

THE QUESTIONS WE SHOULD BE ASKING

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2006 EDITION

Facing Reality is an important and influential book, its “underground” reputation notwithstanding, and it is good to have it back in print.

Its principal author, C.L.R. James (1901-1989) was one of the leading thinkers to address the ways that capitalism and imperialism in all of their forms and manifestations shaped and distorted the world in which we live. Born in Trinidad and educated in the British system, Cyril Lionel Robert James turned his back on the paths of accommodation and acquiescence to the status quo in order to devote his life to the struggles for the more humane and just world that would come with the end of colonialism and the transition to socialism. James was a participant in, and an inspiration to, radical and anti-colonial movements in Europe and the United States, in Africa and the West Indies. He produced a substantial body of writings including the magisterial *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938, revised 1963) and his autobiographical *Beyond a Boundary*, a pioneering study of the role of sports in the modern world.

James became a Marxist, but as a follower of Leon Trotsky was one of the harshest critics of the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership. James eventually broke with Trotsky and the Trotskyist movement after reaching the conclusion that the USSR was not even a deformed workers' state, but rather a new form of political and social organization that James and his followers called state capitalism. *Facing Reality*, subtitled “The New Society: Where to

look for it, How to bring it closer—A Statement for Our Time” is a continuation and elaboration of that debate.

Written by James with the close collaboration of Grace C. Lee, the book also includes a chapter (“The Marxist Organization: 1903-1958”) by the Greek theorist Cornelius Castoriadis, a former Trotskyist and cofounder of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. In 1958, when *Facing Reality* appeared, Castoriadis was still using the pen-name Pierre Chaulieu; later he wrote prolifically under the name Paul Cardan.

When introducing *Facing Reality* in the twenty-first century, the first question is that of audience. During the last years of the life of C.L.R. James and particularly since his death in May 1989, a virtual cottage industry dedicated to his work has grown up in academia. Scarcely a year goes by without a book-length study of at least some aspect of James’s endeavors. Articles on James are sprinkled quite liberally throughout journals in the humanities, particularly in those focusing on modern (and post-modern) politics, literature, culture, etc. of the post-colonial, Atlantic/Diasporic world. James’s writings on cricket and on other forms of popular culture have earned him the accolade, “a founder of cultural studies.”

I am a little uneasy at writing about James’s book. Anyone who has spent any time around James will have heard him rail against academics writing about each other’s books. James said that the purpose of engaging the work of another writer was to offer insight into the concrete situation that writer was addressing, or into a contemporary situation. By no means should the result be a hermetically sealed discussion among academics, without grounding in the lived experience of human beings.

Facing Reality is about politics, and socialist politics at that, and therefore a case has to be made—first, for the relevance of a book on the prospects of a world with a socialist future, and second, for the importance of James’s contribution toward realizing that possibility. I will attempt to make that case by conveying the significance of the book for an earlier time—the 1960s—and then for its continuing relevance to the vastly different world that we live in today.

In 1964, in a class on Negro History at Chicago’s Roosevelt University taught by August Meier, I read *Black Jacobins*—one of the finest works of historical scholarship that I have ever read.

Black Jacobins offered an array of penetrating insights on the relationship between revolutionary struggles in Europe and in its New World colonies at the dawn of the modern age at the same level of brilliance and sophistication that Du Bois provided in *Black Reconstruction* on the role of African Americans in the history of the United States.

Inspired, I tried to learn as much as I could about C.L.R. James, and to read everything he had written—mainly pamphlets, mimeographed copies of essays and a used copy of *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*. I was not able to obtain a copy of *Facing Reality* until 1965 or 1966. Unlike today, in those years James’s works—except for *Black Jacobins*—could be found only by those who frequented left bookstores (not run by the Communist Party), or could make it to New York to Walter Goldwater’s University Place Bookstore, which had a cache of James materials that the proprietor doled out at prices far beyond the means of students and working people. I found my copy of *Facing Reality* in a bookstore in Chicago and liked the subtitle: “The New Society: Where to look for it, How to bring it closer: A statement for our time.” I also liked the cover price of fifty cents. The bookseller told me that the price had gone up a bit since 1958, and he was charging \$1.50. I bought it.

During the period from 1967 through 1969, when I was in graduate school at Northwestern University, successful political struggles afforded us the opportunity to persuade the administration to hire James, ostensibly to teach the history of the Caribbean. When he arrived in the Fall of 1969, James of course taught what he wanted: one course based on *Black Jacobins*, and one on *Modern Politics*. I have written elsewhere of my interactions with James during his years at Northwestern.* Although I did not take his courses, James generously provided me with copies of his writings, and the privilege of discussing (and arguing about) them with him.

Though many of us, young African American activists, considered ourselves to be nationalists, we modified that term with the word *revolutionary*, which meant that we saw ourselves as linked to the broader struggles for socialism in the world, especially those in non-white countries. We were Marxists in the broadest sense of that term, but Marxism was not much help on strategy and tactics, *i.e.*, what do I do today, in this place, at this time. We admired the

magnificent efforts of Communist scholars such as Herbert Aptheker to take on the liberal historiography that dominated American universities at the time. But the posing of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a glimpse of the future was not very convincing, and required a conceptual and emotional leap that we were not willing to make. The Marxists to whom we were most attracted were those who combined the struggle for socialism with the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. We read Mao and Lin Piao, not because we thought that we shared the same reality as a nation of a billion people, predominantly peasants, but for their insights into how one could analyze a difficult and complex situation and devise solutions that could lead to a victorious outcome. The same was true for the writings of Ho Chi Minh and General Giap in Vietnam, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro in Cuba, M. N. Roy of India, and various African thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah, Mamadou Dia, Sekou Touré, Muhammad Babu, Ahmed Ben Bella and Franz Fanon.

Of course, on the process of revolutions we read Lenin, especially on the Revolution of 1905 and his writings between the Spring and Fall of 1917, when the Bolsheviks came to power. Some of us who were members of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) had the benefit of the experiences and insights of Robert F. Williams and of other older Black radicals such as Ishmael Flory, Harry Haywood, Odis Hyde, Julius Hobson, Jesse Gray, Queen Mother Moore and Christine Johnson. Our own basic synthesis of what we had learned through study and struggle was summarized in the "World Black Revolution," written by Muhammad Ahmad and circulated in 1966.

There was a diverse and active left during that period, so no one could avoid the "Trots": the Socialist Workers Party, the Young Socialist Alliance, and their newspaper, *The Militant*. We read many of the books and pamphlets that flowed from their presses—Pathfinder and Merit—especially George Breitman's *How a Minority Can Change Society: The Real Potential of the Afro-American Struggle* (1964) and their numerous works by and about Malcolm X. In addition to the writings of Leon Trotsky on the Russian Revolution, we also read Trotsky's discussions with James on the race question.

We knew that a group close to James in Detroit included the couple, Grace Lee and James Boggs, and that they were deeply

involved in developing and maintaining a dialogue with younger radicals. Members of RAM had known them in Detroit. I first met them in Chicago as part of my work with a short-lived group called ACT, and again in the Summer of 1965 at one of the founding meetings of the Organization for Black Power. The Boggses opened the pages of their journal *Correspondence* to a wide range of viewpoints, and it was *Correspondence* Publishing Company which, back in 1958, had published the first edition of *Facing Reality*.

The mid-Sixties was a period when Black communities throughout the country were beginning to explode in rebellions every summer. Malcolm X had been killed; Rob Williams was in exile. The key questions during that time of ferment, and when profound changes seemed to be on the horizon, were: What kind of organization was needed, and how to build it? We also asked: What were the strategies and tactics most appropriate to our situation? What was the role of democracy—*i.e.* within an organization and *vis-à-vis* the large numbers of Black people one engaged in various groups and actions? What was the role of students and intellectuals in larger groups of people and within larger organizations?

Reading *Facing Reality* today, it is important to remember that James and his co-authors, Grace Lee Boggs and Pierre Chaulieu (Cornelius Castoriadis), were writing in the mid-1950s, before the onset of the sit-ins, the flowering of the Civil Rights Movement, the rise of Black Power. A mass movement of African Americans had yet to make itself fully visible. The Port Huron statement had yet to be written, the Free Speech Movement and the movement of American youth in resistance to the Vietnam War had yet to materialize. There was no National Organization of Women, no national movements of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans or Native Americans. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party, and the Revolutionary Action Movement had yet to be formed.

