

Hungary and Socialism

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Never has a revolution been so discussed, argued about, calumniated, as the Hungarian insurrection. For some, it fell automatically into the class of the *Vendees* of history: reactionary counter-revolutionary risings fomented from outside. For others, the Hungarian revolution was, at least in its origins and in its most profound orientation, a Titoist manifestation, of definite "national communist" inspiration. Others again put the accent on the essentially proletarian character of the revolt, as it was reflected in the Worker's Councils. Certain people saw in it an anti-communist revolt *par excellence*, signalling perhaps the beginning of the break-up of world communism. Yet others considered it an accident in a crisis of growth of communism, but one whose importance should not be underestimated.

The near theological odour of the disputes and controversies to which the Hungarian revolt has given rise among ideologists of all tendencies can no doubt be explained by the newness of the revolt, by the fact that it hardly corresponded at all to the pattern of revolution envisaged by the doctrinaires.

It seems to me that one of the most important contributions which the Hungarian revolution has made to contemporary thought lies precisely in the fact that it obliges us to correct our ideas on revolution, to replace a rectilinear conception of contemporary history with a Conception which is more in keeping with the complexities of evolution. For Marxists in particular (not only Soviet and Stalinist Marxists, but those of all shades) or socialist and liberal non-Marxists, the Hungarian revolution constitutes a solemn warning, inviting them to make a serious examination of their consciences. *Have not their theories, their comprehension, their awareness of the world in which we live, lagged behind reality?* Has not the rigidity which characterises Soviet thought propagated itself well beyond the frontiers of communism? Has it not equally affected the historical thinking of non- and anti-

communists—in fact of the whole European Left?

If the events in Hungary are closely examined, it can be seen that they do not even contradict the classic definition of revolution. According to this definition—which one meets again and in the writings of Marx—a revolutionary situation develops when

"At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution". (*Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy*)

Let us strip this definition of the economic jargon of the epoch: we shall see then that it applies perfectly to the Hungarian insurrection. It resulted from a sharp conflict between the majority of the Hungarian producers, and the political, economic and social conditions in which they were made to live. The majority of the people considered the Rakosist system a fetter not only on their personal development, but also on national prosperity. Writers and artists kicked against the censorship; the workers against a form of planning which took no account of their legitimate aspirations, and which removed from them all defensive arms which they had formerly used against capitalist exploitation. The technicians chafed under the control exercised over them by incompetent party agents; they revolted against a system of centralisation, modelled on Soviet institutions, that had become a factor of anarchy and waste. The peasants revolted against forcible collectivisation. In the name of the most advanced ideas and of the religion of productivity, productive activities were paralysed; while the most rational planning was called for, the regime was profoundly disordered and incoherent. The Rakosist lie—the contrast between the official optimism and the nauseating reality—was thus the very source of the Hungarian revolt. It was not so much a revolt of the poverty-stricken—

though the importance of economic discontent at the origin of the revolt should not be underestimated—as an uprising of a people sickened by lies, by the total discrepancy between the theory and the practice of the regime.

Like every revolution in history, the Hungarian one materialised at a moment when the popular forces were pushing towards the structural reform of a system in which the representatives of the established order, divided and demoralised by rebuffs, troubled in their consciences, revealed themselves incapable of controlling or canalising this push; in which many of them resisted the movement without possessing the moral and material armament necessary to the mastering of it.

Revolution—and that of the Hungarian people reminds us of this—is always a complex, contradictory affair, full of an unexpectedness into which the whole "subconscious" of a people erupts, with all that this implies of the

The national question

The second lesson is that one does not play with the soul of a people, that one does not play with national sentiment.

National sentiment is a factor which the masters of Marxism recognised completely, but which the Soviet disciples, while theorising it and systematising it with Lenin and Stalin—have practised as badly as they have everything else. One has only to read a letter written by Friedrich Engels to Karl Kautsky on the 1848 revolution:—

"It is an historical impossibility," he wrote, "for a great people to preoccupy itself with anything else so long as it still has to create its national independence. There could be no question of socialism in Italy before 1859, not even of a republic, though the republicans in this country were among the most energetic to be found." And Engels added: "As long as Poland remains divided and subjugated, no socialist movement worthy of the name will be able to develop there . . . Any Polish peasant or worker, roused from his apathy to a realisation of public affairs, is immediately thrown up against the fact of national oppression . . . to suppress this oppression is the *sine qua non* of any sane and free evolution."

