I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work except where indicated otherwise in the acknowledgements.
THE PROBLEM OF THE STATE IN MARXIST THEORY AND PRACTICE

FROM MARX TO LENIN

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CHAPTER ONE


Marx first formulated his ideas about the state in the course of his criticisms of Hegelian political theory. Like Hegel, he was concerned above all to establish the nature of freedom and rationality and the conditions in which these might be realised. He accepted, too, a large part of Hegel's account of freedom and rationality and the obstacles to their attainment. At a number of points, however, he found Hegel's judgements inadequate, and his appraisals of policies and institutions effectively hostile to the genuinely free and rational tendencies in society.

Much of Marx's dissent focussed on the institution of the state, or government, which Hegel had come to regard as the principal vehicle and expression of freedom and rationality. Marx adhered to the more familiar liberal view that the government and its agencies were a barrier to, not a source of liberty. From opposition to Hegel's views about particular policies and institutions, he was led on to a more thorough-going critique of Hegel's
formulation of the general problem and the means to its solution.

One aspect (or outcome) of his critique was an alternative theory of the state, or a theory of an alternative means of performing the 'world-historical' functions that Hegel assigned to the state. An important issue from the beginning for Marx was the location of 'universality' in society, and the state's claim to speak for and represent what was truly universal in society, as distinct from what was partial or belonged to particular interests.

Hegel, the State and Universality

Hegel's political theory and his treatment of the state were part of his grand philosophic enterprise in which he sought to resolve and transcend dialectically the distinctions and contradictions that he found in the world: mind (subject)-object; the individual - society; necessity - freedom; thought - sense. The criteria which he applied to political institutions were those that followed from his general account of man's history, especially the progress of mind to mastery over its object, to self-consciousness, rational self-determination, and the unity of individual minds in universal consciousness.
Accordingly, Hegel stood firmly on the ant-individualist side of the divide that had arisen in eighteenth century liberal theories.

Like Rousseau, Hegel believed that to be free was to be rational, and that neither freedom nor rationality could be achieved by the isolated individual responding to purely subjective or self-interested inclinations. But equally, they could not be achieved by ignoring or attempting to bypass individual interests and subjective existence. Any account of man in society and politics had to recognise and reconcile the individual and the general, the particular and the universal. In practical terms, freedom was inseparable from membership of concrete universals: institutions which unified particulars on a higher plane. The progress of morality, culture and reason that took place in these social institutions enabled men to transcend their existence as isolated individuals.

In his most complete and detailed analysis of politics (The Philosophy of Right), Hegel provided for the particular and the universal in his complementary notions of civil society (where the rights of subjectivity and self-interest were paramount) and the state (which represented objective reason and the universal interest).
Hegel accepted the premise that private property was essential in order that the free will of the individual could objectify itself. He argued, however, that the free clash of individual wills did not lead to a free society but to one ruled by the necessity of chance. The competition which arose from private property caused the predominance of particular and material interests within the economic sphere.

Distinct from this realm of civil society was the state, which Hegel described as the most comprehensive concrete universal created by mind. Within it the contradictions of civil society could be resolved on a higher level, and economic competition made part of the common interest. The state could preserve the freedom of the individual through its guarantee of abstract right, while also representing the general interest. The state was immanent in all the other institutions of society, and its existence as organising principle brought unity, rationality and freedom to the whole.

Marx and Universality in Society and the State

Marx was prepared to follow Hegel in identifying freedom as rational self-determination or the mastery of mind over its object, and in seeking a dialectical integration of the particular and universal (the
individual and society). He could not, however, share Hegel's beliefs that freedom and rationality were objectively realised in contemporary German life, or that the institutions of the Prussian state expressed the principles of rationality or universality. Marx believed both that the principles of Hegel's thought had not yet been achieved in reality, and that Hegel's theory itself was impaired by the attempt to compromise with a reality that was already passing away. He was convinced that the bureaucratic exercise of social power, which Hegel so much admired, was one of the greatest obstacles to rational self-determination. In his later political theory he always strove to refute the thesis that bureaucratisation

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N. Lobkowicz stresses the point that in 1818, when Hegel accepted the chair at Berlin, the post-Napoleonic reforms had made Prussia one of the most advanced states of the time. Lobkowicz asserts that Hegel was oblivious of the reaction which set in in the 1820s. However the problem would appear to be of a deeper nature than this would suggest. Calvez argues that there is a contradiction in Hegel's presentation of the state as both the immanent goal of the economic, social and family spheres, and as another real world set over against them: only an ideal essence could be both immanent and exterior in this way. For Calvez, Hegel lapses into positivism when he attempts to identify the state both as the immanent goal of certain institutions and as an exterior reality. See Lobkowicz, N., Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx, Indiana, Notre Dame U.P., 1967, pp.209-10; Calvez, J.-Y., La Pensée de Karl Marx, Paris, Editions du Seul, 1956, pp.174-75.
and increase in the state apparatus was a necessary concomitant of industrial society.

Marx worked out his dissent from Hegel in the period 1842-44, partly in a series of articles in the Rheinische Zeitung on political and social issues, and partly in notes and essays in which he examined Hegel's position more directly. As he did so, he extended his critique from the Prussian state to the state in general, and to Hegel's theory of the state and its relationship to civil society. In developing his own ideas, he was fortified and influenced by the emergence of the 'Left-Hegelian' criticism of Hegel's Idealism, especially in the work of Feuerbach.

Marx's starting point was a denial that the political institutions of the existing state, and in particular the bureaucracy, could themselves formulate or express the universal interest in society. As he first stated that argument, he did not question the existence of a universal interest or principle of universality in society, but concentrated on the mode in which the general interest might be expressed.

Soon however, Marx was led to consider more fully the conditions in which universality could exist and be understood. He came to identify contemporary society
more closely with civil society in Hegel's sense, and to view political institutions as an extension of civil society and not as a means of transcending its contradictions and limitations. Ultimately, since he was still fully committed to the principles of freedom and rationality, he was impelled to look for some other means of transcending civil society and dissolving the dominion of particular interests.

The shift in Marx's interests and in his attitude towards the state was reflected in a change in his terminology. At the time of his earliest articles he still believed that the universal could be located in existing society (though not in its political institutions) and he used the term 'state' to refer to this. From 1843, on the other hand, he used the term almost exclusively to refer to the organs of government, and the 'state' became synonomous with a particularistic institution resting on a particularistic society.

Marx began his indirect attack on Hegel's theory with a number of articles on censorship and the function of the free press. He took the fundamental issue to be the role of the bureaucracy and its claim to speak on behalf of society. Against that claim, he argued that the consciousness of the general will existed in the state,
outside the specific sphere of formal political institutions: it could not be present to a greater degree in the latter than in the people as a whole. He attacked the assumption that one organ of society could be the exclusive possessor of all the reason and morality of the state.¹

Marx alleged that censorship represented an attempt by the bureaucracy to set itself up against the state proper. Censorship meant the protection of the particular opinions of the bureaucracy from the criticism of public opinion. He contrasted the universal form of the free press (in which public opinion could truly be formed and reflected because the press was open to the criticism of all), with the enthronement of particular opinions in the secrecy of the bureaucracy.² He denied that an order of officials could be endowed with a superior knowledge which would enable them to judge the errors of public reason.³

¹ "Bemerkungen über die neueste preussische Zensurinstruktion" (Anekdota, 13 February 1843), MEGA, 1/1, p.163 (p.15). The page numbers given in brackets throughout this chapter refer to Vol. 1 of the Werke edition, and are supplied in view of the scarcity of the preferable MEGA edition (prepared under Rjazanov's direction).
² Ibid.
³ Ibid., p.168 (p.20).
He developed these points further in a series of articles dealing with the question of the publication of the Landtag's proceedings. Marx there treated the free press as the means by which the consciousness of a people was crystallised. The free press was "the public form of the historical Volksgeist"; it mirrored the spiritual development of the people.¹ Through the press the material struggles of the people were idealised, and became spiritual struggles. The press enabled that self-observation by the people which was the first condition of freedom.² Marx lauded the institution of the press for its fostering of the self-awareness of the people; it enabled them to oppose a true public opinion to the arbitrary interpretations of the general will handed down from above. The institution of censorship, on the other hand, resulted in the government hearing only its own voice - a fact which vitiated its claim to represent the will of the people.³

Marx claimed that only the full exposure of the Diet to the public consciousness (through the press) could

¹ "Debatten über Pressfreiheit und Publikation der Landständischen Verhandlungen" (Rheinische Zeitung, May numbers, 1842), MEGA, 1/1, p. 797 (p. 40).
² Ibid., p. 212 (p. 61)
³ Ibid., p. 215 (pp. 63-64).
prevent the rights of the people from being transformed into a privilege enjoyed at their expense. This exposure would exert pressure on the Landtag to give up its particularistic character and become an objectification of public opinion.  

He described the representation of the people as farcical, if the representative body was not subject to the pressure of a public aware of what was being done in its name.  

Besides asserting the claims of the press and the whole people, Marx subjected those of the bureaucracy to a bitingly critical examination. He was already able to employ here some of the arguments which sustained his lifelong hostility to bureaucracy. He depicted the bureaucratic exercise of power as resulting in a distinction between the active, knowledgeable citizenship of the administration, and the passive citizenship of the administered, who were deprived of information.  

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1 Ibid., p.194 (p.43).
2 Ibid., p.195 (p.44)
3 "Rechtfertigung des ++ - Korrespondenten von der Mosel" (Rheinische Zeitung, January 1843), MEGA, 1/1, p.369 (p.186). The ideal of active citizenship was to occupy a prominent place in Marx's political philosophy throughout his life. He was always to assert that self-determination (and thereby freedom) could only be achieved through rational and active individual participation in shaping the universal.
Moreover, he claimed that within the bureaucracy itself administrative precepts and directions took on a life of their own, and ruled the personnel.\footnote{1}{Ibid., p.370 (pp.186-87).} The law of hierarchy fostered the building up of concepts of reality which had little relation to the outside world.\footnote{2}{Ibid., pp.368 and 369 (p.185).} The tendency existed, for example, for officials to inherit situations caused by the man who had just been promoted to become their immediate superior.\footnote{3}{Ibid., p.370 (p.186).} This prevented the objective criticism of previous administrative practices. Also, the lower levels of the hierarchy, which were in closest contact with any given situation, were denied the power to make general criticisms of administrative precepts and institutions. For these reasons officials tended to interpret all mishaps as stemming from causes outside the government.\footnote{4}{Ibid., p.369 (p.186).}

Marx remarked that the state official in general was hampered by a relative lack of practical expertise when dealing with private men. On the other hand, the expert knowledge which the state official did receive from

\footnote{1}{Ibid., p.370 (pp.186-87).} \footnote{2}{Ibid., pp.368 and 369 (p.185).} \footnote{3}{Ibid., p.370 (p.186).} \footnote{4}{Ibid., p.369 (p.186).}
outside was tainted with the prejudice of private interests. It followed that an official acquainted with a situation would probably be prejudiced, while one who was not prejudiced would have no expertise. Marx alleged that the solution reached was that the official elevated the interest of the private man into an interest of the state, in return for having the state interest recognised as his own private interest (from which all others were excluded as laity).^1

Marx's accusation was that the hierarchy of status in the bureaucracy (and the personal relations which it engendered) prevented the satisfactory evaluation of the premises of administration, or of the demands from outside which it had to handle. And this brought him back to the other theme which dominated his first period of editorship - the need for a free press. The press was necessary as a third element to mediate between the administration and the administered. The press was a universal political organ without being bureaucratic: all citizens had equal rights to speak through it, and judgement was formed on impersonal intellectual grounds.2

^1 Ibid., p. 368 (p.185).
2 Ibid., p.373 (pp.189-90).
In these articles, then, Marx had moved into opposition to Hegel in a number of important respects. He had denied that freedom of political activity must be restricted to a particular group endowed with special attributes above and beyond innate reason (which both assumed was a universal characteristic of man). He held that if the political powers of the people were alienated and transferred to institutions not directly responsible to them, these powers would inevitably be used against them to destroy the rest of their freedom. In this way: "the Estates of the Middle Ages absorbed into themselves all the rights of the country, and turned them as privileges against the country".1

Marx had also firmly located the universal will outside the sphere of government. He claimed, in fact, that the expression of public opinion in the free press was an illustration of it. The press was not a divisive but a unifying force, being subject to the universal standards of reason.2 The bureaucracy was not unique in its ability to formulate the common interest in the light of the conflicting demands of particular interests - the

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1 Debatten über Pressfreiheit..., loc. cit., p.192 (p.41).
2 Ibid., pp.224-25 (pp.72-73).
people as a whole could do this for themselves through institutions such as the press.

In sum, these articles provide the first glimpse of the position Marx was later to assume under the influence of Feuerbach/Hess: that Hegel had mystified the political state by inverting its real relationship to society as a whole and by making the latter into merely its predicate. On the other hand Marx still adhered here to the view that it was possible to formulate a general will in a society based on private property.

Marx moved to a much more radical criticism of Hegel when he began to question the compatibility of a general will (universal interest) with private property. His early steps towards such a position were taken in his first article dealing with a concrete social problem, a study of "The Law relating to the Theft of Wood". He argued that in this matter the state was allowing itself to be used by one class of society, the Rhenish landowners, against another, the poor.¹ He concluded that the state had been diverted from its proper role as the guardian of the common interest and was being swallowed up by the particular interests of society (which stemmed from the

¹ "Debatten über das Holzdiebstahlgesetz", MEGA, 1/1, pp.266-304, passim (pp.109-47).
institution of private property). This provided him with the basis and incentive for a more searching look at the relation between the state and particular interests. He undertook that scrutiny in the (draft) "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" which he wrote in 1843.

In this first formal critique of Hegel, Marx developed the points he had already made with reference to the institutions of the Prussian government. He elaborated his position that as long as the common interests of society were not administered by all they would remain unsatisfied. Any institutionalised social power made independent of society as a whole must develop its own particularistic interests.

It followed that it was dangerous to legitimise the bureaucracy as the conscious mind of the state (as Hegel had done). If one did so one made the aggrandisement of the bureaucracy falsely appear to be synonomous with the progress of the state as a whole. In fact the bureaucrats transformed the goals of the state into a means of personal advancement.¹ They represented their own goals and values as those of the state.² When the

¹ "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" [Kritik des Hegelschen Staatsrechts] (1843), MEGA 1/1, p.457 (p.249).
² Ibid., p.456 (p.249).
spiritual being of the state was treated as the property of the bureaucracy it became reduced to the material interests of its guardians.¹

Marx continued here his critique of the hierarchic structure of the bureaucracy: "the few personal sins of the officials are not to be compared with their sins on behalf of the hierarchy".² He described it as a hierarchy of knowledge where "the top entrusts to the lower levels insight into details, and the lower levels entrust to the top insight into general matters [das Allgemeine], thus reciprocally deceiving themselves."³

Marx reiterated that an essential condition for the state qua proper universal was that public functions should be performed openly. They should be performed under the direct supervision of the people and not in bureaucratic secrecy. He wrote:

The general spirit of the bureaucracy is secrecy and mystery, preserved within itself through hierarchy, and from the outside through its position as a closed corporation. That the essence of the state should be open to the public, and even that there should be convictions about the nature of the state,

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p.462 (p.255).
3 Ibid., p.456 (p.249).
seems to the bureaucracy to be a betrayal of its mystery. Authority is the principle of its knowledge and the deification of authority is its intention. But within itself this spiritualism turns into a crass materialism of passive obedience; belief in authority; mechanical performance of fixed, formal business; and fixed premises, outlooks and traditions.¹

In this critique of Hegel Marx had already reached the conclusion that, in a rational state, the division of labour between those who conducted the affairs of state and those who were employed in the business of civil society must be abolished.² Such a division was based on an invalid distinction between men, legitimised by the examination system. He wrote:

In a rational state it would be more appropriate to have an examination to become a cobbler, than to become an executive state official...political knowledge is a condition without which man, although in the state, lives outside it, and is cut off both from himself and from the air. The examination system is nothing but a masonic formula: the legal recognition of the existence of political knowledge as a privilege.³

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¹ Ibid., pp.456-57 (p.249). Here, as in other places where I quote Marx directly, I have not reproduced his emphases (which appear in great profusion in the original).
² "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie", loc. cit., p.454 (pp.246-47).
³ Ibid., p.461 (p.253).
Marx observed that the Greek and Roman public officials did not have to submit to examinations, and made the invidious comparison between the latter and the Prussian civil servant. \(^1\)

Marx stressed that only where political knowledge was readily accessible could men become self-determined in fact - they could not achieve self-determination by proxy as Hegel had suggested. Marx argued that men could only participate in the universal in a meaningful sense through actively and knowledgeably taking part in the exercise of public authority. At the same time, he argued that the state (even had political democracy been achieved) could not become truly universal and free from the invasions of private interest, until it concerned itself with the whole sphere of social relations, and gave these too a universal and rational nature. When this occurred, however, the state as a distinct entity would be superfluous: it would no longer be necessary to impose an external order, or a false universality on the antagonisms of civil society. \(^2\)

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\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) Ibid., p.435 (p.232). In the same year another of the Left Hegelians, Edgar Bauer, was also voicing the opinion that the existence of the state could not be justified by (continued next page)
Marx enriched and widened his critique of Hegel's social theory by adopting the 'transformative method' that Feuerbach had developed in order to attack Hegel's treatment of religion. Feuerbach alleged that Hegel and other Idealists had, by stressing the primacy of thought or consciousness, inverted the true relationship between subject and predicate: they had turned the real subject of history - man in his material or sensuous existence - into merely the predicate of the idea.

Feuerbach set out to restore subject and predicate to their proper places. He argued that an ideal construction, such as religion, was in effect composed of the qualities and desires of man's nature projected into an abstract sphere. Man was diminished in comparison with this ideally perfected image of his own nature, and subordinated to it.

In order to define the subject more closely Feuerbach appealed to the notion of 'species being'

2 (continued from previous page)

1 For Marx's own reference to his use of this method see "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie", loc. cit., p.436 (p.233).
popularised by D.F. Strauss. Strauss wrote that it was the nature of the idea not to realise itself in one example, but rather in a multiplicity of examples which mutually completed themselves.¹ These examples together constituted the species being. Feuerbach applied the term to man, on the ground that man's essence (and completeness) was inseparable from his relationship to fellow human beings, within which relationship consciousness arose.²

Marx likewise employed the concept of species being to describe man's basic nature as a creative being acting on the environment in free association with others. It was the social nature of man's activity which gave rise to his characteristic modes of thought and being. He also followed Feuerbach in finding in theoretical constructs, such as Hegel's, a mere reification or alienated form of man's species nature. As his example of reification, however, he took not religion but the political

¹ Strauss, D.F., conclusion to Das Leben Jesu, quoted in McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, op. cit., p.91.
constitution. He viewed Hegel's apotheosis of the political state as a reified image of man's communal nature.¹

He argued that (in Hegel's theory and in the bourgeois society it reflected) the species life of which man was deprived in reality by the competitive and atomistic forms of civil society was transferred to the abstract sphere of the political state. The content of this sphere was rendered formal and particular because it stood over against (and in contradiction to) the real life of men.² The political form of the monarchy, which Hegel had defended, represented the complete alienation of political life from the people. The form of the republic denied the existence of this alienation in its own (political) sphere. However, the republican form

¹ Feuerbach had used the example of religion to illustrate the general inversion of subject and predicate in Hegel. In 1843 Moses Hess, as well as Marx, had become interested in the political state as a further example of this inversion. Hess wrote: "The essence of religion and politics consists...in allowing the real life, the life of the real individual to become absorbed by an abstraction, by the 'universal', which is nowhere real, and which is outside the individual himself." Hess, M., "Philosophie der Tat" (written 1843), Ein und Zwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz, in Socialist Thought; a Documentary History, eds., Fried, A., and Sanders, R., Edinburgh U.P., 1964, pp.57-58.

only came into being where the private spheres had achieved their independence from the political state.\(^1\) Marx deduced from this isolation of politics from the real working of society that the political freedom of the people was purely formal. He claimed that man could be truly free only where his existence as a citizen and social being extended beyond the unreal sphere of the state.\(^2\)

Marx employed Hegel's concept of civil society to attack the 'distorted' principle which he alleged governed bourgeois society as a whole: the fact that within it individual existence (as confirmed in private property) had become the end-goal, to which work and activity were related only as a means.\(^3\) He had now accepted the position derived by Hess from Feuerbach - that private property was a denial of man's species being. As man's essence lay in free co-operative production, the egotistic principle of individual appropriation represented an alienated form of human existence. Hess's

\(^1\) Ibid., pp.436-37 (p.233).
\(^2\) Ibid., p.498 (p.285).
\(^3\) Ibid.
article "Über das Geldwesen" (written before February 1844) greatly influenced Marx as a practical analysis of alienation in the economic sphere.

In another essay composed in 1843, Marx criticised the French declarations of the Rights of Man for their elevation of the rights of private life over public life:

...the citizen is declared to be the servant of egoistic 'man',...the sphere in which man functions as a species-being is degraded below the sphere where he functions as a partial being, and finally...it is man as a bourgeois and not man as a citizen who is considered the true and authentic man.

Marx here set out forcefully his argument that human emancipation would only be complete when man acted as a species being in all his relationships, and in his work, and did not delegate his social powers to others. Then man would be a citizen not merely in his abstract life, but in the whole of his activity.

The position which Marx finally adopted with regard to Hegel was that Hegel had enunciated the political principles of the bourgeoisie, without realising that they were incompatible with the reality of the bourgeois

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2 Ibid., p.31.
social system and with many of his own practical judgements. As characterised by Marx - who was building on Hegel's general account - the bourgeois was striving in thought towards the universal, although this contradicted his material essence (qua bourgeois, not qua man). In the bourgeois state principles were established such as the rule of law, equality before the law, the guarantee of universal personal liberties, and the sovereignty of the individual conscience.

Marx found, however, that Hegel himself betrayed these principles in his eagerness to rationalise the pre-bourgeois forms lingering on in the Prussian state. Marx attacked, for example, Hegel's defence of the resurrection of the feudal institution of the Estates. Marx interpreted this as a move backwards from the universality of bourgeois forms. He saw the resurrection of the Estates as tantamount to extending once more the limitations of man's existence in the private sphere to his role in the political sphere - and at the same time making man's own particularity the substance of his consciousness.  

The bourgeois state itself, moreover, could not realise its own principles. Marx argued that this was because the bourgeois state resided "not in, but outside civil society" - i.e. it was not immanent in this society as Hegel had suggested, but on the contrary, the divisions of civil society were inevitably a dominating influence on the state.

Marx went on to say that self-determination could only really be achieved when public authority was restored to civil society in a universal form. The absence of public power from civil society had resulted in the complete atomisation of the latter, and in that 'war of all against all', which marked the difference between bourgeois and feudal society. Such lack of inner coherence, he insisted, led to the expansion of oppressive institutions providing external coherence. This in itself gave rise to a contradiction between bourgeois political principles, which demanded the minimising of the state apparatus, and the realities of the bourgeois system.

On the basis of this analysis of the determining role of civil society, Marx was able to re-define the

1 Ibid., p.459 (p.252).
2 "On the Jewish Question", loc. cit., pp.15 and 29.
particularistic nature of the bureaucracy. He claimed that "The bureaucracy must protect the imaginary universality of particular interests...in order to protect the imaginary particularity of the universal interest."¹ Marx concluded that in order really to unite the universal and the particular, the existing form of civil society resting on private property, and its complementary institution the bureaucracy, must be abolished. The principles of democracy could only be fulfilled when they were applied to the whole of material life, and when the institution of private property no longer gave some men arbitrary power over others. The question that now confronted him was how that transformation might be brought about.

In 1844 Marx published a second critique which he had written of The Philosophy of Right, and by that time he believed that he had found the answer to his question. It consisted in the existence of a class which, unlike the bureaucracy, was genuinely universal, and which could only redeem itself by transforming the whole of society. That class was of course the proletariat. Marx now

¹ "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie", loc. cit., p.455 (p.248).
believed that, through the proletariat, philosophy at last could realise itself.¹

He described the existence of the proletariat as the dynamic negation which arose in a system where the freedom of man was basically interpreted as the freedom of property. Property, instead of merely objectifying the subjective will, became an absolute value in itself: the means, in fact, of the complete dehumanisation of man.² As the chief sufferer from this system, the proletariat was in resolute opposition to private property and to the state form which corresponded to it.

The delineation of the role and character of the proletariat, and of the opposition between state and proletariat, became for Marx a major theoretical preoccupation. It made demands, too, on the whole of the theoretical apparatus Marx was developing at this time. It is therefore necessary to follow Marx's thought from the special theme of the state, to the more general framework in which he was now considering it.

¹ Marx was preceded by Edgar Bauer (Der Streit der Kritik mit Kirche und Staat, op. cit.) and Hess, among the Left Hegelians in reaching the decision that the time had come for the transition from critical theory to the social practice of the proletariat.

CHAPTER TWO: PART A

MARX'S GENERAL POLITICAL THEORY

By 1844 Marx's early criticisms of the divergence between the theoretical aspirations of the state and its empirical existence were subsumed in a more general theory of the nature of the state. One function of this theory was to complete and correct aspects of Hegel's philosophy: to show why the related concepts of freedom, rationality and universality had not attained historical expression in the forms of society; and also to reveal the forces bringing them to realisation in the future.

In advancing his own theory (which he established in outline very quickly) Marx reinterpreted and explored anew some of Hegel's main concepts. Two of Marx's innovations were particularly important for his theory of the state. The first was his reinterpretation of Hegel's notion of the unity of mind and object, partly along lines suggested by Feuerbach and other Left Hegelians. The second emerged from his analysis of "civil society" as a society dominated and shaped by a market economy. Taken together, these related the problems of freedom, rationality and the state directly to economic life, and
related their historical development to economic development.

Central to Marx's reworking of Hegel's themes was his reinterpretation of the dialectic of negativity. He reproduced it in two different (but complementary) forms - in terms of the historical alienation of man's powers, and in terms of the dialectic of class struggle.

Marx's approach to human history as a process of the alienation (and reification) of man's powers was dependent on his new version of the doctrine of the unity of mind and its object. The historical estrangement of mind from itself had become the estrangement between man and his objectification in the material world.

Marx found the essence of man to lie in his production of the means of his existence, rather than in his abstract mental production. From the beginning man needed to act as a social being to produce his subsistence, and it was this social relationship which gave rise to consciousness (and which was fundamental to it). Man's nature was not static - history represented man's creation of himself as a social productive being.

The following summary is drawn primarily from the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", and from the [Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts], both in Marx, K., Early Writings, ed. Bottomore, T.B., op. cit.
The moving force behind man's development of his powers was the urge to satisfy needs which themselves developed historically in the course of his praxis.

However, man's species powers must first be objectified in the form of alienation. While the development of man's productive powers was incomplete, the forms in which he organised his production were dominated by material scarcity and a limited technology. In the whole era of 'pre-history' man was subjected to an alien world of his own making. This era would only be brought to a close when man reappropriated his powers.

Another way of describing the movement of history (or the development of man's productive life) was in terms of its expression in class struggle. According to Marx, economic classes arose from the division of labour and the institution of private property - which represented alienated forms of production. Class struggle provided the dynamic of social progress. Each new class which rose to dominance in society embodied a further development in economic production. These revolutionary transitions took place when the old ruling class had become the symbol of negation against which the whole society would rise in favour of the new class. It was necessary for the negative side of a society to
develop fully, to invoke the revolutionary elimination of all the previous social arrangements (which had become fetters on the development of production). The power of a dominant class was basically derived from its ownership of the means of production vital to the epoch in which it appeared.

Having established his own theory of historical development, Marx was now able to argue - much more fully than in his pre-1844 writings - that the state was committed to the particularism of civil society, and that it was necessarily hostile to freedom, rationality and universality. He could now demonstrate that the forms of public power could only be made compatible with man's political aspirations when certain historical conditions had been fulfilled. The state arose from the divided nature of society and served to reconcile society by force, or by an illusory appearance of universality, to the social forms (e.g. class rule) demanded by economic progress. The state could not be truly representative in a society divided against itself, or economic development would come to a standstill.

The state had served a necessary function in the past, not only because it had provided social coherence from above; but also because the specialisation demanded by
economic forms, up to the socialist one, included the need for a separate division of labour "responsible for the work of administration of public interests". The level of production in the periods preceding the socialist era was not sufficiently high to guarantee to those directly engaged in production the time or the education to enable them to conduct public affairs. Also, the narrow existence of men who were bound to one particular task in the productive process hindered that all-round development which qualified men for participation in the exercise of public authority.

According to Marx, only when the state was rendered obsolete by certain economic developments would its overthrow become a political possibility. The old coercive apparatus, and the rigid divisions between the mass of the people and the institutions of public power would only become obsolete in this way when the abolition of private property and of the division of labour had become an economic possibility. Freedom would then be conditional on the conscious creation of new social

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1 The German Ideology (written 1845-46, unpublished in any complete form until MEGA, 5, 1932), Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1960, p.212.
institutions in which the distinction between private and public roles was negligible, and in which social reason became the direct motive of all activity.¹

As Marx proceeded to work out his account of the state in detail, certain difficulties and anomalies began to appear. Some of these were the familiar difficulties of his general account of social and economic progress and the relation between them; others were related more specifically to the state.

Some of the problems relating to Marx's concept of the state are, I believe, of a fairly superficial nature. For example, Marx and Engels did occasionally depict the state as the representative of society as a whole, and it has been claimed that this view is not reconciled with the view of the state as the representative and instrument of

¹ Marx believed that the possibility of this emancipation from the state was confirmed by the 'fact' that the proletariat were "in direct opposition to the State as the form in which the members of society have so far found their collective expression, and in order to develop as persons they must overthrow the State": The German Ideology, op. cit., p.96. A quarter of a century later Marx was to echo these words in his interpretation of the Paris Commune: "It was a Revolution against the State itself, of this supernaturalist abortion of society, a resumption by the people for the people of its own social life." See The Civil War in France, 1st draft, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1966, p.166.
only one class.\textsuperscript{1} Marx was trying to make the point that in each period of history one class will appear as the general representative of society (and win general support) in so far as it represents the forces of socioeconomic progress - even though class rule always involves social oppression. The state, in guaranteeing the dominance of that class, is also protecting the general advance of society.

