



1970: The Leninist Theory of Organisation

Introduction

30 December 2003, by **Ernest Mandel**

Approached in this way, the Leninist theory of organisation appears as a dialectical unity of three elements: a theory of the present relevance of revolution for the underdeveloped countries in the imperialist epoch (which was later expanded to apply to the entire world in the epoch of the general crisis of capitalism); a theory of the discontinuous and contradictory development of proletarian class consciousness and of its most important stages, which should be differentiated from one another; and a theory, of the essence of Marxist theory and its specific relationship to science on the one hand and to proletarian class struggle on the other.

Looking more closely, one discovers that these three theories form, so to speak, the "social foundation" of the Leninist concept of organisation, without which it would appear arbitrary, non-materialist and unscientific. The Leninist concept of the party is not the only possible one. It is, however, the only possible concept of the party which assigns to the vanguard party the historic role of leading a revolution which is considered, in an intermediate or long-range sense, to be inevitable. The Leninist concept of the party cannot be separated from a specific analysis of proletarian class consciousness, i.e., from the understanding that political class consciousness - as opposed to mere "trade union" or "craft"

consciousness - grows neither spontaneously nor automatically out of the objective developments of the proletarian class struggle. [1] And the Leninist concept of the party is based upon the premise of a *certain degree of autonomy of scientific analysis*, and especially of Marxist theory. This theory, though conditioned by the unfolding of the proletarian class struggle and the first embryonic beginnings of the proletarian revolution, should not be seen as the mechanically inevitable product of the class struggle but as the result of a theoretical practice (or "theoretical production") which is able to link up and unite with the class struggle only through a prolonged struggle. The history of the world-wide socialist revolution in the twentieth century is the history of this prolonged process.

These three propositions actually represent a deepening of Marxism, i.e., either of themes that were only indicated but not elaborated upon by Marx and Engels, or of elements of Marxist theory which were scarcely noticed due to the delayed and interrupted publication of Marx's writings in the years 1880-1905. [2] It therefore involves a further deepening of Marxist theory brought about because of gaps (and in part contradictions) in Marx's analysis itself, or at least in the generally accepted interpretation of it in the first quarter century after Marx's death.

What is peculiar about this deepening of Marx's teaching is that, setting out from different places, it proceeds toward the same central point, namely, to a determination of the special character of the proletarian or socialist revolution.

In contrast to all previous revolutions - not only the bourgeois revolutions, whose laws of motion have been studied in great detail (in the first place by Marx and Engels themselves), but also those revolutions which have hitherto been far less subjected to a systematic, generalised analysis (such as the peasant revolutions and those of the urban petty bourgeoisie against feudalism; the uprisings of slaves and the revolts of clan societies against slaveholding society; the peasant revolutions that occurred as the old Asiatic mode of production periodically disintegrated, etc.) - the proletarian revolution of the twentieth century is distinguished by four particular features. These give it a specific character, but also, as Marx foresaw, [3] make it an especially difficult undertaking.

1. The proletarian revolution is the first successful revolution in the history of mankind to be carried out by the lowest social class. This class disposes of a potentially huge, but actually extremely limited, economic power and is by and large excluded from any share in the social wealth (as opposed to the mere possession of

consumer goods which are continuously used up). Its situation is quite different from the bourgeoisie and the feudal nobility, who seized political power when they already held in their hands the actual economic power of society, as well as from the slaves, who were unable to carry through a successful revolution.

2.The proletarian revolution is the first revolution in the history of humanity aimed at a consciously planned

overthrow of existing society, i.e., which does not seek to restore a previous state of affairs (as did the slave and peasant revolutions of the past), or simply to legalise a transfer of power already achieved on the economic field, but rather to bring into being a completely new process, one which has never before existed and which has been anticipated only as a "theory" or a "program." [6]

The Leninist theory of organisation

represents, then, broadly speaking, the deepening of Marxism, applied to the basic problems of the social superstructure (the state, class consciousness, ideology, the party). Together with the parallel contributions of Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky (and, in a more limited sense of Lukacs and Gramsci), it constitutes the *Marxist science of the subjective factor*.

[Next section](#)

Bourgeois ideology and proletarian class consciousness

30 December 2003, by **Ernest Mandel**

The problem can be solved by replacing the formalistic and static point of view with a dialectical one. The Marxian proposition simply needs to be made more "dynamic". The dominant ideology of every society is the ideology of the dominant class in the sense that the latter has control over the means of ideological production which society has at its disposal (the church, schools, mass media, etc.) and uses these means in its own class interests. As long as class rule is on the upswing, stable and hence hardly questioned, the ideology of the dominant class will also dominate the consciousness of the oppressed class. Moreover, the exploited will, as a rule, tend to formulate the *first phases* of the class struggle in terms of the formulas, ideals and ideologies of the exploiters. [7]

However, the more the stability of the existing society is brought into question, and the more the class struggle intensifies, and the more the class rule of the exploiters itself begins to waver in practice, the more will at least sections of the oppressed class begin to free themselves of the control of the ideas of those in power. Prior to, and along with, the struggle for the social revolution, a struggle goes on between the ideology of the

rulers and the new ideals of the revolutionary class. This struggle in turn intensifies and accelerates the concrete class struggle out of which it arose by lifting the revolutionary class to an awareness of its historical tasks and of the immediate goals of its struggle. Class consciousness on the part of the revolutionary class can therefore develop out of the class struggle in spite of and in opposition to the ideology of the ruling class. [8]

But it is only in the revolution itself that the majority of the oppressed can liberate themselves from the ideology of the ruling class. [9] For this control is exerted not only, nor even primarily, through purely ideological *manipulation* and the mass assimilation of the ruling class' ideological production, but above all through the actual day-to-day workings of the existing economy and society and their effect on the consciousness of the oppressed. (This is especially true in bourgeois society, although parallel phenomena can be seen in all class societies.)

In capitalist society this control is exerted through the internalisation of commodity relations, which is closely tied to the reification of human relations and which results from the generalised extension of commodity

production and the transformation of labour power into a commodity, and from the generalised extension of the social division of labour under conditions of commodity production. It is also accomplished through the fatigue and brutalisation of the producers through exploitation and the alienated nature of labour, as well as through a lack of leisure time, not only in a quantitative but also in a qualitative sense, etc. Only when the workings of this imprisonment are blown apart by a revolution, i.e., by a sudden, intense increase, in *mass activity outside of the confines of alienated labour* - only then can the mystifying influence of this very imprisonment upon mass consciousness rapidly recede.