It was true in 1882. Is it no longer true in 1956? No doubt Russian expansion, by reason of the specific character of the Soviet state, differs in many points from the imperialism practiced by the old colonial powers, or the forms taken by economic or ideological expansion in the U.S.A. Nevertheless, the Hungarian revolution revealed even for those who were unaware of it before the non-voluntary character of the association of the peoples which form the Eastern Bloc. The Soviet Union

' I must draw attention on this subject to the excellent study by a young Hungarian philosopher, Zoltan Bezerdi, published in the review "Evidences" (June, July 1957) the conclusions of which are identical with mine; particularly when he writes: "The Hungarian October has knocked down the Stalinist thesis concerning antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. The contradictions existing in bourgeois democracy are replaced in the dictatorship of the proletariat by new contradictions. And these last are neither less important nor less dangerous than the former. The thesis according to which class antagonisms are the only fundamental ones, the other antagonisms, ideological ones, etc., having only a secondary importance, has had the bottom knocked out of it. The thesis which limits to class society the possibility of a qualitative leap and social explosion, and excludes it from a class-less society, is false. As to the basis

reactionary, the progressive, basic aspirations, return to the past, enthusiasm for the future. Everything is in it, pell-mell, the sympathetic and the anti-pathetic, the reassuring and the dangerous, the splendid and the violent. *All revolution is the return to a state of nature.* It is that which makes it both frightening and sublime.

Yet communists have taken the habit of confounding revolution with a *coup d'etat*; of supposing that revolution is an event prefabricated in the offices of the Kremlin. Which is why they have set themselves implacably against an event which proves that revolution is not the monopoly of the U.S.S.R. Communist Party, which had thought to have definitely harnessed revolution to its chariot; and which also proves that in certain circumstances the aim of a revolution can be overthrowing the domination of the Communist Party. This is precisely the first lesson which we propose to draw from the Hungarian Revolution.¹

"associated" Hungary to itself by progressively taking away, thanks to the Communist apparatus installed in the country, everything, down to the last trace of its national sovereignty, by smashing the democratic enthusiasm of the years 1945-48. For the great majority of Hungarians the Communist regime seemed a regime imposed by the foreigner.

In fighting and persecuting what she called "bourgeois chauvinism" the U.S.S.R. was fighting and persecuting the patriotic instincts of the peoples of the East. Instead of eliminating it, she intensified it. Chauvinism and anti-semitism reappeared under new guises, sometimes acute, as was demonstrated in Poland after October 1956. In preventing the Eastern countries from forming in the immediate post-war period one or several federations, the U.S.S.R. was acting against their interests and aspirations.

Of course, from the beginning of 1956 onwards, the Soviet leaders tried to modify this exploitation; they showed themselves disposed to make concessions to Hungarian national sentiment, and especially after the 20th Congress they admitted the possibility of a socialist construction more in tune with local conditions. But, in fact, the Soviet Union never ceased to interfere in Hungary's internal affairs. If they authorised the Hungarian Party to get rid of Rakosi, it was they who imposed Gero. And subsequently they intervened militarily at Gero's call, defending him against a people whom he had provoked. And when finally, indignant at this intervention of the Soviet Army coming to the rescue of a detested police force, the Hungarian people unanimously wished to regain their liberty, then the Soviet

it comes to absolutely the same thing whether we call this explosion revolution or counter-revolution.

The problem of basis is that every society—capitalist or socialist—suffers from internal contradictions, and that the doing away with these contradictions, can, in both cases, be either peaceful or violent. To put it clearly, evolution and revolution are possible in the dictatorship of the proletariat as in bourgeois democracy. One can neither claim the privilege or the right of evolution, nor accuse others of the charge of revolution. The day of mystical half-truths and social superstitions is over. The dialectic is a universal law and not a state decree or a subject of learning for the party seminary to be played with at leisure.

This is the philosophical consequence of the Hungarian October.

Union intervened yet again. Khrushchev's justification of this repression shows that in the eyes of the Soviet Government, "Hungary was attached to the Soviet Union by indissoluble links", just as, in the eyes of Guy Mollet, Algeria is to France. Hungarian liberty lasted five days only; but those five days sufficed to give a new meaning to the term: national independence.

