self-management in the struggle for socialism

michel raptis

Since the Communist Manifesto was written, the struggle for world socialism has taken on extremely diverse forms, the content of the struggle varying from case to case.

The type of transitional society from capitalism to socialism that Marx (in the ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme’) or Lenin (in ‘The State and Revolution’) envisaged, has not yet been reached anywhere.

Since those days, some very big problems have arisen, concerning the content of a society evolving towards socialism – its economic, political, cultural, even its moral content.

There is very little unanimity about these problems on the part of the revolutionary Marxists or socialists of any shade.

When we talk about ‘the struggle for socialism’ we have to make a distinction. There are two separate phases: the struggle for the taking of power and the struggle for the building of socialism.

The ‘struggle for the taking of power’ is the fight for the revolution, i.e. for an abrupt qualitative change in the evolutionary process – the kind of change which, however brief, is always typical of an objective revolutionary crisis.

This kind of situation poses the replacement of the existing social order by new property relations and new social relations.

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An 'objective revolutionary situation' can spring up in all kinds of ways, created by a complex process of interaction of different objective conditions; for this to occur, there is no need of a pre-existing 'revolutionary party' to act as a catalyst.

Under present concrete historical conditions an 'objective revolutionary crisis' can arise as the result of, say, a nationalist war against imperialist intervention or occupation, as a result of a serious social crisis, or as a result of the electoral victory of an alliance of parties claiming to be socialist and campaigning on the basis of an advanced anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist program.

Resistance and war can grow into social revolution. But these exceptional conditions are not the only ones which can provoke an 'objective revolutionary situation' or create a 'revolutionary opening' (i.e. a rapid evolution towards such a situation).

For several years now in several European countries, we have seen situations escalating into major national revolutionary crises, where the question of the 'struggle for power' has been posed (and thus also the possible victory of the 'revolution').

May 1968 in France, the 'hot autumn' of 1969 in Italy, the situation in Britain in 1972 during the long miners' strike, are varying examples of that kind of situation.

The common characteristic of these examples is as follows: it is the advanced capitalist countries that are involved; it is not a time of major economic crisis; but in spite of this, a conjunction of numerous interacting factors has created either an 'objective revolutionary situation' or a possible rapid evolution towards such a situation.

What are these factors?

In some cases there has been the 'confrontation' movement of young people and other new social layers (scientists, technicians, intellectuals, etc.) as well as the broad masses of the traditional working class being mobilised.

In the case of Britain there was also the civil war in Ireland and the difficulties of British imperialism in Rhodesia -- all this in the context of an economic situation where there was heavy inflation and a million unemployed. But even in Britain, the major revolutionary crisis which loomed during the great miners' strike and which brought the conservative government to within a hairsbreadth of its downfall, was not primarily the result of a major economic crisis, but rather the result of an ensemble of interacting factors which are typical of a social crisis and not simply an economic one.

But an 'objective revolutionary situation' could equally come about as a result of the electoral victory of parties claiming to be socialist, as is the case in Chile at the moment and could be the case in a country like France or Italy.

This kind of situation is both the result of a pre-existing revolutionary escalation, of a long process marked by multiform mass struggles, and at the same time the cause of a speeding-up process in the maturation of the revolution.

Even more forms are possible, inasmuch as reality is complex, rich, and is always providing unforeseen combinations.

Objective conditions, therefore, can create a revolutionary situation or at any rate a revolutionary opening, whether or not there is a subjective revolutionary factor with a mass base. But these conditions alone are not enough for the situation to evolve in some sort of automatic way towards 'victory'; they are not enough to finish off the process that has been begun, to provoke, at some given point in its evolution, the qualitative leap which is the absolutely indispensable characteristic of a real revolution.

To accomplish this leap, the masses have to build their own power in the meantime, so that they will have the means to defeat the counter-offensive of reactionary social forces, which in some form or other is inevitable.

