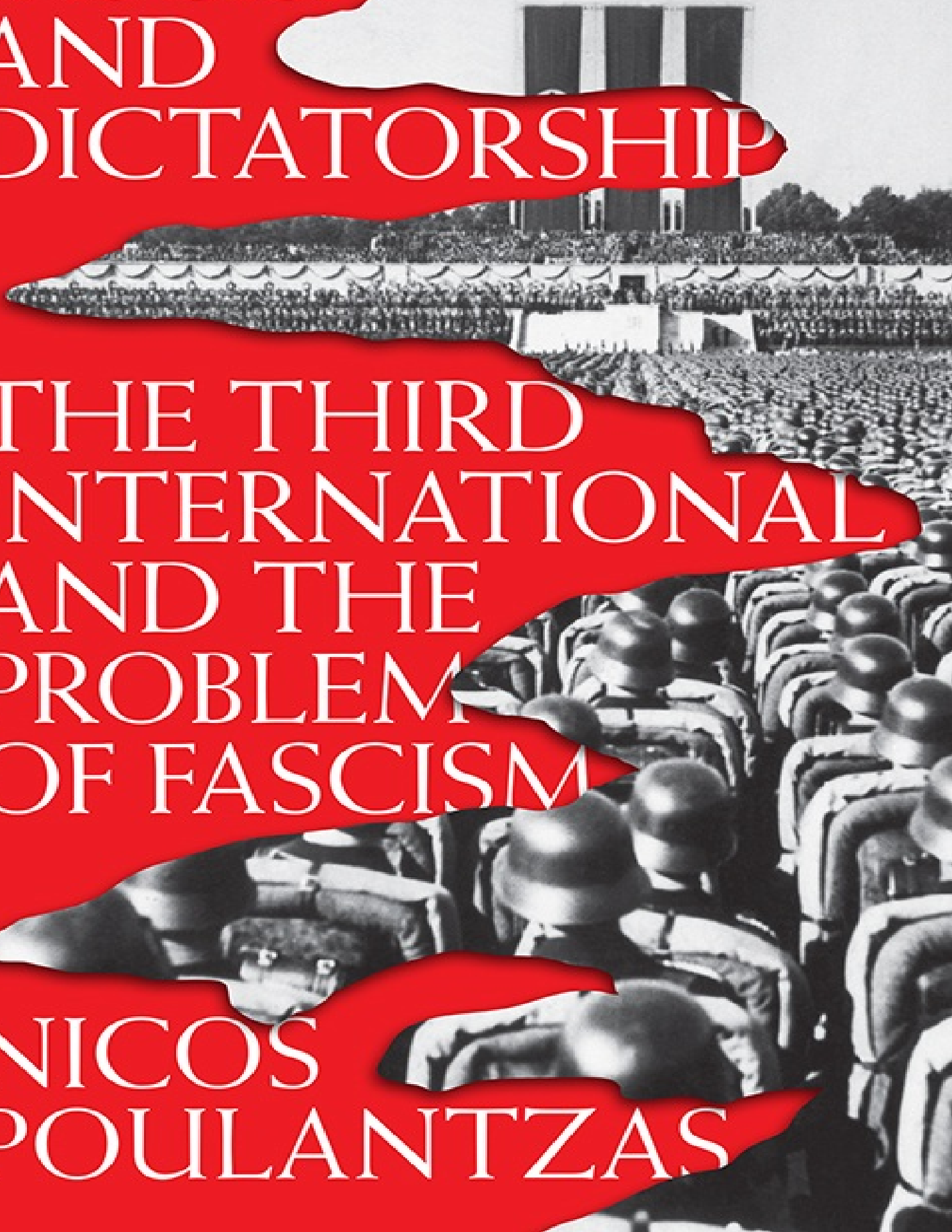
FASCISM AND DICTATORSHIP



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NICOS POULANTZAS

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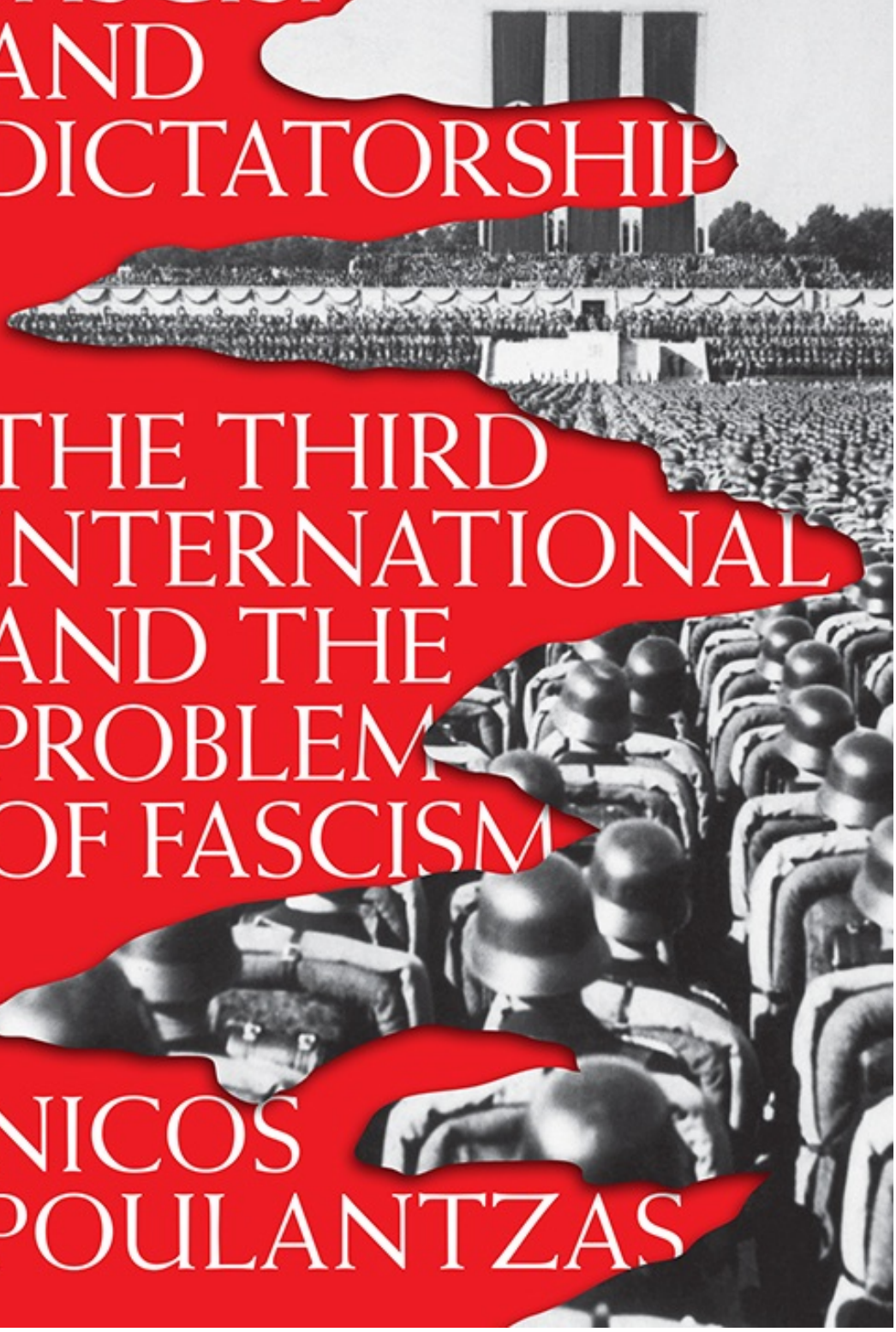

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NICOS POULANTZAS

Fascism and Dictatorship

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The Third International and the Problem of Fascism

Nicos Poulantzas

Foreword by Dylan Riley

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Foreword by Dylan Riley

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Foreword

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FASCISM AND DICTATORSHIP IN CONTEXT

Why would a Greek Communist (Poulantzas had joined the KKE as a student in Paris) write a long and difficult book about inter-war fascism in the heady days of the late sixties?[1] To answer this question requires placing the work at the intersection of two major 'external' historical events, and Poulantzas's own intellectual development. *Fascism and Dictatorship* was written in the aftermath of the 1967 military coup in Greece, and the student uprising of May 1968 in Paris. While the coup prompted him to carefully specify a typology of authoritarian regimes in reaction to what he saw as the erroneous but widely held view on the Greek Left that the regime was fascist, the May events brought home the urgency of an explicit treatment of revolutionary strategy.[2]

Fascism and Dictatorship, in addition to its connection to the conjuncture of the late sixties, must also be understood in relationship to its author's intellectual biography. Following his legal training, Poulantzas's initial project was to blend existentialism with the philosophy of law. It was only in the later sixties that he emerged as a theorist of the State, with the publication of *Political Power and Social Classes*. In this text, Poulantzas dealt with fascism in the context of some extremely interesting, but highly abstract, remarks on the concept of 'totalitarianism'. However, its main thrust was to establish the 'Fundamental Characteristics of the Capitalist State', which Poulantzas treated in an openly functionalist way, arguing that all capitalist States had the dual task of preventing the political organization of the dominated classes, and of organizing the dominant class.[3] In part because of his ambition to identify the common features of all these States, Poulantzas neglected the problem of explaining their different forms. In particular, he never posed the question of the conditions under which capitalist societies might be ruled through dictatorship or democracy, to paraphrase Barrington Moore. *Fascism and Dictatorship* attempted to address part of this problem: to explain the conditions under which capitalist classes

might abandon parliamentary procedures and embrace dictatorship.

FASCISM AND DICTATORSHIP: THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL AND THE PROBLEM OF FASCISM (THE ARGUMENT)

Poulantzas's book has three foci. It seeks to establish the causes and consequences of fascism in Italy and Germany; it seeks to locate fascism as a type of capitalist State, and finally it seeks to analyse the relationship between the rise of fascism and Comintern policy in the twenties and thirties.[4] These issues are linked, since, for Poulantzas, the Comintern's incorrect *economistic* understanding of fascism underlay a series of strategic errors, which were in turn part of the causal process by which fascism came to power. Accordingly, *Fascism and Dictatorship* continually shifts between two levels of analysis: it is both a political sociology of the rise of fascism, and a running critique of Marxist theories of it.

Fascism and Dictatorship unfolds in seven parts. The text opens with two introductory studies: 'The Period of Fascism', situating the phenomenon in relationship to the geopolitics of inter-war Europe, and 'Fascism and the Class Struggle', which identifies, within the international context, the specific pattern of class struggle that produced fascist regimes. Following these relatively brief sections are four longer analyses devoted to the connection between fascism and social classes: 'Fascism and the Dominant Classes', 'Fascism and the Working Class', 'Fascism and the Petty Bourgeoisie', and 'Fascism and the Countryside'. The book ends with 'The Fascist State', which offers a typology of the exceptional capitalist State and locates fascist regimes within it.

What is the central argument? Poulantzas claims that fascist regimes arose in inter-war Europe from the political disintegration of the German and Italian dominant classes, combined with a failed revolutionary breakthrough by the working class. In short, the two principle classes of capitalism – the major owners of means of production and industrial workers – failed in their respective bids to establish hegemony over German and Italian society. This double failure set free small producers, traders and salaried employees (the petty bourgeoisie) to act as an autonomous social force in the fascist parties. (Small agrarian producers and the agricultural proletariat played a similar, but less important, role for Poulantzas.) Fascism then emerged as the political organization of the petty bourgeoisie, carrying it to power, and allowing it to act as the 'class in charge of the State'. In this capacity it reestablished the hegemony of big monopoly capital before retreating from the scene as the fascist party itself became increasingly subordinated by both the State and capital. If this is the

general claim, how is it developed in Poulantzas's book?

The Period of Fascism

Poulantzas, in a modification of Horkheimer's famous dictum, writes that 'he who does not wish to discuss imperialism … should stay silent on the subject of fascism'.[5] The rise of imperialism, which Poulantzas sees as rooted in the emergence of large monopoly enterprises (monopoly capital) whose productive capacities outstrip the domestic market, requires an interventionist rather than liberal State and produces a new 'dominant ideology' shot through with Social Darwinism.[6] This transition to the imperialist stage of capitalism forms the general context within which fascist regimes arise.

While this transformation from liberal to imperialist capitalism was general, fascist regimes emerged only in Italy and Germany, defined as the next two weakest links of the 'imperialist chain' after Russia.[7] Because Bismarck, and therefore the landed aristocracy, unified Germany, the bourgeoisie, although economically strong, remained politically weak.[8] Furthermore, agriculture remained backward; after the war, productivity in this sector reattained 1913 levels only in 1929. These internal problems made access to world markets particularly important for German industry. And yet, again as a consequence of its 'lateness', Germany was 'prevented from carving out a colonial empire for herself'.[9] In sum, Germany needed colonies but faced seemingly insuperable obstacles to securing them. 'Germany's advanced "economic" development was one of the basic elements of this weakness', because, given its limited home market, German industry's hothouse development only exacerbated the country's economic disequilibrium.[10] In Italy the bourgeoisie was economically weak but politically strong. Unlike Germany, where the landed aristocracy unified the country, in Italy the bourgeoisie did so. However, unification 'could only be accomplished if the bourgeoisie had *decisive political weight* over the Southern landowners'.[11] Thus, the Italian bourgeoisie paid for its precocious hegemony by maintaining 'feudalism' in the south. The southern *agrari* allowed the northern bourgeoisie to run the State as long as it did not pursue agrarian reform. In any case, the economic consequences of this different political configuration were the same as in Germany: a restricted home market together with a highly State-dependent industrial sector.

The two cases, to summarize Poulantzas's argument, are similar in their position within the imperialist chain of States. Both were latecomers to the imperial game, and their leaderships pursued strategies of development that tended to exacerbate rather than ameliorate the disequilibrium between industrial

production and domestic demand.

Poulantzas then turns to an analysis and critique of Comintern theories of fascism. Initially, the Third International attributed the rise of fascism in Italy to economic backwardness, and the Comintern confidently concluded that fascism would not come to Germany.[12] When this prediction proved false, the Comintern argued, in flat contradiction to its previous analysis of Italy, that national socialism was an expression of the 'rotten-ripe' character of German capitalism.[13] These incompatible explanations (fascism growing out of both backwardness and rotten ripeness) expressed an underlying economism that tried to link fascism directly to a particular stage of capitalist development. (This point is much the same as Trotksy's.)

Economism vitiated Communist Party strategy throughout the inter-war period. In the early twenties the economistic interpretation of imperialism led to the conclusion that 'revolution was on the agenda in the European imperialist countries'. But this analysis lacked any specific understanding of 'the concrete conjuncture of the class struggle'.[14] Economism continued during the rightist period of 'relative stabilization' in the mid-twenties, but was used to make an opposite political argument. The Communist parties had shifted away from 'ultra-leftism' to an equally debilitating 'ultra-rightism'. Finally, after the Sixth Congress of 1928, which canonized the notorious idea of equivalence between social democracy and fascism, the Comintern declared the opening of a 'Third Period', in which revolution was again held to be on the agenda everywhere.

These theoretical confusions led to a series of strategic misunderstandings: fascism appeared variously as a passing episode, a positive development indicating the weakness of the bourgeoisie, a counter-revolution against a proletarian advance or, finally, a necessary stage in the development of socialism.[15] The correct approach to this problem, according to Poulanzas, was Lenin's. He had emphasized that in the period of imperialism, both interstate and interclass conflicts would be heightened; from this starting point he drew the conclusion that class struggle would be particularly decisive in determining outcomes for all the countries in the 'Imperialist chain'. Thus, Lenin explained the conditions under which the contingency of class struggle would be of decisive importance. By thus inscribing a theory of the specific importance of class struggle within a particular stage of capitalist development, he could break with economism, lay the foundations for an adequate theoretical and strategic response to the challenge of fascism, and retain impeccable Marxist credentials.

The second section of Poulantzas's book focuses directly on class struggle. It contains two brief chapters that define the character of the political crisis to which fascism was a response, and sketch out a periodization.

The first of these chapters specifies the fascist State as a type of exceptional capitalist State. The author rejects both Thalheimer and Gramsci's analysis of fascism as Bonapartism or Caeserism respectively; they incorrectly explain fascism as the result of a stalemate among the working class and the bourgeoisie. Poulantzas holds instead that 'the working class had already been thoroughly defeated by the time fascism came to power'.[16] For Poulantzas, as for Trotsky, fascism does not correspond to a class 'equilibrium', but to a total defeat of the working class.

Finally, Poulantzas provides a schematic periodization through which all fascist regimes pass: *The period from the start of the process to the point of 'no return', the period from the point of no return until fascism comes into power, the first period of fascism in power,* and finally *the period of fascist stabilization.* As I explain below, each of these periods is associated with a specific balance of power among the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie and big monopoly capital.

Fascism and the Dominant Classes

The core of *Fascism and Dictatorship* consists of parts three through six, which are devoted to explaining the relationship between fascism and social classes. Each section begins with a general conceptual discussion, followed by two case studies. Poulantzas's argument can be thought of as three superimposed curves of hegemonic development: a descending curve that describes the development of the working class as it retreats from its ambitious revolutionary goals of the immediate post-war period to increasingly economic demands, an ascending curve that describes the development of monopoly capital as it moves from an economic corporate phase to a more political one, and a parabola that describes the hegemonic rise and subsequent fall of the petty bourgeoisie. Intersecting the three curves are two key turning points around which Poulantzas's narrative is organized: the point of no return and the seizure of power.

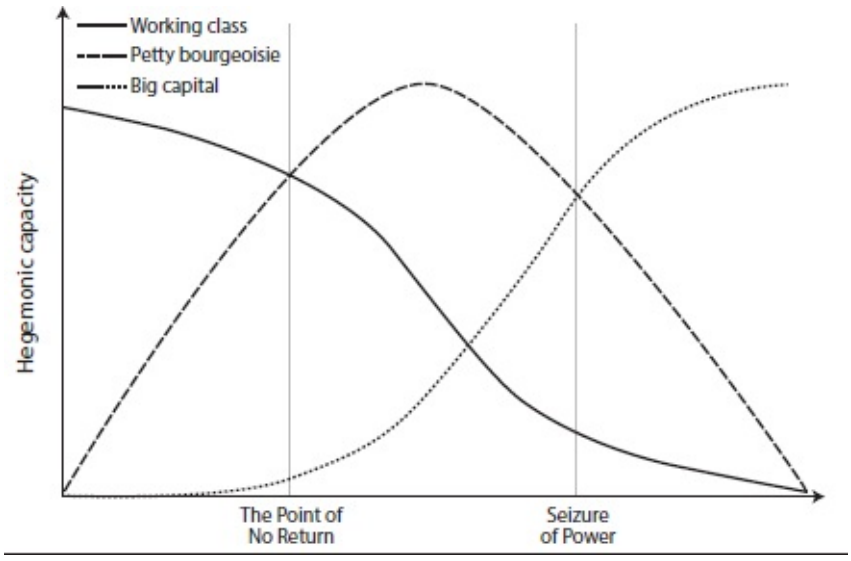

Figure 1. The Central Argument of *Fascism and Dictatorship*

Poulantzas argues that fascism, in the first place, 'corresponds to' a crisis of hegemony within the dominant class. A functioning capitalist State requires a specific sector or fraction of the capitalist class to assume a dominant political position, which determines the character of the 'power bloc'. As he puts it,

> the power bloc, like every other alliance, does not generally consist of classes and fractions of 'equal importance', sharing the crumbs of power among themselves. It can only function on a regular basis in so far as the dominant class or fraction of a class imposes *its own particular domination* on the other members of the alliance in power, in short in so far as it succeeds in imposing its *hegemony* and cementing them together under its leadership.[17]

During the 'conjuncture of fascism' this process of bloc formation fails. Instead, the dominant class's relationship to its erstwhile political representatives frays, while multiple informal channels of communication between the dominant class and the State proliferate, leading to a split between 'formal' and 'real' power.[18] Eventually, under the aegis of fascism, a new hegemonic fraction of the dominant class emerges: 'big monopoly capital' or 'finance capital', around which a new power bloc forms.[19]

On this basis, Poulantzas attempts to more closely specify the relationship between fascism and the dominant class in different periods. In the first period, *from the start of the process to the point of no return*, fascism forms a loose alliance with some members of the dominant class; however, the dominant class as a whole prefers other parties to the fascist party. In the second period, *from the point of no return until fascism comes to power*, the party presides over an alliance of the petty bourgeoisie and big monopoly capital. In the third period, *the first period of fascism in power*, the petty bourgeoisie 'makes its debut as the

class in charge of the State', but real power lies in the hands of monopoly capital. Finally, in the *period of the stabilization of fascism*, 'monopoly capital … establishes its hegemony and achieves the status of ruling class'.[20] To summarize Poulantzas's general analysis here, fascism arises from a crisis of hegemony within the dominant class; furthermore, it fulfills the function of raising big monopoly capital to the dominant position, around which the power bloc reforms through the conduit of a period of petty bourgeois leadership.

How does Poulantzas use this scheme to understand the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy? Consider first the German case. According to the author, there were three main conflicts between 'the classes and fractions of classes in power' in the period leading up to the collapse of the Bruening government in 1930.[21] The first conflict was between 'the bourgeoisie and the large scale landowners'.[22] Here, there were three major sources of tension: the overall decline of agriculture as a share of Germany's GDP; the government fixing of rent on land, which led to a transfer of surplus from agriculture to industry; and the growing indebtedness of big agriculturists to finance capital as mechanization proceeded.[23] A second conflict pitted big monopoly capital against 'medium capital'.[24] A third economic conflict occurred within big monopoly capital between banking capital and industry.[25]

Nazi economic policy, according to Poulantzas, was able to establish the hegemony of big monopoly capital while at the same time providing substantial benefits to medium capital through the general stimulus to the economy provided by re-armament, and through specific policies designed to protect smaller firms.[26] Breaking with the official Comintern definition of fascism as the 'dictatorship of the most reactionary, chauvinist, and imperialist elements of finance capital', Poulantzas argues that fascism in Germany in fact was based on a reconstituted power bloc, 'an effective *reorganization* and redistribution of the balance of forces among the dominant classes and fractions'.[27] Indeed, as Poulantzas points out, this reorganization was made possible by the rapid tempo of economic development under the Nazis. Thus, as he writes,

> [Nazism] represented industrial development, technological innovation, and an increase in the productivity of labour – but all while promoting the *expanded reproduction* of the conditions of capitalist production, that is reinforcing class exploitation and domination.[28]

German fascism, in a basic economic sense, was clearly a progressive development for Poulantzas.

Poulantzas then turns to discuss the political crisis that he sees as rooted in these intra-dominant class conflicts. During the early twenties, big monopoly

capital established its economic domination but failed to secure political hegemony. Instead, each fraction of capital pursued its interests through different parties and ministries. The brief Cuno ministry was ‘a direct emanation from big capital’; the Centre Party, the Democrats and the Bavarian Catholics represented light industry; the large landowners organized themselves in the German Nationalists.[29] Underneath this fragmented political scene, direct economic pressure groups and paramilitary organizations sought to influence the executive.[30]

The analysis then turns to ‘the ideological crisis affecting the power alliance’.[31] Germany’s path to capitalism, running through Bismarck’s ‘revolution from above’, blocked the German bourgeoisie ‘from *forming a specific ideology to dominate the German social formation*’.[32] In short, there was only a weak tradition of German liberalism. When the possibility to establish a liberal ideology appeared during the Weimar period ‘it was already too late’ for three reasons: the catastrophic humiliation of the Versailles treaty, the threat of revolution embodied in the November uprising, and the general transition away from liberalism accompanying the rise of monopoly capitalism.[33] As a result, an ideological crisis ensued within the dominant classes, pitting technocratic imperialist principles against feudal romantic philosophy. This ideological struggle within the power bloc became ever more acute during the first period of the rise of fascism.[34]

Fascism resolved these various economic, political and ideological conflicts. As Poulantzas states,

> With the coming to power of national socialism, the political hegemony of big capital was secured, the dislocation between political hegemony and economic domination was resolved, and the growth of its [big capital’s] economic domination accelerated.[35]

This occurred in two periods: a first in which the petty bourgeoisie acted as the ‘*ruling class*’, and a second in which the party was subordinated to the State and the petty bourgeoisie shifted to the position of a *‘supporting class’*.[36]

The economic conflicts within the power bloc in Italy were more severe than in Germany for two reasons. First, the split between big capital and the large landholders was deeper since Italian agriculture was truly semi-feudal, and regional divisions between the big agrarians and the industrialists were more pronounced.[37] Furthermore, the conflict between medium and big capital was sharper, primarily because medium capital was stronger in Italy than in Germany.[38] Finally, the conflict within ‘big capital’ between banks and industry was also more severe because banking retained a more speculative character in

the Latin country.[39]

Due to this balance of forces, Poulantzas claims that resistance to the hegemony of big capital mounted by both medium capital and the landowners was stronger in Italy than in Germany. Accordingly, parliamentary government, here implicitly equated with the interests of small and medium capital, lasted longer and was abolished definitively only in 1925.[40] Furthermore, there was no dramatic rupture between the political representatives of medium capital and their social base, as there was in Germany. The rise of Italian fascism was much more continuous and gradual than national socialism, reflecting the generally weaker position of monopoly capital in Italy.[41]

Poulantzas also emphasizes Italy's distinctiveness in the realm of ideology. Mazzinian bourgeois liberals, not landowners, unified the Italian peninsula, meaning that liberalism was stronger throughout the twenties and thirties in Italy than in Germany. The ideological crisis of the 1920s in Italy thus pitted a transformed liberal ideology against a Catholic feudal ideology with very little input from the agrarians.[42]

Fascism, to summarize, arose in the context of a particularly fragmented dominant class in both Italy and Germany. During the period of stabilization it reconstituted the power bloc around big monopoly capital – but the precise nature of this transition was determined by the strength of big monopoly capital itself. Where it was strong, as in Germany, the transition was abrupt and radical. Where big monopoly capital was weaker, as in Italy, the transition was more gradual.

Fascism and the Working Class

Part four of *Fascism and Dictatorship* traces the relationship between working class mobilization and fascism. This process follows the reverse course from the drive to hegemony that describes the arc of big monopoly capital. Thus, the rise of fascism corresponds to 'a significant failure by the working class to achieve the political objectives imposed by and attainable in a situation of open crisis'.[43] This failure leads the working class to revert to a series of economic demands while abandoning broader political engagements; at the same time, 'the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the working class assumes an increasingly political nature'.[44]

Poulantzas then traces the 'ideological crisis' within the revolutionary organizations of the working class. The rise of fascism 'corresponds' to a split between revolutionary organizations (tacitly equated with the Italian and German Communist parties) and the working class. Furthermore, defeat of the

revolutionary movement creates an ideological crisis in which petty bourgeois ideologies come to inflect revolutionary organizations manifesting themselves in anarchism, spontaneism, putschist jacquerie and 'left opportunism'.[45]

The analysis then turns to a discussion of the role of social democracy in the rise of fascism. Poulantzas argues that the 'rise of fascism characteristically saw the persistence and extension of the influence of social democracy on the working class'.[46]

During its seizure of power, fascist groups repress working class organizations physically; but after the establishment of the regime, 'repression is always governed by its ideological function'.[47] This ideology goes through two phases. In the first phase, 'the working class side of fascist ideology is very strong'.[48] In the second, this 'left wing of fascism' is defeated and the new authentically petty bourgeois ideology of corporatism replaces it.[49]

The process of working class defeat in Germany begins with the crushing of the Spartacist uprising in 1918 and 1919 and continues through the early twenties until the 1923 Cuno strikes.[50] The defeat of this last action opened a period of stabilization with real, but not revolutionary, gains on the part of workers: universal suffrage, the eight-hour day, factory committees, rights of association for agricultural workers and basic democratic liberties.[51] This period lasted until 1927, when fascism began to emerge as a mass movement. After this point, and with increasing intensity following the 1929 crisis, the working class itself underwent a two-fold ideological crisis. First, the KPD (Germany's Communist Party) began to behave like a social democratic party; at the same time, the working class was influenced by 'the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie in revolt'.[52] The NSDAP (Germany's Nazi Party) exploited this degeneration by making seemingly radical appeals to the working class through the paramilitary SA and in the fascist unions.[53]

Poulantzas's analysis then turns to a consideration of the policies of the SPD (Germany's Social Democratic Party) and the KPD. Both parties suffered, in different ways, from 'economism'. In the SPD this manifested in a shift toward a purely economic struggle, the refusal to use the *Reichsbanner*, and the party's obscene collaboration with the NSDAP during the Festival of Labour on 1 May 1933.[54]

The KPD, in contrast, laboured under the shibboleth of 'social fascism': the idea that social democracy was the left wing of fascism. This prevented the party from establishing 'a rank and file united front' in which cooperation could have been built between the social democratic masses and the KPD.[55] Theoretically,

Poulantzas argues that this strategic error was rooted in 'economist catastrophism', which, it was held, 'would bring the "majority" of the working class into the ranks of the KPD'.[56]

Poulantzas then turns to a more direct analysis of the relationship between national socialism and the working class. In the period before the Nazi seizure of power, the party had a weak foothold, especially among organized workers.[57] Still, with its 'left wing' (the Strasser brothers) the NSDAP was able to neutralize working class militancy.[58] Furthermore, during their seizure of power, the Nazis concentrated on the political organizations of the Left but left the unions largely intact.

During the regime, Poulantzas argues, Nazism offered full employment to the working class and successfully pursued a strategy of internal differentiation by encouraging wage dispersion.[59] Importantly, the Nazis maintained a union apparatus indicating that 'the bourgeois State can in principle do without an ideological apparatus of the "party" type especially intended for the working class', but 'it is absolutely incapable of doing without a "trade-union" type apparatus'.[60] (Had Poulantzas lived into the neoliberal era, one might wonder whether he would have retained this view.)

There was an 'open crisis' in Italy and perhaps 'an objectively revolutionary situation' in the immediate post-war period, with land and factory seizures and the flowering of soviet organizations across the country.[61] Yet here the collapse of the revolutionary wave did not lead to a period of relative stabilization, as in Germany in the twenties, but directly to the rise of fascism.

Two distinctive features of Italy stand out. First, the 'politico-ideological crisis' of the working class did not take the form of a reformist and bureaucratized social democratic party. Rather, in Italy the crisis manifested itself in revolutionary syndicalism and socialist 'maximalism'. Syndicalism tried to develop a political strategy resting directly on unions and circumventing the institution of the party. Poulantzas emphasizes the influence of Sorel's ideas on a group of radical socialist intellectuals in the first decade of the twentieth century, and registers the trajectory of many of these figures from socialism to fascism.[62] Maximalism, in contrast, was similar to the 'economic catastrophism' of the KPD: an expectant waiting for the revolutionary cataclysm, combined with a complete absence of concrete preparation.[63]

Poulantzas then turns to the strategic errors of the PCI (Italy's Communist Party), which he divides into two: the Bordiga group espoused *infantile leftism*, a less dire condition than the 'sham ultra-leftism' of the KPD. Still, like the KPD

in the period after 1923, the Bordiga wing of the PCI failed to understand that after 1921, the Italian working class was on the defensive.[64] Poulantzas has a more positive view of Gramsci, who 'seems to have understood the correct relationship between economic and political struggle'.[65] Generally, however, the Comintern in the twenties was unable to clarify 'the relationship between the economic and the political struggles'.[66] The key problem here is that it failed to emphasize the strategic importance of workers' councils as the organizational link between economics and politics.[67]

Poulantzas then provides a brief sketch of the working class under fascism, pointing out that the general strategy of Italian fascism was similar to its German counterpart: fragmentation. But the author also notes the relative failure of Italian fascism to penetrate the working class.[68] Poulantzas's Italian chapter is then followed by a strange and opaque appendix devoted to the USSR and the Comintern, whose central claim is that 'economism' and the 'abandonment of proletarian internationalism' were a result of the consolidation of a 'Soviet bourgeoisie' during the late twenties.[69]

Fascism and the Petty Bourgeoisie

The fifth section of Poulantzas's book examines the relationship between fascism and the petty bourgeoisie: a notoriously thorny social category. He begins by distinguishing between the 'old' and the 'new' petty bourgeoisie. The first consists of small-scale producers and traders: historical remainders that derive from pre-capitalist modes of production. Alongside it is a 'new' petty bourgeoisie made up of 'non-productive salaried employees' and government workers.[70] The two groups form part of the same social class not because of their common position in the relations of production, but because 'their different economic positions generally have the same effects at the political and ideological level'.[71] Since this class issues from different economic positions and becomes a political actor through ideological and political processes, it is strategically central because its political orientation depends on the organizations, strategies and ideological struggles of the two main social classes in capitalist society: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.[72]

This does not mean that the petty bourgeoisie is, ideologically, a blank slate. It is attracted instead to three ideological elements: status quo anti-capitalism, which demands equal access to private property in the case of the old petty bourgeoisie, and income redistribution and 'social justice' in the case of the new petty bourgeoisie; the myth of the ladder, which takes the form of a demand for a

renewal of the elites in the case of the old petty bourgeoisie, and of meritocracy in the new petty bourgeoisie; and, finally, power fetishism, a belief in a neutral and beneficent State which stands above social classes.[73]

After this general discussion, Poulantzas locates the petty bourgeoisie more precisely in the historical context of the inter-war period. The period of monopoly capitalism produces an economic crisis in both the old and new petty bourgeoisie. The old petty bourgeoisie is threatened with pauperization as competition from larger, more competitive, producers drives out small business; the new petty bourgeoisie, in contrast, expands because of the need for educated workers in both State and private enterprise – nonetheless, this group also suffers from increased unemployment.[74]

In the political and ideological crisis immediately after the war, 'a large part of the petty bourgeoisie clearly swings over to the side of the working class'.[75] However, this alliance fails because of the defeat of the working class in the objectively revolutionary situation following the First World War, 'and the lack of a specific communist policy of alliance with the petty bourgeoisie'. The petty bourgeoisie then shifts its support toward social democracy during the period of 'stabilization'.[76] Subsequently, the petty bourgeoisie becomes disillusioned with social democracy, as well, because 'it fails to defend its [the petty bourgeoisie's] interests'.[77]

As the petty bourgeoisie detaches itself from the working class following the latter's descending hegemonic arc, it becomes available for a new alliance with big monopoly capital. However, initially this alliance fails because the political organizations of the dominant class are themselves undergoing a crisis of representation. The existing bourgeois parties thus, just like the working class parties, are unable to incorporate the petty bourgeoisie.

The fascist party emerges as the organizational vehicle of the petty bourgeoisie. The party 'represents' the petty bourgeoisie in a particular way, however. Its ties to the class are organizational and ideological rather than based on 'real class interests'. In the first place, the petty bourgeoisie constitutes the overwhelming majority of the staff of the fascist party. This, claims Poulantzas, 'distinguishes them from the "bourgeois" parties which traditionally represent the petty bourgeoisie'.[78] Secondly, the fascist parties represent the petty bourgeoisie 'in the ideological sense',[79] meaning they espouse status quo anti-capitalism and power fetishism.

The 'historical role of fascism' in any case is to 'achieve an alliance between big capital and the petty bourgeoisie'.[80] Fascism plays this role by replacing 'the

dominant bourgeois ideology' with a 'petty bourgeois ideological sub-ensemble', which 'cement[s] back together the social formations in question'.[81] This replacement is possible because of a deep compatibility between petty bourgeois ideology and the ideology of the dominant class in the period of imperialism. Poulantzas identifies eleven points of compatibility ranging from 'statolatry' based on the petty bourgeoisie's 'power fetishism' and the dominant class's need for an interventionist State in the age of imperialism, to a corporatism that is based on both the 'guild utopia' of the petty bourgeoisie and the subordination of medium to large capital which reflects the interests of big monopoly capital.[82]

Fascism has a two-fold economic effect on the petty bourgeoisie. By promoting the interests of big capital, fascism harms both the traditional and the new petty bourgeoisie because it exacerbates the crisis that was already underway after the war. However, one of the most important developments in the fascist period is the expansion of State employment, which partially compensates for the economic pressures created by concentration of capital. As Poulantzas argues, 'this was one of the reasons for the support the petty bourgeoisie gave to the fascist State'.[83] Indeed, he suggests that there were even tendencies within fascism for the petty bourgeoisie to 'develop as a *State bourgeoisie*'.[84]

The historical material in this section is briefer, and more sketchily presented than for the other classes. The old petty bourgeoisie in Germany substantially declines in the early decades of the twentieth century, while the new petty bourgeoisie fluctuates between seventeen and fourteen percent of the population between 1907 and 1933.[85] During the Wilhelmine period a '"transformed" feudal ideology' dominates the petty bourgeoisie as a whole.[86] In the period from the war's end until 1923, 'many petty bourgeoisie … went over to communism', but thereafter they shifted first to social democracy, and then to national socialism.[87]

The Italian petty bourgeoisie differs ideologically from its German counterpart because instead of a 'transformed feudal ideology', the petty bourgeoisie first rallied to a 'Garibaldian' ideology, then subsequently to communism after the war, followed by social democracy and fascism.[88] Due to the lack of feudal ideological residues in Italy, fascist ideology takes a different form than in Germany, with 'the relative absence of the antisemitic and racist aspect' and the greater importance of liberal nationalism.[89]

Poulantzas also argues that the social makeup of the Italian fascist party diverges from national socialism. While 'the medium and higher level *cadres* of

the party … were overwhelmingly drawn from the petty bourgeoisie', because of its organizational links to the working class and because of its ideology, 'the fascist party had a higher proportion of members both of really bourgeois origin and of proletarian origin than the national socialist party'.[90]

Fascism and the Countryside

The sixth section of Poulantzas's book addresses the connection between fascism and the rural class struggle. The analysis is broadly parallel to that of the petty bourgeoisie. In the period immediately after the war, the agricultural proletariats of both Germany and Italy shift to the Left; but as a consequence of the failure of either the socialists or the communists to strike an alliance with the agrarian lower classes on the basis of land reform, these groups subsequently move right. The fascist parties make demagogic appeals to rural direct producers on the basis of an ideology of the defence of the countryside against the cities.[91]

Fascism in power, however, does nothing for peasants or for the rural proletariat; the regimes subordinate the interests of small holders to those of large owners and monopoly capital, and the agrarian proletariat suffers wage cuts in both cases.[92]

The Fascist State

The final section of Poulantzas's book locates the fascist State as a type of capitalist State. Fascist States are capitalist States because they retain 'the relative separation of the economic from the political, and the relative autonomy of the State from the dominant class and fractions' characteristic of all such States.[93] The fascist State, further, is an exceptional capitalist State because it acts to 'reorganize hegemony and the power bloc' through a suspension of the relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatus from the repressive State apparatuses, and the relative autonomy of different ideological apparatuses from one another.[94] Finally, the fascist State is a particular type of exceptional capitalist State; its specificity consists in the existence of a party formally outside the State that pressures the State apparatus proper, as well as the emergence of a political police within the administration.[95] The party has the task of reconsolidating the hegemony of the dominant class, as well as reconsolidating a State apparatus weakened by the dislocation of formal and real power in the period prior to the rise of fascism.

The case studies in this section establish the decisive importance of the fascist parties in both Italy and Germany. Their role, according to Poulantzas, is both to reestablish the unity of the State apparatus, and to organize the alliance between

the petty bourgeoisie and big monopoly capital characteristic of fascism. Poulantzas then interprets the declining importance of the party as a result of the declining importance of the petty bourgeoisie within the fascist power bloc as big monopoly capital increasingly comes to the fore.

Such is the general argument of *Fascism and Dictatorship*. It places the rise of fascism in the context of three intersecting arcs of hegemonic development, and assigns these regimes the role of establishing the hegemony of big monopoly capital. Distinctively, Poulantzas explains fascism as the result of a political crisis affecting all classes of capitalist society, not as an expression or tool of monopoly capital.

How was this analysis received?

FASCISM AND DICTATORSHIP: IMMEDIATE RECEPTION

Initial reactions to Poulantzas's book were mixed. American social science proved utterly unable to grasp the book's arguments. In a snarky and silly review, A. James Gregor praised Poulantzas's recognition of high growth under fascism, but concluded that the author had failed to recognize that his analysis was incompatible with 'Marxism'.[96] A more good-natured reaction in *Contemporary Sociology* was equally intellectually empty.[97] Part of the problem is that these readers assumed that a 'Marxist' approach to fascism must attempt to establish a close personal link between fascist movements and parties and major industrialists. Thus, to the extent that Poulantzas rejected this framing, he must not really be Marxist. This reception is interesting in what it shows about the intellectual context of the late seventies. For scholars of my generation it's tempting to regard this decade as a distant golden age of Marxist theorizing and debate. But competence in Marxist debates on the State was quite rare even at that time, and was mostly the purview of younger, less established scholars. As these reactions show, it was common for professional social scientists to demonstrate in published work total incompetence in dealing with such arguments.

Anson G. Rabinbach, one of the cofounders of *New German Critique*, offered a much more serious analysis, together with a precise encapsulation of Poulantzas's political project. Rabinbach claimed that Poulantzas's book was an unsuccessful combination of Marxified structural functionalism with Maoist voluntarism. He saw this as an intellectual reflection of the conditions of the seventies, in which 'the eclipse of the radical opposition in the West has forced the now somewhat jaded generation of the 1960s to seek its red star over China'.[98]

Jane Caplan provided by far the most serious historical critique, however. After a precise and sympathetic exposition of Poulantzas's argument, Caplan pointed out that for Germany, Poulantzas had failed to establish his periodization – which, to recall, postulated a 'first period of fascism in power' characterized by 'instability and ambiguity' as the petty bourgeoisie and big capital jostled for position, followed by a 'period of fascist stabilization' in which 'fascism is purified of its class origins'.[99] Caplan's central point was that there was no 'period of fascist stabilization', at least not in Germany. Indeed, after 1938, German fascism became *less*, not more, stable. As she characterized the situation, 'research into the workings of the Nazi government has strongly suggested that it was characterized by an extreme diffusion and dislocation of authority, and a highly disordered proliferation of agencies and hierarchies'.[100] Furthermore, Poulantzas's failure to grasp the developmental character of the regime led him to completely neglect one of its most obvious features: the drive to unleash a European-wide war.[101]

The most intense theoretical engagement with Poulantzas's book came from Ernesto Laclau, an Argentinian historian and political theorist who would later win world renown for his text, coauthored with Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Laclau agreed with much of Poulantzas's argument, but claimed that it suffered from a debilitating class reductionist (although not economistic) analysis of ideology. Poulantzas, Laclau argued, treated ideologies as ensembles of elements, each of which could be assigned to a particular social class. From this perspective 'liberalism' was the ideology of the bourgeoisie in the phase of competitive capitalism, whereas 'nationalism', 'racism', and 'statolatry' were elements of the bourgeoisie (and also the petty bourgeoisie) in the phase of imperialism.[102]

Poulantzas's analytic procedure was exactly the reverse of the correct synthetic procedure, and led to a mistaken political strategy, argued Laclau. In fact, the 'elements' of ideology had no necessary class belonging, but the 'articulation of those elements in a concrete ideological discourse' was class determined.[103]

Having failed to correctly specify the class character of ideologies, Poulantzas had drawn incomplete and partially incorrect strategic lessons from the fascist experience. The author was right, according to Laclau, to assign the failure of revolutionary socialism in the immediate post-war period to 'economism'. This undermined the Communist parties' ability to establish an alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, thereby throwing open the door to a petty bourgeoisie–big capital alliance. But, Laclau argued, Poulantzas had left economism itself unexplained.

In fact, he argued, economism was rooted in class reductionism – the attempt to link every ideological element to a specific class. This, in turn, was 'linked to the class practices of the workers' movement before the First World War'.[104] At this early stage of development, it was natural for working class organizations to emphasize their separation from all aspects of bourgeois culture. However, this had the unfortunate consequence of ignoring the autonomy of 'popular-democratic interpellations' from class connotations.[105] By abandoning the terrain of popular democratic struggle, both the reformist socialists and the communists bore a heavy responsibility for the rise of fascism. In clear anticipation of Eurocommunism, Laclau argues that the strategic lesson of fascism was the need to combine the struggle for socialism with the struggle for democracy.[106]

Laclau's emphasis on 'popular-democratic interpellations' led him to revise Poulantzas in a further way. For Poulantzas, the political line that communists should have pursued immediately after the war was to support the development of workers' councils that would link the political and economic dimensions of the class struggle.[107] For Laclau,[108] in contrast, the correct political line was to demand a 'Constituent Assembly', which would complete the process of democratic revolution that had been left unfinished by both Bismarck and Cavour.

These divergent reactions all, however, agreed on one central point: that Poulantzas had correctly identified in 'economism' the central intellectual and strategic problem in both Comintern strategy and in previous studies of fascism.[109] Thus, Rabinbach acknowledged 'the validity of this judgement' but chided Poulantzas for its 'restricted' character.[110] Caplan praised Poulantzas for 'rejecting any crudely economistic correlation of class and state'.[111] Laclau, finally, sought to extend Poulantzas's critique of economism to a broader assault on 'class reductionism'.[112] This raises a question which I return to below: is it plausible to attribute the failure of socialist strategy in the inter-war period to 'economism'?

FASCISM AND DICTATORSHIP: INFLUENCE ON LATER STUDIES

To precisely gauge the impact of Poulanztas' book on later studies, it is useful to compare its reception with that of Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, another broadly Marxist analysis of the rise of fascism, with many similarities to *Fascism and Dictatorship*. Moore's book had collected over 8,000 citations by 2017 and is an obligatory reference for any scholar wading into the political sociology of authoritarianism or democracy. Its

intellectual progeny is accordingly numerous: Goldstone, Evans, Mahoney, Paige, Skocpol, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens, and Zeitlin, just to name the most illustrious. *Fascism and Dictatorship*, in contrast, has garnered thus far a respectable but comparatively modest, 445 citations. More significantly, perhaps, within mainstream American political sociology, the book remains largely uncited and unread.

Two reasons for this difference seem obvious. Poulantzas's Althusserian language has not worn well, and his approach to comparative analysis, a parallel demonstration of theory in which the empirical materials are used primarily to illustrate his arguments, is antiquated. Another major weakness of Poulantzas's analysis is his very cursory treatment of the agrarian dimension of fascism. In neither Italy nor Germany could these regimes have come to power without the aid of a reserve of impoverished agrarian direct producers, and highly conservative large landholders: the lords and peasants so masterfully brought out by Moore's analysis. But given the originality of Poulantzas's substantive arguments, these weaknesses, real as they are, fail to fully account for the relative neglect of the book compared with Moore's. A more political approach accordingly suggests itself.

It is good to begin by asking what made it possible for political sociology to absorb so fully *Social Origins*? Moore's book was acceptable to mainstream political sociology in part because he did not bring his Marxist analysis directly to bear on the central cases of European fascism (neither did he include Russia); Japan (a safely exotic case) functioned as a stand-in for fascism, while Germany and Italy remained spectral presences. This meant that Moore, in *Social Origins* itself, was not compelled to directly address the strategic alternatives open to the Left in the period after the October Revolution, nor the relationship between the rise of fascism and business and agricultural interests.[113] Consequently, the explosive radicalism of Moore's thesis, the logic of which indicates that a socialist revolution in Germany in the twenties was the only means of avoiding a fascist outcome once the opportunity of bourgeois revolution had passed, could be left safely implicit. Moore's canonized interpretation then became, in violation of the author of *Social Origins*' own methodological strictures, a 'structuralist account' which stopped the causal path safely prior to 1914.

Paradoxically, Poulantzas's seemingly more structuralist argument focused on the central political issues much more clearly than Moore's. *Fascism and Dictatorship* states clearly that a revolutionary situation existed in 1918 and 1919 in both Germany and Italy, but that the working class failed to seize State power, and failed to achieve its objectives. This rehabilitation of the *biennio*

rosso and the Spartacist uprising as something more than an outbreak of extremist hysteria is completely unacceptable in mainstream social science, and may have been one factor inhibiting a wider reception.

The other, more obvious, problem is Poulantzas's argument that fascism served the long-run interests of capital: a claim anathema to the Anglo-American historical establishment as is demonstrated by the reception accorded David Abraham's outstanding but highly controversial study, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis*. Abraham argued that the collapse of Weimar was due to the internal fragmentation of the capitalist class between a liberal and dynamic export-oriented sector, and reactionary heavy industrial and agrarian sectors – categories which echo, although do not exactly reproduce, Poulantzas's. During the consolidation of the Republic, the dynamic sector hammered out an alliance with the working class. This was the basis for the relative stability from 1924 to 1930. After the world economic crisis hit, though, this bloc broke apart, as the dynamic sector tried to offload the costs of the crisis onto labour. But lacking an appropriate political vehicle for establishing a mass basis, the industrialists, *faute de mieux*, had unenthusiastically supported the NSDAP.[114] The Poulantzian framework was obvious, although Abraham's range of influences was wider, stretching from Gramsci to Rosenberg. Like the author of *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Abraham interpreted the rise of fascism as the result of a double crisis of hegemony that opened a political vacuum occupied by a radicalized petty bourgeoisie, which had the historical function of reestablishing the rule of capital.

After an initially positive reaction, including over forty favourable reviews, condemnation of Abraham's book was swift and harsh. Led by Henry Turner, Gerald Feldman, Feldman's student Ulrich Nocken, and Turner's student Peter Hayes, the Anglo-American historiographical establishment hounded Abraham from the profession. Criticisms of his book ostensibly focused on its violation of professional standards of citation and note-taking, but the attack also had an obvious political dimension. As sampled below, none of these scholars attempted to provide any overall exposition and assessment of the argument in their engagement with Abraham's work, giving a sense of their intellectual quality.

> Feldman: I do not … intend to dignify this book with a systematic discussion of its theses. I think it is irresponsible to continue to treat it as a respectable work of scholarship.[115]
>
> Feldman: By now it should be clear that the material in this book is sufficiently lacking in credibility as to make it not simply useless to scholars but dangerous if quoted or believed.[116]
>
> Hayes: I must conclude that *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic* literally subtracts from our knowledge of the subject it treats.[117]

Turner: Abraham's book will … be of little use to future scholars.[118]

Whatever its causes, the Abraham affair undermined the reception of Poulantzas's book more broadly. Marxist theories of fascism have, subsequently, been equated mostly with Barrington Moore's focus on agrarian structures, leaving the sociology of the petty bourgeoisie, and the related question of the strategic mistakes made by the Left, largely neglected. What can be said about these issues today?

ECONOMISM AND SOCIALIST STRATEGY

The central political issue raised by *Fascism and Dictatorship* is the connection between 'economism' and socialist strategy. Poulantzas claims that by adopting 'economism', the Comintern 'denied itself the means of successfully struggling *against* the resistible rise of fascism'.[119] There is no doubt that both communists and the Left more broadly made many serious strategic and tactical blunders over the course of the inter-war period, and in this way squandered important opportunities and left the door open to fascism. It is also quite common to explain these errors in terms of an underlying economism, which vitiated an adequate political analysis. But, in Poulantzas's use of the term at least, four crucial questions need to be asked:

1) What does economism mean?

2) Is economism an adequate description of Comintern – and, more generally, Left – strategy in the period of fascism?

3) What caused the adoption of economism?

4) What alternative strategy could the Left have adopted to prevent the rise of fascism?

The Meaning of Economism

One problem in grasping Poulantzas's argument is that 'economism' refers to a very wide variety of positions that seem to have little in common with one another. A sampling of references shows at least seven meanings. The predominant sense is the idea that there is tight linkage between revolutionary opportunities and levels of economic development. This appears in passages such as: 'It is well known that, on the other hand, the Second International, with its marked economism, was expecting a revolution in Germany, the most *economically* developed country'.[120] A second related, but distinct, meaning is the idea that an economic crisis immediately yields opportunities for revolution, an error that Poulantzas attributes at various times to the Comintern, to Trotsky, to 'left opportunism', and to maximalism.[121] A third meaning concerns the

reduction of the State to an instrument of the dominant classes.[122] A fourth meaning refers to the reduction of different periods of capitalism to the development of the forces of production.[123] A fifth meaning refers to 'the abandonment of a mass line' and the establishment of 'a basic separation between economic and political struggle'.[124] A sixth meaning links economism to 'the abandonment of proletarian internationalism'.[125] A seventh meaning refers to the view that 'relations of production alone … are sufficient to determine the place a social class occupies in a mode of production and locate it within a social formation'.[126]

These meanings do not imply one another. For example, Trotksy's writings on fascism count as 'economistic' because of his idea that economic crises open revolutionary opportunities; but clearly Trotsky cannot be accused of abandoning proletarian internationalism. Furthermore, there is no obvious relationship between holding the view that social class should be defined in terms of positions in the relations of production and any of the various political strategies Poulantzas essays. This distension of the concept suggests that economism, rather than an explanation, is a catchphrase for any strategic error committed by the Left.

Is economism an adequate description of Comintern – and, more generally, Left – strategy in the period of fascism?

Turning to the second question, it is worth considering if economism is an adequate description of an actual strategic position. For the sake of clarity, let us take the term to mean the view that revolution is the inevitable result of economic processes and requires no active political intervention (something akin to the first meaning above). It is difficult to see exactly what parts of the revolutionary – and, for that matter, non-revolutionary – Left were guilty of this position. The Italian case demonstrates the problems of this interpretation particularly clearly, for whatever their other differences, neither Bordiga, nor Gramsci, nor Tasca, nor Togliatti espoused economism in this sense. In fact, the *Ordine Nuovo* group was stridently idealistic. In his famous article, 'The Revolution Against Capital' published in *Avanti!* in November 1917, Gramsci wrote of the Bolsheviks:

> They are not Marxists, that is all; they have not compiled on the basis of the work of the master an external, dogmatic, and unquestionable doctrine. They live Marxist thought, which never dies, which is the continuation of German and Italian idealism, and which in Marx had been contaminated with positivistic and naturalistic incrustations. [127]

A less economistic view is hard to imagine.

Poulantzas might respond by suggesting that economism was above all characteristic of the mainstream socialist parties, not the Left splinter groups that would constitute the Communist parties. But even this argument is not terribly persuasive. In the first place, in Italy, evolutionary social democratic Marxism never had a very wide reach. The PSI (Italian Socialist Party) had opposed the war, had always been firmly anti-capitalist and was shot through with hyperactivist currents such as revolutionary syndicalism that were profoundly hostile to any sort of economic determinism. Furthermore, in the immediate post-war period, the Maximalist current of the PSI led by Serrati, crushed Turati's reformists at the 1919 Bologna conference, as Poulantzas himself points out.[128]

Perhaps Poulantzas's accusation of economism applies better to Germany. Surely the SPD centre, *locus classicus* of orthodox Marxism, was drenched in economism? To assess this question, it is worth considering the strategic debate between Kautsky and Lenin between 1918 and 1920. If there is one place where one should see a struggle between a benighted Second International economism trapped in a stagist theory of development, and Lenin's concept of the imperialist chain, this should be it. But that is not at all the issue that separates the two in this famous exchange.

Kautsky's central critique of Lenin was as follows:

> The Bolshevist Revolution was based on the supposition that it would be the starting point of a general European Revolution, and that the bold initiative of Russia would summon the proletariat of all Europe to rise … This was all very logically thought out, and quite well founded, provided the supposition was granted, that the Russian Revolution must inevitably unchain the European Revolution. But what if this did not happen? [129]

Kautsky, in short, did not reject the *logic* of the Bolshevik argument. More particularly, he did not counterpose a stagist theory to it. Instead, he argued that the theory had been shown incorrect in historical reality.

Lenin's response was that Kautsky and his ilk were themselves the major obstacle to the revolutionary breakthrough. As he put it,

> When the proletarians of Europe are accused of treachery, Kautsky writes, it is an accusation against unknown persons. You are mistaken Mr. Kautsky. Look in the glass, and you will see these unknown persons against whom the accusation is leveled.[130]

The issue that divided Kautsky and Lenin, in sum, had nothing to do with 'economism'. The disagreement instead concerned the relationship between national and international revolution. Furthermore, neither Kautsky nor Lenin's arguments are satisfactory. While Kautsky remains silent on the central question

of why the Bolshevik revolution failed to unleash fraternal uprisings in the West, Lenin remains content to assign guilt to Kautsky: in the first case, there is no theory; in the second, there is a forensic one. But neither thinker suffers from economism per se. Thus, as a term for describing actual positions within the socialist Left during the inter-war period, it seems quite inadequate.

What caused the adoption of economism?

There is another feature of Poulantzas's invocation of economism as the source of the Left's strategic errors that is important to point out. As Laclau had noted, Poulantzas does not provide an adequate explanation for economism, however defined. In the appendix entitled 'The USSR and the Comintern', Poulantzas tries to explain economism as a consequence of the consolidation of a 'Soviet bourgeoisie' under Stalin.[131] Even accepting this highly questionable interpretation of Soviet history, it clearly cannot account for the range of phenomena Poulantzas refers to with 'economism', which included many parties and movements outside the ambit of the Comintern. Laclau admirably tried to provide an explanation for economism by arguing that it grew out of the early experience of the working class movement in Germany and Italy, which was of necessity focused on the construction of unions, and on separating the proletariat from the rest of society.[132] The problem with Laclau's reading, however, is that it retains the questionable notion that 'economism' accurately describes a dominant strategic position within the socialist Left in the period of the rise of fascism.

What alternative strategy could the Left have adopted to prevent the rise of fascism?

The weakness of Poulantzas's strategic diagnosis is best indicated in his prescriptive statements. Poulantzas identifies the main problem as a failure to clarify the relationship 'of economic and political struggle': the trade union and the party.[133] The lameness of this prescription can be best seen by turning it into a positive statement: a correct understanding of the need for a 'mass organization for economic struggle' and a 'specific vanguard organization for political struggle' would have overcome the strategic impasse of the workers' movement and blocked the fascist road to power.[134] Poulantzas provides no specific historical evidence to suggest that this might have been the case, and it is hard to see how these relatively minor organizational questions could have carried the weight that he places on them.

A more adequate approach might begin with a return to Kautsky's and Lenin's exchange since this provides a crucial clue to the real strategic problem that the Left faced in resisting fascism in the inter-war period. Both parties to

that polemic lacked an adequate understanding of the social processes that concentrate and cage social relations in a national framework: the development of national bureaucracies, labour markets and social welfare. But it was precisely this issue – the inability to make effective political appeals simultaneously in both national and international terms – that scuttled effective resistance to fascism. This problem, however, was not a matter of mistaken doctrine, but of social relations. As Michael Mann pointed out, 'the core constituency of fascism enjoyed particularly close relations to the sacred icon of fascism, the nation-state'. [135] Thus, 'fascism resonated especially among embittered refugees, "threatened border" regions, state employees (including especially the armed forces), state-owned or state-protected industries, and churches that saw themselves as "the soul of the nation" or "the morality of the state"'.[136] It was the Left's inability to penetrate this 'nation-statist core' that formed the crucial strategic problem of the Left in the inter-war period.

Schematically in inter-war Europe, internationalism and nationalism interacted in a particular way with class divisions. An internationally organized working class faced a nationally organized petty bourgeoisie, while capital remained split between an internationalist and a nationalist wing.[137] The key class alliance that could have stopped fascism – that between workers and at least part of the petty bourgeoisie – was blocked precisely by the national cage that trapped a significant part of the latter group, making it unavailable for the Left.

ANCIEN REGIMES, UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT AND WAR

Perhaps an even more glaring weakness than Poulantzas's discussion of economism is his disregard of the expansionist dynamic of fascism, particularly in its German variant. Incredibly, neither the Second World War nor the Judeocide figure in Poulantzas's account. One reason for this might be, as Caplan pointed out, that Poulantzas wanted to insist that the fascist regimes had successfully established the hegemony of monopoly capital – a story that would seem to be contradicted by the very irrational brutality of the war. A second reason for this absence might also be Poulantzas's neglect of agrarian interests. For the fascist search for *lebensraum* or *spazio vitale* cannot be understood exclusively as an expression of the interests of 'monopoly capitalism'; instead, fascist imperialism was closely linked to the uneven character of the social elite, what Arno Mayer terms 'the persistent old regime' in both countries.

The best way to see this is to compare the geopolitical vision of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* with competing ideas in Germany in the 1930s. Hitler was obsessed with

physical control over territory, especially in the east. As Alexander Anievas shows, this was hardly an original idea since it grew out of a long tradition of thinking on the German far Right.[138] He pursued this policy as an alternative to *Weltpolitik*, a position closely associated with Stresemann, and aimed at maritime dominance and challenging Britain.[139] This deliberate turn away from *Weltpolitik*, and toward a continental strategy, was at least facilitated by the social makeup of the German dominant class. The social background of Hitler's geopolitics was the army, and therefore the old agrarian elites – in contrast to *Weltpolitik*, which would have been based on the more bourgeois navy. The brutality of the *Vernichtungskrieg* was the outcome, therefore, of a peculiar combination of modern war-making technology and a basically premodern geopolitical vision.

Similar points could be made about the Italian colonial adventure in Ethiopia. Although there it is difficult to discern any objective economic imperative, it is clear that the desire to recreate a prestigious land empire was a driving force. Furthermore, this project found decisive social support in the Italian army, an institution heavily dominated by the Savoyard monarchy and the aristocracy.

STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES TODAY

From the perspective of 2017 it is striking how relevant these discussions remain. One reason is that Poulantzas identified *the* key issues of alliance formation in the articulation of a viable Left strategy. Fascism was premised on the unification of the petty bourgeoisie around an alliance with big capital in the aftermath of failed proletarian uprisings. Socialism, instead, would be based on an alliance between the working class and at least some segments of the petty bourgeoisie against capital. Clearly, the basic strategic problem of the Left, linking working class demands with those of salaried employees and intellectuals, remains much the same as it was in the inter-war period. However, the terrain differs. As I suggested above, the conflict between internationalism and nationalism tended to undermine the possibility of an alliance between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie in the inter-war period, because the petty bourgeoisie was organized nationally (Mann's 'nation-statist core'), whereas the working class was organized in internationalist parties. In this context, revolutionary socialism proved unable to ally with returning war veterans, some of whom at least should have been available to the Left. 'National socialism' remained an empty slogan rather than a political reality.

The interaction between class alliances, nationalism and internationalism differs today. In the first instance, direct producers lack much international

organization at all; their interests consequently are articulated in overwhelmingly national terms – as hostility to free trade agreements, and often immigrants. Furthermore, in sharp contrast to the inter-war period, the 'new petty bourgeoisie' (salaried employees and intellectuals) is internationalist in orientation, as are some segments of capital. If, in inter-war Europe, fascism depended on an alliance between the petty bourgeoisie as a whole and capital under the aegis of nationalism, in the contemporary period the radical Right is based on an alliance between parts of a 'national' working class and capital. What the contemporary Right lacks, and what inter-war fascism possessed, is a strong anchoring in the 'new petty bourgeoisie', which has now become internationalist. The basic strategic conundrum, however, remains. How to link anti-capitalism and internationalism together in an alliance with both working class and petty bourgeois support? While *Fascism and Dictatorship* certainly does not answer this question, it has the great merit of providing categories which one dimension of the problem can be thought through. For this reason, Poulantzas's book is more than a historical document, or a contribution to theories of inter-war fascism. It is also an example of how to link science and politics in a strategic discussion, one that is crucial in the increasingly turbulent current political context.

Introduction

What purpose can there be in a study of fascism at this moment in time?

I believe that the urgency of the problem makes such a study a political necessity. Until very recently the question of fascism and the other forms of dictatorship seemed to be relegated to historical oblivion, the concern of academic historiography alone. It is now becoming increasingly clear that imperialism is passing through a major world-wide crisis, which is only just beginning but which already reaches into the imperialist heartlands themselves. In the light of the sharpness of class struggle in the period we have now entered (and which stretches far into the future), the question of the exceptional State (*Etat d'exception*), and so of fascism, is therefore posed once more; just as the question of the revolution itself is back on the agenda.

Like every study in historical materialism, this book has a complex subject. It is focused on three main areas:

1. Fascism as a particular political phenomenon. I have tried to capture the essential elements of fascism by analysing the causes and effects beyond the secondary features characterizing it where it took root. To achieve this, however, there is only one correct method of research, and only one correct method of presenting the results: to concentrate on a thorough investigation of where fascism took root, and to analyse *concrete situations*. This is the only way to distinguish secondary factors from real causes, and on the basis of the latter, define the scope and conditions for a reappearance of the phenomenon.

2. Fascism is only one form of regime among others of the exceptional capitalist State (*Etat capitaliste d' exception*). There are others, notably Bonapartism, and the various forms of military dictatorship. The specific political phenomenon of fascism can therefore only be analysed by positing at the same time a theory of the political crisis and the exceptional State which also fits other types of exceptional capitalist regimes.

3. Thirdly, the book focuses on the Third International's policy towards

fascism. It is clearly impossible to discuss fascism without discussing the working class, and equally impossible to discuss the working class in the inter-war period without going into the politics of the Comintern.

Furthermore, to gain a real understanding of Comintern policy towards fascism, we cannot afford to stop short at describing its concept of the fascist phenomenon, neglecting its actual policy and the principles by which it was governed. Throughout its existence – almost from its very birth – the Comintern was confronted with fascism in Europe. This, together with its characteristic Eurocentrism, means that its policy towards fascism is a good indication of the wider theory and practice it adopted towards most questions concerning the labour movement. The historical conjunctures of fascism therefore provide a particularly favourable and concrete opportunity for an investigation of the Comintern. This book undertakes such an investigation, in concentrating on the principles behind the Comintern's policy, in analysing its actual effects, and in putting forward a periodization of the Comintern itself.

The relevance of such a study need scarcely be pointed out: the labour movement still bears much of the stamp of the Third International.

The central axis of the book, which governs its form, is still fascism. If the exceptional State had itself been the subject, I should have had to go into precise and detailed analyses of Bonapartism and military dictatorships. The same applies to the Third International: had it been the subject of the book, this would have required the analysis of many aspects of its policy – such as the colonial question – which go unmentioned.

In this discussion of fascism I have had nonetheless to touch on developments which go beyond the analytical framework. These include the State apparatus, and the capitalist State itself. The fascist State is a specific form of exceptional State, in no way to be confused with other forms of the capitalist State. It is a critical form of State and of regime which corresponds to a political crisis. But it is the property of every crisis to lay bare features not exclusive to itself. In other words, the study of fascism as a specific phenomenon of crisis makes it possible to elucidate certain aspects of the very nature of the capitalist State. The same is true for a whole series of other problems – particularly that of the petty bourgeoisie, whose function within the framework of fascism is revealing. Finally, this is also true for a series of concepts of social and political analysis which I have been led to formulate, to make more precise, and to correct.

The reader should be forewarned, then, that this is not a historiographical study of German and Italian fascism, but a study in political theory – which of course

cannot be carried out without thorough historical research. But the treatment of the material, and in particular the order of exposition, are bound to be different in each case. This study concentrates on elucidating the essential features of fascism as a specific political phenomenon. Historical ‘events’ and concrete details are used here only to the extent that they are relevant illustrations of the subject under investigation.

Such are the principles which govern the general plan and form of the book; the details will become clear as it progresses.

1. I have chosen the following general plan. Each chapter begins with a series of *general propositions;* this is followed by concrete analysis of the cases of Germany and Italy, which are intended to *illustrate* these propositions.

2. I have restricted the investigation of concrete cases to those where fascism actually managed to take power – because this is not a historical study of different fascist movements. The study of fascism in power in fact affords a better understanding and a clearer illustration of the growth and essential features of fascism as a movement.

3. I have further restricted the account to the German and Italian cases. Multiplication of examples is of no service to the aim I have defined, and infinite comparative studies are not the best way of illustrating an object of research.

There were, on the other hand, two basic reasons for choosing these particular examples:

(a) German and Italian fascism, emerging as they did in Europe, the focus of the Comintern’s policy towards fascism, have more direct political interest here and now than, say, Japanese fascism.

(b) These two cases demonstrate the essential features of fascism more clearly and concretely than any others in Europe, though they do so in different ways. I have not therefore undertaken a study of Spanish fascism, which is a complex form which does also belong in the category of fascism, but which is definable firstly as a military dictatorship.

4. I have not followed any strict chronological order. In particular, the concrete analysis of the German case follows on from the general propositions, always coming before Italy. This is because the characteristics of fascism are clearer and more complete in Nazism than in Italian fascism. The order is chosen not because Nazism is some kind of ‘model’ by which to measure all fascism: it is rather to facilitate the clarity which the subject and the very nature of this study demand.

Part One

The Period of Fascism

The first problem to face in studying fascism is its specificity in relation to regimes such as military dictatorship and Bonapartism, and to other forms of the capitalist State. In other words, is it possible to define a form of *exceptional capitalist State*, which is distinct from other forms of capitalist State, and which itself fits various specific forms of exceptional regime, such as fascism, military dictatorship, and Bonapartism?

The question can only be posed accurately by studying both the political crisis to which the exceptional State is a response, and the particular kinds of political crises to which its specific forms correspond. But this requires, first of all, an analysis of the question of the *historical period* of capitalist formations within which these political crises and exceptional regimes occur. To avoid foundering in abstract typology, we have to be clear that the kinds of political crises which produce any given form of exceptional regimes, still have features which vary according to the period in which they arise. Nineteenth-century differs from twentieth-century Bonapartism, and the same is true of military dictatorship and fascism.

Although the analysis of the general historical periods to which exceptional regimes belong does not in itself explain their emergence, it remains a fact that the period affects the *conjuncture of the class struggle* (political crisis), which alone provides an answer.

1

Imperialism and Fascism. Monopoly Capitalism and the Imperialist Chain

I shall begin by looking at the period of fascism, and use the opening provided by a quotation from Max Horkheimer, which forms the inscription in a recent German work, *Faschismus und Kapitalismus*. Horkheimer, reacting early against the whole conception of 'totalitarianism', wrote: 'Anyone who does not wish to discuss capitalism should also stay silent on the subject of fascism.' Strictly speaking, this is incorrect: it is he who does not wish to discuss *imperialism* who should stay silent on the subject of fascism.

Fascism in effect belongs to the imperialist *stage* of capitalism. The point is therefore to try to elucidate certain general characteristics of the stage, and their impact on fascism. The primary causes of fascism are not the factors often seen as its basic *sine qua non*, such as the particular economic crises Germany and Italy were caught in when fascism was establishing itself, the national peculiarities of the two countries, the consequences of the First World War, etc. These factors are important only in relation to the stage of imperialism, as elements of *one of the possible conjunctures* of this stage.

It becomes necessary, then, to dwell on the question of imperialism – though I am well aware that the present discussion cannot be exhaustive. Nonetheless there are positions which require correction, and fascism as a crisis of the imperialist stage provides a basis for doing this.

The crux of the matter appears to be the following: imperialism, considered as

a stage in capitalist development as a whole, is not simply or solely an economic phenomenon; in other words, it is not determined by events in the economic domain alone, nor can it be located within it. The Third International, however, held quite strongly to an ‘economistic’ conception of imperialism.

This became very clear in its particular interpretation of Lenin’s theory of imperialism, and especially of *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* – an interpretation governed by the Third International’s economism. To summarize the thesis I elaborate below: economism seems to be the point of convergence for the currents of the Second International, and is, moreover, the focal point of Lenin’s attacks on it. As far as the Third International is concerned, while it made a clear break under Lenin from the conceptions of the Second International, this lasted only for a short space of time; then economism seems to have been restored step by step in a new guise, hidden behind a certain language and certain organizational forms.

The inevitable corollary of this ‘economism’ was *the lack of a mass line*, linked in turn to *the progressive abandonment of proletarian internationalism*, characteristics not only of the Comintern’s general line, but also of the line of the Bolshevik Party and its leadership within the USSR.

Before going any further, a particular clarification is required. This line did not come out of the blue. It would be completely idealistic to think that the Comintern line, and the line followed by the USSR, were no more than ‘errors’ or ‘deviations’ in theory and politics in the thinking of the leaders. It would be giving a purely subjectivist meaning to what was an effective political line which governed the destiny of the world proletariat. Nor was this line the result of a simple organizational ‘degeneration’ of the Bolshevik Party and the other sections of the Comintern. It was in fact rooted in the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the struggle between the ‘two roads’ in the *USSR itself* during the transitional phase. I shall try to pin-point this in the Appendix, ‘The USSR and the Comintern’.

Although the Comintern’s general political line, and the turns in it, were determined by the struggle between fractions and tendencies within the Bolshevik Party, by the Party’s policy within the USSR, Soviet foreign policy, and therefore by the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat within the USSR, it was determined *by no means directly or immediately*, as a whole historiographical tradition would have it. Economism, the lack of a mass line, and the growing abandonment of internationalism (i.e. the effects of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the USSR), formed the necessary link by means of which the USSR, or ‘what was happening in the USSR’

determined the policy of the Comintern and the local Communist Parties. For the general line had its own decisive effects on the course of the concrete struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the USSR itself.

There were, in addition, particular 'errors' in the line, which, by accumulation, had their own effects both on the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat in the USSR, and on Comintern policy, the point of immediate interest to us.

In the attempt to demonstrate this, my account will in a sense reverse the order of real causation.

To go back to Lenin, it is true that his text deals only with the economic aspects of imperialism – *but with the key distinction* that Lenin himself draws attention to the fact in his last preface, clearly affirming its inadequacies: 'This pamphlet was written with an eye to the tsarist censorship. Hence, I was not only forced to confine myself strictly to an exclusively theoretical, specifically economic analysis of facts, but to formulate the few necessary observations on politics with extreme caution, by hints, in an allegorical language – in that accursed Aesopian language … It is painful, in these days of liberty, to reread the passages of the pamphlet which have been distorted….'[1]

However, it was not accidental that the Third International used this work in a particular way: it was a function of its particular economism, just as the Second International took as its holy writ Marx's 'Preface' to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and Engels's *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. These works do have real 'economistic' overtones – and it would be as well to examine the reasons for this some day. Still, Lenin's pamphlet, and his work as a whole, quite clearly contain a theory of imperialism as something which cannot be reduced to a mere economic phenomenon. Only with reference to this theory is it possible to understand fascism.

Imperialism, considered as a stage in the ensemble of the capitalist process, is not in fact just a question of modifications in the economic domain, such as monopoly concentration, the fusion of banking and industrial capital into finance capital, the export of capital, and the search for colonies for purely 'economic' reasons, etc. These 'economic' factors actually determine a new articulation of the ensemble of the capitalist system, thereby producing profound changes in *politics* and *ideology*.

These modifications affect *not only* each national social formation, *but also* social relations on an international scale. Moreover, the particular relations between these two sectors, which precisely characterize imperialism, depend on

these modifications.

For the first sector, the main feature of the process is *monopoly capitalism*. Here *a phenomenon of decisive importance* enters: the economic modifications of this stage assign a new role to *the capitalist State*, giving it new functions and an extended field of intervention, and also a new level of effectiveness. There are frequent attempts nowadays to attribute this role of the State to present-day conditions, in order to define a new stage of 'State monopoly capitalism'; but the role in fact belongs precisely to the imperialist stage as a whole. To make this even clearer: the evident *break* in the State's role and effectiveness does not mark two decisive *stages* – 'classic' imperialism and 'State monopoly capitalism' – but marks rather the pre-imperialist from the imperialist (monopoly capitalist) stage. Undoubtedly, important modifications occur at the same time, but only as a periodization within the imperialist stage itself.

There was never a stage of capitalism in which the State did not play an important economic role: the 'liberal State', confined to policing competitive capitalism, has always been a myth. Nonetheless, a new State role characterizes the imperialist stage. It is known as the *interventionist State* because of the profound repercussions of the stage on the political forms of the capitalist State, in relation to previous forms. Lenin indicated this many times; in the passages about the *rentier* State in the above-mentioned pamphlet, and in his analyses of *State capitalism*, which went far beyond the simple framework of the historical conjunctures of Germany during the First World War, and the USSR after the 1917 revolution.

The phenomenon of fascism can only really be understood in so far as it is located within a stage characterized by this modification in the State's role. Most Marxist authors who have discussed fascism have correctly pointed to this *key question*.

Fascism combines the role of the State in the imperialist stage with the specific role of the State in a *transitional phase* between stages. There is already an account elsewhere of the specific role of the State in transition between two modes of production in a single social formation.[2] It should be added here that the State also plays a decisive role in the transition between two stages in a single mode of production. In the particular instance of German and Italian fascism, the decisiveness of the State's role is expressed not only in its new role in the imperialist stage, but also in its crucial role in the particular transition to the establishment of monopoly capitalism in these two countries.

Lenin wrote in *Imperialism*: 'For Europe, we can establish quite accurately the moment when the new (monopoly) capitalism decisively replaced the old: it

is the beginning of the twentieth century.'[3] In fact what should be understood by this, in the light of what we now know, is that for the major European countries the beginning of the twentieth century marked a *break* with the preceding stage, and therefore the *decisive start* of the phase of transition towards the dominance of monopoly capitalism.[4] Taken literally, Lenin's statement does not seem correct, at least for Germany and Italy, countries where capitalism and imperialism came late.