I do not mean to endow this term with an absolute sense. National independence is not the supreme value. International solidarity—the true kind—that which rests upon voluntary adherence—is certainly superior to it. But where there is oppression, exploitation or restraint against a nation, the independence of this nation constitutes a factor of progress. Now, the "socialist camp", in spite of its attempts at reform in 1955-56, cannot be considered as a free association of countries (especially where the peoples of Eastern Europe are concerned), but rather as a Holy Alliance of communist apparatuses, for the purpose of assuring Soviet hegemony. After their reconciliation with Yugoslavia, the Soviet leaders seemed to admit the possibility of effectively independent socialist countries which, for reasons of state, prefer to keep themselves out of the communist bloc. It was this modification of the "line" which caused the resurgence in various countries of the "national communist" current, repressed in 1948. But after the Polish and Hungarian October, Soviet policy returned to the Stalinist tradition of monolithic unity.

The Hungarian Revolution, in fact, demonstrated the precarious character of national communism, at any rate in the satellite countries. In fact, national communism, that is to say a communist regime not dominated from without, headed by an independent leadership, exists in three countries only, Russia, China and Yugoslavia. In

these three countries the actual regimes are the result of revolutions and civil war which were authentic, and from which the Communist Party emerged victorious. To these three countries one could, by stretching a point, add Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, where the Communist Parties are represented in strength, and where submission to Moscow has a voluntary character; in any case, it is not explained by the presence of occupying Soviet troops.

But in the other satellite countries, communism, whether national or not, remains subject to the goodwill of the Kremlin. Thus, in Hungary, national communism as a reform of the Stalinist system could not have established itself under Nagy had the Russians not encouraged it, or at least refrained from sabotaging the experiment. But in opposing it, in intervening against it, they forced the national communists to deviate towards a far wider democratisation in which national communism was represented as one tendency among many others. In the satellite countries in which the communist regime subsists, thanks to the protection of Russian tanks, national communism is only conceivable as a compromise regime. The only choice left to patriotic communists was between the abdication of national sovereignty and the revolutionary fight (peaceful or otherwise) at the side of democrats or nationalist non-communists. Communists, if they wish to establish themselves without the aid and protection of the Soviet armies, and if they refuse to condemn themselves to incompetence in order to please the Moscow doctrinaires, *must* revise their ideas and forge new links with the revolutionary democrats of the working class. But the Soviet Union cannot recognise this necessity of "revising" doctrine without shaking the ideological foundations of its power.

State and revolution

The Hungarians and the Poles breached another of the fundamentals of Stalinism: the myth of the one Party system as an indispensable political form for the realisation of socialism—a myth to which even the Yugoslavs (as the stupid conviction of Djilas proves) remain firmly attached.

True, Khrushchev, at the 20th Congress, recognised the possibility of "different roads" to socialism. He even admitted the possibility of a parliamentary way. But the Moscow diehards surrounded this pronouncement in a smoke-screen: they allowed it to be confusedly understood that for them the parliamentary way was that of Prague and Budapest, where the Stalinists, taking advantage of a parliamentary and democratic interlude, had overthrown the regime to install the one party system.

The idea that the dictatorship of the proletariat—that is to say, government by the labouring classes (workers, peasants, intellectuals)—might be exercised in a multi-Party framework has never been entertained by the Moscow bureaucracy since Bukharin's idea of a second party was discredited in Russia. The one party system might have seemed necessary, at any rate provisionally, to defeat the bourgeoisie, to lay the foundations of socialism, to liberate productive forces and intelligence, to rid society of capitalist and feudal shackles. But after the destruction of the bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union, nothing justified the retention of the one party system and the police terror which was its corollary.

It is significant that since the Hungarian October there has been a return to Stalin's absurd theory—formulated in 1937 as the ideological buttress of the great purges, the reinforcement of the police character of the regime, the *Yezhovchina*—according to which the class war, instead of diminishing, is aggravated after the taking of power by the Communists. The ineluctable repression implied by the one party system seems once again, to the Soviet leadership, an absolute necessity—the only rampart against peoples whom they despise as well as fear.