The Leninist theory of organisation therefore attempts to come to grips with the inner dialectic of this formation of political class consciousness, which can develop fully only during the revolution itself, yet only on the condition that it has already begun to develop before the revolution. [14] All revolutionary activity not related to this class struggle leads at best to a party nucleus, but not to a party. This runs the risk of degenerating into sectarian, subjective dilettantism. According to Lenin's concept of

organisation, there is no self-proclaimed vanguard. Rather, the vanguard must win recognition as a vanguard (i.e., the historical right to act as a vanguard) through its attempts to establish revolutionary ties with the advanced part of the class and its actual struggle.

The category of "advanced workers" stems from the objectively inevitable stratification of the working class. It is a function of their distinct historical origin, as well as their distinct position in the social process of production and their distinct class consciousness.

The formation of the working class as an objective category is itself an historical process. Some sections of the working class are the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of urban wage labourers; others are the sons and grandsons of agricultural labourers and landless peasants, Still others are only first or second generation descendants of a petty bourgeoisie that owned some means of production (peasants, artisans, etc.). Part of the working class works in large factories where both the economic and the social relations give rise to at least an elementary class consciousness (consciousness that "social questions" can be solved only through collective activity and organisation). Another part works in small or medium-sized factories in industry or in the so-called service sectors, where economic self-confidence as well as an understanding of the necessity for broad mass actions flow much less easily from the objective situation than in the large industrial plant. Some sections of the working class have been living in big cities for a long time. They have been literate for a long time and have several generations of trade-union organisation and political and cultural education behind them (through youth organisations, the workers press, labour education, etc.). Still others live in small towns or even in the countryside. (This was true into the late 1930s, for instance, for a significant number of European miners.) These workers have little or

no collective social life, scarcely any trade-union experience, and have received no political or cultural education at all in the organised workers movement. Some sectors of the working class are born from nations which were independent for a thousand years, and whose ruling class oppressed for long periods other nations. Other workers are born from nations which fought for decades or centuries for their national freedom - or who lived in slavery or serfdom no more than one hundred years ago. If one adds to all these historical and structural differences the various personal abilities of each wage worker - not just differences in intelligence and ability to generalise from immediate experiences, but differences in the amount of energy, strength of character: combatively and self-assurance too - then one understands that the stratification of the working class into various layers, depending on the degree of class consciousness, is an inevitable phenomenon in the history of the working class itself. *It is this historical process of becoming a class which, at a given point in time, is reflected in the various degrees of consciousness within the class.*

The category of the revolutionary party stems from the fact that Marxian socialism is a science which, in the final analysis, can be completely assimilated only in an individual and not in a collective manner. Marxism constitutes the culmination (and in part also the dissolution) of at least three classical social sciences: classical German philosophy, classical French political economy, and classical French political science (French socialism and historiography). Its assimilation presupposes at least an understanding of the materialist dialectic, historical materialism, Marxian economic theory and the critical history of modern revolutions and of the modern labour movement. Such an assimilation is necessary if it is to be able to function, in its totality, as an instrument for analysing social reality and as the compilation of the experiences of a century of proletarian

class struggle. The notion that this colossal sum of knowledge and information could somehow spontaneously flow from working at a lathe or a calculating machine is absurd. [15]

The fact that as a science Marxism is an expression of the highest degree in the development of proletarian class consciousness means simply that it is only through an individual process of selection that the best, most experienced, the most intelligent and the most combative members of the proletariat are able to directly and independently acquire this class consciousness in its most potent form. To the extent that this acquisition is an individual one, it also becomes accessible to other social classes and layers (above all, the revolutionary intelligentsia and the students). [16] Any other approach can lead only to an idealisation of the working class - and ultimately of capitalism itself.

Of course it must always be remembered that Marxism could not arise independently of the actual development of bourgeois society and of the class struggle that was inevitably unfolding within it. There is an inextricable tie between the collective, historical experience of the working class in struggle and its scientific working out of Marxism as collective, historical class consciousness in its most potent form. But to maintain that scientific socialism is an historical product of the proletarian class struggle is not to say that all or even most members of this class can, with greater or lesser ease, reproduce this knowledge. Marxism is not an automatic product of the class struggle and class experience but a result of scientific, theoretical production. Such an assimilation is made possible only through participation in that process of production; and this process is by definition an *individual* one, even though it is only made possible through the development social forces of production and class contradictions under capitalism.

Next section

Proletarian class struggle and proletarian class consciousness

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But even in its most elementary form, the spontaneous class struggle of the wage earners under capitalism leaves behind a residue in the form of a *consciousness crystallised in a process of continuous organisation*. Most of the mass is active only during the struggle; after the struggle it will sooner or later retreat into private life (i.e., "into the struggle for existence"). What distinguishes the workers vanguard from this mass is the fact that even during a lull in the struggle it does not abandon the front lines of the class struggle but continues the war, so to speak, "by other means." It attempts to solidify the resistance funds generated in the struggle into ongoing resistance funds - i.e., into unions. [17] By publishing workers newspapers and organising educational groups for workers, it attempts to crystallise and heighten the elementary class consciousness generated in the struggle. It thus helps give form to a factor of continuity, as opposed to the necessarily discontinuous action of the mass, [18] and to a factor of consciousness, as opposed to the spontaneity of the mass movement in and of itself.

However, advanced workers are driven to continuous organisation and growing class consciousness less by theory, science, or an intellectual grasp of the social whole than by the practical knowledge acquired in struggle. Since the struggle shows [19] that the dissolving of the resistance funds after each strike damages the effectiveness of the strike and the working sums in hand, attempts are made to go over to the permanent strike fund. Since experience shows an occasional leaflet to have less effect than a regular newspaper, the workers press is born. Consciousness arising directly out of the practical experience of struggle is

empirical and *pragmatic* consciousness, which can enrich action to a certain extent, but which is far inferior to the effectiveness, of a *scientifically global* consciousness, i.e., of theoretical understanding.