The role of the State in the transitional phase in question is relatively different from its role in the monopoly capitalist stage. This explains the fact that when the transition was complete (i.e. after the end of the Second World War), the State confined itself to its role in the monopoly capitalist stage, having already consolidated its dominance. Its role undoubtedly remained *very important*, but seemed to be *less so*, a *retreat* from its 'enlarged' role during the transition. This is as much the case in Germany and Italy as in England and even the United States, after the period of Roosevelt's New Deal.[5]

Finally, the imperialist stage is also characterized by profound changes in ideology, more specifically in the dominant ideology and its political scope: the formation of *imperialist ideology*, in all its variants, takes place within it. We shall see to what extent fascist ideology is a variant of it, and also how far this upheaval in the dominant ideology was an essential element in the ideological crisis which marked the conjuncture of Germany and Italy during the rise of fascism.

It is now necessary to apply these remarks at the international level, where the crucial questions are posed. Imperialism, as a stage in the capitalist system on the international level, is not a phenomenon which can be reduced to economic developments alone. To put it more strongly: only in so far as one sees imperialism as a phenomenon with economic, political and ideological implications, can the internationalization of social relations peculiar to this stage be understood. We can then grasp the two dominant elements in this respect – the *imperialist chain* and the *uneven development* of its links – and analyse concrete situations in their light.

In studying imperialism, it is not enough to speak of the international flow of capital, or of economic interpenetration: it is necessary to see the very important fact that imperialism is a *chain*. A chain implies *links*. But here again, it is not enough to speak only of the *weakest link*. Discussion of the link in itself requires us to bring in the element of uneven development of the various national formations which constitute the chain. It is the very existence of this chain which

gives a new meaning to the particular uneven development characteristic of imperialism; for as we know, uneven development is characteristic of capitalism from its very beginning.[6] The uneven development of the imperialist chain means for one thing that other links than the weakest are not of equal strength: they too are *relatively* weaker or stronger. *Strictly speaking, the strength of some depends on the weakness of others,* and vice versa.

Lenin's analysis of Russia enables us to see more closely how he came to an understanding of the imperialist chain. When Lenin analyses Russia and defines it as the weakest link, he is not referring to economic factors alone. He found in Russia, as the weakest link, an *accumulation* of economic, political and ideological contradictions. The uneven development of the imperialist chain made itself felt *within* the Russian social formation, in an uneven development of the economy (with the various forms of production coexisting in Russia), of politics (the tsarist State) and of ideology (the ideological crisis). If this accumulation made Russia the weakest link, it was because the *chain itself* was not held together by economic ties alone.

It is well known that, on the other hand, the Second International, with its marked economism, was expecting revolution in Germany, the most *economically* developed country. The Second International's economism led, we might say, to a conception of the strongest link. But it is wrong in this case to speak of links, because the Second International's economism (and this is the crucial point) hides the imperialist chain itself from its sight. If the Second International was expecting revolution in the most economically developed country, it was because *at the same time* it saw international relations as 'economic ties' alone. (Hilferding's work is an example.)

So Lenin's conception did not simply reverse the Second International's 'economic' order of the links. He was not expecting revolution in Russia because it was the *least* 'economically' developed country: he showed the incorrectness of this view in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. In discussing the weakest link, Lenin discovered the imperialist chain, and broke once and for all with economism.

It is now quite clear how the very characteristics of monopoly capitalism make the imperialist chain basic to international relationships. In particular, the decisive role of the State in monopoly capitalism within each national formation emerges as an important element in the organization of the chain: 'Finance capital is such a powerful force, one could say such a decisive force, in all economic and international relationships, that it is capable of submitting to

authority, and effectively does so even where the State enjoys complete political independence,' wrote Lenin.

The new index of the power of politics which characterizes monopoly capitalism within each national formation, is translated into the new index of the power of politics which marks international relations in the imperialist stage: 'The essential thing for imperialism is the rivalry of several great powers aiming for *hegemony*, that is territorial conquests, *not so much for their own sakes as to weaken the enemy and usurp his hegemony*' (Lenin).

This in turn has an effect within each national formation. The *concrete form* and the *degree* of the strength of politics within each national formation, depend on its 'historical' position as a link in the chain: this depends in turn on the uneven development of the chain and on its *mode of existence* within each link.

Through this break with economism, we at the same time discover the position of the other links in the chain, be they weaker or stronger. Not just the relative economic situation of a country (in relation to others), but the particular nature of the ensemble of the social formation, helps determine the allocation of this position, and any changes in it, such changes being determinant for the conjuncture.

These remarks are very relevant to the study of fascism. In short, although the revolution was made in the weakest link in the chain (Russia), fascism arose in the next two links, i.e. those which were, relatively speaking, the weakest in Europe at the time. In no sense do I mean that fascism was fated to happen there, any more than the Bolshevik Revolution was fated to occur in the weakest link. I simply mean that in the particular *conjunctures* of class struggle in these countries, which for a whole series of reasons led to such different results, their position in the imperialist chain was of crucial importance. There is, moreover, nothing surprising in the fact that once the Third International had gone over to economism and forgotten the chain, it did not in the least expect fascism to come where it did.

2

The German and Italian Links of the Chain

Germany and Italy were the weakest links in the chain after Russia – the late-comers, as I have said, to capitalism; though this often-used expression is misleading if it is taken to mean that they were the least economically developed countries. Weak and strong places in the chain cannot be explained by a chronological evolution of economic advance or backwardness, no more than uneven development can be explained as a simple rhythm of economic 'development'. I shall demonstrate this by locating the historical characteristics of these national formations in the development of imperialism. For the moment some simple guidelines will be enough.

I. GERMANY

Firstly from the economic point of view,[1] after starting to industrialize relatively late, Germany quickly gained a place among the great industrial powers. From 1880, it was the second most powerful, below the United States and above Britain and France. By the beginning of the century Germany had definitely entered the imperialist stage. The pace of the concentration of capital (the characteristic of monopoly capitalism) was such that industrial production grew three times as quickly as the number of firms. The fusion of banking capital with that part of industrial capital which already had monopoly characteristics, got under way at the beginning of the twentieth century and produced the finance capital of the great trusts and combines. Thenceforth, there were no more than nine great German banks, closely interlinked by a 'community of interest', and

attached to industry through financial participation. There was a spectacular growth in capital exports, with Germany holding third place in the world in 1913. Lastly, Germany at this date held monopoly capital in more international cartels than any country except France.

However, the structure was already shaky. It is quite easy to establish that the 1914–18 war did not just create sudden difficulties in previously harmonious development. The consequences of the war inscribed themselves in the contradictions of the German social formation, at the heart of the imperialist chain; and it did so in proportion to the extent to which it was ultimately no more than their effect. But in economic terms, postwar Germany had matched the volume of her pre-war industrial production by 1927, surpassed it by 15 per cent in 1928, and taken back its second place among the industrial countries. In the period 1924-9, German technical progress and labour productivity surpassed the pre-war levels and equalled those of the United States; the process of capital concentration and the formation of finance capital accelerated.

The war certainly burdened Germany with reparations which she had to pay by the terms of the peace treaty. The phenomenon of transforming a country with foreign credit into a debtor country had some grave consequences: in particular, it helped create a permanently inflationary situation, only slowed down by the 1929 world crisis. It also meant that German industry was seriously indebted to other countries – especially to the United States – for its industrial reconstruction. Thus, from being a country which had exported capital, Germany became a net importer of capital. But these consequences of the war were only *grafted on to* the difficulties inherent in the development of capitalism in Germany, and it was only in this sense that they helped to create the crisis situation of the early thirties.

Even before the First World War, the cracks in capitalist development were visible, for one thing in the falling growth rate: 6.4 per cent in 1880–90, 6.1 per cent in 1890–1900, 4.2 per cent in 1900–13. These cracks were mainly due to the concrete form of the German transition from feudalism to capitalism, and to the nature and course of the bourgeois democratic revolution.[2] This ‘revolution’, which certainly belongs in inverted commas, occurred particularly late. It was not made under the hegemonic leadership of the bourgeoisie, although the bourgeoisie was already very advanced economically. Because of its fear of a proletariat which had already formed, the revolution was directed from ‘above’ by Bismarck, and by means of a special alliance between the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry, the big landed proprietors of Prussia, who for a long time held decisive political sway within this alliance.

The process was characterized not only by specific forms of State apparatus and institutions (forms within which the feudal type of State showed a remarkable persistence), but also by a backwardness and unevenness typical of the achievement of ‘national unity’ in Germany. In the context of bourgeois-democratic revolution, national unity means the ‘economic unity’ of a social formation, although it is understood that this economic unity, in so far as it is national, is overdetermined by a whole series of political factors (i.e. bourgeois political ideology), all of which were generally lacking in Germany.

Although the process was begun by the Customs Union (*Zollverein*) and Bismarck, such economic and national unity had not yet been achieved on the eve of national socialist rule, in spite of the Weimar Constitution. The individual towns and countries (the remains of the former states) enjoyed a special juridical and administrative power status throughout the Reich, with largely autonomous parliaments, governments and State apparatus. The formation of the bourgeois national State was therefore very much delayed, a correlation of the weak hegemony of the German bourgeoisie.

This situation had some adverse effects on the German economy. In the first place, the pace and shape of the whole development of the German social formation meant that the situation of its commercial outlets to the world market was especially critical. Its late industrialization, and also the political forms under which industrialization took place, prevented Germany from carving out a colonial empire for herself. Such possessions as were acquired scarcely served as commercial outlets or receivers of capital exports.

The situation also influenced the internal economy, with important implications for national socialism. The lack of national unity in its turn to some extent aggravated the internal inequalities occasioned by the way in which the dominance of the capitalist mode of production had been established over other modes in the German social formation. Because of the political role of the great landowners, industrialization advanced above all in ‘enclaves’ within the social formation. Despite the efficiency, which Lenin pointed out, of the capitalist ‘Prussian road’ for agriculture, the agricultural sector trailed painfully far behind the industrial sector, and still bore strong traces of the feudal mode of production.

This unevenness of development was only accentuated after the war, which had seriously retarded agriculture. Unlike what was happening in industry, the total volume of agricultural production in 1929 only reached three-quarters of that of 1913. Thus the unequal development of agriculture and industry which, as Lenin showed, accompanies the growth of monopoly capitalism, was

aggravated here. It finally provoked a characteristic ‘contraction’ of the German internal market, accentuated by the very high and constant rate of unemployment throughout the post-war period, and which was especially serious in view of the lack of foreign markets.

Finally, the role of the State, which under Bismarck in a sense directed the process, was decisive in the German ‘revolution from above’. This role was expressed through the State’s very important economic functions, and through its systematic interventions in the economy *throughout* the development of capitalism in Germany. The German bourgeoisie remained constantly in debt to the State, because its marked economic role was indispensable to it.

However, because of the continuing necessity for this role of the State and because of its position within the specific political context of revolution from above, there were no lack of setbacks. The role of the State could not in fact transcend the limits imposed by *State power*. Within the class alliance which held State power, the great landowners long remained a separate class (largely for political and ideological reasons), later becoming an autonomous section of the bourgeoisie. They carved out for themselves an important place, quite out of proportion to their economic power and their position in production, even coming near to total control of that essential piece of the German State apparatus, the Army. With the aid of the Weimar Constitution, the constant interventionist role of the State within the framework of the revolution from above could even be said to hamper the specific role accorded to it in the growth of monopoly capitalism – i.e. to hamper its role of large-scale intervention in favour of finance capital.

It would have to be a large-scale intervention, for in the meantime, because of the ensemble of contradictions in the German social formation, the situation of capitalism was rapidly deteriorating.

The weakness of Germany as a link in the imperialist chain is already becoming quite clear. It stems from the ensemble of contradictions in the German social formation, in its relations with other countries in the imperialist chain. Germany’s advanced ‘economic’ development was one of the basic elements of this weakness, but only if considered in the light of the contradictions of the German formation. It makes sense only within the periodization of the imperialist process, as belonging to the contradictions of the transition towards the dominance of monopoly capitalism.

II. ITALY

Let us now turn to the case of Italy, which is quite different from that of Germany, though a similarity can be established if, and only if, we consider its position in the imperialist chain.

The similarity lies in the *weakness* of the Italian link in the chain. It does not have the same causes as the weakness of the German link; although there are certain resemblances in some of the ‘isolated’ features of the two cases, such features do not in themselves form a relation between the two formations. It is their effects which are important in distributing positions in the imperialist chain. In other words, the imperialist chain itself determines the *homology* of effects (i.e. the weakness of the links), which in each case has *different* causes. The difference does not thereby lose all relevance: the process by which fascism was established and functioned in Italy was appreciably different from the process in Germany.

In Italy, the process of industrialization came particularly late, making a decisive start only around 1880.[3] Feudalism, characterized by the dominance of the agricultural sector, showed a remarkable persistence in the context of the territorial and political fragmentation of Italy, which was perpetuated by successive foreign occupations. However, on the eve of the First World War, Italy had already entered the imperialist stage, though in its very special manner. Given the importance of commercial and banking capital from the time of the Renaissance, and the retardation of primitive accumulation in agriculture, the process of industrialization was characterized *from the start* by a tendency to rapid fusion of banking and industrial capital into finance capital, and by a very high rate of capital concentration. Industrial monopoly capital did not ‘precede’ the formation of finance capital, but was its corollary.

This tendency was further accentuated with the considerable penetration of foreign finance capital into Italy, due to the advance of other countries and the backwardness of Italian capitalism. French and British capital came first, under Cavour, and were followed by German capital after compulsory loans were abolished in 1885. This capital played an important role in the industrialization, reinforcing the precocious tendency for monopolistic concentration, and burdening Italian capital and the Italian State with heavy debts.

As early as 1884, Terni Blast Furnaces was founded with the support of the Banca Generale and Credito Mobiliare, and Italy acquired steel-producing capacity. In 1894, a German finance group formed the Banca Commerciale Italiana, which subsequently played a very important role. From 1902, concentration in iron was further accelerated by trusts (the Ilva trust particularly), and from 1910 the same process occurred with Fiat in the car

industry. It was concentration of an outstandingly *precocious* nature, taking into consideration that *statistically* craft industry and manufacturing were still preponderant in the industrial sector as a whole. The process of concentration was only accelerated during the war.

Immediately after the war, Italy went through a serious economic crisis. But here too the consequences of the war only added to pre-existing fissures in the structure of the Italian social formation.

The specific character of the process in Italy was a basic unevenness between industrial development and the rural sector, where capitalism was only slowly established. The same unevenness was present in Germany, but in Italy it had the nature of *a real breach*, and took a yet more concrete shape in the emergence of the problem of the South. The near total absence of agrarian reform (such as had occurred in the west of Germany), and the persistence of the great landowners' feudal exploitation of the South, not only retarded primitive capital accumulation, but above all deepened the breach in the uneven internal development, and aggravated its secondary effects on the internal market and on industry.

Italian agriculture, which still accounted for 55 per cent of the total product in 1911, was the great loser from the war, which led to its collapse. The effects of the collapse in 'contracting' the internal market were made more serious by the archaic forms of agriculture: scarcely half the agricultural production had been commercialized before the war. To this was again added the widening of the gap between industrial and agricultural development which occurs in monopoly capitalism.

Italian industry, artificially inflated by wartime requisitions, found itself deprived of outlets; the more so because, as a result of its late formation, it had not been concerned early enough with the problem of trade outlets, which *economically* it had not needed until then. Because of the precocious and artificial nature of the rise of Italian finance capital, the 'colonial' Libyan war was less a response to a demand for capital exports than, as Gramsci stressed, to *political motives*: it was an attempt to settle the poor peasants of the South in Libya, and to fulfil promises of agrarian reform on African soil.

In this situation Italy's foreign debt assumed catastrophic proportions after the war. As the precocious fusion of finance capital had been a feature of industrialization from the start, industrial capital had only a very small margin for autonomous action to adapt and re-launch industry after the war. The balance of trade and budgetary deficits were on the increase.

The divisions in the Italian social formation, far from beginning with the war,

themselves went back to the process of bourgeois-democratic revolution in Italy. Despite certain inadequacies in his analysis, Gramsci has left us an accurate sketch of this well-known problem of the Risorgimento: we should note, moreover, that this problem is far from being resolved.[4]

The process of the bourgeois democratic revolution emerged in Italy in the midst of the vast counter-revolutionary movement which followed the upheavals of 1848 in Europe. At the time of this development, the Italian bourgeoisie was *very weak*: it suffered firstly from economic weakness, its position being far inferior to the economic position of the German bourgeoisie. Cavour's historical role in this was to begin the process of national unification by means of an alliance of the nascent Northern bourgeoisie and the largely feudal big landowners of the South. Bismarck's role was above all to bring the German bourgeoisie into political power from above; Cavour's was rather to create the conditions for the economic power of the Italian bourgeoisie, to 'manufacture manufacturers', as Gramsci said.

By contrast with Germany, this process could only be accomplished if the bourgeoisie had *decisive political weight* over the Southern landowners within the alliance: this they acquired under Cavour, and they consolidated it under Crispi. In fact, in these conditions, the bourgeoisie could only be established economically by widening the breach between industry and agriculture. The only alternative path, given the feudal character of large agricultural property, was agrarian reform, i.e. a broad support of the bourgeoisie by the peasantry, similar to the Jacobin experience in France. This path was closed in Italy: the absence of agrarian reform was in fact the price the Italian bourgeoisie paid the big landowners for political supremacy over them. This supremacy would make it possible for the bourgeoisie to establish itself economically, but at the expense of agriculture: the division was given concrete shape in a growing contradiction within the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the big landowners, a contradiction which went much deeper than in Germany.

To some it was a conservative revolution; to Engels, it was the revolution of a bourgeoisie 'which did not want victory'; to Gramsci, it was a *passive revolution*. A passive revolution: the very words indicate the similarity to Bismarck's revolution from above, pointed out by Gramsci himself. Yet it was very different. The Italian bourgeoisie capitalized on the broad popular movement, reaching political power *in spite of its weaknesses*, but guaranteeing the landowners a thorough suppression of the movement by the State apparatus. These features of the Italian process explain both the existence of movements of the Jacobin type (e.g. Mazzini's Action Party and the Garibaldi movement) and

their inability to take a real hold over the Italian bourgeoisie.

The uneven development of North and South also explains the fact that national unity was not completed. This failure, the political effect of economic uneven development, only increased such unevenness through its politico-ideological mechanisms. As Gramsci showed, the absence of a hegemonic bourgeoisie was a sign of the weakness of a national State which was formed in a sense by perpetuating the domination of North over South, and excluding the latter from the political life of the nation. This process, which expressed the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and big landowners, was prolonged by a politico-ideological contradiction between the masses in the North, chiefly the working class, and in the South, chiefly the poor peasantry.[5] As 'Italian unification' had been carried out at the expense of the landowners and against the Pope, the latter forbade the participation of Catholics in the political life of the nation, up to and including the First World War. The great Southern landowners themselves kept Spanish nationality for a long time (until 1920), and did not miss an opportunity to raise the spectre of separatism.

It is therefore true that the Italian State was highly centralized and 'bureaucratized', since this was the only way to maintain a fragile national unity. The reasons for the centralism of, say, the French State, were quite different. Italian centralism was still in fact just a tissue grafted on to bodies possessing a wide local political and administrative autonomy, which allowed the big landowners to maintain their economic and politico-ideological hold over the Southern peasantry, and at the same time to thwart the strategy of the Northern bourgeoisie.

National unification, in the interests of the North and by means of the State form specific to Italy, was the more necessary as the Italian bourgeoisie too was generally tributary to the State's economic intervention in the process of industrialization, especially in taxation and tariffs. This gives it some resemblances to the German bourgeoisie, and in a sense it could be said that Germany and Italy seemed to have missed out the form of the liberal State. Nonetheless, there were setbacks here too, because of the big Italian landowners' opposition to measures which harmed their interests. The situation grew worse in this respect after the end of the war, the popular classes having made substantial gains, at a time when increased State intervention in favour of the Italian bourgeoisie became, here too, a life or death question for it.

Italy at the end of the First World War therefore appeared to be both economically 'behind' the other links in the imperialist chain, and 'in advance' of itself. This 'advance', consisting of precocious and artificial financial

concentration, was only one effect among others of its being ‘behind’ the other links. But this being in advance or behind, understood precisely as the rhythm of the imperialist chain, acquires its full importance only in the ensemble of the political and ideological ties of this chain, and therefore in the ensemble of the Italian social formation.

We can therefore define the weakness of the Italian link during the phase of transition to monopoly capitalism. It has other causes than the German link, but it too results in its own rhythm of accumulating contradictions, which *culminate in the conjuncture of the class struggle*.

These considerations become still clearer if we compare the German and Italian links with the other imperialist countries of this period: France, Britain, and the United States. They too are affected by the transition to monopoly capitalism and by ‘economic crises’. But they do not have the accumulation of contradictions which typify Germany and Italy. Particularly at the level of State power, State apparatus and forms of State, national unity nowhere shows weaknesses comparable to those of Germany and Italy. When national socialism comes into power, the centre of weakness does indeed seem to move to Spain, but in this case the ‘economic’ development is quite different from that of the other two countries. Spain in its turn became the nodal point of imperialist contradictions in Europe: the establishment of fascism and national socialism is well known to have been an essential factor in the weakness of the Spanish link.

3

The Period of Fascism and the Third International

I. THE COMINTERN'S GENERAL VIEW AND ITS CHANGES OF COURSE: THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIOD AND STEPS IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE

We must at this point dwell on the Third International's analyses. It is a striking fact that it could not correctly grasp the imperialist chain and locate the relative weakness of the various links. This was especially obvious in the distinctions it made between Italy and Germany which led it to underestimate the danger of fascism in Germany: the International was unable to identify the similarity between the two cases, which lay precisely in their relative weakness in the chain.

Dimitrov in fact recognized this in his report to the Seventh Congress in 1935: 'In this connection, we cannot avoid referring also to a number of *mistakes committed by the Communist Parties*, mistakes that hampered our struggle against fascism. In our ranks there was an impermissible underestimation of the fascist danger, a tendency which to this day has not everywhere been overcome. A case in point is the opinion formerly to be met with in our Parties to the effect that "Germany is not Italy", meaning that fascism may have succeeded in Italy, but that its success in Germany was out of the question, because the latter is an industrially and culturally highly developed country, with forty years of traditions of the working-class movement, in which fascism was impossible. Or the kind of opinion which is to be met with nowadays, to the effect that in countries of "classical" bourgeois democracy the soil for fascism does not exist. Such opinions have served and may serve to relax vigilance toward the fascist

danger, and to render the mobilization of the proletariat in the struggle against fascism more difficult.'[1]

The important point to understand is *why* the International was not expecting fascism in Germany. This is related to the explanation it gave for Italian fascism. Fascism, in its view, had come in Italy because of its *economic backwardness* in capitalist development: it could not be reproduced in Germany because of the advanced economy of such a highly industrialized country. Martynov expressed the idea clearly enough in 1929: 'Fascism… will be our chief enemy in backward, semi-agricultural countries.'[2] This had been the dominant interpretation of the Fourth Congress (1922–3), where Zinoviev, against opposition from Bordiga and Radek, explained fascism as representing *agriculturalists* first and foremost.[3] The economistic conception of the course of imperialism is combined in this view with an evolutionist outlook incapable of comprehending the complex problems of uneven development, which can only be defined to the extent that the *chain* has been correctly determined.

This conception of imperialism may be said to see the process as a *linear economic evolution*, the weakness of each country being determined by its 'progress' or 'backwardness' along the line of economic development. Fascism supposedly arrived in Italy because Italy was from this point of view a backward ('weak') country, just as the revolution occurred in Russia because this was the *most* backward ('weak') country in economic terms.

But the weakness of the Italian link did not stem from such 'backwardness'. This was in fact noted by the famous Comintern economist Eugen Varga, who posed the problem of imperialism quite accurately, in his own terms: 'The development of Italian capitalism has shown some very interesting features in the last ten years. *Italy is the greatest European power to embark so late upon modern capitalist development, but it has in a very short time taken on an exceptional imperialist character*…. The second peculiarity in the development of capitalism in Italy lies in the fact that the dictatorship of the bourgeois has there assumed the particular form of fascism. The problem which emerges is how far such a *political system* discourages or favours the development of Italian capitalism *in relation to other countries*.'[4]

There is no point in quoting the analysis the International, and especially the German Communist Party (KPD), made of the impossibility that national socialism would come to power. There will be an opportunity to return to this. The most striking thing in retrospect is the terrifying blindness shown by the Communist leaders: they were not expecting fascism in a 'highly industrialized' and economically advanced country, i.e. in a *'strong' country*.

This view had still more far-reaching consequences, which are particularly revealing. Evolutionist economism can well lead to an exactly opposite (and equally false) deciphering of the concrete situation. Jump a few years in time and see what was said about national socialism *after* its arrival. It was perhaps most clearly put by Wilhelm Pieck: national socialism had come about 'in the most advanced industrial country in Europe' precisely *because* of its economic advancement.[5] What before seemed the reason for fascism to fail there, was now brought forth as the reason for its success!

What argument lay behind this *volte-face*? The economic progress of Germany, so it ran, made it, as the *strongest* industrial country, the country where capitalism was most 'rotten-ripe'. The evolutionary advance of a formation along the line of economic development constituted its weakness; because of the mechanical decomposition of capitalism, the miraculous contradiction between the productive forces and relations of production somehow formented within it as if in a closed bottle. Fascism was the response to this 'weakness' of Germany's 'economic strength'. But this was precisely the economistic, evolutionist approach of the Second International, which expected revolution in Germany because of its economic maturity and rotten-ripeness, which was attacked by Lenin with his concept of the weakest link.

For the moment it should be borne in mind that the relative weakness of the German link in the imperialist chain was not solely a question of its economic situation, not even of its 'economic progress' as conceived by the International.

Finally, before embarking on an examination of the conjuncture of class struggle which led to fascism, we should again stop to consider some additional problems of the imperialist stage.

These considerations will make it quite clear that fascism can only be explained by reference to the *concrete situation* of the class struggle, as it cannot be reduced to any inevitable need of the 'economic' development of capitalism. It will also become clear how the Third International's economism led it not only to miss the imperialist chain and the order of the links, but constantly to underestimate, theoretically and politically, the *role of the class struggle* in the pace and direction of the development of imperialism, which its analyses of fascism demonstrate.

To go to the root of the problem: in describing imperialism as the *highest* stage of capitalism, Lenin characterized it as 'a *rotten, parasitic* capitalism', or again: 'From all that has been said in this book on the economic essence of imperialism, it follows that we must define it as capitalism in transition, or, more

precisely, as moribund capitalism.'[6] I shall attempt to give the correct interpretation of Lenin's analyses, which have had an incalculable effect, and to trace the International's evolution in relation to them.

Firstly, the points made by Lenin belong directly to his intense polemic against certain conceptions of Kautsky and the Second International about imperialism. According to Kautsky, the age of imperialism would lead to 'super-imperialism', i.e. to an era of peace both in the 'national' class struggle, and in relations between nation States, through a harmonious agreement of the dominant classes and the States dominating world imperialism. It would therefore be a stage in which capitalism had somehow overcome the economic contradictions of competitive capitalism, and found its final equilibrium.

Lenin rightly took up the polemic against this conception, pointing out that imperialism, far from removing the contradictions of the capitalist system, could only *aggravate* them. As he saw it, the contradictions of capitalism persisted in a *new and intensified form* in the imperialist stage, leading to a sharpening of the *class struggle* in new and more acute forms.

To go ahead some years, let us look at the International's analyses of the question, especially from the time of the Fifth Congress (1924). It is no exaggeration to say that they are deeply economistic. This economism gave rise to a general characteristic of the analyses, which may be termed 'economic catastrophism', and was especially evident in its analyses of fascism in Europe.

Economism here consists, first of all, in giving priority to the 'productive forces' at the expense of *the relations of production*. This is accompanied, in the second place, by an economistic-technologistic conception of the production process and the 'productive forces' as being somehow independent of the relations of production. This makes it impossible to define correctly the way in which the production process is articulated with the *field of the class struggle. Class struggle is outside the picture*, in the sense that it is reduced to a mechanical economic process which is attributed primacy in historical development. Yet Lenin and Mao have many times stressed the fact that, while economics plays the determinant role in the last instance (the fundamental contradiction), it is the *class struggle* (i.e. in the end *politics* and the *political class struggle)* which has *primacy* in the historical process.

This underestimation of the role of the class struggle which results from economism cannot be stressed too much: it makes it possible to understand the corollary of economism, the absence of a mass line. But what matters here is that it also makes it possible to understand the Comintern's economist catastrophism.

1. It was in fact because the Third International lost sight of the role of the

class struggle that it was unable, for one thing, correctly to determine the *tendential* nature of certain aspects of the development of capitalism and imperialism. The very character of an historical *tendency* is, as Marx stressed, decided in the last analysis by the fact that the economic process is overdetermined by the class struggle, which has primacy.

To take a simple example, which played an important part in the Third International's analyses of the fascist period: the tendency towards *a falling rate of profit*, which (according to Lenin) governs the export of capital in the imperialist stage. The Third International's economist catastrophism, predicting the imminent disintegration of capitalism in the imperialist countries, was based in large part on its conception of this tendency towards a falling rate of profit as an 'inevitable law' of the imperialist process.

But as Bettelheim correctly notes, this is 'a historical tendency and not a law of history: it does not demonstrate "the future" towards which the capitalist mode of production is inevitably moving, a future in which the rate of profit will come down to zero and toll the "last hour" of a mode of production thenceforth condemned'.[7] What this tendency does reveal is the development of the contradiction peculiar to the capitalist mode of production, a contradiction which is *reproduced* at the same time as the conditions of capitalist production itself. So, as Marx pointed out, by its very reproduction this contradiction can have such *contradictory effects* that they appear as causes able to counteract or even 'temporarily' to suppress the effects of the tendency.

The crucial point is that the reproduction of this contradiction with its contradictory effects and with their impact on the historical tendency, depends *on the class struggle*: it is well known that the tendency for a falling rate of profit is always combined with *a tendency for a rising rate of surplus value*. This 'countervailing' effect itself depends on the cost of reproduction of the labour force, and so on the *rate of exploitation*. The question which arises is then as follows: up to what point, in what determinate conjuncture, and by what means can the dominant class exploit the dominated classes – i.e. in what way and how will the latter in the end allow themselves to be exploited on both the national and international levels? This is the way to discover the limit, the length of time the tendency is retarded – in short, its historical rhythm. Only by bypassing the class struggle do we end up in economist catastrophism, misinterpreting what Lenin meant by the death agonies, the rotten-ripeness of capitalism.

2. On the subject of economist catastrophism, there are useful examples other than that of the falling rate of profit. There is the equally obvious example of the *development of productive forces*.

For Marx, of course, this question had absolutely no meaning if considered 'in isolation'. The problem of the development of the productive forces has meaning only in its relation to the social relations of production, and therefore through the contradiction between the 'base' (the production process, combining productive forces and relations of production) and a 'superstructure' which no longer 'corresponds' to this development. If superstructure means juridico-political and ideological forms, this contradiction quite clearly involves the *field of the class struggle*. The superstructure itself is not just a wrapping inside which the productive forces develop; it intervenes decisively in the production process. The contradiction between these 'topological' figures of base and superstructure depends on the class struggle. The non-correspondence between base and superstructure does not automatically spell out some future catastrophe for a social formation: the explosion of this contradiction, and also the possibility of its eventual readjustment within the same mode of production, depends on this struggle.[8]

The Third International had *two alternating positions* on this question, both of them typically economist:

(a) The first position postulated *the final halt of the development of the 'forces of production' under imperialism*,[9] outside any context of superstructure and class struggle. As early as the Fourth Congress, under the rubric 'The period of the degeneration of capitalism', the International's *Resolution on Tactics* reads: 'After an appraisal of the world economic situation, the Third Congress could declare with complete certainty that capitalism, *having fulfilled its mission of promoting the development of production*, had reached a stage of irreconcilable conflict with the needs not only of historical development but also of the most elementary conditions of human existence…. The general picture of the decay of capitalist economy is not mitigated by those unavoidable fluctuations of the business cycle which are characteristic of the capitalist system both in its ascendancy and in its decline…. What capitalism is passing through today is nothing but its death agonies. The collapse of capitalism is inevitable.'[10] This thesis of a halt in the development of the productive forces, as conceived and formulated here, was to be constantly repeated later; it became an essential part of economist catastrophism.

It should be pointed out that in this view the forces of production were considered to be somehow 'isolated' from the relations of production and from the ensemble of a social formation. One of the effects of such a conception is to disguise and obscure the counteracting tendencies which lie mainly in the role of the class struggle. In fact it is not going too far to say that the Third International

interpreted what for part of the inter-war period was a real economic tendency, as an indication that an inevitable economic law was coming into irreversible operation. Nevertheless, Lenin had been quite explicit about this in his *Imperialism*: '… the tendency to stagnation and decay, which is characteristic of monopoly, continues to operate, and in some branches of industry, in some countries, for certain periods of time, it gains the upper hand.'[11]

(b) This conception went together with a theory which differed only in appearance, related this time to the contradiction indicated between base and superstructure, a contradiction it saw in specifically economist terms. This thesis runs as follows: the halt in the development of the productive forces is belied by stressing that, *on the contrary*, imperialism continues to develop these forces abundantly, creating the 'preconditions' for (and therefore the imminent arrival of) socialism. For the linear development of the forces of production itself increasingly brings them up against the surrounding superstructure, the deepening of the contradiction naturally leading, according to economist catastrophism, to the destruction of the system.

This theory was developed at the Sixth Congress (1928) in particular, and appeared to move the focus of the problem of the forces of production to the contradiction between base and superstructure – for the International had meanwhile accepted the idea that the capitalist economy had 'stabilized' in the period prior to this Congress: 'The epoch of imperialism is the epoch of dying capitalism…. The general crisis of capitalism … [is] the direct outcome *of the profound contradiction between the growing productive forces of world economy and national barriers* … [it proves] that the capitalist shell has become an intolerable restraint on the further development of mankind, and that history has put on the order of the day the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist yoke.… Imperialism has developed the productive forces of world capitalism to a very high degree. It has completed the creation of all the natural prerequisites for the socialist organization of society.… Imperialism seeks to resolve this contradiction [between the development of the productive forces and the surrounding superstructure].… In reality, however, this utopia comes up against such great and insurmountable obstacles that capitalism must with iron necessity break down under the weight of its own contradictions.'[12]

The terms of the problem may have changed, but not the problematic. The political superstructure is seen only as an epiphenomenal wrapping for the development of the productive forces, and the class struggle goes unmentioned. The contradiction between base and superstructure seems to be the automatic and self-generated consequence of the truly metaphysical primacy given to the

‘productive forces’, and one begins to wonder what the class struggle can have to do with all this.

The Third International’s economism was therefore expressed, in its strategy for the class struggle, as *economist catastrophism*. The main consequence is already clear enough: from the correct Leninist conception of imperialism as the death agony of rotten-ripe capitalism (i.e. as circumscribing the conjunctures of the sharpening class struggle), it was generally concluded later that revolution *was on the agenda* in the European imperialist countries. And this conclusion, to be fair, was correct and in tune with reality *for a time*.

Even during that time, however, this conclusion quickly acquired economistic connotations. It was a *general* kind of conclusion drawn from the *abstract ‘economic’* analysis, and applied (especially by the German Communist Party [KPD] in 1920 and 1921, and by the Italian Communist Party [PCI] in 1921) without any consideration of the concrete conjuncture of the class struggle. To say that proletarian revolution was on the agenda therefore already conveyed the idea of *a revolution ready to break out no matter where or when*, the mechanical outcome of an economic crisis, which was itself the result of these economic contradictions.

The conception of revolution as being on the agenda was explicitly developed by Bukharin in the Russian delegation to the Third Congress of the International. If capitalism was already virtually finished, he argued, an unceasing revolutionary offensive was required to precipitate the birth pangs and bring forth victory.[13] He was speaking in opposition to Lenin, whose line was finally adopted by the Congress (supported, incidentally, by Trotsky, the rapporteur on the international situation). Lenin, for his part, established a periodization of the imperialist stage in steps and zigzags, according to the *conjuncture of the class struggle*. Far from holding to a mechanistic concept of the revolution as based on an evolutionist ‘economic crisis’ (i.e. a non-historic conception), Lenin in 1921 took account of the turn in the class struggle. He raised the slogan ‘to the masses’, and so fixed as the main political objective of this step (of ‘stabilization’) the prior conquest of the masses.

An important question of *terminology* should be pointed out here. Lenin appeared to be conscious of the economistic connotations the term ‘stabilization’ would have carried for the Comintern, implying ‘*economic* stabilization’. He does not use this term but uses instead the term *‘relative balance of forces’*, which refers specifically to the class struggle. It was only afterwards that the Comintern, in quoting Lenin, substituted the term ‘stabilization’.

That it did so was no accident.

In fact this conception of Lenin's was not understood or applied either by Communist Parties (particularly the German and Italian Parties) or by the Comintern from its Fourth Congress on. The conjuncture of the class struggle, which will be discussed in detail later, was increasingly modelled on and reduced to the economic sphere, whether 'stabilization' in an economistic sense was accepted or rejected. Moreover, even where stabilization was accepted as having a purely economistic meaning (economic stabilization), it *always* implied a mere economic episode, a phase in the destruction of capitalism in the stage of permanent economic disintegration.

The Fourth Congress (1922–3) spoke of stabilization in an economistic sense for the first time, and drew from it wrong ('ultra-right') conclusions about the step of the class struggle.

The Fifth Congress (1924) was silent on stabilization as a characteristic step of the class struggle, apparently no longer accepting 'economic stabilization'.[14] This congress took the Comintern's first 'ultra-left' turn, making an equally incorrect definition of the step, although in the opposite direction from the Fourth Congress.

On the other hand the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern (March 1925) did refer to 'economic stabilization'. Zinoviev declared, very significantly that Lenin's 1921 formula of the 'relative balance of present forces' had led, 'when things became clearer, to the stabilization formula'. And Zinoviev was not very far wrong, for the official consecration of the 'stabilization' formula meant the penetration of economism into the Comintern.[15]

As for the Sixth Congress (1928), it had the remarkable foresight to conclude, just before the 1929 crisis, that the end of the period of 'stabilization' was at hand. But this end was envisaged as an economic crisis, which must in itself be catastrophic and final. The end of stabilization was therefore not related in the least to the characteristics of the class struggle; which explains the totally mistaken meaning this 'ultra-left' congress gave to this end of stabilization.[16]

A general line (of economism, and the lack of a mass line) thus became dominant in the Comintern by a gradual and contradictory process. It was a line which governed both its 'right' and 'left' turns, to the extent that from 1928 the definitions of right and left cease to have any clear meaning; they can only have an approximate use, and should not hide the deep divisions located elsewhere.[17]

II. IMMEDIATE EFFECTS ON THE COMINTERN'S ANALYSES OF FASCISM

In any case, this 'economistic-mechanistic' view, *always combined* – whatever its turns and meanderings – with *'economic catastrophism'*, had important consequences for the Comintern's positions on fascism. Although these positions *evolved* according to the turns and the overall development of the Comintern, the 'errors' were clearly *already there* from the period *after the Fourth Congress (1922–3)*, when the Comintern began to be 'officially' concerned with fascism. The first steps had in a sense been taken with the analyses made by the PCI leadership. The analysis of national socialism therefore seemed to be the culmination of this contradictory process. However after the victory of Italian fascism there certainly had been some clear-sighted elements in the Comintern itself for a time, who spoke out against the tide on some specific points.

For the moment I shall merely outline some of the Comintern's most typical positions on fascism, to illustrate the thesis I have put forward about its general conception and line:

1. Underestimation of the danger of fascism, plus incomprehension of its specific nature and historical role. Fascism, according to the Comintern, could not really last. This evolutionist conception of the 'economic crisis' and of the abstract imminence of revolution, could only represent a turn or step in the class struggle as counter-tendencies in an overall tendency towards catastrophe. Such a conception provided no framework for any *concrete historical periodization* of the imperialist stage and for the pace of the uneven development of its links, which determines the length of a step or turn.

The blindness of both the PCI and KPD leaders in this respect is staggering. Fascism, according to them, would only be a 'passing episode' in the revolutionary process. Umberto Terracini wrote in *Inprekorr*, just after the March on Rome, that fascism was at most a passing 'ministerial crisis'.[18] Amadeo Bordiga, introducing the resolution on fascism at the Fifth Congress, declared that all that had happened in Italy was 'a change in the governmental team of the bourgeoisie'. The presidium of the Comintern executive committee noted, just after Hitler's accession to power: 'Hitler's Germany is heading for ever more inevitable economic catastrophe…. The momentary calm after the victory of fascism is only a passing phenomenon. The wave of revolution will rise inescapably in Germany despite the fascist terror…,'[19]

The repeated incantation of terms like 'necessity', 'inevitability', 'inescapability', which constantly recur in the Comintern's analysis should be noted in passing.

2. Fascism, as a mere passing episode in the automatic process of growing economic crisis-evolution-catastrophe-revolution, was somehow supposed to

crumble *of its own accord*. This idea was deep-rooted in the Comintern: the idea that the 'internal contradictions' of fascism would lead to its imminent, automatic fall. Internal contradictions, unequivocally in this case, meant 'economic' contradictions, governed by the catastrophic 'economic crisis'.

This conception of 'internal contradictions' already appeared clearly in the *Resolution on Fascism* at the Fifth Congress (1924), a congress which had gone back on the theory of 'stabilization': 'In this epoch of the capitalist crisis … and the progressive destruction of the capitalist system …, fascism ends after its victory in political bankruptcy, its internal contradictions leading to its destruction from within.'[20] Varga, though he was the only economist in the world to predict the 1929 crisis, gave the following reasons for expecting Hitler's immediate fall in November 1933: 'The rule of fascism is still condemned by the internal contradictions between the interests and desires of the anti-capitalist masses, and the objective role of fascism as guardian of a capitalism which has collapsed.'[21] This, despite Clara Zetkin's denunciation of the failure to understand Italian fascism and the prediction that its 'internal contradictions' would lead to its immediate fall.[22] Not until Dimitrov spoke out in the profoundly ambiguous context of the Seventh Congress was this error again denounced.

3. (a) Fascism was no more than a passing episode in the economic advance of imminent, necessary revolution. This was only the beginning of the spiral in the Comintern's theoretical and political understanding of fascism. Fascism was considered a *positive* moment in the bad side of history, as on the side of the masses in the revolutionary process: 'By its adventuristic politics, fascism is pushing the internal contradictions … of German capitalism to the limit, and leading Germany to catastrophe…. So an immense revolutionary upsurge is beginning in Germany.'[23] Again: 'The establishment of an open fascist dictatorship… precipitates the pace of Germany's development towards the proletarian revolution.'[24]

Fascism was considered a positive phenomenon bringing revolution closer because it accelerated the 'economic' decay of capitalism: any appreciation of fascism according to the conjuncture of the class struggle becomes impossible in this context.

(b) To take the argument further still: fascism had this positive meaning, because it was itself *only* a *simple expression* of this catastrophic economic crisis. This was the prevalent conception of the Comintern at the Sixth Congress – fascism as a purely *defensive* strategy of capitalism, a phenomenon reducible purely to the *weakness* of the bourgeoisie, an infallible sign of the imminence of

its last hour: ‘Fascist dictatorship … is politically the weakest government the bourgeoisie has had in Germany.’ This thesis only re-emphasizes the PCI leadership’s analysis of fascism in Italy (that fascism only expressed the weakness of capitalism [*capitalismo debole*], and the resolution of the Comintern Plenum of June 1923, confirmed by the Fifth Congress, according to which ‘fascism expresses the disintegration of the capitalist economy’.

If fascism were only a measure of the ‘weakness’ of the bourgeoisie, in that it bore witness only to the catastrophic economic crisis of capitalism, its corollary had to be the ‘strength’ of the mass revolutionary movement; and this strength was in turn deduced, automatically and abstractedly, from this crisis. The rise of fascism must of necessity correspond to an *offensive* step by the labour movement and a *defensive* step by the bourgeoisie, a conclusion arrived at by reducing the class struggle to economics and to the mechanist equation, *‘economic crisis = working class offensive’*.

(c) Fascism, then, was seen only as ‘counter-revolution’ in the strict sense, that is, a direct and immediate response to the ‘revolution’. The PCI leaders had already moved towards this view in 1921: ‘Fascism is born of the revolutionary situation….’[25] Zinoviev, in his speech to the Fourth Congress, had developed it: ‘Fascism … is a counter-revolutionary coup d’état.’ The Fifth Congress put it quite clearly: ‘Fascism is one of the classic forms of counter-revolution in the period of capitalist decline and proletarian revolution.…’

There can be no doubt about the short-circuit economism creates here. It sees the decline of capitalism as a period abstractly defined by the notion of catastrophic economic crisis. This crisis determines the permanent and omnipresent potential for revolution, fascism itself being only counter-revolution in the real sense of the term, i.e. a direct response to a *revolutionary situation. Die Rote Fahne* – the KPD daily – wrote on 15 June 1930: ‘The advance of fascism by no means indicates a retreat by the proletarian movement, but on the contrary, it is the counterpart of the revolutionary upsurge, *the necessary concomitant of a maturing revolutionary situation.’*

In fact, there was no question of a revolutionary ‘situation’ here, in the sense of a *concrete situation* of class struggle, but an abstract economistic conception superimposed on reality. Here again Clara Zetkin stood apart, warning the International against interpreting Italian fascism as counter-revolution, as a phenomenon identical with the Russian White Guards or Horthy’s counter-revolution in Hungary.[26]

(d) But to go further still: fascism, in this interpretation, has to be the ‘*last*’ political form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, to be necessarily and

immediately followed by the revolutionary establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This kind of analysis was very common within the Comintern after national socialism came to power. It was linked to the analysis of the PCI leadership, and of the June 1923 Plenum, that fascism was the 'bourgeoisie's last card'. Bukharin opposed such positions at the Fifth Congress (1924): 'We communists ourselves have sometimes seen the situation too simply and believed that first there was democracy, after that comes fascism, and what must come after fascism is the dictatorship of the proletariat. That may happen, but it equally well may not. In the case of Italy, Mussolini's regime may not necessarily be followed straightaway by the dictatorship of the proletariat, but by a new form of "democracy" …' The important thing to see is that the Comintern's economistic, evolutionist conception led quite naturally to the formal, chronological conception of the 'steps' of the historical process.

One further move remained: would the vision of revolution automatically brought about through inevitable catastrophe produce a *fatalistic* view of fascism? In other words, would fascism, as the *last* step before the dictatorship of the proletariat, be seen as a *necessary*, and therefore *inevitable*, step in the move towards revolution in the imperialist countries?

At first sight the Comintern does not seem to have made this move. Still we constantly come across formulae analysing the 'positive' sides of fascism as creating the 'final conditions' for the socialist revolution, giving a strange appearance of 'necessity' to fascism as the precursor of revolution. In this view of historical development, fascism as the *last* step *before* the necessary revolution is confusingly close to fascism as a 'necessary' stage preceding the revolution.

Many communists, moreover, drew the logical conclusion, and followed the Comintern line through, apparently holding this view quite openly. There is *indirect* evidence for this in Thälmann's 'official' warning in *Die Internationale*, the German edition of the organ of the Comintern, in December 1931: 'We have not always struggled hard enough against the false theory of the *inevitability* of fascist dictatorship under monopoly capitalism….' The PCI, for its part, did not mince its words. The Rome theses of 1922 declared unequivocally, 'Fascism … is in reality an *inescapable consequence* of the development of the capitalist regime.'[27] In any case, as far as the Comintern was concerned, although it may not formally have made the move in question, one can say that it behaved as if it had done so: it denied itself the means of successfully struggling *against* the resistible rise of fascism.

4

Conclusion: The Transition to Monopoly Capitalism, and ‘Economic Crisis’

It is now easy to see the blunders made by the Comintern about the ‘period’ of fascism. How can the nature of the period be summarized in a few words? In general, it has to be made clear that it was a part of the imperialist stage; in particular, it represented the transition, in the imperialist countries, towards the dominance of monopoly capitalism.

This gives us some knowledge of the fascist period. It is characterized by the contradictions of imperialism and monopoly capitalism, combined with the contradictions peculiar to a phase of transition. This provides the conditions for an acute sharpening of the class struggle which determines the course of the transition. In other words, the transition phase does not in itself explain fascism: *the fascist phenomenon is by no means restricted to this ‘period’*. The ‘period’ is important only in so far as it circumscribes the conjunctures of the class struggle, and contributes to the emergence of the *political crises* to which fascism corresponds, political crises which are not determined solely by the character of the period, and which may well occur in other periods too.

We have then circumscribed the problem of the inter-war ‘economic crisis’, and its role in the appearance of fascism. In 1929 there was a *world* economic crisis, in the true sense of the term, which was only resolved decisively in the imperialist countries (including the USA) with the Second World War. I cannot

go into details, but the following points should be stressed: this crisis was *not* that of the economic catastrophe of an imperialism already sinking under the weight of its own maturity. It was indeed occasioned by tendencies peculiar to capitalism in the imperialist stage, but only in the forms in which these tendencies were expressed historically in the transition phase.[1]

What is more, it can clearly be seen from the very character of the period that it was not, as the Comintern thought, a simple *continuous, accelerating 'economic' process*. It was wrong to do as the International did under Varga's aegis, and make a global characterization of the inter-war period as a *'period of constant economic crisis'*, with high and low points.[2] This Comintern view was already apparent at the Fourth Congress (1922–3), but it was taken up and stressed by the Fifth and Sixth: 'The general picture of the decay of capitalist economy is not mitigated by those unavoidable fluctuations of the business cycle in the decline of the capialist system…. Even before the present industrial recovery began, the Second Congress had predicted such a development in the not-so-distant future, and had already defined it unequivocally as a superficial wave against the background of the advancing destruction of the capitalist economy.…'

In fact the *whole* of the inter-war period saw an unevenly developed accumulation of all contradictions (economic, political and ideological), producing, rather, *several* 'economic crises'. The picture we then get of the process is as follows: the post-war economic crisis lasted until 1921; then came economic recovery, and growing if fluctuating development until 1929; then acute economic crisis from 1929 to 1931, followed by progressive resolution of the crisis and a marked but hesitant recovery.

In any case, to come back to the problem of the class struggle, these crises were either already over (the case of fascism), or already waning, and *their direct* effects on the class struggle were on the way to being relatively well overcome (the case of national socialism) when fascism and national socialism came to power. The conjuncture of the class struggle which led to them was not directly determined by any one 'economic crisis'. The conjuncture thus circumscribed depended in the end on a periodization based on *the steps and the turns of the class struggle*.

Part Two

Fascism and the Class Struggle

1

The Political Crisis: Fascism and the Exceptional State

I. THE PROBLEM AND THE COMINTERN

I have given a general framework for the period encompassing the conjuncture of the class struggle which led to fascism. I now think it necessary, before embarking on an analysis of the conjuncture, to pose certain problems on which this analysis will focus.

Although fascism must be situated in the framework of a given stage of capitalist development, it is obvious that this stage is not enough to explain fascism: the 'interventionist' State does not necessarily take the form of fascism. Fascism therefore corresponds to a specific conjuncture of the class struggle. But we have to go further: fascism does not constitute a simple variation of the capitalist State at a certain stage of its development. Fascism is a form of State and of regime at the extreme 'limit' of the capitalist State. By 'extreme limit', I do not in the least mean a *'pathological'* form of the bourgeois political system[1] (i.e. a form somehow alien to 'parliamentary democracy'); but a form due to a quite particular conjuncture of the class struggle. This particularity is not itself exhaustively determined by the period of the development of capitalism within which this class struggle is located.

This is the same as posing the problem of the *political crisis*, for the appearance of fascism corresponds precisely to a political crisis. The above propositions can therefore be clarified by making it evident that the political

crisis is composed of a number of *particular characteristics* of the class struggle: the problem raised here being similar to the problem posed by the revolutionary situation.

So we can be more specific. Although it is true that fascism is not alien to parliamentary democracy; and although it is also true that the bourgeois State (and the capitalist system) carry within them both the 'seeds' of fascism and the 'seeds' of revolution (and we must not forget this), it is still true that fascism cannot be explained just by the automatic, linear, necessary germination of these seeds, any more than revolution can be ascribed to such a process.

However, the Third International often thought of fascism in this way, and together with its inability to locate the difference between fascism and the parliamentary democratic form of the bourgeois State, this led it to mistake the specific nature of fascism: 'Fascism grows organically out of bourgeois democracy. The process of passing from bourgeois dictatorship to open forms of repression is the essence of bourgeois democracy.'[2] Again: 'Germany shows … that the passage from democracy to fascism is an *organic process* which unfolds without particularly explosive or surprising events, or a marked high point; it can be completed gradually and directly.'[3]

The conception of a gradual and almost imperceptible transfer to fascism therefore goes back to the view that 'between fascism and bourgeois democracy there is *only a difference of degree* …, fascism is not a new form of government….' (Manuilsky, op. cit.). Or again: 'It is by no means the task of communists to go around with distorting lenses in search of pseudo-theory of differences of some sort between democracy and fascism.'[4]

Such had been the positions of the PCI, and they had already been strongly expressed within the Comintern during the Fifth Congress in 1924.[5]

This context made it impossible even to pose the problem of the political crisis as the point at which contradictions were condensed, at which there was a break from the 'gradual' pace of development, leading to fascism. The Comintern reduced every such situation to a revolutionary situation, seen as a continuous, 'progressive' process of ripening.

To come to the problem of the political crisis, the crucial question is whether it is possible to distinguish general features of a political crisis apart from those of the revolutionary situation in the strict sense of the term, i.e. of determining a quite specific form of State and specific forms of regimes. There are two sides to the one problem: is it possible to grasp a 'crisis' as a general concept and so to determine the special peculiarities of the *exceptional State* to which it leads?

Further, within the general framework of the political crisis, is it possible to determine the different and particular variants of crisis, each leading to specific forms of the *exceptional* regime (Bonapartism, military dictatorship, and fascism).[6]

II. THALHEIMER, GRAMSCI, TROTSKY

To direct our ideas, there are, in making this kind of examination of fascism, two distinct but related conceptions which are of use to us: that of August Thalheimer and Antonio Gramsci. In addition we have that of Trotsky.

The first two are related, in that they both follow from certain analyses by Marx and Engels, developed by Lenin. They are chiefly concerned with a form of State which has as its essential characteristic a particular *'relative autonomy'* from the dominant classes, and which arises when the two main class forces in a social formation are *'in equilibrium'*. These analyses were applied concretely to the case of the *absolutist State* (equilibrium between the bourgeoisie and the landed nobility) and to *Bonapartism* (equilibrium between the bourgeoisie and the working class), *Bismarckism* being considered as an amalgam of the other two cases.[7] It is necessary to be careful with the term 'equilibrium' since *it has a particular meaning here*: the meaning of an equilibrium between 'equals', a situation in which the two main antagonists are, according to the metaphor of the scales, *'in balance'*. In fact, the Marxist classics, Lenin and Mao in particular, often use the term equilibrium in a different way, to designate situations of 'relative stabilization' of the relation of force between two forces which are nonetheless *'unequal'*.

As far as Thalheimer is concerned,[8] he has left us some important writings in which he examines the case of fascism, following the problematic of Bonapartism. The essential factor of the political crisis which he attempts to define (for there are many other factors) is precisely that of the equilibrium between the two main class forces, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Such a crisis leads to Bonapartist forms of State, one of the essential features of which is the specific relative autonomy of the State from the dominant classes. The latter thus sacrifice their 'political domination' for the benefits of a 'master/saviour', to preserve their 'socio-economic dominance'. Thalheimer sees fascism as a particular form of Bonapartism.

For Gramsci the case is rather different. The difference is that, within the general framework of the political crisis, he defines *a specific case of political crisis*, that of the *crisis of hegemony* or of the crisis of *catastrophic equilibrium* which leads to the phenomenon of Caesarism.[9] In this case, it is not just an

equilibrium between the two main forces present, but a specific equilibrium arising ‘in such a way that to go on struggling can only lead to mutual destruction… and a perspective of catastrophe’. This observation is important, and similar to something Marx too had said, which was also used by Thalheimer, though he did not give it a specific meaning as did Gramsci. Marx sometimes attributed French Bonapartism to this particular equilibrium, as resulting from the fact that ‘the bourgeois class had already lost, and the working class not yet gained the ability to govern the nation’.

Catastrophic political crisis of this kind would give rise, according to Gramsci, to the phenomenon of Caesarism. Again, one of its essential features would be a specific form of the relative autonomy of the State from the dominant classes. Gramsci sees fascism as a quite typical case of Caesarism, while he seems hesitant about classifying French Bonapartism as a case of Caesarism, and only does so with many reservations; which by the way enables him – unlike Thalheimer at times – to avoid superficial analogy and identification between fascism and Bonapartism.

As far as I know, Thalheimer and Gramsci were alone in formulating clearly the thesis on fascism which relates the political crisis to the ‘equilibrium’ between ‘equal’ forces. It is nonetheless true that from Otto Bauer to Angelo Tasca and Arthur Rosenberg,[10] the same conception seems to underlie many old and contemporary attempts by Marxists to explain fascism. I need only mention how contemporary studies of fascism are rediscovering the work of Thalheimer in Germany and Gramsci in Italy. But these analyses, though they include important points, seem to me *to be wrong on one essential point*. Neither in Germany nor in Italy did the triumph of fascism correspond to a political crisis of equilibrium in any sense of the term. The working class had already been thoroughly defeated by the time fascism came into power, and the bourgeoisie did not have to pay for this defeat with any catastrophic equilibrium. In other words, throughout the rise of fascism, the bourgeoisie remained the principal aspect of the principal contradiction.

With Trotsky things are more complex. In his writings on Germany, Trotsky for his part is very careful to distinguish between Bonapartism, which is based on an equilibrium between the two forces, and fascism.[11] Nevertheless, he seems to neglect the question of the *specific* political crisis which characterizes fascism. He insists basically on two characteristics. They are significant, for they show that *despite their differences*, Trotsky basically shared the Comintern’s view:

1. That fascism represents an open ‘civil war’ by the bourgeoisie against the

‘insurgent’ working class, and therefore a revolutionary offensive by the working class. In this mistaken characterization Trotsky came close to the Comintern position.

2. That fascism was the typical manner in which the *bourgeoisie in decline* obtained the support of the petty bourgeoisie, just as Jacobinism was the typical manner of the *rising bourgeoisie*, and social democracy the typical manner of the bourgeoisie in *the epoch of its stabilization’*, this being a general characterization deduced mechanistically from the ‘period’, and one which underestimates the specific class struggle.

But Trotsky must be given his due. He clarified some important points about fascism: for one thing, its relations to the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie. What is more, he was almost alone in having an astonishingly accurate foresight of the development of the process in Germany. But as is often the case with Trotsky, his analyses uncovered real problems, which are left unresolved, or given erroneous explanations. Even Isaac Deutscher, well known to be sympathetic to Trotsky’s positions, has to say of his conception of fascism that ‘… on some occasions he applied it rather imprecisely. He saw the imminence of fascism in France; and he insisted on labelling Pilsudski’s pseudo-Bonapartist dictatorship over Poland as fascist.… On the other hand, Trotsky described, rather unconvincingly, the ephemeral governments of Schleicher and von Papen, and also Doumergue’s feeble government of 1934, as Bonapartist. (Only in 1940 did he at last describe the Pétain regime as pseudo-Bonapartist rather than fascist.)’[12]

III. THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: POLITICAL CRISIS, CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

We have already drawn up a framework for investigating fascism, in the form of theses which require justification:

A. The general characteristics of the *political crisis* can easily be defined. The element of equilibrium between ‘equals’ is specific to certain kinds of political crisis (i.e. the general equilibrium crisis and the catastrophic equilibrium crisis). These are not the kinds of political crisis of equilibrium to which fascism corresponds. Moreover, although the conjuncture of class struggle peculiar to fascism has the general characteristics of the political crisis, it also has the particular characteristics of a quite specific political crisis.

Such is the line of research which I shall follow in this study, focusing on the question of fascism. In particular, by examining every side of the political crisis

of fascism, I shall indicate both the features of every political crisis in general, and those which mark it out as a particular kind of crisis.

B. The essence of a political crisis which can lead to the emergence of an exceptional State lies in particular characteristics of the *field of the class struggle – the field of 'social relations'*.[13] But the political crisis is associated with profound fissures in the institutional system (i.e. in the *State apparatus);* just as, from this point of view, the revolutionary situation is characterized by 'dual power' (a feature specific to the State instance). The exceptional State is a response to these fissures, among other things.

But this 'institutional crisis', although it has its own effects on the class struggle, is itself only the result of it. Institutions do not determine social antagonisms: it is the class struggle which governs the modifications in the State apparatuses. This requires pointing out, in view of the 'institutionalist-functionalist' conceptions which reduce this 'social crisis' to an 'institutional crisis', and which have implications for the analysis of fascism, so that most studies of fascism in political theory reduce it to a 'crisis of the parliamentary democratic State'.[14]

So in presenting my analysis, I shall *begin* by explaining the features of the class struggle which characterize the political crisis of fascism. Their effects on the State apparatus during the rise of fascism will only be briefly indicated, since I shall go on to devote a special chapter to the *systematic* examination of effects on the apparatuses. This will also be my plan for fascism itself: I shall first describe the relation of fascism in power with the various classes and class interests engaged in struggle, devoting a whole chapter to the systematic examination of the fascist State. That will be the chapter in which the question of the form of *the exceptional State* will be discussed, together with the question of fascism as a specific *form of regime* of such a State.

2

The Growth of Fascism

Finally, I shall follow the policy of distinguishing between the steps in the *growth of fascism*. I shall not go into a long preamble on the subject here. I simply wish to make it clear that fascism does not come as a bolt from the blue. It is possible to speak of the growth of fascism as long as this does not mean the simple germination of 'seeds' existing in parliamentary democracy, but a significantly different process, corresponding to a political crisis which can be described as the growth of fascism. The growth of fascism can therefore only be grasped by breaking entirely with the theory of an evolutionist, linear kind of 'organic and continuous development' between parliamentary democracy and fascism.

It was no accident that this break did not come until Dimitrov spoke at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. Stressing that fascism was not the simple and ordinary substitution of one bourgeois government by another but a *change in the form of the State*, he was at least able to point to the key problem of the rise of fascism: 'Comrades, the accession to power of fascism must not be conceived of in so simplified and smooth a form, as though some committee or other of finance capital decided on a certain date to set up a fascist dictatorship. In reality, fascism usually comes to power in the course of a mutual and at times severe, struggle against the old bourgeois parties…. All this, however, does not make less important the fact that, before the establishment of a fascist dictatorship, bourgeois governments usually pass through a number of preliminary stages and adapt a number of reactionary measures which directly facilitate the accession to power of fascism.'[1]

The question of the *beginning of the growth* of fascism should not be

confused with the problem of the *origins of* fascism, a question to which priority has been given in the historiography of fascism. First of all, there is the striking fact that the start of the process is *not* the 'birth' of fascist organizations, which on the one hand, vegetated for a long time in Germany and Italy before the process really began, and on the other, often existed elsewhere without getting under way at all. Secondly, and most importantly, what is characteristic of the start of the process is the accumulation, or rather the *systematic co-ordination* of particular characteristics.

Finally, a remark about the pace of this growth of fascism. Again, the process has an uneven pace of development, measured by the forms in which the various contradictions accumulated. Of course, the process can still be divided into strict *periods* according to the development of the class struggle and the modifications in the apparatuses; but such periods have their own pace (slow or rapid) and varying duration (long or short). The way they are grouped is itself determined by the conjunctural forms of the political crisis in question.

From the very nature of fascism, it is possible to distinguish the following periods in its growth. I list them now in order to clarify my account:

(a) *The period from the start of the process to the point of 'no return'*. Although the fascist phenomenon can be resisted and avoided, there is a point in its growth after which it appears difficult to turn it back. The moment is not that at which fascism actually comes into power; the accession to power seems such a simple, final act, occurring only when the essentials are already decided and done with, in short, a confirmation of a victory already won. The importance of this has to be acknowledged: in reality, if one stays glued to what is happening in the political foreground, this foreground will in the end become a screen to hide the deeper workings of the class struggle where real power is at stake.

(b) *The period from the point of no return until fascism comes into power*. This is an important period, not so much because of the actual victory of fascism, as for its nature and specific political character.

(c) *The first period of fascism in power*. This is a period characterized by particular instability and ambiguity, because of the original, very complex, class character of fascism, i.e. because of the very ambiguous character of the popular support it has when it reaches power. This is the period in which fascism is still strongly influenced by its origins, finding itself generally obliged to make compromise measures of a kind to bolster many illusions.

(d) *The period of fascist stabilization*, which itself occurs in various steps. At the beginning of this period fascism is purified of its class origins, or at least of the ambiguity of its origins; this becomes evident with widespread, bloody

purges of its own ranks. It therefore loses its façade, and from now on directly exercises its own class functions. Although it is not true, as Trotsky maintained, that fascism degenerates during this period into a ‘common military dictatorship’ (as it always continues to have specific characteristics distinguishing it from that), it is true that fascism brutally rids itself of a part of the class weight under which it labours, so initiating the period of its stabilization.

Part Three

Fascism and the Dominant Classes

In this section I shall first examine the relation between fascism and the dominant classes or class fractions within the periodization indicated above. I should at once make it clear that fascism is a very complex phenomenon: it can only be explained by elucidating its relation *to the various classes in struggle*. Nevertheless, it corresponds to a very particular situation of the various dominant classes and class fractions.

1

General Propositions

I. CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN DOMINANT CLASSES AND DOMINANT FRACTIONS OF CLASSES

The appearance and rise of fascism correspond to the *deepening and sharpening of the internal contradictions between the dominant classes and class fractions*, which is an important element of the political crisis in question.

This can only be understood on the basis of a correct conception of the alliance of classes and class fractions in relation to political domination. In a social formation composed of many social classes, and in particular in a capitalist social formation, where the bourgeois class is constitutively divided into different class fractions, no single class or class fraction occupies the field of political domination. There is a specific alliance of several classes and fractions, which I have elsewhere described as the 'power bloc' (*le bloc au pouvoir*). Thus, the contradictions between the dominant classes and class fractions often take on sufficient importance to determine the forms of State and of regime.

As for these contradictions in the conjuncture of fascism, it must again be stressed that they are not confined, as is often assumed, to economics alone. In the growth of fascism, the intensification of the 'internal' contradictions of the power bloc is characteristically revealed by their extension over the political and ideological planes. This has repercussions in the deep *crisis of party representation* and in the deep *ideological crisis* which affect the bloc.

The growth of fascism is, then, characterized by the fact that the political struggle of the power bloc against the masses dominates the economic struggle; i.e. there is a *declared politicization of the class struggle* by the power bloc. But

what specifies it here is that the effects of this politicization extend to the contradictions *within* the bloc itself. This is a remarkable feature, for all politicization of this kind does not necessarily have the same effect; generally, it in fact 'petrifies' the power bloc against its common enemy.

II. THE CRISIS OF HEGEMONY

In the case of the growth of fascism and of fascism itself, *no dominant class or class fraction seems able to impose its 'leadership' on the other classes and fractions of the power bloc, whether by its own methods of political organization or through the 'parliamentary democratic' State*.

Basically, the power bloc, like every other alliance, does not generally consist of classes and fractions of 'equal importance', sharing the crumbs of power among themselves. It can only function on a regular basis in so far as a dominant class or fraction of a class imposes *its own particular domination* on the other members of the alliance in power, in short in so far as it succeeds in imposing its *hegemony* and cementing them together under its leadership.

The inability of any class or class fraction to impose its hegemony is what characterizes the conjuncture of fascism; that is, ultimately, the inability of the alliance in power to overcome its intensified contradictions of its own accord. This inability to impose hegemony within the power bloc is also, however, related to the crisis of hegemony experienced by it and its members in its political domination of the ensemble of the social formation.

III. MODIFICATIONS IN HEGEMONY

This being the situation within the power bloc, fascism also corresponds to a complete and specific reorganization of the bloc. This involves: (a) a modification of the relation of forces within this alliance – a redistribution of the respective weight of the forces in it; and (b) the establishment by fascism of the hegemony of a new class fraction within the power bloc: that of *finance capital, or big monopoly capital.*

At the start of the growth of fascism, *hegemony is evidently unstable;* during this step, various classes and fractions of classes occupy the hegemonic position. Then comes a step of genuine *inability to assume hegemony*; and finally fascism in power establishes the hegemony of a fraction which has not previously filled this place.

This shift of *political hegemony* (as distinct from big capital's clearly well-established dominance in the economic sphere) is a function of fascism which the Comintern tended to fail to recognize, by making a simple identification

between economic domination and political hegemony: ‘Fascist dictatorship is no different… from bourgeois democracy, which also achieves the dictatorship of finance capital.’[1]

IV. THE BREAKING OF REPRESENTATIONAL TIES, AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES

The conjuncture of fascism and the start of the growth of fascism correspond to *a crisis of party representation* as far as the power bloc is concerned : this is a very remarkable feature of the political crisis in question. In other words, there is a split between the dominant classes and class fractions and their political parties, i.e. a split in the relations both of representation (in the State system) and of organization. The importance of this element was pointed out both by Marx, in his analysis of the situation in France before the accession of Louis Bonaparte, and by Gramsci: ‘These situations of conflict between “represented and representatives” reverberate out from the terrain of the parties … throughout the State organism, reinforcing the relative power of the bureaucracy (civil and military), of high finance, of the Church, and generally of all bodies relatively independent of the fluctuations of public opinion. How are they created in the first place?’[2]

It is a significant fact that the traditional political parties of the bourgeoisie and its allies at no time adopted fascism completely, but even tried at times, when it was too late, to oppose its accession to power. In cases where these parties agreed to form governments with fascist participation, they did so only with the stated object (which they acted upon) of throttling the fascist parties, that is, of getting rid of them after using them against the masses.

In this, the political parties were not followed by the classes and fractions they were supposed to represent. This by no means implies, as it has often been argued, that the ensemble of the bourgeois class and its allies openly supported the fascist accession to power with unanimity, throughout the growth of fascism. It was rather a question of profound political disorientation of the power bloc, within which the fascist party, with the open support of the big monopoly capital class fraction, came by steps and turns to fill the void left by the breaking of the representational ties of the classic political parties. As a result, the whole of the bourgeoisie and its allies stood by and watched the elimination of these parties by the fascist party.

All this does not mean that nothing was happening with in the political parties concerned, or that they still remained faithful (far from it) to their role in a ‘parliamentary democratic’ form of State. In fact, the beginning of the rise of fascism corresponds to a *radicalization* of the bourgeois parties, in the direction

of forms of the exceptional State. However, the solution such parties sought was the hardening of the State in different forms, within a framework in which they would have been able to continue or restore their political leadership; i.e. they would ultimately have accepted the solution of a military dictatorship.

To come back to the question of the breaking of representational ties, it was a progressive break, firstly affecting *the relation* of *'representation'*. With the beginning of the rise of fascism, while the 'parliamentary democratic' form of State apparently remains intact, the relations between the ruling classes and class fractions on the one hand, and the State apparatus on the other, are no longer mainly established through the medium of these political parties, but increasingly directly. This has two effects:

1. The institutional duplication of these parties by a whole series of hidden parallel networks, operating as the channels of real communication of real power and decisions, varying from the emergence of pressure groups and private militia as nuclei of political reorganization, to the setting up of virtual para-state networks.

2. A new growth in the role of the State apparatus itself (i.e. the army, the police, the courts, the administration) to some extent short-circuiting the role of formal government, characteristically reversing the established juridical order, displacing the real power from the forum of the parties, now mere cliques (i.e. from Parliament) to the State machinery proper.

In short, by analogy with the situation of 'dual power' which specifies the revolutionary situation, we may call what we see here a characteristic which specifies the *distortion between 'formal' power and 'real' power* political crisis.

It is absolutely essential not to reduce this process to a straightforward transformation of legislative-executive relations, i.e. to a simple passage from a 'parliamentary State' to a strong State (*Etat fort*) in which the executive predominates. This transformation, with many variations, is basic to the passage from the form of liberal State of competitive capitalism to the form of interventionist State of monopoly capitalism; but it is not in itself identical with the rise of fascism referred to here, even though there are features common to both, owing to the fact that fascism, of course, has its own precise place in the imperialist stage. The important point here seems to be that there are characteristic distortions between real and formal power, due directly to the breaking of the representational ties. The distortions and breaking do not of course appear in every transformation of the liberal into an interventionist State.

This break between representatives and represented finally affects the organizational relation too. The aims of the extremely bitter struggles among the

various political parties of the classes and fractions in power seem to miss the real political contradictions. The parties seem to confine themselves to aims relating only to the 'economic' contradictions, even though these struggles are directly transposed into 'quarrels' over political personnel; and they seem to lose sight of the concrete means of attaining their general political class interests. The bourgeois political leaders are in a pitiable situation, well described by Marx and Lenin; they are unable to give political organization to, or impose hegemony on, the alliance of classes and class fractions they represent. Cut off from the latter, puppets in the death agonies of parliamentary cretinism, their fear of the working class only sharpens their delirium. It is a situation which, before fascism comes into power, often gives rise to episodes of unprecedented bedlam.

There is one last important point. Throughout the rise of fascism we witness a *proliferation* of the organizations (including the parties) of the dominant classes and fractions. This proliferation is characteristic of the impotence and the instability of hegemony; while a non-fascist solution to the crisis would, as Gramsci stressed, require the fusion of these organizations into a single party of the bourgeoisie.[3]

V. THE IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS

The conjuncture of fascism corresponds to a *crisis in the dominant ideology*. This aspect of the problem cannot be too strongly emphasized; basically, fascism cannot be explained and understood without a correct position on the decisive role played, in given historical circumstances, by ideology, and without a thorough examination of the ideological crisis experienced by the social formations in which fascism triumphed.

By ideological crisis must be understood chiefly a *crisis in the dominant ideology* in a social formation, i.e. a crisis in the ideology of the dominant class in that formation. This ideology of the dominant class (the real 'cement' of a social formation) is attacked first of all among the mass of the people, i.e. among the oppressed classes, whom it is the main function of this ideology to keep politically subject and subordinate.

This is only one aspect of the question: in determinate conjunctures, it is possible to speak of a crisis going beyond the crisis of the dominant ideology, a *generalized ideological crisis* distinct from the former alone.

In fact within a social formation there exists not only a dominant ideology (i.e. an ideological discourse which the dominance of the dominant ideology makes relatively systematic), but also real *ideological sub-groupings*. These sub-groupings exist by virtue of the dominance within them of ideologies belonging

to classes other than the dominant class[4] – e.g. working-class, and petty-bourgeois ideology. Of course, the dominant ideology (i.e. the ideology of the dominant class) is effectively dominant within the ensemble of a social formation only in so far as it succeeds by various means in also permeating the ideologies belonging to the ideological sub-groupings. For example, the ideology of the dominant class dominates the ideological sub-groupings of 'working-class ideology' in so far as it succeeds in permeating its ideology. Thus, trade unionist ideology, which is not as such the ideology of the bourgeois class, is simply a manifestation of this ideology in the working class; i.e. it is only the form in which bourgeois ideology dominates the sub-grouping 'working-class ideology' by permeating it.

It therefore becomes clear that every crisis of the dominant ideology affects the ensemble of the ideological world of a social formation. But it does not always affect it in the same way. For example, it is possible that an acute crisis in the ideology of the dominant social force could allow the ideology of the antagonistic social force to advance or progress in the formation. It is even possible for the one *relatively* speaking to *replace* the other before a revolution in the strict sense has actually taken place, the classic case being the surreptitious replacement of feudal by bourgeois ideology before the French Revolution.

But it is also possible for a situation of generalized ideological crisis to arise. In other words, a situation where there is both a crisis in the dominant ideology *and* a crisis in the ideology of the main dominated social force, occurring for different reasons but running parallel to each other. This was precisely the case with fascism: a deep crisis in the dominant bourgeois ideology and, simultaneously, a deep crisis among the masses. This was not a crisis in the working-class ideology dominated by bourgeois ideology (that is of reformist, revisionist ideology), which would have given room for the advance of Marxist-Leninist ideology; it was a crisis of Marxist-Leninist ideology itself.

The important thing to consider for the moment, however, is the crisis in the dominant ideology, and one aspect in particular of this crisis: the fact that in the case of fascism, it affects not only the impact of this ideology on the dominated classes, but also *the relation of the bourgeoisie (and its allies)* to its own ideology. The ideological crisis in fact penetrates to the very heart of the power alliance itself: the dominant classes and fractions no longer seem able to 'live out' their relation to their conditions of existence in the same way. In other words, the function of the dominant ideology is at an end for the dominant classes themselves.

One of the effects of this situation (and not the least important), was in fact

the breaking of the representational ties between these classes and fractions and their political parties, and the organizational weakness of these parties. Another was the characteristic, spectacular turn of the power bloc's 'watchdogs' (its caste of approved 'ideological spokesmen') towards fascist ideology, and the systematic attack they launched on traditional bourgeois ideology. This conversion of the bourgeoisie's 'ideological spokesmen', together with the ideological crisis within the dominant classes themselves was an important factor in the bourgeoisie's open and decisive passage to fascism.

This ideological crisis, in the forms it took within the dominant class itself, could be said to be at the roots of a factor which contributed further to the political crisis: *the break between the political representatives of the bourgeoisie (the parties and politicians) and its ideological representatives (the 'watchdogs' and 'ideological spokesmen')*. The latter seemed to adopt and advocate fascism more radically, directly and openly than the former, and often, because of their attacks on 'parties' and 'politicians', came into sharp conflict with them. And it was not accidental that the bourgeoisie's ties with its 'ideological spokesmen' proved the stronger.