Another objection which has been raised is that it is difficult to reconcile the proposition that the state represents alienated social power (and as such is external to society), with the proposition that the state is the instrument of social class (and is thus subordinate to society).\textsuperscript{2} The thesis, as Marx presented it, was firstly, that public authority was alienated from society as a whole (and from individuals as such) and bestowed on specialised institutions of state power; secondly, that these specialised organs were exercised on behalf of one particular group of society. In other words the fact


that the state might be effectively subordinate to a social class, did not imply for Marx that true public life was restored even to members of that class.

The more fundamental problems of Marx's political theory arose from the fact that when he interpreted the dialectical movement of history in terms of the struggle of economic classes, he imposed a secondary role of the state as the object and manifestation of this struggle. The most simplified form in which he presented this view was his description of political power as "merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another". This attempt to tie political power to an economic base in production (via its subordination to economic class rule) involved manifold difficulties. Marx's own recognition of the importance of the internal dynamic of political institutions and their independent sources of legitimation was implicit in his account of the historical alienation of man's powers. The question of the exact situation of the state within the general dynamic of historical progress gave rise to the serious ambiguities which exist in his theory.

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In order to provide evidence for his interpretation of the state as a secondary manifestation of class struggle, Marx attempted to link the development of state power with the development of private property (which provided the basis for class distinctions). However, in his actual description, the development of the state form in primitive and ancient society appeared to gain its impetus from the need for a permanent military machine to secure land for the community, rather than from the need to hold down class antagonisms at home.¹ In fact he showed that the state, as an institution of war, developed a set of goals of its own which eventually brought about the breakdown of ancient society.² In the transition period to feudalism the sword was "the real means of life" from which flowed politico-economic power. Nonetheless, whatever the primary sources of political and economic power in the ancient and feudal periods of history, Marx could at least identify those who exercised it as also owning the dominant means of production - the land. He was not able to do this in his analysis of

² Ibid., p. 83.
Asiatic society (to be discussed later in this chapter).

One reason for Marx's difficulties in establishing his theory of the state was the problem of distinguishing between economic and political categories. He was to assert that the determining characteristics of any society were to be found in the means by which the economic surplus was pumped out of the producers.\(^1\) However, only under capitalism did the means of appropriating this surplus become purely economic (according to his analysis), and only then did any clear distinction between political and economic power become possible. Without this distinction, it was difficult to establish the fundamental and determining role of economic relationships.

For these reasons Marx applied his account of the state as merely the instrument of class rule (which itself stemmed from the role of the class in the production process) chiefly to the period dating from the emergence of industrial capitalism. Even with this restricted application of his theory, there was the problem that in England, for example, the industrial

\(^1\) *Capital*, vol.3, p.921.
capitalists did not win political power until their economic role had passed its climax.

However it could perhaps be said that Marx's model of the bourgeois state in which the capitalists are the dominant political and economic group is an example of his employment of 'ideal types', to which reality will only approximate in any given time or place. One might then say that any particular instance will not combine all the factors of the model, but will have sufficient to be subsumed under it. This explanation would help to eliminate some, but by no means all of the problems involved in Marx's analysis of the relationship between political and economic power. Marx himself admits to using concrete examples as 'classic forms'. He described the process of primitive accumulation (through the expropriation of the peasant) as having its 'classic form' in England alone; in different countries it "assumes different aspects, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different periods".

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1. There does not seem to be any particular advantage in discussing Marx's methodology in terms of Whitehead's 'pure frictionless model' as does K.A. Megill. See Megill, K.A., The Community as a Democratic Principle in Marx's Philosophy, Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale, 1966, passim.

One problem that arises from Marx's general comments on the state as the instrument of class rule is that they imply that the social aspirations of an economic group will necessarily find expression in rational political aims (appropriate to effect them). In his more empirical studies Marx recognised that this was not the case. However, granted that a class would be able to translate its general material interests into political terms, the concept of the state as an organ of class rule reinforced Marx's conviction that the role of the state in society was fundamentally negative. In a mode of production based on competition a class would have real unity only in relation to other classes. Therefore the unified political action of the group would be basically limited to the negative function of coercion against the rest of society.

In general Marx denied to the state the capacity for positive economic action or initiative in any progressive direction. He regarded the English factory acts, for example, as a sign of the approach of socialist society in which the state would no longer exist in the old sense of an apparatus which was external to society. In the same way Engels heralded the beginnings of state capitalism as paving the way to the end of the old state.
As the capitalists became unable to cope with the huge modern forces of production, they tended to make them into state property. However, as long as the capitalist mode of production remained dominant in the society as a whole, the state retained its negative role as the "ideal collective body of the capitalists" - in spite of its positive managerial tasks.¹

Other problems involved in the notion of the state as an instrument of class rule stemmed from the difficulty of identifying political elites as the general representatives of a dominant economic class. Marx acknowledged that the state could be employed by a dominant economic class against individuals of its own class,² or could be handed from one fraction of a ruling class to another.³ Cleavages could arise within a class between the part of it which was absorbed in economic


² [Rezensionen aus der Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung: Politisch-ökonomische Revue], (no. 4, April 1850), Werke, vol. 7, p.288. The month is given as May in Rubel, M., Bibliographie des Oeuvres de Karl Marx, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1956, p.88. Hereafter this bibliography is cited as Rubel.

³ The Civil War in France, op. cit., p.166.
business, and the part which was active in its political affairs (and thus divorced from the more immediate material interests of the rest).¹

The political representatives of a class might not stem from within that class at all. In Britain, the aristocrats represented first, the interests of the "bankocracy", and then the interests of the "millocracy", through the medium of the Whig party.² Further, the Whig oligarchs managed to pursue a foreign policy which was in fact damaging to the material interests of the dominant economic class.³

Related to the question of how much control an economic class actually exercised over its political representatives, was the problem that in some cases a dominant economic class had so little political capacity that it was not able to establish its control over the state at all. At one juncture Marx observed that:

¹ The German Ideology, op. cit., pp.61-62.
"The principle of politics is the will." Where a class lacked the will to power, as did the German bourgeoisie, it failed to effect its own political rule.

Marx wrote that, to gain control of the state, a rising economic class needed to win the support of society by acting in the interest of the whole in so far as it relieved society of particular grievances of the past. This required a certain breadth of political vision. Sound political tactics as well as a dominant economic position were necessary to capture the prize of state power, and these were dependent on the kind of individuals produced by the group.

A different situation was that in which a class established its own political representatives, and the political forms elaborated by its political theorists, but then turned against them. Marx claimed that the French bourgeoisie - by acquiescing in the destruction of its parliamentary institutions in favour of Napoleon III - "declared unequivocally that it longed to get rid of the

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2 [Kritische Randglossen...] (Vorwärts, 10 August 1844, no.64), MEGA, 3, p.18.
3 The German Ideology, op. cit., p.320
troubles and dangers of ruling".\textsuperscript{1} This retreat from the political sphere was accompanied by the belief on the part of the bourgeoisie that its material interests would be safeguarded: in fact, the kind of political regime which, by default, they helped Napoleon to achieve was inevitably damaging to those interests.

One apparent anomaly in Marx's political theory stems from the independent and progressive economic role he portrays the state as playing in the transition period to capitalism. He explains it as due to a kind of List der Vernunft that the absolute monarchies, in pursuing their power aims, objectively created the conditions for bourgeois production. The absolute monarch, in consolidating his rule, destroyed the feudal divisions and barriers to the development of a nation-wide economy. In this process economic roles were freed from their ascriptive nature, and a mobile labour force was created. Moreover the monarchs encouraged national expansion abroad, which resulted in the accumulation of mercantile capital. They gained support for such policies from the national egotism which arose from the new-found national

\textsuperscript{1} "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (first appeared under the title "Der 18te Brumaire des Louis-Napoleon", in Die Revolution, N.Y., 1852), MESW, vol.1, p.290.
unity. This nationalist appeal, which enabled the state to create the pre-conditions of capitalism, at the same time gave the state considerable independence, which eventually came into conflict with the interests of the rising capitalist class.

Marx characterised Napoleon I as representing the last attempt of the state to display this kind of independence and act as an end in itself.¹ According to Marx's historical theory, political absolutism was doomed to destruction because it became a hindrance to the further development of the economic forces of capitalism. In his model of a mature capitalist system the role the state played in society was more clearly a subordinate one than ever before. The state refrained from interfering in any way with the economic activity of society (in the interest of the capitalists).

Under Napoleon the state was still able to retain its old initiative. His power accrued from his ability to satisfy the demands of French nationalism. This secured him a position from which he could despotically interfere with the material interests of the bourgeoisie when they conflicted with his political interests. He recognised

the need to protect the development of bourgeois society in general, but he regarded it as a subordinate which must have no will of its own.¹

When Louis Bonaparte effected his coup d'état in France, Marx was compelled to allow that the state had gained another extension of independent life.² He explained this phenomenon in terms of the balance of classes in France at this period, which enabled Napoleon III to play off one against another to his own advantage.

According to Marx, Louis Bonaparte actually came to power primarily through the support of the peasantry. Marx regarded the peasantry as incapable of becoming a class in esse, despite a common relationship to the means of production. Their isolated and non-social mode of production militated against the development of class consciousness, and the translation of this into politically effective terms. For this reason they were unable to enforce "their class interest in their own name".³ Because the peasantry were incapable of united

³ Ibid., p.303.
political action, they were unable to impose their will on Napoleon once they had helped bring about his accession to power. On the other hand, the political timidity of the bourgeoisie led to them abdicate from the political struggle in his favour - the bourgeoisie not being at this time strong enough vis à vis the other classes of society to achieve an easy political dominance. Napoleon attempted to retain the support of all classes within the general framework of bourgeois society by making various kinds of material concessions.\footnote{Ibid., p.309.}

Marx's analysis of the French political situation led him to observe that the institution of peasant agriculture provided an ideal basis for the expansion of bureaucracy. The installation of small-holding helped to destroy the feudal diffusion of power in intermediary social institutions, and helped to create a unified level of relationship to the land. "Hence it also permits of uniform action from a supreme centre on all points of this uniform mass."\footnote{Ibid., p.306.}

Moreover, according to Marx, the institution of peasant agriculture created an unemployed surplus
population seeking state employment. Under these conditions, and where the countervailing force of bourgeois political influence was absent or weak, the institution of the state became swollen and repressive as never before. An "artificial caste" was created, whose material interests were bound up with the continuance of the regime.\(^1\) The state apparatus waxed fat as a non-productive parasite on society.

Marx asserted that the political principles of the bourgeoisie included fundamental support for the idea of cheap government and opposition to such major sources of expenditure as a standing army and "State functionarism". However he believed that the bourgeoisie, through their abdication of political responsibility, had enabled the bureaucratic apparatus to become so entrenched in France that it would take the forceful political initiative of the proletariat to fulfil the aims of liberal democracy.\(^2\)

Marx made out a general case that where "no one section of the population can achieve dominance over the others" the state would be less subordinate to society. Germany provided another example of such conditions

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\(^1\) Ibid., p.307; *The Civil War in France*, op. cit., 1st draft, p.169.

\(^2\) *The Civil War in France*, op. cit., p.71.
giving rise to the hypertrophy of the state. Marx claimed that the independence of the state in these instances was antithetical to historical progress. A rising economic class needed to use state power to destroy the institutional barriers to the full development of new forms of production.

Another version of Marx's general argument that the independence of the state was detrimental to the development of the socio-economic base is to be bound in his analysis of Oriental despotism. His incidental comments on the 'Asiatic mode of production' have proved to be a topic of endless controversy among Marxist theorists. The reason why these comments have been so

1 The German Ideology, op. cit., pp.79, 212.

2 The question of an 'Asiatic restoration' has vexed Russian Marxists since at least 1906 (see Chapter Seven). Marx had defined Russia as "semi-Asiatic in her condition, manners, traditions and institutions...." (a) The Bolshevik programme of state ownership of the land, and state control over production on the basis of communal peasant agriculture, summoned up invidious comparisons with the model of Oriental despotism. These were encouraged by Stalin's fixation on the building of canals with forced labour. The embarrassment caused by Marx's concept of the Asiatic mode of production would seem confirmed by attempts either to force it into the unilinear scheme of history (b), or to ignore it altogether. (c) It also appears to have been responsible for the great delay in the publication of Marx's Grundrisse... (finally published 1939). Communist Chinese historiography has shunned the (continued next page)
controversial is that in them Marx posited a state form where political and economic power arose from administrative functions rather than from the ownership of the means of production, and where, in fact, private property did not exist as such. He wrote that in societies where communal tasks such as irrigation, provision of means of communication, etc., constituted the pre-conditions of production, the monopoly of their administration was a source of political power and economic exploitation.

In Marx's working model, Oriental despotism was characterised by a highly centralised state, with nominal

2  (continued from previous page)
concept of the Asiatic mode of production as an explanation for economic backwardness. For national reasons, the development of China has been portrayed as parallel to the west, except where deflected by feudal oppression lending itself to imperialist exploitation.(d)
(c) E.g. Stalin's omission of the reference to the Asiatic mode in his reproduction of the historical scheme from Marx's Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, in the Short Course...(1938).

1  Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, op. cit., pp.70-71.
ownership of all land; and on the other hand, by the
existence of isolated and economically self-sufficient
villages (combining agricultural and industrial
production) which enjoyed hereditary rights to the
communal possession of the land. The state undertook
public works and general economic functions, and
received in return the surplus value of the village
communities. This surplus was not extracted by "economic
measures" (i.e. through the ownership of the means of
production), but "by other measures, whatever may be the
form assumed by them".\(^1\) Marx suggested that one form in
which this surplus was extracted was "as tribute and as
common labour for the glory of the unity, in part that
of the despot, in part that of the imagined tribal entity
of the god".\(^2\)

Marx observed that the most typical basis for the
Asiatic form of society was the need for large-scale
irrigation.\(^3\) This is the starting point for Professor
Wittfogel's important analysis of 'hydraulic societies'.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Capital, vol.III, p.918.
\(^2\) Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, op. cit., p.70.
\(^3\) "The British Rule in India" (N.Y.D.T., 25 June 1853),
However, unlike Wittfogel, Marx did not go so far as to define a functional bureaucracy as a ruling class. He was still chiefly interested in the question of the ownership of the means of production - even where this was a nominal and symbolic one - rather than in the question of control over the means of production. This meant that he focussed his attention on the despot in whom the nominal ownership of the land was vested (and who embodied the state symbolically), rather than on the administrative caste who performed the functions of the state.\footnote{Marx to Engels, 2 June 1853, Marx K. and Engels, F., Selected Correspondence, 2nd ed., Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1965 (hereafter referred to as MESC), p.81; and \textit{Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations}, op. cit., p.69.}

Marx did note in passing that the "Celestial bureaucracy" was the bulwark of the patriarchal constitution in China.\footnote{Marx on China: 1853-1860, ed. Torr, D., London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1951, p.56.} He was also aware that in Egypt the priesthood shared in the surplus.\footnote{\textit{Capital}, vol.I, p.366.} This was to be understood in the light of the fact that the Egyptian priesthood used their powers of astronomy to predict the flooding of the Nile, and were thus, effectively, a functional elite, although this function had a mystified form.
Marx was convinced that societies based on the Asiatic mode of production were doomed to decay. He attributed this to the fact that economic initiative was monopolised by the central government. Oriental despotism arose where the level of civilisation had not been high enough to give rise to voluntary association for large-scale social tasks (as in Flanders and Italy). This low level of civilisation corresponded to the fact that society was grouped in isolated, self-sufficient and unself-conscious units. Such a situation provided the basis for "the interference of the centralising power of government". Once the latter was established, it prevented any internal social and economic development which would destroy the basis of its power.

Marx believed that the stagnation of Oriental systems could only be overcome through the injection of external influences, for example, by means of western imperialism. He argued that the introduction of the institution of private property was vital, as this would bring into

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1 Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, MESC, p.85.
2 "The British Rule in India", loc. cit., p.314.
3 Ibid.
play the dynamic force of economic contradictions. In order for the idea of private property to take root, the isolation of the village communities had first to be broken, and the people made aware of the possibility and desirability of a higher level of material life. The intensifying of social communication was essential if the people were to become conscious of "the desires and efforts indispensable to social advance".¹ According to Marx, only when the self-sufficient inertia of the villages had been destroyed through forces external to the Oriental system, would the mental barriers to the development of private property disappear, and the economic progress of these societies become possible.

In Marx's theory of history, the institutions of the state represent a complicating factor in the basic dynamic of economic and social development. The forms in which these political institutions accumulated authority rendered them relatively inflexible as compared with economic change. Moreover they frequently attempted to stabilise their social bases. As a contemporary Marxist has expressed it:

¹ Ibid., p.320
Political action has constantly striven to contain this movement [the socio-economic movement] within determinate forms and, to this end, to eliminate disruptive elements. It has always tried to intervene in order to carve 'consolidated' structures out of the spontaneous Becoming.¹

On the other hand, the traditions of political institutions might favour a peaceful acknowledgement of social change. Marx felt that the democratic institutions of England and America had gained sufficient strength to inhibit a resort to force to prevent the reorganisation of labour.²

¹ Lefebvre, H., Dialectical Materialism (tr. of Le Matérialisme dialectique, Presses Universitaires de France, 1940), London, Cape, 1968, p.147.
Marx asserted that the principles of 'political' democracy, as enunciated in the French and American Revolutions, became (if treated as sufficient in themselves) a cloak for the continued existence of coercive relationships in society and for the distortion of popular sovereignty by sectional economic power. He wrote that political democracy emancipated men in so far as it declared that differences in property, status and religion were irrelevant to the state, to which all men were related as equal citizens.

The modern state dissolves the political existence of the elements of bourgeois life; for example, by the dissolution of property through the abolition of the property qualification for electors, and by the dissolution of religion through the abolition of the established church.

However, according to Marx, this advance in principle was largely nullified in practice by the fact that in the social sphere - the primary source of coercive relationships - the

...very proclamation of the political [staatsbürgerlichen] death of these elements corresponds to their most vigorous life,
which henceforth obeys its own laws undisturbed, and develops to its full scope.¹

Marx claimed that real democracy and freedom could only be attained when democracy was extended into the sphere of civil society. The way to such an extension was through the development of one of the basic liberal institutions - the universal suffrage - into an effective political force. Marx identified the suffrage with the "fight for the abolition of the State and of bourgeois society"² - i.e. the suffrage was the means by which the rule of particularistic interests, and the political coercion which that entailed, would be abolished. Among the conditions which Marx listed as necessary for an effective suffrage (and for the abolition of the state as a body external to society) were: elections held at least once a year; immediate responsibility of officials to their electors for all actions; the possibility of instant recall of all officials; and the full access of the public to all decision-making.³

¹ Die Heilige Familie, loc. cit., p.292 (p.124).
³ E.g. The Civil War in France, op. cit., 2nd draft, pp.232-33.
Marx paid tribute to liberal-democratic political principles, while at the same time stressing their inadequacy when accompanied by the liberal notion of the emancipation of 'civil society' from social control. He recognised the institutionalising of universal negative freedoms, such as the rights of man, as an important step in the progress towards creating positive universal freedom. For example, it appeared to him essential that the values of bourgeois liberalism should be established in Germany before the advent of socialism. He feared greatly the kind of benevolent despotism which Lassalle and Bismarck seemed to be proposing in the guise of state socialism.¹ The freedom of autonomous reason, embodied in the independence of the individual from arbitrary external authorities, was the spiritual antidote for this kind of paternalistic socialism (which was the legacy of German feudalism).

Like the nineteenth century liberal theorists, Marx believed that the functions of the state must be restricted

¹ e.g. [Marginal notes to the programme of the German workers' party] (known as Critique of the Gotha Programme, originally enclosed with a letter to Bracke, 5 May 1875), MESW, vol. II, pp.18-37. Also Marx to Schweitzer, 13 October 1868, MESC, pp.213-16.
as far as possible in the interests of freedom. His attitude was implicit in his definition of the state which, as has been shown, made coercion the principle of its operation. He assumed that the individual could not participate in a rational and coherent (i.e. truly democratic) relationship with the rest of the community via institutions of coercion.

Although Marx was fully committed to the ideal of universal suffrage, he did not suppose that it was a sufficient (political) condition for the creation of socialism. Equally necessary was the political maturity of the proletariat, for only if it had become politically experienced as a class could it use the suffrage effectively. The role which Marx credited to the proletarian movement in developing this maturity is discussed in the next chapter. In brief, it consisted in the following: stimulating the sustained political involvement of the proletariat; overcoming submissiveness to the social hegemony of the bourgeoisie; fostering the capacity of the proletariat for public responsibility and initiative.

During the period of the upsurge of working-class political activity in the 1840s, and in its aftermath, Marx was sanguine about the level of political maturity
already reached. He wrote:

Incidentally, our 'very capable' one [Stirner] imagines that citizenship is a matter of indifference to the proletarians, after he has first assumed that they do have it. This is just as he imagined above that for the bourgeois the form of government is a matter of indifference. The workers attach so much importance to citizenship, i.e., to active citizenship, that where they have it, for instance in America, they 'make good use' of it, and where they do not have it, they strive to obtain it. Compare the proceedings of the North American workers at innumerable meetings, the whole history of English Chartism, and of French communism and reformism.¹

Experience of English politics led Marx later to temper his optimism. He found that the English workers still did not know "how to wield their power and use their liberties, both of which they possess legally".²

Marx considered that in general the bourgeoisie, when faced with the situation that the proletariat was using the universal suffrage to transform society, would put up a struggle in which they sacrificed political principle to material interest. He made exceptions for the British and American (and possibly the Dutch) cases,³

¹ The German Ideology, op. cit., p.237.
where he felt that parliamentary traditions had become so imprinted on political life - and the bureaucratic and coercive traditions of state power were so correspondingly limited - that it would be possible to evolve peacefully from political into material democracy. However he suggested that in most cases the bourgeoisie would attempt to distort the suffrage, and resist with force the movement towards socialism. In 1880 Marx added France to the list of countries where socialism might be achieved peacefully - on the condition that the proletariat organised themselves as a separate political party, and the universal suffrage was "thus transformed from an instrument of dupery which it has been up to now into an instrument of emancipation." 1

According to Marx the result of the exercise of universal suffrage by a numerous and politically mature proletariat would be, on the one hand, the abolition of the competitive and anarchic condition of society; and on the other, the abolition of the complementary organs

of state power. Marx never explicitly described which functions of public authority "analogous to present functions of the state" would continue to exist in the socialist society of the future. What he did make clear was that the performance of these functions must not become bureaucratised as in the old political state. In common with many political philosophers, he believed that bureaucratisation might be prevented by the decentralisation

1 The famous phrase concerning the 'withering away of the state' was actually set down by Engels. (See Anti-Dühring, op. cit., p.309.) Engels had discussed as early as 1845 his expectations of this phenomenon. He claimed that the state had expanded in the bourgeois period through the increase of judicial and administrative bodies. These were necessitated by the fact that the social war of all against all took on the barbarous form of crime among the uneducated. When socialism brought about the end of the divided society, crime would cease, and the unproductive institutions of police and judiciary would lose their relevance. The state apparatus would correspondingly dwindle, as an occasional arbiter would suffice. See [Zwei Reden in Elberfelde - 1], Werke, vol.2, p.541. This was the first of the two speeches Engels delivered in Elberfelde, 15 February and 22 February 1845, published in Rheinische Jahrbücher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform, Darmstadt, 1845.

2 Critique of the Gotha Programme, loc. cit., p.32.
of public power, and the encouragement of local initiative.

It has been pointed out that Marx only asserted a decentralised system to be possible in countries (e.g. France) where historical development had brought a thorough-going homogeneity.\(^1\) He saw the integration of the national economy as a prerequisite for the (beneficial) decentralisation of social structures. He wrote that: "The national centralisation of the means of production will become the natural basis of a society composed of associations of free and equal producers who act in full consciousness according to a common and rational plan."\(^2\)

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1 Ramm, Th., "Die künftige Gesellschaftsordnung nach der Theorie von Marx und Engels", Marxismusstudien, Zweite Folge, Tübingen, Mohr, 1957, pp. 82-83. By 1891 Engels recommended a communal constitution for Germany also. In his critique of the Erfurt programme he gave importance to the demand for: "complete self-administration in province, district and commune [Gemeinde], through officials elected by universal suffrage. The abolition of all state-nominated local and provincial authorities". Quoted by Ramm, p. 107, fn.

2 "On Nationalisation of Land", Werke, vol. 18, p. 62. This manuscript provided the basis for a report delivered by Dupont at the Manchester branch of the International. The report was published in the International Herald, London, 15 June 1872, under the title "Nationalisation of Land". In Rubel there is no reference either to the manuscript or to the published speech.
In his writings related to the German situation (such as the *Communist Manifesto* and the March 1850 Circular) Marx stressed that determined political centralisation would there be necessary in order to eradicate lingering feudal particularisms and parochialism. Only a high degree of social communication could develop that consciousness of common interest which was fundamental if the decentralisation of power was to be compatible with a universal and rationally-based democratic community.

Although Marx asserted that it was impossible to anticipate the precise forms which society would assume for its own regulation in the future (because of the emergence of completely new factors such as socialised man), he did give a number of hints as to the forms of organisation which he believed compatible with the creation of socialism. The most important instance was his treatment of the Paris Commune - which he claimed was a concrete example of a political form within which the emancipation of labour could take place.

Marx gave praise to the decentralised communal constitution under which, he wrote, national unity would be a matter of voluntary association of local initiative.
plus a central delegation from the Federal Communes.¹

What Paris wants is to supplant that centralisation which has done its service against feodality, but has become the mere unity of an artificial body, resting on gendarmes, red and black armies repressing the life of real society...to supplant this unitarian France which exists beside the French society - by the political union of French society itself through the Communal organisation.²

Under this constitution all the great towns would be organised into self-governing communes modelled on that of Paris where:

The initiative in all matters of social life [was] to be reserved to the Commune. In one word all public functions, even the few that would belong to the Central Government, were to be executed by communal agents, and, therefore, under the control of the Commune.³

The few central functions which remained would not consist in "governmental authority over the people", but would be necessitated by the general and common wants of the country.⁴

¹ The Civil War in France, op. cit., 1st draft, p.193.
² Ibid., p.189.
³ Ibid., 2nd draft, p.233.
⁴ Ibid.
Lichtheim has claimed that Marx was suffering from a temporary Proudhonist aberration when he wrote *The Civil War in France*. He cites in evidence the letter to Domela-Nieuwenhuis (22 February 1881, *MESC*, p.410), and the fact that Marx did not use the Commune to illustrate the dictatorship of the proletariat in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*.\(^1\) Wolfe refers to the need of the Marxist movement to appropriate the "myth of the Commune" regardless of its political content.\(^2\) In fact, the federalist solution acclaimed in the Address is the logical conclusion of all Marx's statements on the nature of social (and individual) freedom - from the need to eliminate bureaucracy, to his ideal of active citizenship.

Passive citizenship was anathema to Marx - according to his ideas the individual could only realise himself in an active relationship with the community: that is, he must neither dissolve his individuality in it, nor isolate himself from it. If men were to involve themselves in this way as conscious, rational members of a universal

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community, then this community had to be structured so that individual participation was (and was felt to be) meaningful in terms of the whole. Marx has not been alone in thinking that: "The best means of creating community is to delegate power."¹

Marx's treatment of the Paris Commune covered another aspect which was of vital concern to his concept of active citizenship - the organisation of economic life. If the concept of man as citizen was to take on reality it must extend to the most crucial area of man's life - the organisation of production. Marx accepted the economic experiments (including 'workers' control' of the factories) of the Commune as a step in this direction. "The Commune", he wrote, "very wisely, has appointed a Communal commission which, in co-operation with delegates chosen by the different trades, will enquire into the ways of handing over the deserted workshops and manufacturies [sic] to co-operative workmen societies..."²

Marx gave approval to the Communal proposals for considerable decentralisation in the economy, accompanied

¹ See, for example, Goodman, P., People or Personnel, N.Y., Random House, 1963, p.157.
² The Civil War in France, op. cit., 1st draft, pp.150-51.
by a certain expansion of functions at the top, where the representatives of the united co-operative societies were to regulate national production on a common plan.\(^1\)

Marx made no attempt to explain how social functions at the commune and central levels and economic functions at local and federal levels of the co-operative societies (as presented in the proposals of the Commune) might be intermeshed. Marx tended to treat the economic decision-making at all levels of socialist society as something immune from political considerations: conflicting claims for the allocation of scarce goods supposedly no longer existed when all the springs of wealth began to flow more freely. He seems to have considered that as all levels would reach their decisions in an equally rational manner, they would form a naturally coherent and mutually accommodating structure.

Marx's concept of man as a self-determining social entity required that man should be able to act as a free citizen within the factory as well as without. He regarded it as essential that the coercive relationships which had flourished on the basis of the capitalist organisation of production should be abolished at their.

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\(^1\) Ibid. (Address), p.73.
point of origin. In his analysis of capitalism, Marx concluded that the existing type of factory discipline would be superfluous where the labourer was working on his own account, and the process of production was not opposed to him as a foreign power.¹

Marx did admit that some forms of labour control would still be necessary under socialism: "the labour of superintendence and management will naturally be required whenever the direct process of production assumes the form of a combined social process...."² However, he argued that the importance of the labour of superintendence was proportionate to the degree of antagonism between "the labourer as a direct producer and the owner of the means of production".³ Hence superintendence would be reduced to a minimal level under socialism, and the form of its exercise made democratic.

¹ Marx, K., Capital, vol.III, pp.100, 102. Marx comments that: "this discipline will become superfluous...as it has already become practically superfluous in piece-work". (p.100). In piece-work discipline was more or less superfluous because the discipline was contained in the wages. This situation gave wider scope to individuality, it "tends to develop on the one hand that individuality, and with it the sense of liberty, independence, and self-control of the labourers, on the other their competition with one another. (Capital, vol.I, p.607.)
³ Ibid.
Marx compared the nature of the overseer in the
capitalist factory with the nature of despotic states.
Both these combined genuine social functions with an
inflation of power derived from the need to hold down
antagonisms arising from the productive relations.¹ In
a socialist system these antagonisms within the factory
would have disappeared, and it would be feasible that
the manager should be directly controlled by the
labourers.