Therefore, during this phase, the 'struggle for socialism' is summed up as the struggle for 'revolution' and 'power', on the basis of the fundamental concept, justified by history, that revolution is not a totally evolutionary process, nor is 'power' the arithmetical sum of partial conquests.

What, then, are the conditions which would lead to the victorious outcome of a
‘revolutionary opening’ to a situation that is really ‘objectively revolutionary’? It is here that the subjective factor becomes important – the program, the tactics, the organisation.

Inasmuch as revolution is a qualitative change of social reality *towards a given end*, it is a voluntaristic project, carried out by men won over to that end. Revolution is not an aggregate of socio-economic measures, worked out and applied by a State technobureaucracy.

Revolution -- i.e. the successful conclusion of a revolutionary process that has already begun -- demands mass mobilisation and mass organisation, with the maximum conscious participation of the masses in all the measures which fulfil the content of a revolution.

Any government, party or union calling itself socialist has to ensure the real participation of the masses. If the masses only participate through the agency of various mediating devices that merely bear their name, they cannot effectively participate. Participation can only be expressed in the way they construct and operate their own power, in all spheres.

If this kind of process takes place, the masses can fulfil an existing revolutionary situation and move to defend it, deepen it and bring it to a successful conclusion.

But what is the meaning of ‘mass participation’, more precisely?

Let us take an example, of a basic kind -- wage demands.

It is not enough for unions and political parties to formulate the demands and direct the struggles. Recent experience in both the workers’ movement and other social movements (youth, women, etc.) has shown that the new generations everywhere want to be able to contribute directly, both in formulating demands and in the actual running of the struggle.

This wish is deeply held; it does not seek to deny that parties and unions are absolutely necessary, but simply to modify their function.

Their role has to be seen in terms of the help which they can and should provide for workers, young people, women, so that these social layers can participate to the full in the elaboration of demands and the management of the struggle, together with the representatives of party and union.

This, for example, is the significance of the movement of shop-floor delegates working in close alliance with the general assembly of workers, which has been characteristic of recent experience in Italy, Britain, France and elsewhere.

This, too, is the significance of the ‘student control’ which student youth would like to see applied in universities and schools -- the co-management of these institutions by pupils and teachers, in the context of a radical reform of education.

This also is the more general significance of the ‘social control’ over working conditions and their social repercussions, which is sought by various social layers. Of course, this kind of control cannot be adequately fitted into the framework of a society that remains essentially capitalist and therefore hierarchic, authoritarian and oppressive.

But the *tendency* towards this kind of control has already been mapped out, even in societies which are still typically capitalist: capitalism is increasingly preoccupied with the problems resulting from the resistance of workers and young people to the working and general living conditions that are imposed on them in these societies.

Where a country is involved in some kind of revolutionary process, the question of mass participation becomes crucial.

Let us take two distinct types of eventualities: a major national crisis, or the creation of a ‘revolutionary opening’ following the formation of a government calling itself socialist. Contemporary experience can supply examples of both.

A major national crisis can arise when various social layers are mobilised simultaneously, as in France in May 1968.

Schools, public services and enterprises were occupied by student youth, civil servants, workers, and working people generally. In the space of a few days a large, advanced capitalist country found itself paralysed by the effect of strikes and occupations. In some places there were limited experiments in ‘self-management’, but generally it was
a case of passive occupation. A state of dual power appeared.

From the revolutionary point of view, the problem was how to pass from the 'partial power' which the masses held to 'total power'.

This could have been made enormously easier if the masses had been ready to combine occupation of the enterprises with the management of them, under their own armed protection in the form of workers' and citizens' militias.

But there was a lack of the ideological preparation necessary to raise the revolutionary process to a higher level. In addition, the mass workers' organisations were taken unawares by the revolutionary crisis, and they made no effort to release this kind of consciousness. Quite the opposite.

