

Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine

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I. The Reversal of Praxis in Marxist Theory

From the Report

- 1. Ideological disorder within many of the international groups which condemn Stalinism and claim to be holding the revolutionary Marxist line. Uncertainty of such groups as to what they call analysis and perspective: modern development of capitalist society; opportunities for a revival of*

the proletariat's revolutionary struggle.

2. *It has become apparent to everybody that the great wars, the great domestic conflicts and bourgeois totalitarianism have spelled the end of the reformist interpretation of Marxism.*
3. *In the meantime, since the worsening social and political tension has not been accompanied by a strengthening but rather by a total degeneration of the ex-revolutionary parties, the following question arises: does there need to be a revision of the Marxist and Leninist prospect according to which World War I and the Russian revolution would result in a world-wide flaring up of the proletarian struggle for power?*

Foreword

At the Rome meeting of April 1st 1951, the report on *The reversal of praxis in Marxist theory* was brought to a close with the presentation of eight Tables with an accompanying commentary.

The comments which follow are written with a view to allowing a more effective utilization of those eight Tables in their visual exposition of social dynamics according to the fundamental ideologies; ideologies that the proletariat has definitively liquidated on the theoretical plane, but which, unfortunately, it still has to deal with on a practical level.

Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology*, 1846, (Part I, section A):

"Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process".

"In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second

method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness".

"This method of approach is not devoid of premises. It starts out from the real premises and does not abandon them for a moment. Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imaginary activity of imaginary subjects, as with the idealists".

Hence historical-dialectical materialism, in contrast to all conceptions of an enlightenment or idealist stamp, does not view ideology, i.e., the *mystified* and *inverted* representation of real relationships, as the product of an *error* – an error which needs to be corrected in order to open the eyes of the blind – but rather as the indispensable outcome of a real process corresponding to material relations; the very relations, that is, which ideology portrays in a distorted way. Such a distortion, in its turn, necessarily derives from the historical position of the social forces which express themselves by means of ideology, and which impose it on the social body; the dominant ideology always being that of the dominant class. The Marxist conception likewise rejects the enlightenment idea of "conscious trickery" by ideologist-chiefs (the "smart priests"), since the same representation of ideology – inevitably fantastic since it is just a sublimation of a historically transient state of things – is actually imposed as a necessary *program* and *superstructure* of necessary social factors and transformations. Thus, for instance, bourgeois ideology is founded on the *actually* conquered *freedom* of workers from feudal ties in legal and property terms; and the bourgeoisie cannot repudiate this without repudiating itself.

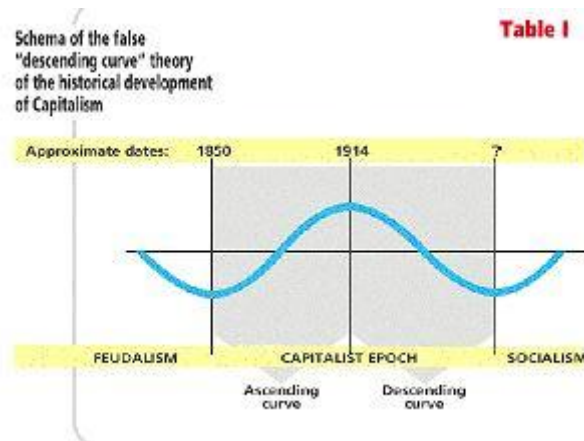
As with classes, ideology also undergoes the dialectical transformation *antiformism-reformism-conformism*, as described in our text *Tracciato d'impostazione*. The proletariat, as the last remaining class, has the historical role of eliminating itself along with all other classes. It does not possess an *ideology* which can assume a *reformist* and *conformist* character, leading to a super-historical fixation of its rule, but rather it possesses a *revolutionary science*, which is already a science of the species; not only because the proletariat represents the *future* (as was the case in the *past* for other classes), but also because this future must inevitably give rise to a species-based society, free of classes and the related conflicts – a qualitative leap from classist prehistory to fully human history.

The contraposition of Marxism to the succession of past ideologies which still today, in varying degrees, exert their influence is therefore rigorously *historical and dialectical*: which does not rule out, in fact it actually implies, that the *global science* with which Marxism identifies itself can reconstruct the real processes underlying the ideological frameworks on its own, revealing *how*

ideology mystifies contemporary reality, regardless of any individual or collective "knowledge".

Having provided this brief summary, let's move on to explain the eight Schemes, and the correct way of applying them.