Facing Reality is a brilliant example of a way to think about a society in the process of transforming itself. The significance of *Facing Reality* in the 1960s, and its continued importance for today, is not so much in the answers that it gives, but in the questions that it raises in the striking subtitle: "The New Society: Where to look for it. How to bring it closer." James and his co-

authors knew that changes were on the way, that post-war capitalist societies were in deep crisis, that the old order of colonialism and imperialism was on the way out. What was not clear, and could not have been, was exactly where, when and from whom the major initiatives would come.

Facing Reality presents a discussion of the major trends that characterize the world of the 1950s, of the failures of Marxists and the left, and of signs that pointed toward a brighter future. Its focus is on Europe and the United States, and on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, reflecting the world situation as it existed at the height of the Cold War, prior to the Cuban Revolution and the onset of the multitude of anti-colonial struggles in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. But *Facing Reality* also offers a chapter, the longest one in the book, with serious and thoughtful recommendations as to "What to Do and How to Do it." This chapter is especially compelling, not because it offers answers to today's problems, but because it serves to remind us of what questions we should be asking *now*.

In general, James was right about the instability of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the increasing signs of resistance to bureaucratic societies in Western Europe and the United States, and about the rise of militant anticolonial struggles in the Third World. The fact that some of his details now seem wide of the mark is nothing against him. James was a very good historian and, as we all know, historians tend to be lousy predictors of the specifics of future events. What is important is that James was offering us an approach and a method for studying the world around us, with the understanding that this present that we see before us is not forever, that change is coming, and that we have a part to play in the struggle to push that change toward socialism and not toward barbarism. Do not be misled or turned off by the specific examples that James offers as harbingers of change. English shop-stewards and incipient workers councils in Hungary are better viewed as indicators of the types of change needed than of specific forms that could sustain themselves over the long haul.

Facing Reality also offers a return to history, *i.e.* to discussions of who you are, where have you come from, and where do you want to go. Such discussions must be renewed, even if tentatively and in the broadest terms. The left today calls itself "progressive," with no clear conception of what it desires to progress toward.

Many of the academic left have rejected even the idea of progress. If there is no "past" and "everything is everything", then how can there be a future? We are left with the late Kwame Turé's pithy admonition: "If you don't know which way you are going, any road will take you there."

We need to look at the broader trends in the ways that work and labor have been reconfigured due to shifts in the form and nature of production, distribution, and consumption in an age of rapidly changing forms of computer technology. We need to identify and assess the groups of people, the organizations, the activities that today presage the "future in the present." How do we address the continuing question of the role of the state and of its dominance due to control over massive military resources? Globalization and transnational forms and institutions may be the wave of the future, but the older forms of power—capitalist nation-states with their armed forces and nuclear weapons—still dominate the planet.

James included a section in his final chapter on the relationship of African Americans to trends in the larger world, and he states what should be obvious to any serious student of social change: "In the United States who fails on the Negro question is weak on all." On this, as on all other matters, James was not a utopian. He always expressed annoyance at the idea of a dichotomy between race and class, and would not have accepted any such notions from the right that we live in a "color-blind society," or from the academic left that we should act as if we can move "beyond race." James knew, like sociologist W. I. Thomas, that "What men believe to be real is real in its consequences." The question of racism in the larger society and on the left has to be acknowledged and confronted. Pretending that racism does not exist and that race is not "real" is a prescription for failure. It is no accident that those scholars who most successfully address these issues in their work—the late George Rawick and Martin Glaberman, and more recently David Roediger and Noel Ignatiev—acknowledge their heavy debt to James. The late Herbert Hill, the most persistent critic of racism in organized labor and on the left, was a comrade and friend of James.

In any case, the world is still in very much of a mess. Prospects for immediate progress toward a more peaceful, humane and just world, a world more attuned to the needs of the many rather than

the few, look rather bleak. But if we want such a world, then one task is to continue the struggles defined by C.L.R. James, Grace C. Lee and Cornelius Castoriadis in this book. We must "face reality," look for the new society and work to bring it closer. To those who are committed to that process, *Facing Reality*—despite its age and provenance—will prove quite useful.

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* See the article, "Nello," in the special "C.L.R. James: His Life and Work" issue of *Urgent Tasks* (No. 12, Summer 1981), pp. 125-126.

FACING REALITY

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

over the world, 1984.

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

It must never be forgotten that the Hungarian Revolution was successful as no other revolution in history was successful. The totalitarian state was not merely defeated. It was totally destroyed and the counterrevolution crushed. It is the totality of the success which enabled the workers to do so much before the revolution was robbed of its victory by Russian tanks from outside. What then was the great achievement of the revolution?

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

I. THE WORKERS COUNCILS: HUNGARY

The secret of the Workers Councils is this. From the very start of the Hungarian Revolution, these shop floor organizations of the workers demonstrated such conscious mastery of the needs, processes, and inter-relations of production, that they did not have to exercise any domination over people. That mastery is the only basis of political power against the bureaucratic state. It is the very essence of any government which is to be based upon general consent and not on force. The administration of things by the Workers Councils established a basic coherence in society and from this coherence they derived automatically their right to govern. Workers' management of production, government from below, and government by consent have thus been shown to be one and the same thing.

The actual resort to arms has obscured the social transformation that took place from the first day of the revolution. Along with the fighting the workers took over immediate control of the country. So complete was their mastery of production that large bodies of men, dispersed over wide areas, could exercise their control with the strategy of a General deploying troops, and yet with the flexibility of a single craftsman guiding his tools. The decision to carry out a general strike was not decreed by any center. Simultaneously and spontaneously in all industrial areas of the country, the decision not to work was taken, and the strike organized itself immediately according to the objective needs of the revolutionary forces. On the initiative of the Workers Councils in each plant, it was possible to come to a general decision, immediately acceptable to all, as to who should work and who should not work, where the goods produced should go and where they should not go. No central plan was needed. The plan was within each individual factory. General strikes have played a decisive role in bringing down governments in every modern revolution, but never before has the general been initiated and controlled so completely by the particular. It was not merely unity against the common enemy which made this cohesion possible. The strike, as well as the whole course of the revolution, demonstrated how deep were its roots in the mastery over production and social processes, which is the natural and acquired power of modern workers.

PRODUCTION FOR USE

All great revolutions have obtained arms from soldiers who joined the revolution, and by taking them from the police and the arsenals of the state. In this the Hungarian Revolution was no exception. The difference is that in Hungary, despite the fact that the whole army came over to the revolution, the Workers Councils proceeded immediately to manufacture their own arms. The decision was immediately taken that these newly-produced arms should be distributed to the striking workers in other industries who were to withdraw themselves into an army of defense. Production for use was for them not a theory but an automatic procedure from the moment they began to govern themselves.

At a certain stage the Miners Councils decided to work in order to keep the mines from flooding. At another, they informed the Kadar government precisely how much they would produce in exchange for precise political concessions. At the same time they opened out to all a vision of the future by stating boldly and confidently that once all their political demands were realized, they would produce at a rate that would astonish the world. Thus they established that the secret of higher productivity is self-government in production.

Previous revolutions have concentrated on the seizure of political power and only afterwards faced the problems of organizing production according to new procedures and methods. The great lesson of the years 1923-1956 has been this, that degradation in production relations results in the degradation of political relations and from there to the degradation of all relations in society. The Hungarian Revolution has reversed this process. As a result of the stage reached by modern industry and its experience under the bureaucratic leadership of the Party and its Plan, the revolution from the very beginning seized power in the process of production and from there organized the political power.

The Workers Councils did not look to governments to carry out their demands. In the Hungarian Revolution the Workers Councils not only released the political prisoners, as in all revolutions, they immediately rehired them at their old plants without loss of pay. Even while they were demanding that the government abolish the system of norms and quotas, they were themselves establishing how much work should be done and by whom, in accordance with

what was needed. They demanded increases in wages, but they assumed the responsibility not only for paying wages but for increasing them by 10 percent. From the moment that they took the apparatus of industry under their control, they began to tear off the veils which hide the essential simplicity of the modern economy.

GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE

The parties, the administrators and the planners have claimed always that without them society will collapse into anarchy and chaos. The Workers Councils recognized the need for an official center and for a head of state. Early in the revolution, because they believed Nagy to have the confidence of the people, they proposed that he assume the national leadership. But the Councils finished once and for all with the delegation of powers to a center while the population retreats into passive obedience. Thus the Workers Councils and the Nagy government were not a dual power in the classical sense of that phrase.