The second kind of eventuality is more complicated and more interesting. This is the election of a 'workers' government' into power. A political party enjoying the confidence of the masses, if it is 'legally' elected has a certain length of time in which it is unlikely that there will be a direct test of strength with its social opponents. This can provide a 'revolutionary opening'. But for this to come about, a simple election victory in itself is not enough: there must also be a real escalation in the radical mass movement, which can somehow force its traditional political organisations to fight on an advanced anti-capitalist program, and to consider themselves bound by that program.

For example, if the British Labour Party won an election victory in a more or less 'normal' period, this would not necessarily amount to a 'revolutionary opening' in the country; in practice, indeed, it might mean simply that a political organisation with a socialist program and a base in the working class would just continue to manage 'capitalist business'.

But if the Labour Party came to power as a result of the kind of national circle that Britain went through during the miners' strike of 1972, and if the Conservative Party were forced to resign under the pressure of this crisis, it would mean the birth of a different objective conjuncture, and would force the Labour Party to undertake far-reaching anti-capitalist reforms.

There is yet another kind of eventuality, which we shall deal with more closely. This is where an extremely radical objective situation already exists, where a 'workers' government', elected in an exceptional situation, is thus endowed with a real revolutionary dynamic.

In this case, the issues revolve around the following major problem. How, once the revolutionary process has been unleashed, do you go from such a situation to a real victory? How, in other words, can the revolution be not only 'begun' but also 'achieved'?

The answer to this lies in the democratic participation of the masses, and in the kind of relationship they have with the government that claims to be 'theirs'.

To start with, this kind of government generally begins by applying the 'structural reforms' that were in its program. The most important of these are 'nationalisation' and agrarian reforms (the latter question has never yet been solved anywhere).

The aim of nationalisation is to remove the ownership of the country's principal means of production (banks, industries, commerce) from the hands of big foreign or indigenous capitalists and transfer them to the whole 'nation'.

This transfer of ownership is carried out by the state, which is supposed to represent the interests of the national community. But the state is a mere abstraction: the social reality of the state can only be grasped if it becomes concrete.

The state is not an autonomous, self-determined structure hovering over the social and property relations of a particular regime. It is the fully conscious expression of the collective interests of the dominant class in a particular society, and takes the form of an articulated series of institutions.

Therefore, to bring something under state ownership does not mean to 'nationalise' it ('nationalisation' in the sense of 'socialisation', where ownership is transferred to the 'nation', the whole society).

New property relations can only become new social relations if there are also new forms of management.
To bring something under state ownership, simply by having workers get their wages from the state rather than from private bosses, is not sufficient to transform social relations in a socialist sense. There is an additional need -- the right of workers in state-owned enterprises to manage these enterprises by themselves, through the democratic organisation of a labor collective including the entire productive personnel of the enterprise.

This is the only kind of measure which will interest working people, which will help them to understand that their social status has undergone a real revolution, and which will get them to organise their output better once their labor is really free. It is also the only kind of measure which ensures that they will defend this major conquest to the utmost, against any attempt made by retrograde forces to return to the 'napoleonic', authoritarian, hierarchic 'model' of private enterprise.

Where the agricultural economy is concerned, the case for a real transformation of social relations is similar.

In any country with an 'agrarian' problem, i.e. where a large amount of the cultivable land belongs to a small landowning oligarchy and there is an enormous mass of poor or completely landless peasants, the question of radical reform becomes urgent.

Agrarian reform has multiple aims: to raise the standard of living of the majority of the population; to enlarge the internal market; to procure the necessary materials for developing (especially light) industry; to avoid importing products which can be supplied by the country's own economy; to feed the population better.

No developing country can really 'get out of the rut' in a balanced way without the existence of a dynamic agricultural economy.

Therefore, the necessity for undertaking a radical agrarian reform has extremely important ramifications which are both social and economic.

But what sort of agrarian reform?