Tables 1 and 2: The Succession of the Forms of Production



Commentary on Table 1

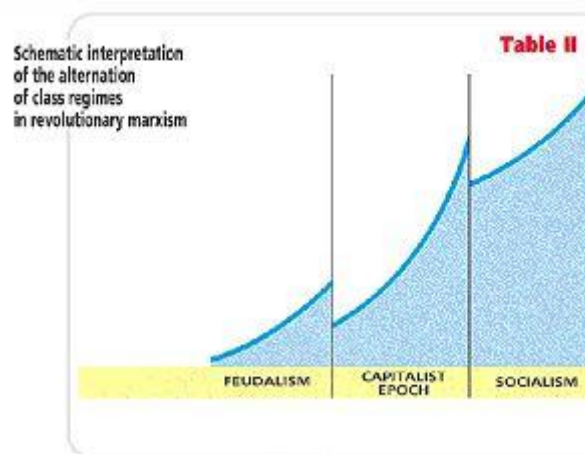
1. Faced with the present confused state of revolutionary ideology, organization, and action, it is a false remedy to count on an inevitable, progressive decline of capitalism, a process allegedly already underway, and at the end of which the proletarian revolution supposedly lies waiting. In fact, the curve of capitalism has no descending branch (*Summary, 1*).

4. The theory of the *descending curve* of capitalism is totally wrong and engenders the inappropriate question as to why, if capitalism is declining, the revolution isn't advancing. The theory of the descending curve represents the historical development as a sinusoid: each regime, for example, the bourgeois regime, starts with an ascending stage, reaches an apex, then starts to decline to a minimum; following which another regime starts its ascent. Such a view is that of gradualist reformism: no jolts, shocks or jumps (*Report, 4*).

The frequent claim that capitalism is in its descending branch and will not be able to rise again contains two errors: one fatalist and the other gradualist.

The first error involves the illusion that when capitalism completes its descent socialism will arise of its own accord, without upheavals, struggles and armed clashes; without party preparation.

The second error, expressed by the fact that the direction of the movement is slightly curved, is tantamount to admitting that there are elements of socialism which can gradually penetrate the fabric of capitalism.



Commentary on Table 2

The Marxist view can be represented (for sake of clarity and simplicity) as a series of continuous curves ascending to peaks (singular points or *cusps* in geometry) followed by sudden, almost vertical, descents; after which, from below, a new social regime, another historically ascending branch, appears (*Report, 5*).

Marx did not envisage a growth of capitalism, followed by a decline, but rather the concurrent dialectical enhancement of the mass of productive forces that capitalism controls and of their unlimited accumulation and concentration, occurring at the same time as the antagonist reaction of the dominated forces i.e., the proletarian class. The general productive and economic potential rises until the equilibrium is upset, and an explosive, revolutionary phase occurs; then, in the course of an extremely short and intense period, the old forms of production collapse and the forces of production decline, paving the way for a new arrangement and for a new and more powerful arising.

In conformity with this view – the only one which can be considered truly Marxist – all the phenomena of the present imperialist stage, for over a century now, have been entirely predictable: in economy – trusts, monopolies, State planning, nationalization; in politics – strict police regimes, military superpowers, etc. (*Report, 6*).

No less clear is the position which holds that the proletarian party shouldn't counter this modern situation with gradualist demands, and proposals for the recuperation and rebirth of liberal, tolerant forms.

The contrary error of the proletarian movement, and particularly of the Third International, lay in its failure to adequately confront the enormous power of capitalism with a comparable revolutionary tension.

The explanation of this second collapse of the class movement, even worse than the social-patriotism of 1914, leads to the difficult issues of the relationship between economic impulses and revolutionary struggle, between the masses and the party that must lead them (*Report, 7*).

Difference Between the Two Conceptions

The difference between the two conceptions represented in Tables I and II is expressed, in surveyors' language, as follows: in the first graph, or the opportunists' graph (Bernstein-type revisionists, emulators of Stalin, pseudo-Marxist revolutionary intellectuals), there is a continuous curve which at every point "allows a tangent", that is, it proceeds by imperceptible variations of intensity and direction. The second graph, in which there has been an attempt to make a simplified representation of the much deprecated "theory of catastrophes", shows that within each period there are points, or as they are known in geometry: "cusps" or "singular points". At such points the geometrical continuity, hence the historical gradualness, vanishes, the curve not only "has no tangent", but at the same time "allows all tangents" – as in the famous week which Lenin refused to let slip through his fingers.

We should point out that the generally upward direction of the second graph refers to the historical fact that over the course of the great revolutionary historical crises there has been a continuous increase in the material mass of productive forces; the intention is not to support idealistic visions of infinite human progress.