Marx believed that the political philosophy of
socialism represented the correction and completion of
bourgeois political principles. In the bourgeois world
democracy had remained in many respects an abstract
principle because it had ceased to apply at the factory
door. Marx satirised the way in which the capitalist
(like a private legislator) exercised his autocracy over
his workmen "unaccompanied by that division of
responsibility, in other matters so approved of by the
bourgeoisie, and unaccompanied by the still more approved
representative system...."²

¹ "In like manner the labor of superintendence and universal
interference by the government in despotic states comprises
both the performance of common operations arising from the
nature of all communities, and the specific functions
arising from the antagonisms between the government and
Engels, in his statements on the future society, tended to put less stress than Marx on the legitimation of public authority through the active and conscious participation of all citizens in its exercise. Perhaps this was because Engels never fully appreciated the focus of Marx's social theory - the concept of the individual estranged from his own powers.¹

In order to demonstrate that it was possible for authority to exist without coercion in classless societies, Engels appealed to the example of primitive tribal communities.² This was in contrast to Marx's view that the nature of authority in these primitive communities bore little relation to that existing in a socialist society. In his presentation the more or less instinctive social relations of primitive society corresponded in some ways to Hegel's period of undifferentiated mind. Such a community was not the product of self-conscious individuals who had re-appropriated their species nature

¹ The tendency of Engels to discuss individuals only in terms of the socio-economic attributes which determine their existence is referred to in: Bollnow, H., "Engels' Auffassung von Revolution und Entwicklung in seinen 'Grundsätzen des Kommunismus' (1847)", Marxismusstudien, Erste Folge, Tübingen, Mohr, 1954, p.122.

but, rather, appeared in the form of natural necessity. On the one hand, human relations had not taken on the alienated forms which persisted through the era of class struggles; on the other hand, man was completely subject to the forces of nature, which were represented in the community in a mystified form.

Engels tended to assume that as long as authority in the future society was based on economic rationality it would be acceptable - even though this economic rationality itself might be despotic. Indeed he wrote that large-scale industry imposed a despotism "independent of all social organization".\(^1\) This was fundamentally different to Marx's proposition that man must no longer be ruled by economic categories, but rather, must subject his environment to conscious determination (including the re-arrangement of work by the producers themselves).

Marx's comments on the transition period from political to material democracy must have been subject to many different interpretations (for example, see below, Chapter Three). Marx called this period the dictatorship of the proletariat - indicating by this term that even when an effective universal suffrage had been achieved,

political coercion and the state form would still exist for a time. These would correspond to the rule of the majority over the rest of society. Marx claimed that only when the divisive influence of private property had been abolished would it be possible for a solidaristic social community to emerge in which the element of force would be superfluous in implementing social decisions.

The emergence of this kind of community was vital to Marx's assumptions about the future society. Without it, effective universal suffrage and the decentralisation of public power would be insufficient to prevent the old 'political' coercion and manipulation of the individual. His belief that such a community must be anticipated in the labour movement, and must represent the universalising of this movement, is discussed in the following chapter - along with the problems it entailed.
CHAPTER THREE

MARX AND THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT:

THE UNITY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Marx developed the idea (already present in Hegel) that the French Revolution of 1789 was the material expression of that revolution which took place in Germany in the form of the classical German philosophy of Kant, Fichte and Schelling. He concluded that in the same way the further development of German philosophy with Hegel, and the rise of the socialist movement in France, were two aspects of the same reality. Hegel's analysis of history as the self-creation of man as a free being could only be fulfilled in the realm of praxis. Marx extended Hegel's analysis by creating a philosophy of praxis, in which he presented the proletariat\(^1\) as the creative agent which was transcending Hegel's philosophy by materialising it.

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\(^1\) Marx used the term 'proletariat' in the technical sense introduced by Lorenz von Stein. The proletariat was by definition conscious of itself as an estate suffering from a disparity between work and rewards. Stein established the link between the demands of the proletariat and the contemporary revolutionary movement. See Lobkowicz, N., Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx, Indiana, Notre Dame U.P., 1967, pp.281-82.
The revolutionary praxis of the proletariat itself entailed that self-change which was a prerequisite for the self-determination of social man.¹ The proletariat was organising itself into associations in self-protective response to the worsening contradictions of capitalist society. The only defence that the proletariat had against the superior power of capital was numbers, and solidarity was needed to make these effective. Once created, these organisations stimulated the desire to exist as a social being, which was denied in the competitive, egotistic institutions of capitalism. At the same time they fostered the capacities for cooperation and self-government which would be the necessary basis for that material democracy in which man's social being would be realised. Marx saw these associations as the germ of the future society.²

Marx's concept of praxis was related to a theory of the active quality of knowledge, or consciousness. The

¹ The idea that men were creating themselves anew in revolutionary praxis contributed to Marx's conviction that the forms of future society could not be anticipated in detail. One could not calculate appropriate social institutions on the basis of the needs of existing men.
² E.g. the [Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts] in Karl Marx: Early Writings, ed. Bottomore, T.B., op. cit., p.176.
The act of cognition itself changed reality. The awakening of consciousness in the masses meant that the eternal laws of political economy were no longer 'true', as it indicated that men were no longer content to be dominated by the social forms they had created. The validity of the communist critique of bourgeois society lay in the practical critique of the masses. The practical critique of the masses in turn arose from experience of material conditions in which the competitive principle was no longer appropriate.

Proletarian organisations performed an essential function as the media through which the isolated despair of the proletariat was transformed into a theoretically enlightened class-consciousness. The early reactions of the proletariat or artisan to the consequences of industrialisation had been primitive and ineffective. The proletarian organisations brought to life the awareness that the industrial process could be made to

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1 This point was to become pivotal in the theory of Antonio Gramsci. For example, he wrote: "These relationships [between the individual and his environment], as we have said, are not simple — some are necessary, others voluntary; furthermore, to be conscious of them is already to change them in some degree." See *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Marzani, C., N.Y. Cameron Associates, 1957, p.47.
serve its present victims through social action. Theory based on collective experience was essential to make the proletarian movement coherent and effective. Isolated practical experience was not sufficient to combat the ruling ideology of bourgeois society.

Marx's fundamental belief in human rationality led him to denounce revolutionary means which could not result in rational self-determination. The revolutionary activity of the proletariat must be rationally motivated. Marx opposed certain forms of early proletarian organisation on the basis that they appealed to the emotions rather than the reason of their followers. This encouraged an unfree relationship between active leaders and passive followers. He believed that the encouragement of independent thought through education made the proletariat less susceptible to such non-rational appeals.

Marx asserted that, although proletarian organisations were originally created for materialistic purposes, this organisation could be shown to make possible the spiritual emancipation of men. Within it, human faculties denied expression in capitalist society (in particular the capacity and need for social activity) were reawakened. He wrote that: "The English and French workers have now formed associations in which the object of their reciprocal
education is not simply their needs as workers, but their needs as men."¹ For Marx this rediscovery of man's species-nature was an essential prelude to a qualitatively different society. Marx's emphasis on the subjective effects of proletarian organisation within capitalist society was unique among the socialists of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Marx stressed the role of the early proletarian organisations in providing political education through the experience of self-governing democratic organisations. If the form of the organisation denied this practical political education, it simply prolonged the old division between rulers and ruled. Socialism meant the end of the alienation of man's social powers, and this goal must be realised in the means to it.

Marx's conception of the nature of the proletarian movement is illustrated in the various episodes of his practical career in working-class organisation. It led him to reject all forms of this organisation that seemed to hinder its development as the vehicle for the

¹Die Heilige Familie, MEGA, 3, p.223. Also: "One must have got to know the study, the thirst for knowledge, the moral energy and the restless drive for self development of the French and English workers, in order to imagine the human nobility of the movement. Ibid., p.256.
practical/theoretical critique of existing society. In particular he rejected any tactics that seemed to undervalue the active role of theory (in practical interaction with reality).

Marx first took an active part in socialist organisation in 1846. He helped to organise from Brussels a series of Communist Correspondence Committees, intended to help keep the proletarian movements in Belgium, Germany, France and England in contact with each other. This organisation acted as a catalyst in the transformation of the association of expatriate German craftsmen afterwards known as the Communist League. Marx's opposition to the early form of the League, and his confrontation with Wilhelm Weitling, illustrate his ideas on working class organisation as a model for the universal democratic community of the future.

Marx had bestowed early praise on Weitling, as representing "the brilliant literary debut of the German worker". Weitling marked himself off from the early French and English 'utopian socialists' by his recognition that the emancipation of the proletariat from the property system must be the work of the proletariat itself. For

1 "Kritische Randglossen...", MEGA, 3, p.18.
Weitling the deficiencies in society were due not to the imperfect state of knowledge, but rather to the interest of the privileged.\(^1\) He also to a certain extent shared Marx's belief that the new, socialised (or reintegrated) man on whom the future rested was a product of working class organisation. "For him a vigorous club life [Vereinsleben] was valued as the true preparatory school for life in the state; he called the clubs the first true image of society in miniature."\(^2\) However, Weitling's anti-intellectual bias led him into conflict with Marx's attempts to further the theoretical enlightenment of the proletariat. A still more important source of conflict was that Weitling turned his back on the broad movement for democratic political freedoms.

Weitling announced that popular sovereignty and universal suffrage were a mirage; they represented only the accidental rule of the majority over the minority.\(^3\)

\(^1\) The political theory advanced by Weitling in *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte* (1838) and in *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit* (1842) his two major works, is discussed in Ramm, Th., *Die Grossen Sozialisten*, vol. I, Stuttgart, Fischer, 1955, Ch. Two.


According to Weitling socialism was to be achieved not through universal suffrage, but through the temporary dictatorship of a well-organised minority. The socialist society which Weitling envisaged, would be administered by experts, elected on the basis of their talents. By 1851 Weitling was disposed to rejoice at Louis Napoleon's dismissal of the "nine hundred talkers", and the ending of the humbug of democracy.¹ He argued that it was easier to get rid of one tyrant than nine hundred.

Marx, on the other hand, denounced conspiratorial activity and regarded it as characteristic of an early stage in the development of proletarian consciousness.² He was aware that the kind of organisations within which Weitling had made his name were still influenced by the traditions of the secret journeyman fraternities. According to Marx more advanced forms of organisation, which enabled both theoretical enlightenment and democratic mass participation in social and political activity, were required for mature class consciousness and effective action.

¹ Ibid., p.136.
² Specific attacks on 'Weitlingites' are to be found in [Zirkular gegen Kriege] (a circular entitled Der Volkstribun, redigiert von Hermann Kriege, dated 11 May 1846), Werke, vol.4, pp.3-17.
In the final confrontation between Marx and Weitling in Brussels, Weitling defended the adoption of whatever theories had practical value in arousing the revolutionary consciousness of the workers. Marx denounced such an appeal to the emotions rather than to the reason of the proletariat, and the uncritical or passive role it allotted to the faithful.¹

Marx's criticism of Weitling were partly instrumental in bringing about a reorganisation of the League of the Just. The new organisation was named the League of Communists, and included Marx's Correspondence Committees. The first congress of the League took place in the summer of 1847, and at this time: "All that had still been left from the time of the conspiracies was...abolished."² The new constitution included the clause that all the officials elected by the members could be recalled at any time by their electors.³ As shown in the previous chapter this was to become a central feature in Marx's

¹ An eye-witness account of this confrontation is given in Annenkov, P.V., Literaturnye Vospominaniia, Moscow, 1960, pp.302-05.
propositions about the shape of the new society developing out of the old. When later working-class organisations became an institutionalised part of bourgeois society, their internal structures in fact became assimilated to those bureaucratic structures of the old society which Marx had attacked so bitterly.

In his retrospective defence of the Communist League, Marx stressed its propagandist nature. The democratic constitution was inconsistent with a conspiratorial secret society. The function of the League had been to assist theoretically the self-conscious participation of the proletariat in the historical revolutionising of society which was going on under their eyes. It was in this that the socialism of the Communist League differed from that of the utopian sects. The League had founded Workers' Educational Clubs, which provided discussion nights, entertainment and libraries. Where possible, classes were held, giving instruction in the scientific analysis of the economic structure of bourgeois society.

2 Ibid., p. 74.
3 Ibid., p. 76.
4 Ibid., pp. 75-76.
Marx's activity in the First International further illustrates his ideas on the kind of organisation which could advance the emancipation of the proletariat. The aims of the First International were, primarily, to foster the international solidarity of workers' movements. The General Council and the annual Congresses were to be clearing-houses for information about the various national movements, and so to help the international proletariat to an awareness of its historical significance.

The Provisional Rules of the International included a clause that called for an enquiry into the social state of different European countries. Marx further developed this into a demand for the collation of labour statistics. A resolution based on the following formulation was passed at the Geneva Congress in 1866:

One great 'International combination of efforts' which we suggest is a statistical enquiry into the situation of the working class of all countries to be instituted by the working classes themselves. To act with any success the materials to be acted on must be known. By initiating so great a work, the workmen will prove their ability to take their own fate into their own hands.

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Marx was again stressing the dialectical effects of the act of comprehending social reality.

A questionnaire was also drawn up by Marx in 1866, and the resolution was accompanied by the demand that the statistical data be sent by the local branches to the General Council. The revised administrative regulations of the International, which were published after the London Congress of 1871, and which included the Geneva resolution, attempted to make committees of statistics a compulsory adjunct of the local branches. Little came of this scheme. Nonetheless, it illustrated Marx's fundamental conviction that the educational and propaganda functions of the workers' associations were the medium of revolution. According to him such organised contact and self-education was needed to create an enlightened and effective class consciousness. The education of the proletariat also served the purpose of proving them capable of bringing the economy under their own conscious social control. This disclosure of latent powers was a revolutionary process in itself. The shortening of the working day was of primary importance to the proletariat because it would: "secure to them the possibility of intellectual development, sociable intercourse, social and political action."

1 Ibid., p.346.
An important aspect of the political education of the proletariat was the participation of working class organisations in the political struggle for the extension of democracy. The experience and confidence gained in the struggle for political rights would form the basis of the struggle to extend democracy beyond the 'political' realm. When Marx asserted the importance of the political struggle, he had to contend with the Proudhonist ideas dominant in the French section of the International. Proudhon had left to French socialists a conviction that to partake in political action meant to be taken in by the 'political lie'. Only direct economic action in setting up workers' cooperatives and workers' control of industry could emancipate the producers from the oppression which characterised all forms of the political state.¹ For

¹ "Whether the workingmen know it or not, the importance of their work lies, not in their petty union interests, but in their denial of the rule of capitalists, money-lenders and governments, which the first revolution left undisturbed. Afterwards, when they have conquered the political lie, the mercantile chaos, the financial feudality, the bodies of workers, abandoning the article of Paris and such toys, should take over the great departments of industry, which are their natural inheritance." Proudhon, P.-J., General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century, London, Freedom Press, 1923, pp.98-99. The only exception to Proudhon's mistrust of politics was his short-lived illusion that Napoleon III might usher in a decentralised social and economic system. Proudhon championed the rights of the (continued next page)
Marx, on the other hand, emancipation from the state was the culmination of the process of gaining practical knowledge of the meaning of democracy. This process might be a violent one, but the limits of political democracy had to be explored before they could be transcendened. Although Marx, like Proudhon, believed that the state form must be abolished, Marx also believed that this could only be achieved by the exercise of political power by the masses.

Marx believed that in the bourgeois democracies state intervention could represent the beginnings of the transition stage to socialism, in which the state persisted as a distinct sphere but could be used on behalf of the proletariat. He declared that in the given circumstances there was no other means of transforming social reason into social force than through general laws enforced by the power of the state. These general laws would not strengthen the power of the state, but would simply help to transform the power directed against the

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2 (continued from previous page)
the peasant as against their subordination to the industrial occupations (Marx's proletariat), as Bakunin was also to do. Bakunin proclaimed himself a Proudhonist without the metaphysical idealist and doctrinaire trappings. Bakounine, M., Oeuvres, 5th ed., Paris, Stock, vol. 2, pp.12-14.
proletariat into their own agent.\textsuperscript{1} The performance of positive (progressive) functions by the state in society would be a symptom of the approaching victory of the social forces which would abolish the state as a particularistic sphere external to society. These views of Marx were in contrast to his stand on state-intervention in a pre-democratic regime such as Germany.\textsuperscript{2} In the latter case he saw state-aid as a means by which an authoritarian regime could hinder the development of an independent workers' movement and postpone the granting of universal democratic freedoms.

Marx succeeded in committing the International to the need for political action within the framework of the existing state, but this issue became in the end the issue which destroyed the Association. It was Michael Bakunin who led the practical opposition to Marx in the latter part of the life of the International, and who also provided an influential critique of Marx's political


theory. Bakunin began from the conviction that unless political structures were directly attacked from without, they would absorb the movement while preserving their essential nature (that of maintaining coercive relationships of authority).

Bakunin's most severe criticisms were directed against the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He was completely opposed to the idea of a political transition state in which the proletariat would exercise political power to nationalise land and industry. He held that this involved the contradiction that complete social emancipation would be prepared from above. Marx had argued that the old state form must survive into the dictatorship of the proletariat in so far as the proletariat employed the formal authority of the state (rather than arbitrary violence) to abolish the privileges of property. According to Marx the existence of property privilege prevented that formation of a general will, which was the condition for the self-regulation of society. Social emancipation could only occur when the existence of a general will made the institution of force superfluous.

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Bakunin rejected the idea that the revolutionary movement, once committed to the use of state power, could move beyond this political structure. He claimed that the institution of universal suffrage was the 'last word' of the Marxists in their idea of 'people's government' (the dictatorship of the proletariat).\(^1\) Bakunin was able to seize on ambiguities in Marx's discussion of the transition state to claim that the state power would actually be expanded during its use as a revolutionary instrument. Moreover this 'transition' state would bring with it the danger of the creation of a new class: "la masse du peuple sera divisée en deux armées: l'armée industrielle et l'armée agricole, sous le commandement direct des ingénieurs de l'État qui forment une nouvelle caste politico-savante privilégiée."\(^2\)

Bakunin's general critique had lasting relevance in so far as the political organisation of the proletariat did tend to become rigidified, and did tend to inhibit that social creativity of the proletariat which Marx had anticipated. There was a tendency among later Marxists,

\(^1\) Bakunin, M., *Étatisme et Anarchie*, op. cit., p.346.

\(^2\) Ibid., p.349. This was perhaps the first attempt to describe Marxism as the ideology of a new class.
from Kautsky to Lenin, to allow the political organisation of the proletariat, and the associated corporate elite, to take precedence over the spontaneous initiative of the class.

Bakunin himself claimed that true revolution could only take place when: "the people are stirred by a universal idea, one evolved from the depths of popular instinct"; and when this was joined to desperate poverty.\(^1\) On the practical level he put his trust, like the early proletarian communists, in conspiratorial forms of action. He eschewed the use of formal political structures, but at the same time placed confidence in charismatic leadership by groups which were to inspire total commitment, and act as the nucleus of revolution.\(^2\)

Marx brought the same kinds of objection against Bakunin as he had against Weitling. Revolution would not arise out of the desperation of the masses, but out of the confidence gained in democratic self-organisation.


\(^2\) Pyziur (op. cit., Ch.6) provides an interesting account of the continuity between Bolshevik and Bakuninist norms of revolutionary behaviour.
Secret societies were antithetical to the nature of the proletarian movement, because they hindered the education and self-sufficiency of the proletariat by subjecting them to mystical and authoritarian laws. The proletariat could only emancipate themselves and society when they were free of irrational forms of dependence.

Marx's strengthening of the powers of the General Council in order to deal with Bakunin's influence led to further anarchist attacks on the innate tendencies of political organisations towards hierarchy, centralisation and dominance by the executive. The Bakuninists argued that the General Council should return to acting simply as a correspondence and statistical bureau. Marx's defence was that the Alliance of Social Democracy, by making anarchy the means rather than the end goal of the struggle, reversed the order of things:

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2 "One must educate the workers and accustom them to liberty and independence" (Minutes of the same session), Freymond, J., ed. La Première Internationale, op. cit., vol. 2, p.225.

It proclaims anarchy in the ranks of the proletariat as the most infallible means of breaking the powerful concentration of social and political forces in the hands of the exploiters. Under this pretext, it asks the International, at the moment when the old world is seeking to crush it, to replace its organisation by anarchy.¹

There are two periods in Marx's writings where he departs significantly from his usual account of proletarian organisation. In both cases he sanctioned political revolution by the proletariat in a situation where the conditions for a socialist revolution which he had established theoretically, were missing.²

Soon after Marx's arrival in Cologne in 1848 during the German revolution he had used his discretionary powers to dissolve the Communist League. His argument was that, as the League was a propaganda rather than a conspiratorial organisation, its existence was superfluous when the freedom of the press and of association had been granted.³ Previously the League had had to exist as a

² Bertram Wolfe has observed that it was the writings of these two periods which were to become Lenin's "bible, his catechism, and his litany of sacred texts". See Wolfe, B.D., Marxism, op. cit., p.228.
³ Röser, P.G., Statement made at the trial of the Cologne conspirators, December 1853 (edited by Blumemberg). (continued next page)
secret organisation in Germany, and Marx appeared to believe that it might hinder the participation of the proletariat in the wider liberal movement for reform (which was taking advantage of the new political freedom). In the event Marx's opponents within the League were justified in their hesitation, as the political freedoms disappeared rapidly with the failure of the liberal revolution. It was Marx's disappointment at the failure of the bourgeois to secure the liberal revolution in Germany which provoked a temporary radicalisation of his views on organisation in 1850.

The locus classicus for Marx's 'Blanquism' is the March 1850 Address of the Central Committee of the Communist League, although the June Address of that year is written in the same spirit. In these circulars Marx was advocating a type of permanent revolution by the proletariat to force the pace of historical development

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1 The League was re-established almost immediately by Marx's opponents, among them Schapper, Moll, Eccarius and Bauer (Heinrich). Marx did not rejoin it until late 1849 or the beginning of 1850. He did not attempt to alter the constitutional changes introduced in his absence.
through and beyond the liberal stage. Because the natural path of development had been blocked by the semi-feudal reaction, the proletariat required a more militant form of organisation. The bourgeoisie had shown themselves incapable, or perhaps unwilling in the face of the rise of the proletariat from below, to make the breakthrough from political stagnation.

The Blanquists held that a small highly organised conspiracy could conduct a successful putsch and revolutionise society at any time, providing that their own preparation was sufficient. Apparently at this time the delegates of the Blanquists were in regular and official association with delegates of the League.¹

¹ E.g. in the Universal Society of Revolutionary Communists, founded in April 1850, in which Marx and Engels collaborated with the Blanquists and the revolutionary wing of the Chartists. The aim of the Society was the overthrow of all privileged classes, and their subordination to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Under this dictatorship the revolution in permanence would be maintained until communism had been realised. See Weltgesellschaft der revolutionären Kommunisten [the statutes of the society], Werke, vol. 7, p. 553.

The slogan 'revolution in permanence' indicated that the proletariat was expected to complete both the bourgeois revolution and its own, without that interval of bourgeois democracy which Marx normally regarded as necessary for the political maturing of the mass movement.

It was thought until recently that Marx took over the phrase 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from the (continued next page)
Marx claimed that communist delegates had undertaken important preparation for the next French revolution on behalf of the Blanquists. Marx's revolutionary impatience at this period is reflected in his attributing importance to a Hungarian emigrant party in London on the grounds that it contained many excellent military men who would be at the disposal of the League in a revolution.

In spite of this temporary tactical co-operation with the Blanquists, Marx never really accepted their views on how to make a revolution. In April 1850 Marx wrote a scathing account of professional revolutionaries. He decried the attempt of small highly organised coteries

1 (continued from previous page)
Blanquists. Draper has demonstrated that actually this expression was not used by the Blanquists prior to their association with Marx at this time, and therefore the use of it by Marx did not imply that he had taken over Blanquist ideas on dictatorship. The Blanquist concept of dictatorship always entailed the rule of a small group in the name of a class, not the rule of a whole class which comprised the majority of the population. For this reason the expression 'dictatorship of the proletariat' would not have come naturally to them. See Draper, H., "Marx and the dictatorship of the proletariat", Etudes de Marxologie, no. 6, (Cahiers de l'ISEA, no.129) (September 1962), pp.5-73.


2 Ibid.
to take the place of the genuine mass movement of the politically mature proletariat.¹

In 1871 Marx waxed enthusiastic over a rising of the proletariat which lacked a solid nation-wide backing, and occurred in the face of foreign occupation. The rising - the Paris Commune - took place for nationalist rather than socialist reasons, and its participants lacked that mature class consciousness which Marx believed evolved with the political development of a class. Nonetheless Marx valued the Commune for its demonstration of the

¹ Marx, K., [Review of Chenu, A., Les Conspirateurs, and of de la Hodde, L., La Naissance de la République], in Neue Rheinische Zeitung, Politisch-ökonomische Revue (April 1850), Werke, vol. 7, p.266ff. Marx's attack on professional revolutionaries in this article anticipated the split within the League which took place on 15 September 1850, and which signalled the end of Marx's collaboration with the Blanquists and with those within the League who sympathised with them (the Willich-Schapper group). Marx then broke definitively with those groups which were trying to revive the revolution in the absence of a genuine mass movement.

The Willich-Schapper group also claimed that intellectuals no longer had a role in the proletarian movement once the proletariat had achieved consciousness of its class position. The group was described as believing that the theoretical side was already settled, and the time had come for practical action: revolutionary dedication could convert a direct attack on existing government into a communist revolution. [Ansprache der Kölner Zentralbehörde an den Bund] (dated 1 December 1850, published Dresdner Journal und Anzeiger, no. 171, 22 June 1851), Werke, vol. 7, pp.561-565. With the split, Marx had moved the headquarters of the League to Cologne, away from the main source of opposition. This action was paralleled in 1872 when he had the headquarters of the International moved to America.
political creativeness of the proletariat.\footnote{1} He sympathised with the Blanquists who took part in it, in spite of the fact that he privately condemned the timing of the revolution, which was typical of the revolutionary optimism of Blanqui's followers.

Immediately after the fall of the Commune, Marx entered into an alliance with the Blanquist refugees against the Bakuninists. Leading Blanquists entered the General Council and were useful to Marx in 1871 and 1872 in helping to pass resolutions favouring political action by the proletariat. At both these conferences motions were passed calling for the organisation of the proletariat as an independent political party.\footnote{2} The Blanquists were

\footnote{1} The way in which a network of popular committees sprang up and flourished during the Paris Commune seemed (to socialist observers) to confirm that the proletariat possessed the social capacity, in terms of creativity and involvement which would enable them to replace the forms of bourgeois democracy with a more dynamic form of social organisation. For the comments of various observers see: Decouflé, A., "La spontanéité révolutionnaire dans une révolution populaire", \textit{Etudes de Marxologie}, no. 9 (\textit{Cahiers de l'ISEA}, no. 164) (August 1965), pp.173-207.

\footnote{2} However Marx maintained his position that the International was not intended to dictate any particular form of the political movement. [\textit{Aufzeichnung eines Interviews, das Karl Marx einem Korrespondenten der Zeitung "The World" gewährte}] (published in \textit{Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly}, no. 13/65, 12 August 1871), \textit{Werke}, vol. 17, p.641.
also of assistance in getting motions passed giving the General Council greater powers for the battle against the Bakuninists. However Marx resisted the more extreme demands of the Blanquists: they wished the International to become a disciplined, centralised revolutionary party with a reorganised General Council as its vanguard.¹

There is no evidence that Marx ever sympathised with the authoritarian tendencies of the Blanquists, apart from the bitter aftermath of the 1848 revolution.

Marx normally viewed his own task as that of helping the proletariat to self-awareness; both through the encouragement of organisation, and through the elaboration of the theory which corresponded to the historical movement. He credited intellectuals such as himself with an important role in giving the proletarian movement "homogeneity and consciousness of its function".²

Marx was critical of the tendency of the early proletarian conspiracies to despise the "habits noirs".


He claimed that it was this deliberate neglect of the more theoretical analysis of society and of their class interests which had rendered them ineffective and misguided. The French mutualists also opposed the inclusion of intellectuals in workers' organisation, and brought this attitude with them into the International. Marx was defeated in the Lefort case of 1865, but the General Council and later the Geneva Congress affirmed the principle that non-workers were entitled to be officials of the organisation.

On the other hand Marx held that the intellectuals needed to be organically connected with the movement, serving to reflect the praxis of the working classes and to generalise it. If the theory was correct it would be accepted by the masses, and become an important revolutionary weapon. The Marxists suspected the motives of the déclassé intellectuals on whom Bakunin relied to lead the revolution. These men had an interest in retrieving their careers through gaining positions in the Bakuninist organisation, which was geared to leadership


by an intellectual elite.

To assure the success of the revolution there must be unity of thought and action. The Internationalists attempt to create this unity by propaganda, discussion, and the public organisation of the proletariat: according to Bakunin one only needs a secret organisation of a hundred privileged representatives of the revolutionary idea, and the orthodoxy and blind obedience of the majority of the privileged few.\(^1\)

Dr Avineri provides an ingenious interpretation of Marx's views on class and the intellectual.\(^2\) The intellectual is in the unique position of being able to consciously choose between classes. This is not because his social being does not determine his social consciousness, but rather because the social situation of the intellectual in bourgeois society has the element of choice written into it in terms of the critical function of the intellectual. However it would seem that for Marx the choice of identification with a class (particularly with a rising class) extended far beyond the intellectual strata as such. This was one reason why ideology, and the critique of ideology, had such important functions.

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1. Ibid., p.393.
The concept of the unity of theory and practice was indispensable to Marx's views of the function of the working class movement. His 'idea' of the movement implied that it embodied the realisation of philosophy: that it was the proof that history was a process of man's self-creation as a free being. Judging by his own standards (and those of some of the Marxist theorists to be discussed below) this proved to be a chimera. The practical critique of the proletariat (of all the forms which man's alienation had assumed) did not maintain the total critique of philosophy.

The unity of theory and practice was severed when Marxism (as radical theory) was no longer vindicated in the self-conscious action of the proletariat - if it had ever been so in the past. According to the criticisms of a number of Marx's followers who were most concerned with his political theory, Marxist theory became the ideological means of consolidating organisational forms which themselves inhibited the political creativity of the proletariat.¹

¹ The concept of the degeneration of Marxism into an ideological function of working-class organisation is summarised in the following formula: "Marxism, in the process of transcending Hegel's philosophy through the self-conscious action of the proletariat, turned into a reified Weltanschauung alien to the proletariat." Fetscher, I., "Von der Philosophie des Proletariats zur proletarischen Weltanschauung", Marxismusstudien, Zweite Folge,, Tübingen, Mohr, 1957, p.26.
It was central to Marx's beliefs that the proletarian movement (as a revolutionary agent) must be the model for the future democratic community. As such a model it must display viable alternatives to the pattern of social relationship and the modes of authority, discipline and decision-making found in the existing state form.