Based on its general theoretical understanding the revolutionary vanguard organisation can consolidate and enrich this higher consciousness, provided it is able to establish ties to the class struggle, i.e., provided it does not shrink from the hard test of verifying theory in practice, of reuniting theory and practice. From the point of view of mature Marxism - as well as that of Marx himself and Lenin - a "true" theory divorced from practice is as much an absurdity as a "revolutionary practice" that is not founded on a scientific theory. This in no way diminishes the decisive importance and absolute necessity for theoretical production. It simply emphasises the fact that wage-earning masses and revolutionary individuals, proceeding from different starting points and with a different dynamic, can bring about the unity of theory and practice.

This process can be summarised in the following diagram:

masses :	<input type="checkbox"/>	action	<input type="checkbox"/>	experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	consciousness
advanced workers:	<input type="checkbox"/>	experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	consciousness	<input type="checkbox"/>	action
			<input type="checkbox"/>			
revolutionary nuclei:	<input type="checkbox"/>	consciousness	<input type="checkbox"/>	action	<input type="checkbox"/>	experience

If we rearrange this diagram so that certain conclusions can be drawn from it, we get the following:

masses :	<input type="checkbox"/>	action	<input type="checkbox"/>	experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	consciousness
			<input type="checkbox"/>			
revolutionary nuclei:	<input type="checkbox"/>	consciousness	<input type="checkbox"/>	action	<input type="checkbox"/>	experience
					<input type="checkbox"/>	
advanced workers:	<input type="checkbox"/>	experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	consciousness	<input type="checkbox"/>	action

This formal diagram reveals a series of

conclusions about the dynamics of class consciousness which were already anticipated in the analysis but which only now obtain their full value. The collective action of the advanced workers (the "natural leaders" of the working class in the shops) is, relatively speaking, more difficult to attain because it can be aroused neither through pure conviction (as with the revolutionary nuclei) nor through purely spontaneous explosiveness (as with the broad masses). It is precisely the struggle *experience* - the important motivating factor in the actions of the advanced workers - that makes them much more careful and cautious before they undertake action on a broad scale. They have already digested the lessons of past actions and know that an explosion is not at all sufficient for them to be able to reach their goal. They have fewer illusions about the strength of the enemy (not to mention his "generosity") and about the durability of the mass movement. The greatest "temptation" of economism can be traced to this very point.

To summarise: the building of the revolutionary class party is the merging of the consciousness of the revolutionary nuclei with that of the advanced workers. The ripening of a prerevolutionary situation (of potentially revolutionary explosion) is the merging of action by the broad masses with that of the advanced workers. A revolutionary situation - i.e., the possibility of a revolutionary conquest of power - arises when a merging of actions by the vanguard and the masses with the consciousness of the vanguard and revolutionary layers has been accomplished. [20] For the broad masses, the elementary class struggle arising from the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production is always kindled only by matters of immediate

concern. The same is true for all mass actions, even political ones. Thus the problem of the broad mass struggle growing over into a revolutionary one depends not only on a quantitative factor, but also on a qualitative one. This requires the existence of sufficiently advanced workers within the masses or the mass movement who, on the basis of the stage of consciousness they have already reached, are capable of sweeping broader masses into action around objectives that challenge the continued existence of bourgeois society and the capitalist mode of production.

This also highlights the central importance of transitional demands, [21] the strategic position of advanced workers already trained in propagating these transitional demands, and the historical importance of the revolutionary organisation, which alone is capable of working out a comprehensive program of transitional demands corresponding to the objective historical conditions, as well as to the subjective needs, of the broadest layers of the mass. *A successful proletarian revolution is only possible if all these factors are successfully combined.*

We have already stated that Lenin's theory of organisation is, in fact, above all a theory of revolution. To have misunderstood this is the great weakness of Rosa Luxemburg's polemic against Lenin in 1903-1904. It is characteristic that the concept of centralisation which is attacked in the essay "Organisational Question of Social Democracy" is - and this is clear if it is read attentively - a purely organisational one. (Yet while it is attacked, it is also confirmed. On this point modern "Luxemburgists" ought to read their "Rosa" more carefully and more thoroughly!) Lenin is accused of advocating an "ultracentralist" line, of dictating the composition of local party committees, and of wishing to stymie any initiative by lower party units. [22]

When we turn to the Leninist theory of organisation as developed by Lenin himself, however, we see that the emphasis is by no means upon the formal, organisational side of centralisation but upon its *political*

and social function. At the heart of *What is to Be Done?* is the concept of the transformation of proletarian class consciousness into political class consciousness by *means of a comprehensive political activity* that raises and, from a Marxist point of view, answers all questions of internal and external class relations:

"In reality, it is possible to 'raise the activity of the working masses' only when this activity is *not restricted* to 'political agitation on an economic basis.' A basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organisation of *comprehensive* political exposure. *In no way except by means of such exposures can the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity.*"

And further:

The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social Democrats; for the *self* knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding - it would be even truer to say, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding - of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experiences of political life. [23]

And it is for the same reason that Lenin emphasises so strongly the absolute necessity for the revolutionary party to make all progressive demands and movements of all oppressed social layers and classes its own - even "purely democratic" ones. The central strategic plan advanced by Lenin in *What is to Be Done?* [24] is therefore

one of party agitation that unites all elementary, spontaneous, dispersed and "merely" local or sectional protests, revolts and movements of resistance. The emphasis of centralisation clearly lies in the political and not in the formal, organisational sphere. The aim of formal organisational centralisation is only to make possible the realisation of this strategic plan.

Although she does not recognise this essence of Lenin's "centralism," Luxemburg is compelled in her polemic to indirectly counterpose to it another conception of the formation of political class consciousness and the preparation of revolutionary situations. Her doing so emphasises even more poignantly how utterly wrong she was in this debate. Luxemburg's concept that "the proletarian army is recruited and becomes aware of its objectives in the course of the struggle itself" [25] has been completely refuted by history. In even the broadest, longest and most vigorous of workers struggles, the working masses have not gained a clear understanding of the tasks of the struggle, or did so only to an insufficient degree. (One need only recall the French general strikes of 1936 and 1968, the struggles of the German workers from 1918 to 1923, the great struggles of the Italian workers in 1920, 1948 and 1969, as well as the prodigious class struggles in Spain from 1931 to 1937, to mention only these four European countries.)