VI. THE OFFENSIVE BY BIG CAPITAL AND THE POWER BLOC

There is finally another element in the conjuncture of fascism, which cannot be overemphasized: *contrary to the prevailing view in the Comintern, the rise of fascism corresponds to a decisive turn in the relation between the forces present; it corresponds to an offensive step and an offensive strategy on the part of the bourgeoisie, and a defensive step by the working class*.

a. On attack and defence

As a start, it will be useful to clarify the notions of *offensive* and *defensive steps*, as well as the idea of offensive and defensive strategy. Is it, first of all, legitimate to have recourse to this distinction between attack and defence in analysing the concrete situation of the relation between forces?[5]

It should be noted in the first place that both Lenin and Mao base their political and military analyses on *the irreconcilable difference between attack and defence*: all their strategic calculations are based on this difference. As Mao emphasizes: 'In the Chinese civil war, as in all other wars, ancient and modern, in China or abroad, there are only two basic forms of fighting, attack and defence.'[6] Mao's concept of 'protracted war' in no way negates this concept.

The difference involves firstly the objective steps of the struggle, which depend on a whole series of objective factors of the relation between forces. In

this sense, any protagonist in the field of the class struggle goes through an *offensive step* and a *defensive step*: between these two lies that of a *relative stabilization* of the forces present, which Lenin defines as a relative equilibrium of forces, Mao as a step of 'consolidation' in the relation between forces.

Correct diagnosis of these steps lays the real basis for a correct *strategy* for the working classes, the masses and their leadership. Correct strategy does not fall from the sky; nor is it made by decree.

The second side to the question is therefore that *strategy*, in the real sense, is articulated on the basis of these steps. Such strategy has its own rules, and is itself based on the distinction between attack and defence. For Mao, there are three distinct moments involved: 'strategic defence', 'strategic consolidation' and 'strategic counter-offensive', corresponding to different steps in the relation between forces.[7] Strategy says *how* the working class and the masses must act *in each step*, to reach *final* victory – through 'protracted war'. Now although strategy is based on the diagnosis of steps, it also intervenes as an element in the step itself – in the *relation* between forces: for example, a defensive step for the working class, requiring a 'strategic defence', is marked out among other things by the *strategy of the enemy*, by his strategic attack.

There is therefore a double problem in the rise of fascism: (i) the real nature of the step and the diagnosis the Comintern made of it; (ii) the *strategy* which was then applied.

b. The steps in the process

We can only get to grips with this problem in the section (Part Four below) on fascism and the working class: the nature of a step depends on the relation between forces. But let it be clear that fascism by no means represents the only 'weakness' of the bourgeoisie, as the Comintern believed; nor does the rise of fascism represent a defensive strategy (counter-revolution) on its part, thereby indicating a step in the working-class offensive. On the contrary, the *general outline* of the model *before and during* the rise of fascism, is as follows:

1. Defeat of the offensive by the working class and the masses after a prolonged and serious confrontation.

2. A step of relative stabilization between the forces present, marked by 'upsurges'. It is not a situation of calm, as it is still located in the context of sharpening class struggles. But these upsurges do not go so far as to modify the unequal but fixed relation between forces. In short, it is a *positional war*. But one must beware of taking a step of 'stabilization' to be an 'equilibrium between equal' forces present. The bourgeoisie still maintains its advantage, pressing and

dividing its adversary, and preparing to take the offensive. It is weak, mainly in not yet being strong enough to go in to the attack; it is not as if it is weakened still further in this period. During this same period, the strategy of the working class not only fails to weaken the bourgeoisie, but on the contrary increases its strength.

Only the Third Comintern Congress (1921) seems to have identified this stage of relative stabilization successfully. The Fourth Congress (1922–3), with its slogans of 'workers' governments' (i.e. bourgeois governments with communist participation) *identified* this step of stabilization as a defensive step by the labour movement, and an offensive by the bourgeoisie; whereas in fact the bourgeoisie's offensive step, and the working class's defensive step began only with the start of the rise of fascism, *following on* from the period of stabilization.[8] As for the Fifth Congress (1924), it too disregarded the stabilization step, but in the opposite sense, in that it diagnosed a step of working-class offensive.

Trotsky's position is also significant for this question.[9] While correctly criticizing the positions of the Fifth Comintern Congress, which skipped the stabilization step and diagnosed a step of proletarian offensive, he in his turn repeated the error of the Fourth Congress, identifying the stabilization step as a step in the working-class defensive. While in characterizing the period which followed, which saw the start of the rise of fascism, and for which the previous diagnosis would have been quite correct, Trotsky made the same mistakes as the Comintern: the end of the period of 'stabilization plus working-class defensive (or downturn)' would mean a reversal of the situation, and therefore a working-class offensive. For Trotsky, as for the Comintern, fascism 'is a response of the bourgeoisie to an immediate danger threatening the foundations of its regime.… Fascism is a state of civil war against the insurrection of the proletariat.'

This *agreement* between Trotsky and the Comintern is due, as I have suggested, to their shared economism.[10] The economistic view is evident in the omission by both of the stabilization step as the period before the rise of fascism begins. But they draw different conclusions: 'economic disintegration = proletarian offensive' for the Fifth Comintern Congress, and 'economic stabilization = proletarian defensive' for Trotsky, following in the tradition of the Fourth Congress, at which economism had already come to the fore. What seems to have re-united them in the same error is the equation 'economic crisis (1929) = proletarian offensive'.[11]

3. *Start of the rise of fascism corresponding to the bourgeoisie's move to the offensive*: this period is characterized by a new sharpness in the class struggle, a

sharpness due to this offensive strategy, but giving the Comintern the illusion, especially after the Sixth Congress, of a repetition of the conditions of a revolutionary period.

In the end, the success of fascism was not a proof of the bourgeoisie's weakness, but confirmed its strength for a long time.

What basically happened in the rise of fascism, was that a *political crisis of the bourgeoisie corresponded to an offensive strategy*. This means, of course, that things are not going too well for the dominant classes. But to describe this political crisis as a 'weakness' of the bourgeoisie is to say something about its relation of force with the working class, and that is precisely where the Comintern was wrong in its interpretation (making the equation 'weakness of the bourgeoisie = power+offensive of the proletariat').

It was not until the Seventh Congress of the Comintern that Dimitrov dared to suggest, in veiled terms, that the rise of fascism represented a defensive step for the working class. The suggestion came in his criticism of the Fourth Congress conception of '*workers' governments*', in that it adopted this slogan, and recommended the participation of communists in such governments. But, said Dimitrov, what the Fourth Congress did not do was to point out that such governments 'were quite definitely confined to the existence of political crisis': they could only be 'governments of *struggle against fascism and reaction*'.[12] Reading between the lines, though Dimitrov was very careful not to say it explicitly, one finds the conception that a rise of fascism corresponds to a defensive step by the working class.

Let us note in passing that Dimitrov was right to criticize the Fourth Congress, but the error of the Congress did not lie where he placed it. The slogan of 'workers' governments' was adopted by the Fourth Congress because of its conception of 'stabilization'. It already denoted a reduction of the class struggle to the economic sphere, implying, in fact, the equation 'economic stabilization = working-class defensive', just as the Sixth Congress, in the opposite sense, believed in the equation 'end of stabilization = catastrophic economic crisis = working-class offensive'. This explains the Fourth Congress 'workers' governments' slogan; whereas Lenin, at the Third Congress, made *no identification between stabilization and working-class defensive*. He was referring to class struggle, and, moreover, only used the expression of 'relative equilibrium of forces'; and he put forward the slogan 'to the masses', a very different one from 'workers' governments'.

So it was not that the Fourth Congress was wrong, as Dimitrov said, in failing to relate workers' governments to a defensive step, but rather in its

understanding of the real nature of the step, interpreting this step of stabilization of the class struggle as defensive.[13]

VII. THE FASCIST PARTIES, FASCISM AND THE DOMINANT CLASSES AND CLASS FRACTIONS; DOMINATION, HEGEMONY AND THE RULING CLASS: THE RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF FASCISM

The final important question concerns the relation between (i) the dominant classes and class fractions and (ii) fascism – firstly with the fascist party, then with the fascist State.

The three main conceptions of this seem equally mistaken to me:

(a) *The conception, increasingly dominant in the Comintern*, according to which, by contrast with the 'parliamentary democratic' State in the framework of which other dominant classes and fractions of classes play a decisive political role, the fascist State represents a total grip on the State by the big monopoly capital fraction alone. According to this conception, the capitalist State has thus reached a stage of total subordination to the narrow interests of this fraction, the fascist State being simply the 'agent' (in the strong sense) of this fraction, a 'tool' which it can manipulate at will, *to the exclusion of the other dominant classes and class fractions*. Clearly this view allows the fascist State no *relative autonomy* from the power bloc and its hegemonic fraction.

This deep-rooted illusion in the Third International went back to a whole 'instrumentalist' conception of the State, closely combined with economism, and *still* governs the analysis present-day communist parties give of the State in the age of 'State monopoly capitalism'. In this respect, the analyses of the fascist State and the present-day State are *absolutely identical*. This was the view which became dominant with Dimitrov and the Seventh Congress.

For now it should be observed that this conception is often accompanied by the apparently contradictory conception of the 'internal contradictions' of fascism. Although it is often stressed that fascism represents the contradictory interests of *various classes*, these contradictions are nevertheless deemed to disappear miraculously at the institutional level of the fascist party and State.

This conception of the relation between the fascist State and big capital *after* fascism comes into power determines the major mistake, which we shall return to, about the relations between big capital and the fascist party throughout the rise of fascism. The fascist party is mainly seen as the 'paid agent' in the service of big capital. The fascist party, the 'military weapon in big capital's fight' is often identified as a 'pack of white guards', a mere 'armed militia' in the pay of big capital, a tool it can manipulate at will.[14]

So on the one hand the question which attracts most attention is the financing of fascist organizations, whereas the organizational relation between the fascist party and the bourgeoisie is much more complex. On the other hand, the military aspect is not only seen as the main aspect of the rise of fascism throughout, but even as being detached from the political aspect of the phenomenon; whereas in fact, firstly, the military aspect is constantly determined by the political aspect of the process and, secondly, the political aspect holds the dominant role, except in the very final step. This latter feature is peculiar to the rise of fascism. In this respect, Clara Zetkin's warning to the executive committee of the Comintern on 23 June 1923, is still correct: 'The error of the Italian Communist Party lies mainly in the fact that it has seen fascism only as a military-terrorist movement, not as a mass movement with deep social roots. It must be stressed that before fascism wins militarily, it has already won the ideological and political victory over the working class…'[15]

(b) *The series of conceptions which construct fascism according to the schema of Bonapartism, i.e. a schema of a relation of 'equilibrium between equals', between the two main forces*. This view was set out above all by Thalheimer, but was also strongly held by many Marxist theoreticians of fascism. It leads them to attribute to the fascist State a *type* and *degree* of relative autonomy which it does not in fact possess, and in the end makes them unable to define correctly the relations between fascism and big capital. It leads them, for example, to speak of a distortion between *economic domination*, the monopoly of a totally 'independent' fascist State, misinterpreting Marx's famous formulations in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* on the 'opposition of State and Society' and the 'independence' of the State in relation to civil society.[16] This relative autonomy of the State, taken to the limit, would even mean breaking the tie between the State and the hegemonic fraction; hence completely false descriptions of fascism using the war economy – openly and for a long period – against the interests of big capital and in declared opposition to it.[17]

(c) The conception, current in social democratic circles and correctly opposed by the International, that fascism was the *'political dictatorship of the petty-bourgeoisie'*. There is, in fact, a very close and complex connection between fascism and the petty bourgeoisie, which was underestimated by the International. But this conception, which attempts to establish the relative autonomy of the fascist State, assumes, just like the previous one, that it can be done by separating political from economic domination, with the difference that the State is not here seen as somehow independent *vis-a-vis* two forces in equilibrium, but as expressing the political domination of the petty bourgeoisie

(the ‘third force’) faced with the economic domination of big capital.[18]

The correct position should be put here too. Throughout the rise of fascism and after the conquest of power, fascism (the fascist party and the fascist State) *characteristically* has a relative autonomy from both the power bloc and the fraction of big monopoly capital, whose hegemony it has established. This relative autonomy stems from two sets of factors:

(a) from the internal contradictions among the classes and fractions of classes in the power alliance, i.e. from its internal political crisis: the relative autonomy necessary to reorganize this bloc and establish within it the hegemony of the fraction of big monopoly capital;

(b) from the contradictions between the dominant classes and fractions and the dominated classes, i.e. from the political crisis of the ensemble of the social formation, and from the complex relation between fascism and the dominated classes. This relation is precisely what makes fascism indispensable to mediate a re-establishment of political domination and hegemony.

But this relative autonomy is not of the same type or extent as that of a State in the framework of an equilibrium (of force) between the two main social forces. Not that in this last case the State becomes a neutral mediator in the class struggle: it never ceases to organize political domination. But in this case it possesses a margin for manoeuvre, imposed by the conjuncture, which the fascist State, located within the framework of a different political crisis has never possessed. In short, although the fascist State has a characteristic relative autonomy which, despite appearances, distinguishes it from the ‘normal’ forms of the capitalist State, it cannot be considered as a particular case of the relative autonomy peculiar to the Bonapartist forms of State.[19]

For the moment I shall confine myself to examining the first set of factors in this relative autonomy, and to indicating the steps it goes through, which are the same as those of the rise of fascism:

(a) *From the start of the process to the point of no return*. The fascist party, existing previously only in the embryonic form of armed bands, maintained by dominant fractions during the step of offensive by the proletariat, but abandoned by them during the phase of stabilization, now increasingly takes on the character of a mass party. It is openly maintained by big capitalist circles, but it is far from being the ‘representative’ party of this fraction, let alone of the ensemble of the alliance in power.

At the point of no return, the fascist party gains the support of the big capital fraction, in return for some guarantees. It attempts to consolidate its relations

with certain of the classes and fractions in power, and to neutralize the reservations of others. In short, it establishes organizational, party ties with a power alliance which has gone onto the offensive, and lacks its own representative political organizations. (This distinguishes fascism from Bonapartism, which in general does not form a party proper.) But its political ties to the masses remain very strong.

(b) *The period from the point of no return until fascism comes to power*. This completes the preceding period by the successful neutralization of the contradictions between the fractions of big monopoly capital and the other dominant classes and fractions, by means of compromises made by fascism to the latter. But at the same time, this is quite a sudden change of direction for the masses, disturbed by the ever clearer relation between the fascist party and the power bloc. This period sees the establishment of an effective alliance between the monopolistic fraction and the petty bourgeoisie, such as I previously outlined, by means of the fascist party. But this alliance is highly ambiguous, and carries within it the seeds of an explosion.

(c) *The first period of fascism in power*. This is the moment of truth – but the truth is still only relative. Fascism consolidates its policy of establishing the hegemony of big money capital, but treads cautiously with regard to the other classes and class fractions in power. At the same time, it finds itself obliged to make certain concessions to the masses against the will of the power bloc. This does not prevent the elimination of their vanguards and their organizations – quite the contrary.

In addition, changes take place on the *political scene*. Through the fascist party, which is still strongly influenced by its class origins, and through the reorganization of the State system and apparatuses, the petty bourgeoisie, without ever becoming a politically dominant class, in this period becomes the ruling class and makes its debut as the class in charge of the State.

This explosive situation is completed by a massive purge of the ‘left wing’ of the fascist party itself, and by the end of the *era of compromise* (such a policy of compromise being, in contrast, typical of Bonapartism throughout).

(d) *The period of the stabilization of fascism*. The monopoly capital fraction establishes its hegemony and also achieves the status of *ruling class* (the identity of the hegemonic and ruling fractions also distinguishing fascism from Bonapartism), dislodging the petty-bourgeoisie. But the latter continues to be in charge of the State – its position is even reinforced by a complete reorganization of political personnel in general.

The era of compromises, as a *typical* period, is now over. But ‘stabilized’

fascism often finds itself obliged to impose on the power bloc certain concessions to the masses (underestimated by the Comintern) so that its links with them should never be entirely broken. At the same time, the establishment of the hegemony of big capital revives the contradictions within the power alliance. Fascism is obliged to be evasive in this respect, sometimes putting a distance between itself and the hegemonic fraction. Although it does conduct a policy which is, in the last analysis, overwhelmingly in the *long term* interests of this fraction, it is not an agent under its orders.

Finally, the situation on the political scene (the petty bourgeoisie as class in charge) and on the ideological scene (fascist ideology) also have their effects, together with the factors previously mentioned; and fascist policy in the end comes to antagonize big capital.

2

Germany

I. THE ECONOMIC CONTRADICTIONS

The above propositions are verified by the rise and establishment of fascism in Germany. As far as the dominant classes and class fractions are concerned, they make it possible to determine where the process began and what steps it went through. The generally accepted view, focused only on events in the political arena, is that the process began in the last period of the Brüning government; but it seems to me that it in fact began even before the last social democratic government (1928), more precisely at some time in 1927. What the fall of Brüning represents is the point of no return.

This is the period which saw a significant acceleration in the advancing dominance of monopoly capital in the German social formation. Concentration, which had marked time and even lost ground with the 1923 inflation crisis, was now taking place at a much faster rate than before: the number of cartels rose from 1,500 in 1923–4, to 2,500 in 1925, falling to 2,100 in 1930.[1] Among limited companies, at the end of this period 16 per cent were in combines – the most important of them at that, for this 16 per cent represented 65 per cent of total share capital. From 1926, the enormous and powerful I.G. Farben trust was in operation, and in 1926–7 the Vereinigte Stahlwerke was created, combining the four biggest German steel producers. From September 1929 after the fusion of the Deutsche Bank and Disconto Gessellschaft, three big banks controlled all important financial operations.

This process, in the concrete circumstances of the German social formation, was accompanied by a sharpening of internal economic contradictions among the classes and fractions of classes in power. These contradictions were

characteristic of the transition to monopoly capitalism, with a relatively restraining effect on such development until fascism came to power, and persisting, though in a different form, while fascism was in power. The contradictions *sharpen* in the period from the start of the rise of fascism to the point of no return, grow *more acute* from the point of no return until fascism is firmly in power, and are thereafter *neutralized*.

Firstly, there was the contradiction between the *bourgeoisie* and the *large-scale landowners* who were of capital importance in Germany, and still had various feudal features. In fact, the alliance between monopoly capital and the large-scale landowners was maintained without a split throughout the rise and the rule of fascism. However, we should not be blind to the economic contradiction covered by the alliance. Large-scale landed property, which had already made the turn to capitalization of ground rent, still remained, as Kautsky pointed out[2] fairly separate from industrial and finance capital. It therefore suffered from the backwardness of agriculture as a whole in relation to industry. The share of agriculture in total German production fell continually and the Junkers' economic power was progressively undermined: between 1924 and 1929, the share of agriculture in Germany's total production fell from 22.7 per cent to 20.9 per cent. Big landowners were also affected by the significant fall in the prices of agricultural products, which created what has been termed the 'scissors' between the prices of agricultural and industrial products, scissors which open wider still in the 1924–9 period.[3] The relative fall in agricultural prices suited monopoly capital, since it believed that any rise in agricultural prices would have repercussions on its own costs, notably on wages.

Another important fact is that government measures on rent (i.e. one of the forms of distribution of total profits) which had begun before this period, were reinforced. The widespread introduction of capitalism in agriculture had as one of its effects a fall in *absolute* ground rent, the part of total surplus value cornered by capital rising proportionately. This involved *fixing* the level of urban and farm rents. Bettelheim correctly points out: 'This regulation has its origins in "social" problems, but its deepest root is the conflict between landed property and industrial capital. It marks a victory of industrial capital over landownership. Legislative control of rents therefore has the effect of transferring profits from landed property to industrial capital.'[4]

Lastly, during this same period, the big landowners took a decisive step towards mechanization, which increasingly put them in debt to the big banks. By concentration in the production of agricultural machinery and chemical fertilizers, big capital imposed monopoly prices. Processing industries, until then

created ‘on the spot’ and controlled by the big landowners, passed into the control of finance capital, and moreover assumed an increasing importance in the treatment of total agricultural production. By the creation of big consumer enterprises – chain stores, etc. – a growing share of profit was transferred from big landed property to big commercial capital.

But although I am emphasizing the ‘new’ contradictions between large-scale landowners and big monopoly capital, we must not forget the persistence of ‘traditional’ contradictions between the large landowners and *medium industrial and commercial capital*. It was precisely these contradictions which were exacerbated during the rise of fascism, in the period from the point of no return until fascism came to power.

Because of its own contradictions with big capital in this period, medium capital even tried to make a *rapprochement* with the rich and middle peasantry, to some extent at the expense of the large landowners. Brüning, representing the interests of medium capital, set out a plan for ‘colonizing’ some large estates, which were mortgaged up to the hilt and whose cultivation was quite uneconomic, and put forward a reform project to help medium rural property in western Germany. The Catholic Centre Party, Brüning’s party, was supported by the rich and especially the middle peasantry of the south-west and west-central regions. Schleicher himself did not grant the squirearchy the import quotas they demanded. A hue and cry was soon raised against *Agrarbolschevismus!*

The resistance of the large landowners was in evidence throughout the rise of fascism. Their chief support in this resistance was the army, and during the second period of the rise of fascism, their resistance crystallized around President Hindenburg and the top ranks of the executive. It was this resistance which was neutralized by the coming to power and consolidation of national socialism.

In reality, the whole economic policy of national socialism in this field was aimed *at cementing the alliance between big monopoly capital and the large landowners, but to the clear advantage of the former and to the detriment of the rural masses*. A whole series of measures enabled the large landowners massively to increase their exploitation of the small and middle peasants, but they still remained at a disadvantage relative to big capital. The national socialist policy of fixing agricultural prices favoured cereal prices, and therefore large-scale farming, to the detriment of stock prices and small-scale farming, but at the same time it only opened wider the scissors between agricultural prices as a whole and industrial prices. The policy of rent control followed the same course.

In the final period of its stabilization, national socialist policy progressively

and systematically increased the hold of big capital over the agricultural sector as a whole. The large landowners maintained their participation in the processing industries and in the circulation of capital, but the main beneficiary of this policy was still big capital, as producer of chemical fertilizers (IG Farben) and of agricultural machinery. National socialist policy in the exports field tended increasingly to favour industrial products to the detriment of agricultural products. The war economy decisively set the seal on this whole policy by aiming to make Germany self-sufficient.

But the internal economic contradictions within the power alliance were primarily among the different *fractions of the bourgeoisie* itself, between big monopoly capital and medium capital. These contradictions involved both the resistance of medium capital to absorption by big capital, and its opposition to an economic process in which big capital tried to take an ever greater share of total profits.

These contradictions intensified during the first period of the rise of fascism, when the concentration of capital was accelerated by the concrete conditions of the German social formation; by the imposition on medium capital of prices for necessary raw materials and means of production fixed by the big monopolies, cartels and trusts; by inflationary tendencies which clearly favoured big capital; and by the growing indebtedness of medium capital to the big banks, the result of its need to maintain the pace of technological innovation and the productivity of labour imposed by the big monopolies, etc.

These contradictions are still clearer in the light of the fact that the distinction between big and medium capital was still at this period partially – but only partially – a distinction between different branches of industry: heavy industry on the one hand, and on the other, consumer goods or finished products industries, the so-called *Fertigindustrie*.

One point has to be made here. Daniel Guérin has the credit of having emphasized this distinction, although it had already been established by Comintern authors.[5] But Guérin gives it an absolute value, relegating to second place the only fundamental distinction, that between monopoly capital and medium capital. In reality, big monopoly capital extended into the realm of the *Fertigindustrie*, just as medium capital extended into heavy industry. The distinction between heavy and light industry remained relevant in the transition process, but only partially so, in so far as it coincided with that between big and medium capital. It is by reference to the latter division, between the different *fractions of capital*, that the conflicts marking the rise of fascism are to be

explained: insistence on the distinction between *branches of industry* as the only one conceals the basic reasons for these conflicts.

Still, medium capital invested in light industry increasingly came up against the big monopolies, which made it pay cartel prices for tools and raw materials. Inflation and the contraction of the internal market mainly affected consumer goods, and the tariff protection imposed by the big monopolies harmed the interests of light industry, which was more oriented towards exports.

These were the reasons why throughout the period of the rise of fascism, medium capital followed a policy of *compromise with the working class*, to counteract the designs of monopoly capital. Such was the plan for capital-labour collaboration, first initiated by Müller's last social democratic government and pursued, though to a considerably limited degree, by Brüning and by Schleicher, the 'social general'. This policy increasingly aroused the opposition of big capital, for with the 1929 crisis, the contradictions between big and medium capital entered a phase of acute aggravation. The 1929 crisis did affect medium capital, but through its financial side it chiefly affected the big banks and big industrial capital, whose organic composition included a higher proportion of constant capital 'frozen' by the fall in production. Big finance capital sought to monopolize the financial aid of the State, which socialized its losses through credits. By causing a contraction of the market, the austerity plan and the fiscal measures adopted harmed the interests of medium capital, which could not afford cartel prices.

This policy of compromise with the working class (of 'class collaboration') followed by medium capital is quite remarkable, standing in contrast to the policy of big capital, and we shall come across it again in the Italian case. In fact, after the Second World War, this kind of policy generally appears to be much more characteristic of big capital than of medium capital. For 'economic' reasons (higher organic composition of capital, superprofits, the possibility of intensifying labour, etc.) big capital is generally less resistant to compromises with the working class than is medium capital. Here it is necessary to emphasize first of all the extremely difficult economic situation big capital was in at the time. But the reasons for the different attitudes of big and medium capital towards the working class were *essentially political*: given the character of the period and the forms assumed by the contradiction between big and medium capital, medium capital desperately tried to find a support in the working class, in order to counteract its own subjection to big capital.[6]

Finally, contradictions also appear within what I have called *big capital*. It must

not be forgotten that what was involved here was the transition towards the formation of big finance capital. In fact, discussion of 'fusion' between commercial banking capital and industrial monopoly capital has too often tended to neglect the contradictions between them during the process of transition.

This transition was no haphazard affair: the fusion between banking capital and industrial monopoly capital to form big finance capital *was achieved in Germany to the advantage of banking capital and through the domination of industry by the banks*. In this instance, although the big industrial complexes tried, during the first stage of the rise of fascism, to create their own banks, these banks could not in fact be maintained without the support of the big banks, and they were therefore subordinated to them. The result was strong resistance by industrial monopoly capital, a resistance which grew after the 1929 crisis, in so far as State aid went mainly to the big banks. Moreover, certain contradictions appeared between big capital invested in production and big capital invested in distribution: the big stores competed for growth as they were vertically integrated into the industrial trusts.

The economic crisis of 1929, which had a specific effect on the aggravation of contradictions within the power bloc, began to ease off around 1932.[7]

But these contradictions remained aggravated throughout the second step of the rise of fascism. The crisis had the long-term effect of accelerating the concentration and fusion of capital. It thus intervened in the growth of the domination of monopoly capitalism, by increasing its contradictions: and it was this process which rapidly came to the fore, even before national socialism took power, as the leading factor in the internal contradictions of the power bloc.[8]

With the accession to power of national socialism and its subsequent stabilization, these contradictions were neutralized: in particular, those between big and medium capital. But this neutralization was the result of *an economic policy favourable to big monopoly capital (i.e. to finance capital), favourable therefore to the establishment in the German social formation of the dominance of monopoly capitalism*. Everything contributed to this end – forced cartelization, price stabilization, the denationalization of banks and enterprises, wages policy, fiscal and budgetary policy, public works and State requisitions, and above all, the war economy. This policy was particularly furthered by the markedly 'interventionist' role of the State in promoting the domination, in the fusion process, of *banking* ***capital***.[9]

II. BIG AND MEDIUM CAPITAL: WAS FASCISM 'ECONOMICALLY RETROGADE'?

We must pause here to show how Nazi policy succeeded in neutralizing these

contradictions.

Firstly, although Nazi economic policy massively favoured big capital, medium capital was not thereby sacrificed: far from it, it made great economic gains. Besides the masses, the main victims of the measures in favour of big capital were the small entrepreneurs. As for medium capital, it too made direct gains at first from the considerably increased exploitation of the working class. It also profited from the general economic recovery of Nazi Germany before the period of the war economy: notably because the reabsorption of unemployment stimulated a relative expansion of the German market. Forced cartelization itself, enacted in many State measures, did not take place through expropriation, i.e. by simply buying out medium-sized firms, but by subordinating them economically (the State policy of cartelization and regulation of the combines) and administratively (in corporate bodies) to big capital. Medium capital invested in the consumer goods industry suffered increasingly from the war economy, but medium capital invested in heavy industry profited, through sub-contracting, from State requisitions. And even medium capital in the consumer goods industries, which recovered with the war economy after the contraction of the home market, also profited from army orders – leather, textiles, etc.[10]

The last and most important factor was that national socialism, to keep these contradictions neutralized, often had to exercise *a kind of control over the developing domination of monopoly capitalism*, through massive State intervention: it even intervened sometimes to hold back too brutal and ‘savage’ an absorption of medium by big capital. This is an aspect of Nazi economic policy which has given rise to numerous illusions about a supposed ‘subordination’ of big capital to the national socialist ‘bureaucracy’ and ‘State’. Something of the truth about this policy comes out in the 1938 Schacht-Göring conflict over exports, in which medium capital was one of the interested parties, and which ended in a compromise. This policy was not so very surprising given that Roosevelt, in the very different context of the United States, was also carrying out at this time an economic policy which massively aided the big monopolies, while making many concessions to medium capital.

The problem is related to a more general question: in fact, the domination of monopoly capitalism does not of itself produce an insurmountable or even an explosive economic contradiction between big and medium capital. The important point, then, about the economic policy of national socialism, is that while it overwhelmingly favoured big capital, it was nevertheless *regulated*: not in the mythical sense of a ‘planned’ or ‘organized’ capitalism, sometimes

attributed to it, but in the sense of a successful effort to smooth the way, by a *controlled mastery* of the process, which made it possible to neutralize the contradictions.

This leads us to the problem of the Third International's definition of fascism. Especially after the Seventh Congress went over to the policy of 'popular fronts', and because of its ideas about the relationship between fascism and economic class interests, *the field of interests which fascism 'exclusively represented' was held to be ever narrower*. From the dictatorship of capital 'in the period of its decline' (Fifth Congress), fascism became the dictatorship of big capital; dictatorship of finance capital (Sixth Congress); dictatorship of 'the most reactionary, chauvinist and imperialist elements of finance capital' (this was Dimitrov speaking); dictatorship of the 'two hundred families'. The implications are very clear: popular front politics based on the broadest possible antifascist alliance, including all fractions of capital except the ever narrower one which fascism was considered 'exclusively' to represent. The *present* consequences of this policy are well known: it is not at all surprising that this kind of formulation about fascism is again to be found *in the same form* in the analyses of 'State monopoly capitalism' as the exclusive instrument of a 'handful' of monopolists. What needs to be made very clear is that despite the actual text of Dimitrov's report, and despite the correctness of his formulae for united and popular fronts, the turn occurs at this point. It is from this point on that the International decisively went over to the conception of a continuous narrowing of the economic interests the State supposedly represents, and this opened the way to the whole subsequent strategy of alliances.

So it was no accident that this definition of Dimitrov's finally boiled down to the social democratic conception formulated by Otto Bauer: 'While in bourgeois democracy the whole of the bourgeoisie is in power, although under the leadership and domination of big capital, under fascism, big capital and large landowners rule alone.'[11]

It is in fact correct that fascism represents an effective *reorganization* and redistribution of the balance of forces among the dominant classes and fractions. It accelerates the consolidation and stabilization of the economic supremacy of big finance capital over the other dominant classes and class fractions. But this can by no means be interpreted as meaning that fascism represents the economic interests of big capital 'exclusively'. Fascism rather operates, in the economic sense, as a factor *neutralizing* the contradictions among these classes and fractions, while regulating development to ensure the decisive domination of big

capital.

Finally, a remark on the definition of fascism, common in the Comintern, as the expression of the most ‘retrograde’ or ‘reactionary’ elements – see Dimitrov, among others. It is again necessary to take careful note of this, for where the Comintern leaders are concerned, such adjectives are not simple slips of the pen.

If these adjectives were simply intended to describe a considerable increase in the economic exploitation of the masses, there would be good reason for using them. But this is something quite different: this definition stemmed from the Comintern’s economistic conception that imperialism and the supremacy of big capital, as the death agony of ‘decaying’ capitalism, automatically meant *a halt in the development of the productive forces*. The ‘productive forces’, in this economistic and technicist view, were seen as independent from the relations of production, the simple ‘advance’ or ‘halt’ of this ‘technical’ process determining the nature of the capital involved – in this case a ‘retrograde’ one.

Such illusions can only arise from posing the question the wrong way. In fact, fascism really represented a development of *capitalist forces of production*, that is within the limits of *imperialist social relations*. It represented industrial development, technological innovation, and an increase in the productivity of labour – but all the while promoting the *expanded reproduction* of the conditions of capitalist production, that is, reinforcing class exploitation and domination. Caught in the trap of technicism, Marxist historians of fascism are still racking their brains to demonstrate its ‘economically retrograde’ character, as if that was more important in their eyes, than class exploitation and domination.[12]

To return to the facts, though I shall mention only a few. Industrial recovery after the 1929 crisis was stronger in Germany than anywhere in the world. In 1939, industrial production, 26 per cent above its 1929 high point, had more than doubled since 1933. In 1938, Germany produced 22.5 million tons of steel, as against 16 million in 1929; the extraction of iron ore had multiplied by 2.5, and so on. As for Italy, industrial recovery between 1922 and 1929 was the strongest in capitalist Europe: the index of gross industrial production which, taking 1938 as 100, was down to 60 in 1922, reached 90 in 1929. It fell back to 75 in 1932 with the crisis. But the recovery after the crisis was quite spectacular. It did not equal the pace of Germany, but it clearly overtook the French: 86 in 1935, 100 in 1938, 109 in 1939. Between 1922 and 1939, the production of cast iron increased by a factor of 6, that of steel by 2.2, and that of electrical energy by 5.[13]

This was of course accomplished within the framework of imperialist social

relations: it culminated in *war*, and the prodigious destruction of the productive forces.

To return to our problem, as far as the development of the capitalist productive forces is concerned, fascism would have really represented a 'retrograde' movement if it had privileged the interests of the large landowners, of those of medium capital in its resistance to monopoly capital. Zinoviev had indicated this at the Fourth Comintern Congress (1922–3), even in his error: 'The fascists,' he said, 'are above all a weapon in the hands of the *landowners*. The experience of this reaction fills the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie with terror…'[14] But as we have seen, this was not the case.

I am stressing these figurative expressions of 'advance' or 'retrograde' movement only because of the illusion, very tenacious in the labour movement, that fascism is an attempt to brake or turn back, as it were, the development of capitalism. In fact, from this point of view, fascism *is not* a *backward turn*, but rather a *forward rush*. Bordiga attempted to explain this when he attacked Zinoviev's view at the Fourth Congress: 'It is wrong to see fascism as the organization of the most backward elements of the bourgeoisie. Fascism is not the blindest and darkest kind of reaction, but the instrument of the most advanced, experienced and conscious elements of the bourgeoisie …'[15]

III. THE CRISIS AND THE POLITICO-IDEOLOGICAL PROCESS

These economic contradictions were reflected in an internal political struggle between the dominant classes and fractions in Germany, corresponding to the steps in the growth of fascism.[16]

The first period of this process was characterized by *instability of hegemony* within the power bloc. Big capital was already establishing its growing *economic domination*, but it was far from having successfully established its *political hegemony*. This dislocation between economic domination and political hegemony often characterizes phases of transition, and has the effect of 'braking' the growth of economic domination.

Following on the inflationary crisis of 1923, the Cuno ministry, even if formed under Ebert, was a direct emanation from big capital – the first since 1918. But this state of things did not last. 1924–8 was the reign of political coalitions, dominated by parties such as the Democrats (Rathenau), the Bavarian Catholic Centre, and the Centre Party (Marx, Wirth, Brüning), which still maintained its traditional representation of the interests of medium capital and capital invested in light industry. On the political scene, very bitter struggles developed against big capital, although this still participated in government here

and there through the German Nationalist and People's parties (Stresemann, Schacht, Thyssen).[17] Ministerial instability (eight governments, all of the Right, in four years), party rivalries, growing frictions within these parties themselves, were the first signs of the imminent instability of hegemony. Large landed property, for its part, was relatively well represented by the German Nationalists, but particularly exercised its still important political influence by keeping its place within the executive: the top ranks of the army, especially, were still recruited directly from this class.

What was taking place was therefore an offensive by big capital for political hegemony. At this level, the offensive was carried out partly by the direct participation of the German Nationalists and People's Party in the government, partly by infiltrating other governmental parties, by twisting what they represented and by their own slide to the right (particularly true of the Catholic Centre Party) and finally, by a growing infiltration of the executive itself. This seriously shook the hegemony which medium capital had successfully maintained, in collaboration with social democracy. But the resistance of medium capital and large landed property was still considerable, and largely succeeded in holding in check this offensive by big capital. Moreover, the contradictions between the banking and industrial components of big capital were appearing, in the form of internal friction between their political representatives and within the government apparatus. The shifting balance of influence among the elements of the power bloc explains the real *incoherence*, expressed in sharp about-turns, which was increasingly typical of government policy, and *which was decisive* during the first stage of the rise of fascism, in which hegemony was effectively unstable.[18]

The 1928 elections were a victory for the left parties, enabling the social democrats to participate in government. In 1929 came the economic crisis. Under Brüning (1930–2) the second period of the rise of fascism began, the point of no return coming in the last phase of the Brüning government, with the opening of the period in which *no element was able to gain hegemony*. Internal political struggles within the power bloc became so sharp that no element in it succeeded, even for a short period, in imposing a policy which represented both its specific interests and the general political interests of the bloc. Collaboration with social democracy, advocated by medium capital and accepted by big capital and agriculture after concessions made to them, was a failure. The Brüning period saw an open political struggle between medium capital, whose general line Brüning followed, while he conceded more and more to big capital (but still not enough), and big capital and the large landowners. This was the situation

until Hitler came to power, and was simply prolonged in different ways.

But these events on the political scene were less and less important compared to what was happening on the real political battleground marked by it. In effect, the representational split between the political parties and the classes and class fractions they represented, began in the first period of the rise of fascism.[19] In particular, it was big capital and the large landowners who moved away from their representatives. The landowners, especially, turned further and further away from parties, and set their political sights on military dictatorship: we shall come back to this in examining the rise of fascism within the State apparatuses. But in addition, party representation was short-circuited by the formation of para-military organizations, functioning this time, unlike the old free corps (the 'black Reichswehr') as effective nuclei of class organization. This was chiefly the case with the Stahlhelm, directly financed by large-scale (particularly industrial) capital, which from then on was the main pole of nationalist agitation, bypassing the actual German Nationalist party.

This process of breaking the ties of party representation was apparently complete at the point of no return. From then on, the dissociation between real and formal power was total. The political parties of the power bloc became mere parliamentary coteries, while parliament had long since ceased to be a place where real power was exercised. During the first period of the rise of fascism, big capital had still made successful attempts to infiltrate the political parties representing the other fractions of the bourgeoisie, but it now entered into open conflict with them. This culminated, in the autumn of 1931, in the 'National Opposition Front', whose real object was less the fall of Brüning than the transformation of that camouflaged dictatorship, approved by parliament, into a straight dictatorship governed by the interests of big capital. Finally, medium capital itself turned decisively away from its representatives, including Brüning, who still retained formal power: this position was now, in the eyes of medium capital, only one card to play in the game of pressurizing an executive which from now on ruled by decree.

The substitution of political parties by corporative economic 'pressure groups', acting at all levels directly on the executive, had begun in earlier periods, but it was now pursued by the massive rebuilding of 'employers' associations' headed by the Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie and the Association of Employers' Unions, and by the growing political role these acquired as transmitters of real power. During the second period of the rise of fascism, open conflicts broke out between Brüning and Schleicher and these various associations, which were getting constantly stronger: but this was only

an episode in the larger process.

The ‘governmental’ parties were themselves progressively won over to the project of an overt dictatorship, especially during the second period of the process, though they always trailed behind the classes and fractions they were supposed to represent: this was the case with all these parties after the Brüning government. The dictatorship was to be overt, but still to operate under their leadership; except for the German Nationalists, they opposed the idea of a military dictatorship under direct army control. As for the National Socialist Party (NSDAP), the German Nationalists, deterred from their own plan for a military dictatorship, were almost alone in advocating that it should take power. Yet they did so more and more openly, despite the continuing friction between the Stahlhelm, which was closely associated to the German Nationalists, and the NSDAP. The other political representatives of the bourgeoisie thought they could use the Nazi party and subordinate it to their own political leadership. This was true of Brüning, even more so of von Papen, and finally of Schleicher, who vainly tried to achieve this aim by provoking a split inside the Nazi party itself, in the Strasser affair.

This crisis of party representation went hand-in-hand with the ideological crisis affecting the power alliance. Germany’s passage to capitalism through Bismarck’s revolution from above, under the political leadership of the feudal landowners, prevented the German bourgeoisie from *forming a specific ideology to dominate the German social formation*. ‘Liberalism’, an important aspect of bourgeois ideology in the process of laying the foundations of European capitalism, never succeeded in taking root in Germany. The dominant ideology until the end of the First World War was in fact feudal ideology, but feudal ideology *transformed* to embrace the bourgeoisie’s own interests: militarism, the cult of State despotism, etc., were so many characteristics of the ideological domination of ‘transformed’ feudal ideology. Significantly enough, none of the broad, liberal nationalist movements of other European countries could be found in Germany before the war. German nationalism took direct military expression: it was dominated at that step by feudal ideology. In habits, customs and mores, this was expressed in the ideal of the ‘Prussian NCO’, which had permeated the whole German social formation.

With the end of the war and the formation of the Weimar republic, there was an attempted breakthrough by ‘liberal’ ideology, representing the interests of medium capital. But it was already too late. First of all, because the dominant ideology as a whole had been considerably shaken by the end of the war and the popular uprising; secondly, because the Versailles treaty, which caused a real

national trauma, was considered a stigma on the birth of the Weimar republic; finally, because the transition to monopoly capitalism and the rise of the economic domination of big capital, were already taking place.

In fact *it is quite possible for the imperialist ideology of big capital to penetrate, to a large degree, an ideological system dominated by 'transformed' feudal ideology*. In this respect, imperialist ideology seems much closer to 'transformed' feudal ideology than to the 'liberal' ideology of the competitive capitalist stage. This is clearly the case today in many third world countries, especially in Latin America. Expansionist nationalism, militarism, the cult of despotism and State authority, respect for 'hierarchy' and 'discipline' in all fields, are points common to both imperialist ideology and a 'transformed' feudal ideology.

The ideology of the liberal bourgeoisie, in increasing contradiction to big capital, fought against this collusion between the two ideological subsystems, a collusion which tended to fuse them into the dominant ideology. The political representatives of medium capital (the democrats of the Catholic Centre) stubbornly resisted this ideology.

Afterwards, during the first period of the rise of fascism, though 'feudal-imperialist' ideology made more and more open attacks on 'Weimar' ideology, splits appeared between the strictly imperialist and the strictly feudal aspects of it. The technocratic side of imperialist ideology was increasingly evident, with the emphasis on 'technique' and 'specialists', on the neutral 'technical' State, on 'organized capitalism', etc. The reaction of the big landowners was expressed in a resurgence of *reactionary feudal romanticism*, with the emphasis on the 'community of the soil', on 'ties of personal loyalty' among the 'workers on the land', in short, on a medieval kind of *corporatism*, extending from the 'peasantry' to the entire 'national community'. This corporatist ideal was to reappear in fascist ideology, but it should be noted right away that big capital remained quite free from this kind of ideological reaction.

The first period of the rise of fascism in fact saw a significant sharpening of ideological struggle within the power bloc. In fact, ideological contradictions do not exist only in ideas: ideology is embodied in a whole series of institutions or *ideological apparatuses* – which I shall call the 'ideological state apparatuses'. The political weight and importance of these apparatuses depends on the step of the ideological struggle. During the first period of the rise of fascism, these ideological apparatuses came to play a decisive political role.

To take a few examples: the various 'nationalist' groups such as the 'Pan-German League' which appeared before the Weimar republic, began to expand

and have a growing influence. ‘These groups were very numerous, very varied, and had roots throughout Germany. In each little town sections of many “patriotic” groups coexisted. They were very influential in local life: the notables were always well represented in them, so that very often local political life hinged around such groups.’[20] The universities, the centre of German intellectual life, provided the basic troops of the free corps, and thus their ideological and political influence grew. The ideological and political influence of the Church once again increased, after its eclipse during Bismarck’s Kulturkampf, when revolution from above was made for capitalism. The media apparatus was extended – more papers and magazines, with a bigger circulation, the beginnings of radio and cinema as mass media etc. Finally, various ‘intellectual’ circles, clubs, groups, etc. began to play an important role.

There was, then, a new growth in the political importance of the ideological apparatuses, as a corollary of the intensifying ideological struggle; but the important point is what happened in that struggle itself. Besides being an offensive against working-class ideology, led by the universities and the student movement, it was also a sign of the internal ideological disarray of the power bloc. Although these apparatuses appeared united in the common attacks on liberal ideology, the contradictions between imperialist ideology and feudal reaction were none the less fought out within them.

There would be little point in going into detail. The most interesting phenomenon was that certain aspects of this ideological struggle contributed, through internal dissensions, to undermining the dominant ideology as a whole. If circles around writers like Spengler (the Juniklub) waged a straightforward struggle against liberal ideology from the side of imperialist-feudal ideology, elsewhere things were much more complicated. The struggle against liberal ideology often exhibited an ‘anti-capitalist’ – though far from socialist – element, *stemmingfrom the influence of petty-bourgeois and working-class ideology in the generalized ideological crisis*.[21]

Since the *Communist Manifesto* we have known that the dominant ideology always uses a language especially tailored to fit the dominated classes. Hence, Marx spoke of *bourgeois socialism* (to be distinguished from utopian socialism) and even of *feudal socialism*. But this case involves something more. In the attacks on liberal ideology there are definite elements of an ‘anticapitalist’ and ‘antifeudal’ ideological critique. This was true of many circles grouped around journals, forming what has been called the ‘national bolshevist’ tendency or the *linke Leute von Rechts* (leftists of the Right).[22] These were in the main, ideological attempts to conciliate nationalist traditions with elements of

working-class ideology; they were often expressed in attacks on ‘plutocracy’ and ‘big money’, and emphasized the ‘historical importance’ of the working class. This is the tendency which brought together such writers as Ernst Jünger and Ernst von Salomon, who formed the group of ‘revolutionary nationalists’. For the moment, we should note that these attacks came from quite different circles from those of the national socialist organization.

At the same time a split was taking place between the politicians and the ‘ideological spokesmen’ or ‘watch-dogs’ of the power bloc. The attacks on ‘liberal parliamentary’ ideology were increasingly directed against the ‘politicians’, against the incapacity, softness and corruption of the ‘parties’: even the German Nationalists were not spared. These ideological movements were quite separate from the political parties. The only exception was the Jungdeutscher Orden (which was to number nearly 40,000 members), with its mystical religious base strongly overlaid with attacks on ‘plutocracy’. After 1930 it attempted to fuse with the Democratic Party – an attempt made, let it be noted, to counter the emerging fascist danger.

The situation became sharper in the second period of the rise of fascism, for meanwhile the last bolt had been shot. This was the final attempt at ideological resistance by medium capital, through the social democratic government, and its abortive ideological initiative for a renewed conception of class collaboration: the ‘capital-labour association’ strongly opposed by feudal-imperialist ideology. It was fascist ideology that was to reunite the power bloc, under the hegemony of big capital.

The rise of fascism, finally, represents an *offensive step* and an *offensive strategy* on the part of the power bloc, and of big capital in particular.

In this respect, the period around 1927 still seems decisive. After the 1923 state of emergency – a simple warning shot – and the memorandum by the big industrial magnates calling for the prolongation of the working day, the abrogation of many social benefits, the suppression of bread subsidies, the denationalization of the railways, etc., governments increasingly satisfied their demands. The eight-hour working day was gradually stretched to at least nine hours, often ten and sometimes twelve: a situation officially ratified by the social democratic trade unions in 1927.[23] The lockout became a general tactic of the employers, and it is significant that from 1927 onwards the number of working days lost through lockouts was greater than through strikes.[24] At the same time, the large landowners made an effort to nullify even more of the gains made by the middle and small peasantry, for example by tariff protection of cereals at the expense of the products of small- and medium-scale farming, and by ending the

‘colonization’ projects established in 1919 against the interests of big landed property.

This development was finally accelerated by the definitive subordination of social democracy to the dictates of big capital. The way opened by the *declared* social democratic policy of ‘capital-labour association’ led to Brüning’s austerity plan and to the direct collaboration of the social democratic trade unions with Brüning, while the large landowners, grouped around Hindenburg, intensified their attack.

But it was chiefly on the political plane that the stakes were down. First of all, the German bourgeoisie tried to settle or at least suspend its contradictions with the Western bourgeoisie,[25] which gave it a certain degree of free rein in its domestic offensive. This was expressed in Stresemann’s foreign policy, which made possible, among other things, the remilitarization of Germany.

So far as the ‘domestic’ class struggle was concerned, I have already given the broad outlines of the offensive. The most significant element was the formation of groups operating, unlike the free corps, as effective organizational nuclei, already substituting themselves for the outworn political parties: the Stahlhelm, the Grüne Front for the large landowners, etc. At the same time, numerous groups and associations of a mainly *ideological* character were formed, designed for a direct offensive against the masses.

IV. THE NAZI PARTY, NAZISM AND THE DOMINANT CLASSES AND CLASS FRACTIONS; HEGEMONY AND THE RULING CLASS

The last question we shall deal with here is that of the relation of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP) and national socialism in general to the power bloc and, more especially, to big capital. In fact, the start of the rise of fascism marks a break in this respect, since this relation cannot be reduced to the question of the ‘origins’ of fascism. In the preceding periods, there had been only armed bands and free corps, directly under the orders of big landowners and of capital, armed bands abandoned by their paymasters as soon as their direct military role was no longer required. The start of the rise of fascism made for a quite different situation. Coinciding with the step at which the power bloc took the offensive the NSDAP became a real mass movement, and effective organizational relations were increasingly established between it and the power bloc.

I have deliberately spoken here of a *coincidence* in time, to make it clear that neither chronological order, nor direct cause and effect relations, are meant. In other words, the establishing of a relation with the power bloc (in particular with big capital) was not a ‘prior’ condition for immediately turning the NSDAP into

a mass movement. These two elements rather appear to have been linked by the *conjuncture*: we could equally well change the given factors and say that precisely because national socialism became a mass movement, and in so far as it did so, the power bloc increasingly turned towards it. For contrary to what most ideologues of 'totalitarianism' say,[26] it is not true that the NSDAP *first* became a mass movement, only *then* to win the support of big capital.

The Nazi Party, which seemed crushed after its abortive coup in Bavaria in 1923, was rapidly reconstructed:[27] from a membership of 27,000 in 1925, by the time of its 1927 Nuremberg congress it had grown to 72,000, of whom 30,000 were in the SA. The figure quickly rose to 108,000 in 1928, and 178,000 in 1929. In 1926, Baldur von Schirach created the famous Union of National Socialist Students, which gained extensive influence in the university milieu and had success in student elections. It is true that the Party had no appreciable electoral success until 1930, and it was this which led the Comintern to underestimate its importance for a long time; it nonetheless became a mass party from the first period of the rise of fascism. Things become even clearer when we take into account the growing influence of fascist ideology in the various nationalist movements: for example, the foundation in 1927 of the fascist paper *Der Angriff* (The Attack), which quickly gained a wide circulation.

During this period, political ties were established between the Nazi Party and big capitalist circles, ties which at the point of no return brought the Party the support of this entire fraction. Significantly, Otto Strasser, whose 'left wing' ideas did not suit these elements, was replaced in 1927 by Goebbels as head of the Berlin-Brandenburg region (*Gau*). 1927 also saw the first radical reshaping of the national socialist programme, which muted some of its previous, rather too 'anticapitalist' demands.

It was at just about this time that landowning and big capitalist circles came increasingly to support the Party. The landowners, including certain members of the imperial family, joined *en masse*. Increasingly, the landowners as a whole, and even more so the big capitalist elements, came to support the national socialists, the ties clearly taking on an organizational aspect. 1927 or thereabouts was the real beginning of the process by which the German Nationalist Party and other right-wing organizations were politically subordinated to the NSDAP. Hugenberg, elected to the presidency of the German Nationalist Party in 1928, openly made an alliance with Hitler in 1929, in a big campaign against the Young Plan. The United National Front was created, bringing together the German Nationalists, the Stahlhelm, the Nazi Party, and the Pan-German League. In 1930, under Brüning's government, the 'national opposition' was

increasingly dominated by the NSDAP. Support and funds flowed in. In 1930, too, Hitler declared himself in favour of his party attaining power by legal and constitutional means; this was only an index of the political ties he had established with big capital.[28]

During the second period of the rise of fascism, the NSDAP largely succeeded in resolving the political contradictions that divided the other fractions of the power bloc from the landowners and big capital, and in calming their fears about its accession to power. While the economic contradictions within the power bloc were growing, the NSDAP appeared to be the real political common denominator of the power bloc in its offensive phase. The main expressions of this were the open support of the State apparatus for the Nazi Party; the more-than-ambiguous attitude of the political representatives of medium capital towards national socialism (e.g. the episode of Brüning's temporary ban on the SA); finally the total passivity of medium capital towards the removal of the last obstacles to national socialism's accession to power, a passivity demonstrated in the replacement of Brüning by Hindenburg.

But during this same step, the political ties between the NSDAP and the masses remained very strong. So much so, in fact, that big capital was often discomforted by the Party's policies. Big capital also played the card – though by now in a defensive way – of a Hindenburg military dictatorship: for example in 1932, when it gave parallel support to the Hindenburg candidature against Hitler.

With the coming to power of national socialism, the political hegemony of big capital was secured, the dislocation between political hegemony and economic domination was resolved, and the growth of its economic domination accelerated. In this process, advancing by steps and with not a few diversions, big capital used the fascist party, the fascist State and fascist ideology to successfully impose a general policy which unified the power bloc under its aegis, overcoming politically the economic contradictions rife within it.

During the first step of its rule, national socialism proceeded to dissolve all political organizations belonging to the power bloc; i.e. it expelled from the political scene the power bloc's traditional representatives. A year after the Nazi Party came to power, it became the *single party* in Germany.[29] The last of the politicians (von Papen, Hugenberg, von Neurath) were expelled from the government, and further harsh measures were taken against them – even to the extent of physical extermination. At the same time there was a purge of the Party's 'left wing' with the famous 'Night of the Long Knives', the dissolution of the two-million-strong SA clamouring for the 'second (anticapitalist) revolution', and the physical elimination of its leaders, Röhm and Strasser. The

process was furthered by the elimination of remaining political resistance within the State apparatus.

But this process took a *quite particular* course. With the increase in the political importance of the State apparatus, the shifting of weight within the apparatus from the army towards the police and administration and the massive filling of the upper ranks of the State apparatus with members of the NSDAP, the first period of national socialism in power made clear the special ties between the *petty bourgeoisie* and the Nazi Party, and made the petty bourgeoisie the *ruling class*. It was from this class that political personnel were recruited for the top ranks of the State apparatus, personnel who had not yet broken representational ties with the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie thus derived definite advantages from this situation during the first period of national socialism in power.

At the same time as the Nazi Party was filling the whole State apparatus (which grew to monstrous proportions) with members of petty-bourgeois origin and with their own quite specific petty-bourgeois ideology, the State apparatuses originally tied to other classes, notably the *army*, were subordinated to the strictly 'petty-bourgeois' State apparatuses. The petty bourgeoisie thus also became the 'class in charge' of the State – hence the process of *Gleichschaltung* and the problem of the 'fascist bureaucracy'.

Later on, with the period of stabilization, this led to the *subordination of the NSDAP to the Nazi state apparatus in the strict sense of the term*.[30] For with the period of stabilization, the petty-bourgeois upper ranks of the State apparatus and party leadership broke their representational tie tp the petty bourgeoisie, which lost its place as presiding class but remained a *supporting class* of the national socialist State. Despite the decisive setback to its interests effected by national socialist policy it continued to be the class in charge of the State. This *subordination* of party to State, although it did not go to the point of *fusion*, indicates that the petty bourgeoisie was losing the political means (i.e. the party) through which it had been able to operate for a brief period as the presiding class: but by means of its relation to the State apparatuses as a whole it continued to function as a social force. At the same time, there were accompanying and successive purges within the NSDAP, which were certainly not limited to its leftist leaders: 20 per cent of its pre-1933 political organizers were expelled before the end of 1934. From this date, about 80 per cent of the political organizers and party leaders were recruited from members who had joined after 1933.[31]

This situation was itself due to the overall balance of forces which had led to

the establishment and securing of national socialist power: it was a situation in which big capital and the petty bourgeoisie grew closer by stages, moving from alliance to support. This situation, reflected in the political apparatus as a whole, was *at the same time* a factor in the *relative* autonomy of the Nazi State from big capital.

To take a closer look: industrialists and financiers were certainly not strictly separated from the State apparatus. On the contrary, they were present in strength, especially through corporative organizations, through their participation in the Nazi Party, and also through a certain progressive fusion of a part of the Party leadership (Goring, etc.) with big capital to form an embryonic *State bourgeoisie*. This is one of the arguments against Thalheimer's thesis explaining fascism in terms of the Bonapartist model: the 'relative autonomy' of fascism, according to him, was based on a crucial dislocation between the economic domination of big capital and its political hegemony, the safeguarding of its economic domination requiring it to delegate this hegemony to a 'master' (Louis Bonaparte – Hitler). The main reason for Thalheimer's error was his neglect of the primary difference between fascism and Bonapartism, namely the existence of the *fascist party* and its objective role in relation to big capital. The fascist party in effect increasingly operated as the political representative of big capital, assuring its political hegemony and its *direct* participation in the commanding positions of the State apparatuses.[32]

It is nonetheless true that the existence of the NSDAP was at the same time a factor in the relative autonomy of the State from big capital. The whole of this party, and particularly the subaltern strata and the base, still maintained strong links with the petty bourgeoisie, which had meantime filled the State apparatuses at every level. Even in the corporate organizations, where big capital directly participated, it was still the party which dominated.

It is unnecessary to go into details of the continuous contradictions between big capital and the Nazi party-state. They were part of the 'game' which national socialism was playing, juggling big capital with the other classes and fractions of the power bloc, and the power bloc with the masses. These contradictions became clear from the time of the four-year plan (and the clashes between Goring and Schacht in 1936, and with the organization of the war economy and the disgrace of Marshals Blomberg and Fritsch in 1938). This was not because war did not suit the interests of German big capital. It was in this case chiefly a question of attempts by the national socialist State to 'control' the development of big capital's domination over the other elements of the power bloc.

3

Italy

I. THE ECONOMIC CONTRADICTIONS

Before starting to examine fascism and its rise in Italy, I should point out that, despite its relatively different origins, it has certain points in common with the German case. I shall not stress these points, since it is my aim within the framework of this work, to take concrete cases as *examples*. I shall rather stress the *differences* between the German and Italian cases.

In Italy, for reasons explained above, we also find crisis and contradictions within the power bloc. On the one hand, these contradictions are deeper than in the German case; on the other, following from this, fascism as a means of achieving the hegemony of big capital meets with stronger resistance from the other members of the power bloc. So although the rise of fascism was quicker than in Germany, beginning between late 1920 and early 1921, reaching the point of no return during 1921 and taking power in 1922, the process of stabilizing fascism in power was much slower. It was only in 1925, three years after its installation in power, that Italian fascism was stabilized, with the *ultra-fascist* laws, and entered its second phase in power.

Firstly, the contradiction between *big capital* and the *large landowners* was much deeper than in Germany; it involved the problem of the Mezzogiorno, which partly consisted in the contradiction between the Northern bourgeoisie and the Southern landowners. The backwardness of agriculture in relation to industry was much more serious, in that the existence of a semi-feudal form of agricultural production made the concentration of capital precocious and artificial. Although, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the nascent bourgeoisie and big landowners had found ground for agreement in protectionist

policies, the contradictions surged up anew with the acceleration of capital concentration alongside persisting feudal structures in agriculture. With the crisis which followed the First World War, the breach between agriculture and industry was driven catastrophically deeper. Among other things, the absence of capital accumulation in agriculture left the landowners completely outside the process of industrialization; their response was speculation in land. During the first period of the rise of fascism, a period marked by a decisive acceleration in the pace of capital concentration and by a fall in agricultural production and prices, the contradiction grew worse. This was evident in the competition of two big associations created in 1920, by the big industrialists (General Confederation of Industry) and the landowners (General Confederation of Agriculture). The latter was opposed to the fiscal policy of the State, which was of great importance in the Italian context of artificial capitalist development, because it favoured industry exclusively, at the expense of an increasing budgetary deficit. In fact the creation in 1919 of the Popular Party – the' peasant' party – was one aspect of this conflict.[1]

In the Italian case, unlike the German, the traditional alliance between Northern bourgeoisie and Southern landowners was seriously jeopardized by the process of capital concentration and by the creation of big capital. Although it held together politically, the explosive seeds it carried at the economic level were brought into the light of day.

This was all the more so as growing contradictions emerged between *big* and *medium* capital, contradictions inherent in the process of capital concentration. Here, too, they *partially* coincided with the contradiction between branches of industry: heavy industry on the one hand, consumer goods industry on the other. By 1919, the National Union of Mechanical Metallurgy was formed in Milan, grouping together medium-sized firms alarmed by concentration.[2] Furthermore, an alliance was made between medium capital and the landowners against the economic domination of big capital. This was made possible by the economic weakness of big capital in Italy, and also because the specific unevenness of capitalist development permitted a conjunctural convergence of the economic interests of these two classes. This embryonic alliance became more and more specific, both in the policy of the Popular Party and that of the representatives of medium capital who held power in Italy during the rise of fascism (Giolitti, Nitti, Bonomi, Facta).

In addition to these economic contradictions within the power bloc, there were, in this case too, contradictions within big capital itself, between banking and industrial capital. The process of capital concentration was less advanced in

Italy than in Germany, and somewhat precocious: the contradictions between banks and industry were also particularly sharp. A real offensive by the big industrialists to gain control of the banks was made possible by the enormous profits they had made in the war, while Italian banking capital (unlike Germany), kept its speculative nature and hesitated to launch into industrialization. Banking capital attempted to defend itself against this assault by big industry: in 1918, the four main Italian banks formed a cartel.

Though it was something of a failure, this attack none the less gave rise to intense convulsions.[3] In the context of the post-war crisis, Ansaldo, the industrial dinosaur which had gained control of the Banca Italiana di Sconto, crashed in 1921; Ilva, which controlled Lloyds Mediterranean, followed. The government was torn between the two antagonists: Bonomi refused State aid to heavy industry, and this led to his fall. Unlike Germany, it was only with the advent of fascism that industrial monopoly capital established its dominance over banking capital, within big capital as a whole.[4]

All three contradictions were exacerbated during the second period of the rise of fascism, *while the post-war 'economic crisis' began to resolve itself towards the end of 1921*. The share of industry in the national product, which had fallen from 30.6 per cent in 1918 to 25.3 per cent in 1921, rose to 29 per cent in 1922; production indices rose in all branches of industry, the budget deficit fell considerably, prices went down, and unemployment was reabsorbed. But the contradictions due to the process of capital concentration grew worse: rivalry broke out in 1921 between the two banking groups behind Nitti and Giolitti, the discount bank and the commercial bank; there was a sharpening of the contradiction between big and medium capital, which took the form of the growing opposition of the former to the latter's policy, represented by Giolitti, of 'capital-labour association' and of keeping up wages. The same thing occurred between big capital and the landowners, with big capital opposing the policy of fixing agricultural prices by means of a fiscal system which worked ultimately in the interests of the landowners. It was the issue of the 'political price of bread' which led to the fall of the Nitti government in 1921.

As for fascism in power, the two following characteristics differentiated it from German national socialism:

(a) Through a whole series of specific economic measures, *Italian fascism intervened even more strongly than national socialism to effect the economic domination of big capital over large landed property*. In Germany, the capitalization of agriculture had begun before the advent of national socialism, and was then only continued and intensified; in Italy, it was fascism which

introduced this process. As A. Rosenberg said: 'Mussolini supported the Southern landowners in their battle against the agrarian revolution, but he was never inclined to give back to these semi-feudal lords the decisive influence they had on the State during the 'liberal' period. The fascist party remained the party of the modern North. Fascism broke the dominant influence of the backward feudal areas of the centre and south of Italy. For the landowners and local potentates of the South, it was a question of the lesser evil: they evidently feared the red revolution as the greater evil, and that is why they supported fascism. But at the same time they knew that with the advent of fascism they would lose their former supremacy.'[5] This was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the Popular Party's long period of opposition to fascism. But it was much more the 'capitalist' landowners and big farmers of the North and centre who supported fascism, rather than the 'semi-feudal' Southern landowners: 'rural fascism' was concentrated in the Po Valley, in Emilia and in Tuscany.[6]

(b) Fascist economic policy also intervened massively in effecting capital concentration and the economic domination of big over medium capital, but this was a *longer* process. Taking into account the economic weakness of Italian big capital, fascism had for a long time to give much more consideration than did Nazism to the economic interests of medium capital (the early period of fascist 'economic liberalism'), and secondarily, to the interests of the consumer goods industry.

II. BIG CAPITAL AND LANDOWNERS

The problem of the relationship between big capital and landownership in Italian fascism also poses a problem of prime theoretical and political importance: the relations between two modes of production 'coexisting', in a combined manner, in this formation, i.e. the relations between *the capitalist mode of production (CMP), which has already entered the transition phase towards the dominance of monopoly capitalism, and the feudal mode of production still dominant in the countryside*. The problem is currently being discussed quite widely in the third world, particularly in Latin America.

In fact the relation of monopoly capitalism to large landed property is very different from that of pre-monopolistic (competitive) capitalism. In the latter case, it is possible, in certain circumstances, to speak of a combined 'coexistence' of the CMP (dominant in industry), and the feudal mode of production (still dominant in the countryside).[7] But the term 'coexistence' cannot adequately describe their relationship where monopoly capitalism is dominant in a social formation.

This dominance implies the consolidation of the conditions of *expanded* reproduction of the CMP itself. The establishment of the dominance of monopoly capitalism thus implies not simply the dominance of the CMP over the feudal mode of production in the countryside, but the final *dissolution* of the feudal mode. This mode now exists only in the form of 'elements' *subsumed* under the CMP in a social formation in which all that 'coexist', strictly speaking, are *forms* of the CMP (competitive, monopolistic, etc.).[8]

Italy offers a characteristic example of this. With the precocious formation of big finance capital, there was in fact a transition to the dominance of monopoly capitalism before fascism came to power, and while the feudal mode of production, unlike in Germany, still dominated relations of production in the countryside. The role of fascism – with the grain battle, 'comprehensive development', mechanization, transformation of the tenancy laws, transformation of small farmers into agricultural labourers, etc. – was precisely to establish the dominance of monopoly capitalism in agriculture, by eliminating the feudal mode of production as such.[9]

Because of the contradictions in this process, Italian fascism's relation to large landownership differed from that of Nazism in those parts of Germany which still had feudal characteristics. Fascism imposed the turn to capitalism. In this conjuncture, it deepened the contradiction between landowners and big capital much more than in Germany, where the landowners had turned to capitalization well before Nazism.

On the one hand, the massive introduction of capitalism into agriculture clearly produced some spectacular results in Italy: notably the yield of cereal production, which was chronically inadequate, rose from 10.5 quintals per hectare in 1909–15 to 15.2 in 1932; the total harvest rose from 4.85 million tons in 1909–13 to 7.59 in 1935–9, which was adequate for national consumption; notable progress was also made with fruits and vegetables.

On the other hand, however, the economic domination of big capital over large landownership was clearly *intensified*. The proportion of industry in the national product rose from 25.3 per cent in 1921 to 31.8 per cent in 1929 and 34.1 per cent in 1940, while that of agriculture fell in the same period from 46.3 per cent to 38.4 per cent and 29.4 per cent.[10] The use of chemical fertilizers, which roughly doubled from 1922 to 1931, gave massive profits to big capital (especially to Montecatini): the same was true of mechanization (6,000 tractors in 1924, 41,000 in 1940), given the high degree of concentration in this branch of industry.[11] The rate of development of capital between 1920 and 1939 was 1.50 in agriculture (1.35 for the period 1894–1913), but it was 2.58 in industry

(1.65 for the period 1894–1913),[12] which indicates the proportionate fall of rent in the distribution of total surplus value. The scissors between industrial and agricultural prices opened wider.

In this contradiction between the large landowners and big capital, which was particularly acute in Italy, fascism was still closer to big capital than Nazism, which did not come up against the contradiction *in the same form*.

This phenomenon was not correctly diagnosed either by the Comintern or by the PCI. The Comintern, under the guidance of its president, Zinoviev (see his report to the Fourth Congress), had at first seen Italian fascism as mainly the expression not of big capital but of big 'feudal' or 'semi-feudal' landownership: 'The fascists are above all a weapon in the hands of the *landowners*. The experience of this reaction fills the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie with terror, and they see it as black bolshevism.'[13] Such was the origin of all the erroneous interpretations of fascism as a political phenomenon peculiar to a society where the agricultural sector is predominant: a conception, like others, resulting from the definition of fascism as a 'retarding' and 'retrograde' phenomenon.

A politically more interesting interpretation was given by the PCI, from its Lyons Congress (1926) until at least 1928. In short, the PCI considered that fascism represented the interests of big capital and the big landowners equally, *without always being able to specify either the hegemonic force in this alliance (big capital) or the reasons for its hegemony and the forms it took.*

The Lyons Theses (1926) made this clear. They marked a step forward from Zinoviev's position, but still declared that fascism 'aimed to achieve the organic unity' of the dominant classes, without any specification as to the hegemonic force under which this unity would be achieved. So fascism was not seen as representing an important modification in the relations between big capital and the landowners: 'In substance, fascism only differs from the programme of conservatism and reaction which has always dominated Italian politics, in conceiving the unification of the reactionary forces in another way.' At the time Togliatti shared this view: 'Fascism becomes … the decisive centre of the political unity of all the governing classes: finance capital, big industry, and the landowners.'[14]

The conception underlying this definition was that fascism represented an alliance between monopoly capital and large landed property of a persistent *feudal* character, in so far as under Italian fascism, monopoly capitalism was developing 'in coexistence' with feudal structures in agriculture. As E. Serrani expressed it still recently: 'The socialist revolution … will have to transform

these capitalist-based structures which have developed in our country where new forms of monopoly capital have been *grafted onto the old feudal trunk*, and which have not been liquidated in the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship.'[15]

This interpretation in fact led to a separation by 'steps' of the *democratic revolution* (yet to be accomplished) from the *socialist revolution*: its political implication was that alliances including the *middle bourgeoisie* were necessary for the transition to socialism, with the common objective of liquidating the feudal mode of production which *still* existed in the countryside. In another context, this well-known theory of the 'coexistence' of the dominant monopoly capitalism with the feudal mode of production underlies the analyses of Latin American Communist Parties today. These advocate a struggle against dictatorship by means of alliances with medium capital (re-christened, to suit the circumstances, the 'national bourgeoisie') to liquidate 'feudalism' – a 'national-democratic revolution' to precede the socialist revolution.

In the case of Italian fascism, the programme of alliances was put into practice by the PCI with its 'anti-fascist front'. The thesis of persisting feudalism was used here to corroborate the line on alliances advocated by Dimitrov. Gramsci's authority was also claimed for it, support being drawn from his position on the Risorgimento as a 'revolution which failed' because, unlike the French Revolution, it allowed big landed property, and therefore feudalism, to survive: Gramsci conceived the introduction of capitalism into agriculture on the French model, i.e. as a redistribution of the big feudal domains.[16] It was somehow concluded from this that the survival of large landed property automatically meant the survival of feudalism, and that it was still a necessary task to carry through the revolution and the 'national unity' which the Risorgimento had failed to achieve.

But an enormous mistake was made about Gramsci, here and elsewhere. It is true that Gramsci seems to have ignored the effects of monopoly capitalism on agriculture, and it is also true that Gramsci himself supported the thesis of Italian fascism as representing the capitalist-landowning 'bloc', without clearly distinguishing the hegemonic force in this bloc. But in all fairness, Gramsci never departed from the line of making an alliance of the Northern proletariat with the poor peasantry of the South, against the landowners and the *whole of the bourgeoisie*, and included the whole of the bourgeoisie in the bloc in question.[17]

III. THE CRISIS AND THE POLITICO-IDEOLOGICAL PROCESS

So far as the political dimension of the rise of fascism in Italy is concerned, there

were some points in common with the rise of fascism in Germany, but there were also differences. Despite its economic weakness and unlike Germany, with its revolution from above, the Italian bourgeoisie was able to give political leadership to the bourgeois-democratic revolution – the Risorgimento. But it could only do so at the cost of major political and economic concessions to the big landowners. In general, although the Bismarckian State evolved with the squirearchy presiding, the German landowners had *less* political power than the Italian landowners, who benefited from the pronounced failure of national unity and from the political and administrative divison of North and South. Still, because of this process of political leadership and the alliance between bourgeoisie and landowners, medium capital managed, through its political organizations (the Liberal Party especially) to acquire strong positions within the State, much more important than those held by medium capital in Germany.

From 1920, Italy also experienced an offensive by big capital for political hegemony within the power bloc. This offensive succeeded in seriously shaking the hegemony of medium capital, which had been re-established after the war, and this opened the period of *instability of hegemony*. But although this offensive was instigated by the 'official' representatives of big capital (in particular by the Orlando-Sonnino-Salandra group[18]), it was mainly carried out, because of the strong political positions held by medium capital, by the latter's political representatives. The whole problem was that these representatives were split into two major groups: the followers of Nitti, who was drawing closer and closer to big capital, and the followers of Giolitti. As for the latter, although his policy of 'class collaboration' with the working class was inspired by the interests of medium capital, he too was increasingly being won over to big capital.[19]

This offensive by big capital was again a relative failure, because of the resistance of medium capital and the landowners. The latter kept their political positions under the reign of medium capital, through the existence of a veritable State within the State in the South. They were worried by the *rapprochement* between the nationalists and big capital, and also by big capital's infiltration of the 'liberal' camp.[20] One of the ways their resistance was expressed was through the political role of the Popular Party, a Catholic party basically representing the interests of large landed property – though it was of varied composition and also included poor peasants. This party essentially embodied the resistance of the landowners to big capital's infiltration of the representatives of medium capital: the hegemony of medium capital had left their political power intact in the South. It was because of this ambivalence that Don Sturzo's Popular Party was

sometimes able to appear ‘progressive’.[21]

These contradictions were exacerbated from 1921, a year which, with the point of no return, opened the period of *incapacity of hegemony* under the last Giolitti ministry.[22] Giolitti did not abandon his reform projects, which harmed the Southern landowners and aided big capital. He drew ever closer to big capital, while at the same time trying to maintain his representative ties with medium capital; for example, he brought in measures to establish registration of assets, which directly harmed the interests of the Vatican and the Bank of Rome; he set up a commission of inquiry into war profits, etc. This situation was prolonged under Bonomi and Facta.

The resistance to this big-capitalist offensive for hegemony was stronger in Italy than in Germany. This determined the particular features of the rise of fascism in Italy:

(a) The *political scene*, in this case parliament, where the representatives of medium capital reigned, gave them a State apparatus fashioned to their requirements and continued to be more important than in Germany until the end of the rise of fascism and even after its installation in power. The distinction between State apparatuses expressing different political forces was less evident than in Germany, with the exception of the Southern State within the State which posed a different problem.[23] Here too, of course, there was a dissociation between *real power* and *formal power;* but the parliamentary political scene kept its own identity. The big-capitalist offensive and the resistance to it continued to have a big impact on this scene, and Italian fascism was obliged to follow much more of a policy of compromise here than was Nazism.

(b) The rupture of the representational tie between medium capital and its representatives came about more slowly, chiefly because of the strong positions of medium capital in the State. It was completed only after fascism came to power, and was one of the reasons for the long first period of fascism in power, and for its policy of caution towards these representatives.

During the first period of the rise of fascism, there was again a dissociation between real power and formal power, and a rupture of party representational ties, at least for big capital and the landowners.[24] From 1920, the economic corporative bodies (Confederation of Industry, Confederation of Agriculture) played an increasing part, by-passing the role of the political parties; para-military organizations were formed as nuclei of class organization, e.g. the armed corps created by D’Annunzio. Para-military *squadre* were also formed outside the *fasci*, even if most fascists took part in them.[25] Big capital aimed for a coup d’état and a solution through *military dictatorship* under the Duke of

Aosta; the political role of the army was growing, under Generals Diaz and Badoglio.