The Nagy government proposed to legalize the revolutionary Councils by incorporating them into the existing administration. The Workers Councils made it clear, in reply, that they were the legal administration, and that the power to legalize, incorporate, indeed dis-establish an official center, rested with them. They drew no distinction between the work of production and the work of government. They decided who should occupy government posts, who should be dismissed, which ministries should be retained, which should be dissolved.

Everyone knows that the revolution attacked without mercy the infamous Stalinist secret police. But people have not concerned themselves with the far more important judicial actions of the Workers Councils. It is traditional with revolutions to place on trial those members of the old regime whom popular opinion holds most responsible for its crimes. In the last twenty-five years, however, the trials of political enemies and vengeance against them have become inseparable in the public mind from the brutalities of the totalitarian and imperialistic states.

Conscious that they represented a new social order, and never forgetting, in their own words, why they were fighting, the Hungarian revolutionaries renounced terror and vengeance. Characteristically they carried out their judicial functions within the

framework of the plant itself. The Councils constituted themselves into courts to discuss, one by one, the directors of the plant, the trade union officials, and the party officials, to decide which should be expelled from the plant and which allowed to remain. They dissolved and destroyed the records of the personnel departments which had become, as in plants the world over, centers of blacklisting and spying.

THE END OF THE POLITICAL PARTY

One of the greatest achievements of the Hungarian Revolution was to destroy once and for all the legend that the working class cannot act successfully except under the leadership of a political party. It did all that it did precisely because it was not under the leadership of a political party. If a political party had existed to lead the revolution, that political party would have led the revolution to disaster, as it has led every revolution to disaster during the last thirty years. There was leadership on all sides, but there was no party leading it.

No party in the world would have dared to lead the country into a counter-attack in the face of thousands of Russian tanks. Nothing but an organization in close contact with the working class population in the factory, and which therefore knew and felt the strength of the population at every stage, could have dared to begin the battle a second time. Still later, after the military battle had been lost, no organization except Workers Councils would have dared to start a general strike and carry it on for five weeks, unquestionably the most astonishing event in the whole history of revolutionary struggles.

In these unprecedented examples of leadership the Workers Councils put an end to the foolish dreams, disasters, and despair which have attended all those who, since 1923, have placed the hope for socialism in the elite party, whether Communist or Social-Democrat. The political party, as such, whatever type it is, constitutes essentially a separation of the organizing intellectuals and workers with an instinct for leadership, from the masses as force and motive power. As long as the real centers of administration were the private capitalists in their various spheres, the apparatus of government was relatively simple. Political parties as such could represent the opposing classes and in their conflicts with

one another and their bids for popular support, clarify the choices before society, and educate the population as a whole. But with the growth of large scale production, the state apparatus controls the national economy in fact, and whichever party comes to power inherits and becomes the agent of an existing apparatus.

Control over production means first and foremost control over the workers, and the modern state can function only if the decisive trade unions are incorporated into it, or are prepared at critical moments to submit to it. The powerful labor organizations, therefore, by their very existence, must suppress those creative energies which the reconstitution of society demands from the mass of the people. The Workers Councils in Hungary instructed the workers to put aside party affiliations and elect their delegates according to their judgment of them as workers in the plant.

At the same time no worker was discriminated against either in his work or in his election to the Workers Councils because of his party affiliations. The traditional political parties take their political differences into the factories, breaking the unity of the workers according to these divisions. They make of individual workers representatives of a political line, corrupting relations between people by transforming them into relations of political rivalry. Once the powers of government were with the shop floor organizations, the objective relations of the labor process provided all the discipline required. On the basis of that objective discipline, the widest variety of views and idiosyncracies could not only be tolerated but welcomed.

So confident were the Workers Councils that the workers' mastery over production would be decisive in the solution of all important questions, that they proposed a great Party of the Revolution. This was to include all who had taken part in the revolution, the clerical and petty-bourgeois Right, former members of the Small Proprietors Party, Social-Democrats and Communists. Before these and other proposals could be worked out and tried, the Russian tanks suppressed the revolution.

Once the Hungarian people erupted spontaneously, the rest followed with an organic necessity and a completeness of self-organization that distinguishes this revolution from all previous revolutions and marks it as specifically a revolution of the middle of the Twentieth Century. So obviously were the Workers Councils the natural and logical alternative to the totalitarian state,

that the traditional demand for a Constituent Assembly or Convention to create a new form of government, was not even raised. So deep is the consciousness in modern people that organization of production is the basis of society, that the whole population mobilized itself around the Workers Councils as the natural government.

It is not excluded that in their search for ways and means to organize a new state, political parties might have been formed. But with the state founded on Workers Councils, no political parties could assume the powers, suppress the people, or make the mischief that we have seen from all of them in the last thirty years.

WORKERS AND INTELLIGENTSIA

Capitalism has created and steadily deepened the gulf between workers and the intelligentsia (technicians and intellectuals). These have been incorporated by capitalism into the directing apparatus of industry and the state. There they administer and discipline the working population. The Hungarian workers—conscious that technicians are part of the labor process—gave to technicians and intellectuals their place on the Workers Councils. The majority on the Councils were fittingly production workers, who constitute the majority in the plant itself. But in these all-inclusive Workers Councils, the technician could be functionally related to the activities and attitudes of the plant community, instead of being isolated from the mass of the people, as he is on both sides of the Iron Curtain today.

In previous revolutions, particularly the Russian, it was necessary to state and restate and underline the power of the working class. The very emphasis testified to the weakness of the proletariat in the social structure of the nation. The modern world has understood, after three decades of bitter experience, that the socialist revolution is a national revolution. Recognized at home and abroad as the leader of the nation, the Hungarian workers called for the establishment of "Workers Councils in every branch of national activity." Thus not only white collar workers in offices, but all government employees, including the police, should have their own Councils.

The Hungarian intellectuals heroically defied Stalinism. Yet even after the revolution began, all that they could demand was the

democratization of the Party and the government, freedom of speech, honesty in placing the economic situation before the people, Nagy in power, etc. Within a week they had come to the conclusion that the Workers Councils should form the government of the country with Zoltan Kodaly the composer as president because of his great national and international reputation. It was the Hungarian workers and not they who showed the form for the new society.

THE FARMERS AND THE WORKERS

The Hungarian peasants showed how far society has progressed in the last 30 years. They broke up the collective farms which were in reality factories in the field, owned and run by the State, the Party, and the Plan. But at the same time they immediately organized themselves to establish contact with the workers and others in the towns on the basis of social need. They organized their trucks to take them food, did not wait to be paid but went back to the countryside to bring in new loads, risking their lives to do so.

So confident were they that the only power against the totalitarian state was the workers, that the peasants did not wait to see if the workers would guarantee them the land before committing themselves to the active support of the Workers Councils. What revolutionary governments have usually striven in vain to win, the confidence of the peasants, was here achieved in reverse—the peasant took all risks in order to show his confidence in the worker.

These objectively developed relations of cooperation have now passed into the subjective personality of people, their instinctive responses and the way they act. Released from the fear that art and literature must serve only politics, sensing all around them the expansion of human needs, human capacities, and cooperation, the Hungarian people created twenty-five new newspapers overnight, the older artists and the younger talents pouring out news, articles, stories, and poems, in a flood-tide of artistic energy.

WORKERS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Hungarian Workers Councils not only made appeals to the Russian troops to cease fire and go home, they entered into

negotiations and made direct arrangements with Russian commanders to retire. At least one Council not only negotiated the removal of a garrison of Russian troops but arranged for it to be supplied with food. This was not just fraternization. It was the assumption of responsibility by the Workers Councils for foreign affairs. The simplicity with which the negotiations were carried out reflects the education which the post-war world has received in the futile bickering and cynical propagandizing of cease-fire conferences in Korea, Big Four meetings in London and Paris, and Big Two meetings in Geneva.

Russian troops mutinied and deserted to fight under the command of the Hungarian Councils. When the hospital at Debrecen radioed its needs for iron lungs, the Workers Councils at Miskolc undertook to get these from West Germany and by radio organized the landing of the lung-bearing plane at the Debrecen airport. The Hungarian Revolution transcended that combination of threats, snarls, lies, hypocrisy and brutality which today appear under the headlines of foreign affairs.