Experience in struggle is by no means sufficient for clarity on the tasks of a broad prerevolutionary, or even a revolutionary, mass struggle to be attained. Not only, of course, are these tasks connected to the immediate motives that set off the struggle, but they can be grasped only by means of a comprehensive analysis of the overall social development, of the historical position achieved by the capitalist mode of production and its internal contradictions, and of the national and international relationship of forces between classes. Without protracted and consistent preparation, without the education of hundreds and thousands of advanced workers in the spirit of a revolutionary program, and without the practical experience

accumulated over the years by these advanced workers through attempting to bring this program to the broad masses, it would be absolutely illusory to assume that suddenly, overnight so to speak, with the mere aid of mass *actions*, a consciousness equal to the demands of the historical situation could be created among these broad masses.

Actually, one could turn Luxemburg's proposition around and say that the proletarian army will never reach its historic objectives if the necessary education, schooling and testing of a proletarian vanguard in the working out and agitational application of the revolutionary program in struggle has not taken place before the outbreak of the broadest mass struggles, which by themselves create only the *possibility* of the broad masses attaining revolutionary consciousness. That is the tragic lesson of the German revolution after the first world war, which was crushed precisely because of the lack of such a trained vanguard.

The objective of Lenin's strategic plan is to create such a vanguard through an organic union of individual revolutionary nuclei with the vanguard of the proletariat. Such a fusion is impossible without a comprehensive *political* activity that takes the advanced workers beyond the confines of a horizon limited to the trade union or the factory. Empirical data available to us today confirm that Lenin's party, before and during the revolution of 1905 and after the mass movement began to pick up again in 1912, was in fact such a party. [26]

To fully grasp the profoundly revolutionary nature of Lenin's strategic plan, it must be approached from yet another point of view. Any concept based on the probability, if not the inevitability, of a *revolution* occurring in the not too distant future, must inevitably deal with the question of a direct collision with state power, i.e., the question of the conquest of political power. As soon as this difficulty is built into the concept, however, the result is one more argument in favour of centralisation. Lenin and Luxemburg agreed that capitalism itself and the bourgeois state exert, a powerful centralising influence on modern society, [51] It

allows all of the forces within the class - and all the labouring and progressive layers of society in general - to be brought together in a simultaneous, open confrontation between the various tendencies existing within the class itself. Every true soviet system - i.e., one that is actually elected by the mass of the workers and has not been imposed upon them by one or another selective power apparatus - will for that reason only be able to reject the social and ideological diversity of the proletarian layers emphasised above. A workers council is in reality a united front of the most diverse political tendencies that are in agreement on one central point: the common defence of the revolution against the class enemy. (In the same way, a strike committee reflects the most widely differing tendencies among the workers, yet with one exception: It includes only those tendencies that are participating in the strike. Scabs have no place in a strike committee.)

There is no contradiction whatever between the existence of a revolutionary organisation of the Leninist type and genuine soviet democracy, or soviet power. On the contrary, without the systematic organisational work of a revolutionary vanguard, a soviet system will either be quickly throttled by reformist and semi-reformist bureaucracies (cf. the German soviet system from 1918 to 1919), or it loses its political effectiveness due to its inability to solve the central political tasks (cf. the Spanish revolutionary committees between July 1936 and spring 1937).

The hypothesis that a soviet system makes parties superfluous has one of two sources. Either it proceeds from the naive assumption that the introduction of soviets homogenises the working class overnight, dissolves all differences of ideology and interest, and automatically and spontaneously suggests to the entire working class "the revolutionary solution" to all the strategic and tactical problems of the revolution. Or, it is merely a pretext for giving to a small group of self-appointed "leaders" the opportunity to manipulate a rather broad, inarticulate mass in that this mass is deprived of any possibility of systematically coming to grips with these strategic and tactical questions

of the revolution, i.e., of *freely discussing and politically differentiating itself* (This is obviously the case, for example, with the Yugoslav system of so-called self-management.)

The revolutionary organisation *can*, therefore, guarantee the working masses in the soviet system a greater degree of independent activity and self-awareness, and thereby of revolutionary class consciousness, than could an undifferentiated system of representation. But of course to this end it must stimulate and not hold back the independent action of the working masses. It is precisely this independent initiative of the masses which reaches its fullest development in the soviet system. Again we reach a similar conclusion: The Leninist concept of organisation, built upon a correct revolutionary strategy (i.e., on a correct assessment of the objective historical process), is simply the collective co-ordinator of the activity of the masses, the collective memory and digested experience of the masses, in place of a constantly repetitive and expanding discontinuity in time, space and consciousness.

History has also shown in this connection that there is a substantial difference between a party *calling* itself a revolutionary and actually *being* a revolutionary party. When a group of functionaries not only opposes the initiative and activity of the masses but seeks to frustrate them by any means, including military force (one thinks of Hungary in October-November 1956 or Czechoslovakia since August 1968), when this group not only finds no common language with a soviet system springing spontaneously from mass struggles, but throttles and destroys this system behind a pretext of defending "the leading role of the party" [52] - then we are obviously no longer dealing with a revolutionary party of the proletariat but with an apparatus that represents the special interests of a privileged layer deeply hostile to the independent activity of the masses: the bureaucracy. The fact that a revolutionary party can degenerate into a party of bureaucracy is, however, no more an argument against the Leninist concept of organisation than the fact that doctors

have killed, not cured, many patients represents an argument against medical science. Any step away from

this concept toward "pure" mass spontaneity would be comparable to reverting from medical science to

quackery.

[Next section](#)

Sociology of economism, bureaucratism and spontaneity

30 December 2003, by **Ernest Mandel**

For Marx and Lenin (as well as for Luxemburg and Trotsky, although they did not draw all the necessary conclusions from this fact until some time before 1914), the revolutionary subject is *the only potentially, only periodically revolutionary working class* as it works, thinks and lives under capitalism, i.e., in the totality of its social existence. [53] The Leninist theory of organisation proceeds directly from this assessment of the position of the revolutionary subject, for it is self-evident that a subject, thus defined, can only be a *contradictory* one. On the one hand it is exposed to wage slavery, alienated labour, the reification of all human relations, and the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. On the other hand, at periodic intervals it passes over into a radicalising class struggle, and even into open revolutionary battle against the capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois state apparatus. It is in this periodic fluctuation that the history of the real class struggle of the last one hundred and fifty years is expressed. It is absolutely impossible to sum up the history of, say, the French or the German labour movements of the past hundred years with either the formula "increasing passivity" or "uninterrupted revolutionary activity." It is obviously a unity of both elements with an alternating emphasis on one or the other.