Tables 3 and 4: Schemes of Social Dynamics According to Ruling Class Ideologies

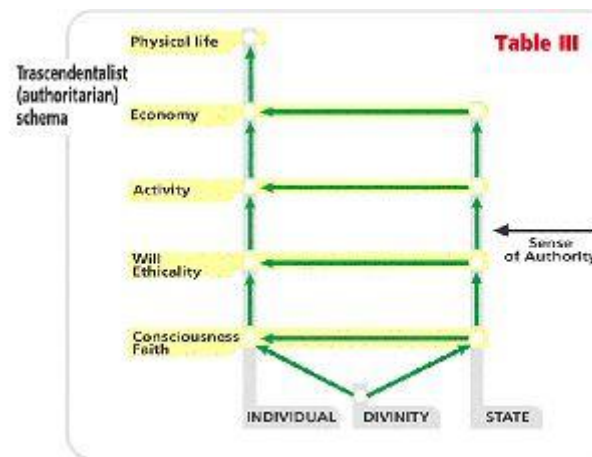
Below are reproduced the Schemes representing social dynamics according to the main ideologies. On various different levels, the proletariat's revolutionary movement has always, and still has today, to settle accounts with these ideologies (see *Foreword*), and counter them with the Marxist Scheme of the Reversal of Praxis (Table VIII).

In one *Note to the Report* is stated a distinction between the Schemes which describe conceptions that are either completely antithetical to Marxism (Tables III and IV) or, worse still, which are aberrant with respect to Marxism, insofar as they ambiguously claim to refer only to a part, or some, of its basic postulates (Tables V, VI, VII).

Tables 3 and 4

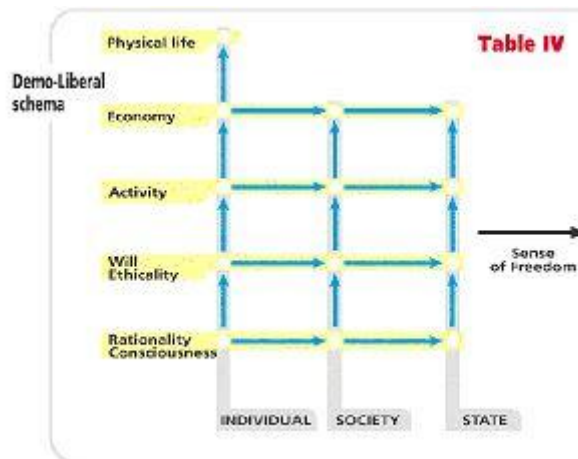
Tables III and IV are presented together because, despite their differences, they share many common denominators.

In the *transcendentalist* and *demo-liberal* Schemes, even if in the one the sense of Authority flows from the State towards the Individual, whilst in the other Liberty flows from the Individual towards Society and the State, for both it is the *Idea* (emanating from the Divinity in one Scheme, and dispersed among all the individual components of the human collectivity in the other) that conditions and determines human actions. In both Schemes we move logically from Consciousness (understood in the first as Faith, in the second as Rationality) to Will (understood in both Schemes as Ethicality), to Activity, Economy, and physical Life.



Commentary on Table 3

Typical of revealed religions (authoritarian), feudalism and theocratic absolutism; adopted also by modern capitalist society. This conception appeals to a Divinity who in the very act of creation infused men with a spirit, which, being found in each individual, warrants equality "before God" – at least in the celestial world – and guarantees a behaviour inspired by common principles of a divine origin. The State in its turn, by controlling the Consciousness and Activity of individuals, allows the development of spiritual and physical life within its hierarchical order, which mirrors the "divine" plan revealed in the Holy Scriptures.



Commentary on Table 4

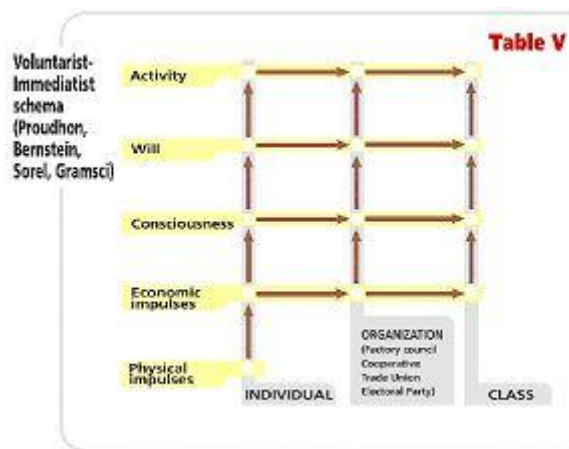
Demo-liberal Scheme is common to quite distinct ideological expressions, notably, the various strands of Enlightenment thinking (empiricism, sensism, mechanistic materialism), Kantian criticism, Hegel's objective and dialectical idealism, positivism, neo-idealism, libertarianism (Stirner, Bakunin) and reformist immediatism. Here we have the purest absolutization of the "democratic principle" based on the Ego, which, both conceived of as the single individual or as the "spirit of the people", "collective will", etc., possesses in itself, in its innermost being, the norms of its behaviour (this may lead, as with the anarchists, to the State being rejected as non-representative of the collective will, and it being substituted with "social opinion", or similar abstractions which perform the same role as the "ethical" State in classical bourgeois thought, and from which they are, after all, direct derivations). Moral life, Economic life, the Will to act in the external environment are considered as the expression of the forces of Consciousness and Rationality proper to the "human spirit" present in every Individual ("equality before the law"). The State, and the social organization in general is conceived, therefore, as a projection, and at the same time a guarantee, of individual freedom, "it is the ethical reality of the Idea".