If the large estates are expropriated and divided up (free or at a price) into small plots for the landless peasants, without the state helping them to regroup into co-operatives for production and distribution, then the danger is that a mass of small peasants will be created who have a low productivity and who will inevitably fall to the combined exploitation of the banks, merchants, industrialists, and the state. If on the other hand, large state farms are set up, there is the same danger -- that productivity will fall, since the peasants have no material or moral incentive for this type of cultivation. Both capitalist countries and those in the process of building socialism have given us plenty of experience of both these dangers.

If agrarian reform is to succeed, it has to be carried out with the conscious voluntary participation of the people who work the land.

It is, of course, absolutely necessary that large-scale, collectively worked farms should be set up -- but it is also necessary that they are democratically managed by their workers' collective.

This kind of management can be defined in two ways: as self-management, or as the co-operative of self-managed production. In the first instance, the land belongs to the whole nation; in the second, it belongs to individual peasants but is still collectively worked by the production co-operative.

But in both instances, management must be in the hands of a collective, democratically organised by the agricultural workers; and it must have as much state aid as possible at its disposal.

The worst mistake of all is to transform the large estates which dominate agriculture into state-owned enterprises where the workers will simply be state wage-earners.

For the peasants to have an interest in working the land properly and increasing their productivity, they must feel that they have some direct connection with the running of things, in a moral sense as well as a material one.

The same principle also applies in the organisation and improvement of the social services and education.

One of the most fundamental tendencies of our time is the progressive incorporation of science and culture into the productive forces of society. Knowledges are permanently being recycled, while qualifications
become increasingly necessary. Hence the necessity for permanent education and continuous training which would, however, not be merely technical or specialised, but general too.

This kind of revolution in the educational system cannot come about as the result of reforms handed down from above. It must be the result of the effective participation of teachers, students and representatives of the social collectivity.

Of course, nationalisation, agrarian reform, and educational reform are not enough to ensure the victory of the revolution and a transition to socialism. However radically these measures interact, they have to be inserted into a more far-reaching program. But once a revolutionary process has been unleashed they can give it a tremendous dynamic. The democratic participation of the broad masses of people is the most important subjective factor in bringing about the victory of the revolution.

Obviously this 'victory of the revolution' cannot be the simple result of a peaceful, evolutionary process within the integral framework of traditional bourgeois democracy of the old state institutions. At a given moment there will be a decisive confrontation of some form or other, where the conservative forces allied with imperialism will be obliged to transgress that traditional framework and provoke a social mutation, a qualitative change.

At this point the period of 'dual power' is over, the resistance of hostile social forces is broken, and the power of the working people begins to express itself not only in the form of a government that rules in their name, but also – and primarily – in the shape of institutions and organs which are directly representative of the working people.

Furthermore, the future of such a regime depends precisely on the relations between the direct and indirect forms of working people's power.

The indirect forms are the state, political parties and unions, which take on the power of working people and citizens by delegation. The direct forms are those with which working people and citizens directly manage their social life, the enterprises, social services, the schools, at all levels.

The indirect forms are not necessarily synonymous with the real power of working people and citizens, for they are institutions managed by social groups who gradually, because of their function, acquire a special status in relation to the masses.

This status inevitably involves material and functional privileges which encourage the growth of a bureaucracy, a new social layer. This is the most serious danger that lies in wait for a state evolving towards socialism.

Of course, there are fundamental objective conditions which encourage the growth of a bureaucracy -- a low economic and cultural level, and the prolonged confinement of these experiences within a restricting national framework.

But countries already involved in building socialism have shown us that there is a very important subjective factor to add: that is, the absence of any critique of the traditional idea of the state, parties and unions in their relations with the working people, and the lack of sufficient theoretical consideration of these problems.

The most widespread image of a so-called 'socialist' regime is one of state ownership and planned economy, directed by the 'revolutionary' party. Ultimately, this means the virtual fusion of state and party, with the unions reduced to the role of a transmission belt for state requirements aimed at the working people. Since the state is axiomatically defined as 'socialist' and the party as 'revolutionary' the schematic conclusion is that these institutions are the same thing as the power of the working people and citizens.