On the other hand Marx held that, for various reasons, it was impossible to prescribe the precise institutional forms which the movement and the future must take. One reason was that the forms of the proletarian movement would necessarily be affected in some ways by the need to utilise political (coercive) power in the process of abolishing it. Another reason was that he expected that historical development (including the impact of the movement itself) would bring about change in the possible forms of social expression.

To those of Marx's followers who took his political ideals seriously, the problem of the state tended to be seen primarily in the light of the problems of the movement as the model for the future. It appeared to them that some of the institutional forms which Marx had credited with revolutionary potential (such as perhaps the trade-union organisations) had turned out to be
ineffective in - and unsuited for - the basic restructuring of social relations. Some of these theorists felt obliged to seek out and absorb into Marx's theory new institutions which might be more compatible with the development of the new community and of socialised man: i.e. more compatible with Marx's vision of the complete return of public life to society, and the involvement of all in the exercise of public authority. For these theorists - as opposed to those discussed in the next chapter - the problem of how to make effective Marx's demand for the abolition of bureaucracy (even within the limited sphere of the movement) became a major one with the development of the 'mass society'.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE REAFFIRMATION OF THE STATE FROM LASSALLE TO KAUTSKY AND LENIN

Ferdinand Lassalle played a vital role in shaping the ideas of the German Marxist movement on the nature of the state. Lassalle himself had promoted the identification of his own views with those of Marx, for political reasons.\(^1\) In fact, the political concepts of Lassalle proved to have more direct impact on the German workers than the genuinely Marxist ideas.\(^2\)

Lassalle, throughout his radical agitation, retained the neo-Hegelian Idealist view of the state (and in particular the 'German state') as a moral entity. He claimed that the German nation-state had been honoured

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1 See Marx to Engels, 3 June 1863, Werke, vol. 30, p. 402. Lassalle wished to capture the remnants of the 1848 communist movement in the Rhineland for the A.D.A.V. by stressing this identity.

2 Lassallean concepts were preserved in the programme of the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany up till the Erfurt convention of 1891 (when the name also was changed). It has moreover been estimated that Lassalle's Open Letter was one of the two most widely read pieces of socialist literature at the end of the nineteenth century (the other being Bebel's Woman and Socialism). See Roth, G., The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany, N. Jersey, Bedminster Press, 1963, p. 240.
with a unique place in world history as a product of mind: its spiritual being had preceded (and inspired) the creation of the material grounds for its existence.\(^1\) As a great cultural nation which had achieved a high level of self-realisation, the Germans had special rights vis-à-vis other nationalities.\(^2\) Such views as these had definite affinity with the general upsurge of nationalist sentiment associated with the unification of Germany. The appeal of Marxist internationalism was relatively weak.

Lassalle differed from the right-wing Hegelians in that he believed that the state had yet to fulfil its moral destiny. For Lassalle the state was imperfect because it had not yet absorbed the progressive principle of the new historical era - the principle of the working class. The class interest of the working class coincided with the "development of the whole people, the victory of the idea, the advance of culture - the living principle of history - freedom".\(^3\)

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2 e.g. Lassalle, F., Der Italienische Krieg und die Aufgabe Preussens (first published 1859), Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, op. cit., vol. 1, pp.33-35.

Lassalle's (non-materialist) theory of history encompassed three main aspects: the philosophical, juridical and sociological. These reciprocally corroborated the view of history as a development towards greater freedom. In the philosophical aspect, Lassalle saw history as the triumph of successive 'ideas', each more progressive than the last. Each idea was the guiding principle of some historical group, which strove to bring it to social expression. When a new, more progressive principle appeared, embodied in another group, the old group was doomed to decline from its position of social dominance.

From the juridical point of view, Lassalle saw historical development as consisting in the progressive limitation of the rights of private property; beginning with the abolition of slavery, and moving through the various forms of feudal bondage. From the sociological point of view, history was the continuing battle against the unfreedom implicit in ignorance, poverty and powerlessness.

According to Lassalle, the working class 'idea' entailed the concept of the state as a conscious moral community. The working class were destined to bring the true nature of the state to full self-consciousness; previously the moral being of the state had developed in a "dark organic" fashion, without, or in spite of, the will of its leaders. The state had always existed as the organism which enabled men to reach a higher level of development, and to set themselves higher goals than were possible where this unity did not exist.

Lassalle believed that the contradiction between the 'idea' of the working class, and the existing accidental reality of the state could only be resolved by the granting of universal suffrage. This would make the idea politically effective. When this occurred the true purpose of the state would become manifest: the assistance in "the great cultural advances of mankind".¹

Lassalle was resolutely opposed to bourgeois liberal conceptions of the function of the state. He saw in the liberal idea the danger of spiritual and moral decay. Lassalle asserted that it was necessary, rather, to

¹ Lassalle, F., Offenes Antwortschreiben an das Zentralkomitee zur Berufung eines allgemeinen deutschen Arbeiterkongresses zu Leipzig (first published 1863), Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, op. cit., vol. 3, p.73.
enlarge the notion of the state so that it became an organisation in which the whole virtue of man would realise itself.¹ For Lassalle the moral order represented by the state was infinitely greater than the sum of its parts.

One important function of the state was to serve as the framework which made "great cultural nations" capable of participating in the centre of the world-historical process. Lassalle cited Fichte's authority for the view that a mere federal union could not create a national character [Volksgefühl]: such an organisation remained external to the people, like any other diplomatic alliance between governments.² Lassalle was of the opinion that the U.S.A. had no world-historical significance for the reason that: "America is a bourgeois society, not a state."³ This was in contrast to Marx's belief that England and the U.S.A., because of their weakly developed state apparatus and their particular

² Lassalle, F., Die Presse und der Frankfurter Abgeordnetentag, Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, op. cit., vol. 4, pp.52-53.
political traditions, were the two countries most favourable to the peaceful development of socialism. It was Marx's contention that economic and social innovations arose outside the state, and were generally hindered in their development by the bureaucratic and coercive logic of the state.

Lassalle asserted that the further cultural development of the German nation depended on the absorption of the progressive principle into the state. The cultural and moral advance of the nation was being retarded by the fact that the state was controlled by those who were opposed to the movement of history (because the latter signified the abolition of their privileges). Lassalle was particularly exercised by the threat to the fabric of the state posed by the bourgeoisie. He feared the disintegrative effects of 'egotistic individualism' as opposed to the ideals of community and reciprocity. For Lassalle the political absorption of the workers, with their solidaristic ideas, was essential for the moral health of the state. Also the workers' movement was in accord with the movement of history: it represented a dynamic new social principle, which the state could not resist without damage to itself.

For Lassalle universal suffrage was the necessary means by which the working class would impose its idea on the state. The demand for universal suffrage was the basis of Lassalle's campaigns during the founding years of the first working class political party in Germany in 1863-64. He believed that the working classes would become an irresistible force once they recognised the necessity for universal suffrage. In fact, Lassalle was the first successfully to popularise among the German workers the idea that political action was necessary. His vehement support for universal suffrage indirectly illustrates his prejudice against the liberal bourgeoisie. The granting of universal suffrage in Prussia would have favoured the interests of the conservatives, with their vast reservoir of peasant adherents, as against the liberals, whose influence was dependent on the three-class property qualification.

However Lassalle claimed that once the workers had recognised the necessity of universal suffrage, they would be an irresistible force in the state. The consequence of political dominance would be that the workers would be able to use the state to satisfy their social and economic needs, in the same way as previously
dominant classes had done. Lassalle urged the view that the achievement of state intervention was essential for any improvement to be effected in the social and economic situation of the workers. He linked the demand for universal suffrage with the demand for state-subsidised workers' co-operatives.

According to Lassalle's economic theory, the only way by which "the iron law of wages" could be abrogated was through large-scale state credit for co-operatives. He argued that the formation of self-help co-operatives was misguided; they were useless as a means of resisting the effects of industrial growth. The primacy which Lassalle accorded to economic intervention by the state on behalf of the workers foreshadowed the conservative policies on welfare legislation in the 1880s.

Lassalle's personal rapprochement with the conservatives appeared scandalous to Marx, for whom the liberalisation of the Prussian power structure was the

1 Lassalle, F., *Offenes Antwortschreiben*, op. cit., p.73 ff.

2 Lassalle's politically oriented workers' party was set up in opposition to the ideas of liberals such as Schulze-Delitzsch who wished to guide the working class through non-political organisations set up within the liberal movement. Lassalle mounted a full-scale attack on Schulze-Delitzsch's ideas on self-help co-operatives in *Herr Bastiat Schulze von Delitzsch, the Economic* Julian, *Or Capital and Labour*, published in 1864.
first essential for the socialist development of the proletariat. Lassalle's impatience for results had led him to enter a brief and somewhat one-sided relationship with Bismarck. In a letter to Bismarck accompanying a copy of the statutes of the newly founded General Workers' Association (A.D.A.V.) Lassalle wrote as follows:

...this miniature will be enough to show how true it is that the working class is instinctively inclined to dictatorship if it feels that such will be exercised in working class interests; and that therefore...the workers...would be prepared to see in the Crown the natural bearer of a social dictatorship in contradiction to the egoism of bourgeois society, if the Crown for its part (and this is most unlikely) could make up its mind to adopt a really revolutionary and national attitude.¹

The dictatorial tendency in Lassalle's own organisational methods gained a certain notoriety. As President of the Association he arrogated very wide powers for himself, and the local branches were strictly subordinated to the headquarters. Marx wrote to Lassalle's chief successor that:

...centralist organisation, although very useful for secret societies and sectarian

¹ Quoted in Footman, D., Ferdinand Lassalle, New Haven, Yale, U.P., 1947, p.179.
movements, goes against the nature of the trade unions. Even if it were possible - I state outright that it is impossible - it would not be desirable, and least of all in Germany. Here, where the worker's life is regulated from childhood on by bureaucracy, and he himself believes in the authorities, in the bodies appointed over him, he must be taught before all else to walk by himself.¹

The value that Marx attributed to liberal freedoms as a school for socialism was denied by Lassalle; Lassalle's aim of state-help could be achieved without the slow maturing of an independent workers' movement, and the political education thus provided. In spite of this essential disparity between the two thinkers on the value of liberalism, their political legacies became merged in the minds of many leading German social democrats. Perhaps this was one of the causes of the weakness of the Party, as a whole, as a force for liberalisation.

For Marx the right of combination, for example, was of far greater importance than the achievement of governmental support for co-operatives. He wrote that the right of combination was vital as a means of weakening the rule of police and bureaucracy, and as "a measure for the conversion of 'subjects' into fully-fledged citizens". State support for the co-operative

¹ Marx to Schweitzer, 13 October 1868, MESC, p.215.
societies would merely extend "the system of tutelage".¹

For Lassalle, the development of self-governing institutions of the proletariat, as the preparation for the generalising of a whole new system of social relationships, was not a central feature of socialism. His immediate aim was the triumphant entry of the proletariat into the traditional political institutions, bearing 'men of science', such as himself, at their head.

At first, the Lassallean party distinguished itself from the 'Marxist' Eisenachers mainly by its support for the unification of Germany by Prussia. After 1871 the 'Marxists' resigned themselves to the fait accompli, and the grounds for the unification of the parties were laid.

The German party leaders demonstrated a lack of inclination to follow Marx in looking beyond the existing state form (or to take seriously his ideas on developing alternative bases of social activity). Lassalle's political ideas appeared more relevant to the German situation, and they came to be treated as part of the Marxist canon. In 1886 Bebel wrote: "The state shall be transformed from a state resting on class rule into a

¹ Marx to Engels, 14 February 1865, MESC, p.165.
people's state...state-help and self-help are identical and there exist no contradictions between them."

Perhaps the height of neo-idealistic political thinking within the Marxist school is expressed in the following passage by the Austrian Karl Renner:

...the state appears to the class-conscious bourgeois as his toy....However, objectively, the state is something higher;...the economy serves the capitalist, the state serves the people. The state will be the lever of socialism,...the kernel of socialism is already hidden in all the institutions of the capitalist state....In fact, the people are far from state nihilism.\(^2\)

The tendency towards a negative acceptance of the existing political order is illustrated in the work of Karl Kautsky, the leading authority in the field of orthodox party doctrine in the two decades before the First World War. Although Kautsky made the concept of political revolution into the lynchpin of orthodoxy, he converted the function of this radical theory into the strengthening of proletarian organisation within the existing political framework.

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Kautsky's primary political concern was this development of a strong social-democratic organisation. He believed that the conditions favouring this aim were, on the one hand, cautious reformist practice, and on the other, the retention of revolutionary theory. In fact he argued that these were mutually supporting conditions. In this respect Kautsky consciously furthered the split between theory and practice.

Kautsky's approach to Marxism was heavily influenced by natural determinism (via Darwin and Engels). The building up of proletarian organisation became an end in itself for Kautsky, because he believed that the actual preparation of revolution lay outside the realm of politico-social initiative of the proletariat and rested with the ineluctable process of economic development.

1 Kautsky, K., Der Weg zur Macht, Berlin, Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1909, p.64.
2 Ibid., p.44; The Class Struggle (Erfurt Programme, first published 1892), Chicago, Kerr, 1910, p.117. The Erfurt Programme represented a victory over both the Revisionists and "Die Jungen". Whereas the Revisionists wanted to reunite theory and practice by discarding revolutionary theory, the Jungen wanted to do so by substituting revolutionary practice for practice centred on the conservation of the Party machine. Kautsky provided the theoretical justification of the Erfurt Programme in his major pre-war political tract, Der Weg zur Macht.
The goal of the socialist movement was to build up a strong political organisation which would retain its authority while the authority of the rest of the regime crumbled. He believed that popular trust in the existing regime was being destroyed by its own instruments, the bureaucracy and the army;¹ and by its incapacity to deal with socio-economic developments.

According to Kautsky the internal interests of the party were best served by the attempt to stabilise the political environment as far as was in its power. This included restraint with regard to political initiatives which would constitute a provocation to the ruling classes, and which would provide a pretext for reprisals.² It also included the political isolationism of the Social Democratic Party. The party was to refrain from alliance with middle-class parties, by means of which the political environment might have been adjusted in its favour. Such an alliance would weaken the unity of the party's political base in the proletariat because it would entail a partial responsibility for the existing regime.³

¹ Der Weg zur Macht, op. cit., p.55.
² Ibid., p.47ff.
³ Ibid., p.103.
Radical theory corresponded to the need Kautsky perceived for the symbolic isolation of the party from the social establishment. Political and social discrimination had given rise to a class consciousness among the proletariat which demanded this kind of symbolic isolation. It provided the Social Democratic organisation with the charisma of an historically designated instrument of revolution, and distinguished it from the parties which basically supported the status quo. Kautsky argued that should the party abandon its revolutionary ideology (which derived the revolutionary character of the party from its theoretical goal), it would no longer be able to perform its function of integrating the proletariat into a disciplined organisation prepared to wait on events. He wrote that if the proletariat lost faith in the revolutionary character of their work for the party, they would turn back to pre-Marxist modes of thought, and reliance on violent uprisings.

Marx had regarded the political ideas of Blanqui and Weitling as a reflection of the first stirrings of

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1 Ibid., p.52. Kautsky drew on the example of "Millerandism" in France, which he believed had caused the desertion of the masses to syndicalism. Kautsky definitely sided with Guesde against Jaurès on this issue.
the proletarian movement. These early socialists held the view that a successful socialist revolution could be initiated on the basis of the degradation and the desperation of the proletariat.¹ Marx saw this school of thought as symptomatic of the emerging stages of a distinctive proletarian praxis (i.e. it appeared before the latter had become fully self-aware).

Kautsky, on the other hand, believed that these ideas were likely to be recurrent among the proletariat. He held that it was the instinct of the masses to prefer this kind of doctrine, which offered the possibility of an immediate release from exploitation through a forcible take-over of the state.² This was the basis of Kautsky's conviction that the consciousness of the masses must be guided and restrained by a disciplined proletarian political organisation which preserved the intrinsic 'idea' of the class. Kautsky's views on the limitations

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² Kautsky, K., Terrorism and Communism (first published 1919), London, The National Labour Press, 1920, pp.154-55. Kautsky went so far as to claim that only when the workers were already released from the crushing burden of poverty could they absorb the lessons of Marxist socialism and forswear the attempt to reach their goal by force. See The Labour Revolution, London, Allen and Unwin, 1925, p.35.
of the spontaneous development of class consciousness (without the benefit of the party intellectuals) is discussed later in this chapter.

Kautsky argued that the growth of proletarian self-confidence (rather than desperation) which Marx considered a preliminary to socialism could only emerge from the development of large-scale organisation and of the capacity of the proletariat for organisational discipline.¹ Kautsky regarded this submissiveness to the requirements of large-scale (bureaucratised) organisation as essential if the proletariat were to come to power. The ideas of revolution which flourished among the proletarian masses outside such an organisation could result at most in the liberation of anarchist tendencies, and in the complementary installation of a dictatorship based on force over them.²

Kautsky gave considerable emphasis to the independent role of political ideals in buttressing institutional strength. He illustrated his point with reference to the

² Kautsky, K., Terrorism and Communism, op. cit., p.156, Chapter VIII.
strong appeal exercised by colonial policies, in spite of the fact that the latter did not represent any immediate material benefits.\(^1\) He described colonial policies as the last political resource of capitalism. In other respects the capitalist class had ceased to be revolutionary and had become conservative; i.e. had lost its concern with great questions and given itself up to self-seeking.\(^2\) The German Liberals had suffered a decline in moral authority and political strength as a consequence of their loss of political idealism. In the same way, if the Social Democrats gave up their future ideals, and subordinated their theory to the demands of practical work in the present, they would lose a potent source of political appeal. Kautsky claimed that pragmatic concentration on present interests at the expense of theoretical ideals had turned the English proletariat into a cipher in actual politics.\(^3\)

For Kautsky the future lay with the growth of the party organisation. At the time of his theoretical

\(^1\) Kautsky, K., *Der Weg zur Macht*, op. cit., p.22.
\(^2\) Ibid., p.98.
pre-eminence his ideas did not extend to any dramatic restructuring of the political environment which had shaped the party organisation. In 1912 this fact became the subject of controversy between Kautsky and Pannekoek. Pannekoek argued that the proletarian organisation which inherited the future would not be the present one, which was influenced by the bourgeois environment. The external features of the present organisation might well be destroyed in the simultaneous struggle against the bourgeoisie for the state power and against the state as such, although the core of proletarian co-operation would remain. Kautsky described Pannekoek's views on the transitory nature of the institutional features of existing proletarian organisation as "a masterpiece of social alchemy".

Moreover, Kautsky argued against Pannekoek that the proletarian victory could not entail any radical change in the administrative structure of the state; the ministries in their existing form and the professional

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1 For a more detailed exposition of the views of Anton Pannekoek see the opening pages of Chapter Six.
2 The controversy appeared in Neue Zeit, Jg. XXX, vol. II (1912).
3 Ibid., p.688.
bureaucracy were essential to modern society. He wrote that the conquering of state power by the proletariat would not lead to the destruction of state power, but only to a shift in the relations of power within the state apparatus.

Kautsky worked from the assumption that the winning of governmental power by the proletarian party would automatically ensure that the economic activity of the state (as involved in nationalisation) would change in nature from exploitative to socialist. Kautsky upheld the view that freedom in socialist society would not be freedom of labour, but the freedom from labour made possible by mechanisation. Freedom would be enjoyed in the realms of artistic and intellectual activity ("the noblest enjoyment"). This appears to be the only area of social life in which Kautsky seriously considered new forms for the future. He employed the slogan: "Communism in material production, anarchism in the intellectual". The uniformity implied by state or

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2 Ibid., p.158.
3 Ibid.
majority control would be avoided by the financing of intellectual production at different levels, including the municipal.¹ Kautsky also considered the possibility of free unions to subserve the interests of art, science and public life. These "consumer co-operatives" could finance activity such as publishing, which was of special concern to their members.²

In general, Kautsky's pre-war preoccupation with the consolidation of the party organisation within the existing political order (by taking advantage of the degree of toleration which the latter afforded it), greatly restricted his political horizons. The achievement of universal suffrage; the achievement of a government responsible to the Reichstag; and the centralisation of the Reich at the expense of the state Landtags, became synonomous with the political goal of the proletariat.³ The achievement of fully representative democracy signalled by these reforms was assumed to provide the political framework for socialism.

¹ Ibid., p.177ff.
³ Kautsky, K., Der Weg zur Macht, op. cit., pp.80-81.
Kautsky was later to claim that the democratic state based on universal suffrage was in fact the creation of the proletariat, and the political institution uniquely their own. Kautsky saw the demand for the supersession of the representative system by forms of direct legislation as a by-product of the "political bankruptcy" of the petit bourgeois class. Demands for vocational representation as a supplement to, or a replacement for, the legislative assembly he regarded as aberrations on the behalf of the proletariat.

Kautsky's political theory was considerably affected by the experience of the Bolshevik revolution. He began to stress the point that the appropriation of private property by a proletarian state was not sufficient to guarantee the socialisation of the economy: statification was not the equivalent of socialisation, even if the proletariat had won governmental power. Kautsky urged

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1 Kautsky, K., Terrorism and Communism, op. cit., p.229.
3 Kautsky defended this position against both the Bolsheviks and the Guild Socialists (e.g. The Labour Revolution, op. cit., p.90ff.)
4 Kautsky developed his case in his Vorwort to Die Sozialisierung der Landwirtschaft (Berlin, 1919), and in his Selbstdarstellung (Leipzig, 1924).
against the combination of state ownership of industries
with management by the state bureaucracy. He described
the state bureaucracy as the most rigid (with regard to
the regulations and conventions characteristically
governing its operation) of all the bureaucracies
developed in modern society - such as the co-operative,
trade union, and capitalist bureaucracies. For this
reason it was the least suitable to be employed in
socialisation.¹

Kautsky insisted that the management of nationalised
industries must be made independent of the state
bureaucracy, and invested with "all the attributes of an
industrial democracy".² The governing body of each
industry should be made up of representatives of three
groups: the producers concerned in the industry; the
consumers concerned with its products; and the community
as a whole (as embodied in the legislature). Works
 councils should play an important role in the self-

¹ Kautsky, K., The Labour Revolution, op. cit., p.168. Kautsky asserted that even the counterbalancing of the state bureaucracy by the rival force of private capital to some extent mitigated the evils produced where the rule of the state bureaucracy was absolute. See Terrorism and Communism, op. cit., p.202.
² The Labour Revolution, op. cit., p.182.
administration of factories and the democratic control of industry. Kautsky, like Plekhanov and the Mensheviks, was able to employ Marx's theory of Oriental Despotism as a "weapon of criticism" against the Bolshevik economic statification. These critics were able to cite Marx on the ossification brought about by the control of the economy by a state bureaucracy.

In opposition to the Bolshevik example, Kautsky denied that socialism made necessary a uniform system of production with all branches transformed into state undertakings. He suggested that at least three different forms of production were apposite: nationalised industry, municipalised industry, and production co-operatives associated with producer and consumer unions.

In the period following the First World War (and the Bolshevik Revolution), Kautsky modified his opinions

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1 The contribution of Plekhanov and the Mensheviks is discussed in Chapter Seven.
2 E.g. Kautsky, K., The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, op. cit., passim.
3 These critics were also able to utilise Marx's theory of Oriental Despotism with reference to the decline in agriculture occasioned by the state requisitioning of all surplus value produced by the peasants. See Kautsky, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, op. cit., p.111.
4 Kautsky, K., The Labour Revolution, op. cit., Chapter VIII.
on the value of radical theory. He placed his emphasis on the need for a peaceful transition to socialism and for temporary coalition with middle class parties. On the other hand his preoccupation with the proletarian party organisation, rather than with the proletariat qua class, remained constant. He even enlarged on the advantages of party rule in a democracy (assuming that classes themselves cannot govern, but can only rule in a more general sense). Because political parties in a democracy were neither co-extensive nor co-terminous with a social class, and because their rule changed more often than class rule, they helped to develop the toleration of minorities.

1 Kautsky described the struggle of the radicals against the moderates in the "Labour Revolution" as the struggle of the most backward members of the working class against the most advanced sections of the class. Ibid., p.41.

2 Ibid., p.77. In the pre-war period Kautsky had denounced the "fanatics of social peace" (i.e. the Revisionists). See The Social Revolution, op.cit., p.61.

3 The Labour Revolution, op. cit., p.50.

4 One concession which Kautsky made in the direction of class spontaneity was that he allowed that the Workshop Committees were more suited to the organisation of mass strikes than the trade union bureaucracy. See The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, op. cit., pp.72-73.

5 The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, op. cit., p.31.
Kautsky recognised that the downgrading of sharp class conflict was detrimental to the growth of that communal sense usually regarded as a prerequisite of socialism. He argued that this fact merely provided an incentive to organise socialisation "in such a way that it will be able to function without a proper communal sense while encouraging the growth of the latter" (i.e. by providing individual incentives).¹

In the post-war period Kautsky made explicit considerable revisions of Marx's political theory; that is, of those parts of it which he regarded as middle class misconceptions.² For example, the demand for "cheap government", which is echoed in Marx, he regarded as incompatible with the true proletarian demands on the state for welfare purposes.³ In the same way, he saw the idea of the popular election and recall of officials, and the abolition of salary differentials, as incompatible with the efficient running of modern mass organisations.⁴

¹ The Labour Revolution, op. cit., p.179.
² Ibid., p.83.
³ Ibid., p.70.
⁴ Ibid.
Kautsky argued that the idea of popular recall of legislative deputies had been rendered obsolete by the growth of proletarian party organisation. Legislative deputies were now subject to the discipline and control of the party; a situation to be preferred to the control of deputies by an incoherent mass of electors.¹

Kautsky's general rejection of the aspects of Marx's political theory concerned with direct democracy is reflected in his differences with Marx on the question of the fusion of legislative and executive functions (in the proletarian organs of public authority). Kautsky regarded the separation of legislative and executive functions as part of the division of labour entailed by the "law of progress".² The representative and supervisory functions of the legislature required a large body, with provision for opposition. On the other hand the executive function required a restricted number of decision-makers, and the exclusion of that opposition which Kautsky saw as a necessary part of the legislature as a whole.³ The removal of independent control by the

² Ibid., p.78.
³ Ibid., p.80.
legislature over the executive would be extremely dangerous (assuming, as Kautsky was, that the executive was not subject to direct popular control).

It was Lassalle who foreshadowed the tendency among German Marxists to dilute the element of hostility towards the state form found in Marx. They were not inclined to take seriously the possibility of replacing the formal machinery of state with social institutions incorporating direct democracy. Instead they concerned themselves with the concrete possibilities of gaining control of the existing structure. The concentration on winning a victory within the existing framework and (within its terms of reference) led to the building up of a professionalised party organisation adapted to this end. For some theorists, such as Kautsky, this organisation became an end in itself.

The logical development of Kautsky's political theory is to be found in Lenin - if Lenin's temporary lapse into anarcho-syndicalist slogans (discussed in Chapter Seven) is disregarded. Lenin, like Kautsky, regarded the proletarian political party as the guardian and

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1 This hostility towards the state is particularly prominent in Marx's writings before 1848 and after 1871.
embodiment of socialist consciousness. The differences between the theorists stemmed primarily from the difference in the type of party accepted by each as paradigmatic.

Both Lenin and Kautsky drew the same conclusions from the failure of proletarian consciousness to take on the character which had defined it in Marx's writings. However, it was Lenin's formulation of them (as in *What is to be Done?*) which came to have the wider impact. Lenin asserted that the proletariat, so far as it could develop spontaneous consciousness, would develop only trade-union consciousness: socialist consciousness must be introduced from above by the intellectuals. This attitude had been anticipated in the *Hainfelder Programm* of the Austrian Social Democratic Party.\(^1\) It was more immediately preceded by an article by Kautsky, which was in fact quoted by Lenin to provide authority for his own position.\(^2\)

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1 "Socialist consciousness is therefore something which has to be introduced from outside into the proletarian class struggle". *Das Hainfelder Programm* (1889) quoted in Mandel, E., *"Trotsky's Marxism: an Anti-Critique"*, in *Trotsky's Marxism*, Australian Left Review Discussion Pamphlet, Sydney, 1968, p.29.

2 Lenin, V.I., *What is to be Done?* (Stuttgart, 1902), *Selected Works*, vol. 1, part 1, pp.242-43.
Kautsky had argued that socialist consciousness was dependent on economic knowledge. For this reason it did not arise directly out of the class struggle of the proletariat, but rather had to be introduced into it from outside. The function of the members of the bourgeoisie, who were the bearers of economic knowledge, was vital for socialism. The role of these intellectuals was institutionalised in the proletarian political party.

Once the party was seen as the objectification of true proletarian consciousness it was easy to maintain that party interests were identical with the interests of socialism. The danger in doing so lay in the fact that the interests of the party were largely determined by the particular political environment in which it was operating. Kautsky and Lenin both came to subordinate theory and practice to the needs of the party: by doing this they indirectly affirmed the kind of state structure which had produced the particular party which they were (respectively) concerned with.

In Lenin's case this was facilitated ideologically by exploiting the concept of the dictatorship of the

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proletariat. This concept was presented in a rather vague fashion in Marx, and was open to varied interpretations. Kautsky justified his departures from Marx's political theory by reference to the direction which industrial development had taken, and the compromise (and indirect) forms of representative democracy which this made necessary. In both cases the actual party organisation upheld failed to attain (or preserve?) the character Marx had attributed to proletarian organisation: that of a model for revolutionary new forms of social relationship and relations of authority.

Kautsky and Lenin can be viewed in many respects as being the heirs of Lassalle rather than of Marx. It was Lassalle who made the first serious attempt at a rapprochement between Marxist socialism and Hegelian political ideas. Both Kautsky and Lenin were convinced that a particular political institution (the party) could represent (or mediate) on a higher level a universal interest. The party became apotheosised as the conscious element of the universal mind. These Marxist theorists effectively returned to the Hegelian position, the rejection of which had shaped the whole of Marx's political theory. Like Hegel they ended by compromising with existing forms of power relations and finding them necessary, although unlike Hegel they did demand a change in personnel.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROBLEM OF PROLETARIAN CONSCIOUSNESS.