The Hungarian people welcomed such medical aid and supplies as they received from abroad. But, as they explained to their Czech brothers, it was not assistance or charity which they needed as much as understanding by the world that they fought not only for themselves but for Europe. To a world which is constantly being offered bribes of economic aid and promises of a higher standard of living, these words ring with a new morality. The Hungarian people were not begging for handouts from the Romanian, Serb, or Slovak workers. They wanted them to join in the common struggle for a new society.

The neutrality which the Hungarian people demanded was not the neutrality of a Switzerland. The revolution had in fact begun by a mass demonstration of solidarity with the Poles. They did not want their country to be the battleground of the struggle between America and Russia for mastery of the world, but they themselves were prepared to lay down their lives in the struggle to build a new society, side by side with the other peoples of Europe on both West and East.

The urgent appeals for arms in the final days of the military battle, the voices fading from the radio with cries for help, must be seen against this awareness by the Hungarian population that they were in the forefront of a world movement to build a new civiliza-

tion, as profoundly different from American materialism as from Russian totalitarianism. Such confidence in the ideals and aims by which men live can come in the modern world only from a material foundation. The material foundation of the Hungarian workers was their natural and acquired capacity to organize production, and their experience of the centralized Plan and the whole bureaucratic organization which has reached its ultimate in the One-Party State but which is a characteristic of modern society the world over.

Helpless before this new civilization, so weak in logistics, but so powerful in appeal to the peoples of the world, aware that it is just below the surface in all Europe and is ready to destroy both American and Russian imperialism, the Western Powers hesitated for a moment and then turned their vast propaganda machine to one single aim, to transform the content of the Hungarian Revolution into a problem of refugees.

The poor, the needy, the supplicating, the weak, and helpless. These the American Welfare State can deal with by charity and red tape. Thus, as in the East, Russia applied herself to the systematic destruction of the Workers Councils by deportation to labor camps; the American government in the West began the break-up by organizing refugee camps. The Hungarian people have not been deceived by this characteristic American maneuver. The failure of the Hungarian Revolution they have placed squarely at the door of both the Russian and the American governments.

THE VICTORY WAS COMPLETE

The complete withdrawal of the Russian troops from all Hungary was on the surface a national demand. But in reality, that is, in the concrete circumstances, the whole population realized that the Russian tanks were the only force inside the country able to crush the Workers Councils. To speak of a civil war between Right and Left in Hungary once the Russian troops had left, in the classical style of national revolutions, is to misunderstand completely the stage to which the mastery of production by the workers has reached in modern society and the understanding of this by the whole population.

In the Hungarian Revolution there was no divorce between immediate objectives and ultimate aims, between instinctive action and conscious purpose. Working, thinking, fighting, bleeding

Hungary never for a moment forgot that it was incubating a new society, not only for Hungary but for all mankind. In the midst of the organization of battle, the Workers Councils organized political discussions not only of the position of the particular plant in relation to the total struggle, but of the aims which the councils should achieve. They carried on incessant political activity to root out the political and organizational remnants of the old regime and work out new politics.

They knew that the danger to the Workers Councils lay, not in the middle classes outside the factory, but from the state, the Communist Party, and the trade union bureaucrats, all trying to remove the power from the shop floor. At the very beginning of the revolution, the Gero government, recognizing that the party and the unions had collapsed, called upon the party cadres in the plants to form councils and mobilize them against the revolutionary population in the streets. The workers in the streets returned to the factories, threw out the party cadres and re-elected their own Councils on the shop floor.

Then they issued the announcement, "We have been elected by the workers and not by the government." They knew whence came their strength and the certainty of correct decision so crucial in the lightning speed of revolution. The trade unions instructed them to return to work and elect Workers Councils. The workers replied, "We will elect our Councils at our place of work but the strike will continue." Even during the most bitter street fighting, workers returned to their plants to take stock of the situation and delegate responsibility.

The final proof that the Hungarian people were conscious of their responsibility for building a new society is the role that was played by the youth in the revolution. In the plants the workers elected youth in the majority to the Councils. Modern society has transformed the youth into displaced persons, rebels without a cause, angry men, juvenile delinquents. The youth, in the United States as in Russia, is in this condition of permanent crisis because it does not know where it has come from and where it is going. So confident were the Hungarian workers that the future belonged to them, so certain were they as to where they stood, that these adults could place upon the young people of the country the responsibility for driving the revolution forward.

The miracle of the Hungarian Revolution lies not in the

heroism of their struggle for freedom. It lies rather in the certainty, the completeness, and the confidence with which, in the midst of battle and on the shortest notice, they laid the basis of an entirely new society.

POLAND

The creative achievements of the Workers Councils in Hungary were overshadowed by the military struggle. Furthermore, the foundations they laid so clearly are still mysterious to the majority of intellectuals and revolutionaries. For decades now these have been preoccupied almost exclusively with politics, by which they mean the Party, and economics, by which they mean the Plan. However, what the Hungarian Revolution did and aimed to do can be better understood by events in Poland.

Long before October, 1956, though seething against the Russian subjugation of their country, Polish workers had recognized that driving out the Russians was only the preliminary to the fundamental question which faced them, the total reorganization of society. Everyone in Poland knew that the Communist system of the Party and the Plan had collapsed as an economic system. The question was what was to take its place.

The workers began to answer this question by their revolt in Poznan in June 1956. Ever after, two conceptions of society have faced each other in Poland—on the one hand, bureaucratic state capitalist society of the Party and the Plan—and on the other hand, the workers in the plant, making no theories but demonstrating in practice what a socialist society and a workers' government could and should be.

"ECONOMY OF NONSENSE"

Prior to the October Revolution, the workers at the Zeran auto plant outside Warsaw submitted to the government a plan to establish workers' control and scheduling of production by Workers Councils as the only means of increasing productivity without bureaucracy. Managers and statisticians alike were to do what the workers in the Workers Councils wanted. They had no illusions about the difficulties of the tasks they had set themselves. The economy of the Party and the Plan was now being derided all

over Poland by a special phrase—"the economy of nonsense." The boldness of the activities and perspectives of the Workers Councils was combined with a sober estimate of the realities. They saw that the Party and the Plan had so ruined the economy that it would be some two years before Poland would be able to lift itself out of the crisis. They were prepared to draw their belts tight for that time. They rejected any concessions of increase in wages that would only be passed on to the country in inflation.

The most popular man in Poland after Gomulka is a Polish worker at the Zeran factory. His name is Gozdzik and he is the secretary of the section of the Communist Party of the Zeran factory. Long before the revolution burst out, this worker, little more than 25 years old, had created squads of rank and file Communist workers, young like himself, whose first task was to go around, sharpen the vision and awaken the fighting spirit of workers all over the country. They began secretly at first and then functioned more and more openly as the revolution grew. They are known as the Gozdziki.

Soon squads from other factories besides the Zeran embarked on the same task. They threw out the old Stalinist bureaucrats, soaked to the marrow with Stalinist totalitarianism and bureaucratic laziness. The trade union leadership, as workers everywhere will understand, was the most fossilized and bureaucratic of all the organizations which made up the Stalinist system.

THE WORKERS TAKE OVER

But it was not a question merely of getting rid of Stalinists, Stalinist bureaucrats, labor bureaucrats, and their persecution of the ranks. The economic life of the country had to go on, and the Workers Councils proceeded to assume responsibility for this by completely discarding the State Plan except as a general guide, and themselves carrying out the negotiations from factory to factory. While Khrushchev turns the Russian economy upside down in a desperate search for means to make it viable, and theoretical men of good-will break their heads in the search for plan without bureaucracy, the Polish workers simply took over the plants where they had worked all their lives. That always will be the only way to organize a national economy.

It was such councils of Polish workers which organized the

Poznan revolt. It was these same Workers Councils which mobilized themselves in the plants over the October 19 weekend, and stood ready with arms in hand to support Gomulka and the Central Committee of the Polish Party in their defiance of Khrushchev.

The Russians retreated. Gomulka is in power. All visitors report absence of fear among the Polish people, the lively discussions going on, and the readiness on the part of all to discuss freely with foreigners. That all this exists is due to the power which the Workers Councils exercise inside the plant. The central problem, however, remains. How is the economy, reduced to such chaos by the Party and the Plan, to be put on its feet again? Gomulka faces the insoluble problem which will lead inevitably either to the instituting of a Government of Workers Councils or once more to a plain and open domination by Russia.