When the point of no return was reached, this development was intensified, accentuating the rupture of big capital and the landowners, both from their own political representatives and from those of medium capital, whom they nevertheless continued to infiltrate. In 1921, a federation of all Italian anti-bolshevik unions and civil organizations was formed in open conflict with the representatives of medium capital; a nationalist-fascist joint committee was formed to create the national-fascist bloc; paramilitary groups were formed throughout the countryside, in declared opposition to the Popular Party; the Liberal Party itself was in an increasing state of decomposition, with Salandra's right wing now dominant and organized into its own para-military organization – the liberal *'squadristi'*.[26]

What was happening meanwhile among the political representatives of medium capital? In fact, while in Germany these representatives turned towards plans for military dictatorship, strongly mistrusting the NSDAP and deciding to use it only as a last resort, the representatives of Italian medium capital, the 'left liberals', drew much nearer to the fascist party.[27] Headed by Giolitti, but with Nitti too, they presented themselves for the 1921 elections on a 'national slate', which united most of the Italian parties from the liberals to the fascists. These slates led to the election of thirty-five fascist deputies. Giolitti's plan was for a Constituent Assembly to initiate the 'hardening' of the State by reinforcing the role of parliament, within which he would have the support of 'parliamentarized' fascism.[28]

The opposition of medium capital to the coming of fascism was therefore neutralized in this case mainly by its own political representatives, as their representational role, although weakened, was maintained throughout the rise of fascism. Italian fascism was able to do this only through a 'game' of political compromises with these representatives.[29]

In Italy, too, the crisis of party representation went hand in hand with a deep crisis in the dominant ideology.[30] But certain features distinguish this from the crisis in Germany.

The process of transition to capitalism had been accomplished under the political leadership of the Northern bourgeoisie, and with an ideology *peculiar to the bourgeoisie*, which was preponderant in the ideological system dominant in Italy. This was the nationalist and liberal ideology at work in Mazzini's movement. It is true that the liberal aspect of this ideology was undermined by

the strong, continual intervention of the State during the development of capitalism in Italy (for example in the Crispi phenomenon). Nonetheless, liberal nationalist ideology, characteristic of bourgeois-democratic revolutions, was remarkably persistent.

This liberal nationalist ideology experienced a deep crisis after the First World War. In the first place, it no longer corresponded to the interests of Italian big capital, which was moving onto the ideological offensive. But while in Germany this offensive was carried out by the combination of imperialist ideology and 'transformed' feudal ideology, in Italy, because of the contradiction between big capital and the landowners, and because of the dominance of this specific bourgeois ideology, it was brought about by an attempt at *some kind of 'continuous' transmutation of this 'liberal nationalist' ideology into 'imperialist-fascist' ideology.*[31]

In other words, although big capital undermined the liberal aspect of this ideology, it seems to have taken its stand squarely in the liberal nationalist tradition. It developed and transformed the nationalist aspect of the ideology, in particular exploiting the feeling that the big powers had usurped the fruits of Italian intervention in the war. With its policy of expansion and annexations, the wartime policy of 'right-wing interventionism', the D'Annunzio movement (the occupation of Fiume), etc., 'nationalist-imperialist' ideology appeared to be the continuation of the Garibaldian national unity movement of the Risorgimento.[32] This was the case with the many nationalist ideological movements which arose in Italy as in Germany, particularly the Italian Nationalist Association (ANI), which was to play a very important role after the war.

Medium capital reacted strongly to this ideological offensive by big capital, with the ideological element of opposition to the war (non-interventionism) and the liberal Giolittian ideology of 'capital-labour association', while nationalist imperialism was more and more opposed to what it called Giolitti's 'socialist monarchy'. But this ideological offensive was a covert one, in that it was masked by the direct monopolization of certain aspects of liberal-nationalist ideology, the ideology of Italian medium capital.

Italian fascism grafted itself into this ideological offensive: it was far from having the ideological originality of German national socialism. As Rosenberg put it, Mussolini's *brown shirts* appeared as the heirs of Garibaldi's *red shirts*, and indeed the fact that Italian big capital and fascism took the ideological offensive behind the mask of the nationalist tradition of medium capital was one of the factors neutralizing medium capital's opposition during fascism's rise to power, in fact bringing it a quite unique support from the 'liberal' representatives

of medium capital.

Big capital's offensive under cover of a renewal of the Risorgimento was soon countered by feudal ideology. If the 'expansionist' side of imperialist ideology suited the Southern landowners, it was not, as in Germany, because of the fusion of imperialist ideology with the 'transformed' feudal ideology of a class which had already made the turn to capitalism. Expansionism and interventionism did not *yet* correspond to the economic interests of Italian feudal agriculture, only coincided with some conjunctural political interests. As in the case of the Libyan war, it was a question of luring the poor peasantry with the conquest of foreign lands, in order to avoid partition of their own. Finally, Southern agrarian feudalism was disturbed by the appearance of the ('traditional') 'Italian unity' theme in the expansionism of imperialist ideology, since it was evidence of an offensive by big capital to gain hegemony, and of the risk that the landowners' political privileges would be abolished.

So, contrary to the German case, *there was a direct opposition between 'classical' feudal ideology and imperialist ideology*. It was expressed in a significant resurgence of *feudal socialism*, with strong Catholic overtones. This was very clear in the ideology of the Popular Party, which was directly opposed to the expansionist imperialist ideology of big capital, demanding intervention and Italian unity.

In Italy too, there were movements critical of the dominant ideology, coming from circles linked to the power bloc. In their 'anti-capitalist' form, these expressed the influence, within this generalized ideological crisis, of petty-bourgeois and working-class ideologies. One of these was the group around the journal *La Voce*, which united nationalists like Papini and socialists like Salvemini; another was the broad ideological movement based on the works of Oriani, reconciling nationalism with a marked 'populism'; the rural anti-clerical group, later the Futurist party, advocating the socialization of land, the corporate State, etc. But these apparently 'anti-capitalist' attacks on the dominant ideology were made under the 'traditional' guise of classical nationalist ideology. The theme of the Risorgimento as a 'revolution which failed' appeared again; a new Risorgimento was advocated to accomplish the work of the first[33] and, in Oriani's words, to counterpose to the artificial 'bourgeois' Italy which had emerged from the uncompleted Risorgimento, an Italy renewing itself in a vast popular renaissance.[34] In this oblique and camouflaged form, the ideological movements of D'Annunzio, the futurists, etc., were to fuse with fascism at the point of no return.

Moreover, in Italy too, with the beginnings of the rise of fascism, and

following the steps of its development, the ideological apparatuses were increasingly decisive, being the political battleground both of the ideological contradictions indicated and of the ideological offensive by big capital. In the universities, this offensive particularly stressed the Garibaldian nationalist side of imperialist ideology, undoubtedly because of the D'Annunzio movement; the Church experienced both the ideological offensive of big capital and the feudal reaction to this offensive.

Finally here too there was a progressive rupture, decisively marked by the beginnings of the rise of fascism, between the political representatives of the power bloc and its 'ideological spokesmen', its watch-dogs. But this happened in a specific way: not so much, as in the German case, through direct attacks on parliamentary liberalism, but throughout under the guise of 'traditional' nationalism, through demands for a '*change of elites*'.

In Italy, too, the rise of fascism represented a step of *offensive strategy* on the part of the power bloc and, in particular, of big capital. The plan had already been drawn up on 7 March 1920 by the first national conference of Italian industrialists, which confirmed the predominance of Confindustria over the entire economy. Giolitti was entrusted with its execution. In fact, this plan could be applied only after the turn in the real relation of forces which marked the end of stabilization, i.e. after the factory occupation movement of the summer of 1920. The failure of this movement opened the way to the offensive step of big capital. Lockouts became generalized, the strike movement was clearly on the decline.[35] At the point of no return, after the fascist movement had formed itself into a party and the socialist-fascist pacification pact was made, under the Bonomi government (autumn 1921), this offensive became stronger: dividend payments were suspended by the Bank of Rome under Bonomi, increased subsidies given to industry and financial groups under Facta. The gains of the factory occupation movement, wage increases and union rights of 'control' in the factory, were undermined, in part by inflation. The average real wage fell, on an index of 100 for 1913, from 127 in 1921 to 123 in 1922.

All this was not enough for big capital: the representatives of medium capital still persisted in policies of 'class collaboration'. Already with the last Giolitti government, judged too indulgent towards the claims of the 1920 strikers, big capital had broken with the representatives of medium capital. This process was intensified with Bonomi and Facta, whom it saw as still too conciliatory towards the masses.

But it was on the political plane that the offensive made its greatest impact. I

have already indicated its main lines: I shall come back to it in examining the rise of fascism within the State apparatus.

IV. THE FASCIST PARTY, FASCISM AND THE DOMINANT CLASSES AND CLASS FRACTIONS; HEGEMONY AND THE RULING CLASS

The last question concerns the relation of fascism and the fascist party to the power bloc, in particular to big capital. Here again, while the fascist movement dated from the war period, in the form of the movement for intervention, it seemed crushed after the war.[36] Reorganized from 1919, in the form of *fasci di combattimento*, basically armed bands and free corps, it barely survived until the summer of 1920. It was only after the bourgeoisie's turn to the offensive that the fascist movement took on the character of a political mass movement. At the beginning of 1920 there were 31 *fasci* in Italy totalling 870 members. By December of that year the fascist movement had grown to 20,000, and a year later, it numbered 200,000.[37]

It was at the start of the rise of fascism, in 1920, that big capital began to give support to the fascist movement in the form of donations; at first this support was still wary. It was even more cautious than in the case of Germany, *for Italian fascism had first to settle the matter of its relation with the landowners*:[38] this was especially important as it relates to the particularly acute form that the contradiction between big capital and the landowners took in Italy.

While Mussolini had foreseen the *urban context* as the centre of Italian fascist activity, from 1920 it was in fact *rural fascism* which developed most, under the leadership of Grandi and Italo Balbo, and in the context of an offensive by the big landowners. Rural fascism, mainly in the form of free corps, attacked the peasant leagues, composed of agricultural workers and poor peasants, under communist or socialist leadership (the Red leagues) or even under Catholic leadership (the White leagues).

In June 1921, Mussolini decided to make a tactical compromise with the political representatives of medium capital and to draw closer to big capital as well. He stood for election on the national slate' and in August 1921 decided, at Bonomi's instigation, to sign a peace pact with the socialists, whom the representatives of medium capital were still counting on to pursue their policy of class collaboration. *In doing this, Mussolini was trying to strangle rural fascism*. The peace pact and the parliamentarization of the fascist movement were resented as being what in fact they were: for one thing, a manoeuvre against rural fascism, dependent on constant white terror in the countryside.

This produced a serious crisis within the fascist movement and led to a real

struggle for power between Mussolini and the *grass roots*, i.e. those in charge of rural fascism, notably the *fasci* of Emilia and Romagna under the aegis of Grandi. At the Rome Congress of November 1921, Mussolini, proposing the transformation of the fascist movement into a party, emerged victorious over rural fascism. At the same time there was the first rupture with the 'left' syndicalist wing of the movement, represented by Farinacci, and the first turn towards abandoning the 'left' syndicalist positions of the fascist party. The new fascist party now formed effective relations of political organization with big capital. From then on, financial support was abundant.

Meanwhile, the fascist party engaged in neutralizing the opposition of medium capital and its representatives. This was effected by its 'liberal' turn already inaugurated during the June 1921 elections. Mussolini now declared: 'The State must be limited to its purely juridical and political functions. Let the State give us police to protect decent people from villains, a well organized system of justice, an army ready for any eventuality, and a foreign policy to serve the national interest. All the rest, and I do not even exclude the secondary schools, must return to individual private initiative. If you want to save the State, you must abolish the collectivist State handed down to us by the force of events and by the war, and go back to the *Manchester State*.' This declaration was designed to mask the interventionist role which the fascist State would have to fulfil to aid big capital, specifically to neutralize the opposition of medium capital.

From then on the way was clear: in February 1922, Vatican support for fascism was won with the election of the new Pope, Pius XI, former cardinal of Milan, and a notorious pro-fascist: the Vatican disavowed the policy of opposition to fascism of the Popular Party under Don Sturzos' leadership.[39] In August 1922, Mussolini abandoned his 'republican' plans and accepted the survival of the monarchy, which unlike in Germany, where its ties were mainly with the big landowners, was in Italy tied to capital, and mainly to 'traditional' medium capital. Finally, in September 1922, the fascist party subordinated D'Annunzio's nationalist movement, by forming the National Fascist Party.

But the fascist party's political ties with the masses remained very strong during this last period. In addition, big capital scorned the political compromises between fascism and the representatives of medium capital. Big capital once again played its second card of a military dictatorship, with the support of d'Annunzio's nationalist movement.

When fascism came to power, *the political hegemony of big capital* was

progressively secured. In the end, it was of the same kind as in Germany, though it developed at a slower pace and in rather different ways. From the March on Rome to the proclamation of the *ultra-fascist laws*, fascism followed a path of compromise with medium capital, in order to finalize its rupture from its political representatives. From 1925, all political organizations belonging to the power bloc were dissolved: the fascist party now reigned unchallenged on the political stage.

At the same time, within the fascist ranks, there was a purge of the 'left wing', which as early as 1923 was calling for the 'second (anti-capitalist) revolution'.[40] Partisans of Mussolini and of the 'second revolution' sometimes confronted each other in machine-gun battles. Hence in 1923 came the first purge, involving some 150,000 fascists, most of whom had participated in the March on Rome. In 1925–6, marking the turn to the second step of fascism in power, that of its stabilization, there was a second purge, and recruitment to the fascist party was suspended until 1931. Finally, the last bastions of resistance by the landowners and medium capital within the State machinery were eliminated: the army and the upper ranks of the administration were decisively purged, and the crown lost its last prerogatives.

Again, as in Germany, the *petty bourgeoisie* functioned as *ruling class* during the first period of fascism in power, and later simply as *class in charge* of the state; the process, however, developed at a different pace. It began as early as the March on Rome, with the formation of that massive 'fascist bureaucracy' which Gramsci in particular emphasized. But Italian fascism used the political personnel of the bourgeoisie. It was only from 1925 that the petty bourgeoisie decisively took over the top ranks of the State apparatus. The rupture of representational ties between the leadership of the fascist party and the petty bourgeoisie from which its members were overwhelmingly recruited, marked the passage of the petty bourgeoisie from the status of presiding class to that of class in charge of the State, and simple supporting class, but it was not finally accomplished until 1928. The law of December 1928 completed the formation of the 'totalitarian State', as Mussolini himself put it.

1928 in fact saw a new purge: the Confederation of Fascist Trade Unions was dissolved, and its general secretary, Rossoni, was sacked together with the 'corporate syndicalist' elements he had placed in various posts in the organization. The subordination of the fascist party to the fascist State apparatus (in the strict sense) was now complete. The petty bourgeoisie, lacking an autonomous political organization to maintain its position as presiding class, fell back to the position of class in charge of the State. The petty-bourgeois

leadership of the State was finally cut off from the petty bourgeoisie itself. At the same time, big-capitalist elements acceded directly to the commanding posts in the State, as in Germany, by means of their membership of the fascist party.[41]

This relationship between fascism and the petty bourgeoisie was also a factor in the *relative autonomy* of the fascist State from big capital. But fascism, in establishing the political hegemony of big capital, also imposed a policy aimed at containing the economic contradictions of the power bloc. *It tried to regulate and control the development of the domination of monopoly capital over medium capital and landed property, while at the same time accelerating it*. This led to major contradictions between big capital and the fascist party-State. As early as 1934, Confindustria and its president, Pirelli, protested vigorously against the increasing State 'intervention' in the economy since 1926. This intervention was exercised in the interests of big capital, but it also imposed forms of control over the development of its domination, which were resented as 'bureaucratic fetters'. The policy of autarchy and the war economy aggravated these contradictions. Badoglio, the upper ranks of the army and the monarchy, were in increasing disagreement with the economic policy of fascism: hence the crisis of 1943.[42]

Part Four

Fascism and the Working Class

In this chapter I shall attempt to analyse the relationship of fascism to the working class: on the one hand, to examine the situation of the working class in the conjuncture of the rise and rule of fascism; and on the other hand, to examine the policy of fascism towards the working class.

1

General Propositions

I. STEPS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ‘PROCESS OF DEFEAT’ AND THE WORKING-CLASS DEFENSIVE

The beginning of the rise of fascism presupposes a significant series of working-class defeats. These defeats immediately precede fascism, and open the way to it.

The Comintern, however, generally considered the working class undefeated, even after fascism had taken power. The ‘ultra-left’ period excluded all possibility of any other interpretation: ‘The Twelfth Plenum … has shown … that all the theories deduced from the history of Italian fascism to show that it is first necessary to defeat the working class, are no more than schematic abstractions.’[1] For after the victory of Italian fascism and the ousting of Bordiga from the PCI leadership, the 1926 Lyons Theses had clearly stated: ‘The victory of Italian fascism should be seen not as a victory against the revolution, but as a result of the defeat of the revolutionary forces.’

The meaning of this ‘defeat’ should be clarified. It was not ‘*the* defeat’, inflicted in a single day, but *a series of defeats in a process marked by various steps and turns*. It was the consequence of this series of defeats that determined the situation of the working class throughout the rise of fascism.

With the end of the First World War, a genuinely revolutionary period opened in Germany and Italy. Revolution was on the agenda, in the sense that there were conjunctures of objectively revolutionary situations. But the working class failed both to take State power (1918–19 in Germany and Italy), and to secure its objectives in critical situations (1920 in Italy, 1923 in Germany).

It should at once be added that a defeat does not necessarily mean an open

defeat in a situation of declared civil war: a defeat can also be a battle launched at an unpropitious moment.

It should also be added that the problem is not really whether at every turn there were objectively revolutionary situations in the strict sense, for this is a debatable point for 1920 in Italy and 1923 in Germany. But it is certain that in both cases there was at least *a significant failure by the working class to achieve the political objectives imposed by and attainable in a situation of open crisis.* For a working-class defeat is not simply to be measured in terms of its failure to take State power, to 'make the revolution', a possibility which probably did not exist or no longer existed in the two cases mentioned; it can also be measured in terms of its inability, in an open crisis, to attain 'possible' political objectives, falling short of the seizure of State power, as part of a long-term strategy.

These last failures gave way to what I described above as a period of relative stabilization, punctuated by moments of heightened class struggle. But the significant weakening of the working class in the relation of forces continued throughout this period of stabilization, making it possible to describe this as a virtual 'process of defeat'. In fact, not every stabilization period necessarily represents a process of defeat. It is possible to find periods of stabilization in which, by a 'strategic consolidation' (Mao), the working class strengthens its positions, in this positional warfare, and prepares to go onto the offensive: this is the strategic meaning of Mao's *'protracted war'*.[2]

This was not the case with the stabilization step preceding the rise of fascism. While the bourgeoisie was growing stronger in this war of attrition, the working class and the masses grew weaker and weaker. As always happens in these cases, unless the revolutionary organizations have a conscious and adequate strategy, stabilization unfailingly plays into the hands of the enemy. It becomes a respite for him, and all the objective coordinates of the capitalist system contribute to this. It is however still the case that the decisive turn in the process coincides with the start of the rise of fascism, signalling on the one hand open offensive by the bourgeoisie, and on the other, a defensive step for the working class, in the full sense.

The process can therefore only be explained by taking into account the nature of the period as a whole. In particular, there was at no point a catastrophic confrontation in Gramsci's sense, i.e. of such a kind that the forces of one or the other of the adversaries, or of both, are at a given moment entirely annihilated.

This leads us to the second element of the period, which also gives one of the answers to the question: *why fascism?* A whole series of writers, including in particular Daniel Guérin, speak abstractly of 'the defeat' of the working class

‘before’ the rise of fascism, and conclude that fascism comes about solely because of ‘economic contradictions’ in the capitalist system which the bourgeoisie cannot solve.

In fact despite the working class’s failures, as measured in terms of the political objectives which the mass movement could have achieved, it had nevertheless managed to make real political and economic gains against the bourgeoisie. And although these were constantly undermined by the bourgeoisie, they *still* survived at the beginning of the rise of fascism, on a scale by then unacceptable to the bourgeoisie, because of the crisis it was undergoing.

These gains, then, still survived when the relation of forces on which they were based had already been modified in favour of the bourgeoisie.[3] This is only apparently paradoxical, unless one considers that every change in the relation of forces is automatically accompanied by a mechanical reorganization and redistribution of the positions occupied by the adversaries, which would clearly be wrong. As for the strategy of the bourgeoisie towards the working class in this relation of forces, it could be maintained that when such gains are made in serious crises, the bourgeoisie *first* concentrates on modifying *the real relation of forces* on which these gains are based, and *only afterwards* does it move onto a direct attack against the gains themselves. This is for a simple reason, stemming from the very nature of the process: it is to deceive and lull the enemy, by hiding from him the real site of the class struggle, and to force him out onto one’s own ground.

The bourgeoisie therefore had to wipe out the political and economic gains of the masses in a short space of time, while the organizations of the working class were still strong and maintained a certain influence. But that was not all: in the conjuncture of the crisis of the bourgeoisie, it was no longer enough just to wipe out these gains. It was necessary to take the exploitation of the masses still further. To do this, in the specific conjuncture of fascism and after the failure of the policy of ‘class collaboration’, it was necessary to move on to eliminate the class organizations of the working class.

Finally, memories of the past had a special importance for the bourgeoisie. After the war, despite the defeats of the working class, a great fear had already struck root in the hearts of the German and Italian bourgeoisie. The ‘workers’ councils’ would never cease to haunt them.

It should thus be clear from all that has been said here, that the meaning of a working-class ‘defeat’ is relative, as is every idea about the field of class struggle. The idea stems from the *relation of forces*, and is measurable in terms of the ‘possible’ objectives in given conjunctures. If the working class had

already suffered a series of significant defeats when the rise of fascism began, this in no way means that, at least up to the point of no return, it could still not achieve the new, much more limited objective of *checking fascism*.

One direct consequence of this series of defeats concerns the very form taken by the class struggle during the rise of fascism. In fact, both the Comintern, which saw fascism as a response to the upsurge of the revolutionary movement, and writers like Thalheimer and Tasca, who saw in fascism the response to a situation of 'equilibrium' between the different forces, were agreed in admitting, in a purely abstract way, that the rise of fascism corresponded to the 'increasingly political' nature of the class struggle.

This was only true of the bourgeoisie, both in its internal struggles and in its struggle against the working class; it was no longer true at all of the working-class struggle. It is characteristic of the rise of fascism that the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the working class assumes an increasingly political nature, while the working-class struggle against the bourgeoisie *falls further and further back into the domain of economic demands*. In other words, in the complex articulation of economic struggle and political struggle, it is the economic struggle which progressively assumes the dominant role in the struggle of the working class. The working class is not 'demobilized', in the full sense of the term, during the rise of fascism: the strike movement in particular stays relatively powerful throughout the process. But with one crucial difference: the economic side of the struggle comes increasingly to the fore.

The whole of this development, however, is obscured:

(a) For reasons relating to the still recent past of political struggles, the increasingly dominant role of economic struggle is hidden behind forms of action inherited, as it were, from a period of *de facto* primacy of the political: mass demonstrations, factory occupations, and various forms of 'direct action'. At the point of no return, this dislocation between the content of the struggle and its forms becomes clear. This point coincides with the turn which finally makes the economic side of the struggle dominant over the political.

(b) After the political defeats, there are still outbursts of 'political fever': but far from being signs of effective political mobilization, they are now mere shadows of the past.

It should finally be added that, on the side of the working class, a politically defensive step *does not necessarily mean that economic struggle has primacy over political class struggle*. Rather, the correct conduct of the struggle during a defensive step more than ever requires the primacy of the political for which

Lenin and Mao call. It especially requires such primacy in the strategy of alliances and compromises which this step implies. The rise of fascism, however, corresponds precisely to the junction of these two elements on the working-class side: a politically defensive step, and a turn from the political to the economic aspect as uppermost in the class struggle.

II. FORMS OF THE IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS: THE CRISIS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS

The rise of fascism corresponds to an ideological crisis of the working class, and to a significant crisis of the revolutionary organizations.

On the latter point, as far as the German and Italian Communist Parties are concerned, I should at once specify that I have no intention of equating the idea of crisis of the revolutionary organizations with their strategic errors. In particular, I mean here the effects of this situation, effects which had a specific role in the advent of fascism:

(a) At the start of the rise of fascism, there was a marked split between the German and Italian Communist Parties and the working class. In short, these parties cut themselves off from the masses. The working class as a whole did not follow the leadership which the parties tried, without any mass line, to impose on the struggle. *The parties were far from having really capitulated to fascism, as a solidly established 'anti-communist' tradition would have it*. They tried, especially in the case of the PCI, to oppose its accession to power, but did so too late and not very effectively. They made the attempt after the point of no return, when the split had already taken place. The mass of the working class did not follow them in their last desperate and posthumous attempts to stop fascism. The process was the more remarkable in that the parties never ceased to gain *electoral* victories throughout almost the whole of the rise of fascism.

(b) As the defeats of the working class had effects within the German and Italian Communist Parties themselves, these parties suffered from deep internal divisions throughout the rise of fascism. Leaving aside their political line these divisions had particular effects: they often led to virtual paralysis in the face of the fascist menace, which disoriented the working class still more.

This situation in the revolutionary organizations also coincided with an ideological crisis within the working class. This was one aspect of the *generalized ideological crisis* outlined above, which affected the German and Italian social formations during the rise of fascism. Marxist-Leninist ideology was profoundly shaken within the working class: not only did it fail to conquer the broad masses, but it was also forced back where it had managed to root itself.

It is clear enough what happens when revolutionary organizations fail in their ideological role of giving leadership on a mass line: particular forms of *bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology* invade the void left by the retreat of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The influence of *bourgeois ideology* over the working class, in this situation of ideological crisis, took the classic form of trade unionism and reformism. It can be recognized not only in the survival, but also in the extending influence of social democracy over the working class, through both the party and the trade unions, all through the rise of fascism. The advancing influence of social-democratic ideology was felt even in those sections of the working class supporting the communist party.

The most revealing phenomenon is not so much the direct influence of bourgeois ideology on the working class, expressed in trade unionism and reformism, as the influence of *petty-bourgeois ideology*.

In fact, bourgeois ideology was itself in crisis during the rise of fascism. This was what allowed petty-bourgeois ideology to spread in the social formation, and to penetrate the working class much more thoroughly than could an uncontested dominant ideology. The petty bourgeoisie was itself going through a deep crisis. In this context, the ideology of the 'enraged petty bourgeoisie', as Engels put it, took quite specific forms: *forms in which it penetrated into the working class more easily than before*, as the working class was itself in ideological crisis. To clarify these ideas, I would suggest that the 'anti-capitalist' aspect always inherent in petty-bourgeois ideology is strengthened and becomes relatively more important in this situation where the petty bourgeoisie is in revolt. This is how such ideology gains entry into the working class.

The influence of petty-bourgeois ideology on the working class takes *specific forms*, adapted to the 'actual conditions', that is the 'lived experience' (*le vécu*), of the working class. Certain of these forms were particularly strong in the working class during the rise of fascism:

(a) *Anarchism*, in the form specific to the working class: especially as *anarcho-syndicalism* (akin to *revolutionary syndicalism)*, which combines contempt for organization and political objectives with ignorance, under the pretext of the 'lived experience' of *factory life*, of the role of the mechanisms of political oppression, of the *State*, in the maintenance of the capitalist system;

(b) *Spontaneism*, i.e. contempt for organization, and the abstract cult of direct and 'spontaneous' action, no matter where or how – the expression *par excellence* of petty-bourgeois 'individualism';

(c) *'Putschist jacquerie'*, which rejects Marxist-Leninist ideology and mass

political struggle: together with spontaneism and anarchism, it is based on a totally abstract cult of the exemplary ‘violence’ of ‘active minorities’, which is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the rebel petty bourgeoisie, and of ‘petty-bourgeois jacquerie’.

The dimensions of the problem are now apparent, and some comment is required. There is no doubt that these forms, notably anarcho-syndicalism, were at one time positive forms of ‘spontaneous’ proletarian expression: Lenin himself had treated them as such.[4] Nor is there any doubt that the forms mentioned often contained, during the rise of fascism, an element of ‘instinctive’ class reaction by the working class to the political line of the revolutionary organizations. But in the context of the rise of fascism, this ‘class instinct’, cut off from Marxist-Leninist ideology and facing these particular forms of petty-bourgeois ideology, foundered under the influence of the latter. A very important question is raised here, in that it is absolutely impossible to explain the complex impact of fascism on the working class without taking into account this ideological factor.

In fact this influence of petty-bourgeois ideology on the working class directly accelerated its political demobilization. Fascist demagogy, in the real meaning of the term, with its ‘populist’ working-class side and its illusory promises, also helped to neutralize it. It did more: fascism thoroughly exploited the influence of petty-bourgeois ideology on the working class, taking precise and open advantage of some of the forms in which it appeared among them. In other words, not only did the content of fascist demagogy contribute to the passivity and neutralization of the working class, but so did the forms in which it was presented – both verbal forms and forms of action – and which reached the working class through the influence of petty-bourgeois ideology.

A clarification is now necessary. If we have referred to the influence of petty-bourgeois ideology on the working class, in open contradiction to Marxist ideology, it is also necessary to mention the influence of petty-bourgeois ideology on Marxist-Leninist ideology itself, and particularly on the class organizations of the proletariat. Together with economism, this influence was one of the factors leading to the ‘left opportunism’ of the PCI during the rise of fascism in Italy; it also influenced *certain aspects* of KPD policy during the rise of fascism in Germany – though it must be clearly understood that the two cases are far from identical.

But left opportunism was a deviation *within Marxist-Leninist ideology itself*. It was evidence in particular of the influence of petty-bourgeois ideology on Marxist-Leninist ideology. It was precisely in this sense that Lenin described it

as an infantile disorder of *communism*, while the direct influence of petty-bourgeois ideology mentioned above, as spontaneism, anarchism, putschism, etc., *has nothing to do* with Marxist-Leninist ideology. In this sense, there is absolutely nothing 'ultra-left' about it, for left opportunism, strictly speaking, only occurs within Marxism-Leninism. The 'left opportunist' elements bore a very grave responsibility in – the advent of fascism: but it was a responsibility of a different order from that of the other expressions of petty-bourgeois ideology, which were directly used by the fascist parties.

The problem, however, does not end there. The Comintern, whose policies, as we shall see, were 'ultra-left' only in appearance,[5] taxed all those who opposed its policy of *de facto* resignation to fascism with 'ultra-leftism', and called them watchdogs of fascism. Trotsky may have borne the main brunt of this, but the German 'left opposition' and many others suffered it too. This is the origin of the very strong tradition that 'ultra-leftism was the precursor of fascism', which is so persistent in the labour movement. By the term 'ultra-leftism' the communist parties increasingly came to mean all opposition to a policy of resignation. No more need be said.

We should on the other hand recognize the quite striking phenomenon of definite and clear collusion between the 'spontaneist' elements, anarcho-syndicalists etc., including many of their leaders, and the fascist parties, which they often joined openly, forming their 'left' wing. Especially in Italy, but in Germany too, there was a large and significant number of cases. The large scale of the phenomenon shows that it was not simply a question of individual defections due to chance or straight opportunism.

III. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: CLASS NATURE AND FUNCTION, POLICY, AND THE THESIS OF 'SOCIAL FASCISM'

The rise of fascism characteristically saw the persistence and extension of the influence of social democracy on the working class, and a particular line of social democracy towards fascism.

This raises two problems:

(a) How to explain the persistence of social-democratic influence, with reference both to the *nature* and the *role* of social democracy, and to the specific conjuncture of the rise of fascism.

(b) How to define the objective responsibility of social-democratic policies in fascism's accession to power.

I shall first examine one of the Comintern's ideas about this, which was both profoundly mistaken, and disastrous in its practical application. I refer to the

theory of ‘social fascism’.

Firstly, the theory itself. It appeared in two forms, both implying a straight identification of social democracy with fascism. This theory, already expressed by the Fifth Congress (1924), attained its greatest influence after the Sixth Congress (1928), by which time it was fully developed.

(a) The first form amalgamates and fuses ‘social democracy’ and ‘fascism’. The resolutions of the Fifth Congress had already formulated this: ‘Fascism and social democracy are two sides of one and the same coin of the dictatorship of big capital. Social democracy is already transforming itself from the right wing of the labour movement into the left wing of the bourgeoisie and therefore of fascism’.[6] In 1924, Stalin affirmed that fascism was not simply a combat organization of the bourgeoisie, but a political phenomenon *relying on* social democracy.[7] This theory was elaborated after 1928, and especially at the Tenth Plenum in 1929, when the term ‘social fascism’ was officially used for the first time. Manuilsky, at the Sixth Congress, said: ‘Social democracy increasingly takes the initiative from the bourgeoisie in repressing the working class … It will become fascist. The transformation of social democracy into social fascism has already begun.’ Hans Neumann raised the issue still more sharply in 1930: ‘The question for the bourgeoisie is not fascism *or* social democracy, but fascism and social democracy *together*.’[8] And finally, the endlessly repeated quote from Stalin: ‘Fascism is the bourgeoisie’s fighting organization that relies on the active support of Social-Democracy. Social-Democracy is objectively the moderate wing of fascism…. These organizations do not negate, but supplement each other. They are not antipodes, they are twins. Fascism is an informal political bloc of these two chief organizations’ (*Works*, vol. 6, Moscow, 1952–5, p. 294).

(b) In its second form, the theory appears more subtle: it poses not a unification of fascism and social democracy, but an apparent *alternative*. The bourgeoisie would play *either* the fascist card *or* the social-democratic card.[9] But this form only seems more subtle than the other: in fact, there is *no periodization* of this alternative. On the contrary, it is emphasized that the alternative exists in the one conjuncture, the choice depending on quite secondary factors. The difference between the two cards is stressed as being minimal, the social-democratic card being ‘a little more legal’ than the fascist one, and we are straight back at the first form of the theory of social fascism.

I shall now simply elucidate the essential presuppositions of the theory. It is strictly governed by a number of positions such that it cannot be isolated from them, or be accepted without the positions indispensable to it being accepted too.

1. It is basic to the theory that it ignores the difference between the specific form of State and regime which is fascism, and other forms of the bourgeois State. Since fascism and the 'parliamentary-democratic State' are one and the same thing, the 'dictatorship of big capital', social democracy, in this second form of State, is identified with fascism. So it was no accident that the theory of social fascism was unfailingly accompanied by the identification of fascism with the other forms of bourgeois State. As Thälmann quite clearly said: 'There have appeared in our ranks tendencies to distinguish in a liberal fashion between fascism and bourgeois democracy, between Hitler's party and social fascism.'[10] Again, Manuilsky's report to the Eleventh Plenum in 1931: 'All too obvious mistakes are being made among us: it is said that bourgeois democracy and fascism, social democracy and Hitler's party, are antagonistic. These mistakes are extremely harmful, even fatal…,'[11]

The theory of social fascism, coupled with the identification of forms of State, led to some very revealing predictions. Not only would social democracy have nothing to fear from the victory of fascism; it would even share power with the Nazis, giving concrete form to the 'informal bloc' of national socialism and social democracy which fascist power would be. As Manuilsky said: 'The fact that the bourgeoisie will be obliged to repress the workers' movement by fascist methods does not mean that the hierarchy will not govern as before (that is with the participation or support of the social democracy). Fascism is not a new governmental method distinct from the system of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Anyone who thinks this is a liberal.'[12] Or to quote Thälmann again: 'If the Nazis should come into the government, there will be no question of the bourgeoisie renouncing the collaboration of social democracy in achieving the fascist dictatorship.'[13]

2. This theory is based on an inaccurate appreciation of the mass character of the fascist party itself, and of its specific political nature. Stalin's analysis of 1924 was remarkable on this score, both for its intuition and for its totally false conclusions. Having stated that fascism was not a mere weapon of the bourgeoisie but a mass political phenomenon, Stalin concluded that it was *based on* social democracy, i.e. that social democracy in some way formed its popular base, its mass base. A popular base peculiar to fascism was to him incomprehensible or unimaginable.

3. A mistake therefore arises concerning the nature and function of the fascist party, parallel to that about the nature and function of social democracy as the

‘weapon of the bourgeoisie’. This is wrong both about its mass base and class representation, and about its role for the bourgeoisie, the two phenomena being related.

As for the first error, about the nature and function of social democracy, the Comintern had from the beginning, but especially after its Fourth Congress, been unable to recognize the persistence of social democracy in the working class and the reasons for it. The Comintern continually expected social-democratic influence in the working class to be on the verge of disappearing. This of course stemmed from its misunderstanding of the conjunctural factors in this persistence during the rise of fascism, but not only from that. It also stemmed from the Comintern’s economistic perspective, which led it to underestimate the importance of political and ideological factors.

The underestimation appeared firstly in the Comintern’s particular interpretation of Lenin’s endlessly quoted theory about *the relation of social democracy to the ‘labour aristocracy’*. Social democracy gradually came to be seen as a largely ‘economic’ phenomenon. The only *real* popular basis of social democracy lay in the economic interests of the labour aristocracy stratum, created by the distribution by the imperialist bourgeoisies of the crumbs of their surplus profits. *Carried to its logical conclusion*, this meant that social democracy could have no real mass base, all the more so because ‘economist catastrophism’ led the Comintern to expect the imminent diminution of these surplus profits and therefore of the labour aristocracy itself.

As for its massive influence outside this stratum, while the Comintern did not neglect the phenomenon, it treated it lightly, as representing ‘social-democratic illusions’ in the working class. It is important to note that this term hides the Comintern’s complete underestimation of the weight of ideological factors. In fact, the Comintern expected the imminent dissolution of all these social-democratic illusions by the demonstrative effect of the ‘facts’ themselves, which would be seen in a moment of blinding truth with the advancing rise of fascism. Remarks like ‘The workers themselves are becoming more and more aware’ were abundant, and were still passed around after fascism came to power, an event which was supposed to ‘awaken’ the workers from their social-democratic illusions.

Social democracy, except sometimes in revolutionary periods, has in principle a permanent mass basis in a capitalist formation, although this is subject to very important fluctuations. This is mainly due to the influence of bourgeois ideology on the working class, but also of petty-bourgeois ideology. The bourgeoisie being unable to rule through organized physical repression alone, and ideology

not existing only in ideas, *the bourgeois State has at its disposal in all circumstances one or more ideological state apparatuses specially designed to inculcate bourgeois ideology into the working class*. A party of the social-democratic type (the problem of trade unions will be discussed further on) constitutes such an apparatus in the 'normal' forms of the bourgeois State.

A party of the social-democratic type: according to Lenin's definition in 1921, that would be a 'workers' party' carrying out the *policy of the bourgeoisie*, a 'social traitor' within the working class. The class base, a fairly large part of its members and activists, and the lower ranks of the party machine are generally of working-class origin. This distinguishes it from *bourgeois parties with a working-class clientele*, such as the Popular (Catholic) Party in Italy and the Catholic Centre in Germany at this time. Moreover, social democracy cannot simply be identified with particular parties; if a party no longer fulfils this role (if it is discredited), another will necessarily take its place.[14]

The social-democratic party fulfils its role as an apparatus within the 'normal' forms of bourgeois State: i.e. within forms of State corresponding to a determinate policy of the bourgeoisie towards the working class, running from 'class collaboration', where this party openly supports or participates in the government, to the point at which the policy of the bourgeoisie demands that the working class be crushed.

From another aspect, as this is a mass party within the working class, *the struggle of the working class is necessarily channelled through it and affects it in a specific way*, partly by means of other organizations depending on it (the trade unions) or on which it itself sometimes depends. The party, at the risk of losing the institutional function which is necessary to its survival, must maintain its representative base. It is bound to a certain policy of compromise with the working class, a policy which is, in the last analysis, that which the bourgeoisie can allow within the normal State forms and its own determinate policy. Moreover, major cleavages within such a party cannot be avoided, among the different ranks, the leaders and the bureaucracy of officials, the lower strata nearer to the masses, and the militants.

In other words, a party of the social-democratic type cannot be used by the bourgeoisie anyhow and anywhere, as a mere 'tool' for universal use: its social function as an institution is quite specific.

Fascism also constitutes a particular form of State and regime, corresponding to a determinate policy of the bourgeoisie. As such, it amounts to a reorganization of all the State apparatuses, including the ideological State apparatuses. In this reorganization, a party of the social-democratic type not only

has no place, it must even be completely destroyed – as in fact happened – precisely because of its mass base in the working class, and because class struggle is channelled through it. The policy of the bourgeoisie from now on is to annihilate the working class.

This does not mean that massive organized physical repression of the working class, which a social-democratic type of party could not carry out, is sufficient to achieve the domination of the bourgeoisie. Other apparatuses have in some way to take over its role. Among them are the fascist organizations, whose mass base and organizational structure are in fact 'external' to the working class (petty-bourgeois), and whose ideological role is quite different from that of a social-democratic type of party.[15]

Finally, still in this specific context, the theory of social fascism also had the following connotation for the Comintern, in the period before national socialism came to power: German – and also Austrian – social democracy was at this time a highly centralized, disciplined and bureaucratized party, which successfully blocked the development of the labour movement, its economic and political demands. So, by stifling socialist democracy and socialist aspirations, it exercised a 'fascist' type repression of the mass of the working class, using fascist 'methods' and 'practices'.

There can be no question about the role of social democracy, which is precisely to mislead the masses and hold back the revolution. But it is evident that it did not and cannot fulfil this function in the same way as the fascist party, which is the only strict point of reference for an examination of the theory of social fascism. In fact 'practices' or 'methods' do not exist in a void, but in relation to the apparatuses which support them: their nature is governed by that of the apparatus. Social democracy and fascism do not fulfil this role in the same way, either in the repression of the working class (in the strong sense), or as far as ideological or organizational forms are concerned.

Taking all these considerations into account, then not only do social democracy and the fascist party not 'supplement each other', in Stalin's terms: they negate each other'. *It is absolutely impossible for them to occupy the same place in the same form of State*.

4. Considered now from the point of view of the strategy of the bourgeoisie, which at a given moment in time would play either the social-democratic card or the fascist card, or even both at once, the theory of social fascism is based on a significant mistake about the rise of fascism and its periodization into steps and turns, depending on the real relation of forces in the class struggle. It is really no

accident that this conception of social fascism, and the identification of the 'parliamentary-democratic' form of State with the fascist State, was accompanied by a linear conception of the 'organic process' which entirely ignored the problem of the political crisis and the rise of fascism.

What in fact happens is that the bourgeoisie plays the card of 'class collaboration', to put it that way, *at the end of the period of stabilization and the beginning of the rise of fascism*. This card can be played either with social democracy in power (the German case), or via bourgeois political parties without the direct collaboration of social democracy. In other words, the move coincides with the turning point in the process of working-class defeat, and with the upturn of the bourgeoisie's offensive.

But such a policy is a failure in these circumstances. It does not allow the bourgeoisie to annul the political and economic gains of the working class, still less to carry the exploitation of the masses a decisive degree further. From this point, and throughout the rise of fascism, only the political representatives of medium capital try to do things in this way. And it is an important fact that these politicians were increasingly isolated both from big capital and from their own class fractions. Big capital for its part no longer toys with 'class collaboration' on the side, supposing it had ever done so, but turns decisively to the fascist solution. This is clear, so long as one is not blinded by events on the political scene, and takes into account what lies behind them and the split between representatives and those they represent.

Can a general conclusion about the rise of fascism be drawrn from this process, a widely relevant conclusion such as 'fascism *follows* social democracy'? I think this is going too far: it stems from the concept of fascism as the 'last card of the bourgeoisie', i.e. a confession of weakness by the bourgeoisie, and prolongs the illusion of an 'organic' continuity between social democracy and fascism. In fact, it is far from certain that big capital has ever been won to the social-democratic line of class collaboration. This is rather a solution imposed on big capital by medium capital, and dictated more by the relation of forces between them than between big capital and the working class. Moreover, the turning point in the rise of fascism sees the hastening of working-class defeat and brings big capital openly onto the offensive. In these circumstances, social democracy does not seem to offer the means necessary for big capital to carry out its policy.

What were Trotsky's ideas on this, as he was one of the strongest opponents of the theory of 'social fascism'?[16] 'In connection with the question of the "era", a polemic arose over Fascism, no less distorted and unscrupulous. The

Opposition maintained that the bourgeoisie advances its Fascist shoulder only at the moment when an immediate revolutionary danger threatens the foundations of its regime … In this sense active Fascism signifies a state of civil war on the part of capitalist society waged against the rebelling proletariat. Contrariwise, the bourgeoisie is forced to advance its Left, the social democratic shoulder, either in a period that precedes that of the civil war, so as to deceive, lull, and demoralize the proletariat, or in a period following upon a serious and lasting victory over the proletariat, i.e. when it is forced to lay hold of the broad masses of the people parliamentarily, among them also the workers disappointed by the revolution, in order to re-establish the normal regime. In opposition to this analysis, which is absolutely irrefutable theoretically and which was confirmed by the entire course of the struggle, the leadership of the Comintern set up the senseless and over-simplified contention of the *identity* of the social democracy with Fascism. Proceeding from the incontestable fact that the social democracy is no less servile towards the foundations of bourgeois society than Fascism and is always ready to volunteer its Noske at the moment of danger, the leadership of the Comintern entirely expunged the political difference between the social democracy and Fascism, and together with that also the difference between a period of open civil war and the period of the "normalization" of the class struggle.'

In fact, despite his correct criticisms of the Comintern, this analysis of Trotsky's, wrongly identifying fascism as the response to a revolutionary movement and to a declared civil war, also ends up with the conclusion of social democracy *first* (the period after the defeat of the proletariat, normalization') and fascism *afterwards* (in the period of revolutionary upsurge following the period of defeat). If the start of the rise of fascism coincides with the turning point in the defeat of the working class, it must not be forgotten that the proletariat, contrary to what Trotsky thought, does not rise again after this defeat: the bourgeoisie is now engaged in a permanent offensive. The defeat produces neither a situation in which big capital means to make the broad masses participate in the normalization' of the regime, nor a situation which would lead it to civil war against the uprisen proletariat.

The precise nature of the rise of fascism clearly demonstrates that social democracy, employed by big capital in the preceding periods, is not or is no longer an adequate instrument for carrying out its policies, even though social democracy in Germany and Italy was itself contributing to 'class collaborationism' during the rise of fascism. Its use *in these circumstances* relates mainly to the forms assumed by the contradictions between big and

medium capital.[17]

All this does not of course mean that social-democratic policy towards fascism is free of grave responsibility for its success. It bears all the more responsibility, in that its mass influence was considerable. Apart from the factors already pointed out, this is because the workers' movement was on the defensive, and this as always signalled an upturn for social democracy. The capitulation of social democracy is typical of a party of class collaboration, although there was not strictly speaking any direct collusion between social democracy and fascism.

IV. THE COMMUNIST PARTIES AND THEIR POLICY: THE TURNS OF THE COMINTERN AND THE STRATEGY OF ALLIANCES

The rise of fascism and its accession to power correspond to an incorrect strategy of the PCI in the one case and the Comintern and the KPD in the other.

The essential point to be discussed here is the struggle against fascism, the key to which lies in the *strategy of alliances*. There is too much of a tendency to identify the line and practice of the PCI with those of the KPD, under the general heading of 'ultra-leftism'. It is true that there are resemblances, but the two cases nonetheless differ: for one thing, because a different Comintern position is involved in each case. In particular, the line of the PCI was at the time contrary to the official line of the Comintern, and openly combatted by it, while that of the KPD was a strict application of it. Moreover, the 'ultra-leftism' of the PCI was something quite different from the reputedly 'ultra-left' line of the Comintern in the case of national socialism.

There is often, too, a tendency to study the line of these parties in the abstract, without seeing its relation to a completely mistaken conception of the steps and turns of the struggle. It was bound up with a wrong appreciation both of the nature of the period of fascism, and of the nature of the step within which the line of alliance strategy was being applied.

To take the Italian case first. The Comintern, at its Third Congress, recognized a period of 'stabilization' of class struggle, and launched the slogan, 'To the masses'; six months later, in December 1921, its executive adopted the theses on the *united front*, in pursuit of this watchword. These theses, ratified by the First Plenum (February-March 1922) and the Fourth Congress under the title 'Theses on the unity of the proletarian front', were added in abbreviated form to the Fourth Congress resolutions. It should furthermore be noted that these theses were elaborated *under Lenin's direction*. The Comintern recognized (i) a turn in the class struggle, (ii) its own sectarian errors during the previous period and (iii)

the persistence of social-democratic influence in spite of the split. It now turned its efforts to the formation of a proletarian united front. A 'rank and file' united front, of course, implying the independence and autonomy of the communist parties within this front, and the participation of communists primarily in the rank and file organizations of the working class; but also implying a certain policy towards the social-democratic party, derived from a particular understanding of it.

'The united front tactic means that the communist vanguard must take the lead in the day-to-day struggles of the broad working masses for their most vital interests. In these struggles the communists are even ready to negotiate with the treacherous social democrat and Amsterdam leaders … The existence of independent communist parties and their complete freedom of action in regard to the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary social democracy is the most significant historical achievement of the proletariat, which the communists will in no circumstances whatever renounce … Nor does the united front tactic mean so-called upper-level "electoral alliances" which pursue some parliamentary purpose or other. The united front tactic is the offer of a joint struggle of communists with all workers who belong to other parties or groups, and with all non-party workers … Its true realization can come only "from below", from the depths of the working masses themselves. Communists, however, must not refuse in certain circumstances to negotiate with the leaders of the hostile workers' parties, but the masses must be kept fully and constantly informed of the course of these negotiations …'[18]

The theses on the united front flowed directly from the Leninist slogan, 'To the masses'; but with the Fourth Congress and Comintern policy in the period straight after it, there was a change to the slogan of workers' governments (*Arbeiterregierungen*), or governments of alliance between communists and social democrats, with definite objectives: 'Such a workers' government is only possible if it is born out of the struggle of the masses, is supported by workers' bodies which are capable of fighting … The overriding tasks of the workers' government must be to arm the proletariat, to disarm bourgeois, counter-revolutionary organizations … Even a workers' government which is created by the turn of events in parliament, which is therefore purely parliamentary in origin, *may* provide the occasion for invigorating the revolutionary labour movement. It is obvious that the formation of a real workers' government which pursues a revolutionary policy, must lead to a bitter struggle, and eventually to a civil war with the bourgeoisie.'[19]

We know what to think of this, and Dimitrov attempted to specify it. Still we

should restrict ourselves here mainly to the first theses on the united front, which were in fact directly relevant to the policy of the PCI.

I shall not discuss Comintern developments between the Fourth Congress (1922–3) and the Sixth Congress (1928), as this period is of no direct interest for the rise of fascism. I would simply note that it is characterized by a great *confusion* on the question of alliances, and that this stems from the Comintern's alternating definitions of steps.

The Fifth Congress made an 'ultra-left' turn, neglecting 'stabilization' and changing the position on workers' governments. While the Fourth Congress had seen these as a 'step' towards the dictatorship of the proletariat through revolution, the Fifth Congress – the Congress of 'Bolshevization' – identified them with the dictatorship of the proletariat, implying that they could not come as a particular step before revolution. This amounted in practice to a rejection of the theory of workers' governments. The theses on the united front remained intact in appearance, but (at the same time as the theory of social fascism first appeared) it was specified that the united front was 'nothing more than a revolutionary method of agitation and mass mobilization', and that 'its main objective lay in the struggle against the leaders of counter-revolutionary social democracy'.

The Fifth Plenum (1925), accepting stabilization, took up once again the policy of contact at the highest levels, and the Comintern carried on an intense struggle against the left party leaders who had attended the Fifth Congress.

With the Comintern's Sixth Congress (1928), the decisive turn took place.[20] Even though in Germany the defensive step of the workers' movement had just begun, with the start of the rise of fascism, the end of 'stabilization' was defined, in 'economist catastrophist' terms, as a step of proletarian offensive and imminent revolution: the 'offensive strategy' was openly proclaimed. The theory of social fascism was put forward, and in the strategy of alliances a turn was made to 'class against class' and the 'rank and file united front'.

The Third Congress had also spoken of a rank and file united front, but the difference here lay in the concrete policies of the Comintern and the KPD towards social democracy and the masses supporting the social-democratic organizations: 'There can clearly be no unity with the social fascists.'[21] 'The social fascists know that for us no collaboration is possible … No communist shares the illusion that fascism can be fought with the aid of social fascism'.[22] This line was by no means applied only to the leaders of the socialist party:

‘Hunt the social fascists from their posts in the factories and the unions’; ‘Hunt the little social fascists from the factories, the employment exchanges, the apprentices’ schools’; ‘Strike at the social fascists in the schools and the recreation grounds’.[23] The ‘left’ wing of social democracy was moreover considered the most dangerous enemy: ‘The new rising tide of the revolutionary labour movement … urgently confronts the Comintern and the sections with special acuteness with the task of decisively intensifying the struggle against social democracy, and especially against its ‘left’ wing as the most dangerous enemy of communism in the labour movement and the main obstacle to the growth of militant activities of the mass of workers.’[24] As for the social-democratic masses, Thälmann has a revealing way of putting it: ‘As long as they are not delivered from the influence of the social fascists, these millions of workers (of the German Social-Democratic Party and its associated trade unions) *are lost to the anti-fascist struggle.’*[25]

This strategy was accompanied by the concept of the *main enemy* being not fascism but social democracy, the defeat of which was the *precondition*, even chronologically, of a victory over fascism: ‘Because the national socialists have been able to make important electoral gains, some comrades underestimate the importance of our struggle against social fascism … This undoubtedly expresses a deviation from our political line, which is that our duty is to deal the main blow to the SPD… *All the strength of the party must be thrown into the struggle against social democracy.’*[26] ‘But the most important problem in our struggle against national socialism … is that of the correct revolutionary strategy to carry out the decisions of the Ninth Plenum and to strike hardest at social democracy … as a precondition for victory over Hitler’s fascism.’[27]

Finally, with the blinkers up against the fascist danger, Thälmann, in his closing speech to the Twelfth Plenum (September 1932): ‘In the present stage of the advance of fascism, every weakening of our struggle against social democracy becomes … a grave mistake.’

This orientation led to disastrous results. But it would be quite wrong to think that behind this radical terminology, the KPD was carrying out an intransigent, if sectarian, struggle against fascism, and for the revolution. Not that it failed to carry out the implacable struggle it advocated against social democracy: *the problem was that it did nothing but that*.

In fact, something very important gradually happened to the Comintern during this very period, something identifiable precisely in the case of Germany, which acted as the ‘test’ case for Comintern strategy. Even the distinctive

features of the ‘left-right’ turns then began to be confused, in the sense that certain elements which were to be very much in evidence at the Seventh Congress (the Dimitrov one), were already developing in the period 1928–35. In other words, the relationship of the Sixth and Seventh Congresses was quite different from the classic, simple ‘swing’ from left opportunism to right opportunism, and rather one of *two* diametrically opposed expressions of the same wrong general line: a model which *to a certain extent* even held for the Comintern in the period before the Sixth Congress.

In fact, after 1928, this model is no longer adequate: the same general line was increasingly affirmed, despite appearances, *by its identical concrete effects*. Though they were attenuated with and after Dimitrov, they were clearly at work in the so-called ‘ultra-left’ period. In particular, the radical words of the KPD were matched only by its triumphant faith, at the same period, in the parliamentary electoral struggle, and by its strong social chauvinism – leaving aside the question of the ‘defence of the USSR’. A striking indication of this is that its ‘ultra-leftism’ was quite different from that of the Italian party during the rise of fascism in Italy, or from its own ‘leftism’ in the period 1920–2.

The change is such that, after 1928, one can no longer periodize Comintern development by the same yardstick. This does not however mean, as one might be tempted to think, that the Seventh Congress (1935), pointers to which had appeared in 1934, was not an *important moment* for the Comintern. To be still more specific: 1935 was not a ‘turn’ in the same sense as those before 1928: firstly, because 1935 was not a *‘volte face’*, strictly speaking, in relation to 1928 – it was not really the *other side* of a single coin. Nor, on the other hand, can 1935 be seen as the *mere continuation* of 1928, the changing features of the same façade giving concrete expression to the constantly developing general line of the Comintern. If the latter is somewhat nearer the truth, it is still far from accurate, and this was important.[28]

Firstly, on the question of alliances, the line of the Seventh Congress had two sides to it, the *proletarian united front*, and the *anti-fascist popular front*.

The first corrected some ‘errors’ of the preceding period, and seemed basically to be a return to the 1921–2 theses of the united front:[29] ‘Communists, of course, cannot and must not for a moment abandon their own *independent* work of education, organization and mobilization of the masses. However, to ensure that the workers find the road of unity of action, it is necessary to strive at the same time both for short-term and for long-term agreements that provide for joint action with social democratic parties, reformist trade unions and other

organizations of the working people against the class enemies of the proletariat … The struggle for the establishment of a united front raises another very important problem, the problem of a united front in countries with Social Democratic governments, or coalition governments in which Socialists participate.… Our attitude of absolute opposition to Social Democratic governments, which are governments of compromise with the bourgeoisie, is well known. But this notwithstanding we do not regard the existence of a Social Democratic government or of a government coalition with bourgeois parties as an insurmountable obstacle to establishing a united front with the Social Democrats on certain issues. We believe that in such a case too a united front in defence of the vital interests of the working people and in the struggle against fascism is quite possible and necessary.'[30]

This policy towards the social-democratic parties and organizations was anyway not enough: 'The pact is an auxiliary means for obtaining joint action, but by itself it does not constitute a united front … The Communists and all revolutionary workers must strive for the formation of elected non-party class bodies of the united front, at the factories, among the unemployed, in the working class districts, among the small towns folk and in the villages …'[31]

So much for the proletarian united front. Let us now come to the *antifascist popular front*, an idea directly related to the recognition of the fascist danger, Dimitrov having tacitly admitted that the rise of fascism corresponded to a defensive step for the workers' movement. I will quote the whole of the key passage dealing with it: 'In mobilizing the mass of working people for the struggle against fascism, the formation of a wide antifascist front is a particularly important task. The success of the whole struggle of the proletariat is closely bound up with the establishment of a fighting alliance between the proletariat, on the one hand, and the labouring peasantry and basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie … In forming an anti-fascist Popular Front, a correct approach to those organizations and parties whose membership comprises a considerable number of the working peasantry and the mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie is of great importance. In the capitalist countries the majority of these parties and organizations, political as well as economic, are still under the influence of the bourgeoisie and follow it. The social composition of these parties and organizations is heterogeneous. They include rich peasants side by side with landless peasants, big business men alongside petty shopkeepers; but control is in the hands of the former, the agents of big capital. This obliges us to approach the different organizations in different ways, remembering that often the bulk of the membership ignores the real political character of its leadership. Under

certain conditions we can and must try to draw these parties and organizations or certain sections of them to the side of this anti-fascist Popular Front, despite the bourgeois leadership. Such, for instance, is today the situation in France with the Radical Party…,'[32]

Finally, this Congress advised communists to participate – under certain conditions – in governments struggling against fascism.

Now these positions constitute an important step for the Comintern, although it is still necessary to distinguish what Dimitrov said at the time from the practical application of these directives and their later evolution. The important points in the theses themselves are as follows:[33]

(a) Dimitrov's definition of the *class basis* of fascism is decisively restricted, so opening the way to the broadest anti-fascist alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie.

(b) Although Dimitrov says that the 'popular front' must be founded 'on the basis' of the united front, he attributes much more importance to the popular front, which for him seems to *govern* the proletarian united front.

(c) Dimitrov accords small importance to the communists' own mass work among the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie: although communists must carry out their own work among the social-democratic masses of the workers, it seems as if the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie must *firstly and mainly* be drawn in through their 'own parties', which if they did not exist, would have to be invented.

(d) Official and pronounced emphasis is laid on the national' side of communist policy.

There is no more to be said here. We do know that in 'revised' and 'corrected' form these theses still govern the policy of frontist electoral alliances held by various communist parties today. They were of course still some way from this: it would be wrong to equate Dimitrov with the present-day parties. But the way was already wide open.

V. THE FASCIST ORGANIZATION, FASCISM AND THE WORKING CLASS; THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS UNDER FASCISM

The final problem is about the actual relationship of fascism to the working class. In this respect, the role of the fascist party and of fascism in power is a double one: organized physical repression and an ideological function. The complex policies of fascism towards the working class ensure its co-ordination.

As far as physical repression is concerned, it is well enough known, and there

is not much to say about it, except perhaps that while in the case of the ‘free corps’ and the ‘white guards’ this repression takes a quite naked form, when fascism organizes itself into a mass political movement, repression is always governed by its ideological function. This function, moreover, never ends, even after fascism comes into power: it has the same aims as the repression, but operates through the petty-bourgeois ‘anti-capitalism’ of fascist ideology. But it only really becomes effective in the working class by taking up certain authentically ‘proletarian’ themes – this being particularly the case for the left wing of fascism. Throughout the rise of fascism, this working-class side of fascist ideology is very strong (this did not escape Comintern analyses). Vigorously persistent during the first period of fascism in power, it declines during the period of its stabilization, while the really ‘petty-bourgeois’ aspect comes to the fore in the form of *corporatist ideology*.

Even here, things are more complicated than they seem. In effect, the corporatist ideology of fascism in power seems to present several aspects:

(a) Authentic residues of *feudal ideology*, of a mystical ‘community’ of personal ties hiding class exploitation and oppression, an aspect strongest in rural fascism.

(b) The aspect analysed by Marx and Engels, originating in the ‘illusions’ aroused by the conditions of life of small producers in the manufacturing period. These were Fourierist illusions of the period of guilds and fraternities, and they constitute one of the typical forms of petty bourgeois ideology, its nostalgia for a mythical past in the face of the threat of proletarianization: an aspect which fascism used amongst the petty bourgeoisie, and also amongst the working class.

(c) The *reformist, class collaborationist* aspect, that of regulated agreement between the representatives of ‘equal partners’ within the institutions of an ‘arbitrating State’, an aspect entirely lacking in fascist corporatist ideology.

(d) Further: corporatist ideology can in given circumstances express otherwise authentic ‘proletarian aspirations’ in an oblique way. Under the illusion of the ‘factory’ as an economic unit sealed off from the world of political authority, this corporatism expresses the aspiration for a conquest of power and an elimination of authority, property and leadership. Corporatism here takes the meaning of restricting power and authority by workers’ control within an organization in which the mass of the workers can impose their will on the employers. This conception is directly related to the revolutionary syndicalist tradition: Proudhon, with his seal of approval for Napoleon III’s ‘corporatist’ projects, is an illustrious precedent. This particular corporatist aspect is constantly present in the ideology of ‘left-wing’ fascism, while the fascist and

national socialist *leaders* are extremely cautious in the use of this double-edged weapon, the ‘ouvrierist’ use of corporatist themes.

The ideological role of fascism leads to a specific policy towards the working class. During the rise of fascism, the fascist organizations do not simply appear to be mere ‘yellow’ organizations, repressive gangs and strike-breakers. While carrying out systematic attacks against working-class organizations, mainly the political organizations, and breaking ‘political’ strikes, fascism might simultaneously take part in working-class struggles. It supports, and even sometimes organizes, bitter strikes for certain economic demands.

There is no doubt that this is mainly a tactic governed by fascism’s ideological role. But this tactic also stems, to a certain extent, from the popular support fascism has obtained. It cannot be said that fascism has ever gained a real mass base in the working class, but it has nevertheless succeeded in getting a foothold in it: the Comintern always recognized this.

Fascism in power completely neutralizes the working class, in part by organized physical repression, but at the same time by means of a complete reorganization of the ideological state apparatuses; this will be analysed together with the ‘fascist State’. The result, sought and achieved, is a considerable increase in the exploitation of the working class, exercised in a variety of ways.

Again, we must go further, for ideological factors alone are not enough to explain this neutralization of the working class. Firstly, it must not be forgotten that fascism effectively succeeded in reabsorbing unemployment : an element which undeniably played a part in this neutralization. Then, the working class was only *one* of the victims of fascist economic exploitation, not even, as a whole, the *main* victim. In economic exploitation, the poor peasantry in the countryside and even the petty bourgeoisie and non-productive employees (clerks, etc.) suffered more, in relation to the previous period. At the same time, the rise in the exploitation of the working class was mainly *relative* to the growth of profits: it was not *absolute*.

Finally, this policy of increased exploitation of the working class was carried out, not without many hesitations on the part of big capital, by a calculated plan of stages and divisions. This was clearly the case for the first period of fascism in power, the period of ‘economic compromises’ imposed on big capital during the period of the destruction of working-class organizations. This policy was pursued mainly by the systematic creation of ‘privileged categories’ of workers over and above the mass of the working class.

2

Germany

I. THE PROCESS OF DEFEAT, THE DEFENSIVE AND THE POLITICO-IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS

In Germany, the process followed particular steps and turns which I shall only touch on.[1]

1918-19. Failure of the German revolution and defeat of the Spartakist militants. But given the nature of the confrontation, which did not take the form of a general civil war, the revolutionary forces were not eliminated, and the working class was far from crushed. The only exception was Bavaria, where after the defeat of the only openly proclaimed 'Soviet Republic' (May 1919), executions numbered hundreds, and the counter-revolution firmly took command.

March 1920. The Kapp Putsch. The working class and the masses succeeded in defeating this by mobilizing in a general strike called by a united committee of the independent socialists (USPD) and the social-democratic left, joined by the KPD (Spartakusbund).[2] But considering the conditions in which the putsch ended, this can be seen as a relative failure of the working class: in effect, no use was made of its victory. With the promotion of von Seekt, who had refused Reichswehr support to pre-empt and fight the putsch, a general amnesty rapidly voted for the rebels, and the refusal to reorganize the army, the great victor of the situation was in fact the Reichswehr. The strike committee, under the leadership of the socialist Legien, tried to form a workers' government. But it only succeeded in getting Noske thrown out. After all this came the rising of the Ruhr workers, rapidly crushed by the Reichswehr. There was a split of the ultra-left elements from the Spartakusbund, creating the German Communist Workers' Party (KAPD). In December 1920, the Spartakists and the USPD fused. *The*

KPD became a mass party, its membership rising from 80,000 to 350,000.

1921. A series of ‘putschist’ attempts in Prussia by the KPD, probably falling for police provocations. There was an armed rising at Mansfeld under the leadership of Max Hölz. The insurgents succumbed at the end of a week of heroic struggles. The call for open insurrection from the central committee of the KPD on 16 March, and the call for an insurrectional general strike published in *Die Rote Fahne* on 28 March, were not followed. This was a debacle for the KPD. In a long letter of 14 August 1921, addressed to the German communists, Lenin wrote that ‘hatred of the opportunists of social democracy pushed the German workers into premature insurrections’.[3] After this failure, KPD membership fell from 350,000 to 180,000. The Comintern, at its Third Congress, passed a severe judgment on this ‘putschism’.

1923. *The great turn*. The Fourth Congress of the Comintern had already taken place (1922-3); it had interpreted ‘stabilization’ economistically, identifying it with a ‘defensive’ for the working class, and launched the slogan of ‘workers’ governments’. Based on this slogan, the KPD, which had never attempted in the meantime to build the rank and file united front, made a *volte-face* towards a right-wing policy under Brandler and Thalheimer; it somehow missed out the united front and went straight into parliamentary alliances between the leaderships. At the KPD’s Leipzig Congress in January 1923, the questions of mass action and the alliance between the working class and poor peasantry were neglected, while ‘workers’ governments’ were formed with the social democrats in Saxony and Thuringia. Radek, who did see the need for an alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, advocated making it by exploiting its ‘nationalism’ and by pacts with the extreme right-wing tendency of ‘national bolshevism’, culminating in the famous *Schlageter line*. (In defence of Leo Schlageter, a Nazi shot by the French for attempting to sabotage a railway in the French-occupied zone).[4]

In July 1923, with inflation, the failure of passive resistance in the Ruhr, reactionary government policy (Cuno), etc., there was a situation of open crisis. The influence of the KPD in the working class increased relative to that of social democracy.

Was it an objectively revolutionary situation? Opinions are divided. For Rosenberg,[5] the situation was similar to that of the spring and summer of 1923, but conditions changed later. The passive resistance campaign in the Ruhr had already ended by the autumn, with the French bourgeoisie flying to the aid of its German sister, and authorizing the intervention of the German policy. Stresemann’s work of financial adjustment had already begun. Radek, the

Comintern delegate in Germany, agreed with Rosenberg: ‘We have let pass the most favourable historical situation there has ever been.’ For Trotsky, there was a revolutionary situation throughout the period from July to November. For Thälmann and Stalin, the revolutionary situation was created only in the autumn of 1923. For Badia[6] and E. H. Carr,[7] who reject Thälmann’s and Stalin’s arguments over the difference in the situation early and later in the year, there was at no point in the year an objectively revolutionary situation. In any case, there was open crisis: it contained certain objective possibilities for mass action and working-class victories, even if these had fallen short of the direct seizure of power.

The KPD, dragging the German working class with it, capitulated without offering battle. The communists of the Ruhr, a left tendency, went into combat in isolation in April. A week later they were crushed by the German police, supported by the French occupation forces, and were disavowed by the Central Committee. Insurrection was then decided on by the Comintern and the majority of the Russian politburo for October 1923. But in the absence of mass work and of the organization of a united front, the preparation of the insurrection ‘from above’ by Brandler and the Comintern at Chemnitz (21 October), with ‘trade union delegates’, foundered on the hesitation of the latter. There was an about turn by the leadership, and an absence of liaison with Hamburg: there under Thälmann, on the night of 21-2 October, the KPD declared a general strike and launched the insurrection. The central leadership of the party did not issue the call for the general strike, and even washed its hands of the Hamburg militants, who were soon defeated. The reversal by the leadership consisted not in that it changed the forms and aims of the struggle, but in that it fell back into the immobility of 1922-3. It was a very serious setback for the KPD : repression clamped down, the party was banned and discredited among the working class, which came out of the experience defeated.

This defeat heralded in a decisive fashion the step of stabilization: not yet the defensive as such, for again because of the nature of the confrontation, the working class was conserving its strength; moreover, the ban on the KPD and the state of emergency were lifted in 1924. The revolution had missed its chance for a long time, but for all that, fascism had not yet found its moment. This would not be long delayed.

There were a series of setbacks, relative to the objective possibilities, but they were accompanied by some real political and economic gains by the working class and the masses. Firstly, the Weimar Constitution, though it contained

changes signalling the advent of the interventionist State of monopoly capitalism, was based on the extension of universal suffrage to both sexes, and on direct and proportional election. This made room for the presence of small parties in parliament, and the direct expression of the masses there. The eight-hour day was introduced; collective bargaining was instituted, and unemployment insurance set up. Factory committees, even if they no longer bore any relation to the workers' councils of 1918-19, being scarcely mentioned in the Constitution and limited mainly to 'social work', could nevertheless inspect the books of the factory and participate in trade-union development. Agricultural workers obtained the right of association and flocked into the unions *en masse*.

These gains by the working class, surviving after a fashion through the period of stabilization, were constantly undermined during the rise of fascism. But they were far from being wiped out.[8] In fact, the factors previously mentioned must not be forgotten here. Throughout this process, it was the representatives of medium capital who presided on the political scene, and because of their contradictions with big capital, they followed the policy of 'class collaboration'. Even Brüning, governing by decree, was supported by the trade unions and made concessions to them, and this was the case with Schleicher too. These were concessions in the sense that the government did not go far enough for big capital in undermining previous gains. This policy was also based on the open or tacit collaboration of social democracy, and because of the nature and function of the latter, the gains could not just be wiped out.

Finally, it is as well not to underestimate the importance of the *form of State* of the Weimar republic. As Rosenberg pointed out: 'In a country like Germany, in which three-quarters of the electorate belong to the labouring classes, a bourgeois parliamentary majority is possible only when the bourgeois parties assume populist aspects and make concessions to the masses. If the government had tried to carry out an *extremist* capitalist policy in the Reichstag, with the means of legal democracy, it would not only have had the opposition of the communists and social democrats to reckon with: many representatives of bourgeois parties would have hesitated to go back to the voters and defend an extremist policy. Dictatorship was necessary in Germany, at least as much because of the left national socialists and the Christian workers, as because of the socialists and communists.'[9] The more so, in that big capital needed not simply to win back the gains, but to exploit the masses still further, and to establish its hegemony over medium capital.

What was happening meanwhile in the working class? During the period of

stabilization, the working class was progressively demobilized. Social democracy and the social-democratic trade unions bowed more and more to the policies of the bourgeoisie: *decisively so*, once the rise of fascism had begun.

This point was also the start of growing working-class disaffection from the political struggle, and a retreat to the struggle for economic demands, which had its own effect on the economic struggle itself. Trade-union strength collapsed after the setback of 1923. The start of the rise of fascism, in 1927-8, coincided with the lowest point in their membership, and the 1929 crisis did little to change this.[10] This decline in trade unionism was not associated with any resurgence of political struggle: there was rather a demobilization of the working class. Moreover, during the rise of fascism, the red trade unions did not manage to reach a mass audience, and even shared in the decline. From 1927, the number of working days lost through lockouts was greater than those lost through strikes, with the sole exception of 1930.

The important thing, however, was that the economic aspect prevailed in these struggles. In fact the only strikes now were *defensive, isolated and sporadic*, almost exclusively for wage demands. For example: in 1928 in a metal workers' strike in the Halle region, the communists tried to link the question of a pay rise to that of restriction of the working day (to eight hours). The attempt failed: the workers demanded a rise of 15 pfennig, and the government arbitrator awarded them 3 pfennig. There was a lock-out: a new arbitration by Braun awarded 5 pfennig, and there was a return to work.[11] At the same time, the working class placed more and more confidence in 'legal forms' of struggle, such as government arbitration. In 1930, although it was a year of open crisis, the only notable big strikes, initiated by the RGO (the communist 'revolutionary trade-union opposition') in the Mansfeld region, and in the metallurgical industries of the Rhine and Berlin, were *solely against wage cuts* (though 130,000 workers were on strike for two weeks). It was as if the RGO itself, at the instigation of the KPD, was trying to by-pass the passivity of the social-democratic trade-union leaderships simply by bidding higher on the wages front alone. Finally, a last series of defensive strikes took place against von Papen's wages policy between September and October 1932.

Now, Thälmann, in his report to the Twelfth Congress of the KPD at Wedding, considered all these strikes to be of an offensive nature: 'Although the struggles are still being contained, they are increasingly moving towards a break.' Sémard, the Comintern delegate, speaking at the same Congress, was more circumspect: 'Although these strikes are due to the capitalist offensive, they are beginning to take the form of a counter-offensive'.[12]

The dominant aspect of economic struggle was often disguised by ‘forms of action’ inherited from the recent past: for example, violent street demonstrations and ‘hunger marches’ which were savagely repressed by the police, ‘jacquerie’ type movements among the small peasantry, bomb attacks on the revenue authorities and tax strikes. The despair of the masses had lost all political orientation and was from this point on rapidly absorbed by the national socialists. At the same time, throughout the rise of fascism, there was an almost total absence of mass political action by the working class.

In fact, the KPD was more and more cut off from the mass of the working class, especially from the start of the rise of fascism. It had for quite a long time been a real mass party, because of its implantation, but also and more particularly because of its actual influence in the working class. From 1923, and throughout the rise of fascism, there was a steady increase in its *electoral influence*, despite certain ups and downs; May 1924, 12.6 per cent; December 1924, 9 per cent; 1928, 10.6 per cent; 1930, 13.1 per cent; July 1932, 14.6 per cent; November 1932, 16.9 per cent. But if its vote was constantly going up, the effective membership of the party fell steadily until 1930, the year of the spectre of mass unemployment.[13]

The basic problem, however, was something which became clear with the start of the rise of fascism – namely that of *social-democratic influence on KPD voters and even on its members*. In other words, this electoral success of the KPD was by no means due to real mass political action, but to the fact that the working class, disoriented by this political vacuum, now voted for and often joined what it saw as a party ‘like the rest’.[14] One important measure of this is that the KPD seemed to win votes not in working through a united front, but mainly when it undertook ‘joint action’ of an electoral nature, and at the highest level only, with social democracy. This was true of the plebiscite against the ‘princes’ ransom’ (1926): it brought the KPD 500,000 new voters.[15]

Moreover, from 1930 on, the KPD made electoral progress not in the most radicalized regions, *but precisely in those regions of Protestant Germany which had been the calmest since 1918*.[16] The KPD’s implantation did not signify any radicalization in these regions, where it in a sense just took up the baton of social democracy. These were the regions most favourable to Hitler in the 1932 elections: 7-800,000 of the new communist votes went to Hitler for the presidency in 1932. The split between the KPD and the mass of the working class was expressed above all in its growing inability to draw the working class into political action: the organization of a mass demonstration in Berlin on 1

May 1929 was a significant failure. On 1 August 100,000 people took part in an anti-war demonstration in Berlin, but this was a swan song, and what is more it should be measured against the influence the KPD previously wielded in this city.[17] Finally, in May 1932, attempts to form a front for 'anti-fascist action' failed. Between 1929 and 1932 the KPD and its trade-union organization issued the call for a *general strike* about six times, which almost always fell on deaf ears.[18]

During the rise of fascism, and even long before, the KPD was itself strongly divided. After the removal of Brandler and Thalheimer, the 'left' faction of Ruth Fischer and Maslow took over the leadership. This faction was itself replaced as 'ultra-leftist' (at the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern in 1925); Thälmann took back the leadership, and carried out the expulsion of 'ultra-left' elements accused of Trotskyism. In 1928, elements described as 'right conciliationists' were expelled, and this led to the creation under Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg's old comrade-in-arms, of the KPD (O) (German Opposition Communist Party).[19] To give an idea of the scope of these successive purges, it should be noted that during the twenties, only 20 per cent of its cadres had belonged to the Spartakist League. By 1932 only 4-5 per cent of the communists were founder members, and in 1931, in Berlin, more than 40 per cent of the full-timers had belonged to the party for less than a year.[20] This division, parallel to the split between the KPD and the masses, deflected energy into the internal struggle, and often paralysed the party in its confrontation with national socialism.