Of course, this was never the conception of Marx, or Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin or Trotsky.

The Bolsheviks, for example, had initially envisaged a multi-party system, even a multi-party government, as well as the existence of a system of 'soviets', of 'councils', which would assume some power directly. But circumstances quickly led them to govern virtually by themselves through their party, which, unconsciously but in real terms, fused with the state apparatus and restricted the soviets to a subordinate and increasingly nominal role.

Lenin's heirs have theorised this state of fact into the 'model' of a 'regime building
socialism’. However, while it is true to say that marxism is (among other things) the most suitable scientific method for understanding the sociological reality of capitalism and demystifying all its categories, values and institutions, the same critical penetration must then be applied to analysing and demystifying the sociological reality of post-revolutionary regimes too.

Truth being concrete, we can do without the kind of schematic generalisation which says that the post-revolutionary structure of the state, parties and unions is identical with the real, direct power of the working people. This has nothing to do with scientific sociology; it is an ideological aberration. New sociological strata, new contradictions and new antagonisms will subsist in these societies for a whole historical period. They cannot be wished away as mere trifles.

We must insist that marxist analysis and critique be permanent, insist on the permanent process of the socialist revolution.

In the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, the state runs the danger of becoming bureaucratised and defending the specific interests of the new bureaucratic caste, though at the same time it defends the general interests of the new social regime. In the latter respect it is partly the state of the working people, but only by delegation and mediation (and therefore in a restricted, deformed way).

Once the ‘revolutionary’ party comes to power, the danger is that it will go through a qualitative change and play the same role towards the working people as the State does.

As for the unions – if they yield their autonomy to the state and the parties, not to mention their primary role as defenders of the working people’s interests (which is necessary even in a so-called ‘socialist’ or ‘workers’ state), the danger is that they will become a virtual mouthpiece for the bureaucracy, an appendage to the state and the parties.

None of this means that one has to declare oneself against the idea of the state, political parties and unions, and take refuge in the so-called ‘anarchist’ mythology, building models of the ‘perfect’ society which are quite arbitrary inasmuch as the appropriate historical conditions for it do not yet exist. All it means is that the indirect forms of ‘working people’s power’ must not be exclusively or systematically favoured, at the expense of the direct forms. For it is the direct forms themselves which systematically favour direct management of social life, in all spheres and at all levels, by the working people and citizens in general.

This is the system of ‘self-managed socialism’.

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In the sphere of economics, self-management means that the enterprises and the land belong to the whole nation and are managed, more and more directly, by their democratically organised working people’s collective.

Manual and intellectual workers are grouped in such a way as to be able to run their units of production by themselves.

The way they organise themselves depends on the kind of enterprise it is; on the general way in which the society as a whole has evolved; and on the level of material and cultural achievement so far reached.

This means that self-management does not spring up in a ‘perfect’ form, all at once; it is a process that stretches out over a whole historical period.

At the beginning, the working people manage those operations which do not demand a very high degree of scientific or technical specialisation; for operations that do demand this, it will be simply a question of controlling them, for some time.

Self-management cannot all at once eliminate the age-old distinction between qualified and unqualified, manual and intellectual workers, nor can it get away overnight from a position where some specialists demand an exorbitant reward for their services, out of proportion with their real labor.

However, while these specialists are necessary for the running of a large modern enterprise, they will be placed under the control of the working people’s collective and will work for the collective, just as at present they work for and under the control of the bosses.

At the base of this collective would be the Working People’s Assembly, which would elect a Working People’s Council with its own executive organ: the two latter would take
up the day to day running of the enterprise on the basis laid down by the Working People's Assembly and under the supreme control of that assembly. It must be kept in mind that the working people's collective should include all those productive personnel in the enterprise who accept this method of organisation. The only exceptions to this are the necessary specialists who cannot be part of the collective because they exclude themselves -- e.g. by demanding exceptionally high pay. Their services will still be hired at this high price, but they will work under the control of the collective as if they were working for a boss.