Tables 5, 6 and 7

These, too, exhibit similar features.

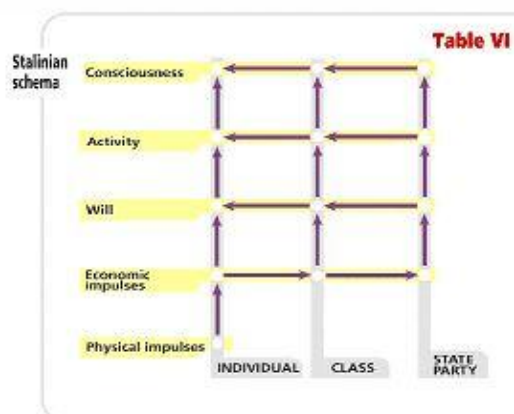
Underlying the construction of the *voluntarist-immediatist*, *stalinian* and *fascist* Schemes, are Physical and Economic impulses, and owing to this shared feature they are opposed to the two previous idealist Schemes. But both groups have in common the precedence and pre-eminence of Will over Activity, as concerns the Individual and the Class (or else People or Nation in the Fascist conception). Another common feature of the three voluntarist Schemes (incidentally, the Proudhon, Sorel, Bernstein, Gramsci Scheme is individualist as well; and in that it is even worse than the other two) is the parallel succession of Economic impulses, Will, Activity and Consciousness one finds between Party and

State (immediate Organization) on the one hand, and between Individual and Class (People or Nation under Fascism) on the other, making it impossible for the Party to achieve a scientific theory of social phenomena.



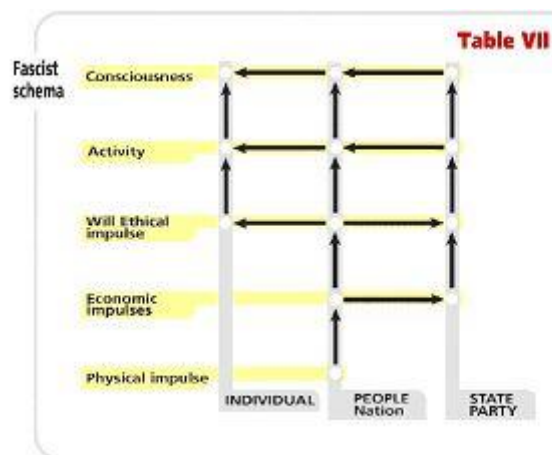
Commentary on Table 5

Voluntarist-intermediatist Scheme, typical of the petty-bourgeois, corporatist view, and therefore of those forms which are opportunist (proudhonism, anarcho-syndicalism, workerism, ordinovism, council socialism) and reformist (laborism, etc.),. Clearly it fits within the liberal conception, of which it represents a variation. Here the Individual, ever at the heart of the process, acquires consciousness of the Physical and Economic impulses which are the substratum of his existence: such Consciousness once acquired determines Will, and this in turn conditions Action. Economic and political Organization in this Scheme is the result of the convergence of individual consciousness: the Class is, in turn, the result of the combination and connecting up of a network of immediate Organizations (it is therefore a notion devoid of any sense of *historical direction* – or even of the class *in itself and for itself* in the Marxist sense of the expression).