As ideological tendencies, opportunism and sectarianism have their deepest theoretical roots in an undialectical definition of the revolutionary subject. For the opportunists, this revolutionary

subject is the *everyday worker*. They tend to imitate the attitude of this worker in everything and "to idolise his backward side," as Plekhanov so well put it. If the workers are concerned only with questions limited to the shops, then they are "pure trade unionists." If the workers are caught up in a wave of patriotic jingoism, then they become social-patriots or social-imperialists. If the workers submit to cold-war propaganda, they become cold-warriors: "The masses are always right." The latest and the most wretched expression of such opportunism consists of determining the program - let it be an electoral program - no longer through an objective scientific analysis of society but with the aid of ... opinion polls.

But this opportunism leads to an insoluble contradiction. Fortunately, the moods of the masses do not stand still but can change dramatically in a rather short period of time. Today the workers are concerned only with internal shop questions, but tomorrow they will throng the streets in a political demonstration. Today they are "for" the defence of the imperialist fatherland against the "external enemy," but tomorrow they will be fed up with the war and again recognise their own ruling class as the main enemy. Today they passively accept collaboration with the bosses, but tomorrow they will move against it through a wildcat strike. The logic of opportunism leads - once the adaptation to bourgeois society has been excused through references to the attitude of the "masses" - to resistance to *these very masses* as soon as they begin in a sudden reversal, to move into action against

bourgeois society.

Sectarians simplify the revolutionary subject just as much as opportunists, but in the opposite sense. If only the everyday worker counts for the opportunists - i.e., the worker who is assimilating and adapting to bourgeois relations - for the sectarians it is only the "ideal" proletarian, one who acts like a revolutionary, who counts. If the worker does not behave in a revolutionary fashion, he has ceased to be a revolutionary subject: he is demoted to being "bourgeois." Extreme sectarians - such as certain ultraleft "spontaneists," certain Stalinists, and certain Maoists - will even go so far as to equate the working *class* with the capitalist *class* if it hesitates to completely accept the particular sectarian ideology in question. [54]

Extreme objectivism on the one hand ("everything the workers do is revolutionary"), and extreme subjectivity on the other hand ("only those who accept our doctrine are revolutionary or proletarian"), join hands in the final analysis when they deny the objectively revolutionary character of huge mass struggles led by masses with a contradictory consciousness. For the opportunist objectivists these struggles are not revolutionary because "next month the majority will still go ahead and vote for the SPD (West German Social Democrats) or DeGaulle." For the sectarian subjectivists they have nothing to do with revolution "because the (i.e., our) revolutionary group is still too weak."

The social nature of these two

tendencies can be ascertained without difficulty. It corresponds to the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia: The opportunists for the most part represent the intelligentsia tied to the labour bureaucracy in mass organisations or in the bourgeois state apparatus, while the sectarians represent an intelligentsia that is either declassed or merely watches things from the sidelines, remaining outside of the real movement. In both cases, the forced separation between the objective and subjective factors at work in the contradictory but undivided revolutionary subject corresponds to a divorce between practice and theory which can lead only to an opportunist practice and to an idealising "theory" embodying "false consciousness."

It is characteristic, however, for many opportunists (among others, trade-union bureaucrats), as well as many sectarian literati, to accuse precisely the revolutionary Marxists of being petty-bourgeois intellectuals who would like to "subjugate" the working class. [55] This question also plays a certain role in the discussions within the revolutionary student movement. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse more closely the problem of the sociology of the bureaucracy, of economism, and of spontaneity (or, of the "handicraftsman's approach" to the question of organisation).

The mediation between manual and mental labour, production and accumulation, occurs at several points in bourgeois society, though at different levels, for example, in the factory. What is meant by the general concept of "intelligentsia." or "intellectual petty bourgeoisie" or "technical intelligentsia" corresponds in reality to many diverse activities of such mediation whose relation to the actual class struggle is quite distinct. One could essentially distinguish the following categories (which in no way do we claim constitute a complete analysis):

1. The genuine intermediaries between capital and labour in the process of production, i.e., the secondary officers of capital: foremen, timekeepers and other cadre personnel in the factories, among whose tasks is the maintenance, in the

interest of capital, of labour discipline within the factory.

2. The intermediaries between science and technique, or between technique and production: laboratory assistants, scientific researchers, inventors, technologists, planners, project engineers, draftsmen, etc. In contrast to category 1, these layers are not accomplices in the process of extracting surplus value from the producer. They take part in the material process of production itself and, for that reason are not exploiters but producers of surplus value.

3. The intermediaries between production and realisation of surplus value: advertising managers and offices, market research institutes, cadres and scientists occupied in the distribution sector, marketing specialists, etc.

4. The intermediaries between buyers and sellers of the commodity labour power: Above all, these are the trade union functionaries and, in a wider sense, all functionaries of the bureaucratised mass organisations of the labour movement.

5. The intermediaries between capital and labour in the sphere of the superstructure, the ideological producers (i.e., those who are occupied with producing ideology): a section of the bourgeois politicians ("public opinion makers"), the bourgeois professors of the so-called humanities, journalists, some artists, etc.

6. The intermediaries between science and the working class, the theoretical producers, who have not been professionally incorporated into the ideological production of the ruling class and are relatively able, being free from material dependency on this production, to engage in criticism of bourgeois relations.

One could add a seventh group, which is partially included in the fifth, and partially in the sixth, In classical, stable bourgeois society, teaching as a profession falls into category 5, both because of the unlimited predominance of bourgeois ideology and because of the generally abstract and ideological character of all

professional teaching. With the growing structural crisis in the neocapitalist high schools and universities, however, a change in its objective standards takes place. On the one hand, the general crisis of capitalism precipitates a general crisis in neocapitalist ideology, which is increasingly called into question. On the other hand, teaching serves less as abstract, ideological indoctrination and more as the direct technocratic preparation for the future intellectual workers (of categories 2 and 3) to be incorporated into the process of production. This makes it possible for the content of such teaching to be increasingly tied to a regained awareness of individual alienation, as well as to social criticism in related fields (and even to social criticism in general).

It now becomes clear which part of the intelligentsia will exert a negative influence upon the developing class consciousness of the proletariat: It is above all groups 3, 4 and 5. (We need say nothing about group 1 because in general it keeps its distance from the workers organisations anyway.) What is most dangerous for the initiative and self-assurance of the working class is a symbiosis or fusion of groups 4 and 5, as has occurred on a broad scale since the first world war in the social-democratic and today already partially in the Moscow-oriented Communist mass organisations in the West.