With all the good-will in the world and despite the dismissal of bureaucrats, Poland remains a country run by the Party but this time without any Plan, and the Plan is inseparable from the elite party. That is how the contemporary Polish State was built, and slowly the whole bureaucratic formation is re-asserting itself. Gomulka stands half-way, with a working class in action in many spheres but above it a bureaucracy which is recovering its strength and is determined to re-assert itself, whether under Gomulka or any other leader. This is of extreme importance, for the Polish Communist Party, under the pressure of the people and the workers, did try to reform itself. It failed, as all reforms of totalitarian states are bound to fail.

That is the Poland of Gomulka today. Back to Stalinism or forward to the revolution of the Polish workers for socialism, that is to say, the Government of Workers Councils.

There are some (and they even call themselves Marxists) who admit the creative power of the Hungarian Revolution, but prophesied for it failure and degeneration, even if it had not been crushed by Russian tanks. The road that Poland is traveling so rapidly should instruct them that it is the half-hearted attack on the Party and the Plan which produces degeneration. Their total destruction is the only guarantee of a future. Workers Councils in every department of the national activity, a Government of Workers Councils, are not ends in themselves. They are means to an end. They will result in one procedure in one country, and other procedures in other countries. They neither automatically reject,

nor automatically include democratic elections on a territorial or industrial basis, or both combined, or each for a period of trial. They would be one thing in Hungary, something else in the United States, and something else again in Britain or Japan. But under all circumstances they would be the political form in which the great masses of the people would be able to bring their energies to fulfill their destiny, in accordance with their economic structure, their past history, and their consciousness of themselves.

II. THE WHOLE WORLD

This is the fundamental political question of the day: The Government of Workers Councils, which sprang so fully and completely from the revolutionary crisis of Hungary, was it only a historical accident, peculiar to totalitarianism, or is it the road of the future for all society? Actually, in the United States, with the most advanced technology in the world, there exists more than in any other country the framework and forces for a Government of Workers Councils. The outside world has been bluffed and bamboozled by American propaganda and American movies. Politically-minded people outside the United States, scanning the American social horizon, bewail the absence of a mass socialist party and a politically-indoctrinated union movement. American intellectuals and radicals do the same. They are constantly looking for political parties, political allegiances, and political slogans of the old type. They find none because the American workers are looking for none. The struggle in America is between management, supervision, and the union bureaucrats on the one side and the shop floor organizations on the other. If any one national struggle can be pin-pointed as the one on which the future fate of the world depends, it is this struggle, and the American workers hold all the cards.

THE UNITED STATES

In 1955 Walter Reuther won, and made all preparations to celebrate, one of his usual great victories—the Guaranteed Annual Wage. The press was summoned, the television cameras were in position, when suddenly a general strike of the Ford and General Motors workers exploded from coast to coast. It was a strike against Reuther and the union. The slogan of the strike in plant

after plant bore the extremely modest title of “local grievances.” The great celebration of the Guaranteed Annual Wage ended with a whimper. The local managements made such terms with the workers as they could. The result of the nation-wide engagement was a draw, the battle beginning again the very next day.

Only one more example need be given here. In the U. S. Rubber Plant in Detroit during the 16 months prior to April 1956, there were on the average two wildcat stoppages a week. The Rubber Union is powerless to stop them. That is the abiding situation in thousands of plants all over the United States. It is no secret. Since the war over a hundred studies by industrial psychologists have appeared, seeking in vain to find some means of controlling and disciplining these workers. Pension plans, guaranteed annual wage, wage increases, sick benefits, all these the unions win, promising in return to discipline the working class, i.e., to force it to submit to the schedules of production as planned by the employers. The only result has been to discredit the union leadership and to range it definitely with management and supervision as one of the enemies of the working class.

The trade union apparatus acts as the bodyguard of capital. Conducting all negotiations with management, processing all grievances through its elaborate grievance procedure, it sits at the bargaining table in a hierarchy of posts parallel at every level with that of management. In an American plant the shop steward or the committeeman represents not the workers, but the union apparatus. He is bound by the elaborate contract governing all issues of production which the union leadership signs in return for wage increases, pension plans, etc. The committeeman is responsible to the union and to management for the carrying out of this contract. The result is that in the vast majority of issues involving actual methods of work, the workers have learned to bypass the union and utilize their own knowledge of production and of the organic weakness of management to gain their ends.

Under the conditions of modern industry, production holds no mystery for the workers. Cooperation rather than competition is in the nature of the work itself. Because of the rhythm which the worker has developed in himself and in the group with which he is working, he is able to devise and perfect a work and social schedule of his own. The workers decide the pace of the line or bring it to a stop by ways and means which it is impossible for supervision to

detect. This schedule gets the work done, but it also creates free time for rest, relaxation around the plant, looking over different jobs and new machines, and visiting friends. Management knows that the workers are doing all this, but where the workers in a plant are powerfully organized, it stays out of their way as much as possible, the situation is too delicate. Any issue, however slight, may cause an explosion.

It is freedom to organize their work as they please, combined with all sorts of details, such as smoking on the job, the condition of the rest room, not working when it is too hot, which pass under the title of "local grievances." What the phrase really signifies in the large American plants is the determination of workers to run the plants to suit themselves and not the management.

Naturally, the workers, even when solidly organized, do not have it all their own way. Management counterattacks at every opportunity. The result is that production, the most important business of society, is at the mercy of this gigantic, disruptive, and unceasing conflict. Every year in the automobile plants there is a period when the models are changed. At this time the real chaos of American production and its root cause become patent. Plans and new machinery which have been elaborated for months in the offices are introduced. Supervision seizes the opportunity to try to restore its damaged authority. The foreman places workers where he wishes, being concerned chiefly with breaking up old groups and reorganizing the plant, not for production but for discipline. The result is disorganization, turmoil, and chaos (and production of cars that auto workers know better than to buy), until the workers, for their own comfort and ease of work, get together and restore some order into the plant.

The much-lauded know-how of American management is a myth, and the superiority of American management is due entirely to the heavy investment in capital and the order which American workers introduce into the plant to suit themselves. When the plans for new machinery are introduced into the plant, they cannot be applied at all unless the workers take them in charge and apply them in the way they think best. Production in a modern plant is based upon cooperation, not upon authority, and cooperation is essentially a problem of human relations. The strategy and tactics of the workers spring from the fact that all productivity and progress in the plant depend upon them.

WHAT WILDCATS SIGNIFY

The realities of life inside the American factory drive relentlessly to one overpowering conclusion. This conclusion is that management and supervision have now become as much an anachronism as a feudal landlord or a slave driver on a cotton plantation. Management, supervision, foremen are the chief source of disorder and disruption in production. Millions of American workers know that if they were left to themselves to organize the plants in their own way, they would work out their own schedules of production, lessen their hours, raise production to undreamed of heights, enormously increase their own knowledge and capacity, and have a wonderful time in the plant.

They know that they can arrange work for women in relation to their special skills and household duties, find suitable tasks for the aged or the handicapped, work hard when it is required and take it easy at other times. That is precisely what has always been understood to be socialist relations of production. American workers, like workers everywhere, are not dominated by the desire not to work. But the cooperation and the discipline that have been instilled into them by large scale machinery have been turned into bitterness and frustration by the capitalist nature of production.

For the time being, their energies and powers are for the most part used in resistance, either in the plant or by walking out on the slightest excuse: the wildcat strike. Wildcats are a constant defiance and rejection of the capitalist system and of the union bureaucracy which has tied its fortunes to capitalism. Nothing that management or the union does can stop them. Wildcats are the ever-present reminder of what the American workers think of the economic system under which they live.

Unable to control the workers, either in its own name or through the union, management in the United States has embarked on a huge program of automation. As if driven by devils, the large corporations have begun to invest billions in new equipment, frantically scrapping still useful machinery, headlining each new expansion with speeches about progress. At the same time thousands are being laid off and those still in the shop are working three and four days a week, building new models, while the just completed models are still resting unsold and rusting in dealer lots. In the auto industry the production schedules see-saw back and forth

like the front lines of a battle, with management obviously in the grip of forces beyond its control.

This unending conflict with management, the constant uncertainty of life, the futility of the union, all are forcing millions of American workers, and the auto workers in particular, to positive perspectives which bypass political parties and touch the very heart of American society: 1) That the decisions on scheduling of production as a whole, when there should be model changeovers and whether or not there should be, whether or not new equipment should be introduced and when, these vital decisions can no longer be left to management. Only the workers can and must organize this. 2) That the only way to keep everybody at work is for everything to be produced for use and not for the market.