Commentary on Table 6

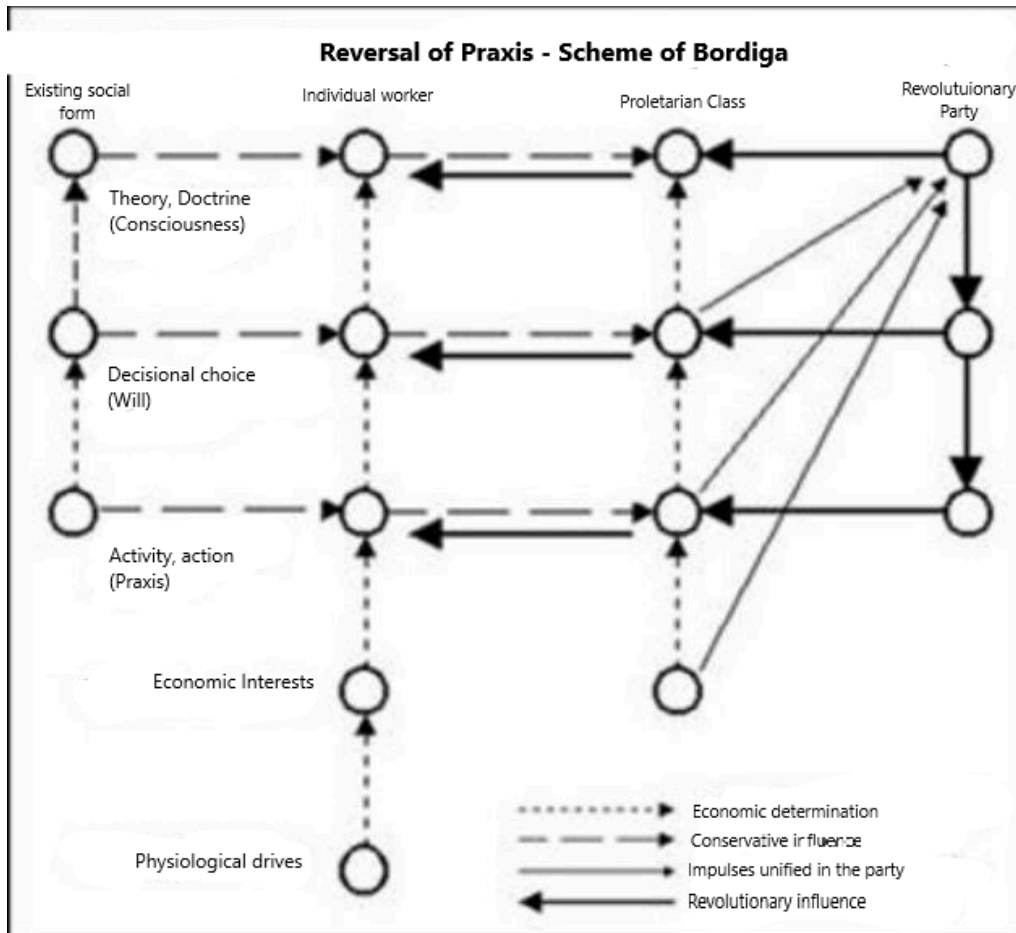
Scheme of the ideology consequent upon Stalin's counterrevolution. For this Scheme, too, it is the Individual who attains Consciousness, after however his Action has been brought about as a result of free "choice", a decision (Will). Characteristic is the Party/State assimilation: but since the Economic impulses (interests) arriving, via the Individual and Class, at the Party/State are utilized by this pseudo "binomial" to perform its decision-making and leadership duties (Will) and to determine practical orientations (Activity) and theoretical positions (Consciousness), it is obvious that the Party part of the "binomial" loses out, and survives only as a "justification of the State".



Commentary on Table 7

Fascism is by definition eclectic. It doesn't have a doctrine of its own, and yet it expresses ideologically its role as unifier of the capitalist (imperialist) forces, achiever of the reformist program, and mobiliser of the "middle classes". And it is not fortuitous that its conception is very similar to Stalinism. Like Stalinism, fascism is unable to relinquish certain essential bourgeois postulates such as the legal equivalence of individuals, the "will of the people", and the "popular" character of its rule. The point of departure becomes, however, not the individual subject, but the "Nation", the "People", or even the "Race", which assimilate physical motivations at the outset (see the national-socialist concept of "blood and soil") and express themselves in the State. The Individual is conceived as a "passive receptor" of the Nation/People's Ethical impulses, and of the Party/State's voluntarist and activist impulses.

Table 8: Scheme of Reversal of Praxis



Commentary on Table 8

The correct Marxist praxis asserts that the consciousness of both the individual and the mass follow action; and that action follows the thrust of economic interest. Only within the class party does consciousness, and, in given circumstances, the decision to act, precede class conflict (*Summary, 3*).

Some groups devalue the function of the party and deny its indispensable role in the revolution. They thus relapse into workerist positions, or, worse still, have hesitations about the use of State power in the revolution. Such views need to be discarded. On an equally wrong track are those who consider the party as a grouping of conscious elements but fail to see its necessary connection with the physical class struggle, and its character as a product, as well as a factor, of history (*Report, 8*).

Tackling this question leads to the reestablishment of the interpretation of Marxist determinism as it stood when first enunciated, putting in their right place the behaviour of the single individual under the pressure of economic stimuli and the function of collective bodies such as the class and the party (*Report, 9*).

It is useful here to delineate the Marxist reversal of praxis in a schematic way. Within the individual, physical needs give rise to economic interest, and to almost automatic action to satisfy those needs; only afterwards do acts of will occur, and possibly consciousness and theoretical knowledge. Within the social class the process is the same, the difference being that forces which are conjoined are always enormously enhanced. In the party, the contribution made by all the individual and class influences which flow into it from below are shaped into the means of establishing a critical and theoretical view, and a will to act, which makes it possible to instill into individual proletarians and militants an explanation of situations and historical processes, and an ability to make correct decisions about actions and struggles (*Report, 10*).