What then was the nature of the ideological crisis within the working class? Firstly, it was expressed in the growing influence of social-democratic ideology, even extending, as we have observed, into the ranks of the KPD. It was also expressed in the influence of the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie in revolt. The anarcho-syndicalist tendency, which had almost disappeared in Germany at the end of the last century, reappeared during the rise of fascism in the Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands. Spontaneist tendencies developed rapidly; together with the general demobilization of the working class, this was one of the reasons for the absence of mass organization, particularly obvious in the decline of trade-union strength, including that of the RGO, despite the 1929 crisis. Moreover, the dissident groups to the 'left' of the KPD also came up against the relative disaffection of the masses from 'organizations', and nowhere managed to get a firm foothold. Finally the 'Blanquist-putschist' tendencies, strong in the period 1920-3, made their mark. They reappeared in particular among the unemployed and the workers of recent peasant origin: without openly joining national

socialism, some of them were influenced alternately by the KPD and by the national socialist party.

Chiefly because of social-democratic influence, but also because the KPD had existed for so long, these ideological currents within the German working class were not clearly expressed in autonomous movements and organizations. In contrast to Italy, where things were much clearer, these ideological currents remained ‘diffuse’ in Germany. At the same time, national socialism managed to neutralize the working class much more successfully. These diffuse ideological influences within the working class are to be discovered mainly by examining the ‘left’ aspect of national-socialist ideology, the tactics of this party and its forms of action, during the rise of fascism.

It then becomes clear that national-socialist ideology exploited the anarcho-syndicalist current. Strike action was exalted as a means to the emancipation of the working class, on condition that the strike was economic (trade-union apoliticism). Affirmations of the need for (apolitical) trade unions as representatives of the workers recur again and again. Corporatism takes first place. This aspect of corporatism shows itself in Strasser’s emphasis that the Nazi State, unlike the State of the ‘politicians’, would be based on a powerful hierarchy of trade unions, bridling the employer through economic organizations consecrated by the ‘apolitical’ State.

National-socialist ideology also exploited the spontaneist current: especially to attack the workers’ ‘organizations’, but also to win fractions of the working class to national socialism. The NSDAP presented itself, on the organizational plane, as an ‘anti-party’. Stress was placed on the formation of action squads meeting for given actions, the link between their members supposedly resting on their direct and personal link with the supreme chief. Declarations against ‘organization’, and emphasizing ‘will’, abounded.

The ‘Blanquist-putschist’ current was also exploited, and this was particularly evident in the SA. The emphasis was on the ‘anti-capitalist revolution’, to be achieved through a military coup. The frictions which arose between the SA and the Nazi political apparatus under Hitler (e.g. the SA mutiny in Berlin in 1931), as well as similar stirrings in the peasant sections under Darré, did not stem only from their anti-capitalist aspirations, but also from their putschist inclinations towards the tactic of the coup d’état. They made a cult of violence and activism, denouncing ‘programmes’, ‘doctrines’ and the like.

II. GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

As for social democracy, its hold on the working class increased through out the

rise of fascism. Although its vote fell after 1928, it stayed above 20 per cent. On the other hand, despite this electoral decline, there was a steady upswing in its membership: 937,000 in 1928, 984,000 in 1932.[21]

Its members were recruited *for the most part* from *industrial workers*: it was also in the most concentrated industrial regions that it obtained the best electoral results.[22] Although it recruited heavily among the most highly skilled and best paid industrial workers (as we shall see, this was true for the KPD too), it also recruited labourers and the lowest paid workers (notably in textiles), and *massive* numbers of agricultural workers.[23] Even before the war, the SPD already had some 150,000 full-timers; 100,000 Party members were employed in its social security services, employment bureaus, and local authorities.

As for its general political line, Lenin had shown how through *revisionism* (Kautsky, etc.), social democracy had succeeded in carrying out bourgeois politics within the working class, mainly expressed in *reformism*. Throughout the rise of fascism and alongside the policy of class collaboration, which constantly held back the development of struggle, the SPD leadership and that of its associated trade unions were capitulating more and more to national socialism.

From the start of its last government in 1928, social democracy rejected any measure to modify the State apparatuses, while national socialism was already beginning to infiltrate these. On 1 May 1929, faced by a KPD demonstration in Berlin which had been banned by the Prussian social-democratic government in order not to ‘give a pretext’ to the Nazis, the Prussian police fired on the demonstrators, killing thirty-three of them. After its fall from government, the SPD was to follow a policy of the *lesser evil (Tolerierungspolitik)*, to bar the way to fascism: in parliament, it openly or tacitly supported Brüning. At the end of 1931, social democracy formed the Iron Front, on the model of the Hartzburg front, grouping the trade unions, the SPD and the Catholic Centre, with the sole aim of electoral struggle against the ‘anti-social measures’ of the government it otherwise supported. In the last presidential elections, it supported Hindenburg.

After 1924, social democracy possessed an armed workers’ militia with a strong membership (160,000): the Reichsbanner. It constantly refused to use it, so as not to ‘provoke’ the enemy, until it was dissolved by Hitler. In 1932, at the time of von Papen’s unconstitutional deposition of the Prussian social-democratic government, the trade-union centre and the SPD refused to take part in the strike proposed by the communists. *Vorwärts* wrote: ‘The working people struggle ballots in hand against social reaction in power …’, and the SPD brought a case against this action in the Supreme Court. The day after Hitler’s

nomination as Chancellor, retreating behind the procedural legality of Hitler's nomination, it refused to participate in the general strike again called for by the communists.[24] *Vorwärts* wrote: 'To let loose a general strike today would be to waste the aspirations of the working class on nothing.' Although it organized demonstrations against the regime, often of remarkable size (notably at Lübeck over the arrest of the SPD deputy Leber), these demonstrations led to nothing (though *Vorwärts* itself, after the Berlin demonstration, carried the headline, on 7 February, 'Berlin is still red').[25]

Tempted by admittedly late KPD proposals for unity of action, the SPD, while timidly looking for a way to carry out some clandestine resistance, nevertheless moved towards 'legal opposition' to Hitler after the March 1933 elections: it foresaw a rapid fall of the government through its 'internal contradictions'. Its parliamentary group was reduced, it is true, to sixty deputies (of the 119 elected, eighteen were in prison, a large number, in disagreement with the leadership, took the road of emigration, and others abstained from the Reichstag proceedings), but it approved the government's foreign policy and its struggle 'for equal rights for the German people'. It refused, however, to vote for the plenary powers which Hitler demanded. The trade-union officials, after flirting for a while with the idea of a 'revolutionary strike', turned to securing the 'economic defence' of the workers under Hitler, and hoped for better times. Led by Theodor Leipart, the trade-union leaders decided to participate in the Festival of Labour organized by the Nazis on 1 May 1933. In June 1933 would come dissolution, banning, and the end.

One last remark is necessary here: the SPD and the trade unions *were themselves divided*.

Firstly, the leadership: apart from leaders of the kind of Noske and Severing, who well deserved their sinister reputation among the working class, and who always openly considered Nazism the lesser evil to 'Bolshevism', there was the centre, which went into exile after Hitler's seizure of power, and the 'left'. The latter, represented in particular by Rosenfeld and Seydwitz, had for a long time been favourable to a united front with the communists. Certain left elements were to split in 1931 to create the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP).

But the essential factor was that an important stratum of minor officials and militants were opposed to the leadership's policy and to the party machine. During Müller's last social-democratic government, this was expressed in opposition to cuts in unemployment benefit, *leading to the fall of the Müller cabinet*.[26] Lastly, the whole of the Reichsbanner, under its commander, Höltermann, called for active and energetic resistance to national socialism. This

is important, and it is a factor we shall encounter again in examining the attitude of the KPD towards the rank and file of social democracy and towards the social-democratic masses.

In conclusion, SPD policy was faithful to its counter-revolutionary nature and function. There was no actual collusion between social democracy and fascism; throughout the rise of fascism, it still tried in its own way to defend and preserve the 'economic interests' of the working class, which it had to do to keep its representational base in the class. None the less, it certainly bears the greatest share of responsibility for fascism's coming to power.

III. THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY (KPD)

I shall now turn to the policy of the KPD during the rise of fascism. Its policy was dictated, amongst other things, by an incorrect understanding of the period (as one of revolutionary working-class offensive) and by an under-estimation of the fascist danger. The policy as a whole was 'ultra-left' only in appearance. I have given my views above about the description of the Sixth Congress as 'ultra-left', and these considerations are equally applicable to KPD policy, *taken as a whole*. This does not mean that the KPD's specific policies did not have certain real 'ultra-left' aspects during this period.

These problems of political line do not seem to stem mainly from the nature of the strata in which the KPD had its roots. Several authors (including Walter Ulbricht) describe the KPD as truly 'ultra-left', and attribute this to its alleged mass base in 'unstable' lumpen strata. This idea, though widespread, is *wrong*. In 1928 about 40 per cent of party members were skilled workers, largely in industries, such as engineering and construction, where wages were among the highest. The other side of the argument, which imputes its 'capitulationist' policy to this high percentage of 'labour aristocracy' in its ranks, is no more valid. The KPD recruited among labourers too (28 per cent of the membership and 13-5 per cent of the leadership in 1928), and among the unemployed in enormous numbers after 1930. In 1932 only about 22 per cent of its members were actually in work.[27] Finally, when Dimitrov said defensively that the KPD 'was not strong enough to raise the masses … and lead them in a decisive struggle against fascism',[28] this was by no means meant in the numerical sense. In 1932, the KPD had 300,000 members.

As far as the line itself is concerned, the inclusive designation of social democracy and the social-democratic trade unions as social fascist and as the main enemy, bore a heavy responsibility for the failure of the united front. This was not so much because of the refusal of all contact between the leaderships,

and even between the secondary ranks; it was particularly because of the policy towards the social-democratic masses, considered ‘lost’ as long as they were under the influence of social democracy. Nothing could make this plainer than the clarifications Thälmann found himself obliged to give in May 1932, at the formation of the front for ‘anti-fascist action’, in response to social democracy’s Iron Front. In his ‘Reply to 21 Questions from Social-Democratic Workers’, Thälmann specified that *unlike in the past*, workers’ membership of social-democratic organizations was not an obstacle to their participation in the anti-fascist front; but this did not go beyond the stage of declarations of principle.[29] It was only finally in March 1933, when Hitler was already in power, that the KPD proposed joint action with the social democrats; but then it was already too late.

Throughout the rise of fascism, this conception of social fascism was associated with the view that revolution was imminent, and with a misunderstanding of the difference between the ‘parliamentary-democratic’ and fascist forms of State. Every common struggle for what was scornfully termed the ‘defence of democratic liberties’ was rejected on the grounds that it would run the risk of misleading the masses, distracting them from their ‘revolutionary offensive’.

Even apart from the fact that the KPD’s main activity was still directed against social democracy, this activity was conceived of as a struggle between ‘organizations’, not as a mass struggle on a mass line. What really happened to the *rank and file* united front? The remarkable thing, as Dimitrov was correctly to recall, was that nowhere did the KPD set up *specific forms of rank and file united front organizations*, which as organizations *outside the party* could cement the union by steps, combining economic and political struggle, with politics in command. The only form of rank and file struggle the KPD accepted *was trade-union struggle through the trade-union opposition, the RGO*. The RGO was to be the spearhead of the rank and file united front, in the now all but defunct ‘factory committees’.

Nothing came of it: firstly, because of the policy towards workers in social-democratic unions; secondly, and most importantly, because the RGO tried to cut out the social democrats simply by putting in higher claims, while the party leadership proclaimed, from on high, the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. Of course, trade unions have a part to play, but the crux of the matter was that, because of the KPD’s lack both of specific rank and file united front organizations, and of a mass line, the RGO itself constantly ended up just fighting for rather higher wage increases than the social democrats managed to obtain through a policy of class collaboration.

This had a dual effect: the RGO was engaged in an economistic struggle for economic demands (not that every struggle for such demands need be economistic, as Lenin showed), while it was simultaneously considered the main instrument of struggle in the rank and file against social democracy. In other words, the RGO was *at one and the same time* driven to wage an *economistic* struggle in the field of workers' demands, and to be the 'political' instrument of an incorrect political line. As a *trade union* organization, it could not be the main organization of a correctly conceived rank and file united front.[30] This is also the key to the whole problem of trade unions in the Comintern, and its continual about turns. I shall return to this problem in examining Gramsci's position.

In spite of everything, i.e. in spite of the leaderships of the KPD and SPD, there were some beginnings of united rank and file action on the political as well as the economic plane. Thälmann, of course, condemned this, even in September 1932, that is after the launching of the 'antifascist' action' front in May: 'Great confusions and dangerous illusions are appearing in the tendency towards unity in the working class … Because of the Nazi terror, there is a notably strong disposition towards unity, but there are also dangerous ideas such as "unity above all leaders", or again, "the leaders of the two parties, the SPD and KPD, bear the responsibility for the failure of the united front." Such tendencies can have very grievous consequences.'[31]

The absence of mass struggle by the KPD within the working class is the more remarkable in that officially revolution was imminently expected. But according to economist catastrophism, the situation would come to maturity through the growing economic crisis. This economic crisis would bring the 'majority' of the working class into the ranks of the KPD, and of course such a development was always on the agenda. But to prepare the revolution, the party had 'first' to work to win this majority.

Work for it? Rather they would *wait* for it, until the moment of insurrection arrived *punctually* on the 'great day'. And this is relevant to the key problem of the KPD's 'electoral illusions'. It was no accident that, in this context, the idea of 'winning the majority' of the working class only concealed the importance the KPD attached to electoral struggle as the favoured form of 'mass action'. This importance was evident firstly in the interpretation of election results: every electoral success was considered irrefutable proof of a KPD advance among the masses and of the collapse of social democracy. After Hitler's triumph in the 1930 elections, in which the KPD gained some votes and the social democrats lost some, *Die Rote Fahne* wrote on 15 September: 'The pace at which our influence is growing among the workers …, the pace at which we are winning

the masses of workers … has proved to have a greater impetus than we thought before 14 September…. Yesterday was Herr Hitler's "red letter day", but the electoral victory the Nazis claim is the beginning of the end.'

The importance the KPD gave to the electoral struggle is also apparent in the plebiscite against the Prussian social-democratic government in 1931, when the Comintern forced the KPD, despite the resolution of its central committee, to make an alliance with the national socialists and the Stahlhelm. This makes clear not only the logical conclusion of the line that social fascism was the main enemy, but also the importance given to the electoral struggle. *Die Internationale* wrote about the plebiscite: 'The KPD army has grown uninterruptedly during the past year thanks to the correct policy of the party. The correct decision about the plebiscite campaign has brought… into its army new masses who until now were under the influence of the national socialists or the social democrats.'

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to point out that the KPD did practically nothing about the poor and middle peasantry in the countryside, nor about the petty bourgeoisie. They were scarcely mentioned in the party programmes and resolutions before 1930, the date at which the KPD recognized the growing influence of national socialism. The idea was that the masses would 'automatically' take the side of the working class, once the economic crisis and the revolutionary situation were ripe.[32]

It was during this same period, mainly after 1930, that the *social-chauvinist* side of KPD policy grew *decisively*. This was shown by its use of the Versailles treaty question. In examining the national-socialist position on this question, I shall show what confusion the German masses were thrown into by the KPD position, which was identical on several points with that of national socialism. It is necessary to go back to the famous 1923 Schlageter line (see p. 169 above) to find a similar case. But while a 'right' turn was involved at that time (at the Fourth Congress) and was subsequently denounced as such, the social-chauvinist aspect was in this case triumphant at the height of the so-called 'ultra-left' period.

But to return to the 'legalistic' aspect of the KPD's response to fascism. The KPD also had its shock troops, organized in the *Roter Front-Kämpferbund* ('League of Red Front Combatants'), which had 100,000 members in 1924; it was banned in 1929, but continued to exist illegally. Although this organization did intervene, actively if sporadically, against the national socialists, not only did it fail to throw itself into the battle in a decisive and organized way, but *from 1931*, when, with the approach of the point of no return, the military side of the struggle in fact came to the forefront, *it explicitly kept out of the fighting*. The

KPD withdrew its slogan, ‘Strike at the fascists wherever you find them’.[33] This was firstly, as Thälmann pointed out, because the slogan risked distracting the attention of the ‘alarmists’ from the main enemy, social democracy. It also hampered the electoral process.[34]

Even on the morrow of Hitler’s accession to power, at the time of the Nazi demonstrations in front of the Karl Liebnecht House, letters of protest were sent to the chief of police, but the League received the order not to intervene. The KPD was still expecting Hitler’s imminent fall and the outbreak of a revolutionary situation: it prided itself on having succeeded in ‘keeping its forces intact’ despite Hitler’s accession to power. At the Thirteenth Comintern Plenum, after Hitler’s victory, Manuilsky replied to foreign communists who accused the KPD of not fighting, that ‘if the KPD had undertaken armed struggle against Hitler it would have been falling for a provocation’.[35]

The KPD took part in the elections of March 1933, after Hitler had come to power, and the appeal by its central committee after the elections declared (15 March 1933): ‘Despite the pompous declarations of the government, the 5th of March is not a victory for fascism.’ For of course the national socialists got only 43 per cent of the votes, the social democrats kept their position, and the KPD, despite the savage repression against it, still had 4,800,000 voters.

Lastly, the KPD’s underground apparatus turned out to be non-existent, despite the fact that it did carry out a campaign for the March elections. On the night of 22-23 February, the night of the Reichstag fire, 4,000 communist organizers were arrested at one fell swoop, without a blow being dealt. For a party which believed in imminent revolution, this seems incredible.[36]

In the face of the terrible consequences of this line, the KPD’s belated attempts to block the path of fascism, *though real enough*, remained ineffective. Once Hitler came to power, they were limited to sporadic demonstrations and street skirmishes. In the month following his accession, there were 62 deaths in street battles (29 communists, 8 socialists, 14 Nazis); these were defensive battles against Nazi attacks. Attempts to organize strikes failed. In short, although it would be wrong to say that the KPD simply capitulated, it is nevertheless true that it bore a heavy responsibility, much greater than that of the Italian Communist Party, for national socialism’s coming to power.

Surely, though, such a political line must have aroused strong opposition within the communist parties and at the base, among KPD militants? In fact, it was evident from the discussions at the Thirteenth Comintern Plenum of November-December 1933, the first plenum after Hitler’s accession to power, that the

reactions were very strong, especially within foreign communist parties. The mass of the militants, the organizations, some members of central committees, and even some members of the political bureaux, mainly of the French, Czech, Polish, Austrian and Swiss Communist Parties, were literally stupefied and indignant at the strategy being pursued.

As for the KPD, the party most closely controlled by the Comintern, reactions during the period 1928-33 seemed less strong, *but they were nevertheless there*. Although information about this is lacking, the continual, official public warnings from the leadership to various local federations and to rank and file militants about not applying' the line, are unmistakable indications. At the beginning of 1932, the central committee criticized the Württemburg organization for waging its main struggle against Nazism and not against social democracy.[37] The same also happened to the local organizations of Nuremberg, Hamburg, Oberhausen and Brunswick. Among the KPD leadership, an 'opposition tendency' was apparently formed in 1931, including Neumann, Remmele, Münzenberg (leader of the Red Aid), and Wollenberg (the Comintern military expert); this tendency stood for both a tough struggle against Nazism (the Neumann group, it will be remembered, was condemned for holding to the slogan 'Strike at the fascists wherever you find them'), and for dealing the main blow not at social democracy but at Nazism.

But nothing came of it. The Thirteenth Plenum, approving the German policy without the slightest hesitation, repeated all the previous mistakes and persisted in them yet more intensely.

Before concluding, it is necessary to point out one last fact. Although terribly demoralized by Hitler's victory, the communist militants, as well as many socialists, fought with exemplary heroism in the resistance to the Nazi regime; that they did so from the very beginning is made evident by the massive number of convictions and deportations they suffered *for acts of resistance*. We should remember these unknown militants, who fought in the darkest hour against barbarism. Many political organizers ('*responsables*' in both senses of the word) fell with them. Remembrance is all the more necessary since the bourgeoisie and its watchdogs scarcely ever mention any but imaginary 'resistance' by the army, by a few isolated priests – and, of course, by Stauffenberg, in his last-minute somersault.

IV. NATIONAL SOCIALISM AND THE WORKING CLASS

a. The Nazi organizations and the working class

I shall turn now to the relations of national socialism, first party, then State, to the working class. The first question to examine, because it has given rise to many misunderstandings, is that of the actual national-socialist base in the working class.

In 1928, with the beginnings of the rise of fascism, national socialism launched a vast attempt, led by Strasser, to gain a foothold in the working class, with the slogan 'Into the factories!' (*'Hinein in die Betriebe'* – the 'Hib-Aktion').[38] In 1929, the National Socialist Factory Cells Organization (NSBO) was set up. At the time of the seizure of power it numbered 400,000 members, a considerable number, taking into consideration that the RGO, in 1932, had no more than 200,000 members (though many communists were then actually operating within the social-democratic trade unions).

To which strata did most NSBO members belong? It has been argued, notably by Daniel Guérin,[39] that the 'labour aristocracy' provided a good number of members. But, provided we are agreed on the term, that seems incorrect.[40] The skilled, highly paid workers in key industries, mostly social democrats but also communists, remained *overwhelmingly* loyal to their organizations. The NSBO did recruit elements of the 'labour aristocracy', usually already belonging to right-wing organizations, but these were generally on the 'staff' of their firms – high-ranking technicians, engineers, administrative personnel, etc. These were not productive workers, whereas the 'labour aristocracy' is a stratum of the working class itself.

Yet the NSBO also recruited among the rank and file. This mainly applied to workers of recent peasant origin[41] in newly established factories (the proportion of the peasantry in the population as a whole fell from 35 per cent in 1914 to 23 per cent in 1925); these workers came especially from the Eastern regions, where the agricultural crisis was particularly acute, and where national socialism found mass support among the poor peasantry.

Finally, the NSBO recruited among the *unemployed*, of whom there were 5,500,000 in Germany in 1932, and for whom it had a special paper, *Der Erwerbslose*. Because of poverty, many unemployed became paid members of the SA. Often, too, employers asked for national socialist party cards before giving jobs. But this phenomenon was on a smaller scale than might be thought, provided the necessary distinctions are made.[42] It is firstly necessary to distinguish the occasionally unemployed workers from declassed lumpen elements: it was among the latter that national socialism mainly recruited. Secondly, unemployed workers who already had an experience of class struggle should be distinguished from unemployed youths, who joined national socialism

more easily. Again, it is necessary to distinguish between the unemployed workers (*Arbeitslosen*) and the unemployed in various categories of salaried employees, administrative workers, etc. (*Berufslosen*): it was especially among the latter that recruits to national socialism were made.

The percentage of NSDAP members belonging to the working class proper varied, between 1930 and 1934, from 28 per cent to 32 per cent; this was still much less than the percentage of the working class in the population as a whole, about 45 per cent.[43]

The same conclusions can be drawn from an examination of the election results, in which, however, the ideological influence of national socialism on the working class appears rather more strongly. From 1930, national socialism seemed to gain a small percentage of working-class votes, and this at the expense not of social democracy but particularly of the KPD, in its strongholds like Merseburg and Chemnitz-Zwickau. But it is clear from these results, including those of the 1933 elections under Hitler, that the mass of the working class remained loyal to the SPD and KPD.[44]

That is not the problem: the thing to be explained is the *neutralization* and *passivity* of the working class which national socialism effected.

The *ideological aspect* of national socialism is fundamental here. Firstly, this ideology had a strong ‘anti-capitalist’ side, a typical sign of the petty bourgeoisie in revolt. In the generalized ideological crisis of the rise of fascism, this petty-bourgeois anti-capitalist aspect (against ‘plutocracy’, ‘taxation’ etc.) was extended to the working class. *But that was not all*: national socialism, under the inspiration of its ‘left’ wing led by the Strasser brothers, took up some really socialist-sounding slogans.[45] Thus from 1920, point 13 of the party programme called for the nationalization of limited companies. Gregor Strasser announced that the ‘Marxists’ were right to demand ownership of the means of production, but that not the working class alone would be the owners, but the people as a whole. With the national community having ownership (*Eigentum*), possession (*Besitz*) could be hired out, under some controls, to individuals. Otto Strasser, for his part, wanted each ‘comrade of the people’ to be not only ‘co-owner’ of the ‘national wealth’, but also ‘co-possessor’; pronouncements in favour of socialism and hostile to ‘imperialism’ were abundant. Gregor Strasser wrote: ‘To see German industry and the German economy in the hands of international finance capital, is the end of any possibility of social liberation, the end of any dream of a socialist Germany … We, the young Germans of the war generation, we national-socialist revolutionaries, will engage in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism incarnate in the Peace of Versailles … We national

socialists have recognized that there is a link … between the national freedom of our people and the economic liberation of the German working class. German socialism will be possible and durable only when Germany is free.'

These were anti-imperialist noises – under the cover of nationalism, to be sure. But it should not be forgotten *on this point* that the KPD, steeped in social chauvinism, put forward an electoral programme in 1930 which was not so very different from these declarations. As Badia notes: 'Communist propaganda on this point, while it was fundamentally different from Hitler's demagogy, did run the risk of sowing a certain confusion among Germans without much political education, so that they might not think there was much difference in the aims of the two parties.'[46] There were in fact many Germans without much political education who did think this. Who would have educated them?

Lastly, the corporatist side of national-socialist ideology, as presented to the working class, must not be neglected. Corporatism, especially for Otto Strasser, suggested not just 'co-management', but actual workers' control of the factories under national ownership.

As for the concrete policy of national socialism towards the working class during the rise of fascism, it has to be recognized that from 1928, *although it attacked the political organizations, it spared the trade unions*. It sometimes took part in the struggle for economic demands: in 1930, it supported the strikes of the metal workers of Mansfeld and Berlin. Even in 1932, together with the RGO, it initiated the famous Berlin transport strike.

b. The condition of the working class under Nazism; the question of the fascist trade unions

National socialism came to power. I shall first examine the exact 'economic' situation of the German working class, a matter on which precise information has now shed new light.

Firstly, national socialism achieved a spectacular decrease in unemployment. There were about 5.5 million unemployed in 1933, less than one million in 1937, and scarcely 40,000 in 1939, until unemployment disappeared completely during the war.

As for the economic exploitation of the working class, it must be noted that any increase was above all *relative* to the *growth of profits* during a period of clear economic revival, of growth of production and increase of labour productivity; such a thing had never occurred when the working class had a 'free' trade-union and political movement.[47] Profits grew, between 1933 and 1938, by 127 per cent; the total volume of production increased by 113 per cent. As for workers' wages, which were fixed by wage scales, the nominal gross

hourly rates went up by 14 per cent from 1933 to 1939, and by 9 per cent from 1939 to 1942. Of course, the rise in the cost of living has to be taken into account; that of food prices and consumer goods prices together came to around 6 per cent. On the other hand, although 'obligatory' loans imposed on wages often reached 1520 per cent, the prolongation of the working day by paid overtime must not be forgotten, making the rise in weekly wages greater than the rise in hourly rates.

In short, avoiding the mistake of some studies of national socialism which rely on over-generalizations about 'wages' as a *whole*, the 'standard of living' (real wages) of *industrial workers* did not fall under national socialism in relation to the previous situation; it even improved in certain respects, without however reaching the level of 1930.[48] Those whose purchasing power and standard of living went down were mainly non-productive employees, especially clerks and officials, whose purchasing power fell by 20 per cent between 1933 and 1942.[49]

Still more relevant is the differentiation of industrial workers into 'wage' categories. To a certain extent, this worked 'naturally' (according to the laws of the labour market), but *above all, it came about as a result of the clear national-socialist policy of dividing the working class*. This differentiation involved both workers in certain branches of industry and highly skilled workers.

For the period before 1937, Bettleheim points out: 'There was a rise in actual gross wage payments. Certain labour contracts provided for wages above the standard rate (this was increasingly often forbidden after the measures taken in 1936 to freeze real wages) depending on changes in the distribution of labour among different branches of industry, etc.' But during this period, the law governing 'minimum rates', blaming the former collective contracts for a tendency to equalize wages, explicitly stipulated: 'Minimum rates must be established in such a way as to leave room for the payment of each member of the firm according to how much he produces. On the other hand, there is room for adequate reward for any exceptional service.' Now, Tim Mason[50] has recently shown that even after the very strict fixing of 'maximum wage rates' by the State in 1938, several employers, faced, among other things, by the scarcity of specialized labour in priority industries, and resorting to plundering each other, managed to get round the obstacle either by offering bonuses or by paying wages above the permitted rates. The State was perfectly aware of this situation: it left them alone or even encouraged them, in order to divide and overcome the spontaneous reactions of the working class, evident in absenteeism, falling productivity, etc.

So *the systematic accentuation of the wages hierarchy* was, as Neumann stresses, 'the very essence of national socialist wages policy … It is of prime importance that this problem be understood, not as an economic matter, but as a crucial political problem of control of the masses.… Although official statistics say nothing on the matter, the index of labour income shows that the scissors between the income of skilled and semiskilled workers widened considerably. The trend would be still clearer if the figures included the income of unskilled workers.'[51]

In short, in this process of growing economic exploitation, it appears that national socialism handled its main enemy, the working class, and the latter's relation to other popular classes, by a calculated plan to divide it.

Of course it was not only or even mainly through its economic policy that national socialism could neutralize the working class. It also did so by police terror, and especially by the total reorganization of the ideological state apparatuses and the function they fulfilled.

It should be pointed out here that this neutralization of the working class proceeded by steps. In particular, during the first period of national socialism in power there was a policy of compromise, to some extent imposed on the dominant class by national socialism.[52] After it came into power, national socialism dissolved the 'free' trade unions (in May 1933), abolished the right to strike, introduced the work permit (in 1935), and instituted compulsory state arbitration for labour disputes. But until July 1933, the members of the factory cells of the NSBO, mostly members of the SA, often established control of hiring and firing, and even went so far as to arrest bosses they considered anti-social.

In May 1933, the Labour Front (*Arbeiterfront*) was instituted as the national-socialist trade-union organization, and membership of it rapidly became almost compulsory, through many kinds of pressure. At the same time, the members of the NSBO saw the Labour Front take over all their authority. Gregor Strasser, the NSBO leader, was executed on the 'Night of the Long Knives'. But friction continued between the employers on the one hand, and the Labour Front and its head, Dr Ley, the Minister of Labour on the other. The latter's corporative plan aimed to dissolve the employers' organizations too, and to enlist the bosses into the Labour Front itself, which would thus become the main organizer of the economy.

At the beginning, it succeeded in this to a certain extent. The German Confederation of Industry was dissolved in 1934 into seven different

corporations (trade groupings) integrated with the Labour Front into corporative institutions within the factory (‘councils of confidence’ and ‘factory committees’). No workers’ representative was directly admitted to these employers’ corporations, which had a semi-State nature, having as their presidents a member of the NSDAP and applying the ‘leadership principle’. At the beginning, ‘leaders’ such as Kessler, and Goltz after his recall, could still put on a plebeian face.

But the bosses did not see it that way: by July 1934 they were asking for the dismissal of Ley, whose ‘demagogic’ and ‘socialist-inclined’ projects were disturbing the economy. Open conflict broke out between Schacht, as Economics Minister, and Ley; at the end of 1934, the Confederation of Industry was re-formed, the ‘leadership principle’ was abolished, and Ley capitulated at the Labour Front Congress in Leipzig in March 1935. From then on, not only were the corporative organizations (‘labour communities’) directly managed by the Confederation of Industry, but the Labour Front itself was directly controlled by the bosses, who were represented in the Front within each firm. At the national level, while no representative of the Labour Front had a seat on the Reich’s Economic Council, the employers in fact controlled the Labour Council. Excluded from ‘collaboration’ with the bosses in the ‘economic’ domain, the Labour Front was also excluded from such collaboration in the ‘social’ domain, i.e. the former factory committees. This collaboration was between bosses and ‘councils of confidence’, composed of workers directly nominated by the bosses. Although the Labour Front’s local officers were generally named by the local sections of the NSDAP, it was still suspect, because of its contact with the mass of the working class.

So far as the national-socialist trade-union apparatus is concerned, it clearly demonstrates *the complex nature of the trade union as an ideological state apparatus, and, despite appearances, it reveals certain aspects of the class ‘collaborationist’ nature of trade unions in the ‘normal’ forms of the bourgeois State*.[53]

In the first place, the main function of the Labour Front, although it was thoroughly infiltrated by the secret police, was not its policing role. This was never expressed better than by Himmler, head of the Reich secret police, when he visited the offices of the Labour Front leadership in 1936. ‘The SS and the police can only ensure internal security if men are won to the idea of national socialism: this task falls particularly on the Labour Front.’ And in fact the role of the Labour Front was mainly ideological. Its head of propaganda, Selzner,

declared that its essential task was the ‘preparation of all members for national socialism by education’. The Labour Front’s role was limited to representing the workers’ economic demands to arbitration commissions, on condition, of course, that they had no political character and did not jeopardize ‘public order’ and ‘social peace’. Yet the Front was considered by the national-socialist leadership to be a ‘purely political’ instrument: they could not have put it more clearly.

It is an apparently paradoxical fact, therefore, that the national-socialist leadership never ceased to mistrust this single union, however well purged, transformed and ‘State-run’ the Labour Front was. For every bourgeois State, of whatever kind, has to keep one or more ideological apparatuses as weapons trained on the working class, and always fears these will be attacked in the class struggle; so it was with the Labour Front in the national-socialist State. Saying that is precisely *not* to make a superficial analogy, like that of ‘social fascism’, between the social-democratic trade unions and the Labour Front. It rather establishes the *natural kinship* between the ideological apparatuses of every form of bourgeois State which lies behind their *key differences* in function, objectives and methods of action. This view should be contrasted with that which claims there is a natural difference between the ‘free’ trade unions and the ‘State-run’ fascist unions, on this occasion the Labour Front.

The case of fascism even allows us to advance a supplementary proposition. Although the bourgeois State can in principle do without an ideological apparatus of the ‘party’ type especially intended for the working class (the NSDAP, a typically ‘petty-bourgeois’ party, fulfilled this function only by substitution), *it is absolutely incapable of doing without a ‘trade-union’ type apparatus*. The French Revolution had already experienced this when, contrary to accepted ideas, it sought firstly to get rid of the ‘party’ type apparatus, and only later, by means of the famous Le Pelletier law, tried to restrain the ‘union’ type apparatus. Louis Bonaparte understood the matter very well. But because of its ambiguous function, this apparatus, an absolutely essential part of the bourgeois State apparatus, is always mistrusted by the bourgeoisie.

As for the Labour Front in particular, Dimitrov had a good under-understanding of it: ‘We must very resolutely put an end to the tendency to underestimate work in the fascist mass organizations … Fascism has deprived the workers of their own legal organization. It has forced the fascist organizations upon them, and it is there that the masses are – by compulsion or to some extent voluntarily. These mass fascist organizations can and must be made our legal or semi-legal field of action where we can meet the masses. They can and must be made our legal and semi-legal starting point for the defence of

the day-to-day interests of the masses. To utilize these possibilities, Communists must… rid themselves once and for all of the prejudice that such activity is unseemly and unworthy of a revolutionary worker.'[54]

3

Italy

I. THE PROCESS OF DEFEAT AND THE DEFENSIVE

I shall again concentrate mainly on the differences between the Italian and German cases, and particularly on those aspects in which the initial propositions are more clearly illustrated by the Italian case than by the German.

Firstly, the rise of fascism, and the preceding period as well, were again a very concentrated experience for the proletariat. The stabilization period between the turning point of the defeat and the start of the rise of fascism was especially brief in Italy. The process of defeat in this case saw no attempt at insurrection in the full sense – apart from a local insurrection in Turin in 1917. The proletarian offensive essentially took the form of strikes, in particular of political strikes. The process of defeat nevertheless took place in a continuous 'veiled' civil war between the two forces in operation.

In Italy too, the end of the war saw an exceptional revolutionary development of the working class.[1] Expressed in a whole series of strikes and mass political actions, this development culminated in an objectively revolutionary situation: the political general strike of 4 July 1919. Soviets appeared all over the place and took over authority, and fraternization between troops and workers became quite widespread. But the 'revolutionary' political strike of 20 July, which should have taken the struggle on from there, was a failure.

After a period of relative calm, the strike movement gained impetus the following year. In August 1920 it culminated in a general strike with factory occupations. Every factory was then placed under the direction of a workers' council (*consiglio difabbrica*) which ensured its functioning: an agreement with the workers' cooperatives made it possible to go on paying wages. Was this an

objectively revolutionary situation and a ‘missed opportunity’? Again, opinions are divided. It was none the less a situation of open crisis, and held certain possibilities for the workers’ movement.

But the movement remained isolated in the factories. The ‘neutral non-interventionist’ Giolitti was content just to encircle them with the troops occupying the industrial cities – and the movement was doomed to failure. The strikers won only the recognition in principle of some vague workers’ control in the factories. Commissions were set up to deal with disciplinary relations between employers and workers, and with productivity increases, but these included management representatives in equal numbers, and were never formalized by law. On 27 September the workers abandoned the factories. After a short period of stabilization, the beginning of 1921 saw the start of the rise of fascism, and the working class already moved onto the defensive.

But the working class had won some important political and economic gains in the process: substantial wage increases; an eight-hour day; the generalization of collective bargaining; factory committees; direct universal suffrage; and relative autonomy in the management of community affairs in the red areas. These gains were constantly undermined during the rise of fascism, but the representatives of medium capital allowed them to persist to an extent unacceptable to big capital, up to the time fascism came to power.

The failure of the factory occupations resulted in a general demobilization of the working class. During the rise of fascism, the strike rate fell: in 1921, the number of working days lost through strikes was 75-80 per cent lower than in 1920, and even then it was the economic side of the struggle which came to the fore.[2] Only at this level, and over defensive demands, was the trade-union movement reunited with the creation of the Labour Alliance on 20 February 1922. In August, this Labour Alliance attempted a last indefinite, political general strike against the fascist offensive and for the ‘re-establishment of democratic legality’. It was a failure.

In Italy too, during the rise of fascism, the Communist Party (PCI) was cut off from the mass of the working class. This was expressed, in the first place, by the fall in its membership after the split with the Socialist Party. At the Livorno Congress in 1921, where the split occurred, the motion of the PCI founders won about 58,000 of the Socialist Party votes. In March 1922, at its Second Congress, the PCI officially declared that it had 40,000 members, a figure which should apparently be reduced to 20,000. At this period the party had a *very strong* ‘working-class’ character, which was moreover a source of pride for its leadership. Ninety-eight per cent of its membership were workers, and it was

rooted almost exclusively in the north.[3]

Again, the important thing was that the PCI never succeeded in imposing its leadership on broad sections of the working class, although the 'revolutionary faction' of the Socialist party had done so up till 1920, and Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group in Turin had succeeded in playing a leading role in the factory occupation movement. In particular, the PCI was unable to draw the masses into effective struggle against the fascist bid for power. But the split was not expressed electorally: far from it. In the 1921 elections the socialists and communists together won 20,000 more votes than the Socialist party before the split.

The PCI was deeply divided throughout the rise of fascism. There was a very bitter struggle between the Bordiga tendency, which got its line carried, and the Gramsci-Togliatti tendency. While Bordiga proposed struggle to the death against the socialists, in 1922 Gramsci and the Turin group were trying to make contact with d'Annunzio, who, before the rapprochement of the nationalists and fascists, had just ordered his men to leave the *fasci* and fight against them.

II. THE POLITICO-IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS: SOREL AND REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM

What is particularly interesting about the Italian case is the ideological crisis within the working class. This is evident in the contamination of working-class ideology by the ideology of the rebel petty bourgeoisie, expressed in *revolutionary syndicalism* and in the thought of Sorel, which was very influential in Italy. What did these influences amount to, in general terms?

Revolutionary syndicalism was rather different from anarcho-syndicalism, in that it was more highly politicized. It proposed the 'self-emancipation' of the 'producers' through the trade unions, the only class organizations 'of their own'. As Arturo Labriola (not to be confused with Antonio) put it: 'The economic association of the workers [the trade unions] is therefore seen as the instrument for carrying out the social revolution; it alone can destroy the base on which the bourgeois regime depends, i.e. competition between the wage-earners; it alone provides the workers with social power … For all these reasons, syndicalism concludes that the social revolution cannot be the work of a party …'[4] For revolutionary syndicalism the essential events were those in the economic sphere (in the factory); it was there that the main objective of a 'social revolution' must lie, and not in the seizure of State power. The State itself would be replaced, at the right time, by an association of trade unions, the instruments of the 'self-government of the producers'. A revolution made by a party, which was by definition 'external' to the producers, could only replace one kind of 'political'

exploitation by another. The revolution would be made without taking State power, which would dissolve of its own accord when the producers took power in the factories with the *general strike*. This idea links up here with spontaneism: the general strike being ever present in working-class consciousness, at least potentially, it would be enough to declare it through the trade unions, which should always be kept safely away from parties.

One final point, for much has been written on revolutionary syndicalism, praising its concept of workers' 'self-management'. In fact, revolutionary syndicalism has a deep strain of *productivist technicism*, which is at the bottom of its concept of workers' 'self-management' of production. According to Labriola: 'The trade union is … also a selection of men possessing given technical skills. Two consequences follow from this:

1. Socialist revolution will be possible only in a period of great industrial growth.

2. Those who take in hand the management of production will have the necessary skills: a condition which would not be fulfilled if the revolution was carried out by a party.'

Less paradoxically than at first sight appears, Sorel's thought also comes within the tradition of revolutionary syndicalism. For Sorel, too, the revolution can only be the work of the 'producers' themselves – he also subscribed to the Saint-Simonian cult of 'productivism'. A political organization of the party type would only become 'bureaucratized', would cheat and despoil the producers of their revolutionary victories. But for Sorel this spontaneity of the working class is not enough; it must be 'activated'. Hence his idea of the *activating minority*. A voluntary, violent intervention by a conscious section of the masses is necessary to make the revolution.

Why violence as such? Firstly, because in all circumstances, it forces the enemy to unmask, while mobilizing the masses: 'Bourgeois cowardice, which consists of … giving way to the threat of violence, can only engender the idea that the bourgeoisie is condemned to death, and that its disappearance is only a matter of time. Each conflict which gives rise to violence becomes a vanguard struggle …'[5] Secondly, and most important, violence is *symbolic* in nature, so that working-class consciousness can be activated by the 'actions' of the active minority.

In his *Reflections on Violence*, then, Sorel gives a whole interpretation of political symbolism, which he terms political *'myth'*. It is on myth that a realistic socialism must depend. 'Myths should be seen as means of acting on the present', and Sorel defines the myth as an 'organization of images giving the

impulse to fight'. He recognizes that the general strike is insufficient for the seizure of power; for this, as a great admirer of Blanqui, he recommends the tactic of a working-class movement activated by the active minority. But he also stresses the symbolic role of the general strike. The 'myth of the general strike' is for him 'revolutionary gymnastics', preparing the 'great leap out of the arena of history'.[6]

A further important and significant detail is that Sorel for a time very wrongly *considered himself a Leninist*: see the chapter 'In Defense of Lenin' (Bolshevik Party = activating minority), which he added after the October Revolution to the fourth edition of *Reflections on Violence*. It should not be forgotten, however, that before the 1914 war he had become disillusioned with the 'syndicalists' and had drawn close to Action Française and Charles Maurras.[7]

These ideological tendencies had a considerable effect on the Italian working class: they were present from the beginning of the century and were reactivated during the rise of fascism.[8] Sorel's influence was felt as early as 1904, by Arturo Labriola, Enrico Leone, and E. Longobardi, not only on Italian syndicalism in the North (especially in Parma, Milan, Bologna and Modena), but also in Naples. In the summer of 1904, the Sorelian revolutionary syndicalists played a part in starting a major general strike. When the Italian trade-union confederation (CGT) was founded in 1906, the Sorelians formed a minority group in it under Alceste de Ambris: this was the 'Direct Action' group, with 200,000 followers. In 1912, influenced by the experience of Pelloutier and Monatte's Labour Exchanges, they created the Unione Sindicale Italiana, which a year later had 100,000 members.

Divided on the war question, in 1914 the left interventionists, together with Edmondo Rossoni, Bianchi and the De Ambris brothers, created the Unione Italiana del Lavoro, which was to play a very important ideological role after the war. It organized a big 'national' 'self-emancipatory' general strike at Dalmine in 1919 – the workers occupied the factory and continued production.

This brings us to the second aspect of the problem, the direct collusion between fascism and Sorelian revolutionary syndicalism. Mussolini himself, as a left interventionist, considered himself a convinced follower of Sorel. The Dalmine strike was openly welcomed by Mussolini and the *fasci*. The Unione Italiana del Lavoro's programme of January 1919, calling for the corporative organization of the 'producers', was taken up by the fascist party. *The Sorelian revolutionaries joined the fascist party en masse*, with Rossono, Bianchi, De Ambris and Farinacci organizing the fascist trade unions. Italian fascism, much more than German, exploited to the limit these petty-bourgeois ideological

influences within the working class. Mussolini declared that ‘he had been defending violence all his life’. The theory of activating minorities, transmuted here into the theory of ‘elites’, was part of his equipment. Mussolini denounced the ‘programmes’ and ‘doctrines’ of the political parties: ‘Our doctrine is the deed.’ In 1920 he declared: ‘Down with the State in every shape or form, the State of yesterday, today, tomorrow … We have nothing left but the religion of anarchy.’ Still stronger were his declarations against bureaucratic organizations, and for the fascist movement as ‘anti-party’. The fascist provincial base took this seriously, and in 1922 opposed the formation of the fascist movement into a party, a ‘party like the rest’. The putschist tendency, very clear in the fascist party, was evident in the opposition to Mussolini when he tried to ‘gradualize’ the seizure of power.

At the same time, the ‘economic’ strike and the role of the trade unions were exalted. In congratulating the Dalmine ‘national’ strikers, Mussolini seemed to go still further: ‘The formation of workers’ councils, which for three days managed the firm, ensuring the working of all branches and sections, represents an honest, well intentioned attempt, and a worthy ambition, to succeed the so-called bourgeois class in the management of labour.’ Moreover, in a statement close to the productivist technicism of the revolutionary syndicalists, Mussolini declared that he would put only one condition on such ‘self-government’ (the ‘technical’ running of production by the workers), ‘that production increases and improves’. Lastly, fascism adopted the corporative projects of revolutionary syndicalism.

III. ITALIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE MAXIMALISTS

Italian social democracy differed in certain specific ways from its German counterpart. But the differences did not show much in the class origin of its members. Just before the war, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) was composed of 43 per cent industrial workers, 15 per cent agricultural workers, 6 per cent poor peasants, 15 per cent artisans, and 3.5 per cent office workers,[9] though it seems that after the war, and especially after the split that formed the PCI, the percentage of members of rural origin (agricultural workers and poor peasants) had increased.[10]

On the political side, the Italian Socialist Party was opposed to Italy’s participation in the war. It took part in the Zimmerwald conference, for which its leader, Serrati, became an active propagandist. After the war, the Bologna conference of 1919 seemed to break with the pre-war ‘reformist’ tendency. Serrati’s Maximalist current carried its line against Turati’s reformist current by

48,111 votes to 14,800. The Congress voted by acclamation for membership of the Third International. The ‘abstentionist-maximalists’, who were to break away under Bordiga in 1921, got only 3,417 votes.

Before going on to its later evolution, it will be useful to examine this famous Maximalist tendency, which was to dominate the party until 1922.

Again, it was economism, in the form of economist catastrophism, which characterized Maximalism. The PSI believed in the imminence of revolution, which would come of ‘iron necessity’. This idea is to be found in the picture Serrati gave the 1921 Milan Congress (just after Livorno), of the fascist movement as expression of the *final phase* of bourgeois rule before the collapse of the capitalist system. Reformist economism was directly transmuted into economic catastrophism: the revolution, necessary and imminent, would come about of its own accord, ‘*fara da sè*’, as the Socialist Party endlessly repeated. It was not a question of preparing and making the revolution, which the party was incapable of, but at the most, of trying in some way to prevent its being held up. It saw things in terms of *all or nothing*; in expectation of the outbreak of revolution, the only thing to do was negative – to avoid falling into the path of reformism. The Maximalist resolution at the Bologna Congress therefore declared: ‘The establishment of the socialist society cannot be accomplished by decree or by the deliberation of any parliament or constituent assembly. We must also reject, and condemn as dangerous and insidious, the hybrid forms of collaboration between parliament and the factory councils.… On the contrary, we must urge the proletariat to the violent conquest of political and economic power, which must be entrusted entirely to the workers’ and peasants’ councils, councils which will be legislative and executive at the same time.’[11]

The phrases of the Maximalists hid the absence of any strategy for the seizure of power. In fact, as their actions revealed, their policy was purely and simply one of wait and see. Nothing was being done to achieve the expected revolution.[12] Not only that, but the members of the Socialist Party were accustomed to their electoral fiefs, and well installed in the machinery of local government. There was no real change of tactics, but merely a new way of presenting things. While doing nothing to make revolution, though abstaining from ‘collaboration’ with the ‘central power’ of the State, the party still went on thinking that the seizure of central power would be accomplished by the progressive acquisition of ‘autonomous powers’ in the towns and the regions. Emilia, the red province, was taken as the example: if there were several ‘red Emilias’ in Italy, said the party, the revolution would be made.[13]

Since the essential thing was not to hold up this imminent and necessary

revolution, it was important in the meantime to avoid giving a ‘pretext’ to the enemy. During 1920, the year of strikes, the party leadership declared: ‘The present situation indicates that the crisis is gathering pace, while the momentous clash between bourgeoisie and proletariat approaches. Before the need to meet the new struggle with all our strength, the leading bodies of the proletarian movement in Italy must warn the workers against movements which could be harmful and prejudicial to the movement as a whole.’ But it was also necessary to get the ‘central State’ and the ‘government’ both to refrain from impeding the revolutionary process, and to remove the obstacles ‘illegally’ opposing it – the fascists in this case. Lastly, as the Socialist Party leadership declared in 1922, it would be necessary to ‘refuse the government all participation, support or votes’.[14]

But this was not how the reformist faction of the Socialist Party saw things. Led by Turati and Treves, they were supported by the C G L and its leaders, under d’Aragona. (The CGL had been linked to the PSI since 1918 by a pact of alliance, and in 1920, it had 2,200,000 members.) These elements openly took the road of class collaboration, and in 1920, while the Maximalists just waited, they brought about the failure of the factory occupation movement. In 1922, the majority of the parliamentary Socialist Party, under Turati, declared itself ready to participate in a ‘democratic government’. Furthermore, at the Rome Congress in October 1922, two months before fascism came to power, the reformists split from the Maximalists to form the Italian United Socialist Party, while the CGL broke its agreement for unity of action with the PSI.

There was a visible decline in social democracy during the rise of fascism, its membership falling from 216,000 in 1920 to 60,000 in 1922, but it must be remembered both that this was after the Livorno split, and that it took place in the context of a general decline of the workers’ organizations, including the PCI. Proportionately, the Socialist Party maintained its membership relative to the PCI, and the reformist faction made ground within the party: while they had only about 15,000 votes at the Livorno Congress in 1920, they had about 30,000 at Rome in 1922.

At the same time, mainly through the trade unions and the parliamentary Socialist Party, social-democratic ideology seemed to be contaminating the working class, though to a lesser extent than in the German case. This came about through Maximalism in particular. It did not always, as in Germany, take the form of direct class collaboration. It can be found in the working class itself in the belief in the possibility of making decisive use of the intermediary layers of the bourgeois State machinery (local authorities, the police and the army) as

barriers to fascism, so as to avoid provoking the bourgeoisie while the revolutionary apocalypse was awaited. In other words, this ideological influence mainly took the form of the typically petty-bourgeois illusion of the State's neutrality in relation to the bourgeoisie, although direct collaboration with the bourgeoisie itself was rejected.

Social-democratic policy towards fascism may not have been the same in Italy as in Germany, but it led to the same results. The Socialist Party certainly avoided the trap of the policy of the 'lesser evil', i.e. of open support of bourgeois governments. The party's mistake was not really, as Droz suggests,[15] failing to participate in or support a 'democratic' government. It was that it did nothing to prepare for revolution, and did nothing much to avoid fascism either.

Firstly, there was the legalistic tactic of refusing to organize mass political struggle against fascism (apart from some demonstrations and scattered skirmishes), so as not to provoke the enemy. On 22 May 1922, *Avanti* published long extracts from Papini's *The Life of Christ*, which of course discussed the question of turning the other cheek, under the significant title, 'No Resistance'.[16] The tactic was based on periodic appeals to respect the Constitution, and on parliamentary agitation; it culminated in 1921 in the socialist-fascist pact, which allowed fascism, a prey to its own internal difficulties, to recommence its offensive and follow it through in the best way possible. The result was to demobilize the working class.

The PSI did jealously cling onto one miraculous weapon to be used *in extremis* against fascism: the *general strike*. German social democracy, which capitulated much more clearly to national socialism, did not even resort to this method. After the historic examples of the successful general strikes against the Kornilov and Kapp military putsches, the workers' movement had developed a deep-rooted illusion that the general strike was a miraculous defensive weapon to ward off fascism. In Italy, the illusion was strengthened by the 'revolutionary syndicalist' tradition and its conception of the general strike.

It was indeed an illusion, for many reasons. In the rise of fascism, coming after the turning point in working-class defeat, it proved difficult even to start a political general strike in such a state of demobilization. When the point of no return came, and the pace of demobilization was equalled only by the pace of fascist organization among the masses, such an initiative became very unlikely. The fascist movement was already a *mass movement*: through its para-military and union organizations, and with the active support of the State and an important part of the population, it could easily smash, or even nip in the bud, the organization and implementation of a general strike. Finally, we should not

underestimate the technical side of the question, which in the case of the Kornilov and Kapp putsches had worked for the masses. Through its mass organization, fascism had access to its own transport and communications.

The famous strike, the last card, was decided on by the Labour Alliance for i August 1922. The PCI, for its part, still hoped to transform it into a revolutionary general strike. The call was answered in small numbers, even in the big towns, and by very few in the countryside, even in red Emilia. The organization of a secret committee in charge of co-ordination was a failure. The fascists immediately occupied the ports and rail centres, drove the trains and city trams themselves, attacked the labour exchanges and co-operatives, and occupied the industrial towns. Two days later this ‘strike for legality’, the ‘socialist Caporetto’, had failed.

Even after Mussolini came to power, during the long first period of fascist rule, the same legalistic tactics were continued. The Socialist Party took the 1924 elections quite seriously. In these elections, although it was two years since Mussolini had come to power, the fascists got only 38 per cent of the votes, and the ‘antifascists’ 25 per cent, with 37 per cent abstentions, while as early as 1932 Hitler had won 37 per cent of the votes in Germany. When the socialist deputy Matteoti was murdered in 1924, a wave of deep indignation and unrest swept through Italy, but there were protests only in parliament. The C G L officials under d’Aragona gave ‘technical collaboration’ to the government, and negotiations with Mussolini went ahead. With the ultra-fascist laws, ‘free’ parties and unions were finally dissolved.

IV. THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCl)

a. The Bordiga tendency and party policy

Although PCI policy was marked by mistakes throughout the rise of fascism, they were the mistakes of *infantile leftism* – something quite different from the sham ultra-leftism of the KPD.

The PCI, formed after the Livorno split, immediately came under the dominance of Bordiga’s political line.[17] As early as 1919, the communist faction of the Socialist Party, under Bordiga’s influence, proposed ‘abstentionism’, i.e. non-participation in elections and in parliament, which drew strong remonstrances from Lenin. After the split, the line was for intense struggle against the Socialist Party, excluding any kind of contact or agreement at any level. Serrati was the first object of attack, as the PCI particularly held it against him that he had not followed them at the time of the Livorno split, and that the ‘maximalist illusions’ which helped to delay the death of social-democracy were

so very dangerous.

In its manifesto for the 1921 elections, the PCI central committee declared: 'The elections of May 1921 must be the trial of the Socialist Party … Every worker who supports it … must from now on be persuaded that his class will be able to advance in Italy only over the dead body of the Socialist Party, and that it is not possible to defeat the bourgeoisie without first clearing its putrefying corpse from the field of class struggle.'[18] In 1922, while Turati's group were breaking with the Maximalist faction, the only thing the PCI could find to do was to congratulate itself that 'the ruin of the Socialist Party places the Italian Communist Party at the head of the Italian working class and its revolutionary struggle'. It even reached the point of congratulating itself on the success of fascism, in so far as this would weaken the influence of social democracy on the masses, and create favourable conditions for the extension of its own influence.[19] This policy towards the Socialist Party was strongly criticized even before 1922 by Lenin, who advised making agreements with Serrati's Maximalists.

Throughout this period, the PCI always held (especially in the Rome Theses of its Second Congress in 1922) to the imminence of revolution and the continuing working-class offensive; it entirely underestimated the fascist danger. The PCI representatives at the Third Congress of the Comintern, led by Bordiga and Terracini, were in strong disagreement with the theory of stabilization. The fascist phenomenon was constantly identified with the Russian White Guards, as a strong reaction to a revolutionary situation.[20] Gramsci alone foresaw the possibility of a victorious fascist 'coup d'état'.[21]

When the First Plenum adopted the theses on the united front, the Italian delegates, together with the French and Spanish parties, voted against the resolution. The Bordiga tendency's interpretation anticipated the Sixth Comintern Congress. Bordiga's leadership even made a first step towards the theory of social fascism. It foresaw an official parliamentary alliance of the Fascist and Socialist parties, under Giolitti, and Bordiga wrote: 'The fact that fascism and social democracy are today taking convergent roads may seem paradoxical to many people … but it will be confirmed in the future … Fascism and social democracy are two faces of the one enemy of tomorrow.'[22] The same tactic was followed as regards the socialists.

As for the united front, the PCI considered that it should only apply in the *economic sphere*, in trade-union work, and only for action on 'claims': not at the political level at all. This radical distinction between economics and politics was also to be found in Bordiga's ideas on the party and organization. Zinoviev, who

had continually warned the Italians against such a policy, was driven to say at the First Plenum: ‘The whole philosophy of comrade Terracini amounts to saying yes to d’Aragona, no to Turati… The masses cannot be won without contact with their political organizations and their leaders.’ At the Fourth Congress, Zinoviev again said: ‘In the tactic of the united front, we have very serious differences with the PCI, which considers the united front is possible in the economic sphere, but should absolutely not be used in the political sphere. This is an anti-Marxist view’.[23]

This policy led to the failure of the united front, even in the economic field alone. There was nothing paradoxical in the fact that despite its declarations on the ‘economic united front’, the PCI boycotted the Labour Alliance. The united front was timidly attempted, at least ‘officially’, in a few joint actions. It was only with the split in the Socialist Party, in October 1922, that rapprochement with the Maximalists was attempted – but then it was already too late. Even after fascism had come to power, these rapprochements were fiercely contested by Bordiga, who undermined them, and Communists and Maximalists stood separately for the 1924 elections, held on the simple majority system. Under Comintern pressure, the PCI made a last-minute appeal for electoral agreement to the Socialist Party, but this was ineffective. These rapprochements were to be followed up only after the Lyons Congress, which confirmed Gramsci’s leadership of the party.

But even apart from the PCI’s attitude to the social-democratic organizations, the formation of the rank and file united front clashed with the very idea of the party put forward by the leadership, and with its strategy for taking power. Bordiga’s tendency was strongly Blanquist. ‘We need to be few, but good’, he often said, and his watchword was for a ‘small party’, and ‘10,000 communists’. With the aid of the revolutionary general strike, the 10,000 resolute communists would succeed, through an *insurrection at the right moment*, in dealing the State its death blow.

It must be stressed that the resolutions of the Third (‘Leninist’) Comintern Congress were directed against such ideas, with the slogan ‘To the masses’. ‘From the day of its birth, the Communist International has clearly and unequivocally seen its aim not as the creation of little communist sects which would establish their influence over the working class only by agitation and propaganda … but as the creation of *mass parties?* The very term ‘mass party’, though taken up by Togliatti in particular after 1945 in the familiar revisionist sense, is a Leninist term.[24] It may seem paradoxical, in that the Leninist tradition admits of a basic distinction between the *vanguard* organization (the party) and

mass organization (e.g. the trade unions). In fact, the use of the term ‘mass party’ denotes the constant ambiguity of Comintern analyses of the relation of politics and economics, and of their corresponding modes of organization.

Bordiga’s conception was diametrically opposed, in principle, to that of the KPD, which stressed the electoral conquest of the ‘majority’ of the working class. But in the PCI view, the united front, as an alliance within specific organizations, had no meaning or *raison d’être*. The PCI had to jealously organize its ‘own’, ‘pure’ organizations of a handful of determined men, strictly controlled by the party leadership, and had to fight and denounce every other similar ‘extra-party’ formation.

The PCI attitude towards the red ‘Arditi del popolo’, paramilitary formations formed spontaneously in 1921 to counter fascist attacks, was characteristic. The Arditi included workers, peasants, rank and file trade unionists, socialists, communists, etc. The PCI denounced them and forbade its members to take part in them: ‘The “Arditi del popolo” apparently propose to use the proletarian reaction to the excesses of fascism to re-establish the “order and morality of social life”. The aim of communists is quite different: they want to lead the proletarian struggle to the revolutionary victory. Their position is based on the implacable antithesis between the dictatorship of bourgeois reaction and the dictatorship of the proletarian revolution … They therefore point to the pernicious and defeatist nature of all distinctions between the defensive and offensive of the working class.’[25] The Arditi elements were branded as ‘suspicious’ and ‘confused’, and the PCI organized its own communist squads, stressing ‘the value of isolation’. Gramsci wrote in vain: ‘Are communists opposed to the Arditi del Popolo? Quite the contrary. The Arditi aspire to arm the proletariat, to create a proletarian armed force strong enough to defeat the bourgeoisie…,’[26]

These mistakes were all typical of infantile leftism, and different from those of the KPD line. As for the struggle against fascism, *the PCI resolutely threw itself into the struggle, within the limits imposed by its line*, and was far from having legalistic or electoral illusions. From 1921, the ‘communist squads’ went into action everywhere, often with good results, especially in Milan. Violent fights took place in Genoa and Turin. After the failure of the 1922 strike for legality, the communists, aided by revolutionary syndicalists, routed the fascist troops at Forli and Parma. In Parma, at the instigation of the PCI, the town was organized as a stronghold, and for five days the proletariat beat back Italo Balbo’s elite fascist troops, who withdrew leaving 40 dead and 150 wounded. In the face of this resolute attitude, fascism abstained from direct attacks on the big

towns before it came to power. Lastly, many communists, risking expulsion from the PCI, fought in the ranks of the Arditi.

b. Gramsci and the workers' councils: the Comintern, the trade-union question and the problem of the 'union-party' relation

There was more to the struggle than that. Opposing Bordiga's line was that of the Turin communist group led by Gramsci, which after 1924 increasingly took over the PCI leadership, with Bordiga on its left and Tasca on its right.[27] In fact, during the rise of fascism, and despite their own mistakes, Gramsci and the Turin *Ordine Nuovo* group seem, in their position on the workers' councils, to have been the only section of the Third International in Europe to have grasped the problems of the united front.

To take the mistakes first: there is little doubt that at that time, Gramsci was advocating using the workers' councils to give workers powers which *by the fact of their establishment* would replace the bourgeois State, and *to some extent he misunderstood the problem of the State itself*. This comes out clearly in his description of the 'factory' as the *basic political centre* of capitalist society, simply because it was its basic economic unit.[28]

But in fact Gramsci's conception of the workers' councils contained important positive elements. It was radically different from the revolutionary syndicalist 'self-management' myth. It was based on a correct conception both of alliances among the masses (the working class, poor peasantry and petty bourgeoisie) and of the alliance within the working class, and it understood the correct method of achieving these alliances. The workers' council was seen as a specific extra-party rank and file united front organization. Factory committees were to be transformed into workers' councils, formed in each factory or workshop on the basis of direct election of representatives, without going through the established trade unions and their leaderships. The role of the workers' councils during the strike was to establish control of production. But as *permanent* bodies their role, according to Gramsci, was to carry out 'the transfer of the trade-union struggle from the strictly corporate and reformist field to the terrain of revolutionary struggle'. Their role would certainly include 'purely technical and industrial' tasks, such as the struggle for wage demands, but it lay above all in the 'political preparation of the masses', including their military preparation. *The political role of the workers' councils dominated the economic*. Organized communists were to work within these extra-party rank and file bodies as organizers and as the most conscious elements.[29]

Bordiga, as might have been expected, thought that Gramsci's perspective

belonged with ‘the syndicalist and neo-syndicalist myths’.[30] He saw the problem as an alternative – ‘Take the factory or take power’. This was how he posed it in *Il Soviet* on 22 February 1920, exploiting Gramsci’s relative neglect at this time of the question of the State. Bordiga’s series of articles in *Il Soviet* in January-February 1920, ‘For the Formation of Workers’ Councils in Italy’, developed the idea that it was *first* necessary to conquer and break the State, in order *then* to build workers’ councils in the factories. Bordiga denounced ‘the error of thinking that the proletariat can emancipate itself through economic gains, while capitalism continues to hold political power by means of the State’. Bordiga saw the councils as organizations of the *union* type, equating Gramsci’s position with that of revolutionary syndicalism, and thus passed over the problem to which the workers’ councils attempted to give a reply.

I could continue on this topic, but I will simply note that, through a correct Leninist conception of the necessity of the party, Gramsci seems to have understood the correct relationship between economic and political struggle, with the latter taking primacy in the actual organizational realization of the united front. This was the problem the Third International could never pose in concrete terms, and this is the key to all the Comintern’s about-turns on the ‘trade-union question’.

Having defined the real problem, we can now examine it more closely. The question of trade unions in the Comintern is generally reduced to the question of its turns over the question of alliances. This is only a derivative aspect of the problem. In this respect, I would point out that the Comintern’s general line, varying according to the different countries, was as follows. After the attempts to split the trade unions, trade-union unity (with communists working in the social-democratic trade unions) prevailed from 1921 to 1924. Before the Fifth Congress, there were attempts to create autonomous communist trade unions, especially in Germany, but after the Fifth Congress there was again trade-union unity, the communists trying to organize tendencies or oppositions within the social-democratic trade unions. From 1928 to 1934, the policy was to split the trade unions and to organize autonomous communist trade unions. In the period preparatory to and following the Seventh Congress, there was once more a policy of trade-union re-unification.

The main problem, however, was the Comintern’s conception of the *relationship* between the economic and the political struggles, the respective modes of organization for these struggles and the relationship between the organizations involved. And these problems come together precisely in the

question of the united front.

Again I would advance the following proposition: that the relationship of economic and political struggle was not clarified by the Third International, despite the fact that Lenin made his position clear, especially in his articles in the trade-union debate attacking the mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin. With the progressive re-establishment of economism, connoting the abandonment of a mass line, despite all declarations, the principle of a *basic separation* between economic and political struggle was established. The problem of their relationship would from now be posed in the context of this basic separation. The question of the distinction between the trade union, the specific *mass organization* for economic struggle, and the party, the specific *vanguard organization* for political struggle, and of the relationship between them, was erroneously soldered onto this radical separation and onto the abandonment of the mass line. It was no accident that Lenin, who fought against this state of affairs, introduced the term ‘mass party’ into the resolutions of the Third Comintern Congress.

What were these errors? The primacy of politics was constantly affirmed, but based as this was on the radical separation of politics and economics, the only road advocated for realizing it was that of the direct subordination of the trade union (either the revolutionary trade-union tendency or the communist union) to the party. Party members worked in their trade-union section in the factory, the trade union and the party being the only organizational forms envisaged. *The abandonment of a mass line here took the concrete form of the ‘trade union (the mass organization) becoming the mass base of the ‘party’ (the vanguard organization); the economic in a may became the mass aspect of the political*.[31] The trade union was therefore always seen as the place to organize the economic struggle, and the only place to organize the rank and file united front among the masses. It was not at all accidental, but by a perfectly coherent and logical path, that Bordiga came to accept the united front only in the ‘economic, trade-union’ field.

These factors, taken together, led to the following alternate or parallel results: *either* the communist trade-union fraction (or communist union) carried out to the last the party’s ‘political’ line, which was no longer a mass line, and therefore failed both in its union role and in concretely articulating the economic and the political under the primacy of the latter; *or* it carried on the economic struggle, trying to articulate it to the political struggle only by outbidding the trade-union leaderships (or social-democratic unions) in their economic demands. We have seen what happened to the KPD’s trade-union opposition in such a case. All the

Comintern's about-turns on the trade-union question can be summed up as lurches in one or other of these directions, to which it was driven by its general political line.

I would go still further, and state that the seeds of this situation are to be found as early as the resolutions of the Second and Third Congresses of the International, on the question of the trade unions and the united front.

The problem of 'workers' industrial councils' or 'factory councils' – bringing us back to Gramsci – was in fact well posed by the Second and Third Congresses. These two congresses put the emphasis precisely on the need to create such councils as 'real mass organizations of the proletariat'.[32] They stressed the necessity to distinguish between such 'councils' and 'trade unions'. 'Workers' industrial councils cannot replace the trade unions. They can only be organized in the course of action … and little by little create a general apparatus capable of directing the whole struggle.' These councils were, *par excellence*, the specific forms of organization of the 'rank and file' united front; they had to be elected directly by all the workers, independent of political or trade-union affiliation. It is noteworthy too that the first three congresses clearly distinguished these workers' councils from *factory committees* (*Betriebsräte*), which were legal and official, and had been established, particularly in Germany and Italy, after the war.

At first sight, it seems that these congresses saw the workers' councils as linked to some extent to a period of revolutionary offensive and imminent revolution, as nuclei of 'dual power'. The Second Congress declared: 'The sharing of all the tasks of the working class between the workers' industrial councils and the trade unions is the result of the historical development of the Revolution.' But that was not the last word. The Third Congress, recognizing stabilization, put forward theses which conceived the councils as *permanent forms* of united front organization, while shifting the emphasis to the role of the trade unions.

The key point, however, is the role assigned to the councils. For the International, their specific role was *in the economic field*. The Second Congress defined their role as 'basically inspired by the effort to achieve control of industry, as the particular historical task of the workers' industrial councils', i.e. to gain 'workers' control' over the supply of raw materials to the factory, over its economic situation, its financial operations, etc.

The turn made by the Third Congress in this respect is clearer still. With 'stabilization', the tasks of the workers' councils took the form of struggles against redundancies, against factory closures, for wage increases and improved

working conditions. The political role, indeed the effective primacy of politics within the workers' councils stressed by Gramsci, was weakened. This primacy was of course affirmed in resolutions, but from now on there was a turn to the party-union solution, as I have mentioned. Given this turn, there are some grounds for wondering what the need for workers' councils could be: they no longer seemed to have a specific role to play relative to the unions and the party. Moreover, confined to the economic field the workers' councils seemed to *fragment* the working class in a *corporative* way, undermining the gains made by the trade unions at the industrial and national levels.

The First International Congress of Revolutionary Trade Unions held in Moscow in July 1921, was right about this when it said: 'To the extent that the workers' unions succeed against the trade-union bureaucracy,… *the factory councils become the nuclei of the union in the factory.*'[33] The Comintern too dealt with the question at its Fifth Congress (1924). Workers' councils entirely disappeared by a subtle substitution. They were now no more than factory committees (*Betriebsräte*) from which the International had previously been careful to distinguish them.[34] From now on all that counted with the Comintern was the work of the communist 'union fraction' on the one hand, and the defunct factory committees on the other.

This is a key problem, but I cannot pursue it here. I only want to draw attention to the problem which the workers' councils at least attempted to answer.

V. FASCISM AND THE WORKING CLASS

a. Fascist organizations and the working class

In broad outlines, the same developments are to be found in Italy as in Germany, as far as the relation of fascism to the working class is concerned. The difference was that the resistance of the Italian working class was stronger, and the origins of Italian fascism more 'syndicalist', and so the crushing of the working class took longer, and required a more devious and cautious strategy than in Germany. The corporatist 'integration' of the working class into the fascist state was less successful than in Germany.

The base of fascism in the Italian working class was similar to that of national socialism in the German working class. In July 1922, the National Confederation of Corporations (the fascist 'union') had 700,000 members, but they were primarily press-ganged agricultural workers, white-collar workers and members of the liberal professions. In March 1923, in the elections to the Fiat commissions in Turin, the CGL had 72.6 per cent of the votes and the fascists

27.4 per cent. But in the same elections a year later, in August 1924, the CGL vote increased to 85.8 per cent, and the fascist vote fell to 14.2 per cent.

The Fascist Party had a lower percentage of workers in it than the NSDAP. Comparing statistics for the composition of the Fascist Party in 1921[35] and for the NSDAP in 1930,[36] we find that 17 per cent of the Fascist Party were workers, including seamen, compared with 28 per cent of the NSDAP. In the following two years, the percentage increased much more for the NSDAP (to 32 per cent in 1933) than for the Fascist Party. But comparing these figures with the percentage of the working class in the population of these countries as a whole (24.3 per cent in Italy in 1921, about 45 per cent in Germany in 1930), the two cases are fairly similar.

Two supplementary points should be considered here. The problem of unemployment was much less acute in Italy than in Germany, and this is also by way of an indirect reply to those who reduce the rise of fascism to economic crisis and unemployment. The statistics for Italy at the beginning of 1921 show 500,000 unemployed, a figure which dropped to 380,000 by the end of 1922. Even if the figures are lower than they really should be, they were clearly in no way comparable to the German figures. On the other hand, the problem of elements declassed by the war was more acute than in Germany in the immediate post-war period. There were about 160,000 declassed reserve officers and NCOs, who were attacked by the left parties and the masses in their revived anti-interventionist fervour. Gramsci was to say that one of the basic errors of the left-wing parties had been their attitude towards these ‘veterans’, who joined the Fascist Party *en masse*.

b. The condition of the working class under fascism: the CGL and the fascist trade unionists

What happened to the condition of the Italian industrial workers under fascism? The Italian economy, weaker than the German, was less adept at withstanding either the 1929 crisis or the war economy in particular. But until about 1935, the situation was not so very different.

First of all, unemployment was reduced, at least for a long period: the number of unemployed fell to 125,000 in 1925. During these years, the increase in the economic exploitation of the industrial workers was *mainly relative* to the rise in profits. As for the development of *average real wages*, the figures for earnings as a whole and not just industrial wages, taking into account the cost of living, and with a base of 100 for 1913, are 127 in 1921 and 123 in 1922 (conjuncture of high wages), 116 in 1923 and 113.6 in 1924, rising again to 121 in 1928. After a fall in 1930, there was a gradual rise to about 125 in 1934, then a gradual fall,

and a sharp plunge with the war economy.[37]

Excluding non-productive employees, whose salaries either fell while average earnings remained stable, or fell much further than the average, and excluding the figures for agricultural workers, whose wages were forced down by about 50 per cent during the rise of fascism, it emerges that from 1922 to about 1935, the real wages of *industrial workers*, despite fluctuations, remained as a whole fairly stable, without however reaching their 1921 level. In the fall in average earnings in the following period, industrial workers' wages also suffered, though the fall in the salaries of non-productive employees accounted for the greater part. Lastly, because of the fascist policy of *stratifying* wages, it was the *basic rates* of industrial workers which fell first and most severely.[38]

Other forms of exploitation such as speed-up should not be lost sight of, nor should other aspects of fascist policy which created different wage categories among the industrial workers themselves, with the sole aim of dividing the working class. In particular, fascist economic policy against unemployment (through public works, etc.) was much less advanced than that of national socialism. In the renewed struggle against unemployment after 1933, the difference between the industrial capacity of the two countries and the repercussions of the 1929 crisis in Italy made it easier to introduce the forty-hour week for *certain categories* of workers, without maintaining the same weekly wage, which reduced their earnings considerably.

From another point of view, in response to the deteriorating condition of the Italian working class after 1934, Italian fascism did seem to grant some concessions in 'social' legislation, which had previously been practically non-existent in Italy: insurance was established for industrial accidents, illness, old age, childbirth, etc.[39]

Fascist policy towards the working class gave a certain leeway to 'free' trade unions, in particular the social-democratic C G L, by contrast with its attitude towards working-class parties. As early as 1921, Mussolini had declared that the CGL should not be confused with the parliamentary socialists. In 1923, he offered the union deputies Baldesi and d'Aragona participation in the government. Until 1925, the CGL was tolerated at the top levels, while at the base the subordination of the local federations to administrative tutelage was intensified, property was confiscated, etc. The attack came in 1926, and faced with physical and legal repression, the CGL dissolved itself in 1927.