Groups 2 and 6, on the other hand, can only enhance the impact of the working-class and revolutionary organisations *because they equip them with the knowledge that is indispensable for a relentless critique of bourgeois society and for the successful overthrow of this society, and even more for the successful taking over of the means of production by the associated producers.*

Those who rail against the growing union of workers organisations with groups 2 and 6 of the intelligentsia objectively assist groups 3, 4 and 5 in exerting their negative influence on the working class. For never in history has there been a class struggle that has not been accompanied by an ideological struggle. [56] It boils down to a question of determining *which*

ideology can sink roots in the working class; or, to phrase it better, whether bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology or Marxist scientific theory will develop among the workers. Whoever opposes "every outside intellectual influence" within the working class in struggle either forgets or pushes aside the fact that the influence which groups 1, 3, 4 and 5 exert on this working class is *permanently and unremittingly* at work upon the proletariat through the entire mechanism of bourgeois society and capitalist economy, and that the ultraleft "spontaneists" have no panacea at their disposal for putting an end to this process. To thunder against the influence of Marxist intellectuals within the working class means simply to allow the influence of the bourgeois intelligentsia to spread without opposition. [57] Still worse: By resisting the formation of a revolutionary organisation and the education of professional proletarian revolutionaries, Mensheviks and "spontaneists" are objectively forced to help perpetuate the division between manual and intellectual labour, i.e., the spiritual subjugation of the workers to the intellectuals and the rather rapid bureaucratisation of the workers organisations. For, a worker who continuously remains within the capitalist process of production will most often not be in a position to globally assimilate theory, and will thereby remain dependent upon "petty-bourgeois specialists." For

that reason, a decisive step can be, taken within the revolutionary organisation toward the intellectual emancipation of at least the most advanced workers and toward an initial victory over the division of labour within the workers movement itself through the intermittent removal of workers from the factories.

This is not yet the final word on the sociology of spontaneism. We must ask ourselves: In which layers of the working class will the "antipathy" and "distrust" toward intellectuals have the most influence? Obviously in those layers whose social and economic existence *most sharply exposes them to an actual conflict with intellectual labour*. By and large, these are the workers of the small and medium-sized factories threatened by technological progress; self-taught workers who, through personal effort, have differentiated themselves from the mass; workers who have scrambled to the top of bureaucratic organisations; workers who, because of their low educational and cultural level, are the furthest removed from intellectual labour - and therefore also regard it with the greatest mistrust and hostility. In other words, the social basis of economist, spontaneity, the "handicraftsman's approach" to the question of organisation and hostility toward science within the working class is the craft layer of this class.

On the other hand, among the workers

of the large factories and cities, of the extensive branches of industry in the forefront of technological progress, the thirst for knowledge, the greater familiarity with technical and scientific processes, and the greater audacity in projecting the conquest of power in both the factory and the state make it much easier to understand the objectively necessary role of revolutionary theoreticians and of the revolutionary organisation.

The spontaneous tendencies in the labour movement often, if not always, correspond exactly to this social basis. This was especially true for anarcho-syndicalism in the Latin countries before the first world war. This was also true for Menshevism, which was thoroughly defeated by Bolshevism in the large metropolitan factories, but which found its most important proletarian base in the typically small-town mining and oil-field districts of southern Russia. [58] Attempts today, in the era of the third industrial revolution, to revive this craftsman caste approach under the pretext of guaranteeing "workers autonomy" could only have the same result as in the past - namely, to dissipate the forces of the advanced and potentially revolutionary working class and to give a boost to the semi-craft, bureaucratised sections of the movement that are under the constant influence of bourgeois ideology.

[Next section](#)

Scientific intelligentsia, social science and proletarian class consciousness

30 December 2003, by **Ernest Mandel**

The participation of the intelligentsia in the classical socialist movement before the first world war generally tended to decline. Though it was considerable at the start of the movement, it became smaller and smaller as the organised mass movement of the working class

became stronger. In a little known polemic against Max Adler in 1910, Trotsky revealed the causes of this process to be on the whole materialistic: the intelligentsia's social dependency on the big bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state; an ideological identification with the class interests

it thereby serves; and the inability of the workers movement, organised as a "counter-society," to compete with its counterpart. Trotsky predicted that this would probably change very quickly, in a revolutionary epoch, on the eve of the proletarian revolution. [59]

From these correct premises, however, he drew what were already incorrect tactical conclusions, when for instance he failed to see the great importance which in 1908-1909 Lenin accorded the student movement (which was re-emerging in the middle of the victorious counter-revolution), considering it an albatross for the subsequent, new rise in the revolutionary mass movement (that was to begin in 1912).

He even went so far as to maintain that it was the "fault" of the leading revolutionary intelligentsia in the Russian Social Democracy if it was able to spread "its overall social characteristics: a spirit of sectarianism, an individualism typical of intellectuals, and ideological fetishism." [60] As Trotsky later admitted, he at that time underestimated the *political and social significance* of the faction fight between the Bolsheviks and the Liquidators, which was only an extension of the earlier struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. History was to show that this struggle had nothing to do with a product of "intellectual sectarianism," but with the separation of socialist, revolutionary consciousness from petty-bourgeois, reformist consciousness. [61]

It is correct, however, that the participation of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia in the building of the revolutionary class party of the Russian proletariat was still a pure product of individual selection without any social roots. And since the October revolution, this has inevitably turned against the *proletarian* revolution, for the masses of the technical intelligentsia were not able to go over to the camp of the revolution. At first they sabotaged economic production and the methods of social organisation on the broadest scale; then their co-operation had to be "bought" through high salaries; and finally they were transformed into the driving force behind the bureaucratisation and degeneration of this revolution. Inasmuch as the position of the technical intelligentsia (especially category 2 above) in the material process of production has

today decisively changed, and since this technical intelligentsia is gradually being transformed into a section of the wage-earning class, the possibility of its massive participation in the revolutionary process and in the reorganisation of society stands on much firmer ground than in the past. Frederick Engels had already, pointed to the historically decisive role this intelligentsia could play in the construction of the socialist society.