AUTOMATION AND THE TOTAL CRISIS

Already grappling with these perspectives, American workers could hardly be expected to take seriously the official view that today's economic crisis is an ordinary commercial crisis. Their whole past experience has taught them that, precipitated by the unending conflict in production between management and the workers, a new stage of technology is emerging—automation.

Automation as a stage in technology is still young. While it has existed in a few specific industries for some time, it is only in the 1950s that it has begun to dominate American industry and all forms of economic organization, even penetrating into the crafts. So gradual has been its invasion that only now is the general public beginning to suspect the revolution in all aspects of human life that automation compels.

What is coming to an end is the stage of mass production by assembly line workers. The assembly line is itself the last major barrier to automation in industry. The essence of the assembly line is that it creates a demand for manual dexterity but at the same time organizes and controls this dexterity to the highest degree by means of the belt. The essence of automation is that it replaces manual dexterity altogether by electronic controls. Electronics is now taking the place of the human being in bringing together and controlling hydraulics, pneumatics, and mechanics.

Only a few decades ago assembly line production put thousands and thousands of workers under a single roof and thus

created the conditions for the new mass organization of the industrial union. In sheer self-defense the assembly line workers created the CIO to protect the human being from being completely destroyed by the machine. Without this intervention by the workers, the assembly line under the control of capitalism continues its relentless momentum, independent of all human considerations as to the weariness of the person or his physical and other needs. But today the industrial union is as helpless in the face of automation as the assembly line method of production itself.

In general, automation started with industries dealing in liquids and chemicals, e.g., petroleum, soda pop, milk, beer, because in such industries the materials are homogeneous and can flow, and production is chiefly a process of heat, chemicals, piping, and bottling. Today the oil refinery and the electricity supply industry are the closest to being completely automated. From there automation moved to the mills because here again raw metals needed large containers and the application of heat and chemicals for their refining. The crucial stage was reached in the 1950s when automation became firmly established in the industries fabricating metals. This in the United States means the auto industry first and foremost, and it was in the auto industry that the term "automation" came into being to describe the linking of machine tools by electronic controls. The next stage of its invasion is in the fabrication of fabrics, e.g., rubber and textiles. Because these materials are flexible, they require more manual dexterity and therefore a higher technique before automation can take over.

Automation is now moving rapidly from one American industry to another, and within each industry from partial to more complete automation. Its technical basis was already being created during World War II, but the expansion of production during the war and pent-up shortages delayed its introduction on a wide scale in the immediate postwar years. Today, however, there is no barrier to automation. It is even invading such fields as tooling where it was once believed that it would be uneconomical. Already it is possible to send blueprints by teletype from one city to another, a tracing tape attached to the machine reproducing the tool according to given specifications on the blueprint.

Up to now every new stage in technology has been the basis for an expansion in the needs of manpower. After each crisis in which the old means of production were scrapped, the labor force

expanded. Automation is that stage of technology which under capitalism for the first time will not create a need for more manpower regardless of the mass of products produced. Now society faces for the first time what Karl Marx called "putting the majority of the population on the shelf." In a particular plant employing 5000, only 500 or 10 percent will be needed in five years to produce as much as is now produced by the 5000. The percentage will vary from industry to industry and the elimination of manpower will come sooner in some industries than in others. But what is going to happen to the 90 percent? Obviously no ordinary solution is possible.

When automation hit the auto industry in the 1950s, it not only hit the industry on which one out of every six jobs in the United States depends directly or indirectly, it also hit hundreds of thousands of workers whose daily life inside the shop for the last twenty years has centered around a battle with management for control over the machine. Hence while the economists and politicians of government, industry, and the union have been babbling about wages, pensions, and profits, every new machine has been greeted by auto workers and their families with fundamental questions about who should control production. Today's crisis is driving them to expand the very meaning of that control.

Up to now the whole life of the majority of the population has been geared to work. To the working man working and living have been one and the same. Now he finds that as a result of automation work is being taken away from him and he feels that he is being robbed not only of what enables him to live but of his very existence as a human being. Capitalism itself has forced the majority of the population into the position where they have no other role than that of workers. Now, with automation, capitalism is robbing the majority of the population of the only role they have been permitted.

When millions of young people have no idea whether they will ever have a job and lie in bed half the day because they don't know what to do with themselves, that is a system committing suicide. When the majority of the population has no place to work and can only look forward to more unemployment, that is the total collapse of a society.

That is the crisis which American workers foresee and seek to forestall. No worker is against automation as such. He recognizes

that automation creates the possibility of such a development of the productive forces that no one anywhere need ever live in want again. That means more to workers than it means to anyone else. But at the same time automation is forcing every worker to re-examine the very manner of his life as a human being simply in order to answer the question of how he shall exist at all.

The CIO is completely incapable of rising to this new situation. It originated in the period when production was being expanded by the expansion of manpower. At its best it only defended the workers from the speed of the line, leaving all decisions as to the scheduling and control of production to the capitalists. Today when capitalist control of automation is threatening the collapse of society, the CIO continues to demand a share with the capitalists in the control over the workers, leaving to the capitalists the right to schedule and control total production.

It is from the growing realization that society faces total collapse that has arisen the determination of American workers to take the control of total production away from the capitalists and into their own hands. Up to now American workers have only organized to defend themselves from the machine inside the individual factories. Now, in defense of all society, they are being driven to organize themselves to regulate total production.

Up to now the concept of who governs society has been based on the idea that different parties and groupings battle with one another over who should control the workers. But control by the workers of production schedules and of the process of production inside society means that government must originate inside the plant. Thus automation creates the conditions for abolishing all previous distinctions between political control and economic control. No longer is it possible to think only in terms of changing leaders or parties. Production as a whole can only be controlled by the producers as a whole in their shop floor organizations. Thus, far more than in any other country, the automation of industry in the United States is creating the actual conditions for a Government of Workers Councils.

THE AMERICAN WORKERS' WAY

The workers do not pose the perspective of their control as a conscious program. But it is inherent in all their actions and in the discussions they hold among themselves. Only people consumed with hate and fear of socialism can believe that the Hungarian workers did the things that they did on the spur of the moment; they could act as they did only because they had for years meditated upon and discussed among themselves how they wanted production to be organized and society to be run.

The Depression made everybody in the United States recognize the capitalist economy as a system functioning according to laws which were outside the control of human beings. In that sense, political economy first came into existence in the United States with the Depression. But with the disorder of automation twenty-five years later, this fatalistic view of the laws of production has been turned on its head.

In its place there has grown up the conviction that it is the present organizers of production, the state and management, who cannot control production but are controlled by it. They, the workers, on the other hand, have the ability to control not only individual machines but the whole process, method, and tempo, by means of which machinery is to be developed and put into use. They have not been taught this by any political elite. They have learned it from experience. It is from there that they begin to visualize a new society.

Just as the Hungarian upheaval took all the political pundits and mourners by surprise, so the future course of American society will overwhelm them. All the dynamic energy of American society, its ruthlessness, its freedom from traditional restraints, its social audacity (which was ready to attempt Prohibition by legislation), these national characteristics are now concentrated in the American working class far more than in any other section of society. But among the workers, the American genius is united, disciplined, and organized by the very mechanism of modern production itself.

All analyses and perspectives of American society as a whole (and we shall go into that later) must begin from the American working class. The most astonishing feature of it is that, undominated by any organized philosophy of life (the American historians having failed most conspicuously to create any); indifferent to

theories of socialism and Communism and the blandishments of political theorists; profoundly disillusioned with unionism—it has created the basis of a philosophy of life of its own. This is that it can manage production, that to do so is its inalienable right, that the secret of a happy life is mastery over machinery and production, and that the rest can be easily managed.

American workers are not certain of their ultimate aims, nor of the end towards which they are heading. They are indifferent to Socialist Parties or Communist Parties in the traditional sense, but under the pressure of a crisis the idea of Workers Councils or a Government of Workers Councils will not be in the slightest degree alien to them.

It is obvious that the working class nowhere is so organized as to win a continuous series of victories. According to the structure of the plant, the strength of its traditions, the relation of the industry to other industries, and various other considerations, the workers are often defeated, and on occasions even routed. They sometimes win great victories. What can be stated categorically is that the struggle is continuous and from the very organization of production, the working class, especially in large and highly organized plants, holds its own and on the whole continuously captures positions from management and supervision.

Each side, whenever it thinks it has the possibility of pushing the enemy back, advances to the attack. One thing, however, is certain. The accounts of wage increases and various other arrangements which get into the press as a solution to any particular open engagement, paint no true picture of the actual situation in any plant or industry. In reality, as soon as the agreement is signed, each side goes back into the plant and the struggle begins all over again irrespective of agreements, and related solely to the particular strength of the combatants at any particular time.