THREE ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE IT: BERNSTEIN, SOREL AND GRAMSCI

It was essential to Marx's theory of socialism that socialism must be the creation of the proletariat. His argument was based on certain unique characteristics which he attributed to the proletarian movement (and which have been discussed in detail in Chapter Three). He believed that socialism depended on the proletariat, but on the proletariat as it emerged from the experience of this movement. For Marx the function of the movement was to create a new consciousness of human possibilities and new capacities to realise them. He asserted that the self-knowledge achieved through this revolutionary praxis would, in effect, create new men, who would 'claim the world as their own'.

By the end of the nineteenth century it appeared to certain of Marx's followers that the proletarian movement had not developed those characteristics which Marx had attributed to it. With the stabilisation of proletarian practice within the framework of bourgeois society, proletarian consciousness had failed to develop the distinctive character which Marx had believed to be the
passport to the future society. The problem was both a theoretical and a practical one.

The theorists I am concerned with in this chapter coincided in putting a large share of the blame for this situation on to the equation of Marxism with economic determinism. This interpretation of Marxism had gained currency since Marx's death, particularly in Germany. The concept of the economic necessity and inevitability of socialism does appear to have served a positive organisational function (as suggested by Kautsky and Bebel) in Germany. It helped to preserve the morale of the labour movement during the period of the Exceptional Laws (1878-1890). It was only at this time and in this form that Marxism won popular acceptance in the labour movement.¹

¹ At the same time as the theory of the movement became more radical and more clearly distinguishable from bourgeois democratic theory, the practice of the movement became more heavily dependent on the parliamentary sphere. While the organisation of the socialist party was outlawed, the Reichstag and the Landtags were the only legal centres for agitation, and the attention of the movement was concentrated on elections and parliamentary activity. During this period the constituency organisations of the socialist candidates for parliament largely took the place of the more formal organisation of the party. See Matthias, E., "Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus", Marxismusstudien, Zweite Folge, Tübingen, Mohr, 1957, p.159.
However by the last decade of the nineteenth century Marxists on both the 'left' and 'right' were rejecting the notion that theory should serve primarily as an ideological buttress for the party organisation. They wished to restore its status to that visualised by Marx - as an aspect of class practice and thus organically linked with it. These theorists claimed that the proletariat could only (and must) reach adequate consciousness through the unity of theory and practice.

The theorists discussed in this chapter and the next claimed that although dialectical materialism might appear a useful prop to party organisers, in fact it had a detrimental effect on the movement as a preparation for socialism. Such determinism diverted attention from Marx's conviction that socialism could only be created by a proletariat which had experienced certain subjective changes within the class movement. This class movement must embody and bring to self-awareness a distinctive new form of praxis.

They argued that theory must not become dogmatic or static, but must continue to mirror the evolution of this praxis (and so assist in universalising it). Theory should never be subordinated to the needs of a particular institution which might be (or become) hostile to the
development of a genuinely revolutionary class praxis. In fact, the theoretical exploration of the kind of institution which could sustain the development of such praxis was of major concern for these Marxists. They held that the revolutionary force of proletarian consciousness could only arise from new modes of human activity and relationship: it could not simply be bestowed from above by means of intellectuals, who would be the guardians of a theory alien to actual proletarian experience.

It was Eduard Bernstein who first gave serious attention to the problems which had arisen from the disparity between theory and practice. He tried to redirect the focus of Marxist theory on to the process of the struggle for socialism, "by means of which men and circumstances will be completely transformed".¹ He rejected the tendency (which he diagnosed in the German party) to believe that a socialist society would automatically emerge from the economic collapse of capitalism.

Marx had abjured the attempt to impose a static conception of socialism on the future, in the belief that

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man's needs and the possible forms of expression of these were undergoing a profound and vital change (in the course of the revolutionary movement). It seemed to Bernstein that the leaders of the German party were ignoring Marx's point and attempting to impose a static vision of the revolution on the future, without reference to existing social development. Bernstein's own position was summed up in his famous assertion: "the movement is everything, the goal is nothing".

Bernstein believed that the only way that the proletariat would take on the human characteristics presupposed by socialism was through the most active participation in (and extension of) democratic institutions. He acknowledged that existing democratic institutions were of an imperfect nature, but he claimed that they were capable of becoming (and must become) the political framework of the future. He argued that mass involvement in these institutions in their yet imperfect form was the condition for their further development.

Bernstein's position in this regard was faithful to Marx, who believed that the forms of representative democracy were, in general, an important revolutionary advance (and means of political education) on the way to more complete and direct democratic forms. An alternative
view was to be advanced, in varying degrees, by 'left' Marxists - that to participate in and adopt existing imperfect democratic institutions meant capitulation to the kinds of political and social dependence that they had so far perpetuated.

Linked to Bernstein's insistence on the importance of democratic experience was his criticism of Marx for not admitting to an explicit system of ethics which would underpin democratic values. He claimed that Marx had denied the revolutionary power of moral judgement.¹ He himself alleged that, for example, the adoption of new "conceptions of right" under the impact of the French Revolution had been of crucial importance for the development of the working class movement.²

Bernstein, like Sorel and Gramsci, was deeply concerned with the development within the movement of an ethically coherent proletarian/socialist culture. Sorel and Gramsci derived this 'proletarian' ethic from the values assumed to be implicit in the concept of man as a producer (who creates the world in self-affirmation).

¹ Bernstein, E., Nachwort to Palyi, E., Der Kommunismus, Berlin, Brandus, 1919, p.103.
Bernstein, on the other hand, asserted that the ethical system needed to sustain revolutionary proletarian praxis was primarily that of Kant. Kant's philosophy buttressed the demand for the emancipation of the individual from every authority that was external and arbitrary rather than self-imposed by his own rational will.

Marx himself had been greatly influenced by Kant.\(^1\) His proclamation that the proletariat were in the process of realising German philosophy assumed the presence of Kantian principles in this philosophy. However Marx never made explicit the moral premises of his own theory — if indeed he was always aware of them. He claimed that revolutionary praxis arose from the revolt of 'human nature' against the extreme forms of its alienation rather than from 'moral' impulse. This view corresponded to his analysis of 'morality' as the mystified form assumed by material interests.

Bernstein's assumption was that once the basic liberal/democratic institutions had been won, the evolution of socialism depended primarily on the growth of ethical and political maturity in the mass electorate. He argued that the working class, in learning how to

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\(^1\) See Marx's early articles for the Rheinische Zeitung, cited in Chapter One.
formulate its ethical demands and translate them into political terms, would become able to imprint them on this political environment. He believed that liberal institutions, reinforced by Kantian ethics, could be adapted more and more towards social purposes.

Bernstein differed from Marx in attributing a degree of flexibility and strength to liberal/democratic institutions which would obviate the need for any violent change between the bourgeois and socialist periods. It seemed to him that liberal political forms could not resist the movement for social change without abrogating their own nature, and that they did not have this suicidal tendency. Moreover, he believed that the liberal traditions of responsibility towards the electorate and of the peaceful transfer of political power would prove stronger than the interest of individuals in preserving the status quo.

Marx always assumed the ultimate control of the capitalist class over liberal/democratic institutions and hence the existence of certain limitations to their peaceful evolution. Although he made some allowance for the independent strength of liberal political traditions, he tended to argue that when the capitalist class was faced with its own extinction it could (and would) ignore
parliamentary conventions and resort to force. Marx's analysis, with its emphasis on extra-parliamentary sources of power, appears to have been fundamentally more suited to German conditions (where parliamentary traditions never really took root, particularly in Prussia) than Bernstein's.

Bernstein's belief in the peaceful evolution of socialism within liberal institutions did not, however, always preclude the advocacy of radical means for the purpose of bringing liberal institutions into existence. In 1905 Bernstein took up the notion of the general strike as a means of obtaining direct universal suffrage in Prussia (i.e., the abolition of the three class system). The official spokesmen of the Social Democratic Party took a more conservative line, influenced by the opposition of the union leaders to political strikes. The official position was that the weapon of the general strike was only to be resorted to if the existing form of

universal suffrage for the Reichstag was threatened.¹

One of the chief practical differences between the Revisionists² and the more orthodox members of the party arose over the question of the ratification of budgets by socialist deputies. Again Bernstein distinguished between situations in which liberal institutions were already in existence, and situations in which they were not. He believed that the socialists were justified in supporting the liberal institutions of the southern states by joining in the ratification of budgets, whereas in the northern states political circumstances did not warrant such action.³ The leaders of the party, such as Bebel, were opposed in principle to the ratification of any non-socialist budget.

¹ By 1913 Bernstein moved towards the conservative position on the general strike. He argued that the organisation of the movement, which had been built up so arduously, should not be risked in a gamble. The maintenance of the movement, which for Bernstein embodied social progress, took priority over externally directed action which would have a disruptive effect on the movement. Bernstein, E., in Party Protocols, Jena, 1913, p.286, cited in Roth, G., The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany, N. Jersey, Bedminster Press, 1963, p.281.


³ Bernstein, E., ibid., p.57ff., cited in Matthias, ibid., p.167, fn.4.
The theoretical objections to his position advanced by the party leaders made no impression on Bernstein. He and they were proceeding from different assumptions about what was relevant to socialism. They objected most to his dismissal of the idea of the catastrophic collapse of capitalism. They believed that this ideological tenet was an organisational necessity - that it was the vital symbolic factor preserving the unity of the movement. Bernstein denied that a socialist movement could be dependent on ideology in that way. The vital factors were, in his view, the kinds of activity (or praxis) out of which socialism could evolve, and the institutional forms in which this praxis could flourish.

Bernstein asserted that the workers' movement must strive to create a complex organisation of self-governing bodies. Experience in these bodies would foster civic responsibility, and check the growth of bureaucracy.¹ For Bernstein the self-government of socialism necessarily rested on the personal responsibility of all units of administration, as well as on the personal responsibility of all citizens. He felt that this democratic development must be well established before the means of

production were appropriated: otherwise, "the political sovereignty of the working class would, in fact, only be carried out in the form of a dictatorial, revolutionary central power".  

Bernstein stressed the importance of experimentation with various types of co-operative economic organisations. He diverged from Marx in the conviction that the workers must begin with more limited forms of association than the productive co-operative. Productive associations were the most ambitious form of co-operative, and had proved ineffective in competition with capitalist industry. Also Bernstein thought that, in their existing form, they did not develop a sense of responsibility towards the community as a whole. He believed that experimentation with workable forms of co-operative association was an essential preliminary to the socialisation of industry.

One aspect of the co-operative movement which Bernstein believed had been wrongfully neglected by the social democrats was the role of the agricultural co-operative based on small land-holding. The party leaders

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., pp.109-34.
had accepted as dogma Marx's predictions concerning the inevitable decline of small-holding, and the disappearance of the peasant class. To Bernstein the practical consequences of this ideological commitment seemed to be that the socialists were neglecting a vital opportunity to help build socialism in the countryside.

The revisionists, in particular Eduard David, contended that small-scale agriculture would be of continuing importance. Bernstein believed that co-operative organisation on this basis could play a vital role in raising the living standard in rural areas and halting the migration to the towns. For him this gradual evolution of socialism in the countryside was preferable to the situation outlined in the Communist Manifesto:

David's major contribution to the agricultural question appeared first in the form of articles in the Sozialdemokrat, August and September 1894. It was published under the title Sozialismus und Landwirtschaft in 1903. David's lengthy economic analysis confirmed the revisionist conclusions on the durability of small-scale forms of agriculture, and of the distinctive rural class which corresponded to them. It followed from these conclusions that the preparation of agricultural policies acceptable to this sizeable class of voters was essential. The revisionists claimed that the reactionary political role ascribed by Marxists to the peasantry had been reinforced by dogmatic attitudes on the part of the socialists themselves. It was largely by default that reactionary elements (e.g. anti-Semitic elements) had won influence in the peasant co-operative organisations.
the sending of industrial armies from the cities into the unfamiliar environment of the country.¹

One of the effects of Bernstein's contact with the English Fabians was his interest in municipal self-government. Bernstein traced back to Proudhon the concern with the municipality as a primary element in the organisation of socialism from below.² He believed that Proudhonist ideas on the organisation of socialism had come into prominence in Marx's work from the time of the writing of The Civil War in France. For Bernstein the importance of municipal institutions was that they were more accessible to the people than other institutions of the state; could provide an ideal school for self-government; and could serve as the instrument of social emancipation. Bernstein in fact overestimated the significance of the actual development in Germany of social welfare and other functions at the municipal level. He said:

Revolution or not, the functions of the central assemblies become constantly narrowed, and therewith the danger of these

¹ Bernstein, E., Evolutionary Socialism, op. cit., p.134.
² Ibid., pp.156-61.
assemblies or authorities to the democracy is narrowed. It is already very little in advanced countries today.\textsuperscript{1}

Bernstein interpreted Marx's notion of the abolition of the state in a literal fashion and reacted critically to it - remarking that one could not "jump out of the state form", one could merely change it.\textsuperscript{2} Bernstein attributed to Marx the view that all public authority must be abolished. He believed that in arguing against this he was attacking some of the views found in Marx. In fact his own assumptions about how the democratic community should be extended through the development of accessible democratic organs within and without industry approximated to Marx's notion of the 'abolition of the state'. The complexity of social organisation which Bernstein advocated as a barrier to the irresponsible exercise of central power - and as the matrix of democratic activity - paralleled Marx's idea of the return of public authority to society at the expense of an independent (and coercive) state power. Bernstein

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\item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid., p.160.
\end{itemize}
did argue that a certain amount of centralisation was necessary in modern society, but he conceded that this might become superfluous with the further development of socialism. Qualitative change depended on the political development of the working classes.

Despite the apparent contrast between Bernstein's predilection for peaceful constitutional development and the syndicalist ideas identified with Georges Sorel, Bernstein anticipated in a number of important respects the contribution to Marxist theory made by Sorel.

Sorel first 'discovered' Marx in about 1893. During the 1890s he took a leading part in the introduction of theoretical Marxism into France. He acted as an energetic middleman in getting literature from centres of Marxist scholarship (especially Italy) accepted by Paris publishers. He participated in the editorship of two journals, *Le Devenir Social* and *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, through which theorists such as Croce, Antonio Labriola, Luxemburg, Bernstein, Kautsky and Vandervelde were introduced to the French public. Marx's son-in-law, Lafargue, was a co-editor of *Le Devenir Social* together with Sorel and two others.

Sorel's writings on Marxism both in his revisionist and syndicalist phases owed much to Bernstein, for whom
he had a lively respect. He followed Bernstein in the attempt to develop Marxism creatively in accordance with contemporary reality, and to restore the unity of theory and practice. For Sorel the central feature of Marx's system was the recognition of the philosophical significance of the proletarian movement. Marx had seen the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat as the context within which men and social relations would be transformed. Sorel quoted Marx as saying that to attempt to impose a programme on the future was reactionary: the future was being created in a living movement which was the negation of all existing social forms. Sorel adopted Bernstein's position that the dynamic nature of

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2 Ibid., p.232.

3 Cited by Sorel in *Reflections on Violence*, N.Y., Collier, 1961, p.137. The actual letter referred to (Marx to Beesly 1869) does not appear in Rubel, or in *Werke*, but the sentiment is expressed elsewhere.

4 An illustration from Marx directly supporting Sorel's position reads as follows: "Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things." *The German Ideology*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1968, p.48.
Marxism as the theoretical expression of proletarian praxis had been largely abandoned by the orthodox Marxists.¹

Sorel particularly acclaimed Bernstein's attack on the orthodox from the viewpoint that socialism could not be established merely by decree, but depended rather on the ability (developed within the movement) of the masses to exercise the rights they claimed.² Bernstein had argued that where the masses lacked sufficient practical preparation for socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat would not bring them any closer to the control over the means of production. His following remark on the subject was given prominence by Sorel:

Unless the working class has strong economic organisations at its command, and unless it has acquired a high degree of moral independence through apprenticeship in

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¹ Sorel blamed Engels for the initial distortion of Marx's work, and for the creation of the dogmatic system of historical materialism: Sorel to Croce, 19 October 1900, cited in Goriely, G., Le Pluralisme Dramatique de Georges Sorel, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1962, p.126, fn.2.

² The idea that revolution was a matter of capacity rather than of power was essentially a Proudhonist idea, although it was echoed in Marx's writing. The capacity to inherit public power was visualised as the outcome of the capacity for producing and administering.
autonomous workers' assemblies, the
dictatorship of the proletariat means the
dictatorship of club orators and the
literati.  

Sorel took over Bernstein's stress on the moral and what he himself termed the juridical aspects of the socialist movement. Sorel frequently used the term 'juridical' to describe proto-legal norms. For Sorel the self-discipline imposed through the formalisation of the juridical notions of the group was an essential preparation for socialism. This was a complex process by which individual values (arising in the industrial process) gained precision and normative force within the group, and were then internalised by the members of it.

Sorel interpreted Marx's distinction between a class in posse and a class in esse in terms of the need for a class to develop a juridical structure. Marx had


Bernstein stated that the proximate aims which inspired the activity of the movement should be the "embodiment of a social conception which means in the evolution of civilisation a higher view of morals and of legal rights". Evolutionary Socialism, op. cit., p.222.

Sorel once said that "laws are like nuclei, around which crystallise popular instincts, which without this prop would remain fluid and indeterminate". De l'Eglise et de l'Etat, Cahiers de la Quinzaine, 1901, p.37.
believed that for a group to act as a class it needed to be more than - in Sorel's words - a mere "agglomeration of people in the same circumstances and situation". As shown in Chapter Two above, Marx held that the peasantry could never genuinely develop as a class, because it was incapable of universalising its demands.

Sorel believed that the proletariat must evolve, before the revolution, the corpus of juridical doctrine which prefigured the concept of justice, and the structure and manner of life of the future society. Sorel asserted that the proclamation of communism or collectivism without a juridical content which had been developed in practical activity would result in the collapse of civilisation, or in a dictatorship.

For Sorel, the crux of Marx's materialism was simply that: "The means of production of material life furnishes the general conditions for the process of social, political and spiritual life." Sorel assumed that the

2 McInnes, N., Introduction to Sorel's "Aperçu sur les Utopies, les Soviets et le Droit Nouveau" (written in 1920), Etudes de Marxologie, no.5 (Cahiers de l'ISEA, no. 121), (January 1962), p.110.
basic options open to a society were limited by the extent to which it had succeeded in bending the forces of nature to its own use, i.e. by its technological development. From this he deduced that it was modern industrial progress that provided the possibility of man's becoming free in his most characteristic and essential role - as a producer. He observed: "Our generation has acquired the true notion of liberty:...the production of useful things for ends chosen by ourselves."¹

However, this same industrial development, Sorel feared, could lend itself readily to the creation of a repressive society, ruled by a scientific hierarchy, "imprinting a single direction of industrial effort" on the rest.² The future depended on the development of the proletariat as a class. The proletarian movement was required to translate the values of the producers into the principles of conscious action.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century Sorel broke with the reformist policies advocated by Bernstein. Sorel was arriving at the conclusion that participation

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² Ibid.
in representative democracy could only effect a circulation of intellectual elites. Roberto Michels was to pay tribute to Sorel for his "rediscovery of the relationships between democracy in general and absolutism, and their intersection in centralisation".\(^1\) Sorel began to assert that the evolution of socialism could not take place within the framework of parliamentary institutions. Sorel claimed that the socialist parties, by becoming assimilated into the bourgeois political system, had lost their capacity to function as a preparation for socialism.

Sorel went on to argue that the internal structure of the workers' political organisation had become modelled on the state that it had intended to destroy. The proletarian parties had reinforced the political dependence of the producers. Marx had believed that as long as the proletarian organisations were guided by democratic principles, and included such features as initiative and recall and frequent elections, they would remain revolutionary institutions in which the conditions of self-determination would be created. Sorel believed that there was empirical evidence to show that democratic

formulae were not sufficient to prevent the tendencies in mass political organisation towards hierarchy. Sorel observed that the mass social democratic parties had responded to the exigencies of political life by becoming centralised and bureaucratised. Once socialism was committed to this type of organisation it became a vehicle for intellectuals seeking political careers, who brought with them the "mores of the political machines".¹

Sorel's ouvriérist attitude towards intellectuals was not completely compatible with Marx's position, although he believed it to be so.² Sorel associated the intellectuals with the St. Simonian alternative facing industrial society: "the formation of an aristocracy of capacity".³ The only difference between capitalism and the sham socialism led by intellectuals would be in the

¹ The Decomposition of Marxism, loc. cit., p.246. Sorel was referring to Ostrogorski's description of the political "machine". See ibid., p.227, fn.
² Marx believed that the intellectuals had an important role to play in the workers' movement in providing it with self-awareness through theory. Sorel found evidence for his own notion that the role of the intellectuals in the movement was repugnant to Marx in an anti-Bakuninist pamphlet published by the International (ibid., p.245). In fact Marx wrote only the conclusion to this pamphlet. (Rubel, p.190.)
latter's "employment of more ingenious methods of procuring discipline in the workshop".\textsuperscript{1}

Sorel remarked that:

\textit{...once the worker has accepted as his leader people alien to the corporation of the producers he will never learn the art of governing himself, he will remain subjected to external discipline. One might use a different word, but it would be the same thing: the exploitation of the worker would continue.}\textsuperscript{2}

Sorel believed that the intellectuals would always value hierarchy more than the emancipation of the proletariat.\textsuperscript{3}

For this reason intellectuals aimed only at acquiring state power, not at transcending it through the return of public power to the masses. Sorel argued that, by extending the control of the state over the means of production, the intellectuals would in fact increase the power of the state to resist the self-determination of the producers.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Reflections on Violence, op. cit., p.236.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} "L'Avenir socialiste des syndicats", in Matériaux d'une théorie du proletariat (Paris 1919), pp.98-99, quoted in Meisel, J.H., The Genesis of Georges Sorel, Ann Arbor, Wahr, 1951, p.111.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} "Aperçu sur les Utopies, les Soviets et le Droit Nouveau", loc. cit., p.111.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} The Decomposition of Marxism, loc. cit., p.244.
\end{itemize}
Sorel's disillusionment with the parliamentary socialism of the intellectuals was completed when, in the aftermath of the Dreyfus case, he found them using *raison d'état* as a justification for the denial of individual liberty. Jaurès, for example, had condoned the methods of police spies, and the reliance on the evidence of informers in the second trial.

After 1902 Sorel turned his back completely on the democratic institutions which were sanctioned by the more orthodox Marxists as the means to socialism. Sorel alleged that to remain faithful to Marx's concept of the role of the proletarian movement one must search for those institutions capable of developing the socialist qualities of the proletariat. For an intermittent period of about ten years from 1897 Sorel thought that he had found the answer in the syndicalist movement.

Sorel interpreted the syndicalist movement (with particular reference to the work of Fernand Pelloutier) as a practical attempt to develop a new systematic idea of rights. Pelloutier, as the secretary of the Federation of Bourses de Travail, was the most important figure in the organisation of syndicalism in its heyday at the

turn of the century. Pelloutier described the aims of the movement as the creation by the proletariat of institutions uniquely its own, within which a distinctive proletarian culture could develop.

Pelloutier helped to develop institutions of self-education (attached to the economic institutions) which were aimed at provoking independent thought critical of the bourgeois commercial culture and of the values engendered by capitalism.\textsuperscript{1} Administrative and technical training was to supplement the understanding of the producers of the industrial process as a whole.

The internal structure of the syndicalist movement was decentralised and largely relied on voluntary co-ordination for effectiveness. It was based on a complete rejection of the discipline required by a political party. The many anarchists who entered the movement at this time strengthened its hostility to all forms of conventional political organisation, as leading to the renewed subordination of the workers to external authority.

Sorel endorsed Pelloutier's claim that syndicalism provided the working masses with the experience that direct self-government was possible, and was the only means to freedom. ¹ For Sorel the movement had a special significance for socialism, because it made explicit the values men developed in the industrial process: the combination of individual creativity and initiative with a voluntary social solidarity. Sorel believed that the real producer ethic was directed towards liberty rather than towards material welfare. As producers men found fulfilment in the voluntary striving to attain individual standards of perfection. ² Production gave rise to the distinctive value of liberty, because without liberty creative activity was impossible. On the other hand the consumer ethic emphasised ends, and things to be secured, rather than activities and a way of life. ³

For Sorel, as indeed for Marx, the consumer ethic was linked with the proprietary values of capitalism.

¹ The Decomposition of Marxism, op. cit., p.250.
² Reflections on Violence, op. cit., p.242-49.
³ Professor J. Anderson was to say that Sorel's concept of ethical goods as productive activities had "opened up the science of ethics itself". Anderson, J., Studies in Empirical Philosophy, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1962, p.327.
Marx had distinguished between the drive for exclusive possession, and the sensual appropriation of objects through activity.\(^1\) The idea of a producer ethic as something specifically proletarian, however, had less in common with Marx's views. According to Marx, all men were essentially producers, and could only realise their human nature fully in free creative activity. He assumed that the proletariat functioned merely as the historical representative of these universal attributes.\(^2\)

Sorel believed that the proletariat had found in the syndicalist movement an institutional form of action which corresponded to the producer ethic. Syndicalism had succeeded where other forms of action had failed, in remaining impervious to the norms of the bourgeois environment. This success was due to the fact that it had maintained a revolutionary intransigence vis à vis bourgeois society. To Sorel it seemed of the utmost


\(^2\) It has been pointed out that a direct belief in the significance of labour (that is a moral significance) could be deduced from Marx's scorn for the Lumpenproletariat. Goriely, G., *Le Pluralisme Dramatique de Georges Sorel*, op. cit., p.90, fn.
importance for Marxism to analyse how this intransigence had been maintained.

Syndicalism was inspired by the belief that socialism would issue directly out of the general strike. The general strike depended only on the direct action of the workers - without the need for rigid political structures or disciplined support for political leaders. It required only the voluntary initiative of all producers, rather than centralised leadership. Capitalism would allegedly be powerless before the combined economic action of the proletariat, who would then immediately take over the direction of industry.

According to Sorel it was this belief in the imminence of the general strike which would serve to make partial reforms unacceptable to the proletariat. He asserted too, that the belief in the general strike would bring class war into the open, by continually challenging the basis of existing society. This situation would bring about the rapid growth of proletarian class consciousness.

In his earlier phase of Marxist revisionism Sorel had criticised Marx's notion of a catastrophic confrontation between classes as being unscientific, and as being too dependent on the idea of violence. However
by the turn of the century Sorel became convinced of the pragmatic validity of this catastrophic conception as a social belief which corresponded to the needs of the proletarian movement. Sorel used the word "myth" to refer to this type of social belief which could not be verified by logical means. He believed that the power of the myth over men was due to the fact that it represented symbolically an inner reality of moral instincts. The importance of the myth was that it inspired men with the faith that they could reshape the world by their own action.\(^1\) Whether or not the myth was a precise representation of the future seemed to Sorel to be an irrelevant question:\(^2\) the truth of the myth could only be judged in terms of its effectiveness in arousing men to action in defiance of all the forces of determinism. If it was effective it was because it was a true reflection of inner convictions and aspirations.

Sorel's analysis of the non-rational sources of social action has earned for him in the past a reputation as a proto-fascist,\(^3\) and as both a prophet of

\(^1\) Letter to Daniel Halevy, Reflections on Violence, op. cit., pp. 48-49.
\(^2\) Reflections on Violence, op. cit., p. 126.
\(^3\) Although Sorel appears to have anticipated Mussolini's leadership as early as 1912, Mussolini's movement away from anarcho-syndicalism towards étatist doctrines severed whatever sympathy Sorel had for his politics.
irrationalism and an apostle of fanatacism. This kind of reputation has been bolstered by misleading accounts of Sorel's thought such as that found in Sabine's *A History of Political Theory*, which describes Sorel's idea of political philosophy as "an incitement to fanatical determination and blind devotion". However, in so far as Sorel provides a normative account of the function of the social myth, it is in terms of the extension of the individual's freedom and responsibility. By affirming the eschatological consequences of individual action, the myth provided a meaningful context within which the individual could act freely on the basis of his moral convictions (and to that extent escape the determinism of blind chance). Sorel believed that the myth enhanced the moral responsibility of individuals, and so was a barrier to the manipulation of the masses from above. Sorel accepted Le Bon's view that crowds are essentially

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2 "The partisans of the general strike intend to do away with everything that claimed the attention of the former liberals: the oratory of the tribune, the management of public opinion, the combinations of political parties. This amounts to turning the world upside down, but has not socialism said that it intends to create an entirely new society?" *Matiériaux d'une théorie du prolétariat* (1st ed. 1919), 3rd ed., Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1929, p.59.
conservative and flock to a Caesar.¹ For Sorel the myth was the means by which this abnegation of personal responsibility could be avoided. As far as Fascism was concerned, Sorel wrote in 1921 that the development of Fascism was a "disaster"; that it was similar in nature to the French Thermidor; and that it would force Italy into war in order to ruin the socialists at home.²

Sorel's concept of a moral absolute, which made the unconscious mind a reservoir of morality, prevented him from foreseeing the wider application of his concept of the myth.³

In the light of his work on the 'myth' of the general strike, Sorel revised his previous condemnation of Marx's concept of the class struggle, for which Sorel

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¹ Reflections on Violence, op. cit., p.133.
² Lettres à Paul Delesalle., 1914-1921, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1947, pp.215; 218-19; 223. The fact that Mussolini claimed that Sorel was his intellectual mentor has coloured many of the accounts of Sorel's work.
³ I have not described Sorel's brief flirtation with the monarchists and ultra-nationalists before the First World War as it does not appear of much relevance to his Marxist contribution. The eruption of nationalism into world war disillusioned him as to the possibility of the regenerative force of a nationalist mythos. Nor have I discussed Sorel's ideas on the symbolic function of violence (as opposed to force) as this also appears of peripheral importance.
had considered that there was no empirical evidence. Sorel now valued Marx's concept for its symbolic functions. The notion of the class struggle served to give a general significance to what otherwise might have remained purely private conflicts.\(^1\) It represented the need for the socialist movement to develop in militant opposition to the values of existing society. By enhancing the opposition between the movement and the old society, it enabled the movement to develop a revolutionary new concept of justice in isolated purity. For Sorel the strength of the socialist movement now appeared to depend, like that of the primitive Christian movement, on the "irrational" refusal to compromise with the old world.