Yet, after Hungary, surely this system is finally discredited as a means of achieving socialism. Is not socialism, should it not be, above all, the expression of the legitimate aspirations of the popular masses? Has not the Stalinist system revealed itself as a parasitical and reactionary force, as a terror which decapitated the political leadership, demoralised the technicians and economists, emasculated political life, and condemned the best writers and artists to lies or to silence?

Today, the impossibility of maintaining the one party system in the form inherited from Stalin is recognised even by communists who could not be accused of revisionism. In Poland, Gomułka, who after the January elections, did everything to break the revolutionary enthusiasm of his people, decided to give back to the old parties of the coalition a certain freedom of activity and a more real liberty of action. The Chinese also reached a theoretical conclusion on the Hungarian situation. One read in the *Jen Minh Jen Pao* (People's Daily) of the 21st

of November, 1956, "A political system allowing of several political parties is possible in a socialist democracy such as China, and it can be preferable to the one party system if it is properly understood." This article, reproduced by the "New China Agency", was written by a leader of the Democratic Chinese League.²

In Hungary—a fact which is often forgotten—the foundations of socialism (agrarian reforms and industrialisation of industry) were not the work of the one party government, they were constituted in the time of coalition governments, elected, on the whole, democratically (1945-48). Rakosi and Gero did nothing more than confiscate these reforms for their profit, justifying the terror by the necessity of safeguarding them. The majority of Hungarians after 1949 felt that the democracy to which they aspired had been stolen from them, the compensation for this loss being only the promise of future happiness. The one party system seemed to the Hungarians, as to most of the other peoples who had had a taste of Stalinist methods, as absolutely incompatible with socialism. In these countries the idea was gaining ground that the retaining of revolutionary conquests was only possible in the framework of a democratic organisation of political life. This implies the rejection of any dictatorship, either Fascist or Stalinist, and respect for the liberty of conscience and speech.

Of course, the return of a country to democracy from a totalitarian regime, does not exclude the dangers of a reactionary putsch, and even of civil war. But any manifestation of life, from the living cell upwards, implies danger. Democracy is precisely a dangerous life because it implies the necessity of fighting for the transformation of society and for the disappearance of the oppression

Last stage Stalinism

Another problem posed by the Hungarian revolution concerns the *monolithic* character of the Communist Party itself. The majority of the world communist parties, with the Soviet Communist Party at their head, have been reinforced by the Hungarian revolt in their conviction that any liberty of discussion within the party must be severely limited if it is not to lead to the division and liquidation of the party. "If the Communist Party in Hungary had not been so profoundly divided", they say, "the revolution could never have broken out." Which is no doubt true, but represents only one side of the coin. It is necessary, in fact, to enquire into the *cause* of the division of the party. In Hungary's disastrous situation this division seemed inevitable. It would probably never have reached such dimensions if, during the course of the preceding years, the directors of the party, at the same time as pursuing the wrong policy, had not exacted from its adherents a blind obedience, if they had not established, at the very heart of the party, a climate of suspicion and terror.

In 1949 they broke the communist opposition by implanting a "mechanical" Soviet model. Later by forbidding the Nagyists to express their point of view and to organise an open debate on proposed solutions, the Stalinist elements threw themselves passionately into the task of maintaining a dictatorship which ended in the ruin of the party. There was no longer any organisation, particularly in the working class, because organisation had been

and exploitation of classes and races by capitalists or empires.

It is true that the experiment of political democracy based on collective ownership of the means of industrial production, has never been tried, since it is tricky, not to say difficult, in the under-developed countries where it is necessary to persuade (not force) the population to tighten its belt for a while in order to develop industry, and to persuade the peasantry (without tricking them) to cooperate for the sake of the rational utilisation of the modern techniques of agricultural productivity. One should not, however, underestimate and despise the intelligence of the people. The Stalinist methods of forced collectivisation and industrialisation failed lamentably outside the Soviet Union, as much in the Peoples' Democracies as in Yugoslavia. They only succeeded very partially in the U.S.S.R. and in Czechoslovakia—and in this last country because there was already considerable industrialisation, established by capitalism.

Finally, the attachment of the Western communist parties to the Stalinist one party doctrine has shown itself as a negative factor in the re-creation of Popular Fronts with a view to politically renovating the Left and laying the foundation of socialism, which, in the West, can only be democratic.