In order to take over and put into operation the means of production, we need people, and in large numbers, who are technically trained. We do not have them, . . . I foresee us in the next eight to ten years recruiting enough young technicians, doctors, lawyers and teachers to be in a position to let party comrades administer the factories and essential goods for the nation. Then our accession to power will be quite natural and will work itself out relatively smoothly. If, on the other hand, we prematurely come to power through a war, the technicians will be our main opponents, and will deceive and betray us whenever possible. We will have to use terror against them and still they will shit all over us. [62]

Of course, it must be added that in the course of this third industrial revolution the working class itself, which is much better qualified than in 1890, exhibits a much greater ability to directly manage the factories than in Engels' time. But in the final analysis, it is technical abilities that are required for the broad masses to be able to exert political and social control over the "specialists" (a matter about which Lenin had so many illusions in 1918). A growing union between the technical intelligentsia and the industrial proletariat, and the growing participation of revolutionary intellectuals in the revolutionary party, can only facilitate that control.

As the contradiction between the objective socialisation of production and labour on the one hand, and private appropriation on the other, intensifies (i.e., as the crisis of the capitalist relations of production sharpens) - and today we are

experiencing a new and sharper form of this contradiction, which underlay the May 1968 events in France and the mass struggles in Italy in 1969 - and as neocapitalism seeks to win a new lease on life by raising the working class' level of consumption, science will increasingly become for the masses a revolutionary, productive force in two regards: With automation and the growing mountain of commodities, it produces not only a growing crisis in the production and distribution process of capital, which is based upon generalised commodity production; it also produces revolutionary consciousness in growing masses of people by allowing the myths and masks of the capitalist routine to be torn away, and by making it possible for the worker, reconquering the consciousness of being alienated, to put an end to that alienation. As the decisive barrier which today holds back the working class from acquiring political class consciousness is found to reside less in the misery of the masses or the extreme narrowness of their surroundings than in the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification, it is precisely then that the eye-opening function of critical social science can play a truly revolutionary role in the new awakening of the class consciousness among the masses. Of course, this makes necessary the existence of concrete ties with the working masses - a requirement that can only be met by the advanced workers on the one hand and the revolutionary organisation on the other. And this also requires the revolutionary, scientific intelligentsia not to "go to the people" with the modest populist masochism that restricts it to humbly supporting struggles for higher wages but to bring the awakened and critical layers of the working class what they are unable to achieve by themselves, due to their fragmented state of consciousness: the scientist knowledge and awareness that will make it possible for them to recognise the scandal of concealed exploitation and disguised oppression for what it is.

[Next section](#)

Historical pedagogy and communication of class consciousness

30 December 2003, by **Ernest Mandel**

To assimilate its growing class consciousness, each layer requires its own methods of instruction, goes through its own learning process and needs to have a special form of communication with the class as a whole and with the realm of theoretical production. The historical role of the revolutionary vanguard party Lenin had in mind can be summed up as that of jointly expressing these three forms of pedagogy,

The broad masses learn only through action. To hope to "impart" to them revolutionary consciousness through propaganda is an endeavour worthy of Sisyphus - and as fruitless. Yet although the masses learn only through action, all actions do not necessarily lead to a mass acquisition of *revolutionary* class consciousness. Actions around immediately realisable economic and political goals that can be completely achieved within the framework of the capitalist social order do not produce revolutionary class consciousness. This was one of the great illusions of the "optimistic" Social Democrats at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth (including Engels) who believed that there was a straight line leading from partial successes in electoral struggles and strikes to revolutionary consciousness and to an increase in the proletariat's revolutionary combativity. [63]

This has proven to be historically incorrect. These partial successes certainly played a significant and positive role in strengthening the self-confidence and combativity of the proletarian masses in general. (The anarchists were wrong to reject these partial struggles out of hand.) Yet they did not prepare the working masses for revolutionary struggle. The German working class' lack of

experience in revolutionary struggles on the one hand, and the existence, on the other hand, of such experience in the Russian working class, was the most important difference in consciousness between the two classes on the eve of the first world war. It decisively contributed to the dissimilar outcome of the revolutions of 1917-1919 in Germany and in Russia.

Since the goal of mass actions is generally the satisfaction of immediate needs, it becomes an important aspect of revolutionary strategy to link to these needs demands that objectively cannot be achieved or co-opted within the framework of the capitalist social order, and which produce an objectively revolutionary dynamic that has to lead to a test of strength between the two decisive social classes over the question of power. This is the strategy of transitional demands which, through the efforts of Lenin, was incorporated into the program of the Communist International at its fourth congress, and which was later elaborated by Trotsky into the main body of the program of the Fourth International. [64]

The development of revolutionary class consciousness among the broad masses is possible only if they accumulate experiences of *struggles* that are not only limited to the winning of partial demands within the framework of capitalism. The gradual injection of these demands into mass struggles can come about only through the efforts of a broad layer of advanced workers who are closely linked to the masses and who disseminate and publicise these demands (which normally do not spontaneously grow out of the day-to-day experiences of the class) in the factories, experimenting with them in

various skirmishes, and spreading them through agitation, until a point is reached where favourable objective and subjective conditions converge, making the realisation of these demands the actual objective of great strikes, demonstrations, agitational campaigns, etc.

Although revolutionary class consciousness among the broad masses develops only out of the experience of *objectively revolutionary struggle*, among advanced workers it flows from the experience of life, work and struggle in general. These experiences do not necessarily need to be revolutionary at all. From the daily experiences of class conflict, these advanced workers draw the elementary conclusions about the need for class solidarity, class action and class organisation. The programmatic and organisational forms through which this action and organisation are to be led will differ greatly depending upon objective conditions and concrete experiences. But the advanced workers' experience of life, work and struggle leads them to the threshold of understanding the inadequacy of activity which seeks merely to reform the existing society rather than abolish it.

The activity of the revolutionary vanguard can make it possible for the class consciousness of the advanced workers to cross over this threshold. It can fulfil this role of catalyst neither automatically nor without regard for objective conditions. It can only fulfil it when it is itself equal to the task, i.e., if the content of its theoretical, propagandistic and literary activity corresponds to the needs of the advanced workers, and if the form of this activity does not trample underfoot the laws of pedagogy (avoiding ultimatic formulations). At the same time, this kind of activity

must be linked to *activity of a practical nature* and to a *political perspective*, thus enhancing the credibility of both the revolutionary strategy and the organisation putting it forward.