The fascist trade unions, however, organized strikes in the metallurgical industry in 1924–5; from 1925 they called for their cherished corporatism,

reminiscent of revolutionary syndicalism, and for ‘workers’ self-government’. The trade unions ought, they said, to incorporate the employers and submit them to the ‘technical control’ of the workers. The attempt failed: in 1926 the Rocco law on corporations laid down the principle of separate representation of employers and workers, within ‘corporatist’ organizations operating only at the top national level. But although the plans of these trade unionists failed, the corporatist subjection of the working class to the employers and the fascist State was less strong here than in Germany. This state of affairs was confirmed a year later with the passing of the Labour Charter (1927).

The fascist trade unionists none the less went on agitating vigorously. The axe fell in 1928: Rossoni and his team were disgraced, the fascist trade-union confederation was dissolved into thirteen industrial federations, and the fascist union machine was thoroughly purged. From then on, though agitation went on despite all this, Mussolini, helped by strong corporatist declarations, was able in 1934 to bring some high officials of the purged fascist unions into the employers’ organizations, which were national semi-State bodies. Lastly, in 1943, after Mussolini’s fall, there was an attempt to resurrect the ‘corporatist dream’ in the ‘social republic’ of Salo, in Northern Italy.

It is scarcely necessary to go into details of the other aspects of fascist policy towards the working class, and the role of fascist ideology. The general outlines are similar to those of national socialism, although the ‘working-class’ side of this ideology was stronger in Italy. The demands of the ‘left’ trade-unionist wing of Italian fascism were themselves much more radical than those of the national-socialist ‘left wing’ in Germany.

Appendix: The USSR and the Comintern

An examination of the problem of the USSR's relation to the Comintern will allow us to justify the theses advanced in and up to Part 4.

During the period after the Sixth Congress (1928), a particularly close relation was established between Comintern policy and the USSR; although a relation had existed from the very foundation of the Comintern. Before 1928, however, this relation was more or less indirect and not an immediate one. *The necessary link via which it was basically established was a general line characterized by economism, the lack of a mass line and the abandonment of proletarian internationalism*. This was the line which progressively came to dominate *both* Bolshevik party policy within the USSR *and* the policies of most of the national communist parties.

But even after the tie-up between Comintern policy and the USSR had become 'particularly close',[1] this link of the same general line welding them together still *kept its importance*. By bearing this in mind:

(a) We can understand the effectiveness of the tie-up, despite the unevenness with which local parties applied Comintern directives, and despite the certain margin of autonomy which they kept.

(b) We can account for a whole series of 'contradictions' and 'errors' (in the real sense) in the Bolshevik party's internal policy and in the USSR's world strategy: these 'contradictions' and 'errors' had repercussions on Comintern policy.

(c) We can articulate and understand the real significance of certain ‘factors’ or ‘events’ concerning the USSR which are generally thought to determine Comintern policy *in themselves*. By establishing the relation between the general line and the class struggle, we may hope to grasp what actually happened in the USSR and thus to locate the meaning and the role of these various factors in the ties uniting the Comintern to the USSR.

Authors of the most diverse views have attempted to establish relations between a series of ‘events’. Their aim has generally been to establish without any precise periodization a direct, immediate and sufficient tie-up between the USSR and the Comintern, from the very time (or almost) that the Comintern was established. But the factors they adduce are not sufficient in themselves to explain the tie between the USSR and the Comintern either before 1928 or *even after that time*.

(1) The first factor which is often proposed is *the internal factional struggle within the Bolshevik party*. In broad outline, the relation between the USSR and the Comintern is explained as follows: In the struggle against the Left Opposition, Stalin depended directly on the ‘rightist’ elements in the USSR and the Comintern, the result being that the Comintern took a turn to the ‘right’. Then when he was engaged in a struggle against the Right Opposition in the USSR exactly the opposite happened and the Comintern took a turn to the ‘left’.[2]

The first objection to this is that the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ in this context remain purely descriptive until we have determined the conjuncture of the class struggle in the USSR. Moreover, although it may happen that we can distinguish these ‘turns’ by their *effects*, we must not forget that they are situated (though to varying degrees) *on the terrain* of the one general line in question. And furthermore, after 1928 these ‘left/right’ differentiations seem to become indistinct, even at the purely phenomenal level.

But if we retain this schema, the contradictions are flagrant – as much before 1928 as after. Whilst the struggle against the Left Opposition was at its height, the Comintern began its turn to the ‘left’ with the Fifth Congress (1924). Nor can the confused and ambiguous period which the Comintern went through between 1924 and 1928 be explained in this way, for at this level, the situation in the USSR seems clear (i.e. the struggle against the Left Opposition). Stalin’s struggle against the Right Opposition seems on the surface to fit in better with the Comintern’s 1928 turn, provided that the latter is considered as a real ‘ultra-left’ turn, which in fact it was not. But for the period immediately preceding Dimitrov’s ‘right’ turn, the contradictions are flagrant. This period coincides

exactly with the intense struggle in the USSR against the Right Opposition.

Finally, although the great opposition figures had already been politically eliminated by this date, we now know that before he went on to eliminate physically the entire old cadre of the Bolshevik party and the Red Army, Stalin was running up against extremely hostile internal opposition (e.g. Kirov, Ordjonikidze, etc.). This opposition evidently cannot be understood according to the classic 'left/right' schema.

(2) A second factor which is often claimed to be a sufficient and exhaustive determinant of the relation between the USSR and the Comintern is the *USSR's foreign policy*.

It is true that this element played an important role in Comintern policy, but it was not a direct or immediate role until after 1928. The USSR's foreign policy took over Comintern policy through the necessary link of a single general line dominant (though of course not to the same degree) both in the USSR and in the foreign communist parties (i.e. economism, lack of a mass line and the progressive abandonment of internationalism). *The obvious illustration of this is provided by the one great 'exception' (and it occurred after 1928)*: namely China, where, because of the Chinese Communist Party's line under Mao, the link was broken and the tie-up never re-established, which as we know, was what saved the Chinese revolution.[3]

Moreover, even after 1928, the general political line remained important as the link in the relation between the USSR and the Comintern:

(a) It helped to decide the significance of the USSR's foreign policy: 'defence of the USSR, the only proletarian State', or 'policy of the USSR as a great power'.

(b) It allows us to account for a series of contradictions, which take the form of 'errors' in the strong sense, in that Comintern policy often seems to have gone *against* the USSR's 'interests', independent of the direction which its foreign policy might have taken.

A very revealing but simple example of this is the following. The explanation often proposed for the 'social fascism' line of 1928, especially with regard to Germany, is that German big capital favoured a policy of 'collaboration' with the USSR; this policy had been inaugurated by von Seekt in the Rapallo treaty, a treaty which left its mark on the whole of Soviet foreign policy in Europe, while German social democracy was oriented towards an 'anti-Russian' policy of open alliance with Anglo-French or even American imperialism. These facts in themselves are quite correct. With the 1928 turn, Stalin is then seen waging his

main battle against European social democracy, and German social democracy in particular, and not against Hitler, who represented German big capital whose favours had been assured by the Rapallo treaty. This, in broad outline, is one interpretation of the German-Soviet pact.

But as an explanation it ignores one essential fact. From 1925 and in particular in 1927 Stalin shows in a number of statements that he was perfectly aware of the fact that Hitler's victory in Germany would inevitably be accompanied by a war against the USSR. What then was the basis of the monumental 'error' of considering that the 'social fascism' line could effectively block the advance of Hitler?[4]

(3) The third factor often claimed to be determinant of the relation between the USSR and the Comintern is *the series of massive turns taken by the* Bolshevik party in its internal policy and the effects of these turns on the Comintern.

This has been assumed to be of great importance. But it comes up against the same stumbling-block as 'factor' no. 1: the essential task of getting behind appearances, locating the *real* turns and relating them to the class struggle in the USSR. Anyway, this factor like the others has no direct or immediate influence on Comintern policy before 1928. How could we use it to explain, at the height of the NEP period in the USSR, the Comintern's consecutive turns at the Fourth (1922–3) and Fifth (1924) Congresses and at the Fifth Plenum (1925)?

Here too, the general line is important as a link, even after 1928.

(a) By reference to it, we reach the real, precise explanation of these 'internal turns', by establishing their relation to the class struggle of which this line was the effect: even after 1928, the 'left/right' character of these turns was becoming blurred (just as is the case for the Comintern's turns).

(b) By means of it, certain apparent contradictions between the turns within the USSR and those in the Comintern become explicable.

Thus, for example, many authors explain the Comintern's so-called 'ultra-left' turn of 1928 by reducing it to the so-called 'ultra-left' turn in the USSR under Stalin, with his policy of 'collectivization' of the peasantry. When we relate them to the general line outlined above, we find that these very characterizations of 'ultra-left' raise problems. But leaving this aside, what is of immediate importance to us is that the obvious contradiction between these two 'turns' cannot be explained without also considering the general line. The political turn in the USSR itself, which was not confirmed until after 1929, was based on a thesis presupposed by the first Soviet Five Year Plan. According to this, the USSR was condemned to a lengthy period of isolation and would even be driven

to war with the imperialist countries; i.e. revolution in Europe was admitted to be impossible for a long time to come. On the other hand, the Comintern's *parallel* turn was explicitly determined by the analyses and forecasts of the 1929 crisis and by the Comintern's estimate that revolution was inevitable and imminent in Europe – an estimate which governed its whole policy.[5]

These remarks should not be misinterpreted, I do not want to deny or minimize the influence of the factors described on Comintern policy when I emphasize the key role played by the general political line *as a link in the relation between the USSR and the Comintern*. I emphasize it rather because of the specific role which it takes on *within the USSR itself*. This line had a determinant relation to 'what went on in the USSR'; in its relation to the class struggle, it enables us to uncover the real meaning of these 'events' and therefore to explain their connection.

Thus we come to the second and most important question. To what exactly do economism, the lack of a mass line and the progressive abandonment of proletarian internationalism correspond in the USSR itself? *What are their causes? What are their consequences?*

(1) Unless we have a purely idealistic vision of history, we cannot be content to see these things as simple 'errors' or 'deviations'. Of course this line led to concrete 'errors'. It is wrong to think of 'error' as something purely subjective: this was a wrong line (not just a simple error or deviation), which means that it actually *governed* the concrete errors flowing from it.

(2) Nor can it be seen as a line emanating from a simple 'bureaucratic caste'. This is not to say that that element did not – at the beginning and for a certain time – have its own specific role to play. But the kind of line which governed both the USSR's internal policy and the world Communist movement cannot be related to any sort of bureaucracy. Trotsky had an inkling of this, in that he stopped at the notion of 'bureaucracy' and never tried to elucidate the general line governing this policy; consistent with his own views, he was satisfied with a conception of 'bureaucratic zig-zags'.

(3) It is also wrong to use an entirely false conception of 'the second stage' and to attempt to reduce the line to this stage.

To clarify: Mao introduced *new and crucially important* elements into Marxist-Leninist theory and practice. The basis of these new elements is firstly, the present period of imperialism and its effects on the worldwide class struggle, and secondly, the historical experience of the Chinese revolution. So it is impossible to define in full what the concept of the 'third stage' refers to until we

have:

(a) made clear both what exactly specifies the contemporary period of imperialism and the *universal* aspects of the Chinese revolution, notably those which concern the imperialist metropolitan countries;

(b) made precisely clear the meaning of ‘stage’ and ‘second stage’; it is only by this means that we can hope to determine the ‘third stage’.

I shall deal simply with the second point since it is of direct interest for us and because I want to refute what seems to me a completely mistaken conception of the ‘second stage’. Today the ‘second stage’ is most often understood as meaning that all that happened in the USSR and the Comintern was a *necessary consequence* of a stage which still lacked the historical experience of the Chinese revolution and of Mao’s thought.

In this conception, which is a purely evolutionist and fatalist doctrine of ‘stages’, ‘the question of Stalin’ cannot be posed. According to it, the general political line in the USSR and the Comintern is *from beginning to end* the inevitable corollary of the second stage, which thus includes ‘Lenin’ and ‘Stalin’ in a single unit *with the same status*. ‘Lenin-Stalin’, in their *continuity*, represent the ‘positive gains’ acquired within the ‘necessary limits’ of the ‘second stage’. Apart from the ‘errors of Stalin’, there is no essential interruption in the USSR’s general line from 1917 until Khrushchev.’ Stalin’s errors’ are interpreted as purely subjective or else as simple errors of direction or aim in a ‘necessary stage’.

But the explanation is false even at this elementary level, and the question of the ‘third stage’ cannot be clarified until it is discarded. In the sense of being Lenin’s thought and policy, Leninism itself is of course *limited* both by the ‘period’ in which it is situated and *relative* to Mao’s thought and policy. We have already noted these limits in this book and we shall return to them later. The same limitations hold for Stalin.

But from this point of view, it is also true that *considerable splits* occurred in the process both in the USSR and in the Comintern: we may schematize these as the *distance* between ‘Lenin’ and ‘Stalin’ (although there was of course more than one ‘Stalin’). To say then that Lenin himself is limited because of the period in which he is situated (Stalin being similarly limited) is one thing. But it is something quite different to say that economism, the lack of a mass line and the abandonment of proletarian internationalism which progressively dominated the policy of the Bolshevik party and the Comintern can be equated with the ‘necessarily limited Leninism’ of the ‘second stage’ *plus* Stalin’s errors; what is more, it is also false.

Moreover, this wholly perverts the question of the ‘third stage’. The context and meaning of the third stage are in fact quite different depending on whether it is defined according to the above conception (Stalin being subsumed under the ‘necessarily limited Leninism’ of the ‘second stage’) or whether it is defined according to the principles I uphold. I can give a simple example: we can consider Mao’s principle of ‘politics in command’ as a specific characteristic of the ‘third stage’ only if we relate it to Stalin and his unfettered economism and if we wrongly assimilate Lenin to him. But relative to Lenin, it is absolutely wrong to consider this as a specific characteristic of the ‘third stage’ since he, unlike Stalin, always advocated and applied it.

This question had to be posed first before tackling what is of interest to us here. The interpretation I have criticized made it impossible to undertake an analysis of ‘what went on in the USSR’ in the period which interests us, for such an analysis ought to be based precisely on the historical experience of the Chinese revolution and on the principles developed by Mao. If according to this interpretation no essential interruption occurred between Lenin and Stalin, it is because it holds that *no essential change occurred in the USSR in the evolution of forces in the class struggle until Stalin died*. The ‘Soviet bourgeoisie’ is supposed to have emerged suddenly with the advent of Khrushchev, just as Minerva emerged fully armed from Jupiter’s head. This is a much more serious misinterpretation, since it forbids any periodization of the era which interests us in the USSR on the basis of the desperate class struggle which was under way there.

I cannot go into this periodization here, but I must make two points about it. My aim is to show that the periodization in the USSR and in the Comintern, and their relationship, cannot be grasped in their relation to the class struggle in the USSR unless we refer to the general line which gradually became dominant there.

During the whole of this period, there was a *desperate struggle* in the USSR between the ‘two roads’ (i.e. the socialist and capitalist roads: there is no alternative to these two). I say between the two roads *and not between the two lines* since there were not ‘two’ lines in the USSR and in the Comintern, the various ‘oppositions’ being in the last analysis located (to unequal degrees) on the same ground as the official line.[6] By a contradictory process, the struggle between the two roads ended in the ‘Soviet bourgeoisie’ being reconstituted in a new form and in its taking over State power. This process of reconstituting the ‘Soviet bourgeoisie’ (and the impact of the latter on the class struggle) was in

full swing under Stalin himself.

The reconstitution of the 'Soviet bourgeoisie' depended on a whole series of historical conditions in the USSR. What were the principal means of its reconstitution? How did it influence the working class and Bolshevik party policy?

In the light of the Chinese experience, we now know that this reconstitution has its way prepared for it by a political line of the party of the working class. Probably the most important effects concern the State apparatuses, including the ideological apparatuses. These apparatuses are the refuges of the old bourgeoisie (which at the beginning suffers a *relative* loss of its economic place) and provide the bastions of its reconstitution in a new form. 'Bureaucratic deformation' naturally played a part in this process; for one thing, it was the necessary condition for forming the nucleus of the State bourgeoisie. But this policy towards the apparatuses *was itself governed by a general line which had much wider effects: i.e. by economism, the lack of a mass line (which bourgeois practices produce) and their corollary, the abandonment of proletarian internationalism.*[7]

So this general line was neither a simple error nor a mere accident; it was linked to the class struggle in the USSR. Essentially it resulted from the persistence of bourgeois ideology during the transition. This was able to persist because the bourgeoisie, which had taken refuge as a social force in the State apparatuses, continued to influence actions, its continued influence being itself due to a series of historical factors: the growing presence of the 'Soviet bourgeoisie' at the very heart of the Bolshevik party is important here. The line then appears to have been the essential 'breach' which allowed the beginning of the process of reconstituting the 'Soviet bourgeoisie' as a social force in a new form.

But at the same time the line appears increasingly to have been one of the principal *effects* of this process of reconstitution and of the growing weight of the 'Soviet bourgeoisie' in the class struggle in the USSR. Thus although it had its particular role to play in 'what went on in the USSR', the line derived from the struggle there, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

We can now understand why this line was the essential lynch-pin of the relation between the USSR and the Comintern throughout the process: related as it was to the class struggle in the USSR, this line allowed the USSR's influence on the Comintern to be made concrete.

We can now also outline the possibility of dislocations and inequalities between 'what went on in the USSR' and the process in the Comintern. In fact

the two aspects of the process *in the USSR itself* (i.e. (i) the steps of the class struggle, which was the principal and dominant aspect there and (ii) the concrete evolution of the line) developed unequally in relation to one another. This inequality either allowed or introduced dislocations between the turns in the USSR's class struggle and those of the Comintern, even though the latter were related to 'what went on in the USSR' by being linked by the line. Either these dislocations were chronological (in that the Comintern process either followed or preceded the USSR process) or they took on the form of 'contradictions' between 'what went on in the USSR' and the process in Comintern.

None of this means that the struggles within the Bolshevik party, the party's policy within the USSR and the USSR's foreign policy did not bring increasing weight to bear upon Comintern policy. *But the problem shifts* in this case too. These 'factors' lack all significance for a serious periodization unless they are articulated around the following questions. What were the steps in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the USSR and what was the process of modification of the class nature of the Soviet State in this respect? What were the steps in the process of making 'concessions' to this 'Soviet bourgeoisie', which was not of course explicitly identifiable as such? From what moment did the 'Soviet bourgeoisie' take on the role of a social force and form itself into an effective social class? At what moments in this contradictory process did it become the principal aspect of the contradiction? When and how did it assert its political hegemony?

No history of the USSR has yet been written which takes the class struggle as its connecting thread and which uses the line described above to relate these various factors to the steps of the class struggle in the USSR. Until such a detailed and conclusive account is available it is impossible to establish a more vigorous periodization of the Comintern.[8] As far as those questions I have just mentioned are concerned, *it is clear that some essential things happened under Stalin himself*: the post-1928 collectivization, the 1936 proclamation of 'the State of the whole people', the physical liquidation of all the old cadres of the Bolshevik party and the Red Army.

To sum up: the general line which was progressively dominant in the USSR and in the Comintern can allow us to make a relatively clear periodization of the Comintern, a periodization which can also be very useful for the history of the USSR. But this is insufficient. For example, we have seen how the Comintern's Sixth (1928) and Seventh (1935) Congresses cannot be interpreted on the model of a pendulum (left opportunism/right opportunism), but that there is no simple

continuity between them either. That corroborates the view that the turn in Soviet policy in relation to the peasantry as a whole was not a simple, internal, 'ultra-left' turn. But it will be impossible to make a deeper analysis of this problem in relation to the Comintern until we have exactly established what was the real process involving the Soviet bourgeoisie during the period of the class struggle in the USSR – which was considerably more than a simple struggle of the proletariat and poor peasants against the kulaks.

I shall give one last example: until we have periodized the class nature of the State in the USSR from this point of view, we cannot finally decide on the direction of the Soviet foreign policy or on its exact role in Comintern policy. As long as the class nature of the Soviet State remained proletarian, the slogan of 'defence of the USSR', which gradually became dominant in the Comintern, did not necessarily (I repeat: *not necessarily)* entail the abandonment of internationalism and the Comintern's mechanical submission to the interests of Soviet foreign policy. But in this case too an analysis of what happened in the Comintern can be a crucial indicator of what was really going on in the USSR itself.[9]

Part Five

Fascism and the Petty Bourgeoisie

The relationship between fascism, the fascist party and fascist State and the petty bourgeoisie are ideal ground for the study of the petty bourgeoisie in general. Some introductory remarks on the petty bourgeoisie are in order here.

1

The Class Nature of the Petty Bourgeoisie and Petty-bourgeois Ideology

The definition of the class nature of the petty bourgeoisie is the focal point of the Marxist theory of social classes. It very clearly shows that, contrary to an economistic conception of social classes, relations of production alone are not sufficient, in Marxist theory, to determine the place a social class occupies in a mode of production and to locate it within social formation. It is absolutely indispensable to refer to ideological and political relations. I have attempted to formulate this elsewhere, by saying that in a given social formation, a class which is capable of constituting itself as a social force can only be located when its place in the relations of production produces 'pertinent effects' at the political and ideological levels.[1] No matter how it might appear, this was always the position of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and very clearly, of Mao.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of the rural petty bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeois class can be seen to contain two main ensembles of agents, with nothing in common, at first sight, in the productive process. *If, confronted with these two groups, we can speak of a single petty-bourgeois class, it is because their two distinct places in the relations of production have the same effects on the political and ideological plane*. The petty bourgeoisie is thus unified, in fact, in political and ideological relations.

The initial meaning of petty bourgeoisie, on the economic plane, is *small-scale production and small-scale ownership*: this is the 'traditional' petty

bourgeoisie with which Marx, Engels and Lenin himself were mainly concerned.

(a) *Small-scale production*: those forms of artisan work or small family businesses in which the same agent is both owner and possessor of the means of production, and works directly with them. There is no economic exploitation, strictly speaking, since such forms of production do not employ paid workers, or do so only very occasionally. Labour is provided mainly by the actual owner or by the members of his family, who are not paid wages. Small-scale production of this sort draws profit from the sale of its goods and by participation in the total redistribution of surplus value, but it does not directly extract surplus value.

(b) *Small-scale ownership*: mainly *small-scale commerce* in the sphere of the circulation of capital, in which the owner of the business, helped by his family, provides the labour, and only very occasionally employs wage labour.

These two groupings of the traditional petty bourgeoisie can be said to have a common economic position in that they do not directly exploit wage labour. This particular petty bourgeoisie does not belong, as such, to the 'pure' capitalist mode of production (capital-wage labour). Its existence in a capitalist formation depends on: (a) the coexistence in this formation of several modes of production, including the feudal mode, or at least certain 'elements' of this mode;[2] (b) the presence in this formation of the form of *simple commodity* production, which is the form of transition from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production.

Its existence therefore also depends on the concrete historical forms this transition has taken. In France, for example, the particular persistence of small-scale production and small-scale ownership is due to the *political forms* assumed by the transition (the bourgeoisie drawing on the support of the petty bourgeoisie against the nobility).

Marx and Engels emphasized the *tendency* for the petty bourgeoisie to be undermined and eliminated in a capitalist formation: Lenin described it as a 'transitional class'. When the capitalist mode of production becomes dominant and generalized, a minority of its members are integrated into the bourgeoisie, in a variety of ways, while the great mass are 'proletarianized'.

However, we can also define certain groups as part of the petty bourgeoisie who have quite a different place in the economy. This is what may be termed the 'new' petty bourgeoisie, whose importance was already recognized by Lenin. It is new in the sense that, unlike the first, it is not in the least fated to disappear; rather, the expansion of the capitalist mode of production (CMP), and its passage to the stage of monopoly capitalism, provide the conditions for its development and growth. I refer to *non-productive salaried employees*.

I shall leave aside the problem of the 'technical personnel' of the firm (the

‘bearers of science’) in order to avoid the complicated discussion about whether they are ‘non-productive workers’. I shall restrict myself to the most important groups of employees whom Marx defined unequivocally as *not* being productive workers, that is, not direct producers of commodities and surplus value in the CMP.[3]

This applies, firstly, to those employed in the *circulation of capital*, and to those who contribute to *realizing* surplus value: salaried employees in commerce, banking, insurance, sales departments, advertising, etc., as well as ‘service’ employees. It applies, secondly, to *civil servants* in the various branches of the State apparatus (the public services, with the exception of course of workers in nationalized factories). These are nonproductive employees whose function is to ensure, through the role of the State, the *reproduction* of the conditions of production of surplus value. They do not produce surplus value. They too sell their labour-power, and their salaries too are determined by the cost of reproducing it, but their exploitation is accomplished by the direct extraction of surplus labour, and not by the production of surplus value.[4]

These two groupings, small-scale producers and small-scale owners on the one hand, non-productive employees on the other, therefore occupy quite different economic positions. The two groups have only a *negative* characteristic in common on this plane, in that they belong neither to the bourgeoisie nor to the proletariat. Yet this negative criterion is not an adequate basis for a common or related place within the economic: it is relevant only at the political level.

What makes it possible for the two groups to be considered as part of the *same class*, the ‘petty bourgeoisie’, is that their different economic positions generally have the same effects at the political and ideological level. The relevant criteria for explaining this identity of effects at these levels are, in the first case, small-scale production and above all the small-scale *ownership* involved in it, in the second case, exploitation experienced in the ‘juridical’ form of ‘salary’, and not directly in production.

Before examining the identity of effects on the ideological plane, I must first say something about the famous ‘petty-bourgeois ideology’.

Taking into account the close relationship between the ideology of a class and its political position, the only real class ideologies in a capitalist social formation are those of the two basic classes in irreconcilable political opposition: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. That is, the only ideological ensembles with a coherent, relatively systematic structure are the dominant, bourgeois ideology, and the ideology linked to the working class.

It is none the less accurate to speak of an effective *sub-ensemble of 'petty-bourgeois' ideology*, formed by the influence of the (dominant) bourgeois ideology on the petty bourgeoisie's *own aspirations* relative to its specific class situation. In twisting and adapting bourgeois ideology to its aspirations, the petty bourgeoisie also adds to it specific ideological 'elements' originating in its own class situation. But there is still more to it. In a capitalist formation, an ideology linked to the working class exists simultaneously. Lenin pointed out that the dominant ideology itself contains in its discourse the 'elements' of such ideology. Because of the petty bourgeoisie's ambiguous class situation, its ideological sub-ensemble 'borrows' from working-class ideology much more than does the dominant ideology, and deflects and adapts it to the petty bourgeoisie's own aspirations.

This must all be kept in mind to avoid misunderstandings when speaking of 'petty-bourgeois ideology'. Given the shifting and unstable character of this ideology, the conjunctural position of the petty bourgeoisie determines the form in which these contradictory factors combine, i.e. the role and forms of influence of bourgeois ideology, the role of the ideological 'elements' peculiar to the petty bourgeoisie, and the forms and role of the 'borrowings' from the ideology linked to the working class.

Let us return, then, to the problem of the identity at the ideological level of the effects of the different economic positions occupied by the two major petty-bourgeois groupings. I shall of necessity be very schematic.

At the economic level, the small-scale producer and the small-scale owner are close both to the bourgeoisie (through ownership) and to the proletariat, the small-scale owner himself being the actual labourer. They are also opposed to both the bourgeoisie, which progressively crushes them economically, and to the proletariat, as they fear proletarianization and are fiercely attached to (small) property. At the ideological level, this often has the following effects:

(a) *Status quo anti-capitalism*: against 'big money' and 'great fortunes', but in favour of the *status quo*, for this group clings to its property and fears proletarianization. This is often associated with an 'egalitarian' aspect, against monopolies and for a return to 'equality of opportunity'; for 'fair' competition on the one hand, and the parliamentary cretinism of equal suffrage on the other. The petty bourgeoisie wants change without changing the system. It also aspires to 'participate' in the 'distribution' of political power, without wanting a radical transformation of it.

(b) *The myth of the 'ladder'*: aspirations to social mobility, not the

revolutionary transformation of society. With the fear of proletarianization below, and the attraction of the bourgeoisie above, the petty bourgeoisie aspires to join the bourgeoisie, by the individual rise of the ‘best’ and ‘most able’. This aspect therefore often takes ‘elitist’ forms, standing for the renewal of elites, for the replacement of a bourgeoisie ‘not doing its job’ by the petty bourgeoisie, without society changing.

(c) *The ‘power fetishism’* described by Lenin. Because of its economic *isolation* (which also gives rise to ‘petty-bourgeois individualism’), and because of its economic closeness and antagonism to both bourgeoisie and proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie believes in the ‘neutral’ State above classes. It expects the State to nurture it and arrest its decline. This often leads to ‘statolatry’: the petty bourgeoisie *identifies* itself with the State, whose neutrality it supposes to be akin to its own, since it sees itself as a ‘neutral’ class between the bourgeoisie and the working class, and therefore a pillar of the State – *‘its’* State. It aspires to be the ‘arbitrator’ of society, because, as Marx says, it would like the whole of society to become petty-bourgeois.

Similar ideological effects result from the ‘economic’ situation of non-productive employees, who for their part, experience their exploitation not in production, but mainly in the juridical (and therefore largely illusory) form of the salary:

(a) *Status quo anti-capitalism*. Effective exploitation is hidden here, because it is experienced mainly in the form of the salary. This group therefore aspires to ‘social justice’, through State redistribution of income. They make declarations against ‘big money’, mainly in the form of demands about taxation. There is an ‘egalitarian’ aspect to the demand for equalization of ‘income’, and often parliamentary cretinism comes in too. They fear proletarianization, but above all they fear a revolutionary transformation of society, because of the insecurity they experience through their salaried position. They fear an upheaval which could affect the earnings of non-productive employees, and they often fail to take into account the mechanisms of production, and the exploitative role of ownership of the means of production. One expression of this is the particular corporatist forms assumed by the trade-union struggle of this group.

(b) *The ladder*: upward aspirations. The ideological tendency to look to the ladder and ‘promotion’ does not come from this section of the petty bourgeoisie having a transitory nature, but from the fact that it is characterized by *the highest index of social mobility* in capitalist society (both upwards and still more downwards). Although this group is not *as such* transitory, the successive generations of its members seem, because of their conditions, to belong only ‘in

passing'.[5] This ideological tendency takes particular forms here, in so far as this group of employees has undergone a *high level of education*, producing its special qualifications as a labour force. These forms include the ideology of 'culture' as democratic and 'neutral', and of the 'neutral' educational system as the means for promoting the 'best' to bourgeois status.

(c) *Power fetishism*. Again, isolation is what counts (also giving rise to petty-bourgeois individualism), not in the form assumed in small-scale ownership, but in the form of isolation and competition among employees, who do not work in production as part of the 'collective labourer'. Their isolation is not therefore overcome by the increasing concentration of the commercial sector. Their belief in the neutral State above classes and their statolatry here assume the form of 'social Caesarism' and the belief in the 'justice' of a strong State.

To this must be added the ideological aspect specific to those employees belonging to the the State apparatuses (the administration). The State apparatuses, as institutions, produce *their own internal ideology*, and these employees are particularly subject to it. The ideological aspect of the neutral State above classes especially enters into this, as an essential element of the internal ideology of the State apparatuses. Statolatry and identification with the State and its top levels intervene here more than elsewhere, through bureaucratism and hierarchical subordination.

These common effects of the different 'economic' positions of the groups making up the petty bourgeoisie are also to be noted at the political level. Here, the common negative criterion is also important, i.e. the fact that they are neither part of the bourgeoisie nor of the working class, the two basic classes whose political interests are totally irreconcilable. This means that in the field of class struggle, the different groups making up the petty bourgeoisie *can have no long-term political interests 'of their own'*. This criterion, together with their isolation and their ideological similarity, generally produces the following *common* effects at the *political* level:

(a) It is very difficult for them to organize politically into a specific party of their own.

(b) They are often organized politically directly through other apparatuses of the State, which these groups see as their own political representative. The petty bourgeoisie often constitutes a supporting class for the State. Its alliance with the bourgeoisie is not direct, but mediated through support for the State forms which the petty bourgeoisie sees as opposed to the bourgeoisie's interests and in agreement with its own.

(c) These common ideological and political effects apply primarily in what we may call ‘normal’ social circumstances. Because of their electoralist illusions, the two component petty-bourgeois groups are often in effect the ‘peaceful’ pillars of the ‘democratic republican order’. But the community of effects also functions in the case of crises, as the two groups revolt in quite similar ways against the existing order.

(d) Both groups share a politically *unstable* nature. It is they who ‘swing’ most often, either to the side of the bourgeoisie or to that of the working class, according to the conjuncture, since they are polarized around these two classes.

Clearly then, despite their different economic positions, these groups can be defined as part of the same class, the petty bourgeoisie, because of the like effects of these different economic positions on the plane of political and ideological relations.

Certain remarks are necessary here:

1. If these groups belong to the same class, the distinction between their economic positions does not thereby lose all relevance. *The petty bourgeoisie is itself divided into class fractions*. This can have important consequences: although the petty bourgeoisie as a whole basically has a common position in a conjuncture (the case of fascism is a particularly good example of this), it is also possible for dislocations to appear between its different fractions.

These dislocations can even be deep enough for one fraction to swing one way, the other in the opposite direction. Experience shows that a common political position is generally maintained in ‘normal’ conjunctures of class struggle, or in conjunctures of acute political crisis where the working class is on the defensive, as in the case of fascism. The dislocations appear above all in revolutionary conjunctures or in political crises corresponding to the working-class offensive, as in Germany and Italy between 1919 and 1921. Otherwise, when the petty bourgeoisie is functioning as a *social force*, the two groups generally take up a common political position.[6]

2. The fact that the petty bourgeoisie does not in the long term have a class position of its own does not prevent it from constituting and playing the part of an *authentic social force*: fascism is a case in point, and all such cases correspond to quite specific conjunctures. In such instances, even if the petty bourgeoisie is in the long run and in the last analysis playing the game of the bourgeoisie or the working class, it none the less enters the political scene in *a relatively autonomous manner and with a specific political weight*.

This is quite a serious problem: in fact, one of the reasons for the Comintern’s

misunderstanding of the fascist phenomenon was precisely its refusal to recognize that the petty bourgeoisie can act as an authentic social force. The Comintern quickly recognized the relationship of fascism to the petty bourgeoisie, but it saw the petty bourgeoisie as a mere contributory force 'trailing behind' big capital (fascist party = hired 'agent' of big capital). Only Gramsci and Trotsky had a really correct understanding of the relationship of fascism to the petty bourgeoisie.[7] Their position was subsequently condemned by the Comintern and lumped together with that of the social democrats, i.e. that the petty bourgeoisie was a 'third force' with its own long-term class position, leading to a false conception of fascism as the 'dictatorship of the petty bourgeoisie'.[8]

3. Finally, we should note the importance of ideology in the actual class constitution of the petty bourgeoisie. Even apart from the role of ideology in 'unifying' its different 'fractions', which are particularly subject to illusions because of their economic position ('transitory' in the one case, employee status in the other), because of the resulting isolation, ideology plays a decisive role: *the petty bourgeoisie literally feeds on the ideology which cements it*. Particularly in Italy, this class was one of the main 'economic' victims of fascism, which bled it white – yet it was the only class to support it *en masse* to the end, and it did so for ideological reasons. This gives some indication of the magnitude of the Comintern's mistake in expecting fascism to fall quickly, because of its 'internal contradictions', or more precisely, because the mass of the petty bourgeoisie would themselves turn from fascism when they found it damaging to their economic interests.

2

General Propositions

I shall now return to discuss the relationship between fascism and the petty bourgeoisie, according to the plan previously applied.

I. MONOPOLY CAPITALISM AND THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE: ITS ECONOMIC SITUATION

The rise of fascism corresponds to an economic crisis for the entire petty bourgeoisie. This is an important fact: in both Germany and Italy, the petty bourgeoisie was particularly affected by the economic crisis the countries had just been through. But in so far as the crisis had begun to be resolved before fascism actually came to power, the essential point is the step of transition to the dominance of monopoly capitalism to which fascism corresponds. The acceleration of the concentration of capital during the rise of fascism directly jeopardized the economic existence of small-scale production and small-scale ownership. As for the salaried employees, this step caused a sharp and considerable increase in their numbers, accompanied by the unemployment and under-employment normal in such circumstances.[1]

II. THE POLITICAL CRISIS AND THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE AS A SOCIAL FORCE; THE FASCIST PARTIES AND THE INTERESTS OF THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE

The rise and rule of fascism correspond to a situation of political crisis for the petty bourgeoisie, and to its formation into an authentic social force through the fascist parties.

Apart from those factors which operated or other classes as well as the petty bourgeoisie, its crisis was directly affected by the crisis of hegemony among the dominant classes in Germany and Italy. The petty bourgeoisie, the ‘intermediate’

class, is always affected by a major crisis involving the basic forces of the capitalist social formation. As a general rule, the crisis of the ruling classes affects the petty bourgeoisie directly. Before stabilization and during the first period of open crisis between the bourgeoisie and the working class, a large part of the petty bourgeoisie clearly swings over to the side of the working class. Without being able to trace a clear line of demarcation between the two fractions of the petty bourgeoisie, we can say that this is mainly the case with the salaried employees. In the face of working-class defeat, and the lack of a specific communist policy of alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, this situation changes, but only by steps. After its open swing to the working-class side, this part of the petty bourgeoisie seems to stick to social democracy during the stabilization step. Subsequently it becomes disillusioned with social democracy, which fails to defend its interests. Turning away from social democracy, the petty bourgeoisie as a whole finds itself faced, at the beginning of the rise of fascism, with that instability and lack of hegemony among the dominant classes and fractions which characterizes the bourgeois parties' crisis of representation. These parties, while they are directly tied to the class interests of the power bloc, are at the same time the 'representatives' of the petty bourgeoisie, because of its inability to form its own party.

The bourgeois parties split away from their own classes and fractions in the power bloc. *This directly affects their representational tie to the petty bourgeoisie itself*, which understands that from now on such parties are no more than parliamentary cliques. The loss of these parties' real influence on the political scene, which they obtained as a result of their ties with fractions and classes other than the petty bourgeoisie, leads the petty bourgeoisie for its part to turn away from them. The way is therefore open to the fascist parties.

During the rise of fascism, the petty bourgeoisie, and this time the whole of it, becomes a social force through the fascist parties.[2] But I should pause here to deal with the question of the *representational tie* between the petty bourgeoisie and the fascist party, and to distinguish between two meanings of the term 'representation'.

In its first meaning, the term indicates the tie of a political party to *real class interests*.

In its second meaning, the term mainly indicates the ideological and organizational ties of a party to a class whose real interests it may well not represent.

On the relationship between the fascist parties and the petty bourgeoisie, it is

necessary to be still more specific and distinguish the steps in the rise and rule of fascism. To take the second meaning first, it is in this sense that the fascist parties are the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie. They are highly structured mass parties with a mass base of members, activists and voters essentially drawn from the petty bourgeoisie. The class origin of their intermediary and upper strata is also petty-bourgeois. What therefore distinguishes them from the 'bourgeois' parties which traditionally represent the petty bourgeoisie is their effective organizational ties with this class. At the same time, the fascist parties are typically 'petty-bourgeois' in the ideological sense: this also distinguishes them from the other bourgeois parties which traditionally represent the petty bourgeoisie.

What of the *real interests* represented by these parties, in the first meaning of the term 'representation'? As far as the petty bourgeoisie can be said to have had its own short-term political interests, the fascist party was their real representative during the first step of the rise of fascism. The first party programmes were basically no more than a 'catalogue of petty-bourgeois grievances', and the parties actively pursued petty-bourgeois demands. But with the point of no return, the turning point was already past: the fascist party from then on overwhelmingly represented the real interests of the bourgeoisie. If it still continued to pay some attention to the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, once fascism was in power and well into the step of stabilization, these interests were completely abandoned.

The petty bourgeoisie intervened as a social force on the political scene through the fascist parties: while swinging clearly to the side of the bourgeoisie, it *acted relatively autonomously from big capital* within the alliance. The petty bourgeoisie no longer simply trailed behind the bourgeoisie as it had when represented by the traditional bourgeois parties. The alliance of big capital with the petty bourgeoisie in revolt covers over very strong contradictions in this conjuncture. What it hides is intense political struggle between big capital and the petty bourgeoisie, a struggle which is present thoughout the whole history of fascism, and which has repercussions on the contradictions between fascism and big capital.

In the beginning, this alliance was made through the fascist party, thanks to its ambiguous representational function. The fascist party presented itself as 'anti-capitalist', while representing more and more clearly the interests of big capital. Later, after the party was subordinated to the State apparatus (in the strict sense), the alliance was made through the State, with the help of the petty bourgeoisie's own power fetishism. This alliance of big capital and petty bourgeoisie was

never openly declared: it took the form of petty-bourgeois support for a form of State whose ties with the interests of big capital it did not understand. In short, the historical role of fascism was to achieve an alliance between big capital and the petty bourgeoisie, in the very conjuncture in which their contradictions were being acutely intensified.

As for the political role and position of the petty bourgeoisie under fascism, I have already given its broad outlines in examining the relationship of fascism to the dominant classes. During the first step of fascism in power, the petty bourgeoisie became the ruling class. With the stabilization step, it fell back to the position of class in charge of the State apparatuses. Its role as a social force was from then on mainly expressed in characteristic effects on the State apparatuses. The particular forms these effects took can be explained neither by their simple correspondence to the interests of big capital, nor by the general ideological role of fascism, but only by the role of the petty bourgeoisie as a social force. In fact, organization into a party 'of its own' is not the only way for a class other than the working class to become a social force.

III. THE IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS AND 'FASCIST IDEOLOGY': IMPERIALIST IDEOLOGY AND PETTY-BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY

The rise of fascism corresponds to an acute ideological crisis of the petty bourgeoisie, as part of the generalized ideological crisis of these social formations.

The generalized ideological crisis of the German and Italian social formations was firstly a crisis of the dominant ideology. Because 'petty-bourgeois ideology' is in the end only the complex twisting and adaptation of bourgeois ideology to the petty bourgeoisie's own aspirations, this crisis directly provoked an ideological crisis of the petty bourgeoisie. Together with the petty-bourgeois revolt, this produced the following results:

(a) The 'elements' of petty-bourgeois ideology specific and peculiar to the petty bourgeoisie, which were previously drowned, as it were, in the discourse of bourgeois ideology as adapted to petty-bourgeois aspirations, experienced a revival and a sharp upsurge.

(b) The 'anti-capitalist' aspect became uppermost, often by *implicit opposition* to bourgeois ideology.

(c) In the ideological crisis of the working class, 'borrowings' from its ideology, scattered and out of context as they were, became more frequent and more significant.

When fascism comes to power, an apparently paradoxical phenomenon

results: *the petty-bourgeois ideological sub-ensemble, modified in this way, 'replaces' the dominant bourgeois ideology, thereby cementing back together the social formations in question*. It therefore takes on the role previously played by bourgeois ideology, both for the bourgeoisie itself, and for the working class.

A warning should be given here, for the 'petty-bourgeois ideology' of fascism has often been discussed in quite wrong terms. This shift in the dominance of bourgeois ideology in favour of the petty-bourgeois ideological sub-ensemble in no way means that bourgeois ideology is suffering an 'eclipse'. Bourgeois ideology continues to be constantly present in the dominant ideology: even in its modified form, the petty-bourgeois ideological sub-ensemble is still a torsion and adaptation of bourgeois ideology to the aspirations of the petty bourgeoisie which, strictly speaking, has no ideology of its own. Besides, even the ideological 'elements' peculiar to the petty bourgeoisie work in the end to the bourgeoisie's advantage. Bourgeois ideology thus perpetuates its hold, but in indirect or disguised form. This is in fact the specific characteristic of 'fascist ideology': the indirect domination of imperialist ideology, via the direct dominance of 'petty-bourgeois ideology'.

Under fascism, the *imperialist ideology* of big capital is also dominant over classical 'liberal' ideology within bourgeois ideology itself. Imperialist ideology seems to be in contradiction with the 'normal' forms of petty-bourgeois ideology (social justice, electoralism etc.) but *it can correspond perfectly well to the forms assumed by the ideology of a petty bourgeoisie in revolt*, which classical liberal ideology cannot. Power fetishism and the strong State, aggressive, intensified nationalism and statolatry and the cult of the 'leader', antiparliamentarianism, corporatism and authoritarianism, are so many common features shared by imperialist ideology and the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie in revolt, features which mainly turn on the role of the State.

That is not all. Imperialist ideology is clearly in harmony with the ideological 'elements' involved in the actual class situation of the new fraction of the petty bourgeoisie. The growth of this fraction of salaried employees (including managers and technicians) is due to the development of capitalism, and they are therefore particularly sensitive to the *technocratic* aspect of that ideology – the cult of efficiency and technological neutrality which goes together with the idea of the neutrality of culture. The technocratic element is one of the most important aspects of imperialist ideology. Fascism, moreover, with its mystique of yields and efficiency, thoroughly exploits this ideological element, which is common to big capital and the new petty bourgeoisie.

On the basis of these considerations, we can take stock of what has been called

fascist ideology. The characteristic features of this ideology correspond completely to the interests of big capital. The 'bourgeois aspect' of fascist ideology is basically imperialist ideology, and in so far as imperialist ideology grows out of bourgeois ideology, the 'seeds' of fascist ideology are to be found in the 'tradition' of the dominant ideology of the social formations in question. Fascist ideology was, as it were, rooted in the tradition of the 'national cultures' of Germany and Italy. But on the other hand, it was also dominated by the ideological elements peculiar to the petty bourgeoisie in these two countries, and by a characteristic adaptation of imperialist ideology to petty-bourgeois aspirations.

In other words, while there is no basic aspect of fascist ideology which is not related to imperialist ideology, yet it is because of the relationship of this ideology to the petty bourgeoisie that these aspects take the precise form of fascist ideology. This should not lead us to forget the *internal contradictions* of fascist ideology, which, in the last analysis, stem from the contradictions between the interests of big capital and those of the petty bourgeoisie.

I could describe the general lines of this ideology here, by concentrating more precisely on its imperialist and petty-bourgeois aspects. But there is no point in making a systematic analysis. In fact, 'fascist ideology' cannot constitute a field of research in the same way as the ideological ensembles essentially tied to the bourgeoisie and the working class. As Togliatti pointed out, it is rather *an amalgam of contradictory elements*, whose articulation can ultimately be grasped only when they are embodied in the practices and apparatuses which will be examined in the last part of this work.[3] At this level it is therefore necessary to keep to a mere indication and enumeration of certain of fascist ideology's essential elements.

To begin with the internal contradictions of fascist ideology, it should be remembered that fascism exploits ideological elements peculiar to the petty bourgeoisie in revolt. The 'anti-capitalist' aspect of petty-bourgeois aspirations has an important place in this. Declarations against 'big money' were aimed mainly at those fractions of big capital whose interests most obviously harmed those of the classic petty bourgeoisie: e.g. loan capital, the banking fraction of big capital, big capital invested in circulation, and the chain stores detrimental to small commerce. Monopolies obstructing free and fair competition, a slogan dear to small-scale production, were also denounced, as were the prevailing forms of taxation.

But apart from these contradictions between imperialist and petty-bourgeois

ideology, attention should be given to their *points of collusion*. These are the more remarkable because this collusion is constantly presented in 'anti-capitalist' guise:

The '*statolatry* aspect of fascist ideology, and the importance given to the cult of the State, outside which 'the individual is nothing'. Corresponding to the petty bourgeoisie's power fetishism, this aspect disguises big capital's interest in the interventionist role of the State, at the stage of monopoly capitalism. It carries over into the notorious 'cult of the leader' and the cult of hierarchical authority, the form of power fetishism typical of the petty bourgeoisie in revolt.

The *anti-juridical aspect* and the related cult of the 'arbitrary' in fascist ideology: the leader's command is the only rule and law. This expresses not only the petty bourgeoisie's cult of the leader, but also its revolt against juridical 'regulation' which, because of its fixation on the State, it holds responsible for its difficulties. This aspect also corresponds to the interests of big capital: imperialist ideology in effect represents a displacement of domination within bourgeois ideology itself, from the juridico-political region which was dominant in liberal-bourgeois ideology to economic technocratism. This displacement disguises the massive State intervention in favour of big capital at the monopoly capitalist stage.[4] But the displacement implied by the anti-juridical aspect of fascist ideology is completed here by a major resurgence of *moral ideology* (the themes of 'honour' and 'duty'), a favoured form of expression for petty-bourgeois ideology.

The *elitist aspect* of fascist ideology, carrying over into its racist conceptions. This is also typical of the petty bourgeoisie in revolt, coveting the position of the bourgeoisie. It suits big capital, which is trying to oust medium capital and its representatives from hegemony and from the political scene.

The *antisemitic, racist aspect*: I cannot of course start examining racism here. But let me simply point out that the image of the 'rich exploiting Jew' was adapted to the mystified anticapitalist side of petty-bourgeois ideology. This aspect suits big capital, not only because it shifts the anti-capitalism of the petty-bourgeois masses onto the 'Jews', but also because it corresponds to its colonialist and expansionist interests.

The *nationalist aspect*: the exaggerated cult of the mystical entity of the 'nation' (ties of 'the soil' and of 'blood'), through which the petty bourgeoisie tries to deny class struggle, and of which it considers itself the pillar, the 'natural' mediator of the forces operating. Such nationalism evidently suits imperialist big capital.

Militarism: the petty bourgeoisie combines nationalism with the authoritarian,

hierarchical, leader-cult aspect, in accordance with the interests of expansionist big capital. This is accompanied by the ‘abstract’ cult of ‘violence’ characteristic of the *jacquerie* of the rebel petty bourgeoisie, and of the end of the phase in which big capital brings in increasing repression of the masses.

Anticlericalism: the ‘laicizing’ aspect of the petty-bourgeois revolt against ‘privileges’, which suits big capital, given the close tie of the Church to big landed property and medium capital in these countries.[5]

The particular and important role of the ‘family’ in this ideology, which was studied by Wilhelm Reich. The role of the family is related to the representations and aspirations of a petty bourgeoisie characterized by isolation and family organization in its economic life, and by its search for a social unit immune to class struggle. This suits big capital, although the development of monopoly capitalism leads to a *de facto* dissolution of traditional family ties. It disguises the class struggle and takes away its reality, contributing to the tendency to ‘authoritarian hierarchy’ peculiar to imperialist ideology.

The particular role given to education, in which the youth are regimented by the State, and a quite specific conception of ‘youth’ and education. This corresponds to the petty-bourgeois ideology of the ladder and social mobility, and the conception of ‘generations’ held by the new petty bourgeoisie, which sees itself as in transit. It also suits big capital, in that it allows it to intervene in the education and training of the labour force necessary to monopoly capitalism.

The obscurantism and ‘anti-intellectualism’ of fascist ideology, corollary of a spontaneous petty-bourgeois revolt against the bourgeoisie’s *organic* ‘ideologists’ and ‘ideological spokesmen’ (in Gramsci’s sense) who have betrayed its aspirations. The revolt of the petty bourgeoisie – a class which in other circumstances is very respectful of culture because of its myth of education – often assumed this aspect of hostility towards the ‘ideologists’. For the petty bourgeoisie, which does not strictly speaking have its own ideology, does not normally have its own ‘ideological spokesmen’: its revolt against the organic ‘ideological spokesmen’ of the bourgeoisie assumes the form of a general revolt ‘against the ideologists’. This suits the technocratic side of imperialist ideology very well.

Finally, corporatism, in its truly petty-bourgeois form. This corresponds to the utopia of the guild era, which the traditional fraction of the petty bourgeoisie looks backward to, and also to the aspirations of the new petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie as a whole would like to form the basic force, the pillar and mediator of every social construction, using the State and its own ‘participation’ in State corporations to group all social forces together in an ‘authoritarian’ way.

By the particular repression of class struggle this implies, and by the subordination of medium capital to big capital which it favours, this corporatism suits big capital.

IV. THE CONDITION OF THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE UNDER FASCISM

Lastly, what about the economic condition of the petty bourgeoisie under fascism, and the strategy of fascism in this respect? The petty bourgeoisie, traditional and new, was the main economic victim of fascism, together with the middle and lower-middle peasantry. Petty commerce and small-scale production were very badly hit by the fascist policy of support for big capital. The fascist wages policy harmed the purchasing power of salaried employees more than anyone else.

But this policy advanced by steps. In the first step of fascism in power, during which the petty bourgeoisie effectively occupied the place of ruling class on the political scene, fascism was forced to impose a series of compromises on the dominant classes, in favour of the petty bourgeoisie.

Secondly, fascism, once established, did not radically eliminate the traditional petty bourgeoisie. There is a particularly important *counter-tendency* in the stage of monopoly capitalism, to such a kind of elimination. The very establishment of the dominance of monopoly capitalism in a social formation in fact *makes room for the persistence* of a weak sector of small-scale production and petty commerce. The high prices and production costs of small-scale production, together with the high retail prices of petty commerce, make it possible to raise the cartel prices fixed by the big monopolies and chain stores. The big monopolies therefore disguise the profits they make by pointing to the prices of small-scale production and commerce. This counter-tendency is therefore mainly of a political and ideological nature, and in the case of fascism, it generally works in favour of certain measures to protect small urban property.

As for the salaried employees, there is an important side of the question which should not be forgotten: by a characteristic extension of the bureaucratic State apparatus, very well analysed by Gramsci, fascism provided openings for an important part of the petty-bourgeois masses. There was an excessive growth of the State apparatus, what has been termed the ‘fascist bureaucracy’, and this was one of the reasons for the support the petty bourgeoisie gave to the fascist State.[6]

One final problem, already mentioned above in connection with the relationship of fascism to the bourgeoisie. In the event of a ‘dictatorship’ in which the petty bourgeoisie functions as a social force and as the ruling class,

there can be a process of relative but also sometimes radical *substitution* of the old bourgeoisie by members of the petty bourgeoisie. These elements then set themselves up as a *new bourgeois class*. Most often they develop as a *State bourgeoisie*. By nationalizations and by expropriating the old bourgeoisie, also by dominating the State apparatus, the petty-bourgeois upper ranks of this apparatus often manage to substitute themselves for the old bourgeoisie.

This process was not in fact important in the specific case of fascism. Although there was by this means a certain integration of the upper ranks of the petty bourgeoisie into the bourgeoisie (the classic case being the Goring clique, with the creation of the H. Goring Werke), this integration mainly took the form of political and ideological ties. ‘State control’ of the economy by fascism has always been a myth, and even with the *war economy*, it never went beyond regulation in favour of big capital. Fascism never jeopardized ‘traditional’ big capital, whose interests it constantly guaranteed.

3

Germany

In Germany, small-scale production and commerce underwent a serious economic crisis, due above all to the process of capital concentration. Between 1907 and 1925, the proportion of ‘independent’ traders and producers in the population as a whole fell by about 4.5 per cent, and between 1925 and 1933 by a further 2 per cent, which in all amounts to the considerable decline of some 6 to 7 per cent.[1] At the same time, this fraction of the petty bourgeoisie, exploited by big capital (not only or even mainly by means of expropriation and *proletarianization* (in the strict sense), and subject to price movements, inflation, and the crisis of the 1929 depression, was one section of the population which suffered most ‘economically’. In this process of *pauperization*, artisans and traders lost almost half their income.[2]

As for the new petty bourgeoisie of employees and officials, it increased to the point of representing 17 per cent of the population in 1925 as against 12.6 per cent in 1907. Between 1925 and 1933, this percentage increased again by 1.4 per cent, while the percentage of the working class remained relatively stable.[3] This section of non-productive employees, though it suffered less than the others, lost more of its purchasing power than the working class proper.

Before considering the political crisis of the German petty bourgeoisie after the war and during the rise of fascism, I should like to say a few words about its particular characteristics. The revolution ‘from above’ carried out by Bismarck under the political leadership of the landed nobility, and the marked lack of a hegemonic role for the bourgeoisie, had allowed the German petty bourgeoisie, as Marx and Engels pointed out, to play an important role: ‘In Germany the

petty-bourgeois class, a relic of the sixteenth century and since then constantly cropping up again under various forms, is the real social basis of the existing state of things.'[4] 'This class, a most important one in every body politic, and in all modern revolutions, is still more important in Germany, where, during recent struggles, it generally played the decisive part.'[5]

It was certainly an important role, but what precisely was it? Faced with the still dampened political contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the landed nobility, the petty bourgeoisie constantly supported the bourgeoisie against this nobility, without its own contradiction with the bourgeoisie ever being openly declared. Unlike the French case, the German petty bourgeoisie, in the absence of a specifically bourgeois ideology, was impermeable to an ideology of the Jacobin type, and constantly remained in the wake of the bourgeoisie. It was therefore also overwhelmingly subject to 'transformed' feudal ideology. Until fascism, it never constituted a social force, which to a certain extent explains the way in which it allowed itself to be hoaxed by the bourgeoisie after fascism's accession to power.

After the war, a section of the petty bourgeoisie seems to have swung, in varying degrees, onto the side of the working class. Employees and civil servants openly participated in the big strikes and street demonstrations, and joined unions. They also gave their electoral support, which was quite significant, to social democracy, and more rarely to the Communist Party. In 1923, when the Ruhr was occupied, many petty bourgeois, mainly white-collar workers, went over to communism. An examination of union membership and election results in the strongly petty-bourgeois areas shows that, during the stabilization period, this part of the petty bourgeoisie pinned its hopes on social democracy. Only with the beginnings of the rise of fascism did it turn towards national socialism.

Let us turn now to the relationship of the petty bourgeoisie to the national socialist party.[6] In the years between 1930 and 1934, the proportion of salaried employees in the membership of the national socialist party varied from 20.6 to 25.6 per cent, well above their proportion in the total population (about 12 per cent). The proportion of government employees (particularly teachers) rose from 8.3 per cent to 13 per cent, reaching 29 per cent in 1935, while they were only 5 per cent of the total population. The proportion of 'independent' artisans and traders stayed at about 20 per cent, though they were only 9 per cent of the population as a whole.

Equally remarkable are the figures for the class origin of the party's middle-grade officials and higher leaders: 37 per cent of these were white-collar

workers, followed by government employees, then artisans and traders.[7] The national socialist Reichstag deputies elected in 1930 included 16 who were mainly from small-scale commerce and artisan production, 25 white-collar workers, 13 teachers, 12 government employees, 15 party officials of petty-bourgeois origin, 8 ex-officers and 12 middle peasants – plus one clergyman and a chemist (Gregor Strasser).

The election results were also clear: it was basically the petty bourgeoisie which gave clear and unanimous support to the national socialist party. It is particularly notable that where the national socialist party made electoral gains, it was *firstly* the 'liberal' centre parties (with the exception of the Catholic Centre) *with their essentially petty-bourgeois clientele*, which suffered, losing about 80 per cent of their votes, much more than the 'conservatives', the German Nationalists, who lost only 40 per cent of their votes to the Nazis.[8]

This situation remained virtually unchanged while fascism was in power.

The relationship of the petty bourgeoisie to the national socialist party was also apparent in its *forms of organization*:[9]

(a) It was, at first sight, a highly centralized party, organized essentially on a street and community basis, the 'principle of the leader' being rigorously applied all the way down. But this centralism was in fact *sectoralized*, the different party apparatuses and geographical sectors keeping for a long time a large measure of autonomy. The party was constantly shaken by internal struggles and contradictions, a measure not only of the contradictory interests it represented, in the ideological and political sense, but also of the difficulties inherent in an organization of the petty bourgeoisie. Lastly, this indicates the various successive breaks in the representational tie between the upper ranks and the petty bourgeoisie, breaks which in turn entailed others between the upper ranks and the intermediate levels. This gradually led to the creation of the SS arm, dominating the party and directly affiliated to the upper ranks which had already severed their representation of the petty bourgeoisie, in both senses of the term.

(b) The various rank and file organizations of the party were based on representation by profession: traders, teachers, office workers, doctors, etc.

(c) The party was organized on military lines, corresponding not only to the requirements of the struggle for power, but also, and perhaps especially, to the ideology of the German petty bourgeoisie.

(d) From the beginning, the party was heavily staffed, with a very large number of paid members and full-timers. This corresponded especially to the proletarianized petty bourgeoisie's need for subsidies, and also to those ideological tendencies towards bureaucratization which are peculiar to the petty

bourgeoisie.

(e) Organizations with a purely ideological function were particularly important (e.g. ‘sports’, ‘youth’ and ‘leisure’ organizations). Actions of an ideological nature, such as parades, ‘festivals’ and initiatory rites, played a characteristic and leading part in this.

During the rise of fascism, the national socialist party effectively seemed to represent the real short-term interests of the petty bourgeoisie. This is to be seen in the practical support it gave the actions of the petty bourgeoisie, and in the concrete demands written into its programme. Moreover, from 1927, the petty bourgeoisie’s own corporative associations, such as the very important Deutschnationale Handlungsgehilfeverband (DHV), gave their support to the national socialist party.[10] But there was a radical change with the party’s turn from the point of no return.

I already outlined the political evolution of the petty bourgeoisie when it was most enlightening to do so, in examining the relationship of national socialism to the ruling classes. With national socialism’s accession to power, the petty bourgeoisie briefly became the presiding class, then fell back to the position of class in charge of the State. It should just be recalled that although there was a clear and progressive rupture in the representational tie between the national socialist party and the real interests of the petty bourgeoisie, the ties of political and ideological representation were maintained throughout the time fascism was in power. The contradictions which resulted from this, between the action of the petty bourgeoisie as a social force, and big capital, mark the whole period, and also mark the relations between national socialism and big capital.

I shall not examine in detail the question of ‘Nazi ideology’. Firstly, because others have already studied the question fully; secondly, and above all, because ‘fascist ideology’, *in the sense of petty-bourgeois class ideology*, does not exist: the ‘elements’ which distinguish it have been mentioned above. What is much more interesting is the institutional forms to which they gave rise and in which they were embodied, and I shall deal with these later in examining the national socialist State.

The real interests of the urban petty bourgeoisie were totally abandoned when national socialism came to power. But this was still accomplished by steps, and the process only became apparent with the step of stabilization. During the first step, certain measures were taken in favour of the traditional fraction of the petty bourgeoisie. The activity of the big department stores was restricted to some

extent. In 1933, two autonomous corporations were created, a Corporation of Retail Trade (excluding large stores) and an artisan corporation, both with Dr Renteln at their head. Their purpose was the protection of small-scale production and petty trade. But these measures were abolished in 1934 and Dr Renteln was sacked.[11]

Partly because of monopoly capitalism's counter-tendency (mentioned above) to the 'proletarianization' of small producers and traders, their exploitation by big capital and their progressive extinction was not accomplished by direct expropriation, nor by outright purchase by big capital. It was in the main accomplished only indirectly, and the small producers and traders were economically subjected to big capital in a *de facto* manner.[12] The national socialist policy of retail price control severely damaged the profits of petty commerce, which fell steadily: by 1936, 75 per cent of businesses in the food trade brought their proprietors a monthly income below that of a skilled worker. Between 1936 and 1938, 104,000 independent artisans became wage workers.

But with the war economy and the need for labour, this development went still further. In 1939 two decrees were issued: by the first, artisans in 'untimely' work or work 'unsuited to their abilities' could be constrained to take other work; by the second, all businesses with a turnover below a certain minimum, which varied according to categories of occupation, were simply suppressed, this affecting petty commerce as well as small-scale production.

All these measures were presented by national socialism as 'progressive' popular measures against price rises. National socialism, with its dividing tactics, seemed to be relying on the working class and the poor peasantry for its radical measures against the petty bourgeoisie and in favour of the big monopolies, and was then going on to take certain measures in favour of the petty bourgeoisie at the expense of the lower classes. In 1941 in particular, national socialism decreed the dissolution of the consumer co-operatives, which catered for some ten million small consumers in Germany and Austria, invoking the 'illegal competition' they were giving private commerce.

The second fraction of the petty bourgeoisie, the employees, grew after national socialism established the dominance of monopoly capitalism. The proportion of white-collar workers in the population as a whole rose from 11.8 per cent in 1933 to 13.3 per cent in 1939; that of civil servants from 6.6 per cent to 7.1 per cent, representing a rise of 350,000 persons in government employment, not counting the civil officials of the national socialist party; the civil service budget went up by 170 per cent.[13] The real wages of these non-productive workers were *undermined* (by about 20 per cent), while those of

industrial workers remained fairly stable.

4

Italy

The situation of the urban petty bourgeoisie in Italy was broadly similar to that in Germany. In view of the precocious and artificial concentration of Italian big capital, accelerated during the war, the position of the artisans and small traders became more and more critical throughout the rise of fascism. The proportion of salaried employees increased less during this period than in Germany, because of the different level of capitalist development, but the proportion of civil servants was much higher than in Germany, because of the exodus from the countryside and the novelty of this source of revenue. With the post-war economic crisis and the fall of the lira, this fraction suffered more than the working class, which succeeded in making appreciable economic gains by means of collective bargaining.

As to the particular characteristics of the Italian urban petty bourgeoisie, because of the ‘passive’ revolution of the Risorgimento, and the specific alliance of the Northern bourgeoisie with big landed property in the South, it too had been unable to function as a social force until fascism. Unlike the German case, however, it had been affected by the ideology of the Garibaldian movement, which it adapted to its own aspirations. Its contradiction with a bourgeoisie which, under Crispi, had rapidly lost ground, had often come out into the open. This meant, firstly, that fascism tried to place itself in the ‘Garibaldian republican’ tradition, and secondly that the Italian petty bourgeoisie under fascism was much more radical than the German. This obliged Italian fascism to play a continual game of compromise.

After the war, a large part of the petty bourgeoisie here too swung to the side

of the working class. It generally supported the factory occupation movement of 1920, and was converted to social democracy. But it supported fascism from the beginning of its rise.

None the less, the Italian petty bourgeoisie seems to have made relatively less of a mark on the fascist party than did its German counterpart on the national socialist party. Because of its particular ideology (the Risorgimento tradition) and its trade-union links, the fascist party had a higher proportion of members both of really bourgeois origin and of proletarian origin than the national socialist party.

Basically, though, the two cases were the same. According to statistics for 1921, covering 151,000 of the fascist party's 320,000 members, the petty-bourgeois proportion was roughly as follows:[1] 14,000 small traders, 15,000 white-collar workers in the private sector, 10,000 State employees, and 20,000 students of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois origin. This proportion is far higher than that of the petty bourgeoisie and its different fractions in the population as a whole. There were also 18,000 large and medium landowners and 4,000 industrialists, fewer than the proportion of these classes in the total population, but considerably more than the national socialist party had. These members were the militants of the fascist movement.

As for the medium and higher level *cadres* of the party, they were overwhelmingly drawn from the petty bourgeoisie: three-quarters of the federal secretaries and officials of the fascist party came from the urban petty bourgeoisie.[2]

Finally, there was a large proportion of fascist party members who were ex-servicemen, demobilized and declassed after the recent war. In conjunction with the particular process by which Italian fascism established itself in power, this was one of the reasons why the fascist party presented a more militaristic organizational appearance than the national socialist party:[3] it was organized in *squadri*, centuries and cohorts. The military organizations of the fascist party were not separate from its civil organizations: the progressive severance of the fascist party's representation of the petty bourgeoisie was marked by open military engagements between different sections of the apparatus. Lastly, one feature of Italian fascism which distinguished it from national socialism was its organization of *professional groups* based not on *occupation* but on *branches of industry*. This does not so much signify a greater implantation of fascism in the Italian working class, as the open fight it had to wage against it.

The specific development of the role of the petty bourgeoisie in Italy, first as

presiding class, then class in charge of the State, has also been studied in investigating the relationship of fascism to the dominant classes.

I shall not go into detail here either on the subject of fascist ideology. I would simply remark that the form it took in Italy was much more marked by the ‘ nationalist’ tradition of the liberal bourgeoisie. Instead of Rosenberg and other Nazi ideologists, Renan is in the front line here. But perhaps the most striking difference with national socialism is the relative absence of the antisemitic and racist aspect, due for one thing to the restricted importance of colonialism for Italian big capital.

The material interests of the Italian petty bourgeoisie under fascism underwent a similar development to that in Germany, though because of the different level of capitalist development, the process of concentration did not reach the same pace or level as in Germany. Italian fascism thus had more room for manoeuvre in relation to small-scale production and commerce. There is a particularly notable absence of authoritarian measures equivalent to expropriation, measures such as were taken by national socialism, although the artisan sector decreased considerably in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the active population. In 1936, it accounted for 25.6 per cent of workers in industry, which is relatively high.[4] At the same time, this fraction of the petty bourgeoisie suffered less from pricing policies than its German equivalent.

There was also a very important increase in non-productive employees. The ‘tertiary’ sector as a proportion of the whole population rose from 19.5 per cent in 1921 to 237 per cent in 1936. The earnings of this fraction of the petty bourgeoisie declined, as a percentage of the total national income, while their percentage in the whole population was always going up, a phenomenon which clearly distinguished them from the working class proper.[5] However, the number of state employees was growing much faster than in Germany, the ‘fascist bureaucracy’ being more important in Italy after the accelerated depopulation of the countryside, and with the unemployment which followed the 1929 crisis. The proportion of white-collar workers in the whole population rose from 11 per cent in 1920 to 12 per cent in 1930 and 18 per cent in 1938.[6] To keep things in proportion, however, these processes were on the whole quite similar in Germany and Italy.

Part Six

Fascism and the Countryside

I must now turn to the last problem, the relationship of fascism to the countryside.

I have deliberately used the term *countryside*. An analysis of fascism in the countryside once again clearly demonstrates what a reactionary myth it is to describe the ‘peasantry’ as a single class. The rural population is itself composed of different classes and fractions, stemming from the different modes and forms of production in the social formation. This is not all: even those who accept, as Marxists, that the peasantry is divided into classes, often tend to take the ‘land’ as a common denominator and to imagine that these classes and fractions may operate, politically and ideologically, in the same way, like the sections of the petty bourgeoisie, for example.[1] Among European examples, the case of fascism is often used to point out the ‘reactionary’ nature of the rural population, which is presumed to have been unanimous in its support.

This is incorrect. Both in discussing fascist policy towards typical rural areas, and in discussing the behaviour of the peasantry towards fascism, which varied from direct support through passivity to open opposition, some distinction must

be made between the classes and fractions.

1

Classes in the Countryside

The problem of distinguishing classes and class fractions in the countryside is very complex, and so some preliminary remarks are needed. The main Marxist positions available are those of Lenin, basically in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia;* Kautsky (the Kautsky of 1900), in *The Agrarian Question;* and the much briefer remarks of Mao about classes in China.

1. To begin with, there are certain criteria which are generally referred to in distinguishing classes in agriculture, though these are inadequate :

(a) *Formal juridical ownership*. This properly belongs to the 'superstructure', not to the relations of production. Lenin has shown, particularly in his analyses of the 'Prussian road' of capitalist development in agriculture, that this criterion affords no way of distinguishing large feudal ownership from large capitalist ownership.

(b) *Size of income* is not definitive either, but this is what the summary use of the criterion of *area* of cultivation leads to. Such a criterion is particularly inadequate for distinguishing between small owners, small tenant farmers and agricultural smallholders, as well as between large feudal and large capitalist owners.

(c) The relationship of an agricultural unit to the *market*, i.e. the proportion of the product marketed, is quite irrelevant, as it does not refer to the relations of production, and wrongly lumps together different classes and fractions of the peasantry.

(d) *Technical* criteria (commercial value of land, type of agricultural product,

degree of ‘technological’ rationalization, percentage of capital invested) are not determinant either.

In the last analysis, all these elements are the effects of the relations of production in the countryside.[2]

2. It is therefore necessary to look closely at the characteristic *relations of production* exhibited by different *modes of production* in the countryside, and this must be done via the double relationship governing these relations of production:

(a) the relationship of the non-labourer to the land, i.e. economic ownership; this can be defined as the non-labourer’s *real economic power and control*, its forms, extent and degree.

(b) the relationship of *real appropriation* (or possession), i.e. the relation of the actual labourer to the land: in what forms, to what extent and to what degree it is possible for the direct labourer to set to work the means of production without the intervention of the non-labourer.

For each mode and form of production (feudal, capitalist, simple commodity production), the combination of these two relationships is embodied in a particular kind of ‘economic unit’ or ‘farm’, the specific form of *agricultural enterprise*. This may be defined as the unit within which the allocation of land to any type of production, the distribution of the means of production and labour and therefore the distribution of income and profits, are determined by the combination of these two relationships.

3. This is valid for all modes of production. But any given social formation contains several different coexisting modes and forms of production, both in industry and in agriculture.[3] The first consequence of this is that the actual forms of cultivation or agricultural enterprises are in some way ‘impure’, because of the concrete combination of different modes (or forms) of production, varying according to the specific historical development of each social formation.

We may now attempt to establish the main forms of agricultural enterprise in capitalist social formations. Although *historical development* is involved here, the analysis will still be at a high level of *abstraction*, just as when Lenin, discussing historical development, attempted to grasp the ‘two roads’ by which capitalism tended historically to establish itself in the countryside.[4] This analysis is an indispensable precondition, but it is not in itself sufficient to grasp all the concrete effects of the combination of modes of production in the countryside, and to establish what classes and fractions are present in the social formations concerned.[5]

(a) The agricultural unit based on large landed property of the feudal kind. The landowner has complete economic power in this kind of cultivation. The actual labourer holds small patches of land by feudal tenure, and provides the landowners with labour, mainly in the form of corvee. In its historically 'surviving' forms, this type of cultivation, as Lenin shows, often takes the form of *share-cropping;*[6] there is no market for agricultural labour, as this is provided by the dependent tenant, 'tied to the soil' of the land he cultivates. Extensive cultivation prevails. Production is not mainly for the market, and the criterion of profitability is not very important. The proportion of capital invested is low.

(b) The agricultural unit based on capitalist landownership of the kind typical of a direct capitalization of the previous form of cultivation. Here also, the landowner has complete economic power over the land. Cultivation requires long-term capital investment, and is generally centred on intensive monoculture (cereals, potatoes etc.) intended for the market; the cost of land is often relatively low. The direct producer here is the landless agricultural labourer. He sells his labour power, and is paid sometimes in kind, but more generally in *wages*. Large, well-to-do and medium capitalist property are all involved: the form of cultivation is the determining factor, not the size of unit.

(c) The agricultural unit based mainly on tenant farming, with large, medium and small farms. As Kautsky explains,[7] this involves the typical *capitalist rentier*. Real economic power is basically in the hands of the tenant, and the tenancies are themselves the agricultural units (there is a partial identification of economic ownership and possession). The capitalist landlord is the formal, juridical owner; rent is fixed, either at a given amount, or on a sliding scale according to the yield.[8]

In this type of unit, real economic power can itself be divided. It may be the juridical owner who decides what should be produced, the farmer who decides what means of production to use. This is a specific form of transition to the establishment of capitalism in agriculture. It is not the 'Prussian road', as in case (b), but neither is it the road of small landownership. Although it belongs historically 'on the side' of the latter, it is a transition form which, for juridico-political reasons, has come up against the obstacle of uncompleted distribution of land and agrarian reform.

This type of cultivation is to be found not only *before* the 'historical' problem of land redistribution arises (as in France before the Revolution) but also *after* the distribution has taken place. The expropriation of indebted small-holders, who then become tenants, is one of the ways in which capitalist ownership is built up from small ownership, in the way Lenin describes, for example, in the

case of central and south-west Germany.

This kind of unit is also found in the later ‘historical’ transformation of case (b), when land rent is capitalized as a very fast rate: England is the classic case.

This form favours the introduction of capitalism into agriculture much more than does small-holding. It aids the extension of units, as small and medium owners often rent lands other than their own. These enterprises are more inclined to increase their yields and introduce technological innovations, etc., as they have to pay for their land. High yields and intensive cultivation are often found on this kind of land. Finally, different forms of agricultural labour are used, according to the type of cultivation. Large and well-to-do capitalist owners are involved, but depending on whether tenant farming is generally conducted using wage labour, and on the degree that this is developed, large, medium and small tenants can be the effective ‘economic owners’.

(d) The agricultural unit based on small-scale ownership, the familiar small-holding, where juridical and economic ownership, ownership and possession, coincide. Cultivation is mainly by members of the family (however loosely defined): the services of agricultural labourers are subordinate (farm servants) or rare (in periods of intensive work). The smallholders are occasionally obliged to work as agricultural labourers. Such units are relatively little oriented to the market. Land rent does not play a direct role; small-scale production, apart from its restricted extent, is not well adapted to increasing productivity. Deeply indebted and mortgaged as capitalism develops, its main problems are credit and prices. While tenant farms of the same size often share the risk of production with the owner, here the direct producer bears the risk alone.

This kind of unit is engaged in *simple commodity production*; it is one of the historical ‘roads’ of transition to capitalism in agriculture. The small peasant owners are the ‘rural petty bourgeoisie’ *par excellence*, and they, too, are destined to be eliminated in the long run.