It is for these reasons that the lessons of the Hungarian revolution should be meditated by all those who remain attached to Marxism and to socialist ideas: only a democracy allows of the revaluation of the alliance of the proletariat, the peasantry, and the intellectuals, an alliance which Stalinism preserved in theory, but made impossible in practice.

emptied of all meaning by the stupid obstinacy of the Stalinists.

Of course, the problems of the organisation of a workers' party are always complex, and one cannot imagine a workers' party without the minimum of discipline indispensable to effectiveness. But the Hungarian Stalinists overstepped the limits beyond which discipline becomes tyranny, the party apparatus becomes separated from the mass of the militants, and the party becomes an army in which the officers can no longer count upon the obedience of their soldiers in battle.³

The Hungarian revolution has furnished ample food for reflection on the meaning of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. On this point, too, the facts are strangely in contradiction with Marx's theory according to which, "The proletariat will make use of its domination to tear all capital from the bourgeoisie little by little, for the purpose of concentrating all the means of production in the hands of the proletariat organised as a leading class, and to increase rapidly the means of production."

In the eyes of those Hungarian proletarians who took arms against the police regime, the theory which presented them as the leading class in a popular democracy could only seem a sinister joke.

For them the claimed dictatorship of the proletariat took the shape of a dictatorship *over* the proletariat; a totalitarian dictatorship under which the proletariat as a social class had no means of defending itself against exploitation.

Also, the Hungarian revolution was characterised by clearly anti-state and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies; it set up various nuclei of power (revolutionary committees, workers' councils, etc.) as a substitute to the failing power

² It was another story when the heads of this league, conforming with the ideas put forward by Mao in February, 1957, tried to organise themselves independently of the party, and were pitilessly crushed.

of the State. On the communist side, these tendencies have been labelled purely anarchic, and were said to be the result of bourgeois, anti-communist and anti-socialist influences gaining a victory over socialist ideas in the mentality of the working class. This argument rests on the fact that the Hungarian working class, as a result of forced industrialisation, underwent a considerable transformation during the preceding years. Because of the integration into industry of several hundreds of thousands of peasants and a great number of artisans, petit bourgeoisie, and even the old dispossessed bourgeoisie, the number of workers was almost doubled compared to 1938. These new elements brought new blood to the industrial proletariat, but at the same time, traditional ideas; and the regime had neither the time nor the means to re-educate and enlist them. The enlistment of industrial recruits was all the more deficient because the party made tens of thousands of those workers who were most devoted to them into functionaries of political and economic administration. And if it is true that these "workers' cadres", given posts of responsibility often without any training become the most zealous defenders of the regime—there is no doubt either that they were separated from the working class and acquired the mentality of bosses and foremen. During the insurrection the workers treated them as class enemies; in revenge they often gave their vote in workers' council elections to bourgeois proletarian elements.

No doubt the modification of the composition of the proletariat was not entirely divorced from the fact that the spontaneous feelings of the workers, as manifested during the insurrection, took on a clearly anti-communist flavour. Nevertheless, those who, for this sole reason, reject *en bloc* the concrete expressions of this spontaneity, prove themselves guilty of a singular aberration of mind. One often observes this suspicious, if not hostile attitude towards the authentic manifestation of the proletariat, precisely among those ideologists who everywhere else (mostly because of a feeling of bourgeois guilt) profess a blind faith in the mission of the proletariat, History's elected people. These ideologists make of the proletariat an image of sentimental idolatry; the real proletariat they hardly know; they are not even interested in it; the proletariat in the name of which they claim to speak is an abstract being; it is prefabricated and lends itself, without

resistance (just because it hardly exists), to be used as cannon fodder for the great strategic plans of the ideologists.

Of course, we do not want to make of the workers' spontaneity a new idol, an historical demi-urge. To overestimate the importance of spontaneity in modern history, and especially in the history of revolutions, would be no less mistaken than overestimating the importance of ideas and organisation. But it must be remembered that from its origin the international workers' movement has been characterised by the conjunction, the alliance, the inter-penetration of intellectuals and manual workers, of active philosophers and militant workers. Did not a like inter-penetration, a like inter-action precede the events in Hungary? Did not the idea of workers' councils reach the proletariat by means of intellectuals who had taken notice of a Yugoslavian experiment which, incidentally, they had not always rightly understood?⁴

But the idea fell on fertile ground, and was able to satisfy the workers' spontaneous instincts just because it expressed the major aspirations of the proletariat.