Thus, whilst determinism denies the individual the possibility of achieving will and consciousness prior to action, the reversal of praxis does allow it within the party, and only within the party, as a result of a general historical elaboration. However, although will and consciousness can be attributed to the party, it is not the case that the party is formed by a concurrence of the consciousness and will of individual members of a group; and nor can such a group be in any way considered as free of the determining physical, economic and social factors weighing on the class as a whole (*Report, 11*).

Therefore, the so-called analysis which alleges that all the conditions for the revolution are in place but a revolutionary leadership is lacking is meaningless. It is correct to say that an organ of leadership is indispensable, but its arising depends on the general conditions of struggle themselves, and never on the cleverness or bravery of a leader or vanguard.

Such clarification of the relationships between economic/social and political events, must represent the basis for understanding the problem of the relations between revolutionary party and economic and trade union action (*Report, 12*).

Only in the Marxist Scheme is the sequence of Activity, Will and Consciousness, in both the Individual and the Class, found to be completely reversed in the Party. The Party's knowledge of social facts incorporates past, present and future, and attains the level of scientific theory; thus it is capable of exerting Will and taking Action

The purpose of the Scheme is merely to simplify the concepts of economic determinism. Within each Individual (consequently within the individual proletarian, too) it is not theoretical Consciousness which determines the Will to act on the external environment but exactly the opposite, as shown in the Table by the upward pointing arrows : the impulsion of Physical need, via Economic interests, results in an unconscious Action; only much later is the action criticized and theorized, due to the intervention of other factors.

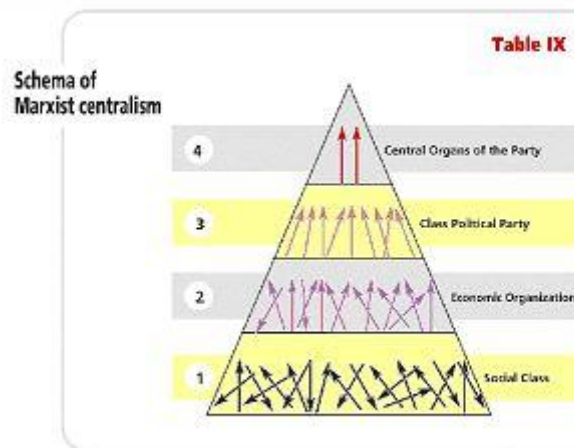
A combination of individuals, placed in the same economic circumstances, behaves similarly (as shown in the Table by the upward pointing arrows), but the concomitance of stimuli and reactions creates the basis for a clearer Will and, after that, Consciousness. These are only specified precisely in the class party, which brings together only a part of the class, but which elaborates, analyzes and strengthens the very wide experience drawn from all the various different impulses, stimuli and reactions. *Only the party is able to reverse the direction of praxis.* It possesses a Theory and therefore has knowledge of the way events unfold. The party, within specified limits, and depending on circumstances and relations of force, can take Decisions and initiatives, and influence the course of the struggle (as shown in the Table by the downward pointing arrows).

The arrows going from left to right represent the influences of the traditional order (forms of production); the arrows going from right to left show the revolutionary influences which oppose them.

The dialectical relationship resides in the fact that the revolutionary party is a conscious and voluntary factor of events, inasmuch as it is also the result of them, and of the conflict these events contain between the old forms of production and the new productive forces. Such a theoretical and active function of the party would, however, come to nothing if it were to sever its material links with the social environment, and with the primeval, material and physical class struggle.

Table 9: Scheme of Marxist Centralism

At the second meeting on September 1st, 1951 (Naples), after a reminder about the eight Tables discussed and on the fundamental themes summed up within them at the first meeting (Rome), there was introduced a ninth Table, entitled "The Scheme of Marxist Centralism". Attached to it there was a short, but sufficient, commentary explaining how it worked, and on the meaning of the Communist Left clear-cut position on the matter.



Commentary on Table 9

1. The individuals which make up the class are driven to take action in different directions. Some of them, if consulted and free to decide, would act in the interests of the opposing, dominant class.
2. The action of trade union members tends to be opposed to the interests of the Master's class, but in an immediate way, lacking the capacity to converge into a unique action and aim.
3. The militants in the political party, who are the result of the work within the class and its organizations, are prepared to take action along the unique, revolutionary resultant.
4. The leading organs of the party, emanating from its base, act in a revolutionary direction that is in keeping and continuity with its theory of organization and tactical methods.

The stance of the Left consists in the simultaneous struggle against two deviations:

a) The base, *as long as it is democratically consulted* (workerism, labourism, social-democratism), is entitled and sufficient to decide on what action the center takes.

b) The supreme center (political committee or party leader) is sufficient to decide on what action the party and the masses take (Stalinism, Cominformism), and has the right to discover "new forms" and "new courses".

Both deviations lead to the same result: the base is no longer the proletarian *class*, but rather the *people*, or the *nation*. According to Marx

and Lenin, the ensuing direction is in the interest of *the bourgeois ruling class*.