There is no need to make prophecies. But in all the blindness, the violence, confusion, and despairs of modern American society, it should be obvious that the same forces which produced the Workers Councils in Hungary not only exist but are infinitely more developed, infinitely more powerful in the United States of America, and for the simple reason that these forces and ideas are the product of capitalism itself.

which very purpose the Russians instituted their program. Thus these two enemies grow more like each other every day. Only the Marxist organization basing itself on the proletariat can attempt a synthesis and transcend the essentially bourgeois antagonism between humanism and technology.

OUR UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATIONS

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

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

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

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

Today it is not mere profits of investment that are at stake. The territory and the manpower, the very traditions as well as the material production of the various countries of the world, advanced

as well as backward, are needed. What is taking place, therefore, is that capital, which always had men in its grip, has been accumulated to such an extent, intensively and extensively, that it now operates by complete mastery of men.

The vast state capitalist trusts and syndicates hurl themselves against each other to be shattered, only to reorganize themselves in unstable combinations, vainly seeking that complete centralization which it is the nature of capital to forever seek and never achieve. Lenin did not deny the theoretical possibility of world capital being totally centralized but, as he said, a great deal would happen before then. It is happening.

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

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

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

Today there are no longer any mysteries in the conditions of social existence nor in that science of human affairs whose right name is political economy. In his famous chapter of *Capital*, the last but one of the first volume, Marx stated, so that a child could understand, that the new society would grow and flourish (one would flourish) inside the old. The crisis now is between two

societies. All the pontifications, calculations, projects, discoveries, alternative courses of action of economists about the rise of prices, inflation, balance of payments, productivity of labor, are just so much mystification and nonsense, necessary only to preserve the illusion that the rulers are in control and directing affairs.

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

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

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

(a) All development takes place as a result of self-movement, not organization or direction by external forces.

(b) Self-movement springs from and is the overcoming of antagonisms within an organism, not the struggle against external foes.

(c) It is not the world of nature that confronts man as an alien power to be overcome. It is the alien power that he has himself created.

(d) The end towards which mankind is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms is not the enjoyment, ownership, or use of goods, but self-realization, creativity based upon the incorporation into the individual personality of the whole previous development of humanity. Freedom is creative

universality, not utility.

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

VII. WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

It is agreed that the socialist society exists. Then we have to record the facts of its existence.

We begin at this apparently most primitive level. Experience has taught millions of workers that the most colossal task that faces them is to take action on the job for "local grievances." The whole bureaucratic apparatus of official society, the official state, labor parties, and labor unions function automatically to inhibit prevent, and suppress just this. We too have learned that the same apparently all-embracing apparatus not only in deed but in thought, creates obstacles, and every second of the day never ceases to attack, to infiltrate, to demoralize, to corrupt, to ridicule, to destroy any attempt to present systematically the conception of the new society as we have outlined it.

The only course therefore is to present what we have learned in concrete terms, approaching it from every angle, nailing down the individual concrete fact by looking at it in terms of the Universal, falling back on theory to uncover the so often unexpected significance of what may appear to be casual incidents or episodes, pointing out the unbelievable insidiousness with which the bureaucratic environment, in matters large as well as small obtrudes, and inserts itself into the minds even of those whose main purpose in life is to reject it.

All this and whatever may appear to be related, we shall now try to do. We have behind us not only decades of negative experience, but we can draw on some positive and extended attempts in various countries to work out the new at various levels of thought and action. Experiences in various countries were made in common, with constant exchange of trial and error.

The infinite variety of national peculiarities helped to distinguish the incidental from the fundamental. We have had successes

and have studied carefully their implications. As with all departures from established practice, the moves forward are and in fact must be explorations into unknown territory. But we have laid a foundation and it is this that we now try to communicate.

Let us begin with what is apparently a casual elementary anecdote.

In one department of a certain plant in the United States, there is a worker who is physically incapable of carrying out his duties. But he is a man with a wife and children, and his condition is due to the previous strain of his work in the plant. The workers in that department have organized their work so that for nearly ten years he has had practically nothing to do.

They have defied all efforts of the foreman and supervision to discharge him, threatening to throw the whole plant into disorder if any steps are taken to dismiss the invalid. That is the socialist society. Careful observation will show that such enormous problems as work for the old, the handicapped, the young, of both sexes, can be easily and competently handled without any bureaucratic apparatus whatever, by the good sense of workers as long as they have the power to arrange their labor as they wish. Workers tell such episodes by the dozen. No bourgeois or trade union journal ever prints any.

In another plant in the United States the company tried by a maneuver to prevent a Negro driver being given the job of dispatcher to which his seniority entitled him. The Negro workers in the plant called a meeting and gave the company a certain deadline to upgrade this worker to the job which was his by right. Before their united determination the company capitulated. Thus these workers had struck a blow against common injustice, racial discrimination, and the disorder in production which management creates. That is the socialist society. It hasn't to be organized in the future. It exists. It is organized. It has to get rid of what is stifling it, what is preventing it from expanding to the full, what is preventing it from tackling not only the immediate problem of production, but also the more general problems of society. But it exists.

In a British airport the security officers salute their superiors in accordance with the semi-military discipline that prevails in this type of public service. One of their representatives, on going to discuss union matters with management, refused to salute, claiming that in this relation he and the representative of management met as equals.

The representative of management, quite obviously a man of semi-feudal mentality, demanded the right to be saluted. The whole section of workers went out on strike immediately, and in the end, management capitulated. That is the socialist society.

Workers refer to these struggles as attempts to correct "local grievances" and to "improve working conditions." Yet to the terror of management and the perpetual astonishment of people who are not familiar with the working class, workers are ready to bring production to a stop and endure the greatest privations for weeks and months over what seems to the ordinary observer to be trifles. To workers it is precisely the power to carry all these ideas and wishes of theirs to completeness which constitutes the new society.

SOCIALIST DISCIPLINE

The new society exercises its own discipline. Workers are not homogeneous and often some worker refuses to go out on strike with his fellows or to play his part in one of the innumerable daily clashes with management. The majority of workers are quite aware that, though these dissidents take a great stand on their individual rights, none of them has ever been known to refuse the benefits of money and conditions which the actions of his fellows may win. In the United States the workers will mercilessly badger this type of worker all day.

They will report his activities to colleagues of other departments. They will construct and even write lampoons which are circulated all over the plant. In Britain the method of correction is the opposite. The British workers send the dissident to Coventry—they will not speak to him at all. In each case the workers are substituting their own discipline, the discipline of socialist relations of production, for the capitalistic discipline of dismissal.

The same type of discipline is applied to workers who do not do what their fellow workers consider to be a fair share of the work. All industrial psychologists know that under conditions of capitalist production workers have two standards of production. One they apply to the demands of management. At any particular time this consists of a quantity of work governed by the amount of money they want to make and the energy they wish to expend, on the one hand, and keeping management in its place on the other.

But there is another standard, a standard of their own, what

under the particular conditions they want to do, what they consider necessary to their self-respect and security, and they do not lightly tolerate any persistent and irresponsible departure from this. This determination to control their own labor by common agreement and to discipline those who depart from the cooperation that modern production demands, what is it but socialism?

True, it is frustrated at every turn by the existing capital-labor relation, but it is nothing that has to be created in the future by the Party or the Plan. It exists and fights, not only to exist but to expand its sphere of action.

OVERTIME

To the observer outside the plant the question of overtime is far removed from socialism. Yet it is around overtime that can be seen as clearly as anywhere else, the socialist and all other attitudes to social labor, posed in opposition to each other. Management, whether democratic or totalitarian, considers that it is its prerogative to decide when and where and by whom overtime is to be worked, irrespective of the wishes or needs of workers. There is a small minority consisting of Trotskyists, anarchists, radicals, and ex-radicals, who have what they consider to be the revolutionary attitude towards overtime.

They claim that any overtime work is a departure from the great principle of the eight-hour day and is therefore a crime. These are the ones who, we may be sure, under what they call socialism, would be ready to impose the most brutal conditions of overtime. According to them, once the property is nationalized, overtime is in the interest of society as a whole (these radicals having been substituted for the capitalists as the managers and policemen of production). At the other extreme is another minority, usually consisting of skilled workers and lead men who are eager for all the overtime they can get.