According to Sorel, one of the functions of the militant belief in the class struggle was to stir the bourgeoisie to a vigorous defence of their rule. The socialist movement could only maintain its identity if its opponent did not dissolve itself in compromise.\(^2\) This theory is compatible in some respects with Marx's dialectic of negativity. For Marx the dynamic of social

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2. Ibid., ch. 2.
change depended on the full development of the negative side of each social epoch: generalised oppression was the condition of a generalised movement in favour of radical social reorganisation. When the ruling class compromised and attempted to modify the social consequences of its rule, this dynamic was lost. Marx attributed the backwardness of Germany to the fact that her class struggles had issued in a series of compromises. All kinds of reactionary institutions and values had lingered on, creating obstacles to social innovation. In the same way Marx thought that the existence of the proletariat derived its dynamic nature from the fact that it represented the full development of the negative side of capitalist society. Also, for Marx, the fact that capitalist society was the consummation of class society, meant that the proletariat represented the full development of the negative side of all class society.

Sorel grasped Marx's belief that socialism could only develop as the radical critique of its dialectical opposite. However the idea of heroic conflict takes on a much wider significance in Sorel's writing than it does in Marx's. This was partly due to Sorel's notions about the precarious nature of human civilisation in the
grip of cosmic flux, and his adaption of Vico's theory of \textit{ricorso}.\textsuperscript{1}

Sorel's views on conflict also relate to his belief that social unity was incompatible with freedom. For Sorel freedom was inseparable from the recognition of the moral absolute which pertained to the individual consciousness. This individual concern with the infinite manifested itself in diversity and conflict. Freedom depended on action being inner-directed, rather than other-directed. Free activity or production would reflect the manifold differences in men. Sorel described social unity as demonstrating the lack of freedom implicit in "the operation...of hierarchical authority which imposes uniform rules on citizens of the same country".\textsuperscript{2}

Sorel has been acclaimed for his effort to reinsert this element of contrast into the Marxist vision of the future. It has been said that Marxism proposes a static

\textsuperscript{1} Vico had claimed (in \textit{The New Science}, 1725) that human societies developed in cycles of three stages - the heroic, the religious, and the philosophic/scientific. The last stage was regularly accompanied by a relapse into barbarism owing to the fact that culture ceased to present any barriers to self-seeking.

\textsuperscript{2} Sorel, G., \textit{Reflections on Violence}, op. cit., Appendix 1, p.250.
society, devoid of contrast, and for that reason incompatible with liberty. Croce remarked that in Marxist theory liberty tended to become simply an "epitheton ornans" attached to a scheme of social justice.¹ Sorel attempted to develop the libertarian premises of socialism, which Marx had failed to make explicit (but which were entailed in Marx's analogy between the productive activity of the future and artistic creation).

According to Sorel part of Marx's ambiguity on the question of liberty was due to the fact that his writing had retained 'utopian' elements. For Sorel the distinction between myth and utopia was extremely important. He defined utopias as rationalist schemes for the perfecting of society. They were based on the presumption that society could be comprehended and transformed by the application of simple logical principles. For Sorel the natural consequence of utopian thinking was the attempt by the few to rule in the name of reason.² A propos of Rousseau's concept of the general will Sorel declared:

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Every scholastic formula of abstract politics will have the same destiny: after having amused the litterateurs it will end by providing justifications to causes whose existence the author had not even suspected.\(^1\)

Sorel described the 'utopian' elements in Marx as providing a justification for intellectuals who wished to use the socialist movement to gain state power. If socialism depended on the imposition of a rationalist scheme (on an obstinate social reality), this could only be done from above, by means of political power. This in turn meant that the movement would become dependent on intellectuals, who could most readily translate this scheme into political terms.

For Sorel the most valuable part of Marx's work was now that part which was symbolic or mythical in nature. Marx provided a chiliastic vision of the inauguration of socialist society, which glorified the consequences of the united action of the producers. Marx stressed that freedom depended only on the workers themselves - organising themselves to expropriate the capitalists and abolish the state. To Sorel this cataclysmic vision was the forerunner of the myth of the general strike and basically identical with it.\(^2\) According to him this part

\(^1\) Ibid., p.108.
\(^2\) The Decomposition of Marxism, op. cit., p.251.
of Marx's work differed from the utopian elements in that it was more faithful to the real aspirations of the proletariat than any rationalist scheme could be. The cataclysmic notion of the significance of the workers' movement was essential to its true development: it reinforced the ethical values which the group had evolved by representing them as an irresistible force in changing the world.

However Sorel believed that Marx had paid insufficient attention to the ways in which values (or human needs as Marx would have put it) were transformed into a new idea of justice within the movement. Because of this, Marx had neglected to stress the importance of unique proletarian institutions which could embody and develop the new idea of right.

As already noted (pp.153-54) Sorel believed that the creation of proto-legal norms had an essential function in the development of proletarian culture (and the preparation for socialism). He once wrote that: "laws are like nuclei, around which crystallise popular

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instincts which, without this prop, would remain fluid and indeterminate".¹ Sorel asserted that unless the movement developed its unique concept of justice it would remain susceptible to the kind of utopian (rationalistic) appeals which were still present in Marx's writing. If the movement did remain open to such appeals it would be at the mercy of Jacobinism (which for Sorel implied the antithesis of socialism).

Sorel criticised the tendency of Marxists to attempt to bolster the idea of imminent cataclysm by insisting on the inevitable growth of the impoverishment of the masses under capitalism.² He felt that such Marxists were hindered by their own dogma from seeing that it was the practical development of new ideas of right rather than impoverishment which produced revolutionary consciousness. Sorel believed that his own view was corroborated by the fact that in the period following the First World War the socialist movement had been revitalised in spite of the context of rising wages.

Sorel attributed this socialist resurgence to the fact that the proletariat had created a new institution

² "Aperçu sur les Utopies..." loc. cit., p.106.
which corresponded to the proletarian concept of right. This institution was the soviet. Sorel acclaimed the soviets as the living antithesis to all forms of hierarchy. He wrote that they provided a true preparation for socialism, in that they relied completely on the individual initiative of every member, rather than on the guidance of intellectuals, and on externally imposed discipline. In fact he believed that the slogan of the Russian Revolution was "Death to the Intellectuals", the principle being expressed in this extreme form because of the particular history and condition of Russia.

Sorel's enthusiasm for the soviets was the final phase of his search for forms in which the proletariat could become a class 'for itself'. Marx had tended to believe that this process would be largely accomplished by the development of industry itself, which would stimulate the solidarity of the workers. Sorel argued that this belief had proved illusory, in the face of such developments as that of the "labour aristocracy".

1 Lettres à Paul Delesalle 1914-1921, op. cit., p.170.
2 Sorel accounted for the violence which had accompanied the Russian revolution in terms of the national traditions of Russia, and the unscrupulous methods of the counter-revolution. See Appendix 3 (Pour Lénine), of Reflections on Violence, op. cit., p.284.
For Sorel the most important problem was to discover the means by which the proletariat could develop that potential it had as a class, which had first been clarified by Marx.

Sorel helped to uncover the libertarian premises of Marx's concept of the proletarian movement, which had become obscured with the materialist accretions to his theory. Marx had said that philosophy would be realised in the self-conscious action of the proletariat. The condition of man becoming free and self-determining was the emergence of freedom as a real human need in the proletarian movement. This was dependent on the assertion and the practical/theoretical elaboration of the productive values which he believed the proletariat to represent.

According to Sorel the proletariat as a class could only develop the distinctive characteristics which Marx attributed to it if it was able to institutionalise a radical new culture and operational concepts of right based on its productive values. These values must be objectified (in part symbolically), if they were to resist the pressure of the bourgeois environment. Marx had been very vague on that question which Sorel believed to be crucial: that is, "how is it possible to conceive
the transformation of the men of today into the free producers of tomorrow working in manufactories where there are no masters?"¹ Sorel's importance as a Marxist derives from his elucidation of this problem.

Many of the ideas of Bernstein and Sorel are discernible in an important book by Hendrik de Man, *The Psychology of Socialism* (first published in German in 1926). For de Man also, the most essential part of socialism was the struggle for socialism.² According to de Man the socialist movement functioned as a means by which the workers overcame a group "social inferiority complex", and became capable of socially constructive action.³ The movement helped the workers to overcome a submissive attitude towards society, and to translate their own instincts of community into action. He also saw the movement as functioning to divert resentment from expression in individual aggression into expression in work for supra-individual ends.⁴

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¹ Reflections on Violence, op. cit., p.237.
³ Ibid., p.478.
⁴ Ibid.
For de Man one of the weakest aspects of Marxist theory was the lack of an adequate explanation of human motivation. De Man criticised the utilitarian concept of economic man which, he alleged, lingered on in Marxist thought.\(^1\) He stressed the eschatological and symbolic appeals of the socialist movement. For example he analysed the way in which the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat had taken on an affective colouration: it had come to function as a means by which the passion for revenge was discharged.\(^2\)

De Man attributed to the intellectuals as a group what Sorel had called the producer ethic - the drive towards disinterested activity, work done for its own sake. He believed that in the case of the proletariat, the socialist movement must first raise the material standard of living, before they, also, would learn to despise the acquisitive instinct.\(^3\)

One of the main problems of the movement appeared to de Man as follows:

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1 Ibid., p.127.
2 Ibid., p.478.
3 Ibid., p.477.
...the social position of the workers makes them amenable to socialist sentiments; these sentiments become the primary motive force of attempts to improve the material and moral position of the working class; but such improvements as are effected tend to bring the workers more and more under the cultural influence of the bourgeois and capitalist environment, and this counteracts the tendency towards the formation of a socialist mentality.\(^1\)

Meanwhile, in Italy, Antonio Gramsci had been approaching the problem of proletarian consciousness from the standpoint of the durability of this kind of cultural reign by the bourgeoisie. Gramsci was to reach the conclusion that the normal means of social domination in western civilisation was in fact through cultural suasion rather than through the exercise of the state's legal monopoly of force (in a direct or indirect manner).\(^1\) He rejected as simplistic the notion that the power of the capitalist state - or any other presocialist political formation - consisted basically in the force embodied in its organs of repression. In doing so Gramsci broke away from the Marxian tendency to analyse political authority primarily in terms of a power base. He was to stress the nature of authority as a two-way relationship between those who command and those who obey.

\(^1\) Ibid., p.242.
Gramsci described the rule of any given social class as resting on both 'egemonia' and 'dominio'. He used the term 'egemonia' to refer to the ethical/cultural influence exercised through private institutions such as schools and churches, and the term 'dominio' to refer to direct rule by law through the formal organs of state power. He asserted that, except in times of crisis, the consent obtained through egemonia was more important than that obtained through fear of the law.

Gramsci was much influenced by Benedetto Croce's concept of ethico-political leadership. This led him to bring into prominence Marx's point about the need for any rising class to be able to universalise its demands and come forward as the general representative of society. Gramsci wrote that a class, in order to rule, must be identifiable as a force devoted to the development and expansion of national energies.¹

Gramsci attempted to demonstrate that each class which had risen (historically) to dominance within society had done so on the basis of a monopoly of both technical and ethical values. The medieval warrior class

had enjoyed a monopoly of military technology, but they had obtained consent to their rule primarily through their ethical pre-eminence. Their rule was legitimised by the complex system of rights and duties which made up feudal ideology. Gramsci claimed that the founding of a ruling class could be seen as the creation of such a Weltanschauung which would win popular acceptance.¹

Gramsci stressed that a class needed to aspire to more than the mere protection of its corporative interests if it was to become politically effective. For reasons of internal integration a class had first to acquire a unified culture embodying its unique Weltanschauung. This culture must emerge as convincingly superior to the old dominant culture if the class was to achieve a directing role in society. Only such ethical/cultural development could transform the class from a sectional interest group into a potential elite.

The first lesson which Gramsci drew from his analysis of class rule was that the proletariat must master the technology relevant to the present time - that they must master the organisation of the whole industrial process.

Secondly Gramsci concluded that the proletariat must develop a culture which was more than simply an expression of economic determinism and material class interests. The creation of an ethically progressive culture represented a vital step in sapping the bourgeois cultural hegemony and establishing the legitimacy of the challenge to their rule.

For Gramsci, one aspect of this higher culture concerned the nature of social consensus. Socialism represented a superior political form in that it involved not simply passive consent, but depended on active consent, arising from the fact that direct self-government would become a reality. Socialism would enable the masses themselves to participate in the life of society in an ethical way (on the level of general principles), rather than only participating through their specialised functions.

According to Gramsci proletarian political rule could become effective - via its cultural influence - before the economic bases of other classes had disappeared or been abolished. His belief that cultural dominance was more significant as a political factor than bases of material power was illustrated in this assertion that proletarian hegemony was compatible with
the survival (and recognition) of social pluralism.

Nonetheless he did write that:

...the fact of hegemony undoubtedly presupposes that the interests and strivings of the groups over which the hegemony will be exercised are taken account of, that a certain balance of compromises is formed....

Gramsci held that the ethico-political evolution of a class must be supplemented by a 'cathartic' moment of force during the actual transition from one rule to another. However he argued that the proletariat must not come to power on the basis of force alone. If the new egemonia was not well developed in the ruins of the old, there would be a lack of equilibrium in the new order between the organs of repression and the institutions of civil society. The explosion of political passions (arising from technical transformations) in situations where new and adequate juridical forms had not been gradually developed could only issue in new forms of coercion. Rule that was

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completely dependent on force would result in the destruction of the fabric of civilisation.

Gramsci had perhaps most in common with Max Adler (discussed in the next chapter) in his deep concern for the fate of civilisation should a sweeping political revolution take place without the prior development of a coherent social fabric. He came to dread the kind of political rule that could emerge on the basis of social anarchy.

Gramsci's analysis of political/social authority (with its emphasis on the function of ideology) led him to assert the key role of intellectuals - in establishing the foundations for this authority, and in exercising it. He followed Sorel in defining the state as a 'corporation of intellectuals'. The intellectuals were "the 'officers' of the ruling class for the exercise of the subordinate functions of social hegemony and political government".

Gramsci distinguished two main groups of intellectuals - the 'organic' intellectuals, and the

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'traditional' intellectuals. The existence of the former was intimately connected with a particular socio-economic class (for example, factory managers and political economists in the case of capitalism). The ties of the 'traditional' intellectuals, on the other hand, were primarily with an intellectual or professional tradition (he placed doctors and ecclesiastics in this category).

Gramsci argued that the organic intellectuals played a vital role in providing a rising class with self-consciousness and cohesion, and so paving the way to its ethical and political dominance. These intellectuals had the initial task of developing the philosophy implicit in the practical activity of the class, and giving it the clarity and coherence of an individual philosophy.¹ This philosophy had to correspond to the objective needs of the practical movement in order to become widely diffused and effective: it had also to be of a quality to carry conviction with the traditional intellectuals.

The traditional intellectuals staffed the churches and educational institutions, which were the key structures through which the basic social consensus was created.

They were deferred to by civil society for their allegiance to a 'disinterested' intellectual tradition, and in fact their assent was indispensable to the peaceful maintenance of the established hegemony. For these reasons it was vital for a rising class to win their support, and this could only be done on the philosophical level provided by the organic intellectuals.

Gramsci asserted that the socialist movement, in its existing state, was greatly dependent on the development of organic intellectuals. In the future socialist society, men outside the old 'intellectual' occupations would be capable of exercising a critical and generalising capacity in the institutions of self-government and public life. However only the cultural development of the workers within the movement would render every man able, in this way, to analyse critically concepts beyond the range of his immediate experience. In the meanwhile the role of specialist members of the movement in performing intellectual functions was essential. The acceptance of the new concepts by the movement as a whole had to be, at first, largely an act of faith in the members performing intellectual functions, although the validity of the concepts could ultimately be tested against collective experience.
Gramsci described Marx as the most important organic intellectual the movement had ever possessed. As such he had produced an integral conception of the world which could last until the disappearance of political society and the arrival of the administered society. The conception of necessity would then be replaced by that of liberty. Ideas which had been utopian in the context of social contradiction and struggle would become valid in the context of social unity.

Hannah Arendt has lamented the failure of Marxists and other political theorists to come to grips with the political form represented by the workers' council movement. Arendt has described the council system as springing up in the wake of all western social revolutions since 1789: she has attributed the phenomenon to the desire of the masses to prolong the social effectiveness they have briefly achieved in revolution.

Gramsci was one Marxist theorist (as has already been shown Sorel was another) who attempted to integrate the workers' council movement into Marxist theory. Marx's prognostications about socialism had presupposed the creation of social structures by the proletariat which would revolutionise traditional political and social relationships. Gramsci, like many others in the period following the First World War, viewed the council system as the structure destined to replace the old state form.¹

The councils revived the features of the Paris Commune which Marx had described as effective in abolishing (and preventing) the reification of delegated authority. These provisions included the election of all officials by universal suffrage; the possibility of instant recall; and the accountability of officials to the masses for all administrative actions.

¹ In Italy the P.S.I. Congress in October 1919 approved a motion calling for the eventual replacement of the bourgeois state by soviets, or workers' councils. The following month the P.S.I. won 32 per cent of the popular vote. The councils were generally expected to replace both the political and administrative functions of the state. The failure of the council system in regard to administration was one of the reasons for the rapid decline of the movement. The ineptitude of the German councils for general administrative purposes is discussed in: Kolb, E., Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918-1919, Düsseldorf, Droste, 1962.
Gramsci at first accepted the popular interpretation of the Bolshevik revolution as a victory of the soviet movement; he also joined in the widespread tendency to interpret the factory committee as an embryonic form of the soviet or workers' council movement. In Italy, as in many other countries participating in the First World War, the trade unions had tended to become absorbed into the governmental structure to a marked degree. In reaction to this development, factory committees emerged. During the years 1919-20 Gramsci was a leading figure in the effort to create a workers' council movement in Turin on the basis of these factory committees.

Gramsci mounted a general attack on the trade-union movement, claiming that it had proved an inadequate vehicle for socialism (i.e. refuting Marx's expectations). He argued that the trade unions were organically related to the capitalist system, and had become part of the institutionalised market competition. They served to perpetuate the status of the proletariat as merely a sectional interest group within bourgeois society - united around material demands that were themselves determined by the capitalist wage-relation.\(^1\) Moreover,

the trade unions reflected in their structure the bureaucratisation that was flourishing in the capitalist state. For these reasons, Gramsci claimed that the trade union movement had proved a hindrance to the ethico-political development of the proletariat.

Gramsci described, on the other hand, the factory council as "the model of the proletarian state". He alleged that the council system was the institution unique to the working class which would reinforce its opposition to the structure of existing society. For this reason it was also an institution which could hasten the development of the integrated culture which was to replace that of capitalism. Gramsci believed that a class only became conscious of its own world view (as opposed to the dominant world view of the society) when it moved as an organic whole, in opposition to the existing socio-political structure. He saw the council system as the appropriate form in which this organic movement could be institutionalised.

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Gramsci argued that the factory council was a type of organisation particularly suited to the ethical development of the proletariat. He agreed with Sorel that only organisation based on the factory, rather than based on specialised industrial functions (like trade or craft unions), could develop the latent producer consciousness - an involvement and pride in the whole industrial process. The councils, through their voluntary co-ordination of the production process, would foster the values of social solidarity. At the same time the existence of the councils as a free and open forum for social action would, in Gramsci's opinion, stimulate individual initiative and independence of ideas.

For Gramsci, the workers' council movement in its heyday appeared both as the political framework for the future (incorporating as it did the features of direct democracy and the accessibility of all decision-making)

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Gramsci's ideas on the functions of the councils are summarised in two editorials from _l'Ordine Nuovo_ written in August 1919, and in the Programme of _l'Ordine Nuovo_, published in August 1920. These are translated in _The Modern Prince_, op. cit., pp.19-27. Also Cammett, op. cit., Ch. 4, has extensive quotation (in translation) from Vol. 9 of the _Collected Works_ published in Italian (Turin, 1954). This volume contains the writing which Gramsci did for _l'Ordine Nuovo_ - the journal which he edited, and which was the organ of the workers' council movement.
to popular control) and as the school for socialism (in which the capacity of every man to perform both specialist and generalist social functions would be developed). On the one hand, the education provided by the councils would be of a technical nature, in order that the worker might improve his understanding and performance of his own specialised industrial function - Gramsci believed that hegemony always rested partly on the monopoly of technological values. On the other hand, the councils would also educate the worker, through practical experience, in the generalising skills involved in administrative, managerial and political tasks. Only the development of the capacity for self-government and self-management could validate the ethical claims of socialism that alienated forms of authority and the coercion they entailed could be abolished.¹ This

¹ Marx had asserted that the proletariat only achieved the capacity for universal political functions after an indefinite period of organisation and education. He had proclaimed to the German proletariat: "You have to go through fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and national struggles, not only to change conditions but also to change yourselves and to make yourselves capable of political rule." Enthüllungen über den Kommunistenprozess zu Köln (1st ed. 1853), 2nd ed., Zurich, 1885, p.21. Quoted in Meyer, A.G., Marxism: The Unity of Theory and Practice, Harvard U.P., 1954, p.111.
education was also demanded by the socialist ethico-political programme for the emancipation of the 'complete man' who could express himself in the social activity of public life as well as in his narrow specialist function.

At this time, Gramsci claimed that the council form was the organisational prop by means of which the theory and practice of social self-regulation would eventually establish a cultural predominance over the ideology of competitive capitalism. The organic intellectuals created in this process would assist in the crystallisation of the new social principles which emerged from the experience of the movement in creating new forms.

As has been said (pp.182-83), Gramsci believed that the preparation of a new coherent social structure before the actual advent of political revolution was essential to the survival of civilised values. He adopted the council system as representing this kind of coherent structure which established the norms of the future. Gramsci feared that, without this kind of preparation, the basic atomisation of existing society would give rise to a destructive wave of anarchism rather than to
constructive social action in a period of political stress.¹

However, after the failure of the occupation of the factories in September 1920, the Party came to usurp the place of the councils in Gramsci's political theory. Gramsci took a leading part in the founding of the Italian Communist Party in 1921, and l'Ordine Nuovo became a Communist Party journal. He still retained his individual emphasis on the need to create a popular culture of a high standard in order to combat bourgeois social hegemony. But now, the disciplinary intellectual function of a centralised party appeared to him as necessary in order that the workers' movement be directed into the right channels.

During the early period of his imprisonment (at least up to his disillusionment with Leninism), Gramsci put even more stress on the need for the Party to lead the proletariat to dominance via the capture of the state power. He condemned as "economism" the idea that a political party should be merely an educational organisation of a syndical type.² "Anti-Jacobin"

became for him a damaging label to attach to the syndicalists (including Sorel, who had admired Gramsci's work in connection with the council movement, and had himself considerably influenced Gramsci).

Gramsci's analysis of the consent obtained through cultural and private institutions as a primary source of political power remained the most fruitful part of his work. He provided a convincing argument that the state was of relatively little importance in maintaining class rule in western society, as compared with the situation in less developed societies such as Russia. In studying the Italian case, Gramsci made the process of what is now called "political socialisation" his focal point. On the basis of his analysis he made various interesting suggestions as to how the socialist movement might express itself effectively in political terms without becoming absorbed into the existing social structure.

In common with Bernstein and Sorel, Gramsci had seen the answer to the problem of consciousness as resting with the discovery by the proletariat of the structures appropriate to the general development of socialist praxis. All three were concerned that proletarian rule should be legitimated by the superior culture it represented: this required the development
of the ethical, juridical and cultural capacities of the proletariat within such appropriate structures. Moreover, it was felt that unless these capacities were developed, the ideals of socialism - the return of social responsibility and social authority to every individual - would prove impossible to realise.

These three theorists differed greatly in their detailed approach to the problem, as might be expected from the different political and intellectual environments in which they were operating. Gramsci was the only one who attempted to utilise the Hegelian aspects of Marxism, and again, this was via the influence of Italian neo-idealism.

Nonetheless, all three tackled the problem from the viewpoint that the proletariat could only develop socialist practice, and therewith socialist consciousness, within the kind of institution which anticipated the structure of authority in a socialist society. The experience of participation in social action would not produce new men if the old patterns of leadership and subordination re-emerged. These Marxists attempted to reunite theory and practice so that the movement could achieve an awareness of itself, and of the connection between its means and aims.
In the years preceding the First World War, socialist theorists were confronted by the dilemmas presented theoretically by Weber and Michels - that the labour movement had itself become bureaucratised and that this might well be an inevitable development. Such conclusions ran counter to socialist conceptions of the labour movement as the revolutionary means by which society would be made to conform to the principles of rationality, universality and freedom, through the destruction of bureaucratic and authoritarian forms of organisation. The answer provided by theorists as divergent as G.D.H. Cole and the radical Dutch Marxist, Anton Pannekoek, was that although the bureaucratisation of the movement was an undeniable fact, it was only an inevitable development within the framework of capitalism. They argued that the present forms of the movement were as transient as the capitalist system itself. The bureaucratic, centralised and authoritarian forms which the labour movement had assumed proved nothing about the inherent tendencies of human social organisation - rather
they should be viewed simply as a logical organisational response to the capitalist environment.¹

Nonetheless the problem remained that, if the Marxist precept that bureaucracy was innately hostile to freedom and self-determination was accepted, it followed that the existing forms of the labour movement were incompatible with the development of socialist praxis. Luxemburg and Adler were two of those Marxists who came to believe that socialism would have to be inaugurated by mass movements which would bypass the mediation of existing organisation to a large extent. They assumed that once the proletarian class began moving as an organic social whole (as in revolution) they would evolve revolutionary new forms of direct democracy within the labour movement, and in society as a whole, which would satisfy Marx's criteria for a truly human society. Both Luxemburg and Adler were to welcome the soviet, or

workers' council movements, as demonstrating this kind of mass initiative, and as serving to extend the meaning of popular sovereignty. ¹

After 1905 a left wing concerned with such issues emerged in the ranks of German Social Democracy, under the direct stimulus of the 1905 Russian Revolution. Rosa Luxemburg was to become the most active theorist of this group. The German left argued that the existing organisational form of the party (i.e. its increasingly professionalised and hierarchic nature) was responsible for a tendency towards increasingly conservative policies. According to Pannekoek (who settled in Bremen as a political journalist), the German cult of organisation, and the need for keeping that organisation intact, was a factor likely to weaken the class struggle and to produce a tendency towards accommodation with the status quo. ²

Together with the other members of the left, Pannekoek

¹ On the other hand Luxemburg and Adler rejected the Leninist exploitation of the soviet movement as simply a means of revolutionary breakdown. Lenin's ideas on the role of the party organisation implied a fundamental disparity between the social forces which would bring about the revolution, and those which would create socialism.

put forward the theory that only when the masses were caught up in revolutionary action would they liberate themselves from the influence of bourgeois ideology and structures. Only when this occurred would they achieve true class consciousness and evolve the kinds of institution suited to socialist society.

The idea that the structures of socialism would only be evolved in the heat of mass actions (the idea which characterised the German left), was in some respects a departure from Marx. Marx saw the forms of socialism as being created by the dialectic of the capitalist system. Marx's emphasis was on the gradual appearance of the new socialist structures in the labour movement, rather than on their sudden and belated appearance in a series of graduated mass actions.

One of Pannekoek's distinctive contributions was the idea that a 'labour aristocracy' and a labour bureaucracy had emerged, and formed a separate stratum between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie: a stratum distinguished from the proletariat by the superior skills at its disposal, and by its place in the industrial hierarchy. Pannekoek linked the adoption of reformist policies with the emergence of this new stratum.
he claimed that it provided the social basis for reformism.  

The central theme of Luxemburg's political writing is the dependence of the socialist movement on the revolutionary initiative and direct action of the masses. It has been suggested that the reason why she never elaborated a theory of socialist government was that according to her philosophy, all systemisation ended in reification.  

Although this suggestion is attractive, it must be remembered that the Marxist tradition concerning predictions of the future society was still strong: one could not predict in detail the future society because it would be created under completely new circumstances, where man had become truly self-determining. In spite of her lack of systemisation, interesting political notions are scattered through her writing. 

In Reform or Revolution, her early polemic against Bernstein (published 1900), Luxemburg analysed the increased scope of the modern state, particularly in the


economic sphere. She wrote:

...in this sense capitalist development prepares little by little the future fusion of state and society. It prepares, so to say, the return of the functions of the state to society. Following this line of thought, one can speak of an evolution of the capitalist state into society, and it is undoubtedly this that Marx had in mind when he referred to labor legislation as the first conscious intervention of 'society' in the vital social process.¹

She was aware that Marx himself had already been able to describe in *Capital* the first signs of the dissolution of the capitalist system as a system independent of the state apparatus, and ruled by its own economic laws.

Rudolph Hilferding was to point out much later the carelessness of the term "state capitalism" from a Marxist point of view. He wrote that, for Marx, capitalism had - by definition - excluded the possibility of the kind of state intervention and conscious direction of the economy which meant that price became a means of distribution only, rather than the regulating factor. Any society in which the economy was subject to conscious political direction, whether this was in the form of

popular control or not, was a post-capitalist society.\(^1\) Economic evolution had brought about the end of the autonomy of the economy: but according to Luxemburg, only the class conscious action of the masses could bring about socialism.

In 1904 Luxemburg published her famous article, "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy".\(^2\) In this article she contrasted the type of organisation consistent with the aims of social democracy with the type of organisation being advocated by Lenin.\(^3\) Social democracy required the development of the political initiative of the broad masses. Lenin, on the other hand, was cutting himself off from the masses by creating an extremely centralised, highly disciplined party consisting of the revolutionary elite. Luxemburg believed that the insulation of the central leadership from popular control


\(^2\) This has been edited by B.D. Wolfe under the title "Leninism or Marxism", and published under that title together with the article "The Russian Revolution", Michigan, Ann Arbor Paperback, 1961.

\(^3\) Ibid., p.86.
could only lead to a bureaucratic conservatism within the party. In 1918 she was to remark that the only corrective for "all the innate shortcomings of social institutions" was "the active, untrammeled, energetic political life of the broadest masses of the people".¹ For Luxemburg the absence of political liberties within the state made it vital that the party structure be geared to providing the masses with political experience: i.e. direct democracy, which would draw immediately upon popular initiative, was more important than an efficient hierarchy. Behind the different tenets of the organisation favoured by Luxemburg and Lenin lay the more basic ideological difference: Luxemburg believed that true socialist consciousness could only emanate from the masses in action; Lenin believed consciousness was not a spontaneous product of the masses, but rather the attribute of a highly organised vanguard.