This is the capital fact that comes out of the Hungarian revolution: the totalitarian state which emasculated all the political organisations in the country, which truly *atomised* society, transformed itself into an entity no less foreign to the social body than certain anti-national absolute dynasties in the past could have been. Now, *on the overthrow of this state, nothing was left; a new social contract had to be made.* The entire administrative armament of the country, down to the committees of undertaking and the municipal councils, was considered an emanation of a crumbled power, it was necessary to rebuild everything. It was necessary to rebuild the state from the foundations upwards.

Certainly the case was exceptional, and will perhaps recur in this way nowhere else. Therefore, hasty conclusions must not be drawn from it. But do not History's lines of strength always show themselves most clearly through exceptional cases? Thus the great French Revolution was without parallel in history up till the great Russian Revolution. But it was that great French Revolution which showed in a convulsive and pathetic manner what there is "in the stomach" of a people, once they rid themselves of the traditional shackles.

No infantile disorder

In the same way, the Hungarian revolution reveals the form, the orientation, and the aspirations underlying all the regimes in which the bourgeoisie have been deposed and private capitalism replaced by a state capitalism.

The first of these aspirations, manifested by the workers, is to have a freely-elected professional representation, and to regain for themselves the means of opposition (the strike) against the manager-state, whether it be socialist or not. It was with a rare unanimity that the Hungarian proletariat demonstrated that as a class it rejected totalitarian paternalism, and that it rejected totalitarianism as a system of state. This is a serious warning to the ideologists. Those who believe in the supreme efficaciousness of total planning, are welcome to go on believing in it, but they will no longer be able to count on the proletariat. The proletariat, when the liberty of speech is given back to it, calls for liberty and democracy; *it wishes to distinguish itself as the productive class of administrators, even when it is a question of elected administrators.*

Another workers' aspiration concerns the active participation in the management of enterprises. The workers' councils formed during the insurrection not only substituted themselves for the crumbled unions as representative of the workers' interests; they also claimed the right to name and to revoke the directors and to fulfil the functions of an administrative council.

It was not at that time a case of anything definite. The way in which the principle of workers' management could be realised, remains to be much discussed; it must be put to the test of reality. But the principle is established. It is from now on inseparable from socialism. The historic merit of the Yugo-Slavs will be that of having revived this idea of "direct worker management" which Lenin, against his will, abandoned because of the political and economic immaturity of the Russian people. Now the world proletariat has evolved since 1921. Also the scientific organisation of enterprise. Both science and the workers' interests have converged to give to co-operative

management, worker participation, centralisation by de-centralisation, a new meaning.

From the first days of the revolution, the different workers' councils on the one hand, and the local revolutionary committees (substitutes for the one-time municipalities) on the other, began by federating themselves on a territorial basis, on a local, departmental and national scale. In the same way, students, intellectuals, university teachers, and even technicians, federated themselves. Thus, on the ruins of the totalitarian state the contours of a new state of workers, peasants, intellectuals and young people appeared through the fight of the people: a state which would no longer be an instrument of oppression in the hands of a privileged clique, and even less an instrument in the hands of a "red aristocracy" relying on the police and the strength of a powerful foreign army.

We have shown⁶ the authority which the central workers' council of Budapest gained. It became a sort of workers' "Supreme Soviet", facing—up till the time of its dissolution by the police—the occupying force and its agents. There is every reason to believe (Edward Kardelj has said some illuminating things on this issue) that if Nagy's cabinet had not been pursued and deported, if the

Soviet Union had chosen to respect the will of the Hungarian people—a useful co-operation could have developed between the national government and the workers' central council, the expression of the working class. The central workers' council was about to play the role of a consultative body to the planning office and the economic ministries. It is probable that Nagy would have chosen the incumbents of these ministries from men to whom the workers' council could have given their confidence. Did he not appoint one of the leaders of the military revolutionary committee to the ministry of defence?