The labor collective will become more and more homogeneous (Marx wrote about the 'collective worker', referring to the gradual fusion between manual and intellectual labor, between technique and science, which he saw the capitalist economy evolving towards); and the totality of its members will reach a continually higher level of qualification. But this can only take place if the following two measures are applied from the beginning: a mode of payment based on the 'labor supplied'; and the permanent education of the working people -- education that is general, technical and political at the same time.

Where a society is in the process of building socialism but for some length of time cannot avoid using the methods of the money market economy, the mode of payment is an extremely important element.

For a mode of payment to be fair, it must be based on the 'labor supplied' by everyone, i.e. it must be based on the amount of wealth created by labor. This does not happen in the capitalist system, where the wage only represents a part of the wealth produced; nor does it happen in those states in which capitalism has been abolished, where pay is arbitrarily fixed, without any direct reference to the criterion of how much wealth is being produced.

Of course, the objection may be raised that this criterion (which Marx referred to in the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' as the most appropriate for the period of transition) is a difficult one to establish, since wealth is actually produced by the whole 'collective worker', which includes not only manual workers but intellectual ones as well (qualified engineers, experts, researchers, etc.); and that since mechanisation and the automation of labor have been progressing so rapidly, as science and more organically incorporated into the productive process, value and surplus-value are crystallising an increasingly complex social labor. Nevertheless, it still holds true that wealth is the product of social labor, and that the payment of everyone must be based on the criterion of the labor supplied.

It is up to the working people themselves to determine democratically, not only the organisation and operation of labor in the enterprises, but also their pay rises, on the basis of agreements reached by the enterprise and within the framework of national agreements.

It is also up to the working people to make the necessary outlay from their income to meet the needs of the whole society.

If the wage system is to be properly abolished, the criterion of 'the amount of labor supplied' has to be established. The citizens and working people themselves have to disentangle the complexity of the 'social labor' in which the labor supplied by each individual is integrated; this can be done by means of democratic decisions, from the level of the enterprise up to the highest levels of national administration.

With this method of payment differentials will not vanish immediately. But it can help to soften them, restrict their range and make sure that the benefits of an increase in productivity are fairly distributed.

It would also be the best stimulus to productivity. Each worker would feel, both that he was being paid according to his own contribution to the social labor, and that he was automatically benefitting from the general increased productivity of that social labor.

Any arbitrarily determined method of payment that has no clear relation to the amount of labor supplied and its productivity, only serves to maintain the feeling of 'unfairness' and to sap the productive effort of the working people.

There is no excuse for systems which compel the workers to increase their labor by invoking the 'ideal' of socialism and using moralistic phraseology, without giving working people the chance to really participate in management and in the wealth that issues from their labor. Those who defend such systems are the unwitting spokesmen for privileged bureaucratic layers, perpetuating the
proletarian condition of the broad mass of working people.

The other reform which has to be applied is the radical reform of education -- again from the beginning, and again with the aim of the effective abolition of the proletarian condition.

The purpose of this is to get rid of the lack of education (inculture) of the mass of working people, to end the current division between 'qualified' and 'unqualified', between 'intellectual' and 'manual' workers, between people with so-called 'qualities of leadership' and those who simply 'carry out instructions'.

In this sense, education is the pre-requisite of a truly socialist society where it is not just the forms of property which are affected but the quality of social relations too. But education also affects the evolution of productive forces and the repercussions of this evolution in turn on the qualitative composition of the working class and working people in general.

We have already stressed the fact that the dominant trend in the evolution of the modern economy has been the gradual incorporation of science into the productive process in the form of basic research, applied research and higher technology.

Hence the necessity for constantly higher qualifications from an increasing number of working people, at the expense of the number and importance of ordinary laborers.