Conclusion

The positions we have highlighted using the nine Tables correspond, in the form of written texts, to the 1922 *Rome Theses* and the 1926 *Lyons Theses*. They are invariable positions of revolutionary Marxism, and not clothes to be changed with each passing season. They do not express personal opinions, nor introduce changes to a theory that belongs to the working class and that was born, fully formed, along with it. What we are in the presence of are not personal documents; they are party texts.

II. Revolutionary Party and Economic Action

From Summary

2. The second opportunist international historical crisis, marked by the collapse of the Third International, is to be ascribed to intermediatism; which holds that transitory, general political goals needed to be interposed between the bourgeois and the proletarian dictatorships. But the notion that we can avoid intermediatism by renouncing the specific economic demands of proletarian groups is also a mistake.

4. According to all the traditions of Marxism and of the Italian and International Left working and struggling inside the proletarian economic organizations is one of the indispensable conditions for successful revolutionary struggle; along with the pressure of the productive forces on production relations, and with the correct theoretical, organizational and tactical continuity of the political party.

5. If it is true that during the various phases of the bourgeois historical course – revolutionary, reformist and anti-revolutionary – the dynamics of trade union activity have undergone profound changes (prohibition, tolerance, subjection), this doesn't alter the fact that it is organically indispensable for a layer of organizations to exist between the proletarian masses and the minority that joins the party; such organisms, politically neutral but accessible to workers alone, must be resurrected as the revolution approaches.

Before we pass on to examine what has changed in the union field in the period after the World Wars and totalitarianism, it is worth recalling the Italian Communist Left's previous stance on the Trade Union question.

1. Even before the Italian party was constituted, two key tactical issues were discussed at the Second Congress of the International in 1920: parliamentary action and trade-union action. The delegates of the anti-electionist current would now marshal against the so-called left-wing, which supported splitting the unions and giving up the attempt to conquer trade unions led by opportunists. All things considered, these currents situated the centre of revolutionary action in the trade unions and not in the party, and wanted them pure of bourgeois influence (Dutch tribunists, German KAPD, American Syndicalists, Shop Stewards, etc).
2. From then on the Left waged a bitter struggle against these movements analogous to the "Ordine Nuovo" group of Turin, which saw the revolutionary task as consisting in emptying the trade unions to the advantage of the movement for factory councils, with the latter interpreted as the framework of the economic and State organs of the proletarian revolution initiated under full-blown capitalism. These movements thus seriously confused the instruments with the timing of the revolutionary process.
3. The trade union and parliamentary questions are on an entirely different plane altogether. Parliament is clearly the organ of the bourgeois State which claims to represent all classes in society, and all revolutionary Marxists agree that it is impossible for it to form the basis for any other power than that of the bourgeoisie. The question is whether the use of parliamentary mandates can serve the aims of pro-insurrection and pro-dictatorship propaganda and agitation. Those opposed to this view would assert the view that, even given this restricted aim, our representatives would produce the opposite effect by participating in a bourgeois political organism.
4. Given that the trade unions are professional and economic associations, they will always bring together individuals of the same class, no matter who leads them. It is quite possible that those proletarians organized within them will elect representatives who are not just moderate but totally bourgeois, and that the unions will come directly under the sway of capitalist influences. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the trade unions are composed exclusively of workers and thus it will never be possible to say of them what we say about parliament, namely, that it is only susceptible to a bourgeois direction.
5. In Italy, before the foundation of the Communist Party, socialists refused to work in the catholic or republican unions. Later on, at the time of the great Confederazione Generale del Lavoro led mainly by reformists and of the Unione Sindacale led by anarchists, communists would declare, unanimously and unhesitatingly, that they wouldn't be setting up new

unions but instead would work inside and conquer the aforementioned ones and indeed work towards their unification. In the international field, the Italian party would unanimously support not only work in all the national social-democratic unions, but also the existence of the Red International Union (Profintern), which saw the Amsterdam Centre as unconquerable because of its links, by way of the International Labor Office, with the bourgeois League of Nations. The Italian Left was violently opposed to the proposal to liquidate the Profintern in order to constitute one single Trade Union International, still asserting, nonetheless, the principle of unity and internal conquest of the unions and national federations.

6. a) Proletarian union activity has caused significant changes in bourgeois policy over successive historical phases. The early revolutionary bourgeoisies prohibited any form of economic association as an attempt to reconstitute the illiberal regime of the mediaeval corporations, and any strike was violently suppressed, therefore, all early trade union movements took on revolutionary aspects. The Manifesto would soon announce that all economic and social movement lead to political movements: that their key importance lies in the ensuing extension of proletarian associations and coalitions, whilst their merely economic conquests are precarious and do not impair class exploitation.

b) In the following period, the bourgeoisie would come to understand the necessity of tackling the social question, and, with the precise aim of warding off the revolutionary solution, it would tolerate and legalize the unions and recognize their activity and demands; during this entire phase there were no wars and there was a relative increase in welfare up to 1914. Throughout this period, the work carried out in the unions was the fundamental element in developing strong socialist parties, who could clearly get large movements underway by applying the union lever.