Thus was sketched out the structure of a socialist democracy of a new kind, of a government "of the people, by the people, for the people". All the workers' councils recognised the necessity of a central government, but they wanted this state to conform to the national interests; they wanted the government to take into account national and social aspirations so long repressed. *It was not anarchy, it was a socialist democracy in gestation: a revolutionary democracy which had no time to clarify its position and to make its choice, in particular between the traditional parliament and a new sort of popular representation of a corporative and professional character.*

The peasants

Equally, the Hungarian revolution revealed the artificial character of the solution given by totalitarian communism to the peasant problem. At the first weakening of the central power, the Hungarian peasants dissolved the majority (70%) of the productive co-operatives created by force, and reconstituted the old peasant divisions. But this peasantry which had to some extent regained its autonomy, did not for that reason set itself up as a class enemy against the proletarians of the towns. On the contrary, many moving indications came to light of a complete fraternity between workers and peasants. The basis of an alliance, a true worker-peasant alliance, appeared: The workers' councils solemnly recognised the right of the peasantry to dispose of their own fate, they repudiated the "authoritarian paternalism" of the communists who made of the peasants the minors of society, by taking away from them all possibility of expressing their ideas and organising themselves as they thought best.

No doubt, the fact of giving back to the peasantry its liberty of action would not, by itself, resolve the problem of modernising East European agriculture. But after the Hungarian revolution it is difficult to think that any solution can be arrived at without the co-operation of the democratic peasantry. The communists have completely discredited the Soviet system of agrarian collectivisation in East Europe. By clinging to it they have cut the grass

from under their own feet; they have condemned agriculture to stagnation. The idea of peasant co-operation must be taken charge of by the peasants themselves. Moreover, one saw the beginnings of such an evolution during the insurrection; those co-operatives that opted for survival, formed a revolutionary agricultural committee, while getting rid of the Stalinist police who had been appointed as their leaders and knew nothing of agricultural matters.

In a broadcast speech, Sandor Meszaros, vice-president of the revolutionary council of these co-operatives, set out the rural claims: free elections for all posts of responsibility at all levels of the scale; substantial contributions from the state with a view to mechanising agriculture; the rehabilitation of all the unjustly excluded peasant leaders; the elaboration of statutes for an independent co-operative Hungarian Movement; the adherence of this movement to the national federation of co-operative movements.

We must note, in this category of ideas, that the Hungarian revolution brought to light one of the most grotesque errors of the communists; that of suppressing free artisanship and small trade, without offering any proper substitute. That was the unnecessary sacrifice on the altar of total planning.

Hungarian writers republic

The decisive importance of the role played by the intellectuals in awakening the national conscience, both political and social, of the Hungarian people could serve as a lesson to those revolutionary intellectuals all over the world, in whom Stalinism encouraged a feeling of inferiority, vis-a-vis the working class, just as it also skilfully exploited the intellectuals' sense of responsibility (not to say culpability) for the downtrodden of bourgeois

⁶ In the Italian, more complete edition of my book on the Hungarian tragedy, Angheria: 1945-1957. Einaudi, pp. 355 and following.

society by making its own apparatus an indispensable intermediary between them and the proletariat.

The Hungarian example—and many other examples—prove that the Stalinist apparatus, instead of being a valuable intermediary, is an obstacle in the way of contacts between the intellectuals and the proletariat. The Hungarian example, moreover, confirms that the essential function of the intellectuals is to seek out the truth by all the means of which they are capable, and to tell that truth (even at the risk of losing their privileged situation or making traitors of themselves like Dery, Hay, Tardos,

Zelk, Gali), to express popular aspirations, and to create works dictated by free inspiration.

The Congress of Writers of September, 1956, will no doubt come to be seen as a red letter day in the history of the human spirit. The resolutions of this congress took on the meaning of a true *declaration of the rights of the man of letters*, of the rights of the man who works with thought and speech. Before the insurrection, the Hungarian writers and journalists united to take a solemn oath, never again to lie, to have no more to do with

"Enmeshed in a web of lies "

The Hungarian writers and journalists made the important discovery that lies are of very little use as a factor of progress. They discovered that the socialist worker movement, if it wishes to remain faithful to its origins, needs the truth, that is to say, participation of the national community in discussion and the dispute of ideas. They also discovered enthusiastically that the right of expression and criticism which seemed indispensable to them for the fulfilling of their own function was indivisible from the right of the whole population to fight against oppression and exploitation.