Luxemburg found supporting evidence for her views in the Russian Revolution of 1905-06. Here was the demonstration that more progress could be made towards socialism in such a period of the unmediated social

action of the masses than in decades of careful organisation. She acclaimed the revolutionary masses who "push the leaders spontaneously to more advanced goals". The general strike was the means of direct action which had finally brought the masses into the political scene in Russia: once the masses had entered into political life, practical class consciousness followed as a natural consequence. Luxemburg wrote of the general strike:

Today, when the working class must enlighten itself, gather itself together and lead itself on in the course of the revolutionary battle; and when the revolution, for its part, is directed as much against the old state as against capitalist exploitation, the mass strike appears as a natural weapon. The mass strike is a means both to recruit, revolutionise and organise the broadest strata of the proletariat in the midst of action, and a means to undermine and overthrow the old state power, and to paralyse [einzudämmen] capitalist exploitation.

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3 Ibid., p.201.
Luxemburg advocated strongly the use of the mass strike by the German party.¹ She contrasted this kind of action, which brought together a whole class, to the highly organised, but disparate economic and political struggles which characterised the labour movement in Germany.² For Luxemburg the organisation could never be an end in itself which must not be risked in revolutionary action: even defeated mass actions were valuable for the momentary glimpse they afforded of the return of social power to the united people, and the subsequent rise of class consciousness.

In 1905 Luxemburg saw the development of the soviet movement in Russia simply as the spontaneous creation by

¹ The use of the mass strike, although agreed upon in a tentative way at the Jena congress of the S.D.P. in 1905, was effectively ruled out by the parity agreement with the trade unions formalised at the Mannheim congress of 1906.

² Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften, loc. cit., p.197. Luxemburg believed that the indirect, representative political form of the labour movement was simply a response to the nature of the bourgeois state. In the revolution these indirect political forms would be exchanged for the direct political action of the masses, and moreover, the artificial distinction between political and economic action would be ended (that is, the traditional attitude that the trade unions should retain some political neutrality in order to improve their bargaining position). Ibid., pp.209-10.
the masses of a means of revolution. After the 1917 Revolution the soviet (Räte) system took on a much deeper significance for her. In 1918 the Spartakusbund, of which Luxemburg was the leading theoretician, came to uphold the authority of the soviet system as the permanent form of proletarian self-government. They rejected the universal pretensions of the constituent assembly, and urged the greater democratic validity of the soviet system. They claimed that the constituent assembly was obsolete in the face of this new, more progressive, political form, and they withdrew their support from it. These views were in some contrast with Marx's general conviction that once parliamentary forms had been firmly established, they lent themselves to extension through the political action of the proletariat (and thus a complete boycott of them would be self-defeating). The left socialists had become pessimistic about the revolutionary possibilities of parliamentary development in Germany.

However, it was possible for Luxemburg and her colleagues to find authority in Marx for the idea that the proletariat might need to set up a rival system of government in a distinct institutional form, which would serve to sap the legitimacy of the still existing
government. This idea of two rival governments, resting on (and stemming from the initiative of) two different classes in society was popularised by Pannekoek, and it was presented in an emphatic form in Lenin's *State and Revolution.*

In the draft programme which Luxemburg wrote for the Spartakists, and which was adopted in full at the founding congress of the K.P.D. (30 December 1918 - 1 January 1919) the council system was presented as the framework of socialist society. The programme outlined a federal structure for the councils; delegates at both levels were

1 "Alongside of the new official governments they [the workers] must establish simultaneously their own revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal committees and municipal councils or in the form of workers' clubs or workers' committees, so that the bourgeois-democratic governments not only immediately lose the support of the workers but from the outset see themselves supervised and threatened by authorities which are backed by the whole mass of the workers." Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League (March 1850), *MESW,* vol.1, p.104.
to be subject to recall at any time, and the central council was to be convened every three months.¹ She asserted:

Only by means of a constant, mutual action upon each other on the part of the masses and their organs - the soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies - can their activity fill the state with a socialist spirit.²

Luxemburg saw the bureaucratic and militaristic development of the German state on the one hand, and the political passivity of the masses on the other, as being responsible for the sufferings of the workers during the war. The workers had been duped by the government during the war: they could only now become self-governing and politically aware if they remained in a condition of permanent political activity. The accessibility of the councils as a forum for the masses would help to assure this political engagement of the proletariat, according to Luxemburg. The reunification of the roles of worker and citizen would then extend into the future. She wrote that:

The main feature of a socialist society is that the great mass of workers will cease to be a governed mass, but, on the contrary

¹ Ibid., pp.129-30.
² Ibid., p.125.
will itself live the full political and economic life and direct that life in conscious and free self-determination. ¹

The programme is remarkable for the fact that the role of the party is hardly mentioned at all. Like some other western Marxists² Luxemburg adopted the soviet as a revolutionary new form of social authority, while rejecting Lenin's ideas on the organisation and the role of the communist party. Luxemburg abhorred the Bolshevik indifference to democratic fundamentals such as universal suffrage, freedom of speech, of organisation and of assembly.³ She argued that the defects of democratic institutions could only be cured by rendering the influence of the masses on their delegates more direct and immediate: this could only be done by encouraging public life, not by stunting it. She wrote:

...bourgeois class rule has no need of the political training and education of the entire mass of the people, at least not beyond certain narrow limits. But for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life

¹ Ibid.
² E.g. P.J. Troelstra, a leading Dutch Social Democrat, had addressed mass meetings in Rotterdam in 1918, condemning the Bolshevik coup as a seizure of power by a terrorist minority, but praising the revolutionary medium of soldiers' and workers' councils. Verkade, W., Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany, Leiden, Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1965, p.110.
³ Luxemburg, R., The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism, op. cit., p.62.
element, the very air without which it is unable to exist.1

The proletariat required the political education afforded by a public life based on the most complete political liberties, in order to become truly self-governing.

Luxemburg's ideas on how the Communist party itself should be organised are reflected in the speech on organisation by Hugo Eberlein at the founding congress of the K.P.D. According to Eberlein's recommendations, the local branches of the party were to have full liberty to model the structure of their organisation as they wished. A central committee was to be elected by the party congress, but its tasks were to be limited to the mere assembling of local experiences in order to evolve a political and theoretical line from them: there were to be no central directives, even for the press or propaganda.2

1 Ibid., p.68.
2 Bericht über den Gründungsparteitag, quoted in Badia, G., Le Spartakisme, Paris, L'Arche, 1967, p.297. Even this amount of centralisation was condemned by the groups based in Hamburg, Dresden and Bremen (including Pannekoek) who had come together in December 1918 to form the group "The International German Communists" (I.K.D.) This group declared that, unlike the Spartakists, their principles included full autonomy for the local groups, which would only centralise themselves during the actual struggle.
In her report on the founding of the K.P.D., Luxemburg stressed that the proletarian socialist revolution could only be achieved through the building up from below of the council system, the institution which embodied the revolution. The bourgeois revolution had required only the capture of the central political institutions: the proletarian revolution required the building up of new institutions from below, combining the political and economic functions of public power, and unifying the legislative and administrative processes in the one body. According to Luxemburg the actual toppling of the formal government would have to be the last act of the revolution.¹ The masses would only learn how to exercise public power through exercising power in the councils, even while the old formal apparatus of power was still standing. Luxemburg stated in her report that only from within the councils could the masses reach

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(continued from previous page). The groups would disappear after the revolution, having demonstrated the necessity for centralising autonomous actions. Badia, G., op. cit., p.218, Resolution of the I.K.D. (24 December, 1918).

the consciousness that the councils could and must take
the place of the old state machinery.  

Luxemburg's deference to the consciousness of the
masses as the final authority finally led to her
participation in the ill-fated rising of January 1919.
This rising lacked the numbers and preparation in the
exercise of public power which Luxemburg had outlined as
the sine qua non of a successful proletarian revolution.
Max Adler was later to write of this revolutionary
failure, which brought about Luxemburg's death, that the
people appeared only to desire "either machine-guns, or
parliament in the sense of the old Reichstag", and that
they did not have the political maturity to establish a
proper council system, "which would have required a
deeper, finer radicalism".  

The loss of Luxemburg represented the loss of a
bulwark against Leninism within the K.P.D. Her sacrifice
was exploited as a symbol, but in a cause which less and
less resembled her own.

1 Ibid., p.199-20.
2 Adler, M., Helden der sozialen Revolution,
Berlin, Laub, 1926, p.50.
In the period following the First World War, when his most important political writing was done, Max Adler was the leading theoretician of the left wing of the Austrian Social Democratic Party. Adler combined a devotion to Kantian ethics with revolutionary political beliefs. Like Bernstein, he believed in the need for the proletariat to win ethical dominance in the state; but unlike Bernstein, he believed that socialism could not simply be achieved by the ethical and political dominance of the proletariat within the existing political framework. Adler believed that there must be an institutional break between bourgeois and proletarian democracy, and that the old bourgeois state form must be replaced by a structurally rich society.

Before the first world war Adler had been a foremost combatant of "metaphysical materialism", and in particular of the naturalistic ethics of Kautsky. Adler stressed the point that Marx's historical materialism centred on man's revolutionary praxis, and that moral aims were an essential component of man's praxis. Adler claimed that,

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1 E.g. *Kausalität und Teleologie im Streite um die Wissenschaft*, 1904. Adler described the socialist movement as being distinguished not by being the representative of an ineluctable material process, but rather, by its consciousness of the means and tendencies present in the social process by which its aims could be achieved. Adler, M., *Marx als Denker*, Berlin, Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1908, p.73.
were it not for their moral ideal, the proletariat might well be satisfied with a system of industrial feudalism, which would be quite compatible with the contemporary material foundations of society.¹ For Adler, the morality of the proletariat combined the primacy of the moral responsibility of the individual with the recognition that the individual could only realise himself through society.

Adler took up the view (which he found in Marx's early works) that social solidarity was an essential component of human consciousness, that would re-emerge dialectically in a higher form (absorbing individual self-consciousness) at the end of the period of alienation. The young Marx described man as a 'species being' - i.e. incomplete in isolation and dependent on social relationship for the affirmation of his nature as a rational/sensuous being.

Adler rejected Marx's later emphasis on the link between human sociability and the needs of material

¹ Adler, M., Marxistische Probleme, Stuttgart, Dietz, 1913, p.113 ff. This is much the same point as that quoted earlier, made by Luxemburg in Reform or Revolution. Both theorists believed that only the social consciousness arising from social activism could protect the masses from the misguided acceptance of a despotic welfare-state system.
production. In the light of this emphasis Marx had even attempted to derive the proletarian potential for socialism from the fact that the new forms of industry required greater co-operation. Such co-operation was to deterministically produce the requisite form of social consciousness. Adler denied the validity of this argument, as did other contemporary Marxists who observed that the advance of industry in fact stimulated competitiveness among the proletariat. Adler claimed that only the dialectic of human consciousness could bring the essential human characteristic of solidarity to social expression.¹

Adler attacked the German idealist position on the ethical priority of the claims of the state, on the grounds that as no historical state had represented a true general will, there was no basis for such a moral claim over the individual. The conflict of the demands of the state with the realisation of the individual was expressive of the fact that these states had not really

¹ Adler presented at length his ideas on society and individual consciousness in Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft, Wien, 1936, which is discussed in the first chapter of Heintel, P., System und Ideologie: Der Austromarxismus im Spiegel der Philosophie Max Adlers, Wien, Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1967.
embodied a general will. The argument for the special status of political morals appeared to Adler as only a pretext for the continuation of a relationship of rulership, and the pursuance of power aims.

Adler wrote that capitalism was incompatible with democracy for the very reason that a true general will could not exist in a capitalist system. Capitalism produced too many divisive material interests; and the rule of the people could only truly take place when the people were united. As Sorel had said, the notion of the general will had been used as the ideological means to represent decisions reached by compromise between antagonistic groups as being indirectly willed by all.

Adler dismissed the alternative concept of the will of the majority as fundamentally oppressive rather than democratic. This view was in agreement with that of

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1 Politik und Moral, Leipzig, Verlag Naturwissenschaften, 1918, p.29.
2 Ibid. Adler regarded the Bolsheviks as having furthered the split between politics and true morality, rather than having done away with it: they had papered over the divisions within society with coercion, rather than building up a new social unity from below.
Marx, who had stressed that the 'political state' (and the coercion that implied) would survive as long as universal suffrage only represented the rule of the majority - even the immense majority - over the rest of society. The democratic transcending of the state could only occur with the creation of a truly coherent community, united by a conscious solidarity.

Adler believed that the proletariat would finally make democracy a reality by building a real community, or Gemeinschaft, in which cultural differences would persist, but no longer as a cloak for material interests. When the institutional and human obstacles preventing the individual acting according to the social reason latent in his nature were removed, the general will would become the will of all, and man would be free. Man could only be free when acting according to the rational part of his nature.

Adler's ethical standpoint did not prevent him from evaluating the class struggle as the prime mover in the historical process, past and present. However, like Lassalle, he stressed the cultural significance of the class struggle, as the struggle of a new concept of justice against the old.\(^1\) Adler saw the moral ideals of

revolutionary activists as the motor of revolution.

The question of the kind of social organisation which could replace the old political order of centralised coercion with a living community (in which a general will was spontaneously generated from the whole people) was of great importance to Adler. Adler recognised the dilemma of the socialist movement as being the seemingly innate tendency towards bureaucratisation in mass organisations analysed by Michels and Weber. He saw the popularity of the anarchist, syndicalist, and later the workers' council movements as the direct protest of the masses against that bureaucratisation of the socialist movement analysed by the theorists.¹ These movements represented for Adler the rejection of all the indirect and representative forms of political organisation which flourished within and without the labour movement under bourgeois democracy. He was also interested in the recent appearance, and growing influence of the guild socialist movement.² He viewed it as a protest against the existing forms of democracy which had been exposed as the disguised rule not only of capitalists, but of a bureaucratic elite.

² Ibid., p.172.
Adler rejected both the pessimism of Michels and the solution suggested by Weber: that is, that the tendency towards bureaucratic rigidity should be counterbalanced by the institutional encouragement of charismatic leaders dependent on retaining the enthusiasm of the masses. Adler condemned Weber's solution as incompatible with the true self-determination of the masses, depending as it did on the strength of irrational appeals. According to Adler, the first suggestion of the true solution to the problems of mass democracy was to be found in Marx's writing. The new society must be built up on the basis of self-administering units small enough to retain a sense of individual responsibility and of the significance of individual contribution, while at the same time fostering human solidarity.

However, Adler viewed Marx's ideas on the nature of these self-administering units as being constricted by the limits of historical development at the time of his writing. Adler interpreted Marx's theory as being based primarily on the territorial unit, and the potential contradictions of this form had been noted by Marx himself. The territorial unit raised the spectre of

\[1\] \textit{Die Staatsauffassung des Marxismus}, op. cit., p.181.
local particularism and parochial loyalties - or a retreat from the universalising tendencies of capitalist society to the particularism of medieval society. Adler believed that the theory and practice of the socialist movement had now encompassed the solution of this problem through the creation of a multiplicity of self-administering units with an overlapping membership, which would help bind the society together. First, the workers' council movement had brought an emphasis on the works or factory as the basis of organisation, and on the development of solidarity among all participants in the productive process regardless of specific function. Secondly, the guild socialist movement had advanced the idea of a whole system of organisations both within and without the factory to cater for needs of the most varied kind.¹

Adler argued that the latter kind of federal organisation would circumvent the problem of minorities, particularly cultural minorities, in a democracy. These groups of likeminded people could join together in their own self-governing association to satisfy their needs, provided that these needs could be met without damage to the society as a whole.² Adler

¹ Ibid., p.179ff.
² Ibid., p.124.
stated that if a vital contradiction did occur between the needs of such groups and the needs of society as a whole, it would mean that democracy was no longer possible - because a basic lack of homogeneity had crept back into society. The only remedy would be to discover a new higher form of social organisation within which solidarity would be restored.

Adler believed that the decentralisation of public power was absolutely essential if political alienation was to be overcome. He claimed that centralisation was not an irreversible tendency of industrial society, but that rather it represented the attempt to unify particularistic and conflicting interests by force. In the small self-administering community the continual involvement in making public decisions, and the lack of barriers between officials and the people, would prevent delegated authority from becoming alien and reified. Authority would no longer gravitate around the control of the means of force, but would rather be that kind of two-way relationship, based on respect, found between a master and his pupils in an artistic school.¹ The

metaphor of the artist, used in portraying the man of the future, is persistent in Marxist literature, particularly in relation to the anticipated attitude to work.

Adler's ideas on the need for the state form to be replaced by the socialist community were parallel in many respects to the ideas held by the anarchists who created the short-lived Munich commune of April 1919. Erich Mühsam wrote that political order had always been necessary to the extent that voluntary self-government had been absent: however, political power had always exceeded this legitimate sphere in accordance with the logic of centralised power. Socialism could only be achieved through the reawakening of communal instincts in self-administering communities. These communities must, of necessity, be in existence before the formal revolution, or the social relationship which was to bind together the federal structure of communities would fail to replace the old political relationship.¹

Martin Buber has sympathetically described such ideas concerning the replacement of the state (to the greatest degree possible) by a new form of social community as typical of utopian socialism. These utopian

¹ Buber, M., Paths in Utopia, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949, Ch.6: "Landauer".
socialist aims were common to both anarchists and to those followers of Marx who took seriously his concept of the transcending of the state. According to Buber the conditions for the new kind of society being advocated are as follows:

...it is not an aggregate of essentially unrelated individuals, for such an aggregate could only be held together by a 'political', i.e. a coercive principle of government; it must be built up of little societies on the basis of communal life and of the association of these societies; and the mutual relations of the societies and their associations must be determined to the greatest possible extent by the social principle - the principle of inner cohesion, collaboration and mutual stimulation. In other words: only a structurally rich society can claim the inheritance of the state.¹

Buber himself believed that the early forms of the Jewish Kibbutz system in some ways realised the vision of the utopian socialists, and for this reason he welcomed them.

For similar reasons, Adler welcomed the rise of the workers' council movement in Austria after the military and administrative collapse. He contrasted this new social form with the old structure of the party which had reproduced in itself the structure of capitalist society, including the split between legislature and

¹ Buber, M., Paths in Utopia, op. cit., p.80
Adler claimed that democratic theorists had been blindly following Montesquieu in praising this distinction between the legislative and executive arms of government. The distinction had arisen historically merely because the bourgeoisie had not felt strong enough to suppress completely the power of the king. Adler blamed the separation of powers for the subsequent growth of bureaucracy. He believed that full people's control in the councils (in the usual sense of the powers of initiative and recall, and the use of the mass meeting both to legislate and to elect or dismiss officials) would take the place of the separation of powers. In this way the bureaucratic distortion of the people's will would be avoided. To Adler the council appeared as the image of the solidaristic and homogeneous society which alone could make democracy possible.

1 Adler's ideas on the council system are presented chiefly in Demokratie und Rät esystem (Wien, 1919), Die Staatsaufs a fungung des Marxismus (Wien, 1922) and Politische und soziale Demokratie. Unfortunately, Demokratie und Rät esystem is not available in Australia, and I have had to rely on the account of this pamphlet by Y. Bourdet: "Rôle et signification des conseils ouvriers d'après Max Adler", Études de Marxologie, no.9 (Cahiers de l'ISEA, No.164) (August 1965), pp.209-17.

2 Ibid., p.216.
While the council system was in existence, Adler assessed it as being the theoretico-practical means best adapted to realise that self-education of the proletariat which alone could make the system a successful revolutionary weapon. Adler hoped that the councils would encourage the political and social initiative of the masses, who normally regarded their government as an alien power beyond their control. While supporting the council system for these reasons, Adler was strongly opposed to any attempt at the revolutionary supplanting of the old government by a small segment of the proletariat against the background of the political immaturity of the majority.

The solution Adler suggested was that the established national assembly should coexist for a certain period with the central council of the workers' councils. The non-revolutionary (or not yet revolutionary) part of the electorate could express itself politically in the traditional way by electing deputies to the assembly. The central council should, in the meantime retain the power of decision in the last resort, lest the revolutionary development be halted. However, Adler did

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1 Ibid., p.214.
not object to the constitutional regulation of the councils, believing that their political importance could only accrue with their internal development. Should the council system lose its institutional dynamic, the non-revolutionary classes (and the national assembly - their representative body) would remain the dominant force in the state.¹

Adler was concerned lest the councils might be conceived of as effectively conservative institutions which would stabilise the class character of the proletariat. If this occurred they would become the material and spiritual basis of a form of class rule. Following Adler's schema for the peaceful evolution into power, the councils could only achieve a dominant position in the state after proving their superiority in serving the community as a whole as a means of making and carrying out social decisions (and after educating the masses into a concern for the public interest).

The workers' councils in Vienna welcomed as members all who believed in the class struggle and socialism. Adler echoed Lenin's dictum of 1917 on the anarchists long after it had become out of date in the Soviet Union:

The differentiation between socialism and anarchism developed clearly and along party lines after Bakunin's opposition to Marx's International, and even then it did not yet mean a difference in aims, but here only in the means to this end, in the tactics and forms of the proletarian movement.¹

Adler later blamed the failure of the council system² on the failure of the social democratic movement to provide adequate socialist education, particularly for the young. The dogma of economic determinism was once again the villain of the piece: "economic development itself was expected to perform the reorganising of society like some sort of poltergeist".³ Much of Adler's succeeding work was devoted to this problem of socialist education (which was intended to add the missing components of revolution - the psychological and moral

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maturity of the masses - to the economic maturity already at hand).

Adler derided the idea of a neutral universal system of education (as opposed to the idea of the social function of education). In the bourgeois system of education, individualism masqueraded as universal culture. He believed that the vigorous development of a socialist education was an imperative task: man's revolutionising praxis must begin with man himself. The new education must be political, and Adler used the term in the classical sense of concern for the common culture of the state (rather than concern for particularistic interests).

Adler developed high hopes that the wealth of proletarian cultural, welfare, and other self-help organisations which sprang into being in the post-war period of social-democratic government were developing the capacity (and the necessary enthusiasm) of the proletariat for the public self-government of socialism. Adler's optimism on the subject of the sustained energy

1 The fact that Adler's important book on education was entitled "New Men" reflects his preoccupations.

2 Adler, M., Neue Menschen, op. cit., p.28.
of the masses for public life was shared by Otto Bauer, in his description of the Austrian social revolution:

Thus the popular energies released by the revolution found ever new spheres of activity. Tens of thousands of men, whose life hitherto had been divided between the eternal routine of mechanical labour in the factory and an animal existence during the scanty hours of leisure in the family circle or in the public house, now found new interests and a new purpose in life in the organisations of the party, the trade unions and the co-operative societies; in the workers' councils and the works' committees; in municipal representation and in the various institutions of communal self-government; in the allotment and settlement movement; in the parents' unions and among the Kinderfreunde. It is not too much to say that this social activity of the masses created a new type of manhood and womanhood.¹

Bauer echoed Adler's belief that once the masses had discovered structural means to sustain their social effectiveness, 'socialised Man' must begin to emerge fairly rapidly.

Like Luxemburg, Adler was a revolutionary democrat in his concept of socialism. However Adler was less concerned than Luxemburg with the amorphous movement of the masses, and more concerned with the structures whereby revolution could be achieved democratically.

This does not mean that Adler held the mechanical notion that new improved institutions would automatically create new men. What he claimed was, that the participation in the creation of new social institutions would help men to discover themselves as determining rather than determined agents.

Perhaps partly because the left wing social democrats in Vienna were so firmly opposed to revolutionary terrorism and Bolshevik conspiracy, Austria escaped the bloodshed which occurred in the German and Hungarian revolutions. The Austrian socialists were limited in their constructive work by the economic hardships imposed by the Versailles Treaty. However they did stimulate a great amount of participation in public life by the working class, which perhaps illustrated the aims of Marxist socialism.
CHAPTER SEVEN
FROM THEORY TO STATE POWER: PLEKHANOV AND LENIN

G.V. Plekhanov performed the role of pioneer in establishing the relevance of Marxist theory to a country still submerged under a semi-Asiatic regime (as Marx described Russia). Plekhanov took as his starting point the position outlined in the Communist Manifesto with regard to Germany: the proletariat must assist the bourgeoisie to make their revolution before attempting to achieve their own. The relevance of Marxist theory in this situation was that it enabled the proletariat to assist the bourgeoisie as a class fully conscious of its own interests, rather than as merely the tool of the bourgeois liberals. Plekhanov adhered to this formula of two-stage revolution through the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, up to his death in 1917.

As a Marxist, Plekhanov was completely convinced that a period of bourgeois democracy (during which the

1 Plekhanov had been actively involved in the Zemlia i Volia movement from its foundation in 1876. As such he had held anti-political views and believed in the immediate struggle, through mass agitation, for the socialist revolution. In 1880-82 Plekhanov broke completely with
mass organisations of the proletariat would develop, and petit-bourgeois influence would decline) was an essential preparation for socialism. The fact that the bourgeoisie, as a discernible class was far weaker in Russia than even in Germany, where they had failed to bring about a democratic revolution, did not disturb Plekhanov's faith in the 'laws of historical development'.\(^1\) He assumed that the supporting factor of proletarian political organisation would give the Russian bourgeoisie the confidence they so far lacked to challenge the absolutist regime.

Because Plekhanov firmly believed that the historical role of Russian Social Democracy was, first, to strive for the bourgeois revolution, the actual forms of socialist society were not of immediate concern to him.

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\(^1\) (continued from previous page) the Narodnik movement (then dominated by the terrorist Narodnaia Volia wing) and turned his back on the "exceptionalist" view of Russian development. He posited that capitalism could not be bypassed, and neither could the political structures which had accompanied it in the west.

\(^1\) The Russian situation was to prove parallel to the German one in that the rise of 'proletarian class consciousness', before the bourgeoisie had made their revolution, served to drive the bourgeoisie into compromise with reaction.
Until the First World War, Plekhanov was deeply influenced by the German Social Democratic Party, and accepted their official conception of the workers' state.¹ According to this conception, the workers were to struggle for state-intervention in various areas of social welfare including state-credit for workers' associations - as well as to struggle for political liberties - in the interim period before they were able to take complete control of the state.² In his book directed against the anarchists (written in 1894), Plekhanov pointed to the German party as evidence that participation in bourgeois parliamentary institutions in no way produced a bourgeois mentality in the workers' representatives.³ Plekhanov's withering attack on anarchism in this book, directed both against the disruptive elements in the Second International and

1 Plekhanov makes frequent references to Lassalle, whom he cites as an authority ranking only after Marx and Engels. (E.g. Our Differences (first published 1885), in Plekhanov, G.V., Selected Philosophical Works, vol.1, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, p.373.)


3 Plechanoff, G., Anarchism and Socialism, Chicago, Kerr, 1908, p.100.
against the Narodnik elements at home, obscured the anarchist affiliations of Marx's notion of the return of public authority to society. Plekhanov's attack on anarchism was later to provoke a sensitive reaction from Lenin in the latter's State and Revolution phase. Lenin then attacked what he alleged to be Plekhanov's failure to emphasise the problem of the state, and the need to smash the state machine.¹

Plekhanov's most interesting contribution to the Marxist theory of the state was his elaboration of the theory of Oriental despotism, and his notion of the possibility of an "Asiatic restoration", brought about by a premature socialist revolution. Plekhanov's theory of Oriental despotism was at first closely related to his ideas on geographical determinism. Plekhanov throughout his Marxist writings was inclined to put more stress on natural, as opposed to social, determinism than Marx did

¹ Lenin also had strong objections to Plekhanov's dissertation to the effect that it was impossible to distinguish anarchists from bandits, in light of the crimes they committed in the name of propaganda of the deed. Lenin's encouragement of "expropriations" had been the subject of heated controversy within the Social Democratic Party in 1905-10, in which he suffered a political defeat. Lenin's tendency to stress the anarchist elements in Marxist theory in 1917 will be discussed later in this chapter.
himself. For example, he was to say:

Marx's answer thus reduces the whole problem of the development of economic structure to the problem of the causes that determine the evolution of the productive forces of society. In this latter form, the question is primarily solved with reference to the nature of the geographical environment.¹

The geographical version of the materialist conception of history, upheld by men such as Elisée Reclus and Mechnikov was at this time very influential. Plekhanov was not the only Marxist in the 1890s to attempt to integrate it into the economic interpretation of history. It appears, for example, in Enrico Ferri's Socialism and Modern Science (written in 1894). Ferri, however, believed that it was geographical determinants in combination with anthropological determinants which shaped the economic base.² Plekhanov was to deride this notion of the ethnic influence on history in his criticism

of Labriola's historical materialism and elsewhere.  

The only system of production which Marx described as being directly brought into existence by geographical factors was the Oriental system. For Plekhanov, the influence of geography in the Oriental system was such that the organisation of the state was prior to the existence of class struggle; and the cause rather than the effect of the latter. He wrote:

The ruling classes we meet with in the history of these countries held their more or less exalted social position owing to the state organisation called into being by the needs of the social productive process.

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2 See Chapter Two.

3 In one of his first Marxist writings Plekhanov describes as Bakuninist the similar attitude (attributed to the Narodniki) expressed in the following: "Here it is not the class struggle which has given rise to the given state structure, but, on the contrary, that structure itself which brings into existence the different classes with their struggle and antagonism. If the state decided to change its policy, the upper classes, deprived of its support would be condemned to perish...." (Our Differences, loc. cit., pp.319-20).

Plekhanov extended Marx's account of Asiatic society by making explicit the existence of a functional ruling class; whether the priesthood in Egypt, or the "service nobility" [pomeshchiki] created by the Russian Tsars.