This analysis is not enough to account for the division of the peasantry into classes and class fractions in a given, historical social formation. Such a formation *combines* in a *complex* way the forms of agricultural unit defined above, according to the ‘pure’ modes of production and to the general, relatively abstract forms of their *tendency* to combine in the course of history. There are two very important problems here:

(i) In each form of agricultural unit, except for simple commodity production, there are *two main classes*, the non-labouring exploiters and the exploited direct producers. The criteria I have used, those of relations of production and real

economic control, lead us to regroup categories which at an abstract level are based on different forms of agricultural unit, into one and the same class in a concrete social formation. The effect is to polarize, over-determine and under-determine classes where modes of production are concretely combined in a social formation. But even after such regrouping and polarization, the fact that the categories grouped together belong to different forms of agricultural unit remains important: it is expressed in the *political and ideological* differences which divide these classes into class fractions.

(ii) *Ideological and political relationships play a crucial role in dividing the peasantry into classes*, not only in dividing them into different fractions, but as a factor around which the classes themselves regroup and polarize, locating and defining them.

The size of the agricultural unit, which varies according to the quality of the land and the amount of capital investment, has its own importance, which should be neither exaggerated nor minimized. Not only does it often indicate the form of the enterprise, but above all, together with the relations of production, it introduces key ideological and political differences into a single form of agricultural enterprise.

These principles are the basis for understanding the rural class divisions of Germany and Italy.[9]

1. *The great landowners*, such as the Prussian *Agrarier*, usually owning over 100 hectares. The 'semi-feudal' landed aristocracy, those big capitalist landowners who cultivate their own land, and the big capitalist rentier landlords all belong to this category. But important ideological and political differences distinguish these fractions from each other.

2. *The rich and upper middle peasantry*. According to the region, the land and capital investment, the unit is generally more than 20–25 hectares. It is cultivated mainly by wage-labour or by small tenant farmers. The rich peasantry comprises 'juridical' owners of land who are at the same time economic owners, and also large tenant farmers in so far as they are the real economic owners of the agricultural unit. There are none the less important politico-ideological differences between these class fractions.

3. *The middle peasantry*. Depending on the region, the land and capital investment, the unit is generally over 5–10 hectares. Cultivation is by mixed labour, family labour and wage labour in that order of importance. The middle peasantry comprises middle tenants and middling owners. It is noteworthy that the middle owners of this class rarely rent out their land; in general, they

cultivate it directly. Again, there are important politico-ideological differences between the fractions of this class.

4. *The poor and lower middle peasantry*. Generally, depending on the region and the land, such units are not above 5–10 hectares, and labour is mainly provided by the family. This category includes small-holders, small tenants who are also the actual economic owners, and also the tenants and share-croppers of the big semi-feudal estates. The latter may not have economic ownership as the rest do, but they do have a similar *possession* of the land in the relation of real appropriation. Again, there are notable ideological and political differences between the fractions of the poor peasantry.

5. *Agricultural labourers proper*, living mainly if not solely from selling their labour power. There are still notable ideological and political differences among these landless workers, according to whether they belong to a large estate which still has feudal features, or to a properly capitalist estate.

There are of course *intermediate fringes* between these classes.

2

General Propositions

I. THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The rise and rule of fascism correspond to an economic crisis in the countryside, a crisis with two aspects. Firstly, the post-war economic crisis affected the whole of agriculture in Germany and Italy. More important, however, the establishment of monopoly capitalist domination in these social formations had far-reaching effects on the relations of production in the countryside, and this in turn had its effects on the 'peasantry'.

II. THE POLITICO-IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS

The rise and rule of fascism correspond to a deep politico-ideological crisis in the countryside, especially among the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers.

The end of the war saw a real peasant uprising in both countries, and in Italy it took particularly radical forms. Many small-holders and tenants went over to social democracy. The agricultural labourers were organized into social-democratic unions *en masse*, and some of them supported the communist party.

But social democracy betrayed them. As for the KPD and the 'Maximalist' tendency in Italian social democracy, they both completely neglected the question of alliance with the poor peasantry, and so did the PCI to a certain extent, during the rise of fascism. This had its roots in the general political line of the parties and their specific practice in relation to alliances. Their policy did not allow them to advance any concrete transitional programme for the peasantry on the basis of *distribution of land*.

In this situation, the different peasant classes and fractions found themselves extremely disoriented politically, and their revolt increasingly took on typical *jacquerie* forms. They too were in *ideological crisis*.

It is important to go into this ideological crisis of the rural classes. The two basic forces in a capitalist formation are the bourgeoisie and the working class, and in these formations, the rural classes and fractions have no ideology of their own, strictly speaking (except for a considerable fraction of the large landowners who are often still imbued with feudal ideology). According to their class nature, the peasant classes and fractions are drawn towards the major ideologies (or ideological sub-systems) of capitalist formations, which they adapt to their own conditions.

Where the capitalist mode of production is dominant, the classes and fractions finally polarize around the basic social forces. The agricultural proletariat is drawn towards the working class, and is particularly susceptible to its ideology. Small-holders and small cultivators (the poor peasantry in general), because of their individual ownership and small-scale cultivation, have many of the ideological characteristics of the urban petty bourgeoisie. They share in small-scale production's ideological sub-system, and polarize around and oscillate between the two basic classes just as the petty bourgeoisie does. The middle peasantry are ideologically divided: they too are sometimes drawn towards the urban petty bourgeoisie and sometimes, because of the form of enterprise they are engaged in, and their contradictions with big property, they are drawn towards capitalist ideology in the form which it assumes in the countryside, that of the rich peasantry.

Finally, I should stress the specific functioning of ideological effects in the heart of the countryside. Because of the forms taken by the relations of production, the lack of an ideology peculiar to the popular classes of rural society, and the contradictions which arise between industry and agriculture, *the popular classes in rural society are particularly subject to the ideological influence of big property*: the means of indoctrination are typically rigid and stagnant.[1]

The particularly strong ideological influence of big property takes specific forms. The dominant classes and class fractions in the countryside fully exploit the myths of 'peasant unity', of the 'solidarity of the soil' and 'community of the land', which would unite the whole of the peasantry against industry and the towns. This ideological myth can present different aspects, which often express the survival of *feudal ideology*: the feudal ideology of the great landed proprietors gives credibility to the myth, which seems to have been formulated

as a response to the emergence of capitalism in feudal society, and which thus expresses the contradiction between the feudal nobility and the bourgeoisie. This myth therefore refers constantly to the themes, images and symbols of feudal 'tradition'. But feudal ideology, in order to infiltrate the popular classes in the countryside, takes the form of 'feudal socialism' analysed by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*.

The generalized ideological crisis of the German and Italian social formations had direct repercussions in the countryside. In particular, the rural petty bourgeoisie was affected by the ideology of the urban petty bourgeoisie in revolt. The rural proletariat, more subject to petty-bourgeois ideological influence than the urban proletariat, were won to the 'rebellious' form of this ideology in massive numbers. Lastly, the theme of the 'community of the soil' binding together the peasantry as a whole was particularly effective, and attested to a significant extension of the hold of feudal ideology on the popular classes in the countryside.

Fascism, then, presented a demagogic face to the poor peasantry, making false promises of 'colonization' and land distribution. But there was more to it: fascism thoroughly exploited both the particular forms assumed by petty-bourgeois rebel ideology in the countryside, and the ideological theme of the solidarity and community of the soil. It was this corporatist aspect which prevailed in the ideological role of fascism in the countryside. Like the emphasis on ties of blood and ties of the soil, on personal loyalty, etc., this aspect linked up with the survivals of feudal ideology in 'rural fascism'.

This fusion of rural petty-bourgeois rebel ideology with the relics of feudal ideology is what gives rural fascism its originality. It is to be distinguished from urban fascism, in which monopoly capitalist forms of ideology are much more pronounced.

III. THE FASCIST PARTIES, FASCISM AND THE PEASANT CLASSES: TOWN AND COUNTRYSIDE

In discussing the relationship of fascism to the countryside, the point must be made very strongly that *fascism is basically an urban phenomenon*. This contradicts the view of almost all the ideologists of 'totalitarianism', who have a vague conception of the connection between fascism and 'traditional values' and see fascism as an essentially 'peasant' phenomenon.[2]

Fascism is basically an urban phenomenon in that the class origins and 'militant wing' of fascism are rooted essentially in the towns. It is not necessary

to go over the relationship of fascism to the big landowners again. As for its relationship to other sections of the peasantry, even where fascism got active support going beyond mere voting, the impact of the peasantry within both the fascist and national socialist parties was entirely secondary. This is a remarkable fact, if fascism is contrasted with the 'reactionary' but essentially 'peasant' mass political movements which arose at the same period in the East European countries (Hungary, Roumania, etc.) or even Spain. The explanation is that fascism really represents the interests of monopoly capitalism at a step at which its interests are in very strong contradiction with those of the agricultural sector as a whole.

On the basis of this secondary contradiction, fascism manages to disguise the principal contradiction in the countryside, between the big landowners and the popular classes, in a quite specific way. Fascism originally appears much more as a reaction of the whole agricultural sector against the capitalization of agriculture, than as the direct expression of the reaction of the poor peasantry, i.e. the rural petty bourgeoisie, against the big landowners. Under fascism, this petty-bourgeois revolt is directed almost exclusively against credit (banking capital) and the 'profiteering Jew', against falling prices on the urban market, and against the industrial proletariat.

Because it can present itself as the protector of agriculture as a whole, fascism has from the beginning much closer political and organizational ties with big property in the countryside than in the towns, where it expresses the reaction of the urban petty bourgeoisie to monopoly capital in a new way. This does not of course mean that fascism has no ideological or even demagogic role among the poor peasantry. It means that, in the countryside, fascism is much more an ideological and military movement with direct ties to big property, rather than a movement that stems from the rural petty bourgeoisie. Fascism anyway had to pay the landed proprietors this price for the domination of monopoly capital, which it effected at their expense. Lastly, one of the basic tasks of fascism was to divide the popular classes of the towns from the popular classes in the countryside, by using the myth of peasant 'unity'.

As for the relationship of the different rural classes and fractions to fascism, it should be remembered that the big landowners gave fascism direct and active support. This is also true of the *rich peasantry*, though some of them, depending on the region, seemed to share the doubts of the middle peasantry about fascism. *The middle peasantry, next to the agricultural workers, seem to have resisted fascism more strongly than the other peasant classes, at least for a time.* Although it cannot be said that the middle peasantry and some of the rich

peasantry resisted fascism in the way that middle industrial capital did, there are still some similarities in their political attitudes. Further, it was middle tenants rather than middle landowners who swung towards fascism.

The *poor peasantry*, small producers and rural petty bourgeoisie, *were particularly deeply divided over fascism*. They were distinguished from the middle peasants by a more open and majority support for fascism, but their case is much more complicated than that of the urban petty bourgeoisie. The rural petty bourgeoisie in the majority swung over to fascism, but did not work actively in the fascist movement. Even their votes were deeply divided. Where there had been agrarian reform, creating the familiar 'parcels' of peasant land, the small-holders were much more resistant to fascism than the small tenants or the tenants of feudal estates, the latter being overwhelmingly dominated by feudal ideology. They were also more divided than the urban petty bourgeoisie.

This was not, as a whole series of 'third force' ideologists would like to have it, because of the innately 'democratic' powers of small-holding. This idea, which led Tasca to maintain that one of the reasons for the success of fascism in Italy was the absence of agrarian reform and a significant class of peasant small-holders (*proprietari contadini*) is quite incorrect. In fact, like the urban petty bourgeoisie, the small-holders are at once drawn towards 'democratic' radicalism, *and*, as Marx pointed out, especially likely, in given circumstances, to give massive support to Bonapartist forms of State. Their division over fascism relates to its specific ideological and political features. Fascism is originally an urban phenomenon, and in the countryside it is directly tied to big property, which has feudal ideological features clashing with the ideological traits of the small-holders.

Lastly, the relationship of *agricultural workers* to fascism depends both on the nature of the agricultural unit to which they belong, and on the political forms of past struggles; it also depends on the importance of ideological factors. They are in the main hostile to fascism, and brought into it mainly through direct pressure from the great landowners. Agricultural workers in truly capitalist enterprises do however seem to put up more resistance to fascism than those engaged in semi-feudal cultivation, who experience the whole weight of feudal ideology.

IV. MONOPOLY CAPITALISM AND THE COUNTRYSIDE: THE CONDITION OF THE PEASANT CLASSES UNDER FASCISM

What then was the economic policy of fascism towards the various classes and fractions in the countryside once it had come to power? In economic terms, the

agricultural workers were the main victims of fascism, followed by the rural petty bourgeoisie and their urban counterparts. The final introduction of capitalism into agriculture, in the form of monopoly capitalism, works in the interests of the big landowners and rich peasants alone. Two important phenomena should however be noted:

1. The economic exploitation of the small-holdings, and the exploitation of the land by monopoly capital and the big landowners, is not in the main carried out by direct expropriation of the small-holders, although some measures of the kind are taken. Because of the nature of the step, and for political reasons, this exploitation *is mainly indirect*: so much so that Bettelheim, referring to the survival of small-holding property in the countryside, goes so far as to say that 'the conservative aspect of Nazi policy [was] … the stronger as the interests of the small-holders ran counter to the economic needs of the Reich … The Nazi regime accepted all the inconveniences involved, only because it wanted to preserve one of the factors of peasant conservatism.'[3]

Besides these political reasons for preserving small-holdings and small cultivation, the reasons Kautsky gives in *The Agrarian Question* should also be recalled. These include 'economic' counterweights to the *tendency* for the small agricultural unit to disappear in the course of capitalist development. This counter-tendency is stronger than that in the relations between big capital and small industrial producers, but it is nevertheless similar: 'The currents running counter to the concentration of capital in industry also make themselves felt in agriculture, with striking similarity … But in agriculture there are still more tendencies which do not come into operation in industry.'[4] The big landowners can quite happily accommodate the survival of a sector of small-scale cultivation. Firstly, the high cost of small-scale production allows them to keep up the level of agricultural prices. Secondly, while capitalism tends to depopulate the countryside the small-holding ties the peasantry to the soil, providing the landowners with a labour force. Thirdly, because of the nature of the land, the small-holding property bordering on a large estate is not always that which is needed for the 'rounding off' and extension of the large estate, etc.

2. Although fascist promises of colonization and distribution of land were a dead letter for the poor peasantry, certain measures were taken in this direction, with some tangible results. Through the buying up of land, and the conquest and clearing of new land, a new fraction of middle and rich landowners was created, fascists as far as one can see, to whom this land was distributed. This measure killed two birds with one stone: it achieved both the penetration of capitalism into agriculture, by-passing the obstacle of the small-holding, and the creation of

a solid social base for fascism in the countryside.

3

Germany

In Germany, according to the 1925 census, 23 per cent of the total population lived off the land. Forms of property and cultivation were largely divided by the Elbe. To the West, there had been land distribution, partly influenced by the Napoleonic code and industrialization, but also due to forms of ‘bourgeois-democratic revolution’ in these regions. It led to a very small-scale farming, mainly in small-holdings, in the Rhineland, Baden and Württemberg. In Bavaria and Saxony big and medium tenant farms were dominant.

The East was still the region of the great landed estates, which covered 64.4 per cent of the land in Mecklenburg, 57 per cent in Pomerania, and up to 70 per cent in the Stralsund district. The great estates had already made a decisive turn towards capitalist exploitation,[1] despite the fact that certain features of feudalism still persisted. The great manors often retained their small tenants (especially in Schleswig-Holstein), and agricultural workers were often bound to particular farms by customary law.[2]

In all, 38 per cent of the land was held by big estates, 40 per cent by farms of between 5 and 100 hectares (this percentage being almost equally divided between large and middle farms), and the rest by small-holdings. The number of agricultural labourers had reached about 2,600,000.[3]

After the First World War, the agricultural situation continued to grow worse. With the widening of the scissors between agricultural and industrial prices, agricultural prices fell by 40 per cent, and after the 1929 crisis, gross income in agriculture fell by 28.5 per cent. This put the great majority of farms into the red, middle and even sometimes rich ones among them,[4] because of the high and fixed level of rents and mortgage payments. The indebtedness of small and

medium landowners grew increasingly to catastrophic proportions (12 thousand million marks in 1932, with the interest rate reaching 11 per cent) and there were massive foreclosures. The great estates, which produced mainly cereals, managed to keep going thanks to government tariff policy, especially after 1930; but the prices of livestock and of the secondary agricultural products typical of small and medium farms went on falling. The big landowners used the *Osthilfe* [aid to the East] to get state support, while small and medium landowners suffered under the weight of heavy taxation. The wages of agricultural labour plummeted.

With the end of the war, the small peasantry and some of the middle peasantry in the West swung to the side of social democracy, and sometimes, but more rarely, to the KPD. They took an active part in the 'peasants' councils'. Agricultural labourers joined the social-democratic unions in great numbers. Their main demand was for the partition and distribution of the great estates, for *Siedlung* (colonization). But the 1919 laws and decrees on colonization, according to which the State could buy up two-thirds of estates above 100 hectares, were boycotted by the State apparatus and became a dead letter. Social democracy rapidly abandoned all attempts to carry out the plan, even though the SPD was in fact in power in Prussia, the home of the great estates, until it was thrown out by von Papen in 1932. The KPD, for its part, neglected the peasant question until 1930.

In this situation, the poor peasantry experienced a deep political and ideological crisis throughout the rise of fascism. After 1928, *jacquerie* forms of struggle appeared in Schleswig-Holstein and spread throughout the North and East. They varied from wildcat tax strikes, through direct attacks on the revenue collectors and guards, to bombings. At the same time, the theme of the 'solidarity of the land' uniting the whole 'peasantry' was being put forward by the big estate-owners and rich peasants. They brought the popular classes into an association for 'peasant defence' under their leadership, the Grüne Front. The prevailing slogan was for the 'green democracy' of the countryside against the 'gilded democracy' of the towns.[5]

Besides making demagogic promises to the rural lower classes, national socialism thoroughly exploited the ideological and political tendencies which appeared in this crisis situation. It used the anarcho-putschist *jacquerie* tendencies for its own ends, often supporting such forms of peasant revolt. The agrarian sections of national socialism, led by Darré, had a distinct *jacquerie* character, often leading them to collaborate with the SA and to oppose the party's 'political' apparatus.[6]

National socialism made still more blatant use of the myth of ‘peasant unity’ against ‘industry’ and ‘commerce’, under the feudal ideology of ‘loyalty’ and the ‘personal ties of blood and soil of the toilers of the land’. Hitler himself put it best: ‘Many of our present ills are the result of the unhealthy relationship between the population of town and country. The need to keep a healthy peasant estate as the basis of the whole nation cannot be stressed too highly … Industry and commerce will therefore withdraw from their unhealthy position of leadership, and be integrated into the general framework of an economy with national needs …’ In a secret memo to Hitler, Darré gave national socialist policy in the countryside the primary objective of ‘using peasant unease and strike actions against the republican government of the towns’.[7] The preamble to the 12 May 1933 law on the *Erbhöfe* (entailed estates) reads: ‘The inexorable tie between blood and soil is the indispensable pre-requisite of the healthy life of a people. The agricultural legislation of past centuries in Germany safeguarded this tie which exists in the natural feeling for life of the people.’[8] This feudal ideology was ever present in the forms assumed by national socialist corporatism in the countryside; in 1934, Darré gave one of his books the title *The New Nobility of Blood and Soil*.

Yet national socialism was basically an urban movement. The agrarian sections of the party were only created in 1930. 14 per cent of its members in that year were from the peasantry, and this figure fell to 107 per cent in 1934.[9] Although this does not include agricultural labourers, it is clear that the proportion of peasant members of the national socialist party was lower than that of peasants in the population as a whole (about 23 per cent); the only comparable disparity is in working-class membership. Most of these agrarian members were large landowners and small farmers. Moreover, there were hardly any members of peasant origin in the upper ranks of the party.

Hitler certainly had strong rural support, but this was mainly at the electoral level, while ideological factors, together with forms of cultivation, were the main influence in the allocation of the peasant vote.[10] It was mainly in the north-east, primarily in Schleswig-Holstein and East Prussia, that national socialism had massive electoral victories from 1930 on. In this region of great estates, not only did the landowners support national socialism, but so did the small tenants on manorial lands, subject as they were to feudal ideology – this was very clear in Schleswig, where this type of cultivation prevailed. However, in regions where there were still traces of feudalism and few agricultural capitalists (in the strong sense), medium-sized farmers were more resistant to Nazism, and voted for the

German Nationalists; though because of the influence of feudal ideology, they resisted less strongly than their counterparts in the West. The agricultural labourers, also under many pressures, including 'semi-feudal' ideological and political relationships, were less resistant than the agricultural labourers of the West.

In the West, the situation was more complicated. The middle peasantry, which had an important place there, and also some of the rich peasantry, opposed Nazism for a long time, and voted for the Catholic Centre Party: this was clearly the case in Bavaria, where middle-sized farms were dominant. Such opposition, which had some resemblances to the opposition of medium capital, also stemmed from the attempt under Brüning and Schleicher to make an alliance between medium capital and the middle peasantry against big capital. The majority of the Western small farmers supported national socialism, though important divisions began to appear. The rural part of the Rhineland, for example, where small-holding was predominant, resisted Nazism; so did the small-holders of Lower Saxony. Among small farmers it was mainly tenants who first went over to Nazism: this happened around Nuremberg. It is worth noting that the small farmers who resisted Nazism often voted socialist, unlike the middle farmers, who might have resisted longer, but as a whole voted for the Catholic Centre Party. Lastly, the agricultural workers of the West, who worked on typically capitalist farms and had a tradition of strong unionization, stayed overwhelmingly hostile to Nazism, particularly in Bavaria.

The agrarian policy of national socialism, after it came to power, was distinguished by its basic support for the big landowners and wealthy peasants. This support was expressed in the unique protection of cereal prices from all tax, in direct State support (the *Osthilfe*), in the increase of rents, the drastic reduction of agricultural wages, etc. The rural petty bourgeoisie and agricultural proletariat were the main victims of these measures.

At the beginning, however, national socialism made some compromises with the poor peasantry. In 1933, it declared a year's moratorium on debts and mortgages, which was later prolonged for a further year. In 1933 also, a constitutional law was passed concerning *Erbhöfe*, or 'entailed estates'. Its aim was to create a stable fraction of rich and middle farmers, for the farms were to be between a *minimum* of 10 hectares and a maximum of 125 hectares. They were declared *inalienable* (i.e. they could not be foreclosed on), and they could not be left to more than one heir, which prevented partition. In 1939, 60 per cent of German farms were *Erbhöfe*,[11] and their proprietors for the most part

provided all the necessary political guarantees.[12]

National socialist declarations about partitioning the great estates were largely a dead letter. The land bought up and distributed was the least productive, and the area affected fell from 60,000 hectares in 1933 to 35,000 in 1937. The great majority of land 'colonized' was public land, and newly cleared or conquered areas. These too were divided into large and medium farms (70 per cent were over 10 hectares in 1933), and were apparently all made over to national socialists. The State sometimes directly expropriated small-holders and small tenants to make hereditary farms of their lands. But the direct expropriation of the rural petty bourgeoisie was limited. Most of it took place indirectly, as the small-holders continued to get deeply into debt, while farms of under 10 hectares were not recognized as hereditary and the moratorium on mortgages was eventually lifted. The exploitation of small-holders also took place through the indirect measures mentioned above.

The condition of the agricultural workers was catastrophic: their real wages fell by 50–70 per cent, their unions were destroyed, and they were no longer allowed unemployment benefit. Worse still: *wage* payment was largely abolished and replaced by payment in *kind*. This, of course, meant increased exploitation, but it should not be seen as a return to feudal forms of working the land. On the contrary, national socialism was carrying capitalism further into agriculture. The change to payment in kind only affected the *juridical form* of exploitation. More precisely, it did not aim to fix the agricultural worker to a particular farm, and it did not affect the circulation of labour in the countryside: its aim was rather to prevent an exodus to the towns. As the experience of many Latin American countries today shows, capitalism can very well be introduced into agriculture in the juridical form of payment in kind to agricultural labourers.

Lastly, national socialism attacked the status of small tenants and lease-holders in many ways, directly transforming most of them into agricultural workers: a development which corresponds precisely to the introduction of capitalism into agriculture. One of the ways of accomplishing this was the prohibition of leasing on the *Erbhöfe*.

We can then make a balance-sheet of the agrarian question under national socialism. Firstly, big monopoly capitalism increasingly came to exploit the whole agricultural sector. The introduction of capitalism into agriculture was carried out, for ideological and political reasons, in a manner that did not basically change the juridical forms of property. But the capitalization of agriculture gave nothing like the results anticipated. Although the sale of agricultural machinery rose from 80 million RM in 1932 to 300 million in 1938,

and that of chemical fertilizers rose by about a third in the same period, total agricultural production rose only a little, despite an appreciable increase in yields per hectare.

‘Exogenous’ factors of various kinds should be taken into account to explain the poor rise in agricultural production: in particular, the loss of arable land through the building of barracks, military training grounds and fortifications. Between 1933 and 1939 about one million hectares were taken out of production in this way.

4

Italy

According to the only complete census, taken in 1929, Italian agriculture was *extremely polarized* between large and small units. 20,000 great landowners, representing 0.6 per cent of all proprietors, held 36 per cent of the cultivable land. A third of the cultivable area was in small-holdings of from 2 to 10 hectares. Among the agricultural population, only 28 per cent were owners, 48 per cent held land owned by others, and 30 per cent were agricultural labourers (*braccianti*).[1]

At the end of the war, the situation was as follows. In the South, which together with the central region had most of the specialized agriculture, the big landowners were generally the economic owners of the agricultural unit. Cultivation was based either on the labour of agricultural day-workers, (*braccianti* and part-tenants), or on share-cropping, in forms which testify to the remarkable survival of feudal relations. Share-cropping is based on dividing the harvest between the owner and the share-cropper. The share-cropping contracts lasted a very short time (often only for a single crop), applied to a very small area, arid were made on the basis of personal, client-type ties of an ideological and political nature. The conditions of cultivation were archaic, mechanization was almost non-existent, and the use of fertilizers very limited.

In central Italy, small-holding and small tenancy were dominant.

In the North, however, capitalism had tentatively begun to penetrate agriculture: the big landowners were turning into capitalist ‘rentiers’. Cultivation in the pasture and arable lands was to a large extent carried out by big and middle tenants, while small-holdings (in the Po Valley) and small tenants kept most of their lands.

With the exception of the part-tenants, who were generally tied to one farm, the agricultural labourers were on the whole a very mobile labour force, often only able to find work for 60 to 100 days in a year.

Italian agriculture had very low yields and a low rate of labour productivity. Only 50 per cent of its gross product went to the market. Italy was obliged to import massive quantities of cereals, etc., while the produce of specialized agriculture from the small farms was not competitive in foreign markets. The price of land was very high, a measure of the fact that capitalism had not penetrated the countryside very much. Social contradictions in the countryside were very acute: between the big landowners on the one hand, and the poor peasantry and agricultural workers on the other; between the 'capitalist' landowners and the middle and rich tenants; and between the 'semi-feudal' landowners of the South and the big landed capitalists of the North.

Into this situation, during and after the war, there came a deep agricultural crisis, aggravated by the general economic crisis of post-war Italy. Between 1915 and 1917, while industrial prices tripled, agricultural prices only doubled. Around 1917, agricultural stagnation was so bad that rationing was brought in, and whole regions were left without bread. But the 'economic crisis' had only secondary effects on peasant agitation, and its effects were basically to aggravate the contradictions already mentioned.

With the end of the war there was in fact a real peasant movement, stronger and far more widespread than in Germany. In July 1919, a general movement of land occupation started under the slogan 'share out the land': it spread from Latium to the whole of the peninsula, and was especially strong in the South and the islands. The poor peasants organized co-operatives, the agricultural proletariat unionized in massive numbers, the share-croppers and tenants refused to leave their lands when the leases ran out. It was a largely spontaneous movement, but came under the increasing control of the Socialists and the Popular Party (the Catholic 'White' leagues). The Popular Party channelled it into demands on the government for 'colonization reform'; while the maximalist Socialists looked on this 'petty-bourgeois' movement for land distribution with the greatest mistrust, explicitly stating themselves to be more 'orthodox' than Lenin on this question, and putting forward the idea of immediate 'collectivization'.

So the peasant movement nowhere joined up with the workers' movement, and this division was to persist right through the rise of fascism. In such a situation, the peasant rising was a failure: it declined in 1920 and disappeared in 1921 under the landowners' offensive. Hardly 200,000 hectares changed hands

by whatever means. The Visocchi decree of 1919, issued by the Nitti government, authorized the local administration to give temporary or permanent validity to land occupations, but this was slowly abolished, and the gains of the unions were undermined.

After this, when the rise of fascism began, the poor peasantry was in a state of deep political and ideological crisis, and deeply demoralized. Agricultural workers now looked on their union membership as no more than a way to find work. The small-holders and small tenants turned away from social democracy. The Popular Party gradually ousted social democracy from the countryside, and most importantly, its ideological influence spread, essentially in the form of *feudal socialism*, inspired by Catholic corporatism, advocating the community of interests of the 'toilers of the land' against the towns, and representing the interests of the landowners. However, the anarcho-syndicalist current was still influential among the agricultural proletariat of the North.

Rural fascism began to develop from the summer of 1920. Ideologically, it was similar to national socialism in its demands for land distribution and 'colonization'. What distinguished it was the nature and extent of the white terror it let loose in the countryside, where the revolt had been much stronger than in Germany. Rural fascism was a straight paramilitary movement run by the landowners.

Rural fascism took root basically in the agricultural regions of the North, where the capitalist landowners supported it more directly than did the semi-feudal landowners of the South. It first appeared in Ferrari province, which had seen the strongest peasant disturbances, and spread rapidly through Emilia, Tuscany and the whole Po Valley. Here it was also supported by the large and middle tenant farmers. It none the less met with resistance from the agricultural proletariat. The apparently impressive recruitment to the fascist trade unions came about almost wholly through the forced incorporation of the local branches of the socialist unions and through the white terror. The poor peasantry of the North (small-holders and tenants) was divided over fascism, with the small tenants, who had been disillusioned by social-democratic 'collectivist' declarations, taking a more favourable attitude. The division over fascism was deepest among the rural petty bourgeoisie of central Italy, where they were dominant, and where fascism gained even less of an implantation than in the North.

Except for the landowners, the South as a whole was *fairly resistant to fascism*: it was the only region where the opposition to fascism made gains in the 1924 elections.[2] This is particularly striking by comparison with eastern

Germany under national socialism: the basic reason for this attitude in the South was the overwhelming proportion of poor peasants and agricultural proletarians, who had been strongly radicalized by the peasant uprising.

The actual policies of fascism towards the rural classes included the massive introduction of capitalism into agriculture, the effects of which were pointed out in the analysis of the relation of fascism to the landowners and monopoly capital. For political reasons, this was effected by support for the great estates. The great estates were systematically aided at the expense of the small-holders, and under fascism they took a decisive turn towards capitalism.

The State in fact undertook between 70 and 95 per cent of 'integral improvements' (improvement of agricultural yields through technical development and mechanization). The expense to the State was great, and the profits went almost wholly to the great landowners. State subsidies to the big estates were financed by a treasury which bled the small farmers white, while the landowners obtained many tax exemptions. Customs protection was mainly for cereals (the product of the big estates), while the produce of the small-holdings lost out completely to international competition.

Fascist policy towards the small-holders and small tenants was not quite the same as national socialist policy. Given the strength of the peasants' demands, fascism was careful not to take over-radical measures in favour of middle and rich farms and against the small-holders – a marked contrast to the Nazi *Erbhof* policy. Certainly, in the course of making its improvements, and especially in the draining of the Pontine marsh, fascism distributed some 60,000 hectares to its most fanatical devotees, divided among 3,000 rich and middle farms. But the phenomenon was of limited proportions.

Although the promises to colonize 'unproductive' land were largely a dead letter, even after the Serpieri law of 1934, which decreed the partition of the latifundia, such measures none the less seem to have aided the small peasant at the expense of the middle landowner. In a situation where holdings tended to polarize between large and small, such measures *led to the extension of small-holding at the expense of middle farming*: the units of cultivation increased by 500,000 between 1929 and 1940, while the area cultivated increased by only a million hectares, which is evidence enough of the extension of the small agricultural unit. The capitalization of agriculture was carried out by the indirect exploitation of the small agricultural unit by the great, and *by the increasing polarization between these two forms of cultivation*, to the overwhelming profit of the landowners.[3]

At the same time, however, and perhaps as a necessary concomitant, fascism took a series of measures to develop capitalist relations of production in agriculture. These were essentially aimed at transforming small cultivators with residual feudal characteristics into agricultural labourers. The share-croppers of the Southern latifundia were radically affected by fascism, together with the tenants. The share-cropping contracts grew less favourable, insurance was deducted from their share, and no wage was guaranteed them. Their condition became even worse than that of the agricultural labourers. The result, as the fascist economist Perdisa wrote, was that 'unfortunately, where the land is under share-cropping, the rents reach such astronomic levels that despite the peasant's attachment to the land, he is obliged to become a day labourer'.

Lastly, fascist policy towards the agricultural workers was similar to that of national socialism: the wages of agricultural workers fell by about 50 per cent, and they lost the right to unemployment benefit and union membership. By the system of 'co-participation', wage payment was often replaced by payment in kind. But again as in Germany, this modification of the juridical form of payment, aimed basically at stopping the exodus to the towns, must not be understood as a reinforcement of feudal relations in agriculture.

Two additional remarks should be made here:

1. The pace at which capitalism was introduced into agriculture also depended on the relationship of fascism to the 'feudal' landowners. Fascism transformed them into landed capitalists unevenly and on the basis of compromises. This policy was far from producing the desired results. State subsidies to agriculture often amounted to transferring public money to landowners who resisted the capitalization of agriculture. The works of 'integral improvement' should have initially affected 8 million hectares. The fascist regime declared that 5 million hectares had been improved, but the actual figure was 1.5 million.

2. Fascist policy was also compounded by a whole series of inequalities in the agricultural sector. For example, 'technical progress' in small and intensive agriculture far from equalled that in cereals. But these inequalities and backward features were basically due *to the very introduction of capitalism into agriculture, under the dominance of monopoly capitalism*, as Lenin always stressed.[4] They were not due, as has often been held, to fascism basically favouring the 'feudal structures' of Italian agriculture.[5] This is a 'technicist-economist' view, which in fact thinks that capitalist development in agriculture must go hand in hand with harmonious and spectacular 'technical and economic

progress’ in all sectors of agricultural production.

Part Seven

The Fascist State

Having analysed the field of class struggle during the rise of fascism and fascist rule, I shall now examine the institutional forms taken by the fascist State. Again, before making a concrete analysis, I shall put forward certain propositions regarding the question of the State in Marxist theory. These can in fact be very well illustrated by the example of the fascist State, the *crisis* form of State.

1

The State Apparatus and the Ideological Apparatuses

I. GRAMSCI

The basic problem here is that of the ideological apparatuses and their relation to the State apparatus in the strict sense. The Marxist theory of the State has in fact been centred explicitly on the *'repressive' State apparatus*, whose branches are the army, police, administration, law courts, government etc. The Marxist classics certainly discussed institutions like the Church, the schools, etc., but only by analogy with the State apparatus in the strict sense.

The only notable exception is Gramsci. It must be stressed that Gramsci developed the theory that the ideological apparatuses belong to the State system on the basis of his political experience as a proletarian leader.

He firstly made a series of general analyses. Stressing that the State had not only a 'coercive' role but also an ideological role, that of hegemony, Gramsci repeatedly pointed out in great detail that the State should not be seen only in the 'traditional' way as an apparatus of 'brute force', but also as the 'organizer of hegemony'. The State 'in the total sense' included organizations 'normally referred to as private', namely the Church, schools, unions, parties and news media: 'I have had to reconsider the whole idea of the State, which is generally understood to be a "dictatorship" and not… the hegemony of a social group over the whole society of the nation, hegemony exercised through private bodies such as the Church, the unions, parties, schools, etc.' Elsewhere he wrote: 'But what

does all this mean, if not that the "State" should be understood to be not just the governmental machinery, but the "private" apparatus of hegemony too?' … 'If every State thus tends to create and preserve a certain type of civilization and a certain type of citizen, … to do away with some customs and attitudes and develop others, the law, the schools and other institutions must be used in achieving such objectives.'[1]

Gramsci goes on to prove his theory with a whole series of very detailed analyses, in particular of the Church, unions, parties and schools.

I am not able to say much more about Gramsci here. But little as I know Gramsci's work, there can be no doubt that it was he who formulated the theory of ideological apparatuses as State apparatuses. Two points, however, should be made:

(a) These analyses of Gramsci's, originating in the *Ordine Nuovo* period, were later obscured, not without a reason, but as part of the enormous 'official' mystification of Gramsci.

(b) Gramsci's theory is still tainted by a language stemming from the 'historicist' conception, and from certain related notions such as that of 'civil society'; this even affects his concept of 'hegemony'. I have given a critique of this elsewhere, which I shall not repeat here. In the present theoretical and political conjuncture, I thought it important to emphasize this critique, which I still think is correct. But what I retained, while attempting to separate and correct them, were the important elements of Gramsci's analysis which led him to formulate his theory of the ideological State apparatuses. I still think this correction necessary, perhaps more so than ever. At the same time, I left the problem of the ideological apparatuses open, but May-June 1968 in France showed once again how correct Gramsci's analysis was, for the capitalist State specifically. It is clear enough that the question is a key one. It engaged much of Lenin's attention, and has been posed once again by the Cultural Revolution in China.

It is necessary to go into the basic presuppositions of this conception of the *ideological State apparatuses*: not only because Gramsci did not elaborate them, but above all because, unless the conception is rigorously located in relation to the class struggle, it can lead to certain confusions.[2]

II. IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUSES AS STATE APPARATUSES

I shall start with some remarks about the functioning of ideology in a social formation. Ideology does not only belong to the realm of ideas: it is not a 'conceptual system' in the strict sense of the term. As Gramsci firmly stated, it

extends to the mores, customs, and 'way of life' of the agents in a social formation. It is concretized in the *practices* of a social formation (bourgeois, proletarian, and petty-bourgeois practices).

Ideology, the dominant ideology, is furthermore an essential *power* of the classes in a social formation. As such, the dominant ideology is embodied in a series of institutions and apparatuses within a formation:[3] the Churches (religious apparatus), parties (political apparatus), unions (union apparatus), schools and universities (educational apparatus), the means of 'communication', i.e. papers, radio, television, cinema (communications apparatus), the 'cultural' domain (publishing etc.), the family in a certain sense, etc. These are the ideological State apparatuses.[4]

Such apparatuses are relatively distinct from the 'repressive' State apparatus, i.e. from that apparatus which fulfils its role under the *principal aspect* of organized physical repression, which the State legally monopolizes (though ideology plays a part here too): this is the State apparatus in the strict sense. The ideological apparatuses have as their *principal aspect* the elaboration and indoctrination of ideology (though various forms of repression are at work here too). Why should they be described as ideological *State* apparatuses?

1. Ideology is not something 'neutral' in society: *the only ideologies are class ideologies*. The dominant ideology consists of power relations which are absolutely essential to a social formation, and sometimes even assume the dominant role in it. But this is not enough to make the ideological apparatuses State apparatuses. Political domination cannot in fact be maintained through the use of physical repression alone, but demands the direct and decisive intervention of ideology. It is in this sense that the dominant ideology, in the form of its ideological apparatuses, is directly involved in the State apparatus, which concentrates, guarantees and gives expression to political power.

2. This brings us to the Marxist definition of the State. In the Marxist classics, the State, as a class State, is not defined solely by its control of repressive physical 'force', but mainly by its social and political role. The class State is the central instance with the role of preserving the unity and cohesion of a social formation, of preserving the conditions of production and therefore the reproduction of the social conditions of production. In a system of class struggle, it guarantees political class domination. This is precisely the role of the ideological apparatuses: in particular, the dominant ideology is the 'cement' of the social formation.

3. The State apparatus in the strict sense is the condition for the existence and functioning of the ideological apparatuses in a social formation. Although the

repressive apparatus does not generally intervene directly in their functioning, it is still continually there behind them.

III. BRANCHES OF THE REPRESSIVE STATE APPARATUS; CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES

Some additional remarks are required here:

1. I have just said that the State apparatuses fulfil their role either under the *principal aspect* of repression or under the *principal aspect* of ideology. But I should specify that *this does not mean that the only 'functions' of the State are repressive and ideological*.

Depending on the modes of production and their stages, and depending on the phases and periods of a social formation, the State can even have what could be called a 'direct economic function'. This function is direct in that the State is not limited to reproducing the social conditions of production, but intervenes decisively in the reproduction of the production cycle itself – notably in certain cases of the interventionist form of capitalist State, where the State, as Lenin showed, intervenes 'even in the detailed workings of the economy' (i.e. in the very cycle of capital reproduction), just as the fascist State does. This economic function of the State can be carried out both by the repressive apparatus (government and administration), and by the ideological apparatuses (the trade unions).

The important point, however, is that the economic function of the State is always articulated to its overall political role. In other words, this economic function, which may be dominant over the other functions, is in fact carried out under the principal aspect of either repression or ideology.[5]

2. As a corollary, the concept of 'apparatus' cannot be restricted to the State apparatuses alone. In other words, the *concepts of 'apparatus' and 'State' do not cover exactly the same ground*. The firm, for example, is not merely a 'unit of production'. It also plays a part in reproducing the social conditions of production, and ideology and relations of political domination are involved in it. As an effect of the relations of production, the 'firm' gives concrete form to the relationship between social relations of production and political and ideological social relations. Revolutionary practice experienced this with the 'workers' councils' and 'soviets' (Gramsci in particular was very aware of this).

However, the 'economic apparatus' cannot be described as an economic State apparatus, although the State intervenes to guarantee 'order'. On the one hand, the Marxist definition of the *State* is that its apparatuses are basically designed to preserve the cohesion and unity of a formation divided into classes. This

definition emphasizes political class domination and does not therefore apply directly to the economic apparatus. On the other hand, as ‘production units’ in a system of class exploitation, the main role of the economic apparatus in relation to the masses is to *exploit* them. The ‘authority’ or ‘despotism’ of the exploiting class is directly determined by exploitation, while the State apparatuses do not exploit in the full sense of *directly extracting* surplus value (this at least is not their main role).[6]

There are some important consequences for the problem of the socialist revolution.

The Marxist classics *explicitly* indicated that a socialist revolution means not only a change in *State power*, but must also ‘*smash*’ the repressive State apparatus. It can be argued that this thesis does not apply only to the *State*, i.e. to the repressive *and* ideological State apparatuses, nor is it enough just to extend it to the ideological State apparatuses. *This thesis in fact involves the whole ‘apparatus’, including the economic apparatus*. Lenin always maintained just this position.

None the less, the distinction between State apparatuses and economic apparatus is *still basic*. In particular, it is clear that the *State* apparatuses and the economic apparatus cannot be smashed *at the same time or in the same way*. The same is of course true for the distinction between the repressive and ideological State apparatuses, which can also not be ‘smashed’ at the same time or in the same way. But the difference between the *State* apparatuses (repressive and ideological) and the economic apparatus is of quite a different kind. The economic apparatus in particular contains, in its ‘production units’, the hard kernel which Marx called the ‘technical basis of production’. This is not to be met with in the State apparatuses, and it poses quite specific ‘problems’.

3. The fact that the ideological State apparatuses are often of a ‘private’ character, and are not officially recognized as *State* apparatuses, should not be surprising. The distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ is purely juridical. Contrary to a certain conception that there is a ‘pre-juridical’, almost ontological distinction between private and public, a demarcation line between ‘civil society’ and the ‘State’ (i.e. the place at which the State is constituted), it has to be understood that this distinction is established by *law* – in effect, by the State itself – and its *only* meaning is therefore a juridical one.[7] The distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ does not basically affect the question of the ideological State apparatuses. Gramsci understood this perfectly when he described ‘bodies normally referred to as private’ as belonging to the State.

This in no way means that the ‘private’ or ‘public’ character of the ideological

State apparatuses is of no importance, or that it comes about merely by chance. On the contrary, this signifies different forms of functioning, according to the different types and forms of State. The normally 'private' nature of these apparatuses, moreover, often relates to their *relative autonomy* both from each other and from the State apparatus.

4. We are close to the heart of the matter. It is possible to refer to *the* State apparatus, narrowly defined, *in the singular*, whereas one speaks of *several* ideological State apparatuses.

It would be wrong to think that the State apparatus in the narrow sense was some kind of indivisible monolith. The repressive State apparatus is itself composed of specialized *branches*: the army, the police, the administration etc. But in their relations with each other and with the repressive State apparatus, the ideological State apparatuses display *a degree and form of relative autonomy* which the branches of the repressive State apparatus do not possess. The repressive State apparatus, the *central nucleus* of the State system and State power, has a much stronger and more vigorous internal unity than the ideological apparatuses. The internal unity of the branches of this apparatus makes it possible to speak of them as a *virtual sub-system* within the system of State apparatuses.

One of the main consequences is that the 'destruction' of the State cannot be identical for the State apparatus and for the ideological State apparatuses: the ideological apparatuses cannot be 'smashed' at the same time or in the same way as the State apparatus, or as each other.

Why do the ideological State apparatuses have this relative autonomy, expressed in their own multiplicity?

(a) The relative distinctness of class ideologies from the State apparatuses is not jeopardized by the institutionalization of the dominant ideology in State apparatuses. These apparatuses do not 'create' ideology, and their main function is to develop and instil it. This relative distinctness of ideology stems from the fact that the apparatuses themselves are no more than the effects of the class struggle. I cannot go into this here, but its implications were understood by the Marxist classics. They saw the remarkable ability of the dominant ideology to *outlive* the transformation of the apparatuses (including the ideological apparatuses) and of State power.[8]

(b) It is based on fundamental features of the class struggle, firstly in the realm of ideology. The dominant ideology is not the only ideology in a social formation: *there are several contradictory ideologies or ideological sub-systems*, related to the various classes in struggle. The dominant ideology itself is only

formed by its successful domination of these other ideologies and ideological sub-systems: it does so through the ideological State apparatuses. This in turn implies that the apparatuses condense the intense ideological contradictions expressed in splits among the 'ideological spokesmen' who are a part of them. The result is the relative autonomy of the ideological apparatuses.

(c) The relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses therefore finally relates to the relations of political power in the strict sense, and is expressed in major dislocations of *State power*.[9]

Firstly, State power is generally formed by an alliance of the dominant classes or class fractions, the power bloc in a capitalist social formation. So despite the fact that one class or fraction normally has hegemony, the political power of the other classes or fractions 'in power' involves dislocations among the State apparatuses. It is not possible to discuss State power, political class power, without locating its concrete expression in the State apparatuses.

In particular, it is possible for one class or fraction to have power in all or some of the ideological apparatuses of the State, while another controls the State apparatus proper. One characteristic example is that of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, where there is an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the landed nobility. In such cases the Church often acts for a long time as the nobility's seat of power, while the bourgeoisie entrenches itself in the State apparatus.

The important point to stress is that these dislocations in State power appear mainly between the ideological State apparatuses themselves, or between them and the repressive State apparatus. Despite the internal unity of this sub-system, it is even possible for similar divisions to appear within the State apparatus proper. The army, the administration or the judiciary can at times be the privileged seats of power of different classes or fractions within the power bloc: this will become clear in the case of the rise of fascism.

But as the repressive State apparatus is the central nucleus of the State, the hegemonic class or fraction generally controls this apparatus. Its internal unity ('centralization') means that while non-hegemonic classes or fractions may control certain of its branches, its internal organization is, according to the form of State, generally under the direct domination of the branch controlled by the hegemonic class or fraction. This is precisely why it is possible to speak of a concrete unity (not a 'sharing') of State power within the State apparatus, when several classes and fractions are in power.

With the ideological apparatuses things are different. These are in fact the apparatuses best able to concentrate in themselves the power of non-hegemonic

classes and fractions. They are therefore both the favoured ‘refuge’ of such classes and fractions, and their favoured spoils. The classes and fractions in these apparatuses may not even be allies of the hegemonic class, but in bitter struggle against it.

These apparatuses are therefore often the *last ramparts* of a waning class power, as the Church was for the landed nobility, or the *first strongholds* of a new class power, as publishing and the schools were for the bourgeoisie before the French Revolution.[10] Lastly and most importantly, the struggle of the masses is not only reflected in the ideological apparatuses, but often has a particularly marked influence on certain of them, in particular those aimed at the masses, such as trade unions and parties of the social-democratic kind.

The ‘game’ of class power played out between the repressive State apparatus and the ideological apparatuses, which is due to the *class struggle*, appears to be the basic cause, and one of the effects, of the relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses.

5. One last point, which I can only touch on here. Only revolutionary organizations and organizations of class struggle can in the end ‘escape’ the system of ideological State apparatuses. This relates to the Marxist-Leninist theory of *organizations*. It should simply be remembered that the main question at the centre of this theory is the question of knowing how these organizations can be formed and carry out their tasks, breaking the hold of the ideological apparatuses, and avoiding, in their practice, the constant danger of slipping back towards them.

2

The Exceptional State and the Fascist State: Type of State, Form of State and Form of Regime

In the light of the above analysis, we can now approach the problem of the fascist State provided certain factors are kept in mind:

A. The fascist State is a form of State of the *capitalist type*. In spite of everything that has been written to the contrary, it therefore has the features peculiar to the capitalist State.

B. The fascist State is a specific *form of State*, an *exceptional State* corresponding to the needs of a political crisis. Therefore:

1. It has a *different* form to the State in other social formations which belong to the same stage (the imperialist stage), but do not experience the same kind of crisis.

2. It has *features in common* with other States belonging to the imperialist stage; while it has to deal with the crisis, it has also to fulfil the functions required of it in this particular stage.

C. The fascist State is also a specific *form of regime*. Therefore:

1. It has *features in common* with other forms of regime also belonging to the form of the exceptional capitalist State, in so far as they also correspond to political crises of a similar nature in a capitalist formation, e.g. military

dictatorship and Bonapartism.

2. It is *different* from these forms of regimes, in so far as it corresponds to a specific political crisis and specific class relations. The differences also depend on the period in which these forms arise. I already posed this set of problems at the beginning of the book, in analysing the *political crisis*.[1]

Before embarking on the concrete examination of the fascist State, a few words are required about the *relevant criteria* which specify it as a form of State and a form of regime. There is no need to analyse these different criteria, which are to be understood on the basis of the distinction and the *relationship* between these two political spaces.[2] I would simply point out that the factors for differentiating *forms* of the capitalist *State* are: (a) the relationship of the economic, the political and ideology at a given stage of the capitalist mode of production; (b) the general characteristics of the class struggle in the corresponding *period* of capitalist formations: in this instance, the general features of political crisis, leading to the exceptional State. The factors in differentiating the *forms of regime* are the concrete methods of political class struggle in a determinate *conjuncture*: in this instance, the specific political crisis to which fascism corresponds.

In the framework of a capitalist State, these factors are expressed according to a rigorously governed set of *criteria*. For the *form of State* these are:

1. The forms and modalities of State intervention in the economic and in social relations in general, and the forms and modalities of the relative autonomy of the State from the dominant classes.

2. The role, forms and inter-relationship of the State apparatus proper and the ideological State apparatuses, corresponding to modifications in the law, which is precisely what governs them.

3. The general relationship of the branches of the repressive State apparatus itself, corresponding, for the capitalist State, to the general relationship between executive and legislative.

4. The general relationship between the ideological State apparatuses. As for the *forms of regime* occupying the political scene, the criteria are these:

1. *How far* they display the general characteristics of a form of State;

2. The specific *form* taken by these characteristics; the concrete relationships between the various branches of the State apparatus proper and between the various ideological State apparatuses, and the relations between the two when one is dominant. The political parties and class representation by party are particularly important for this.

These criteria also hold for the *exceptional State form* and for the *exceptional political regimes* dependent on this State form. I shall therefore start my analysis with a series of propositions about the *exceptional State form of the capitalist State*, and outline a theory of it. Like the other exceptional regimes (Bonapartism and military dictatorship) the fascist State belongs to this State form and displays its essential characteristics.

I shall reverse the order of presentation in this chapter, firstly analysing the established fascist State, then the modifications in the form of State which preceded fascism during the period of its rise. The importance of these modifications, which mark the rise of fascism, can only be seen in relation to the fascist State to which they led.

3

General Propositions on the Exceptional State

I. FORMS OF STATE INTERVENTION

The exceptional State form of the capitalist State still belongs to the *capitalist* type of State, not only in terms of State power, but also in its institutional forms; this also holds for the fascist State as an exceptional capitalist State. It has the distinguishing features of the capitalist type of State – the relative separation of the economic from the political, and the relative autonomy of the State from the dominant classes and fractions.

Because of the period and the crisis to which the exceptional State corresponds, it generally *intervenes* in the economic in a characteristic way, to adapt and adjust the system to the socialization of the productive forces. The fascist State's intervention in the economic is very important.[1] From this point of view, it has points in common with the interventionist form of State (monopoly capitalism) of social formations not experiencing political crisis. What distinguishes it as an exceptional State is not so much the extent to which it intervenes, as the forms it uses.

The relative autonomy of the exceptional State from the dominant classes and fractions is particularly important and significant, as a result of the political crisis and the relation of forces to which it corresponds. The exceptional State needs this relative autonomy to reorganize hegemony and the power bloc, and in the context of the political crisis, supporting classes also appear quite often as social forces. The reasons for the relative autonomy of the fascist State, and the way it works, have already been stated. In the other forms of exceptional regime,

this autonomy can be due to a normal or catastrophic balance of forces, which is characteristic of particular kinds of political crisis (e.g. Bonapartism).

II. MODIFICATION IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPRESSIVE APPARATUS AND THE IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUSES

The exceptional State, corresponding to a reorganization of the whole State apparatus (the State system), involves radical changes in the ideological State apparatuses and in their relationship to the repressive State apparatus. The fascist State is a very good example of this.

This is a vitally important aspect, and it is no accident that the writers who talk about 'totalitarianism' make it their central theme.[2] They say that a 'totalitarian' State such as fascism is 'essentially', *innately* different from the State of 'institutional pluralism'. In the latter, there are institutions and organizations which are *autonomous* from the State on the one hand, and from the individual members of civil society on the other. These 'intermediate bodies' between State and individual are the guarantee of liberty, which is of course to be measured in terms of the autonomy of the individual from the State. Such 'autonomous', 'free' institutions supposedly includes the parties, trade unions, cultural institutions, schools, the Church, and even the various local associations, sports clubs, etc. The modern form of this ideology goes right back to Veblen, and even to Durkheim himself. Following Arendt, they continue in a series of works on 'mass society', establishing learned correlations between the propensity to totalitarianism and the absence in these 'mass societies' of these intermediary bodies between the State and the 'atoms' of society.

The totalitarian State, according to them, is characterized by the fact that every institution belongs to the State, and that all social life is brought under the State, so that there are no 'autonomous' institutions between the State and the individual.

We should pause here to recall what was said about the ideological State apparatuses. These 'institutions' are State apparatuses throughout, whatever the form of State. In other words, the difference between the fascist State (the exceptional State) and the other forms of capitalist State does not lie in the fact that in the one case the institutions belong to the State system while in the other they are independent or 'autonomous'. In fact, contrary to the all too obvious apologias of the ideologists of totalitarianism, the fascist State is akin to the other forms of the capitalist State because it is itself a *capitalist State*. Furthermore, to recall an earlier remark, the exceptional capitalist State, and in particular the fascist State, because it is a *crisis* form of the capitalist State and

therefore quite specific, also reveals certain aspects of the actual functioning of the capitalist State as such – sometimes, admittedly, by contrast.

This in no way means that there are no *key differences* characteristic of the exceptional State form. They are *generally* expressed at the juridical level (that of the relation between 'public' and 'private'), by the formal attribution of a public status to the ideological apparatuses of the exceptional State.

What does this in fact mean? The differentiation between public and private status is coextensive with the relative autonomy of the ideological apparatuses within the State system. Changes in this respect in an exceptional State – especially in the fascist State – indicate the various degrees of limitation or even suppression of the relative autonomy of the ideological apparatuses: a relative autonomy they enjoy in other forms of State. This means that the whole relationship between the repressive State apparatus and the ideological State apparatuses is changed.

A. This limitation, typical of the exceptional State, stems primarily from the relations of class power and from the re-organization of hegemony which takes place in political crisis.

The relative autonomy of the ideological apparatuses in the other forms of capitalist State is due to the following factors, among others:

(a) classes or class fractions of the power bloc other than the hegemonic class or fraction hold power in them;

(b) the masses have particular ways of expressing themselves through the apparatuses (parties, unions, etc.).

In an exceptional State, the State's decisive role in reorganizing hegemony implies:

(a) a decisive limitation on the 'distribution' of power within the apparatuses;

(b) strict control of the whole of the State system by one 'branch' or one apparatus in the hands of the class or class fraction which is struggling to establish its hegemony.[3]

B. But this characteristic limitation of the relative autonomy of the ideological apparatuses in the exceptional State is also due to the *ideological crisis* which accompanies the political crisis, and therefore to the specific intervention of ideology, which concentrates and increases repression against the popular classes.

1. The first element to be stressed is that the increased role of physical repression is necessarily accompanied by a particular intervention of ideology to *legitimize* this repression. I would go further: the other forms of capitalist State have a 'constitutional' juridical arsenal to allow for the use of a broad measure of

physical repression in critical situations in the class struggle, and the ‘democracies’ are very good at this. But such State forms often do not allow the use of ideological intervention to justify such repression, because of the relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses. It therefore becomes necessary to resort to the exceptional form, not so much because the established juridical rules forbid repression, but because the accompanying ideological intervention is not possible within these other forms of State.

2. This factor alone, however, does not explain this characteristic limitation of the autonomy of the ideological apparatuses in the exceptional State. It must not be forgotten that this ideological intervention becomes necessary when the dominant ideology is in crisis: the exceptional State has then to play a part itself in the actual organization of the dominant ideology. The combination of these two factors explains the limitation in question.

In other forms of State, it is in fact through the ‘spokesmen of the *organic* ideology’[4] of the dominant classes, and through their ability to represent them, that the dominant ideology is ‘worked out’ within the ideological apparatuses, and instilled by means of these apparatuses. However, in all forms of State, the State apparatuses themselves ‘secrete’ *their own internal ideology*. But in those State forms not corresponding to a political and ideological crisis, this internal ideology is often perceptibly different from the dominant ideology: for example, the State ‘bureaucracy’, the army, the Church and the educational system all have an own internal ideology of their own.

The reasons for this are:

(a) the dislocation between these apparatuses, as seats of the contradictions between various ideologies and ideological sub-systems;

(b) the contradictions within these apparatuses between (i) the *social* categories of the ‘spokesmen of the organic ideology’, organizing hegemony in a direct relationship of representation (‘organic’ in the Gramscian sense) to the hegemonic class or fraction, and (ii) those subjected to other ideologies.

This dislocation between the dominant ideology and the internal ideology of the apparatuses therefore expresses the ideological contradictions which, together with the dislocations in State power, give the ideological State apparatuses their relative autonomy.

As for the exceptional State form, the ideological and political crisis leads to the hegemonic class or fraction losing its direct links with both its political and its ideological representatives. This is where the internal ideology of the State apparatuses meets up with the dominant ideology in the formation. The ‘ideological spokesmen’ of the hegemonic class or fraction identify with the

internal ideology of the apparatuses, excluding those of other ideologies. At the same time, the State apparatuses as a whole are subjected to this internal ideology, coinciding as it does with the dominant ideology, which itself is that of the dominant branch or State apparatus. The ‘militarization’ of society and of the apparatuses comes about when the army is dominant; ‘bureaucratization’ when the administration is dominant, and ‘clericalization’ when the Church is the apparatus concerned.

This particular function of the exceptional State is thus the necessary means for reorganizing ideological hegemony. But this in turn involves, to a greater or lesser extent, (i) the limitation of the relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses from the repressive State apparatus and (ii) the limitation of the relative autonomy of the ideological apparatus among themselves.

Even in this case, the fascist State has features in common with the other interventionist form of State, not corresponding to a political crisis. In this State form, because of the stage it belongs to, there is also both a proliferation of the role of the ideological apparatuses and a diminution of their relative autonomy, because of the overwhelming political domination of monopoly capital.

III. THE DISPLACEMENT OF THE DOMINANT BRANCH OR APPARATUS

The exceptional State form is therefore characterized by certain relationships between the ideological State apparatuses and the repressive State apparatus. This does not mean that the repressive State apparatus simply dominates the ideological apparatuses, contrary to the naive idea that the exceptional State is characterized merely by increased physical repression, part of which is the subordination of the ideological apparatuses to the repressive State apparatus.

The exceptional State form is typically marked by a resurgence of organized physical repression. But the total reorganization of the State results in a new relationship between the repressive and ideological apparatuses, and it is this which is important here. In this relationship, the domination of one or the other specifies the form of *regime* of the exceptional State. In fact, depending on the relation of forces and the distribution of class power within the State system, the dominant position may belong (a) to the repressive State apparatus and one of its branches – the army in military dictatorship, the civil administration in Bonapartism, the political police in the established fascist State; (b) to an ideological State apparatus – for example the party in the first period of fascist rule, or the Church in ‘clerical-military’ dictatorships like the Dollfuss regime in Austria.

But it is possible to distinguish two basic common features of the exceptional State form:

1. In the other forms of capitalist State, the repressive State apparatus is dominant over the ideological State apparatuses, whether this is evident or not. It is particularly clear with the political parties, which in these forms of State are principally transmission belts, and as ideological State apparatuses are subordinate to the repressive State apparatus. In these States, where the elaboration and indoctrination of ideology operate normally', the *central nucleus of the State* really is dominant within the State. This is one of the reasons why the Marxist classics concentrated on analysing it.

The exceptional State form sees:

(a) the overthrow of the relation of forces within the power bloc, and the special role of social forces which, in the crisis conjuncture, is often taken over by the support classes of the State, whose ideological apparatuses are their strongest points;

(b) the new State role, outlined above, of reorganizing ideological hegemony.

In the case of the exceptional State, the reorganization of the State system *can sometimes go so far* as to let an ideological apparatus dominate the whole State system.

2. In the case of the exceptional State, even in the forms of regime dominated by a branch of the repressive apparatus, the reorganization of the whole State system has particular effects, given the new relationship between the ideological apparatuses and the State apparatus in the strict sense. The repressive and the ideological State apparatuses are distinguished from each other by their *principal aspect*, repression and ideology respectively.

In the case of the exceptional State:

(a) The reorganization of the State system may even modify the principal aspect of a branch or apparatus, as in certain examples of military dictatorship or Bonapartism, where the principal aspect (of the army or the administration respectively) becomes ideological; the political police has a similar role at a certain period of fascism. There are therefore effective *displacements* within these apparatus.

(b) Even when a branch of the repressive apparatus is dominant in an exceptional State, without going so far as to change its main aspect, its dominance is always accompanied by an upsurge in its 'secondary', ideological aspect.[5]

IV. MODIFICATIONS IN THE JURIDICAL SYSTEM: REGULATION AND LIMITS

The exceptional State modifies the juridical system in a characteristic way, often thematized as the distinction between the ‘legal State’ and the ‘police State’.

But again, distinctions have to be made, especially in the case of the fascist State, because the prevailing line of analysis sees the fascist State (or the ‘totalitarian State’) as the antithesis of the ‘liberal State’. This is quite incorrect, as the liberal State is only a State form corresponding to the stage of competitive capitalism. We need to establish:

(a) What in this sense distinguishes the exceptional State from the other forms of capitalist State, including the liberal State as well as the form of interventionist State not corresponding to political crisis. This requires an indication of the common features of the juridical system in capitalist State forms other than the exceptional State.

(b) What are the major modifications in the juridical system which mark the difference between the liberal and the interventionist forms of State, according to the different stages of capitalism to which they correspond. In this sense, the fascist State has points in common with the interventionist State form which belongs to the same stage.

The subject is enormous, and I shall be forced to be schematic. On the first point, it is necessary to point out the double role of law, which the Marxist classics (and particularly Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme*) descriptively conceive as a relative distinction between ‘law’ and the ‘State’. On the one hand, the juridical system sanctions in its own way property and exchange relations, and this helps to ensure the reproduction of the conditions of production. On the other hand, it has a directly political role: it acts directly in the political class struggle. It is in the latter sense that law is important in an analysis of the exceptional State in general, and the fascist State in particular.

In this sense, the capitalist juridical system perpetuates and sanctions political class rule, following particular methods and depending on class struggle. While ideologically it disguises class domination, law fulfils its role in two main ways:

1. Law *regulates* the exercise of political power by the State apparatuses, and access to them, by a system of general formal, abstract, strictly regulated *norms*, explicitly fixed to make for *predictability*. Given a power bloc composed of different classes and class fractions, it regulates their relations within the State apparatuses, organizing the hegemony of one class or fraction over the rest. Law therefore allows the relation of forces within the alliance in power to be modified without the overthrow of the State, without affecting what Lenin called the State’s envelope. The juridical system thus lays down its own *rules of*

transformation; this is the main role of the Constitution.

But while law organizes the power game among the dominant classes, it also organizes it among the dominated classes. It makes it impossible for them to come to power in accordance with its rules, while giving them the illusion that this is possible. For one thing, this is because such class law (or class-struggle law) also governs the forms through which power is exercised over the masses: organized physical repression is carried out according to its rules. The State apparatus is in general subject to the laws it itself decrees.

2. Law imposes *limits* on the exercise of State power, i.e. the intervention of the State apparatuses. Bourgeois writers have theorized this as the role of law in drawing the demarcation line between the *individual* (and his 'subjective', 'natural', 'inalienable' etc. rights) and the *State*. It is correct to say that these limitations take the form of a demarcation line between the 'private' and the 'public', but they express a relation of force which is also a class relation. The limitations imposed by law therefore also express the limitation of the power of class domination by the struggle of the masses.

For the dominant classes and class fractions, the limitation of law expresses relations of force within the power bloc. It mainly takes the form of limiting the respective interventions of the various State apparatuses dominated by the different classes and fractions: hence the problem of the familiar distinction between the 'three powers' (executive, legislative and judiciary).

The operation of the juridical system has direct repercussions on the operation of the *judicial* branch of the State apparatus. Not because this branch is 'independent' of the other branches of the State apparatus, but because its main way of exercising class domination is through applying the law: it is bound to 'respect' the law's rules and limits and to 'make them respected'.

In the exceptional State form, the forms in which the law operates politically are more or less different:

1. Law, to put it briefly, no longer regulates: *arbitrariness* reigns. What is typical of the exceptional State is not so much that it violates its rules, as that it does not even lay down rules for functioning. It has no *system*, for one thing, i.e. it lacks a system for predicting its own transformations. This is particularly evident with the fascist State and the 'will' of the leader.

If there is no regulation, it is because it is only possible to give juridical regulation to a relation of forces which has a certain degree of stability *elsewhere*, where the real game is played. The political crisis to which the exceptional State corresponds sometimes has the characteristic of an 'equal balance' of the basic forces, which is in itself an unstable and precarious

situation. Every political crisis is a demonstration of instability of hegemony, and of shifts in the relation of forces within the power bloc.

There are reasons for the lack of regulation. The exceptional State aims in this conjuncture to re-stabilize the situation by reorganizing the relation of forces. It arms itself with the means to intervene to do so, and with a certain 'freedom of action' in the face of the forces it has to deal with. In particular, the typical limitation of predictability on the part of classes and fractions in the power bloc is an important *strategic* factor in the increased relative autonomy the exceptional State needs to reorganize hegemony.

2. The law is no longer the limit. In this sense, and in this sense alone, it is possible to speak of an 'unlimited' exercise of power. For even in this State form, the power of the hegemonic class or fraction is limited by the power of the other sections of the power bloc, as well as by the working class and the supporting classes.

The important point here, though, is that these limits are not fixed in law. Law no longer poses a distinction *in principle* between the 'private' and the 'public': virtually everything falls within the scope of State intervention. Moreover, this also applies to the typical division between the spheres of intervention of the different State apparatuses (I shall return to this later) and to the blurring of their respective limits. This lack of juridical limitation is due both to the particular way in which the exceptional State intervenes when hegemony is unstable, and to its role in the increased repression of the masses.

All this affects the judiciary. This branch of the State apparatus is directly subjected to the dominant branch or apparatus, not simply or only by being purged or taken over politically, which happens in every capitalist State, but by the transformation of the law itself.

To turn now to the main aspect of the juridical system, the role of law lies chiefly within *'private law'*, in:

(a) Sanctioning the relations of production in the juridical forms of property;

(b) Organizing the sphere of circulation of capital and of goods – 'contractual' and 'commercial' law:

(c) regulating the forms of State intervention in the economic domain.

In this respect there are appreciable differences between the juridical systems of competitive capitalism and of monopoly capitalism. These differences between the 'private law' of the liberal State and the 'private law' of the fascist State stem basically from the differences in the stages of capitalist formations: they are not due to the fact that the fascist State belongs to the exceptional State

form. In this respect, law in the fascist State has the same basic characteristics as in the interventionist State form – the differences are secondary, and relate mainly to labour law. This is particularly striking in the case of national socialism, which as both Neumann and Marcuse showed at the time,[6] basically kept the law of the Weimar Republic, which was the first juridical system in an imperialist country to make the turn to the stage of monopoly capitalism.

It could even be said that the *exceptional State in general* basically leaves intact that aspect of law which regulates the economic basis of the capitalist system, essentially only making some simple modifications required by the stage in which it is situated. To take another illustrious example, Louis Bonaparte did no more than preserve and develop the Civil Code.

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF MODIFICATIONS IN THE ELECTORAL PRINCIPLE; ON THE SINGLE-PARTY SYSTEM

Another important characteristic of the exceptional State form is that the method of representation and class organization is modified; this affects the political parties in their role as ideological State apparatuses.

In the other forms of capitalist State, the ideological and political workings of class indoctrination and organization give political parties a *specific role*. These organizing institutions and particular forms of transmission belt cannot be used under the exceptional State. It is no accident that this form of State corresponds to a crisis of party representation, both among the dominant classes and, in differing degrees, among the dominated classes. The role of the political parties is either shifted onto other ideological State apparatuses, or even to branches of the repressive State apparatus; or else it is replaced, as in the fascist case, by one particular party. The function of such a party in the reorganization of the whole state system is quite different from that of the ‘traditional’ parties in the classic ‘representative’ State.

The *suspension of the electoral principle*, the typical basis of class representation in the capitalist system, is determined by this situation. The suspension, and the necessity to resort to the exceptional State form, is not because there is any risk of the working class and the masses gaining power by the ‘electoral road’. For the masses, the electoral system is *essentially* a means of ideological indoctrination, and the suspension of the electoral system in the exceptional State is therefore a feature of the political crisis and the concomitant effect of the failure of the classic political parties to carry out ideological indoctrination.

1. For the power bloc, however, because the political parties are a good way

of organizing, the electoral system in the other capitalist State forms is also a means by which power circulates according to the relation of forces within the power alliance. It is therefore a form of political organization of this alliance: the transformations of the electoral system and electoral laws is an example of this.[7] The electoral system quite simply ensures a certain circulation of power among the power bloc, within the State apparatuses and through the political parties.

The suspension of the electoral principle in the exceptional State thus has a particular purpose: in the conjuncture of the crisis of hegemony, the complete upsetting of the power bloc, and the crisis of party representation, the reorganization of the relation of forces within the state system falls directly on apparatuses other than the 'traditional' parties.

Again, certain writers about totalitarianism are way off the mark[8] when they define the particularity of the exceptional State by the formal distinction between 'single-party regimes' and 'multi-party regimes'. According to them, with the 'single party' the exceptional State eliminates 'free competition' for 'access to power'. That is not in fact the essential difference between the exceptional State and other capitalist State forms; such conceptions are incorrect about both kinds of State. The facts are as follows:

(a) In the 'normal' forms of capitalist state, under the electoral system, political parties are State apparatuses. 'Free competition' therefore never exists for the working class and the masses. So much is obvious, but further, 'free competition' for access to power through a plurality of parties does not even exist for the power bloc itself in 'normal' State forms. *The power bloc organizes its power in the state system through all the State apparatuses* (the administration, judiciary, army, the ideological apparatuses) *and the political parties are only a part of these*. In other words, even in the 'normal' forms of the capitalist State, the role of parties in the circulation of power is still to a greater or lesser extent limited; it is still determined by the power of the hegemonic class or fraction in the state system as a whole.

(b) This 'competition' i.e. the contradictions among the dominant classes and fractions, *even continues in the exceptional State, but in a different form*. In particular, the exceptional State does not remove from power all sections of the power bloc other than the hegemonic one.[9]

2. None the less, there is a second aspect of the suspension of the electoral principle which should not be neglected. By the very nature of the ideological State apparatuses, they always reflect the class struggle. Based on the electoral principle, they give the masses some possibilities of action – possibilities always emphasized by Lenin. It should not be forgotten that universal suffrage was itself

a victory for the working class and the masses over the dominant classes. The exceptional State also attempts to suppress such possibilities of action.

The suspension of elections affects all the ideological apparatuses of the exceptional State. Circulation within the apparatuses is normally by co-option or appointment from above: hence the bureaucratization typical of the exceptional State form.

There is a second striking consequence in the corporatist forms of representation. These provide forms of 'direct representation' typical of situations where the power bloc is politically disorganized, where political parties are cut out by the direct 'organizer' role of the other State apparatuses, and where the masses are characteristically subject to the dominant ideology.

The liberal and interventionist State forms are also different in this respect: the executive prevails over the legislative in the interventionist State, 'parliamentary democracy' declines in importance, and so on. Going beyond the juridical level, the differences in the relationship between the 'executive' and the 'legislative' essentially coincide with modifications in the functioning of the political parties, within an overall modification of the functioning of the ideological State apparatuses. There are resulting modifications in the means of representation, because of the difficulties monopoly capitalism experiences in organizing its hegemony in Parliament; for example, corporatist forms may spring up. The fascist State therefore has points in common with the interventionist State, since they originate in the same stage. Its distinguishing features are the break in class representation by party, and the suppression of the electoral principle.

This does not mean that the exceptional State form of the capitalist State does not equally require legitimation. It is a remarkable feature of the exceptional State that it resorts to plebiscites or referenda to legitimate it; by contrast with purely 'charismatic' legitimacy, these depend on the specific ideology of 'popular sovereignty'.

VI. THE EXTENT OF BUREAUCRATIZATION

The exceptional State is markedly 'bureaucratized'. I shall not dwell on the point,[10] but simply point out that 'bureaucratization' relates mainly to the way the functioning of the State apparatus is dominated by its *own internal ideology*. This internal ideology is essentially related to the petty-bourgeois ideological sub-system, and it results from the impact of the petty-bourgeoisie, as supporting class, on the State apparatuses. Every capitalist State is therefore affected, in varying degrees, by *a measure of bureaucratization*.

It is particularly high in the exceptional State, because of:

(a) the role of social force which the supporting classes often play, in particular the petty bourgeoisie. Not only do these classes permeate the State apparatuses in massive numbers, 'swelling' them in a 'monstrous' and 'parasitic' fashion, but they have a strong influence on the internal ideology of the State apparatuses;

(b) the general suspension of elections.

It should however be noted that the extent of bureaucratization *varies* according to (i) the *form of regime* in the exceptional State, and the steps it goes through; (ii) the modification in the relation of forces, in the relation between apparatuses, etc.

VII. CENTRALISM AND INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS: PARALLEL NETWORKS AND TRANSMISSION BELTS

There is one last point: even within the apparatuses of the exceptional State, the class struggle is not expressed in the same way as in other capitalist State forms.

In fact, the reorganization of the state system within the strong State has often been taken to be a 'centralization' of power. But this is correct only in so far as it refers to the significant restriction of the relative autonomy of the State apparatuses, and the new relations of dominance among them. For contradictions and frictions between branches and apparatuses persist in the exceptional State, *but in different forms*. This is because the class struggle continues in the exceptional State. The exceptional State's lack of success in suppressing the class struggle as it would like to cannot be overemphasized.

The different way the class struggle is expressed in the exceptional State is due (i) to the modifications in the State system, which in turn correspond to features of the political crisis; (ii) to the reorganization of hegemony and of the relation of forces within an unstable, politically disorganized power bloc; (iii) to resurgence of the supporting classes, notably the petty bourgeoisie, as social forces; and (iv) to the state of equilibrium between the two basic forces, which can at times be a feature of the political crisis.

In other capitalist State forms, class contradictions and the circulation of power within the power bloc are generally governed by a ruling determining more or less strictly the *respective spheres of competence* of the various branches and apparatuses. These are usually mutually exclusive. Power is organized mainly through the specialization of the apparatuses; this is one of the reasons for the 'separation' of powers in a 'representative' State.

In the exceptional State, by contrast, there are varying degrees of *a*

characteristic duplication of parallel power networks and transmission belts, i.e. of the branches and apparatuses of the State, and the relationships between them are not readily apparent. This is particularly striking in the case of the fascist State, and gives rise to a specific expression of the contradictions within the state system: rather than contradictions *among* the branches and apparatuses, there are now sharp contradictions *within* each branch or apparatus. The dominant branch or apparatus, e.g. the army, the single party, or the political police, itself suffers from sharp contradictions, but establishes its dominance primarily by directly *infiltrating* the rest. These are the 'internal contradictions' of the exceptional State, the expression of class struggle behind its united, centralized façade: they take the form of behind-the-scenes wars between 'teams' or 'pressure groups'.