The "Independent Republic of Hungarian Writers" constituted in September, 1956, and which two Soviet interventions failed to do away with, was the first breach opened in the totalitarian system. It was the forerunner of the revolutionary committees, the workers' councils; for the autonomy of intellectuals is inconceivable without the democratisation of other sectors of public life. The fight against the censorship logically led these writers and journalists to the fight against all the oppressive aspects of the system under which they lived.

One can, all the same, put the question whether the right of writers to criticise what they like, to call everything into question, does not necessarily lead to anarchy? Were not Dery, Tardos, Hay and their companions apprentice-sorcerers, initiators of a movement the tempestuous course of which they were subsequently unable to control? Certainly, the Hungarian intellectuals, while rejoicing in an immense prestige in the country, did not in the hour of crisis show themselves gifted with the qualities of leaders and organisers. The direction of events escaped them completely. The revolution with its excesses plunged them into perplexity. But can one from this fact forge an argument against intellectual liberty? The truth formulated by writers and journalists, the ideas thrown out by them, are only explosive—this is a platitude, but one which it is necessary to recall from time to time—are only explosive when the situation itself is explosive. One does not get rid of illness by eliminating the thermometer which indicates the fever.

The majority of the Communist leaders drew from the Hungarian events the conclusion that the intellectuals must be subdued. But the anti-intellectual campaign to

"mental diplomacy", to tell the truth. This oath they pronounced on the realisation that the *sacrificium intellectus* which they had consented to make for the great good of the party, by repressing their doubts, by shutting their eyes in order not to see the embarrassing reality, by forcing themselves to believe in the unbelievable, had been a useless sacrifice. The party itself had hardly profited from it; on the contrary, the lies of propaganda had contributed to its complete estrangement from the people, and to its sinking into a sort of collective paranoia.

which the communist parties gave themselves up only threw into greater relief their terrorist and retrograde character. The arrests and convictions of writers and journalists in the Eastern countries served as a useful warning to those intellectuals all over the world who so much wanted to believe in the progressive character of the totalitarian regime, in the protection which it could give to culture. In fact, totalitarianism is incompatible with intellectual liberty. It tends to reduce the intellectual to the status of propagandist.

The intellectual is nothing if he cannot say what he himself thinks. There is here an insurmountable antagonism. The intellectual who serves totalitarianism is a scholar who betrays his mission.

He betrays also the youth that it is his duty to guide. One of the most moving aspects of the Hungarian insurrection was just this meeting of the youth of the country with the intellectual elite, their communion in the common idea of liberty.

Who can ever forget those students of Budapest, their nobility, their purity, the temerity they showed? Later, the Kadar government was to try to explain the hostility of the students towards the dictatorship of the party and Soviet domination, by the fact that the "selection of classes" had not been sufficiently rigorously applied. According to a declaration made by the vice-minister of instruction, Magda Iorobu, only 40 per cent of the students were of worker or peasant extraction. But while in any case this figure contradicts the previously published statistics, one cannot help thinking that a larger number of students of popular origin would only have accentuated the anti-Soviet tendency. For the workers and peasants displayed a far more vigorous opposition to the totalitarian regime than the petit-bourgeoisie or the intelligentsia.

Youth turned against the regime, from which it had, nevertheless, often benefited materially, because the regime had deprived it of the intellectual nourishment to which it aspired. Young people felt themselves tricked, deceived and outraged by the party, and the enthusiasm of the young for the intellectuals arose quite simply from the fact that they were able to consider them as sincere fraternal people, concerned for humanity and the truth.

No steps backward

The Hungarian revolution betrayed to the naked light of day the sharpest of the interior contradictions of the communist regimes. It revealed the fundamental unpopularity of these regimes, and by the same token, it is incontestable that the insurrection dealt a severe blow to the international prestige of the Soviet Union. The Hungarian insurrection forced the leaders of the U.S.S.R. to revise the whole of their strategy in East Europe. After November, 1956, they took a whole series of steps to reinforce the cohesion of the bloc, to re-forge the solidarity of the party apparatuses, and to jam the propa-

gation of "national communist" and "revisionist" ideas. The communist world lost its assurance, and was put on the defensive.

From this, must it be concluded that the October insurrection was a success for the West? One can hardly speak of a victory of capitalism over socialism. While rejecting the totalitarian communist system the Hungarian people showed no particular desire to return to the capitalist fold. The way of the insurrection did not lead back; it lead onwards to the democratisation and widening of socialism.