The great majority of the workers have nothing in common with any of these. They carry on what at first glance is an utterly bewildering series of struggles, sometimes for, sometimes against overtime. What the average group of workers wants in regard to overtime is that they should control the amount of overtime, how and when it should take place and who should do it. Thus, at times the struggle is against overtime, at others it is for the right to work

overtime, in what appears to be a chaotic capriciousness. But one principle underlies all these struggles.

It is the fundamental principle that workers themselves are to control overtime and therefore keep their grip on the length of the working day. Control by workers over the amount of extra work that should be done, when it is to be done, how it is to be done, who will do it, just simply this constitutes socialist relations of production, and many millions of workers all over the world are engaged in a constant struggle to establish this. Sometimes they succeed, if only partially, or for a certain length of time—that precisely is socialism and there is no other kind of socialism.

THE SCHEDULES OF PRODUCTION

In most modern plants workers want to control who are hired and when, and to control who will be dismissed and when, and under what circumstances. But this really involves knowledge of what work the plant proposes to do. While the unions and general public are primarily concerned with wages, what every worker in every plant wants to know in advance and to control are the schedules of production. But this management is adamant in keeping from them.

Walter Reuther once threw out the slogan "Open the Books." This did not mean to the workers that the companies should make their profits known. These profits have to be registered with the government and can be inspected at a moment's notice. To open the books meant to the workers: tell us in advance the schedules of production which you propose to carry out. When workers say they wish to see the schedules of production, they mean they wish to say what they think about them. So fierce was the response to the slogan of both management and workers, from their opposite points of view, that Reuther rapidly withdrew it.

In modern industry ten or twenty thousand men who have to carry out the enormously complicated processes of modern production are excluded from any comprehensive and precise knowledge of what they have to do. Not in the interests of production, but in defense of its own position, management has to treat them like children. This the workers reject as men. The intolerable exclusion from what concerns them so closely, periodically breaks out in prolonged strikes over differences of two or three pennies per hour.

Two forces here are in conflict: one mode of production based on the capital-labor relation, the relation of a drill sergeant and privates; and the other, in the words of Marx "production by freely associated men . . . consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan." These opposing forces are not ideas or theoretical constructions or hypotheses. They exist. The clash between them is constantly shaking every bone and stretching every nerve in contemporary society. There are two societies in conflict. The one is a capitalist society. The other is a socialist society. It is the refusal to recognize this which accounts for the mountains of nonsense which are daily produced on the subject of automation.

AUTOMATION

While official society and the labor bureaucracies are excelling themselves in creating dust, noise, confusion, and fear over automation, the socialist society has already put forward its own most comprehensive plans for dealing with automation.

Workers of Standards in Coventry, England, have said the fundamental words about automation.

- a) If management wishes to introduce automation into any plant, it must consult the workers in the plant at the very first inception of the idea. Workers are not opposed to automation. Far from that. They welcome it. But they insist that it is their business more than anybody else's.
- b) When automation is introduced, there is no necessity to dismiss anyone.

It is here that not merely two methods of production but two conceptions of society as a whole are in conflict. Workers are not units of production. They are men with homes which, sometimes, they have bought or are in the process of buying. They have families and children who are going to school, with the friends and associations that distinguish the lives of human beings from animals in the forest. They refuse to concede to management the right to break up their lives according to the supposed needs of production. The Coventry workers claimed that they could reorganize the work so that no one needed to be dismissed. They went further and announced a principle that made several newspaper editors declare that the end of the world had come. They stated that there were times

when they had to work very hard and times when they could take it easy because there was no need to work so hard.

Amid the chorus of denunciations and yells at the unreasonableness, the insanity of these workers, no one took care to note that the necessity to work hard at times was not denied. It was specifically admitted. But it was based on the principle that the workers would themselves decide.

This was the workers' answer to the great problem of automation. We take the liberty of making only one addition that was inherent in the whole: it would be necessary at times to send workers away from one plant to another. But who should go, and when, and under what conditions, these things nobody could know and arrange satisfactorily except the workers themselves.

Most of this appeared in the press in garbled form. But it was among the Standards workers themselves, in their private conversations, that what they proposed and, still more, what they thought, could be heard at its simplest and most direct. This is the socialist society, as complete an overturn of capitalist production as the most daring theoretical mind could conceive. But wild as this program seemed to official society and labor bureaucracies and parliamentarians, it would win the immediate support of the vast majority of workers in every country in the world. This is socialism, not in the heads of intellectuals and advanced workers, not in the future, not to be achieved after sacrifice of a generation of human beings, but here all around us, based on generations of experience and burning with the desire to establish itself.

What happened is characteristic. Faced with what amounted to the destruction of their society, union leaders, newspaper editors, bishops, and parliamentarians rushed in and organized a compromise. The workers were promised two or three weeks' severance pay as compensation. The Coventry workers had to retreat. But they have added another story to the socialist structure that they are building, in practice and in theory. Two weeks' pay. That is the capitalist answer to automation. Nearly two hundred years after the social catastrophes and cruelties of the early industrial revolution, capitalism registers its progress—two weeks' pay, a week for each century.

Automation has already brought an unbelievable disorder into the social life of millions of American workers. Unemployment pay does not satisfy. Workers want some order in their lives. Automation

shows that capitalism today, as two hundred years ago, is incapable of order. But today workers not only know that they can handle these problems, but that nobody else can. These were not the problems posed in the days of Lenin. The Marxist organization must begin from here.

THE FIRST FUNDAMENTAL TASK

Here we pause for a moment to look again at our first simple statement: To recognize the socialist society and to record the facts of its existence. Workers do not record. The great Shop Stewards Movement, the most powerful social force in Great Britain today, keeps practically no records. You will search the millions of volumes in the great libraries of Britain and you will find no single volume which attempts to make any serious examination of what this movement is, what it does, and how it does it. Yet it is certain that such records exist, in the secret files of industrialists who have to deal with this movement and understand it as far as they are able. As far as they are able. For it is impossible for them, and their bureaucratic colleagues, to understand that the day-to-day struggles of the workers constitute the socialist society and the basic struggle for socialism.

The proposals of the workers at Standards in Coventry, England, of how to deal with automation did not come from study or theory or boards of inquiry or parliamentary committees or Royal or Presidential Commissions. To those who made the proposals they were the natural, normal, in fact unavoidable conclusions, flowing naturally from their daily lives. Management and labor bureaucrats cannot understand this because its ultimate conclusion, and one that is not in any way remote, is the elimination of these parasites as an integral necessity in modern life.

It is to be noted that the vast majority of workers, contrary to theoretical socialists, have little concern with the wages or social privileges of management, supervisors and such. They are interested in the free interchange of tasks in the plant, the leveling, or rather equalization of wages through which their essentially cooperative labor can be performed without undue friction. They are not interested in the perquisites of management. Their main concern with management is that it should confine its function to doing what they, the workers, want done.

No one should underestimate the will and the energy that will be needed to say, not once but again and again with the Coventry workers, that a body of workers in a plant constitutes the only social organization capable of dealing with automation in a reasonable social and human way. To record it, to publicize it in every conceivable shape and form, to place it before workers who have not heard of it, to encourage it, this is the concrete task. Workers are ready to listen. Even when they appear skeptical, perseverance will often show that they have long thought of this but are acutely aware of the difficulties in the way and push these forward because they wish them to be examined and discussed. It is in these confrontations that Marxism and Marxists acquire life and movement, and get closer to social reality.

THE MIDDLE CLASSES

A new society invading the old never establishes itself in production alone or in one class, in this case the working class. The pattern of production permeates the whole society. The middle classes, the worker with the black coat, the white collar, or the frilly blouse, shaped by their own conditions of production, have shown themselves all over the world increasingly ready to follow the example of the workers, thus proving how deeply ingrained in the new society is the activity that the workers carry on. The most striking example, of course, is in the Hungarian Revolution. At the same time that the Hungarian workers in the plant were forming their Workers Councils, the employees formed their own councils in every branch of the national activity, in all government offices, in the Department of Foreign Affairs, in banks, in the information services of press and radio, everywhere.

Social upheavals bring out what already exists in society, even though only in embryonic form, or as aspiration. But they exist. It is the task of the Marxist organization to find them.

In Paris at the General Life Insurance Company, an Employees Council was formed two years ago in conscious opposition to both management and the trade unions. We print here complete the program and policy that it has worked out to guide it, and which it published and distributed before other insurance companies. It is the socialist society in action.