In periods of abating class struggles, of a temporary decline in the self-confidence of the working class, during which the stability of the class enemy appears temporarily assured, the revolutionary vanguard will not be able to achieve its objective even if its activity is completely equal to the task of catalysing revolutionary class consciousness among the broadest layer of advanced workers. The belief that a mere defence of "the correct tactic" or "the correct line" is sufficient to miraculously generate a growing revolutionary force, even in periods of declining class struggle, is an illusion stemming from bourgeois rationalism, not from the materialist dialectic. This illusion, incidentally, is the cause of most splits within the revolutionary movement because the organisational sectarianism of the splitters is based on the naive view that the "application of the correct tactic" can win over more people in the as yet untouched periphery than it can among revolutionaries who are already organised. As long as the objective conditions remain unfavourable, these splits for that reason usually result in grouplets that are even weaker than those whose "false tactics" made them seem so worthy of condemnation in the first place.

This does not mean, however, that the work of the revolutionary vanguard among the advanced workers remains useless or ineffectual during unfavourable objective circumstances. It produces no great *immediate* successes, yet it is a tremendously important, and even decisive, *preparation* for that turning point when class struggles once again begin to mount!

For just as broad masses with no experience of revolutionary struggle cannot develop revolutionary class consciousness, advanced workers who have never heard of transitional demands cannot introduce them into the next wave of class struggle. The patient, persistent preparation carried

out, with constant attention to detail, by the revolutionary vanguard organisation, sometimes over a period of years, pays off in rich dividends the day the "natural leaders of the class" still hesitating and not yet completely free from hostile influences, suddenly, during a big strike or demonstration, take up the demand for workers control and thrust it to the forefront of the struggle. [65]

To be in a position, however, to convince a country's advanced workers and radical intelligentsia of the need to extend broad mass struggles beyond the level of immediate demands to that of transitional demands, it is not enough for the revolutionary vanguard organisation to learn by heart a list of such demands culled from Lenin and Trotsky. It must acquire a twofold knowledge and a two-sided method of learning. On the one hand, it must assimilate the body of the experiences of the international proletariat over more than a century of revolutionary class struggle. On the other hand, it must carry on a continuous, serious analysis of the present overall social reality, national as well as international. This alone makes it possible to apply the lessons of history to the reality at hand. It is clear that on the basis of the Marxist theory of knowledge, only practice can ultimately provide the criterion for measuring the actual theoretical assimilation of present-day reality. For that reason, international practice is an absolute prerequisite for a Marxist international analysis, and an international organisation is an absolute prerequisite for such a practice.

Without a serious assimilation of the entire historical experience of the international workers movement from the revolution of 1848 to the present, it is impossible to determine with scientific precision either the contradictions of present neocapitalist society - on a world scale as well as in individual countries - or the concrete contradiction accompanying the formation of proletarian class consciousness, or the kind of struggles that could lead to a prerevolutionary situation. History is the only laboratory for the social sciences. Without assimilating the lessons of

history, a pseudo-revolutionary Marxist today would be no better than a "medical student" who refused to set foot inside the dissecting laboratory.

It should be pointed out in this connection that all attempts to keep the newly emerging revolutionary movement "aloof from the splits of the past" demonstrate a complete failure to understand the socio-political nature of this differentiation within the international workers movement. If one puts aside the inevitable personal and incidental factors involved in these differentiations, one has to come to the conclusion that the great disputes in the international workers movement since the foundation of the First International (the disputes between Marxism and anarchism; between Marxism and revisionism; between Bolshevism and Menshevism; between internationalism and social-patriotism; between defenders of the dictatorship of the proletariat and defenders of bourgeois democracy; between Trotskyism and Stalinism; between Maoism and Khrushchevism) touch upon fundamental questions relating to the proletarian revolution and to the strategy and tactics of revolutionary class struggle. *These basic questions are products of the very nature of capitalism, the proletariat and revolutionary struggle.* They will therefore remain pressing questions as long as the problem of creating a classless society on a world scale has not been solved in practical terms. No "tactfulness," no matter how artful, and no "conciliationism," no matter how magnanimous, can in the long run prevent these questions from rising out of practice itself to confront each new generation of revolutionaries. All that is accomplished by attempting to avoid a discussion of these problems is that instead of raising, analysing and solving them in a methodical and scientific fashion, this is done unsystematically, at random, without plan, and without sufficient training and knowledge.

However, while the assimilation of the historical substance of Marxist theory is necessary, it is nevertheless in and of itself an insufficient prerequisite for conveying revolutionary class consciousness to the advanced

workers and the radical intelligentsia. In addition, a systematic analysis of the present is required without which theory cannot furnish the means for disclosing either the immediate capacity of the working class for struggle or the "weak links" in the neocapitalist mode of production and bourgeois society; nor can it furnish the means for formulating the appropriate transitional demands (as well as the proper pedagogical approach to raising them). Only the combination of a serious, complete social and critical analysis of the present and the assimilation of the lessons of the history of the workers movement can create an effective instrument for the theoretical accomplishment of the task of a revolutionary vanguard. [66]

Without the experience of revolutionary struggle by broad masses, there can be no revolutionary class consciousness among these masses. Without the conscious intervention of advanced workers, who inject transitional demands into

workers struggles, there can hardly be experiences of revolutionary struggle on the part of the broad masses. Without the spreading of transitional demands by a revolutionary vanguard, there can be no possibility of advanced workers influencing mass struggles, in a truly anti-capitalist sense. Without a revolutionary program, without a thorough study of the history of the revolutionary workers movement, without an application of this study to the present, and without practical proof of the ability of the revolutionary vanguard to successfully play a leading role in at least a few sectors and situations, there can be no possibility of convincing the advanced workers of the need for the revolutionary organisation and therefore no possibility (or only an unlikely one) that the appropriate transitional demands for the objective situation can be worked out by the advanced workers. In this way the various factors in the formation of class consciousness intertwine and

underpin the timeliness of the Leninist conception of organisation.

The process of building a revolutionary party acquires its unified character through jointly expressing the learning of the masses in action, the learning of the advanced workers in practical experience, and the learning of the revolutionary cadre in the transmission of revolutionary theory and practice. There is a constant interrelationship between learning and teaching, even among the revolutionary cadre, who have to achieve the ability to shed any arrogance resulting from their theoretical knowledge. *This ability proceeds from the understanding that theory proves its right to exist only through its connection to the real class struggle and by its capacity to transform potentially revolutionary class consciousness into the actual revolutionary class consciousness of broad layers of workers.* The famous observation by Marx that the educators must themselves be educated [