But in the context of the capitalist system this remains simply a trend. Its accomplishment depends upon the destruction of that system and of the principles of authority, hierarchy, subordination and dualism which puts capital in control over working people.

In a society evolving towards socialism permanent education is a viable possibility for reasons which are both fundamental and conjunctural, which touch both on the essence of socialism and on the means of achieving it.

On the one hand permanent education is necessary to help the working people to manage their social life at all levels and in all spheres (the aim of socialism). In other words, a radical reform of education signifies the division of the time for social labor into two parts: a time devoted to direct, productive labor, and a time devoted to educational labor. This is the real 'cultural revolution' that has to be accomplished. Its development, its extent and its forms depend on the context in each concrete example.

Education must be considered an integral part of the social labor of every member of society; a distinction can be made between direct productive labor and educational labor, but both should be paid for by society.

On the other hand, only a constantly improving level of qualification can dynamise the economy, modernise it and increase productivity.

The permanent education of working people must be thought of in its overall essence, i.e. as being general, technical and political at one and the same time, so that not mere specialists are formed but polyvalent subjects, citizens developing in a balanced way, capable of controlling and managing their social life.

But the most important thing is to commit oneself to this from the very beginning, to start abolishing the proletarian condition in the field of education too.

Self-management is a 'global' system which cannot be limited to the economy alone or to the level of the enterprise, each acting on its own.

Ultimately a socialist economy might be composed of several large ultra-modern enterprises in each sector of the economy, within the framework of democratic social planning at a national level. But for quite some time it will be a question of dealing with a multitude of enterprises in each sector, working under varied conditions. It is this extreme disparity (among other things) which necessitates our still using the methods of the money market economy, and which shackles real planning (defined as the semi-automatic administration of balanced social development).
The latter kind of planning would suppress in real, economic terms (rather than in an arbitrary, administrative way) the after-effects of capitalist society in the areas of the market, money, payment for the amount of labor supplied, value and surplus-value -- that is, an economy which still needs to measure its progress, balance its development and stimulate productivity by means of the market, money and labor.

During the period of transition, the guiding line in the economic sphere must be to socialise a dominant sector in each branch of the economy by reason of its concentration, modernity and productivity, and to encourage the voluntary co-operation of the other, smaller enterprises with state aid of all kinds. When we use the term 'socialise', we are talking about property which is collective, and under workers' management.

Self-management is not an aggregate number of enterprises acting each for itself and in an uncontrolled competition. Self-management is integrated at the level of the economy into a national social plan, which is applied and worked out democratically. This presupposes a radical rethinking of the rigidly centralised planning in a state-owned economy.

In the economic sphere, the purpose of the plan is to determine the general conditions under which the self-managed enterprises can act and co-ordinate their efforts in relation to the ultimate interests of society as a whole. We use the term social rather than economic plan to stress the fact that the plan seeks the balanced overall evolution of the society towards socialism, and that this affects the determination of so-called economic aims; the real aim of the plan is to satisfy the real social needs of the working people and citizens, with decisions made democratically from the bottom up and vice versa, in a process of interaction which is constantly readjusting the objectives sought, even while the plan is being executed.

Therefore, there is no absolute incompatibility between self-management, the plan and the necessary utilisation of, not exactly the 'market' in the capitalist sense, but the methods of the money market economy.

The function of the plan is to establish an equilibrium between self-management and the use of such methods, and to ensure that there is a general direction towards the broadest and quickest possible development of the socialised sector of the economy.

In any such plan the economic and administrative decentralisation of the country will play a very important part.

The country should be thought of as a combination of communes and regions, divided not simply for the sake of administrative control but also because they are homogeneous, coherent economico-administrative unities which favour the balanced development of the country.

The communes and regions will also be self-managed, self-governed by the working people and citizens, and will have sufficient financial means to develop their own plan within the general framework of the national social plan.

