of struggles during the next few years could, in the event of a far-reaching social explosion, lead to a situation very different from that in May '68. It could trigger off a series of struggles on a scale not seen in France for decades.

But this is true not simply of France. For those who have taken part in workers' conferences like this organised on a European scale, it is easy to see that a similar transformation of the workers' movement is taking place in a number of countries—notably in Belgium, Italy, Spain and Britain.

LAUNCHING STRUGGLES ON AN INTERNATIONAL SCALE

If today we can launch at least limited initiatives at the level of the individual factory, and even industrial sector,

then it is clear that tomorrow we will be able to take certain initiatives—limited, but of extraordinary significance—at an international level. The possibilities are already evident in some sectors, such as the motor, steel, chemical and glass industries.

So, to deal with the tasks of revolutionaries in Europe today, we must first insist upon the active role of the workers vanguard in the internationalisation of struggles. It must be stressed that this development flows directly from the inevitable tendency towards the internationalisation of capital. The existence of the Common Market, and the possible steps towards economic and monetary union together with the political repercussions that would have, means that the development of its struggles on an international scale is already a crucial question for the workers' movement. This internationalisation of the productive forces, means that the multi-national companies have numerous factories in the various European countries—in other words, we are seeing the emergence of a kind of international employing class.

This means that *the international negotiation of work contracts and European-wide strikes and solidarity actions* have already been on the agenda for some years. There are basically four central tasks in this context:

1. To organise a response to the attacks on the workers' movement by the multi-nationals.