The collapse of the Second International showed that the bourgeoisie had gained a decisive influence over a large part of the working class by means of its relations and compromises with the parliamentary and union chiefs, who almost everywhere dominated the party structures.

c) During the resurgence of the movement which followed the Russian Revolution and the ending of the imperialist war, it was precisely a matter of drawing conclusions from the disastrous failure of the previous trade-unionist and political outlook. There was the attempt to draw the world proletariat onto revolutionary terrain by removing the political and parliamentary traitors through party splits, and by ensuring that the new communist parties were able to eject bourgeois agents from the largest proletarian organizations. This was highly successful in several countries, and capitalism would discover that in order to impede the revolutionary

offensive it had to strike back violently, and outlaw not just the parties but also the unions within which the parties were working. Nevertheless, through all the complex vicissitudes of these bourgeois totalitarianisms, outright abolition of the union movement was never adopted. On the contrary, the constitution of a new union network was advocated and put into effect, fully controlled by the counter-revolutionary party, and, in one way or another, declared to be a single and unitarian body, wholly faithful to the administrative and State mechanism.

Even where, after the Second World War, for purely contingent reasons, capitalist totalitarianism appeared to have been substituted by democratic liberalism, the union dynamic previously set in motion continued to move uninterruptedly towards State control and insertion into the official administrative organisms. Fascism – dialectical accomplisher of the old reformist demands – put into effect the legal recognition of the union; in this way the union could be the office holder of collective contracts with the employers, laying the way open for the entire union organization to end up effectively imprisoned through being completely tied to the bourgeois class power.

Such an outcome is crucial for the defense and conservation of the capitalist regime precisely because influencing and making use of the associational framework of trade union organizations is an indispensable stage for every revolutionary movement led by the communist party.

7. Clearly, these radical changes in the unions weren't only due to the political strategy of the antagonistic classes and their parties and governments, they were also significantly linked to the changed nature of the economic relations between employer and wage-laborer. In the early union struggles, when the worker tried to confront the monopoly of production with a monopoly of labor-power, the sharpness of the conflict derived from the fact that the proletarian had absolutely no resources except his daily wage. During a time when the worker was deprived of any reserve fund of consumer goods, every struggle became literally a matter of life and death.

The Marxist theory of increasing immiseration is confirmed by the continuous increase in the number of pure proletarians and by the closely related expropriation of the last reserves of layers of the proletarian and middle-classes, a process which is sped up a hundredfold by wars, destruction, monetary inflation and so on. Whilst increasing immiseration is undoubtedly still the general trend, and whilst it is true that in many countries the unemployment figures are enormous and proletarians are just plain massacred, nevertheless, we can see that wherever industrial production flourishes, a whole range of reformist assistance and providential measures exist for the employed worker. These constitute a

new type of economic reserve representing a small stake in wealth, and this makes the position of the worker in those areas in a certain sense analogous to the artisan and small peasant. The wage-laborer thus has something to lose, and this makes him hesitant, and even opportunist when union struggles break out and worse still when there are strikes and rebellions. This was a phenomenon remarked on by Marx, Engels and Lenin with regard to the so-called labor aristocracy.

8. Apart from the question of whether or not in such and such a country the revolutionary communist party should participate in the work of given types of union, the elements of the question recapitulated so far lead to the conclusion that any prospect of a general revolutionary movement will depend on the presence of the following essential factors: 1) a large, numerous proletariat of pure wage-earners, 2) a sizeable movement of associations with an economic content including a large part of the proletariat, 3) a strong revolutionary class party, which, composed of a militant minority of workers, must have been enabled, in the course of the struggle to oppose, broadly and effectively, its own influence within the union movement to that of the bourgeois class and bourgeois power.

The factors which have led to establishing the necessity for each and every one of these three conditions, the effective combination of which will determine the outcome of the struggle, were arrived at: a) by a correct application of the theory of historical materialism, which links the basic economic needs of the individual to the dynamics of the great social revolutions, b) by a correct interpretation of the proletarian revolution as regards the problems of the economy, politics, and the State, c) by the lessons derived from the history of all the organized movements of the working class - as much from the degenerations and defeats as from the outstanding achievements and victories.

The general line of the perspective outlined here does not rule that there will be all kinds of different situations arising in the course of the modification, dissolution, and reconstitution of associations of the union type; all those associations, that is, which arise in various countries, either linked to the traditional organizations which once upon a time declared themselves as based on the class struggle approach, or else more or less tied to the most diverse methods and social tendencies, even conservative ones.