This kind of radical reform of local government would be a very important measure for the developed countries, not just developing ones.

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Where underdeveloped countries are concerned, communal reform can be combined with agrarian reform and self-management to provide a very powerful lever so that the enormous unused mass of the peasantry can participate in local government; the stimulus will be provided by objectives which are democratically defined at commune level and which will have a direct, palpable effect on the standard of living of the local population.

This is how the overall articulation of the self-managed society takes shape, as it evolves towards an authentic socialist regime. Socialisation, not just state ownership of enterprise and farms, agrarian reform, communal reform, educational reform, democratic planning -- these are the elements of a structure which it will need a long time to achieve, but which must be tackled from the beginning, with the 'global' conception of them as the point of departure.

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In the light of all this, the struggle for socialism would appear to be inseparable from the struggle for self-management. The self-

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management strategy, both before and after taking power, is the only one capable of mobilising large masses of citizens and working people, as it offers them effective participation in the revolutionary process through all its stages.

Parties, unions and governments which refer to the working class, to ‘the people’, to socialism, must devote themselves to the task of getting this participation to work, so that the revolution ‘begun’ will end in victory, and so that afterwards a new regime will be built that avoids the disastrous results of bureaucratic sclerosis.

It is true that the masses aspire to ‘direct democracy’, that they seek to suppress the multiform alienation which they are subjected to in their social life. But existing social relations are based not merely on having but also on knowing and being able, all of which are hoarded by small minorities; they are based on centuries-old concepts of hierarchy, authority, on the dualism between ‘leaders’ and ‘led’. This means that the masses are unable to build social self-management immediately, by themselves, at all levels of social life. For some time they will need the mediation of political parties, unions and other organs, just as the society as a whole will need, for some time, a central power, a ‘state’.

But the real objective of the social revolution is not just to change property relations, but to change the quality of social relations, the real status of productive man and the citizen in society. Effective steps towards this have to be undertaken from the beginning: the progressive application of socialist self-management, in all spheres and at all levels of social life.

This process is the apprenticeship of socialism, defined as the increasingly direct management of social life by its citizens and working people.

Self-management is the upbringing of socialism and the upbringing of itself; it teaches itself and perfects itself in being applied.

The application of self-management must not be postponed on the excuse that the working people and citizens are still not fit to manage their social life and that one has to go by stages: a first stage under the state, parties and unions which assume the essence of the masses’ power while the latter content themselves with a measure of control; and a second stage during which the masses will be ‘instructed’ and introduced to the tasks of management.

This kind of reasoning belongs with the bureaucratic deformation, where power is conquered in the name of socialism and the masses -- and inevitably leads to the stratification of a bureaucracy which gradually becomes omnipotent.

The formation of a bureaucracy is a barrier across the path from a state where the masses merely control to one where they manage.

Self-management is the most direct, the most stubborn enemy of the bureaucracy, the negation of the bureaucracy par excellence.

The whole barbaric past of humanity is based on exploitation and the subordination of some people by others. This fact continues to condition our behaviour, consciously or unconsciously, quite independently of our adherence to this or that ideology. There is almost overwhelming resistance to the birth of new social relations abolishing authoritarianism, hierarchisation, subjugation, dualism.

Some of this resistance comes from the ranks of socialists and revolutionaries. This is why the struggle for self-managed socialism will be a ‘long march’, but an absolutely necessary one.

The task for those who claim to be the vanguard is to ensure that the new ‘power’ is not centralised in the hands of an ‘elite’ in the state, parties and unions, but that it is diffused as widely as possible among the mass of working people and citizens. Their task is to give the utmost systematic, clear and conscious encouragement to all the creative initiative through which the masses express their profound aspiration to become the true subjects of their own history, to manage their social life directly, by themselves.

Only then will there be a future for socialism ‘with a human face’ -- and this is the only kind of socialism which will be worth the long, persevering, sacrificial struggle ahead.