In his early descriptions of the Oriental system as found in Russia, Plekhanov simply followed closely the account given by Engels. Russian absolutism had flourished, in the manner of Oriental despotism, on a foundation of agricultural communes reproducing themselves in a stagnant system of natural economy. Later Plekhanov was to ascribe greater initiative to the state power in the organisation of its own economic base than either Marx or Engels had done. He came to attribute the elaboration of the communal system found in Russia to deliberate state policy. The expanding Muscovite state had required large resources to support its military and administrative apparatus; and the only resources available to it had been those provided by peasant agriculture. The state proceeded to make itself

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Owing to the difficulty of obtaining Plekhanov's works, particularly in English translation, I am indebted for the following account of Plekhanov's mature views on Russia's Asiatic system to Baron, S.H., "Plekhanov's Russia: The Impact of the West upon an 'Oriental' Society", Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. XIX, No. 3 (June 1958), pp.388-404.
master of virtually all landed property, which constituted the basic means of production. The commune became the instrument by which the state could obtain the maximum share of the output of the peasantry, a process which was only completed in the eighteenth century. Through communal arrangements the state could ensure the tax-paying capacity of the peasantry. These arrangements included periodic repartition of the holdings to take account of the changing size of families, and joint responsibility for taxes. The state bound the peasants to the soil and to the village in order to ensure that its obligations would be met.

In this way, Plekhanov saw the Russian state in the Muscovite era as the active principle which had deliberately contrived the economic basis for its own continuance and expansion. It was the state which had created a privileged class of landowners, and the foundation of this class was service to the state. One requirement of landownership was that the peasants should not be exploited to such an extent as to damage the interests of the state treasury.¹ However, the Russian state, in order to compete with its Western European

neighbours had been forced to introduce economic reforms which gradually undermined the economic basis of the autocracy. Peter the Great, in helping to establish a monetary economy in Russia, had unwittingly put in train this development. According to Plekhanov the development of a capitalist economy could only lead to the creation of a class hostile to the existing state, and seeking to establish class rule to further the new economic forces it represented.

Plekhanov saw Peter the Great as an essentially ambivalent character, seeking to westernise Russia by means of perfecting the absolute rule of Asiatic despotism.¹ In order to develop the productive forces of Russia in response to the challenge from the west, Peter undertook a complete mobilisation of all available resources to serve the state's purposes. In so doing he rendered complete the subordination of all groupings of the Russian people to the will of the state. Plekhanov became obsessed with the idea that those who were in too great a hurry to introduce socialism into Russia would, by the logic of events, adopt the "Asiatic" methods of

¹ Plekhanov, G.V., History of Russian Social Thought, op. cit., p.52 ff.
Peter the Great. He believed that only the political and social development incumbent on a period of bourgeois rule (together with the anti-state tendencies of the bourgeoisie), could destroy the Russian tradition of monopoly of initiative by the state.

These fears were voiced in Plekhanov's first important Marxist writing, *Socialism and Political Struggle*. In this, Plekhanov attacked the Narodnaia Volia group on the grounds that if it were to introduce the socialism it proposed, it would not be feasible to hand over power to the representatives of the people. Also, in order to prevent the redivision of land from giving rise to increasing commodity production and capitalist accumulation, the party would be forced to organise national production itself. This it would be prevented from doing in a modern spirit by "the present stage of development of national labour and the workers' own habits". This would leave the alternative that it

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1 Ibid., pp.67-68. Plekhanov wrote that: "The worship of Peter spread the opinion among Russian Occidentalists that great reorganizations in our country could be promoted only from the top....We shall see that Byelinsky and his followers could not combine into one harmonious whole such notions and their other social views adopted from the foremost writers of contemporary Europe."
would "have to seek salvation in the ideals of 'patriarchal and authoritarian communism', only modifying those ideals so that national production is managed not by the Peruvian 'sons of the sun' and their officials but by a socialist caste".  

Plekhanov believed that under such an Asiatic restoration the people would lose all possibility of being educated for socialism, and indeed would lose the capacity for further progress (unless economic inequality and hence capitalist growth did arise in spite of the efforts of the government). Plekhanov later described the possible result of a premature revolution as being the creation of a "political monster similar to the ancient Chinese or Peruvian empires, i.e.......a renewal of tsarist despotism with a communist lining".

In 1906 Plekhanov turned the full force of his attack regarding policies liable to issue in an Asiatic restoration, against the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party (i.e. in particular against

1 Plekhanov, G.V., Socialism and Political Struggle, loc. cit., p.114.
2 Ibid.
3 Plekhanov, G.V., Our Differences, loc. cit., p.347.
The Bolsheviks had responded to the 1905 Revolution by coming forward with proposals for the nationalisation of the land as the first step of the democratic revolution. Plekhanov had taken up the position that as state control of the land provided the economic basis for despotism, it must be destroyed once and for all in Russia. He wrote in 1906:

...nationalization of land would be an attempt to restore in our country that order which first received some serious blows in the eighteenth century and has been quite powerfully shaken by the course of economic development in the second half of the nineteenth century.

At the Stockholm Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. Plekhanov supported fully Maslov's proposals for the

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1 As neither the Plekhanov Sochineniia (2nd ed., edited by Riazanov, D., 24 vols, Moscow, 1923-27) nor the Protocols of the Fourth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. (Chetvertyy (ob'edinitel'nyy) s'yezd RSDRP aprel' (aprel'may) 1906 g. : protokoly, Moscow, 1959) were available to me as source material, I have depended on the following for an account of this Congress: Keep, J.L.H., The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963, Ch. VIII; Wittfogel, K.A., Oriental Despotism, New Haven, Yale U.P., 1957, pp.391-93.

2 The policies of nationalisation and municipalisation were only intended to have reference to confiscated large estates; it was recognised by both factions that it would be impossible to do other than confirm the individual holdings of the peasants.

municipalisation of the land. Municipalisation became the official Menshevik policy during the period of the First Duma, and it was seen as the means by which the power of the bureaucratic central government might be checked.

Speaking at Stockholm, Plekhanov described the Bolshevik proposals of nationalisation as the project of a Russian Wang An-shih (the latter being a Chinese statesman who allegedly sought to make the state owner of all land, and state officials managers of all production).\footnote{Wittfogel, K.A., Oriental Despotism, op. cit., p. 392. Plekhanov obtained his account of Wang An-shih from an article by Elisée Reclus: Nouvelle géographie universelle, vol. VII (L'Asie Orientale), 1882.} Lenin's rather weak rejoinder to these claims (displaying an unwonted underestimation of political power) consisted in the idea that any restoration that took place after a proletarian revolution could only be a capitalist restoration based on petit-bourgeois production. According to Lenin neither nationalisation nor municipalisation could prevent such a restoration if the petit-bourgeoisie deserted the revolution and help had not arrived from the western proletariat.\footnote{Lenin, V.I., Report on the Unity Congress of the RSDLP (A Letter to the St. Petersburg Workers) (first published 1906), Collected Works, vol. 10, p. 335.}
Plekhanov's fear of a socialist revolution carried out from above became an intrinsic part of Menshevik ideology. Plekhanov posited that a bourgeois-democratic revolution (even if the major part in achieving it was taken by the proletariat) was absolutely essential to provide the environment in which a mass socialist movement could mature.¹ Only in a liberal democratic regime could the workers gain the political education, managerial experience and self-discipline necessary for the true socialisation of industry. In such a regime the development of mass working class organisations would foster the popular initiative necessary for democratic self-government, and provide experienced bodies outside the central power capable of administering socialist policies. Also, Plekhanov argued that only when the proletariat were able to function as a legal mass party would they be able to win over to socialism the petit-bourgeois class which dominated the Russian countryside.

Plekhanov believed that it was particularly vital for Russia that the social democrats fight for democratic

¹ Plekhanov retained to the end his early conviction that: "A widespread working-class movement presupposes at least a temporary triumph of free institutions in the country concerned, even if those institutions are only partly free." Our Differences, loc. cit., p. 385.
institutions in which the masses could reach consciousness of the political and social realities on which self-government would be based. The socialist revolution must not arrive before the petit-bourgeois political irrationalism, bred of centuries of political isolation under a partiarchal system, had disappeared under the impact of public and constitutional government. The mixture of anarchism and Blanquism represented by the Narodnik movement¹ (and later to some extent by the Bolshevik movement) had arisen in reaction to the passive political servitude of the masses. This solution could only further the evils from which it sprang.

Socialism, for Plekhanov, was meaningless if it was not based on the self-determination of the masses. His position is summed up in the following:

And even if there came into being a state which - without giving you political rights - wanted to and could guarantee your material welfare, in that case [should you accept that situation] you would be nothing more than 'satiated slaves, well-fed working cattle'.²

¹ Plekhanov, G.V., Our Differences, loc. cit., p.373.
In 1918 Martov was to use Plekhanov's concept of Asiatic restoration to describe the Bolshevik regime. He wrote that the Bolshevik regime merely continued a bureaucratic dictatorship based on the "atomisation of the masses", and that it would intensify and strengthen that atomisation, that "incapacity for organised, collective self activity". Martov attacked the Bolshevik government as "our Paraguayan communism" and as a "monstrous system of Asiatic government". He asserted that the paralysing of the independent proletarian organisations (such as the trade unions, factory committees and co-operatives) had rendered socialisation impossible.

2 Martov to A.N. Stein, 16 June 1918, quoted in Getzler, I., Martov, op. cit., p.181. The parallel with Paraguayan communism (that is, eighteenth century Paraguay under Jesuit rule) was also used by Kautsky, in making the point that in primitive conditions communistic methods became the basis of despotism: Kautsky, K., The Dictatorship of the Proletariat (written in the latter part of 1918), Manchester, National Labour Press, n.d. p.6.
3 Martov to A.N. Stein, 26 June 1920, quoted in Getzler, I., Martov, op. cit., p.195.
4 Martov, "Nasha platforma", Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, No. 19 (41), (4 October 1922), quoted in Getzler, I., op. cit., p.216.
Martov was to accuse the 'ideologists' of the Russian Soviet State (as established by 1919) of repudiating democratic parliamentarism, while no longer repudiating the instruments of state power to which parliamentarism had acted as a counterweight within bourgeois society - i.e. the bureaucracy, police, permanent army, extraordinary courts, etc.¹

Parliamentarism had been abolished without allowing the soviets effectively to take its place as an obstacle to the hypertrophy of the state. The soviets had merely been used as an excuse to abolish universal suffrage, instead of as a means of directly exercising it in all public decision-making.²

The Marxist concept of an Oriental system of government proved an apt tool for the criticism of a


² Plekhanov himself had displayed some ambiguity on the question of whether it might not be valid for the proletariat to deny the bourgeoisie the exercise of political rights (including the suffrage). As a result of a private conversation, Martov came to the conclusion that Plekhanov had certain Jacobin tendencies in this respect. Where the proletariat already constituted the vast majority of the population, instead of only a revolutionary minority, such a procedure would be unnecessary. See ibid., p.42, fn.
nominally proletarian regime in which power remained concentrated in the hands of a bureaucratic elite. Plekhanov and Martov sought in vain for a democratic prelude to socialism, in which power would pass down in part to the masses, and in which the initiative for socialisation would arise outside the state apparatus. However, faithfulness to Marx's idea of the socialist revolution proved of little consequence in the sphere of revolutionary politics. The political legacy of absolutism proved stronger than the economic and social forces which Plekhanov had analysed as working for westernisation. It was Lenin rather than Plekhanov who was to triumph in the revolutionary sphere, and he did so by accepting rather than rejecting specifically Russian political traditions.

From about 1902, Lenin's theoretical development becomes quite distinct from that of Plekhanov to whom he had previously deferred in matters of theory. Lenin's distinctive political theory took its shape from his views on the nature of socialist consciousness. The conviction that the proletariat were incapable of arriving spontaneously at socialist consciousness, gave rise to elitist organisational principles.¹ A highly

¹ Outlined by Lenin, in What is to be Done? (first published 1902), Collected Works, Vol. 5, pp.347-529.
centralised and strictly disciplined party became for Lenin the first prerequisite of successful revolution.\textsuperscript{1} The emphasis in his theory was laid on the party control of the movement, rather than on the movement itself as an educational factor.

However, Lenin's analysis of the existing Russian state and of its putative future was characterised by flexibility, as Plekhanov's was not. During the revolutionary periods of 1905-06 and 1917 he acclaimed the role of the unorganised masses in the struggle for socialism and the possibility of an immediate takeover of power on this basis. In these writings Lenin veered towards anarcho-syndicalist views on political organisation, in his efforts not to fall to the right of the revolutionary forces. But although Lenin temporarily

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1} For example, Lenin wrote: "Bureaucracy versus democracy is in fact centralism versus autonomism, it is the organisational principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy, as opposed to the organisational principle of opportunist Social-Democracy. The latter strives to proceed from the bottom upward... The former strives to proceed from the top downward, and upholds an extension of the rights and powers of the centre in relation to the parts." One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (first published 1904), Collected Works, vol. 7, pp.396-97. In January 1969 a Soviet publication (Zvezda), claimed that this quotation was a complete forgery by B.D. Wolfe. See Wolfe, B.D., Letter to the Editor, The Russian Review, July 1969, pp.371-72.}
identified the forces of revolution with the forces which would create socialist society, his position remained ambiguous because he retained his belief in the necessity for a monolithic socialist party.

The anarcho-syndicalist views expressed by Lenin during these periods of revolutionary upsurge were not incompatible with Marx's concept of the socialist future. However, they did belittle the kind of political and economic experience which Marx regarded as a sine qua non for socialism. On the other hand, Lenin's views on the primacy of a proletarian vanguard, which had "absorbed the revolutionary energy of the class", 1 were quite alien to Marx's beliefs.

The spontaneous appearance of the 'soviet' political form in 1905 presented a major dilemma to Lenin, as to his followers in St. Petersburg. The soviets were of non-party, popular inspiration; were decentralist in tendency; and were characteristically opposed to party discipline, as they were created as organs of direct democracy. Lenin's hesitations over what line to adopt with regard to the soviet institution are evident in

1 Lenin, V.I., "The Trade Unions, the Present Situation and Trotsky's Mistakes" (speech delivered 30 December 1920), Collected Works, vol. 32, p.21.
statements made during November 1905. In early November he wrote that the soviet should be regarded as the embryo of a provisional revolutionary government. In late November he wrote that: "The Soviet of Workers' Deputies is not a labour parliament and not an organ of proletarian self-government at all, but a fighting organisation for the achievement of definite aims." In 1906 Lenin wrote both that the revolutionary proletariat had sensed sooner than its leaders "the change in the objective conditions of the struggle"; and that the Bolsheviks had regarded the soviets as "rudimentary, disconnected, spontaneous and therefore impotent organs of revolutionary state power". The lack of conviction felt by Lenin in the significance of the soviet as an independent proletarian creation, and as the political

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institution of the future, was revealed when the tide of revolution had ebbed. Lenin advised that soviets might be utilised to spread Social-Democratic influence among the working class, but he added:

...the Social-Democratic Party organisations must bear in mind that if Social-Democratic activities among the proletarian masses are properly, effectively and widely organised, such institutions may actually become superfluous.¹

In general, Lenin laid stress on the soviets as instruments of revolutionary power by means of which the existing governmental structure might be destroyed, rather than as organs of political expression of the proletariat and schools of self-government.² This attitude was connected to Lenin's drift away from the two-stage theory of revolution drawn up by Plekhanov. Although Lenin did not completely espouse the theory of

² For example, Lenin wrote: "Soviets of Workers' Deputies and similar institutions must be regarded as organs of insurrection, of revolutionary rule. It is only in connection with the development of a mass political strike and with an insurrection, and in the measure of the latter's preparedness, development and success that such institutions can be of lasting value." Lenin, V.I., "Several Theses" (first published in Sotsial Demokrat, No. 47, 13 October 1915), Collected Works, vol. 21, p.402.
permanent revolution developed in 1905 by Alexander Helphand and Trotsky, he came close to doing so. He did support the immediate seizure of governmental power by the combined proletariat and peasantry. The revolutionary forces were to make the democratic revolution without the bourgeoisie, and accordingly modify it in the direction of socialism. Lenin represented the soviets as the structure of workers' democracy as opposed to the parliamentary structure of bourgeois democracy, and thereby as a locus of authority competing with the existing regime. By 1917, when Lenin effectively put into practice the theory of permanent revolution, he was portraying them as the foundation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

\[1\] Helphand and Trotsky discounted the political significance of the peasantry. They claimed that the peasantry could increase anarchy, but that only the proletariat was capable of organising revolution and seizing governmental power. Zeman, Z.A.B., and Scharlau, W.B., The Merchant of Revolution, London, O.U.P., 1965, p. 76 ff.

\[2\] Lenin backed the soviets as "the only form of revolutionary government" long before the Bolsheviks gained control in them in 1917. For Lenin they represented an institutional challenge to the authority of the Provisional Government, e.g. see "The tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution" (the April Theses, first published in Pravda, No. 26, 7 April 1917), Collected Works, vol. 24, pp.21-26.
The most important theoretical work written by Lenin while he was trying to make the decentralist, anarchist tendencies of the soviet movement appear compatible with his own organisational precepts, was The State and Revolution. In this pamphlet Lenin highlighted the need for the destruction of the (bourgeois) state machine and for the abolition of any distinction between officials and the people; and he asserted the ability of any member of the proletariat to perform ministerial and managerial tasks. The role of the party in directing and organising the proposed new order, and the retention of the centralised organisation of power, received comparatively minor treatment.

Typically, at this period, Lenin outlined the conditions for the abolition of the distinction between state and people as follows: the entire population would be drawn into the soviets; every member of the soviet would perform some duty in the management of the state in his spare time; these tasks would be rotated; the accompanying simplification of administrative functions and rise in the cultural level of the workers would bring about the

2 Ibid., p.404.
withering away of the state. On the other hand, Lenin never omitted to ascribe to the 'vanguard' the role of actually training the workers in practical participation in state-management. 2

One manifestation of Lenin's temporary rapprochement with popular anarchist tendencies in 1917 was his adoption of the movement for 'workers' control'. Lenin first took over this slogan in Pravda, 19 May 1917, and finally issued a decree establishing workers' control in November. Towards the end of 1917 one anarcho-syndicalist journal reported that:

The Bolsheviks have separated themselves more and more from their original goals, and all the time have been moving closer to the desires of the people. Since the time of the revolution, they have decisively broken off with the Social Democrats and have been endeavouring to apply Anarcho-Syndicalist methods of struggle. 3

However, by early 1918, Lenin had begun the subjugation of the factory committees to the trade unions.


The latter became transformed in effect into organs of the state control of industry (they were described by Lenin as 'transmission belts' between the vanguard and the rest of the workers). With the consolidation of the regime came the reintroduction of one-man management; the payment of high salaries to managerial and technical experts; the militarisation of labour; and the monopolisation of political organisation and expression by the Bolshevik Party. 'Petit-bourgeois anarchism' was characterised as the main obstacle to the achievement of unquestioning obedience to 'Soviet dictators' in the factories.\footnote{The anarcho-syndicalists were attacked for their counter-revolutionary opposition to the centralisation of the economy.2} The anarcho-syndicalists emerged in 1918, was in the tradition of the early work by the Polish Marxist, Machajski. Machajski first presented his ideas in a work hectographed in Siberia, \textit{The Evolution of Social Democracy} (1898), which was later incorporated in his major work, \textit{The

\footnote{2} E.g., Radek, K., \textit{Anarchismus und Räteregierung}, Hamburg, Willaschek, 1919, p.10.
Intellectual [Umstvennyi] Worker. He claimed that Marxism represented the interests of a new class of intellectual workers, whose capital was their education. The answer Machajski proposed to this problem was direct action by the proletariat and the "unceasing class struggle of the manual workers and the lower white collar employees against the administrative and managerial bureaucracy of the socialist State". Machajski owed much to Bakunin: for example, his special emphasis on the elimination of educational differentials. Like Bakunin, he also came to assign a key role in the making of revolution to secret conspiratorial

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1 This book was published under Machajski's pseudonym A. Vol'skii, Umstvennyi Rabochii, Geneva, 1904-05.
2 Nomad, M., Aspects of Revolt, N.Y., Bookman, 1959, p.106. None of Machajski's work has been translated from the original Russian into English apart from a rather poor as well as brief selection in Calverton, V.F., ed., The Making of Society - An Outline of Sociology, N.Y., Modern Library, 1937. Nomad is the nom de plume of Max Podolski. As an ex-disciple of Machajski, he has written a number of books in which his ideas are presented (e.g. Rebels and Renegades, N.Y., 1932; Apostles of Revolution, London, 1939; Aspects of Revolt, op.cit.). Nomad has a private collection of Machajski's publications and documents.
organisations, thus vitiating much of his anti-elitist theory.

One article appearing in an anarcho-syndicalist journal in September 1918 stated that the peasants and factory workers now found themselves under the heel of "a new class of administrators - a new class born largely from the womb of the intelligentsia". It claimed that a new ruling class of party officials, government bureaucrats and technical specialists had inherited the privileges and authority once shared by the Russian nobility and bourgeoisie. The people, having spontaneously torn political power to shreds, had then accepted a new centralised state power. The old arguments of the anti-authoritarians against the Marxist International were raised again: although the Bolsheviks' intentions may have been good, their principles could only succumb to the corrupting influence of centralised power.¹

In 1920-21 the Workers' Opposition group arose within the Bolshevik Party itself, claiming to speak in

the name of the non-party proletariat. The group revived the call for (non-party) workers' control, to be exercised through factory committees, trade unions and an All-Russian Congress of Producers. They appealed to the authority of Marx on the need for the creation of communism to stem from the initiative of the working masses themselves. They charged that the creativity which Marx had attributed to the proletariat was being crushed under the weight of the bureaucratic machine of Soviet officialdom.¹ The Kronstadt rising of 1921 was triggered by similar demands, including the demand for the restoration of independent political activity to the soviets, to replace the "bureaucratic socialism" imposed by party control.²

At the Tenth Congress of the Party, Lenin devoted much time to the 'anarcho-syndicalist deviation'. He attributed it to the petit bourgeois element, which "inevitably engenders a vacillation towards anarchism,

particularly at a time when the conditions of the masses have sharply deteriorated.^ It was this kind of "vacillation towards anarchism" which had brought Lenin to power, and which he had exploited. By 1921, however, the party had moved away from the extreme left position which it had found appropriate in its previous role as a destructive agency, and was adopting slogans more consistent with the aim of consolidating a monopoly of power in the new political environment.

Although Lenin claimed that a proletarian state was so constituted that it began to wither away immediately,^ his political practice led to a modification of Marx's theory to accommodate the leading role of the state in the construction of socialism. Lenin did not commit himself theoretically to this position (he placed the onus of the construction of socialism on the 'vanguard'.

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2. Lenin, V.I., State and Revolution, loc. cit., p.402. In "The State" (lecture delivered at Sverdlov University, July 1919), Lenin prolonged the expected duration of the state machine to that time when "the possibility of exploitation no longer exists anywhere in the world" (Collected Works, vol. 29, p.488).
without identifying this with state power), but the revision was undertaken by his followers.

Marx had written that political power became anachronistic when the real organising of socialism began.¹ Trotsky, on the other hand, claimed that:

No organisation except the army has ever considered itself justified in subordinating citizens to itself in such a measure, and to control them by its will on all sides to such a degree, as the State of the proletarian dictatorship considers itself justified in doing, and does.²

He argued that the proletarian state, rather than the bourgeois state, represented the zenith of state power, and that under the proletariat the state was once more "soaring high above society". He wrote that:

Just as a lamp, before going out, shoots up in a brilliant flame, so the State, before disappearing, assumes the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the most ruthless form of State, which embraces the life of the citizens authoritatively in every direction.³

¹ Marx, K., "Kritische Randglossen...." (Vorwärts, No. 64, 10 August 1844), MEGA 1/3, pp.22-23.
³ Ibid., pp.169-70. Trotsky's statements perhaps corroborate the judgement passed by Marx on the second stage of the French Revolution - viz. that a self-conscious political revolution which tries to change its base in civil society before the internal development of (continued next page)
Under Stalin, the active role of the proletarian state in creating its own base became dogma. The aim of proletarian revolution was described as the use of state power "in order to build socialist society".¹

The kind of changes which took place in Lenin's political theory between 1917 and 1918 with regard to home affairs, took place in his theoretical contribution to the Comintern between 1919 and 1920. At the First Congress of the Comintern Lenin waxed enthusiastic over the possibilities of the new proletarian political form - the 'soviet'. He wrote:

And indeed, the form of proletarian dictatorship that has already taken shape, i.e. Soviet power in Russia, the Räte-System in Germany, the Shop Stewards' Committees in Britain and similar Soviet institutions in other countries, all this implies and presents to the toiling classes, i.e. to the vast majority of the population, greater political opportunities for enjoying democratic rights and liberties than ever existed before, even approximately,

¹ (continued from previous page)
that base is ready for it, can only end in the employment of terror. See "On the Jewish Question", in Bottomore, T.B., ed., Early Writings, op. cit., p.16.

in the best and most democratic bourgeois republics.¹

As in 1917 in Russia, Lenin courted the anarcho-syndicalist elements in the international scene in 1919. He wrote that the destruction of state power was the aim set by all socialists, "Marx above all", but that it could only be achieved through soviet democracy which "immediately begins to prepare the complete withering away of any state".²

By September 1919, the possibilities of spontaneous socialist revolution in Europe were becoming more remote. In that month Zinoviev opened the campaign against 'ultra-leftism' with a circular letter on parliaments and soviets. By April 1920 Lenin had written the major part of 'Left-Wing' Communism: an Infantile Disease, in which he stressed the need for communist parties to build up their strength through participation in bourgeois political institutions, instead of relying on the encouragement of purely proletarian forms. At the Second Congress, the "Twenty-One Principles" became mandatory,

² Ibid., p.467.
and the building up of disciplined communist parties subordinate to Moscow became the preoccupation of Comintern.

In the Spring of 1920 Zinoviev wrote that soviets should only be formed (and could only be proper soviets) if: an acute economic crisis was causing power to slip away from the existing government; a strong revolutionary impulse existed among the workers and soldiers; and a serious decision had been made within the ranks of the communist party. ^1 This article reveals that strictly instrumental view of the soviets which had remained obscured in 1919. The soviets were valued primarily as a means of dispersing the old political authority, and challenging the legitimacy of parliamentary regimes during a revolutionary crisis. Where they could not perform this function, Lenin was more concerned with the building up of bureaucratic, centralised communist parties than with new political forms. Opposition to Lenin came from the Left Communists who believed that there should be no retreat from the institutions created

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during the period of mass political involvement after the First World War.

The focal point of Lenin's political theory was the capture of power in the political situation peculiar to Russia. He assumed that the capture of power by the proletariat (or on their behalf) would automatically be favourable to the development of socialism.

Lenin ignored Marx's emphasis on the need for socialism to be preceded by the experience of bourgeois democracy. Marx had asserted that the achievement of liberal political rights was essential to the development of the kind of mass workers' movement which could bring about a socialist society. Only the self-organisation of the masses on such an open and universalising basis could develop their political self-confidence and stimulate their capacity for social and political initiative. Lenin's answer to the 'vices of the oppressed' was the extension of 'conscious' political direction from above, rather than the gradual development of mass involvement in democratic political activity.

For this reason Lenin did not take seriously (as did the other Marxist theorists discussed here) the problems of revolutionising the old political relations of authority within the movement, and of preparing
the masses for independent participation in the organisation and public life of socialism. The kind of proletarian party which Lenin created was effective in capturing political power, but perpetuated the relationship between an active political elite, and a passive manipulated majority - and so was hostile to the development of socialism as Marx had visualised it. The masses rose to the surface of political life briefly during the revolution, but Lenin rapidly became opposed to the institutionalisation of their independent political activity.

Marx had designated the proletariat as the agents of socialist revolution but he believed that the proletariat only developed their distinctive capacity in the course of a certain kind of class movement. Where such a movement had not developed, the 'proletarian' capture of power did not necessarily imply that the achievement of socialism had been brought any closer.
CONCLUSION

As a political philosopher, Marx's main concern was to establish the conditions of man's freedom. Like Hegel, he believed that man could only become free and self-determining in the context of rational and universal social institutions, and that within these institutions a unity must be achieved between the individual and the general will. Marx rejected, however, Hegel's thesis that the political state represented the ultimate form in which the contradictions between the individual and the general, the particular and the universal, would be resolved.

Marx argued that the means by which the state imposed unity on society was incompatible with man's rational self-determination. The political state did not truly resolve the contradictions of society, but merely inflicted on them an external order based on coercion. He concluded that man, in order to achieve complete self-realisation, must evolve forms of association which posed a real alternative to the superficial universality of the state.

Marx described as an essential feature of such forms the fact that they should give rise to a social solidarity
which would make coercive relationships of authority superfluous. He also argued that these forms must rest on the active participation of all in public life and in the exercise of public authority: in this way a real identity would be promoted between the universal and the individuals who composed it.

According to Marx's observations the working class was already developing alternative bases of social organisation such as these, and the time was in sight when it would be capable of substituting them for the state. He alleged that in the working class movement, theory and practice were evolving together towards synthesis in that full self-consciousness which would enable man to master the world he had created and to subordinate it to his real needs.

Marx's political philosophy gave rise to various theoretical and practical problems which became of serious concern to some of his followers in the period under discussion. The most important of these problems stemmed from Marx's thesis that the working class movement was the destined agency of socialist revolution, and that therefore its praxis must anticipate the future patterns of social relationship, modes of authority, discipline, and decision-making. The historical development of the working-class
movement in many ways seemed to contradict Marx's propositions concerning it. Bureaucratisation, stratification, and the old 'political' distinctions between active leaders and passive followers appeared to have re-emerged.

Those theorists who accepted Marx's political philosophy needed on the one hand to account for these developments, and to show that they were not an inevitable feature of society; and on the other hand to establish the conditions in which the working-class movement could develop a truly revolutionary praxis. These considerations led them to examine closely the means by which the sustained social activity of the masses might be facilitated and the values arising in this activity crystallised. It was felt that such a re-examination was vital if the influence of bourgeois ideology and structures on the movement was to be resisted.

Not all of Marx's followers, however, understood or shared his ideas on the need to transcend the state as a means of integrating society. Some, like Lassalle, accepted Hegel's view of the state outright and attempted to graft it onto Marx's theory of socialism. Others, like Kautsky and Lenin, drifted back to Hegel's view of the state via conceptions of the primacy of political
organisation. These men abandoned Marx's aspirations towards a new kind of universal community based on the active self-determination of all its members.
ABBREVIATIONS


Rubel  Rubel, M., Bibliographie des Oeuvres de Karl Marx, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1956.


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Georges Sorel


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Antonio Gramsci


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