The 'internal contradictions' of the exceptional State should not be underestimated. They are the occasion and the expression of what are often extremely violent tremors in the state system, and this cannot be understood if the models of other capitalist State forms are applied to the exceptional State, where these contradictions are no longer secondary. The exceptional State, like every capitalist State, is a giant with feet of clay.

None the less, this particular characteristic of the exceptional State, which results from the conjuncture of class struggle and the new form in which it is expressed in the State, also gives it the ability to take especially effective action to neutralize class contradictions and fulfil its special role of reorganizing hegemony and the relation of forces:

(a) The duplication of parallel power networks and transmission belts makes it possible to displace very rapidly the *actual transmission* of power. There are continual changes, if not in the centres of real and formal power, at least in the real and formal transmission belts of power.

(b) The special position of the apparatuses permits their effective *control* under the dominance of one of them, while the 'crystallization' of relations between them could endanger the hegemony of the class or fraction which the strong State secures.

(c) If power is organized in this way, it also allows the exceptional State to play the specific interventionist role required by the crisis conjuncture – to juggle the various classes and fractions through parallel, superimposed channels, and thereby to reorganize class hegemony.

(d) Lastly, this hidden duplication fulfils the ideological role previously performed by the electoral system, in disguising from the masses as well as from the other sections of the power bloc, which class or class fraction has actual hegemony.

As for the working class and the masses, this type of power organization enables the exceptional State to conduct a war of manoeuvre against the class enemy. Because of the restriction of the relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses (which is also due to the possibilities for action this relative autonomy previously offered), the class enemy can no longer be directly located as an *isolated*, 'relatively autonomous' *sore*. It threatens to infect the State apparatus at many points – as in the case of the 'single' party and 'single' trade union under fascism. It should also be added that the supporting classes play a special role here, as social forces within the State apparatuses and branches.

The duplication and overlapping of the State apparatuses is a response to these new risks, which are particularly strong in the exceptional State. In particular, it is a counter-weight to the bureaucracy which always threatens to engulf this form of State. For example, it is characteristic of this duplication and overlapping to produce a proliferation of the 'authoritarian' relationships to which every member of the State apparatuses is subjected, thereby undermining the strictly vertical hierarchical relationships within each apparatus, which are characteristic of bureaucratization. The prime example is the 'principle of the leader' in the fascist State, according to which every member of the State apparatus is directly under 'the leader', and depending on circumstances, under his supposed representative – not his normal superior in the hierarchy. This gives room for a great deal of mobility in action.

4

General Propositions on the Fascist State as a Form of Exceptional Regime

I. THE ESTABLISHED SYSTEM

I shall now turn to the specific features of the fascist State as a form of regime different from other exceptional regimes such as Bonapartism and military dictatorship. The first of these is of course the ‘degree’ to which it possesses the characteristics mentioned above (p. 313), which varies with the different exceptional regimes. But the *forms* in which the State apparatuses function and are related to each other are also important, and that is what I shall deal with now.

I. There is a particular kind of mass party within the ideological State apparatuses. The fascist State is characterized by the permanent mobilization of the masses.

II. According to the steps there are particular relationships between the fascist party and the repressive State apparatus.

Firstly, fascism is originally and essentially ‘exogenous’ to this apparatus. Despite the connivance between the fascist party and branches of the repressive State apparatus, the main instrument for gaining power is outside the repressive State apparatus, which is invaded ‘from the outside’.

This situation persists throughout the time fascism remains in power, in the sense that there is never any fusion of the fascist party and the State apparatus.

The fascist party always has a role of its own to play.

During the first period of fascist rule, the fascist party dominates the branches of the repressive State apparatus (the army, police, administration and judiciary), although major struggles still take place between the fascist party and branches of this apparatus. In the second step of fascist stabilization, the State apparatus, suitably transformed, dominates the fascist party, which is subordinated to it.

III. In this step of fascist stabilization, the dominance of the State apparatus is achieved by a reorganization of the branches of the State apparatus: one branch of the repressive State apparatus dominates the rest, and therefore the whole State system, including the ideological apparatuses. The branch in question is neither the army nor the 'administrative bureaucracy': it is the *political police*. But although the police has a special role in the exceptional State, it does not always have the dominant role. The term *political* police is used not simply to indicate the importance of political repression, but to show that the key ideological role belongs to the police branch of the fascist State apparatus.[1]

IV. The fact that the political police is dominant within the State apparatus does not mean that the relations of relative subordination and sub-dominance among the other branches of the apparatus are irrelevant. It is even possible in the case of fascism to ascribe a definite order to the subordinate branches: political police, administration, and army. The fact that the army comes below the 'bureaucratic' administration is important.

V. Fascism in power also reorganizes the relations between the ideological State apparatuses. In the first place, the relative autonomy of the apparatuses one from another, together with their relative autonomy from the repressive State apparatus, is undermined. By their very nature no rigid, continuing hierarchy is to be found among them, but it is possible to see which apparatuses dominate the establishment of the new relations, one reason for this being the forms of fascist ideology:

(a) *The fascist party*: never entirely fusing with the State, from the time it is subordinated to the State apparatus it acts as a transmission belt for subordinating the ideological apparatuses to the repressive apparatus, and as a *link* for the centralized cohesion of the ideological apparatuses it dominates. The fascist party, which previously acted as a means of controlling the State apparatus, now essentially becomes the means for the State apparatus to control the ideological apparatuses.

(b) *The family* becomes a central part of the ideological State apparatuses. In contrast with the fascist State, the role of the family in the 'normal' form of interventionist State is weaker than it was in the liberal State.

(c) *The communications and propaganda apparatus*: papers, publishing, radio etc.

Party, family and propaganda are the trinity dominating the ideological State apparatuses.

There is also a significant decline in certain of the ideological State apparatuses, in particular the educational and the religious apparatuses.

II. THE RISE OF FASCISM WITHIN THE STATE APPARATUSES

The various steps in the rise of fascism are also marked by modifications in the State form 'preceding' fascism.

I. Fascism comes to power, formally at least, *in a perfectly constitutional manner*. Hitler and Mussolini came to power 'respecting' the forms of the 'parliamentary democratic' State, and within the juridical norms which every bourgeois State has in store for critical situations of class struggle.

II. Fascism characteristically comes to power with the collusion of the State apparatus. Although the fascist phenomenon is strictly speaking exogenous to the repressive State apparatus, with the beginnings of the rise of fascism it is able to penetrate and take over this apparatus from the outside, and at the point of no return, it neutralizes the branches or sectors still hostile to it. Fascism would never have come to power without decisive help from the repressive State apparatus in the struggle against the masses. Contrary to what many social democrats say, it is quite incorrect to speak of *three forces* in struggle during the rise of fascism: the fascist camp, the State, and the anti-fascist camp.[2]

The specific feature of fascism is that the kind of crisis to which it corresponds allows it first to neutralize the divisions it encounters in the repressive State apparatus, and then to come to power 'constitutionally'. The neutralization is mainly possible because the masses have already experienced a series of defeats when the rise of fascism begins, and when it comes to power, fascism has already won the support of, or at least neutralized, the power bloc as a whole.

III. It is useful to recall the dislocation between *formal power* and *real power* in the State throughout the rise of fascism.

Its characteristics are the parliamentary crisis resulting from the crisis of party representation; the instability of the government, resulting from the instability and lack of hegemony; the duplication of the political parties by parallel power networks, varying from pressure groups to private militia; the resurgence of the role of the 'executive' and the repressive State apparatus, and the increasingly important role of the police; the deterioration of the juridical system ('order')

and the direct infiltration of the judiciary by fascism.

What becomes apparent is that the dislocation between formal and real power represents a *dismembering*, but not as has often been claimed[3] a 'disintegration' of the State apparatus.

It is a dismembering in the sense that the relations between branches and apparatuses no longer work in the same way as in the State form 'preceding' fascism. They often undergo radical change, corresponding to a modification in the relation of forces, and due among other things to the instability or lack of hegemony. Internal contradictions and frictions among the apparatuses increase, as a result of the political disorganization of the power alliance. This often takes the form of splits between the top ranks and the lower levels of a branch or apparatus. The reorganization of these relations therefore only seems possible through a new system, to be established through the 'exogenous' factor, fascism.

The State apparatus is however far from disintegrating, as it would do if fascism was an 'emergency' reaction to a revolutionary situation or to open civil war, as the Comintern believed in the German case. The repressive State apparatus does seem to lose some of its monopoly of legitimate violence to the private militia during the rise of fascism. But it is only other armed organizations of the power bloc which gain, and in any case the collusion of the State apparatus and the militia should not be forgotten – the militia were armed by the State. What does take place in this process is a transfer or delegation of functions, further legitimized by the judiciary.

5

Germany

I. THE RISE OF FASCISM

I referred above to certain modifications in the repressive ideological State apparatuses during the rise of fascism. I shall now discuss only those which shed more light on the problem.

Firstly, an important modification confirming the special role of the executive was what has been called the ‘presidential government’ introduced by Brüning. From 1931, on the basis of article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, providing for periods of ‘danger to the republic’, Brüning governed by *emergency decrees (Notverordnungen)* not requiring the prior approval of parliament. Parliament could of course reject them. But what the government now sought was not so much a parliamentary majority to support it as to avoid one which could oppose and overthrow it.

The role of the executive did not however ensure real control of the branches of the repressive State apparatus by the formal government, now independent of parliament. Instead, the army had the decisive role. Through its special relationship with the head of the executive, Hindenburg, on whom the government directly depended, it intervened openly on the political scene, and in particular, it occasioned the fall of Brüning. At the same time, the administration was no longer responding to orders. It boycotted government decisions which went against the interest of the big landowners, and also tax measures.

The army, which remained a *professional army* (conscription having been abolished by the Versailles treaty), was still too closely tied to landed interests, and was one of their surest strongholds, as the class origin of the officer corps shows; 21 per cent belonged to the nobility, which was only 0.14 per cent of the

German population.[1] As a closed professional body, it was far from representative of the people, and certainly not of the petty bourgeoisie and the rural popular classes.

Specific contradictory relations developed between national socialism, the ‘representative’ of big capital and the petty bourgeoisie, and the army. The army was hostile to government by the representatives of medium capital; it gave tacit compliance to Nazism, but was not overwhelmingly won over to it. The army was continually involved in contradictions, expressing the contradictions between big capital and the landowners, the landowners hoping to gain hegemony through a military dictatorship. A typical example was the friction between the SA and the army, which led Brüning and General Groener, Defence and Home Affairs Minister, to ban the SA in 1932.

During the rise of fascism, national socialism aimed at neutralizing the army, and eventually succeeded. Its infiltration of the army was mainly through use of the theme of ‘national greatness’. This was the basis of its appeal to young officers from the eastern provinces, and to the members of the former free corps who were incorporated into the army in great numbers. National socialism never used its ‘populist’ side to infiltrate the army, and this had important consequences later.

Apart from the fact that the army was neutralized, defeated by the split between the ‘top brass’ and the lower ranks (as the Scheringer affair demonstrated), even the ‘top brass’ did not want to suppress the Nazi militias, but to use them for their own ends; in particular, to recruit them to the army and use them to defend the frontiers. From 1931, even under Groener and Brüning, the SA had every opportunity for access to the national arsenals.

But national socialism infiltrated the State apparatus chiefly through the administration and the police, securing their overwhelming support and thereby ouflanking the army. The petty-bourgeois origin of members of these branches was a decisive factor in winning their support for national socialism. The army ‘top brass’ attempted to counteract this, General Groener combining the functions of Defence Minister and Minister of the Interior. Nothing came of it, though there were clashes between the army and the police – which defended the SA after it was banned. The police in fact depended on the local provincial governments, and escaped control by the central authority. This certainly should have made it possible for social democracy, which was still strong in various local governments, to control the police. In fact, it was the national socialist party which used the situation to its advantage, infiltrating the police and so by-passing the centralized army command.

It is scarcely necessary to draw attention to the thorough collusion between the national socialist party and the police apparatus. The police constantly took the side of the national socialists, giving cover to their operations and supporting them in street battles. They worked hand in glove. The judiciary branch simply set the seal on the situation: a few light sentences on national socialists, simply for the record, were nothing by the side of the massive convictions of anti-fascist militants.

The relative split in the army between the upper and lower ranks was also to be found, though in varying and generally lesser degrees, within the other branches of the repressive State apparatus, particularly the administration, the judiciary and the police. This is a general feature of forms of exceptional regime brought into power 'from below' by the decisive support of the mass of the petty bourgeoisie. Fascism, however, combines the features of a *movement from below* and a *penetration from outside* the repressive State apparatus. The divisions between the upper and lower ranks are therefore less extreme than in the case of movements installed from below by means of the apparatus and its branches, as with some military dictatorships of 'colonels'.

National socialism clearly infiltrated even the 'commanding heights' of the administration, the police and in particular the judiciary; the upper ranks of the latter belonging to the Prussian tradition and enjoying a privileged status both in the Weimar Constitution and because of their class position, were difficult for 'republican' governments to purge and were won over to national socialism in large numbers. They also suffered least from purging after national socialism came to power.[2]

The administration was somewhere between the judiciary and the army. Part of its upper ranks, linked to Weimar politicians, medium capital and the big landowners, remained hostile to Nazism.

Lastly, the dismembering of the State apparatus was also expressed in contradictions between the central authority of the Reich and the provincial authorities.[3] With the start of the rise of fascism, around 1927, the problem of reforming and *centralizing* the Reich became crucial. In the context of political crisis and failing hegemony, the provincial apparatuses operated more and more as 'autonomous' centres of State power for different classes and class fractions. They served as a refuge for medium capital and the landowners against the offensive of big capital, but they could also be bases for national socialism (as in Bavaria and Thuringia) against the central power under army domination. But national socialism did not gradually progress from the periphery to the centre, as often happens with emergency counter-revolutionary white-guardism. It

mounted its siege at the centre and the periphery at one and the same time.

The dismembering of formal and real power, and the siege of the State apparatus, had proceeded a long way by the time national socialism came 'constitutionally' to power. It is remarkable that when the national socialists first took part in the government they had only three ministeries of secondary importance. Frick did have the Ministry of the Interior, but it was the provincial governments that controlled the police. General Blomberg, on the other hand, a typical representative of the 'top brass', had the Ministry of National Defence. But by then the dice were already cast.

II. THE ESTABLISHED SYSTEM

The first period of national socialist rule saw a 'tidying up' (*Gleichschaltung*) of the State apparatuses: the national socialist party conducted a thorough purge, and brought its own members into the apparatus.

The more important point, though, is what happened to the Nazi State in the stabilization period. The party was increasingly subjected to the repressive State apparatus.[4] The first step in this process consisted in the apparatus being given a certain degree of protection against the Nazi party's attack. When the first thorough purge of the apparatus took place, the regime issued a 'Civil Service Law' (*Beamtengesetz*), in April-May 1933. This gave certain guarantees to members of the State apparatus, as long, of course, as they gave loyal service to the regime. Its first effect was to slow down the invasion of the apparatus by the rebel petty bourgeoisie. In December 1933 the 'Unity of party and State' was announced. The party's move into the apparatus and the conflict between the two, which had until then been resolved by the party, were declared at an end. The repressive State apparatus, controlled by the Führer, would presumably now fuse with the party. Hitler declared, 'The party has now become the State. All power from now on lies with the government'. Frick announced that 'any kind of parallel government is incompatible with the "total State"'; the 'end of the revolution' was also proclaimed.

The dualism of party and State apparatus in fact persisted, but the leading role of the party was constantly on the decline. The parallel power networks now crystallized: the leadership of each region consisted of the party representative (*Gauleiter*) and the purely administrative posts (*Reichsstatthalter, Minister-Präsident*), and this duplication was extended to all ranks.

If areas of competence were nowhere juridically defined, the party was none the less clearly losing its prerogatives in posts of decision and transmission to the State administration. Bracher describes this as the 'monocratic administrative

State' – *monokratischer Verwaltungsstaat*.[5] The important decisions were taken within the State apparatus, particularly by the administrative branch, while the party's general secretary, Rudolf Hess, was allowed into the government for purely decorative purposes.

It has already been pointed out that the same decreasing importance of the party also applied in the corporate organizations such as the trade unions. The subordination of the party to the State apparatus, together with the massive purge within the party, in fact represents the petty bourgeoisie's loss of its place as presiding class.

The distinction between the national socialist party and the repressive State apparatus still continued, basically because fascism still had a complex relationship with the masses. But the main role of the national socialist party now lay in the ideological State apparatuses, operating as a link controlling these apparatuses for the repressive apparatus. The party also continued to form and to mobilize 'cadres', and thus to give the petty bourgeoisie its own means of mobility; a role mainly fulfilled in other State forms by the educational system. Lastly, it still operated as a parallel power network: there were endless frictions between the State administration and the party.

With the army the situation was more complicated.[6] National socialism penetrated the army from below, but it controlled it and deprived it of its decisive role from above, through the State apparatus itself. In 1938, the high command was reorganized: Blomberg and Fritsch, the chiefs-of-staff, were sacked together with fourteen generals, and thirty more generals were demoted. Goring took charge of the key sector – the air force. The upper ranks of the State administration, controlled by national socialism and big capital, became quite resistant to the pressures of the army, which was now reduced to its 'military role'. But the national socialist party avoided direct intervention in the army. This had very little to do with the resistance this branch put up, in spite of what has been said. It was rather because the national socialist leaders and big capital were apprehensive about taking into the army an organized force which still had close links with the petty bourgeoisie and lumpen elements.

None of this reorganization of the State apparatus can be understood without taking into account the growing and dominant role of the political police, which gave rise to the 'SS State'. The SS existed long before national socialism came to power (from 1923). Alongside the party militia (SA), it formed a nucleus of men specially selected and tightly controlled by the leadership (Hitler), acting as body-guards and as the party's internal police. After national socialism came to power, the following process took place, by steps:[7] all the local police forces

were unified (1933); the political police (Gestapo) and the SS were fused under a single command, that of Himmler (1934); then all the police forces were fused under the dominance of SS–Gestapo (1936).

The political police were under the direct control of the national socialist leaders, Hitler in particular as the 'supreme leader'. They were seen as the direct incarnation of the 'will of the leader' (*Führerprinzip*), and thus were able to intervene with authority in all branches of the State apparatus. Their sphere of intervention became unlimited, including the army, the administration, the judiciary, the national socialist party and the ideological State apparatuses. The scope of their intervention was also boundless, including not only 'security' matters but administrative and military questions, etc. Their role was both repressive and ideological: they were the spear-head of the 'national-socialist spirit'. The aim of the intervention, according to Himmler, was the 'total and constant education of all members of the nation, thereby securing the possibility of constant control of the position of every individual'.

The SS therefore received a very strong training in national socialist ideology. Recruitment to the 'Order' was very revealing: the 'general SS', by contrast with the SA, was originally recruited, where possible, from 'the nobility, the intellectuals and the rich sons of the bourgeoisie'.[8] This was the force which liquidated Röhm and the rebellious petty bourgeois of the SA. It rapidly rose to a membership of 210,000 in 1936. It is a significant fact that in 1940, 32 per cent of the leading SS officers came from 'intellectual' backgrounds – teachers and graduates – while there were appreciably less of these in the party as a whole; 25 per cent of these officers had university doctorates.[9] The notional 'elite' *par excellence*, they were the main means by which the dominant class infiltrated the key posts of the Nazi State apparatus. But recruitment to the SS was increasingly changed; it reached enormous proportions with the creation of the *Waffen SS* (armed SS divisions), and the 'death's head' formations, whose ranks were recruited from lumpen elements to administer the concentration camps. From 1938, the political police were limited to the SD, a section of the SS. The whole SS, however, was still seen as an extension of the political police, and recruitment to the highest levels of all SS branches was still on the same basis.

In Himmler's own phrase, the SS was 'the bond between the police, as the protector of the community, and the national socialist party, as the embodiment of the national will'. The SS in fact controlled the Nazi party as well as the whole repressive State apparatus: administration, army and judiciary. It was a parallel power network, a virtual *ideological police administration* dominating the whole state system. The SS apparatus was the concrete embodiment in

national socialism of the displacement between the repressive and the ideological State apparatuses which characterizes the exceptional State. Finally, because of its mass recruitment and ideological training, the SS did not become a real ‘State within a State’, as often occurs with the secret police in other forms of the bourgeois State; it was still tightly controlled by the national socialist leaders.

It was no accident that the political police took on this role. It was a result of the special relationships national socialism had with the petty bourgeoisie and with big capital, of the existence of a complex type of party, and of the split between its leadership and the petty bourgeoisie it represented. Finally, it was the result of the particular ideological intervention of the national socialist State.

The role of the political police was also accompanied by modifications in the juridical system and the role of the judiciary.[10] Law no longer ruled or defined boundaries of the kind described above. The courts were not supposed to apply laws, but the ‘healthy sentiments of the people’, in turn incarnated in the ‘will of the leader’. The police was seen as the incarnation of this healthy sentiment and the best expression of the leader’s will; its job was not to ‘protect’ but to create a new political order. Its interventions were expressly ‘political’ interventions. As ‘acts of the Führer’ they were therefore expressly exempted, in a 1936 decree, from legal regulations, and from the judiciary’s control in the form of ‘legal proof’.

There was also an ideological modification in the notion of *guilt*. Guilt no longer primarily referred to the *suspect act* (violation of the law), as it generally is in other forms of the bourgeois State; it now referred to the *possible enemy*. The guilty man was the one whose ‘objective situation’, determined by ‘arbitrary’ criteria, could lead him to intend to injure the health of the regime. For a fascist regime this meant primarily Jews, communists, socialists, free-masons, liberals, beggars, mad people, homosexuals, syphilitics and various other ‘anti-social’ elements. What is more, all individuals were subject to ‘unlimited’ police intervention; this was expressed in the abolition of all distinction between public and private. All these ideological modifications accompanying the repressive role of the political police are also at the root of the institution of concentration camps, a subject I shall not dwell on, as everything has been said that can be said.

The law no longer regulated the relations between the various branches and State apparatuses. National socialism systematically refused to regulate these relationships juridically as ‘spheres of competence’.[11] This gives an impression of indescribable administrative confusion, in which frictions and contradictions arose between branches and apparatuses of the state system. Their relationships

revolved around the *Führerprinzip*. The will of the supreme leader was taken to be 'universal and total, boundless and exclusive',[12] relative to any regulation. The members of the various hierarchies of the branches and apparatuses were supposed to be directly dependent on the supreme leader, and whoever might be supposed to incarnate his will in given circumstances.

This effectively broke down the strict principle of bureaucratic hierarchy,[13] in that it broke the vertical isolation of the branches and apparatuses: it worked to achieve the control of the apparatuses by the dominant branch, through the parallel power networks. At the same time, hierarchical authority in the State apparatuses was reinforced: a member of the State apparatus was supposed to give unconditional obedience to his direct superior in the hierarchy, unless there was intervention by a possibly lower ranking member who was nonetheless an SS man, a party member, etc. Bureaucratization was therefore at the same time reinforced in all branches and apparatuses, and the system of secondment to posts from above contributed to this. Bureaucratization even affected the national socialist party and the political police: for example the quite insane administrative logistics of the concentration camps run by the SS.

In this superposition of apparatuses, held together by the dominance of the political police, there was only one domain which remained more or less 'apart'. This was however quite a significant one: *the 'economic' domain was reserved mainly, if not exclusively, for the State administration*. Everything affecting the relations of production and property relations increasingly fell to the administration alone. Juridical regulation in this field was preserved, at least in essentials. Fraenkel[14] has even gone so far as to distinguish in national socialism a 'normative State' (regulated by law), and a 'prerogative State' (not so regulated). Nazism maintained juridical regulation in matters of the protection of the capitalist order and private property, with full authority in all economic affairs.

Although the frictions between branches and apparatuses of the Nazi State stemmed essentially from class contradictions, and from their new form of expression within the State, contradictions of the 'corporative' type, between *social categories* among the members of these branches and apparatuses, still had a role to play. There were of course clashes of interest between party members competing for position and 'influence' and the members of the State administration, army and political police. But these were *secondary* contradictions, which exist in every State. The internal contradictions of the Nazi State cannot be understood by the usual method[15] of referring only to the

corporate frictions between different social categories.

This is even more the case in the exceptional State, and in the fascist regime in particular, for the repression of 'open' class struggle in fact diverts class struggle into the State apparatus and its branches. This is disguised as contradictions between social categories, between the 'cliques' and 'personalities' of the regime itself. In fact, though they are secondary, these contradictions should not be under-estimated;[16] they can in fact shed light on the class struggle. In the Nazi State, for example, this can be seen with the contradictions between different 'cliques': Fritsch-Blomberg/Schacht/Hitler-Göring-Himmler/Ley/Darré, etc.

As far as the ideological State apparatuses are concerned, the first point to note is the suppression of their relative autonomy, both from one another and from the repressive apparatus. This was accomplished by juridical changes on the public-private dimension. These apparatuses were by no means entirely taken over by the State: publishing, newspapers, cinema, schools etc. largely retained their 'private' nature, at least in bringing their owners profits. But the members of these apparatuses were obliged to belong to public bodies: the 'Reich councils' for the arts, music, theatre, literature, press, radio, and cinema. The decisions of these bodies had the force of law, and the leadership principle was applied to the benefit of Nazi party members. It was therefore mainly through the party that the ideological apparatuses were subjected to the repressive apparatus, though the direct intervention of the latter, under Goebbels, was constantly in evidence. These bodies had to ensure that the ideological state apparatuses would carry out the indoctrination of national socialist ideology: for example the teaching corporation (the 'National Socialist Teachers' League') was held 'responsible for the ideological and political co-ordination of all teachers with respect to national socialist doctrine'.

Some of the ideological state apparatuses had an essential place, and this produced changes in the dominant role among them:

(a) *The communications apparatus* (radio, newspapers, films, etc.) had a dominant place because of the importance of *propaganda*[17] in a broadly based regime, where the intervention of ideology was decisive. Propaganda from 'above' of this kind did not cut out the role of the party itself, but, at least at the start, functioned alongside it. In the second phase of national socialist rule, the apparatus of propaganda from above, which could reach the people directly, tended to be substituted for the party, which increasingly acted as the link between the repressive apparatus and the ideological apparatuses.

(b) *The family* had a dominant place; as Wilhelm Reich showed,[18] this was because of the position of the family in the ideology of the *petty bourgeoisie*. National socialism attached great importance to the strengthening of family ties, which was a constant theme of Nazi propaganda. For Hitler, 'Our first task … is to help the development of family ties. The decline of the family would undoubtedly be the end of any superior form of humanity …, the ultimate aim of logical, organic development is the family. It is the smallest, but most important unit in the building of the whole State …'

Hitler was saying more than he knew. Leaving aside the role of the family in the formation of 'authoritarian' ideology, through the role of the 'father', national socialism gave women an important place as the 'mother'. On Mothers' Day in 1933, Goebbels affirmed: 'Nowhere else does the mother have such importance as in the new Germany. She is the guarantor and guardian of family life of a kind which produces the strength which drives our people on. The German mother alone bears the spirit of the German people …' For national socialism, woman's main role was as 'mother of the family', the guarantor of the national socialist 'spirit' in the family. Countless national socialist organizations and associations were devoted to women. Moreover, the family had enormous importance in other ideological State apparatuses: for example the increasing role of parents in education through parent-teacher associations, in the youth organizations, etc.

What then is to be said of the national socialist party and its organizations, which apparently broke 'family ties' by instituting informing within the family? The contradiction is only superficial, for these family ties in fact worked mainly as an ideological apparatus. The important point is that one of the essential tasks of the party was to secure a 'representative' within each family. *In fact it can be said that the national socialist party's most favoured cell was not the factory, the street or the local community but the family itself* It was no accident that it had this in common with the Church and religious movements.

(c) The ideological apparatuses were *multiplied* under the control of the national socialist party. A variety of associations and organizations locked every individual into a complicated network of apparatuses covering every sector of activity. The multiplicity of 'youth' organizations is a typical case.

Certain ideological apparatuses however declined in importance:

(a) *The educational apparatus, in the broad sense*.[19] Professional training was carried on outside the schools (in 'labour' organizations), degrees lost their importance for social mobility, a lesser role was given to 'culture' (which in this sense is only the form assumed by ideology in the educational system), school

hours were restricted to give time for other ‘youth’ organizations, the use of ‘technical’ criteria in selection diminished.

Basically, this was because the myth of the objective, neutral character of ‘culture’ was removed; traditional authority in teaching, based on the supposed neutrality of knowledge, disintegrated. The role of the bourgeois educational apparatus largely depends on the operation of the myth of the neutrality and the objective nature of knowledge. This myth is the favoured form of ideological indoctrination in this apparatus, disguising its class function. National socialism tore away the mask by declaring openly its aim of indoctrinating fascist politics and ideology, and by so doing it contributed to the relative decline of the educational system in the ordering of the ideological apparatuses.

Indoctrination, previously carried out through the educational system, was replaced in a different form by other apparatuses: ‘youth’ organizations outside the school, the army, etc. At the same time, the function of social mobility for the petty bourgeoisie, which the educational system had previously provided, now passed to the national socialist party and the SS.

(b) *The religious apparatus: the Churches.*[20] The top levels of the Protestant churches in particular, but also of the Catholic church, welcomed the advent of national socialism and contributed to it. But there were certain frictions, which often became important.

The Protestant church, which in Germany was the most reactionary and the most opposed to Weimar, was, contrary to what might be gathered from a superficial reading of Max Weber, closely linked to the big landowners (Protestantism had great influence in Prussia). Together with the army, it was one of the two main seats of the landowners’ power. It welcomed fascism much more than the Catholic church, which, through the Centre Party, was more closely related to medium capital. But frictions soon developed with national socialism, according to the steps reached in the contradictions between monopoly capital on the one hand, and the landowners and medium capital on the other.

National socialism, supported by the reaction of the rebel petty bourgeoisie, engaged in a struggle ‘against the Church’ to break its relative autonomy as an ideological apparatus in relation to monopoly capital. The SA carried out broad anticlerical campaigns. Borman declared in 1941: ‘National socialism and Christianity are mutually exclusive… Just as the pernicious influence of astrologers, wise men and other quacks has been suppressed by the State, the possibilities of Church influence must constantly be eliminated.’ Of course, the religious feeling of the masses was always exploited by the ‘deification’ of

Hitler: the SA slogan was ‘Hitler yesterday, today … and for eternity.’

But national socialism did not deprive itself of the influence of the Churches. It simply broke their relative autonomy. The *Gleischschaltung* was extended to the Protestant church and to the Catholic, the latter being consecrated in the Concordat of 1938. The churches were placed under the strict control of the repressive apparatus; their prerogatives in the field of education were limited, and the Christian youth organizations were abolished to make way for national socialist organizations. At the same time, the real policing role of the Churches was strengthened: ministers took an oath of loyalty to Hitler, and a start was made towards informing through the confessional. In short, though Christianity was not undermined, the Church, as well as losing its relative autonomy, completely lost its importance within the ideological State apparatuses.

Lastly, under the national socialist regime, the party’s own internal ideology conquered the ideological State apparatuses as a whole, with the dominant ideology emanating directly from the party. However, as the political police became the dominant apparatus, its own specific ideology tended to spread to the rest of the apparatuses and to society as a whole. It is striking how the police-and-murder fever which gripped the apparatuses and German society, corresponded to the irresistible rise of the SS apparatus.

6

Italy

I. THE RISE OF FASCISM

This chapter will again emphasize the *differences* between national socialism and Italian fascism.

The rise in fascism, firstly, was of a dual nature in Italy. It was both more militarized and more parliamentary than in Germany. The collusion of the repressive state apparatus with fascism was much clearer, and it will be remembered that the representatives of medium capital were much more conciliatory towards fascism. In 1921, Giolitti issued decrees to dissolve the socialist municipal authorities, which were under attack from the fascists, for 'reasons of public order'.[1] This was an extreme measure which only von Papen had taken in Germany, against the Prussian government. The police (*carabinieri*) almost everywhere accompanied the fascist *squadre* on punitive expeditions. The government itself, through the Minister of Justice (Fera), ordered the judiciary not to use dossiers on the criminal acts of the fascists.

Developments in the *army* were also indicative here. The Italian army was won to fascism in greater numbers, during its rise, than was the German army by national socialism. In 1920 a circular from Bonomi, the War Minister, authorized 50,000 demobilized officers to join the *fasci*, and they became their military organizers. The army also often accompanied the fascist militia on 'punitive expeditions'.[2] General Diaz, the army chief-of-staff, Admiral Thaon de Revel, the navy chief-of-staff, and many generals (Gandolfo, De Bono, etc.) openly worked for fascism,[3] as became very evident in the weeks preceding the march on Rome.

The Italian army was not, firstly, a professional army as in Germany, but a ‘national army’, though after the war it had been purged of its revolutionary elements. It was therefore affected by fascism as much as or even more than the mass of the Italian people. The class origins of the officer corps were in great part the urban middle and petty bourgeoisie, and it was therefore very strongly fascist. The upper ranks of the army, together with the Crown to which they were fervently devoted, were traditionally linked, through the ‘unification’ of the nineteenth century, to medium capital which, with royal assent, governed Italy throughout the rise of fascism. The especially conciliatory attitude to fascism of the representatives of medium capital had repercussions within the officer corps.

In this case too, however, frictions appeared between the upper levels of the army and the fascist party. These were based on the contradictions between big and medium capital, and centred specifically on the question of the monarchy.[4] General Badoglio and the leading circles of the army declared that they would fight fascism if it endangered the monarchy, which medium capital saw as its safeguard. Fascism, which began with strong republican tendencies, retreated somewhat, and this went together with reassuring guarantees to medium capital and its ‘liberal’ representatives about the ‘Manchester-type State’. The obstacle of the army was therefore overcome. Facta, the last Prime Minister before Mussolini, tried in vain to provoke the army to move against fascism, using D’Annunzio. On the eve of the March on Rome, the king refused to decree a state of emergency, and by summoning Mussolini to power, acted as the Hindenburg of medium capital.

The dismembering of the repressive apparatus in Italy took the form of a split *between the central apparatus and the local apparatus*. The representatives of medium capital, who were particularly influential on the political scene, virtually controlled the central apparatus through their political staff. The periphery, however, largely escaped their control, and the main power bases of the landowners and of big capital were concentrated here; it was mainly at the periphery that fascism attacked the State apparatus. But again the centre was simultaneously infiltrated: the March on Rome was only a demonstration.

II. THE ESTABLISHED SYSTEM

Italian fascism, once in power, proceeded to reorganize the State apparatuses on much the same lines as Nazism; but it did not go so far as Nazism, or follow the line right through. In particular, the suppression of the relative autonomy of the State branches and apparatuses was less marked than with Nazism; State intervention in all social activity, including repressive and ideological

intervention, was more restricted, and certain institutional forms of the ‘parliamentary democratic’ State were preserved.

The explanation lies in the particular characteristics of the class struggle: the different features of big capital in Italy, the stronger resistance of medium capital and also of the masses, in particular the working class, i.e. the specific characteristics of the ideological and political crisis.

During the first period of fascist rule, which was longer than in Germany, there was again a gradual reorganization of the repressive state apparatus under the dominance of the fascist party, whose members invaded all the apparatuses. The party’s dominance was stronger and more necessary in so far as parliamentary forms were preserved throughout this period: the gap between real and formal power persisted to some extent, the party acting as the centre of real power, despite appearances on the political scene.

1925-6, with the various ‘ultra-fascist’ laws, was a major turning point in the reorganization of the State system, and the party was increasingly subordinated to the repressive state apparatus. At the same time as power was concentrated in the executive, the dominant role among the branches of the apparatus shifted towards the administration: for example, the powers of the prefecture were extended, the prefects becoming ‘the highest State authority in the provinces’, which occasioned much discontent in the fascist party and among the regional secretaries of the *fascia*.[5] In 1927, a new circular about the administration and the prefects submitted the party hierarchy to the State hierarchy. The party itself was considered an ‘instrument of the will of the State’, and the circular stated that ‘squadrism is now an anachronism’. With the formation of the fascist Grand Council, the supreme body for decision-making, supplementing the Council of Ministers, the subordination of the fascist party to the State apparatus was finalized. The process was completed with the proclamation, in 1928, of the ‘unity of party and State’, which had the same meaning as in Germany: the petty bourgeoisie lost its presiding place.

The political police again took the dominant role, controlling the whole apparatus, including the fascist party. The secret political police department was formed by bringing together all the repressive services into the OCRA, under Bocchini.[6] It was directly dependent on the fascist leaders, its numbers increased considerably, and its powers grew at the expense of the traditional police, the *carabinieri*. The political police escaped the control of the fascist party, and many frictions resulted between the fascist Minister of the Interior, Suardo, and the head of the political police.

The role of the political police was extended through the militia (Voluntary

Militia for National Security – MVSN), which was purged of 'left-wing' elements, and much better controlled by the fascist leadership than the party itself. The action squads (*squadre*) were brought into the militia, in 1923, only after a severe purge. In 1927, the militia officially became an 'armed body of the State', depending directly on the Duce: its members swore loyalty to the Duce, not to the king. As with the SS, the upper ranks of the militia belonged to the bourgeoisie rather than to the petty bourgeoisie.[7] Modifications in law and in the judiciary accompanied the growing dominance of the political police: the police, the administration and the fascist party formed parallel power networks.

There were however clear differences from the Nazi State. Both the repressive and the ideological intervention of the State was less important. The fascist militia had only a remote resemblance to Hitler's SS. The branches of the repressive State apparatus were more independent of each other and less closely controlled by the political police. The army, overwhelmingly won over to fascism, escaped the control of the militia and subjected it to its own control in military affairs. The role of the political police as regards the State administration was more or less limited to keeping a check on it, without actually intervening in administrative matters. As regards the judiciary, there was still a distinction between 'regular courts' and 'emergency courts', indicating that the regular courts continued in their traditional role, even if they were unable to control the intervention of the police. There was less multiplication of apparatuses: compartmentalization of spheres of competence still applied, and the modifications in the juridical system were less drastic than in Germany.[8]

This seems to make Italian fascism more like a traditional 'bureaucratic' dictatorship, which it was not. Though the fascist party was subordinated to the State apparatus, it did not fuse with it. Although the party's main role was as the link between the repressive and the ideological State apparatuses, it also held together the different branches of the repressive apparatus. The purging of the party, which was quickly taken care of under Nazism, was here a continual process. Compromises with the petty-bourgeois base continued, culminating in the Salo republic; the petty-bourgeois base of Italian fascism was much more pugnacious than in Germany.

Writers on 'totalitarianism' freely introduce a false and arbitrary distinction between Nazism and Italian fascism when they say that Nazism was a 'totalitarian' State and fascism was simply 'authoritarian'. I need scarcely comment on their criteria. Arendt, for one, bases her argument on the number of victims of the respective regimes, concluding for Italian fascism that 'similar non-totalitarian dictatorships appeared in Roumania, Poland, the Baltic States,

Hungary, Portugal and Spain.'[9]

The relevant criteria for distinguishing between forms of exceptional regime show the identical nature of the two cases, though the Italian fascist regime kept up a façade of constitutionality, because of the particular compromises it had to resort to. The king in principle still had the power to dismiss and nominate the Prime Minister (Mussolini); parliament was 'elected' on a single slate drawn up by the fascist Grand Council on the nomination of the various corporate bodies, though it had only a decorative function; alongside it was the Chamber of *Fasci* and Corporations, nominated by the fascist leadership; the Senate, appointed by the king, continued to exist, as did the State Council and the Court of Appeal. This was clearly only a façade, though it helped give Mussolini real standing in the eyes of some heroes of 'Western freedom': first among them, of course, being Churchill, the future executioner of Greece.

Although the rise of fascism in the ideological State apparatuses was similar to the process in Germany, their relative autonomy was less severely suppressed. This is true for the 'arts' and the educational system. As Salvatorelli observes: 'The schools were none the less not completely fascist, either then [1925] or later; the old structure and the old spirit held firm: less in the primary schools, and more in the secondary schools.'[10] Through the corporate bodies and the fascist party there was total control, especially of the communications apparatus (newspapers, radio, etc.). The reasons are the particular resistance in Italy of medium capital and the landowners, occupying these apparatuses under the strong pressure of the masses at their centre, and the ideological aspect of Italian fascism, which presented itself as the successor of the Garibaldian tradition.

Some specific features of Italian fascism are worthy of note: the *trade-union apparatus*, in particular, played a more important part than in Germany, because of the pressure of the working class. Under Gentile's 'liberal' ministry, this was also true for the *educational apparatus*, the refuge of medium capital.

The relationship with the *Church* was still more significant. In Italy, the Catholic Church was the favoured stronghold of the *landowners*. It was opposed to 'Italian unification', which had been carried out at the landowners' expense (only under Mussolini did the Pope recognize Rome as the capital of the Italian State), and it was on extremely bad terms with the monarchy, which was allied with medium capital – the 'creators' of Italian unity. At the beginning, and also later, Italian fascism had marked anti-clerical tendencies: Mussolini, the former left socialist and editor of *Avanti*, and the urban petty bourgeoisie with its Garibaldian tradition, came near to adopting the thesis of 'the opium of the

people’. Although the Catholic Church openly supported fascism, the attitude of the landowners led to strong frictions, basically stemming from the contradictions between big capital and the landowners, which were especially acute in Italy.

Given the resistance of the landowners, and the ideological importance of religion in the countryside, fascism made an effort to resolve its conflict with the Church. With the Lateran pacts (1929),[11] fascism simply bought the Church out: such was the aim of the ‘Treaty’ and the ‘Financial Convention’. The Church, as an international financial power with its own interests, in a sense betrayed the interests of the Italian landowners, by making a major contribution to the stabilization of a regime which had to restrict their economic and political power.

The friction none the less continued: The Lateran pacts included a Concordat, which amounted on paper to a considerable compromise with the Church’s influence in Italy. Fascism, however, had no intention of allowing the Church to exercise this influence in favour of the landowners. After the pacts, fascism went on limiting the powers of the Church in education, in the various clerical organizations (such as Catholic Action) and in the youth organizations.

The Pope did not fail to complain of the ‘ingratitude of the regime’, in a really absurd encyclical, *Non abbiamo bisogno*. Fascism replied by decreeing that membership of the fascist party and of Catholic Action was mutually exclusive. In the end, there was a compromise: the Church would be restricted to the religious domain alone, and the Catholic schools, which were forbidden to have any ‘athletic or sporting activity’, were taken over by the fascist *balillas*. The Church salvaged the essentials: the authority of the hierarchy over the lower clergy, and the maintenance of its authority in the family (through Church marriage). The Church therefore preserved a measure of relative autonomy within the ideological apparatuses, and had a more important ideological role than in Germany.

Notes

Foreword

1. I would like to thank David Abraham, Perry Anderson, Sebastian Budgen, Michael Burawoy, and Cihan Tugal for helpful comments.
2. Bob Jessop, *Nicos Poulantzas*, London, 1985, p. 264.
3. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, London, 1978, pp. 188–9.
4. The present volume, pp. 11–12.
5. Ibid., p. 17.
6. Ibid., pp. 19–20.
7. Ibid., p. 25.
8. Ibid., p. 27.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 29.
11. Ibid., p. 32.
12. Ibid., p. 37.
13. Ibid., p. 38.
14. Ibid., p. 44.
15. Ibid., pp. 49–50.
16. Ibid., p. 61.
17. Ibid., p. 72.
18. Ibid., pp. 73–5.
19. Ibid., pp. 72–3.
20. Ibid., p. 87.
21. Ibid., p. 89.
22. Ibid., p. 90.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., pp. 93–4.
25. Ibid., p. 94.
26. Ibid., p. 96.
27. Ibid., p. 98.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., pp. 100–101.
30. Ibid., pp. 102–103.
31. Ibid., p. 103.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 104.

34. Ibid., p. 106–107.
35. Ibid., p. 111.
36. Ibid., p. 112.
37. Ibid., p. 115.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 116.
40. Ibid., p. 125.
41. Ibid., p. 126–7.
42. Ibid., p. 129.
43. Ibid., p. 140.
44. Ibid., p. 142.
45. Ibid., p. 147.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p. 165.
48. Ibid., p. 164.
49. Ibid., p. 165.
50. Ibid., p. 170.
51. Ibid., pp. 171–2.
52. Ibid., p. 176.
53. Ibid., p. 177.
54. Ibid., p. 179.
55. Ibid., p. 183.
56. Ibid., p. 184.
57. Ibid., pp. 189–90.
58. Ibid., p. 190.
59. Ibid., pp. 194–5.
60. Ibid., p. 196.
61. Ibid., pp. 198–9.
62. Ibid., pp. 203–204.
63. Ibid., pp. 204–205.
64. Ibid., p. 210.
65. Ibid., p. 215.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., p. 218.
68. Ibid., p. 218–20.
69. Ibid., pp. 223–33.
70. Ibid., pp. 237–40.
71. Ibid., p. 240.
72. Ibid., pp. 244–6.
73. Ibid., pp. 240–3.
74. Ibid., p. 247.
75. Ibid., p. 248.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., p. 249.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., p. 250.
81. Ibid., p. 251.
82. Ibid., pp. 254–6.
83. Ibid., p. 257.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., p. 259.

86. Ibid., p. 260.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., p. 266.
89. Ibid., p. 267.
90. Ibid., p. 266.
91. Ibid., pp. 279–80.
92. Ibid., pp. 290, 295.
93. Ibid., p. 313.
94. Ibid., p. 318.
95. Ibid., p. 332.
96. A. James Gregor, 'Fascism and Dictatorship by Nicos Poulantzas', *American Political Science Review* 71(4), 1977, p. 1650.
97. Marvin D. Koenigsberg, 'Fascism and Dictatorship: The Third International and the Problem of Fascism', *Contemporary Sociology* 5(4), 1976, pp. 488–9.
98. Anson G. Rabinbach, 'Poulantzas and the Problem of Fascism', *New German Critique* 8, 1976, p. 170.
99. The present volume, pp. 66–7.
100. Jane Caplan, 'Nicos Poulantzas as Historian', *History Workshop* 3, 1977, p. 90.
101. Ibid., p. 95.
102. Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, London, 1975, p. 94.
103. Ibid., p. 99.
104. Ibid., p. 127.
105. Ibid., p. 111.
106. Ibid., p. 124.
107. The present volume, p. 217.
108. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, pp. 132–2.
109. Rabinbach, 'Poulantzas and the Problem of Fascism'; Caplan, 'Nicos Poulantzas as Historian'; Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*.
110. Rabinbach, 'Poulantzas and the Problem of Fascism', p. 168.
111. Caplan, 'Nicos Poulantzas as Historian', p. 84.
112. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, pp. 124–5.
113. These questions were addressed in Moore's much less discussed, but extremely interesting book on the German November Revolution, *Injustice: The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt*. It is not an accident that this work has had much less influence on scholarship than *Social Origins*.
114. David Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis*, Princeton, 1981, pp. 3–11. Although he does not use exactly the same categories, nor does he focus on the period of the seizure of power directly, Adam Tooze's widely celebrated *The Wages of Destruction*, London, 2006, offers a quite similar interpretation of the relationship between German industry and national socialism. As Tooze (p. 103) puts the point, 'the peacetime agenda of the more politically minded elements in German business consisted of at least two distinct elements, the one domestic, the other international. The domestic agenda was one of authoritarian conservatism, with a pronounced distaste for parliamentary politics, high taxes, welfare spending and trade unions. The international outlook of German business, on the other hand, was far more "liberal" in flavour.' This recalls Abraham's 'dynamic' and 'heavy industrial' fractions, although, importantly, Tooze sees these as different orientations within the same social group, rather than two distinct groups.
115. Gerald D. Feldman, 'A Collapse in Weimar Scholarship', *Central European History* 17(2/3), 1984, p. 161.
116. Feldman, 'A Collapse in Weimar Scholarship', p. 176.
117. Peter Hayes, 'History in an Off Key: David Abraham's Second "Collapse"', *Business History Review* 61(3), 1987, p. 472.
118. Henry A. Turner, 'The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis', *Political Science Quarterly* 97(4), 1982–83, p. 740.

119. The present volume, p. 52.
120. Ibid., p. 23.
121. Ibid., pp. 81, 146, 205.
122. Ibid., p. 83.
123. Ibid., p. 98.
124. Ibid., p. 215.
125. Ibid., p. 223.
126. Ibid., p. 237.
127. Antonio Gramsci, *Scrittigiovanili 1914–1918*, Turin, 1975, p. 150.
128. The present volume, p. 205.
129. Karl Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Westport, CT, 1981, pp. 62–3.
130. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Detroit, MI, 1920, 79.
131. The present volume, p. 231.
132. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, p. 126.
133. The present volume, p. 215.
134. Ibid., 216.
135. Michael Mann, *Fascists!* New York, 2004, p. 3.
136. Ibid., p. 359.
137. Perry Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary', *New Left Review* 34, 2002, pp. 13–15.
138. Alexander Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War: Class Conflict and Geopolitics in the Thirty Years' Crisis, 1914–1945*, Ann Arbor, MI, 2014, pp. 165–8.
139. Ibid., p. 145; Arno Mayer, *Why did the Heavens Not Darken? The 'Final Solution' in History*, New York, 1989, p. 116.

Part One: The Period of Fascism

1. Imperialism and Fascism. Monopoly Capitalism and the Imperialist Chain

1. *Selected Works*, vol. i, p. 671.
2. Charles Bettelheim, *La Transition vers l'économic socialiste*, Paris, 1968; and my book, *Political Power and Social Classes*, London, 1973, p. 157.
3. Lenin, op. cit, p. 682.
4. I should point out that this theory of transition is also accepted, in their own way, by Baran and Sweezy in *Monopoly Capitalism*, New York, 1966, Chap. VIII, 'On the History of Monopoly Capitalism', especially in their interpretation of the 1929 crisis as a crisis of transition between the 'competitive model' and the 'monopoly model'. See also Christian Palloix, *Problèmes de croissance en économie ouverte*, Paris, 1969, p. 217.
5. The question of terminology requires clarification here. The term 'stage' refers to modifications in the structure of a mode of production and the articulations of the relations which specify it. The terms 'step' and 'period' refer to the concrete periodiza-tion of a social formation, more especially of the class struggle. With 'transition', I make a distinction between a transitional 'period' of transition and a 'phase' of transition: the period of transition covers the unstable, complex combination of modes of production when a social formation is undergoing the change from the dominance of one mode of production to that of another (e.g. from feudalism to capitalism). The 'phase' of transition refers to a social formation in which one mode of production is dominant, but the conditions of its dominance are being changed by the change from one stage to another: as in the present case of the transition between 'competitive' capitalism and monopoly capitalism.
6. Lenin, ibid., p. 724. This had already been pointed out by Marx himself. However this does not mean that *capitalism has somehow been imperialist from the very beginning*, the theory recendy upheld by A. Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, London, 1971. Frank in fact bases his theory on the 'economic' domain alone, insisting on the interdependence of foreign and domestic 'markets'

from the beginnings of capitalism. But this economic 'interdependence', which the classics of Marxism have always admitted, is not enough to constitute the imperialist stage, characterized above all by the new role of politics and ideology, and their new articulation *vis-à-vis* the sphere of the economic, which creates the imperialist 'chain' within which uneven development too takes on a new meaning. The proof lies in the fact that Gunder Frank's model of imperialism as a 'bipolar structure of capitalism between centre and periphery' (everything being both the centre of a periphery and the periphery of a centre, in its linear and circular form) has nothing to do with the uneven development of the 'imperialist' chain as a stage of capitalism.

2. The German and Italian Links of the Chain

1. For the basic economic factors, see C. Bettelheim, *L'économie allemande sous le nazisme*, Paris, 1946: the essential value of this important book is in its thorough study of the economic policy of Nazism in power. Although it is in general accurate, there are a few points to be corrected in the light of knowledge acquired since its publication (cf. A. Schweitzer, *Big Business in the Third Reich*, London, 1964; G. Badia, *Histoire de l'Allemagne contemporaine*, Paris, 1962; G. Stolper, *The German Economy 1870 to the Present Day*, 1967).
2. On this see A. Rosenberg, *The Birth of the German Republic, 1871–1918*, London, 1931; *A History of the Weimar Republic*, London, 1936; and the analysis given by Marx and Engels (cf. my book, *Political Power and Social Classes*, London, 1973, p. 180).
3. Among relevant works on the subject are: R. Paris, *Histoire du fascisme en Italie*, Paris, 1962, and *Les Origines du fascisme*, Paris, 1969; R. Romeo, *Risorgimento e capitalismo*, Rome, 1959, and *Breve Storia delta grande industria in Italia*, 1967; *La formazione dellItalia industriale*, ed. A. Caracciolo, 1963; and finally S. B. Clough, *The Economic History of Modern Italy*, London, 1964.
4. Gramsci's essential writings on the subject are to be found in 'The Risorgimento' and 'The Southern Question' and in *The Modern Prince*. For a review of the debate which has been going on in Italy about Gramsci's theories, see A. Pizzorno, 'A Propos de la méthode de Gramsci …', *L'homme et la société*, No. 8, pp. 161 ff. The debate focuses on the following question: one of the causes to which Gramsci attributed the weak hegemony of the Italian bourgeoisie, was the fact that, unlike the French bourgeoisie, it was unable or unwilling to impose an *agrarian reform* and so gain the support of certain classes and middle strata of the peasantry. It has been held (particularly by Romeo) that Gramsci meant simply an *economic* weakness on the part of the Italian bourgeoisie, which would not have been able to use the reform for the purposes of *primitive accumulation* of capital. It can in all fairness be said in reply that such accumulation was in fact achieved in Italy, though by the 'Prussian road', to use Lenin's term. The important point, however, is that for Gramsci it was a *political* question.
5. 'Another element in evaluating the real significance of the obsessedly unitary policies of Crispi is the complex of feelings created in the North with regard to the Mezzogiorno. The poverty of the Mezzogiorno was historically "inexplicable" for the popular masses in the North; they did not understand that unity had not taken place on a basis of equality, but as hegemony of the North over the Mezzogiorno in a territorial version of the town-country relationship – in other words, that the North concretely was an "octopus" which enriched itself at the expense of the South, and that its economic-industrial increment was in direct proportion to the impoverishment of the economy and agriculture of the South.' (Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, London, 1971, pp. 70–1.)

3. The Period of Fascism and the Third International

1. Dimitrov, *Selected Works*, Sofia, 1967, p. 574.
2. Report to the Ninth Plenum of the Comintern, July 1929.
3. Zinoviev's report in *Protokoll des vierten Kongresses der K.I.*, 1923, pp. 89 ff.
4. In *Inprekorr* (abbreviation of the Comintern paper, *Internazionale Presse-Korrespondenz*), German edition, 4 August 1927.
5. Report to the Thirteenth Plenum of the Comintern, 1933, in *Der Faschismus in Deutschland*, reports and resolutions of the Thirteenth Comintern Plenum, 1934, pp. 89 ff.

6. Lenin, *Selected Works*, op. cit., p. 766.

7. Preface to French edition of Baran and Sweezy, *Capitalisme monopoliste*, Paris, 1969, pp. 15 ff.

8. Hence stricdy speaking one should not refer to 'forces of production' pure and simple, but to *forces of capitalist production* or *forces of socialist production*. So it was no accident if the Comintern's position led in fact to a conception of *technology* as *neutral*: only with Mao and the experience of the Chinese revolution did all the implications of such a conception become clear.

9. Moreover this was, of course, Trotsky's *consistent position*.

10. Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919–1943: Documents*, vol. II, London, 1956, p. 418.

11. Lenin, op. cit., p. 745.

12. Degras, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 472 and 480.

13. On this see also Trotsky's remarks in *The Third International after Lenin*, London, 1936, pp. 75 ff.; E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia, The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3, London, 1966, pp. 381 ff., confirms the division on the question between Lenin, Trotsky and Kamenev on the one hand, with Zinoviev, Bukharin, Radek and Bela Kun on the other, although the Russian delegation did not air its differences in the Congress.

14. Varga, the famous economics expert, whose analysis was always quoted in justification of Comintern turns from the Fourth Congress on, had in the Fourth Congress argued for 'economic stabilization' (*Rise and Fall of Capitalism?*); during the Fifth Congress, he laid more stress on the general economic crisis of capitalism, arguing that '… the internal contradiction of *stabilized capitalism* necessarily lead to new revolutionary situations' (!) (in *Protokoll desfünften Kongress der K.I.*, vol. I, pp. 108 ff.).

15. Quoted by E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia, Socialism in One Country, 1924–1926*, vol. 3, London, 1964, pp. 286–7. But this did not stop Zinoviev from holding that it was still the 'revolutionary epoch'. The resolution adopted distinguished in particular between (a), *a revolutionary situation in general* (sic!), which existed in Europe, and (b), *an immediately revolutionary situation*, which for the moment did not exist in Europe.

16. This was the 'Third Period' theory of the Sixth Congress. But recently M. Hajek (in *Storia dell'Internazionale communista, 1921–1935*, Milan, 1969, pp. 199 ff.) has argued that the Comintern had not foreseen the 1929 crisis *specifically*: it had only some general ideas related to the 'end of stabilization' in the abstract. This, I think, is wrong: although the actual resolutions of the Sixth Congress refrain from officially making a concrete prediction, Varga's reports went much further; and from 1928, in his polemics after the Sixth Congress with the 'right wing', Stalin himself took responsibility for making particular predictions about the crisis in the United States. The real problem is the interpretation made of the crisis. When it had passed, the Eleventh Plenum of the Comintern (1931) clearly confirmed this line: 'The year which has gone by since the last Plenum in February 1930, has been a year of historic change and has seen the deepening of the economic crisis, confirming the inevitability of the destruction of the capitalist system, the development of the socialist offensive…, and the end of stabilization' (in H. Weber, *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, collection of Comintern texts, Frankfurt, 1966, p. 255). However, the position of Varga himself on the 1929 crisis *has quite different nuances*: his reports continually stress that the outcome of the crisis will depend on the class struggle, noting that 'it is possible, from the abstract theoretical point of view, that the crisis may be overcome': a view which provoked a strong attack from Mendelson. See, *inter alia*, E. Varga, *La crise économique, sociale, politique*. Paris, n.d.

17. See below, pp. 153–4, where I show why after 1928 these turns cannot even be grasped by use of the classic model of *the 'pendulum'* (left opportunism/right opportunism), i.e. as the two diametrically opposed faces of the same mistaken line. It should further be noted – and we will come back to this in discussing Trotsky – that even before 1928, the various 'oppositions' to the official line within the Comintern were increasingly and overwhelmingly within the same terms of reference as the Comintern's, i.e. economist.

18. *Inprekorr*, German edition, nos. 213 and 221, November 1922. This tone also prevailed during the Fourth Congress. Only Radek seemed aware of the reality of the situation.

19. Resolution of 1 April 1933, taken from F. Heckert's report in *Why Hitler in Germany?*, 1933, pp. 38 ff.

20. *Inprekorr*, German edition, no. 119, September 1924.

21. Quoted from the collection of documents in *Komintern una Faschismus, 1920–1940*, ed. T. Pirker,

1966, pp. 176, 180.

22. Clara Zetkin gave this analysis in the course of a discussion on fascism at the Third Plenum of the Comintern, from 15 to 23 June 1923 (*Protokoll der Konferenz der erweiterten Exekutive der K.I.*, 1923, pp. 204 ff.). In particular, she declared: 'We should not think of fascism as a united, coherent force … It includes many contradictory elements, and will tear itself apart. But it would be very dangerous to think that therefore the ideological and political disintegration of fascism will be directly followed by its military defeat. On the contrary, we can be sure that fascism will try to retain power by every possible means of terror.' Clara Zetkin thereby registered her opposition both to the analysis of the Italian leaders, and to the line held by Zinoviev himself at the Fourth Congress (1922–3). To them, because of the 'internal contradictions', 'this sinister counter-revolution is *the weakest* counter-revolutionary organization in existence…. What makes fascism strong also forms the very basis of its own destruction' (in *Protokoll* …, op. cit., pp. 897 ff.).

23. Resolution of the political bureau of the KPD, 10 October 1933, in Pirker, p. 175. This view was common among Italian communists after Mussolini came to power.

24. Resolution of the Comintern presidium, 1 April 1933, ibid. See also the Thirteenth Plenum resolutions, November-December 1933.

25. Resolution of the PCI reproduced in French in *Programme Communiste*, October-December 1969, p. 75.

26. In her report to the Third Plenum in June 1923, Clara Zetkin declared: 'Fascism is quite different from Horthy's dictatorship in Hungary …Fascism is decidedly not the bourgeoisie's vengeance against a militant uprising of the proletariat. Historically and objectively, fascism is more of a punishment of the proletariat for not taking the revolutionary road.'… (*Protokoll*… op. cit.).

27. 'Thesis on Tactics', in *Ordine Nuovo*, 3 January 1922. It is also interesting to note that the interpretation of fascism as the *necessary realization* of the 'essence' of capitalism, was prevalent in the Frankfurt School, the 'theoretical ultra-leftist' tendency of his-toricist-Hegelian mould; see in particular Horkheimer's and Marcuse's articles for the period 1933–9.

4. Conclusion: The Transition to Monopoly Capitalism, and 'Economic Crisis'

1. Baran and Sweezy also interpret the 1929 crisis in this way and, in their own manner, accept the thesis of transition (see *Monopoly Capitalism*, chapter 8). Maurice Dobb's analysis of fascism, in *Political Economy and Capitalism*, London, 1937, pp. 230 ff., seems close to this.

2. I have already drawn attention to Varga's analysis of the 1929 crisis; he thematized his conception of the new phase' of capitalism as the phase of 'general economic crisis' in *Rise or Fall of Capitalism?*, 1924.

Part Two: Fascism and the Class Struggle

1. The Political Crisis: Fascism and the Exceptional State

1. The 'functionalist' school has in effect used the model of 'deviance', and hence of 'dysfunction', to examine fascism and the 'crisis' to which it corresponds. See Talcott Parsons, *Some Sociological Aspects of the Fascist Movement*, 1942.

2. Manuilsky's report to the Eleventh Plenum, 1931.

3. W. Hirsch, 'Faschismus and Hilterpartei', in *Die Internationale*, January 1932. The PCI's 1922 Rome theses, drawn up by Bordiga's 'ultra-left' tendency, also point out that 'fascism is a *natural stage* in the development of capitalism'.

4. Hirsch, op. cit.

5. Bordiga's and Freimuth's reports to the Fifth Congress in *Protokoll des fünften Kongress der K.I.*, 1925, vol. II, pp. 715 ff. The most blatant example of this failure to differentiate between fascism and other forms of the bourgeois State, at its worst between 1928 and 1935, was the definition of Roosevelt's regime in the United States made at the Thirteenth Plenum of the Comintern (1933). Palme Dutt declared: 'It is the most advanced example of the classical type of fascist development to be found among the imperialist countries', a position confirmed by Kuusinen.

6. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the Comintern had no answer to this question either, and for a good reason: after the Fourth Congress, and particularly after the Fifth, the label of *fascism* was given to all exceptional regimes. Included without distinction in the category of fascist have been the following: Horthy's regime in Hungary, von Seekt's army in Germany (the source from which fascism was expected in 1923), Pilsudski's regime in Poland, the Kuomintang, Francoism, Peronism, the Japanese regime, etc.

7. See my analysis in *Political Power and Social Classes* (London, 1973).

8. 'Über den Faschismus', in *Faschismus and Kapitalismus*, Frankfurt, 1969; see also: Griepenburg and Tjaden, 'Faschismus and Bonapartismus. Zur Kritik der Faschismus-theorie August Thalheimer', *Das Argument*, December 1966.

9. Gramsci, 'Caesarism', in *Prison Notebooks*, London, 1971, pp. 291 ff., and in numerous scattered passages in *The Modern Prince*. I am only giving a general outline of Gramsci's interpretation of fascism here: I shall come back to a closer and more detailed analysis later.

10. It is clearly formulated by A. Tasca, *Naissance du fascisme*, Paris, 1967, pp. 349 ff., and O. Bauer, 'Der Faschismus', in *Faschismus und Kapitalismus*, op. cit., pp. 143 ff., the latter leaning towards the view of catastrophic equilibrium; it is put less clearly by A. Rosenberg, 'Der Faschismus als Massenbewegung', ibid., pp. 75 ff.

11. *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, New York, 1971, pp. 437 ff.

12. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast. Trotsky: 1929–1940*, London, 1963, p. 276n. There is no question of minimizing the importance of Trotsky's analysis of fascism: in particular his writings on Germany are still one of the best works on the period (cf. *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, New York, 1971 [introduced by Ernest Mandel]).

13. In *Political Power and Social Classes*, I attempted to define the field of 'social relations' (i.e. that of the *class struggle*, including *class practices)*, particularly by establishing the distinction between 'relations of production' and 'social relations of production' (pp. 62 ff. and 72 ff.): on the latter point, see C. Bettelheim, *Calcul econo-mique et formes de propriété*, Paris, 1970, pp. 59–60.

14. These currently very fashionable views are also to be found in many attempts to analyse the French 'crisis' of May-June 1968: see D. Vidal's correct critiques in 'Institutions ou rapports sociaux: Preface à une analyse du politique', *Atelier*, No. 3

2. The Growth of Fascism

1. Dimitrov, *Selected Works*, Sofia, 1967, p. 564. It is true that Trotsky made these points as early as 1930.

Part Three: Fascism and the Dominant Classes

1. General Propositions

1. May 1931 resolution of Central Committee of KPD.

2. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, London, 1971, p. 210.

3. Gramsci emphasizes this element, but relates it to his conception of 'catastrophic equilibrium', which is not valid for fascism: 'The passage of troops of many different parties under the banner of a single party, which better represents and resumes the needs of the entire class, is an organic and normal phenomenon, even if its rhythm is very swift-indeed almost like lightning in comparison with periods of calm. It represents the fusion of an entire social class under a single leadership, which alone is held to be capable of solving an over-riding problem of its existence and of fending off a mortal danger. When the crisis does not find this organic solution, but that of the charismatic leader, it means that a static equilibrium exists …; it means that no group, neither the conservatives nor the progressives, has the strength for victory, and that even the conservative group needs a master.' (op. cit., p. 211).

4. See *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 210 ff.

5. This is not at all evident from what the PCI said in 1922, in the middle of the 'ultra-left' period, against the red *Arditi del Popolo*: '… they show the pernicious, defeatist nature of the distinction between attack and defence.' This position was attacked by Lenin, with his accustomed irony, as the 'philosophy of

attack'.

6. *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*, Peking, 1963, pp. 98 ff.

7. 'On Protracted War', ibid., pp. 210 ff.

8. As far as fascism is concerned, the Comintern's definitions (and their practical effect) of the step in fact apply in practice only to Germany, as fascism came to power in Italy just before the Fourth Congress. The Fourth Congress analyses of the step apply *'in practice'* to Germany, France and England, where there was *still* a step of stabilization. The Fourth Congress analysis would have been correct only for Italy … if only it had been made a few months earlier! *Uneven development* no longer made much sense to the Comintern.

9. *The Third International after Lenin*, New York, 1936.

10. This is a suggestion, not a *proof*: the subject is too important for thorough analysis to be possible here. The fact that Trotsky basically shared the Comintern's economism does not mean that there was no difference between them. The Comintern's development was typified by both economism and the progressive abandonment of proletarian internationalism, while Trotsky stood firm on internationalism. But it was not accidental that Trotsky's internationalism was expressed in the form of 'permanent revolution' (which is an entirely different thing from 'uninterrupted revolution').

11. The very notion of *permanent revolution*, together with Trotsky's economist catastrophism (he always defended the theory of the halt in the development of the productive forces under imperialism), seems to make it impossible for him to recognize the real steps of class struggle. For Trotsky, permanent revolution seems to mean the *continual imminence of revolution*, which leads to quite paradoxical results: even when he defines a step as *defensive*, he *at the same time* expects the almost metaphysical resurgence of a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary offensive *at any moment* within this step. Trotsky's characterization of the 'age of revolution' as the age of 'permanent revolution' *seems to abolish time for him*, because he can never *periodize* it. To give just one example: after 1930, he often spoke of a defensive step and of an ebb in Germany, but when he predicted fascism, he could still describe it as a response to the offensive by the working class, i.e. as a revolutionary situation.

12. Dimitrov, *Selected Works*, op. cit.

13. The equation 'economic stabilization = working-class defensive' does not appear in the Fourth Congress resolutions. But it is apparent in Radek's report to the Congress, *The Capitalists' Offensive*: 'What defines the period we are in is the fact that… the mass of the proletariat … has fallen back to a defensive position.' (*Protokoll*, pp. 296 ff.) Lenin, racked by illness, made his penultimate public appearance at the Congress, and only made a brief report on NEP.

14. The Fifth Congress's definition was: 'Fascism is one of the classic forms of counter-revolution in the era of the decay of capitalist society, the era of proletarian revolution … Fascism is the weapon of capital…' (*Inprekorr*, German edition, no. 119, September 1924.)

15. See Radek: 'Fascism does not represent a clique of officers, but a broad, if contradictory, mass movement.' (*Die Rote Fahne*, 16 August 1923.) Note too the contemporary analyses of Gramsci and Togliatti, which were opposed to the official view of Bordiga and the PCI (below p. 244).

16. See Togliatti's correct critique of Thalheimer in a 1935 lecture series, *Lezioni sul fascismo*, 1970 edition, pp. 6 ff., and in the article by Griepenburg and Tjaden 'Faschismus und Bonapartismus. Zur Kritik der Faschismus-theorie A. Thalheimer', in *Das Argument*, December 1966.

17. This is the conclusion reached, for example, by Tim Mason on the basis of Thalheimer's views, in his article 'Der Primat der Politik – Politik und Wirtschaft im Nationalsozialismus', *Das Argument*, December 1966, pp.473 ff. Inits misinterpretation of Marx, this conception is similar to the fashionable 'elitist' view that there is a basic and radical distinction under fascism between the 'three realms' of power: the economy, where the 'industrial magnates' have power, politics and the State, dominated by the fascist party and bureaucracy, and the army, dominated by the upper layers of the *Wehrmacht*: one example is A. Schweitzer, *Big Business in the Third Reich*, London, 1964, pp. 227 ff. The concept of the 'autonomy of politics' is also shared by F. Neumann, *Demokratischer und Autoritärer Staat*, 1967, pp. 93 ff.

18. For this social-democratic position on the petty bourgeoisie as the '*third force*', see, amongst others, G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, vol. V, *Socialism and Fascism*, pp. 5 ff.

19. R. Miliband's errors on this subject should also be noted. But I single him out as one author who

appears to be aware of the risk involved in this view: 'It is in this perspective that must be understood the notion of the independence of the State power from all forces in civil society, to which Marx and Engels occasionally referred as possible in "exceptional circumstances" (18th Brumaire, etc.), and of which fascism, in the context of advanced capitalism, may be said to provide the furthest example. In that context, however, the concept is ambiguous in that it suggests a certain *neutrality* on the part of the State power … which actual experience bellies …' (*The State in Capitalist Society*, London, 1969, p. 93.)

2. Germany

1. G. Badia, *Histoire de l'Allemagne contemporaine*, Paris, 1962, vol. I, p. 240.
2. K. Kautsky, *La Question Agraire*, Paris 1970 (re-edition), pp. 59, 67, 129 ff.
3. C. Bettelheim, op. cit., p. 6; G. Badia, op. cit., p. 49. For what follows, see the works already cited by A. Schweitzer and T. Mason, and also S. J. Woolf, 'Did a Fascist Economic System Exist?' in *The Nature of Fascism*, ed. S. J. Woolf, London, 1966.
4. op. cit., p. **194.**
5. In particular, O. Dsenis: 'Der Faschismus und die Widersprüche im Lager der deutschen Bourgeoisie', in *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, 1933, pp. 166 ff.
6. The difference in the policies of big and medium capital is especially relevant to the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy.
7. According to the statistics, Germany reached the bottom of the trough during 1932 and *recovery then began*. The first sign was the stabilization of the mark, which regained almost the whole of its gold value. Badia is therefore right to emphasize that 'the signs of recovery appeared' (op. cit., p. 317).
8. Brüning's measures against capital concentration on behalf of medium capital are particularly noteworthy. By four successive 'emergency decrees' he enacted a complete anti-trust code, limiting concentration, cartels, prices, etc. There was a violent reaction from big capital (F. Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, 1966, pp. 261 ff.).
9. The Nazi state's economic role is *very important and indicative*, but I can do no more than mention it. Bettelheim, op. cit., has an exhaustive study of it.
10. See J. Kuczynski, *Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Imperialisms*, vol. 1, Berlin 1952, and D. Eichholtz, 'Probleme einer Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Faschismus in Deutschland', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1963, part 3, pp. 103 ff.
11. 'Der Faschismus' in *Faschismus una Kapitalismus*, p. 158. To indicate the Comintern's evolution in this respect, note that the PCl's 1926 Lyons Theses, formulated under the guidance of Gramsci, who had Comintern support, *correctly* stressed that 'Fascism … proposes to achieve an organic unity of *all the forces of the bourgeoisie* in a single political organism …' (*Le Origini del Fascismo*, ed. M. Bartolotti, 1969, p. 102.) The Comintern's evolution is very evident in Togliatti's consecutive writings on fascism: see below, pp. 253–4.
12. The *exact opposite* of this view is to be found among those writers who equate fascism with 'technological modernization': A. Organski, *The Stages of Political Development*, 1965; R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, London 1967, pp. 402 ff. In fact it is the very problematic governing both these 'opposite' views which is wrong.
13. M. Roncayolo, *Le Monde et son histoire*, vol. IX, 1968, pp. 338 and 342. See also A. Rosenberg, 'Der Faschismus als Massenbewegung', in *Faschismus und Kapitalismus*, p. 114; R. Romeo, op. cit., pp. 215 ff.
14. In the speech quoted above from *Protokoll*.
15. ibid.
16. See chiefly A. Rosenberg, *The Birth of the German Republic, 1871–1918*, London 1931, and *A History of the German Republic*, London 1936; K. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism*, London 1973.
17. Sec R. Hanser and R. Kühnl, *Deutschland zwischen Demokratie und Faschismus*, 1969, pp. 34 ff.
18. Varga correctly pointed out: 'The contradictory interests of the different layers of the ruling class entailed … a zig-zag policy, which was one of the factors in allowing fascism to gain a hold in the State' (op cit., p. 106). See also Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., pp. 259 ff.

19. See L. Bergstrasser, *Geschichte der politischen Parteien in Deutschland*, 1965, pp. 240 ff.
20. Klein, *Weimar*, 1968, p. 65.
21. On these movements as a whole, see R. Kühnl, *Die Nationalsozialistische Linke*, 1966.
22. J. Droz, *Les Forces politiques de la république de Weimar*, Sorbonne lectures, pp. 147 ff.;cf. especially E. Vermeil, *Doctrinaires de la revolution allemande (1918–1938)*, Paris, 1939.
23. G. Badia, op. cit., p. 215.
24. G. Castellan, *L'Allemagne de Weimar*, Paris, 1969, p. 76.
25. Again the point should be made that the Western bourgeoisies bore a heavy responsibility for the rise of national socialism in the monstrous Treaty of Versailles: not so much because of its economic aspects, but because of its political and ideological effects.
26. The view that Hilter was the 'choir-master' of big capital is held, for example, by W. Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society*, 1965, pp. 198 ff.; G. Almond, 'The Politics of German Business', in *West German Leadership and Foreign Policy*, ed. H. Speier, 1957, pp. 195 ff., and by Hallgarten, Heiden, etc.
27. A. Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, pp. 294 ff.
28. For the general political factors in this last period, see K. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie*, 1964, and *The German Dictatorship*, op. cit.; R. Heberle, *From Democracy to Nazism*, 1945; D. Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution*, 1966.
29. See E. Matthias and R. Morsey (eds.), *Das Ende der Parteien: 1933*, 1960.
30. See the analysis of all these problems below, pp. 247 ff., and pp. 331 ff.
31. K. Bracher, op. cit., p. 295.
32. See D. Lerner(ed.), *The Nazi Elite*, 1951, pp. 6 ff.; D. Schoenbaum, op. cit., p. 239; H. Gerth, 'The Nazi Party, Its Leadership and Composition', in *Reader on Bureaucracy*, ed. R. Merton, New York 1952, pp. 100 ff.

3. Italy

1. R. Paris, *Les Origines du fascisme* (henceforth Paris I), pp. 54 ff.
2. R. Paris, *Histoire du fascisme en Italie* (henceforth Paris II), p. 132; A. Tasca, *Naissance du fascisme*, 1969, pp. 111 ff.; R. Romeo, *Breve Storia delta Grande Industria Italiana*, 1967.
3. On this contradiction, see R. Romeo, op. cit., pp. 128 ff.; S. B. Clough, op. cit.
4. P. Alatri, 'La Crisi della classe dirigente …', *Fascismo e Antifascismo*, 1963, p. 66.
5. A. Rosenberg, 'Der Faschismus als Massenbewegung', in *Faschismus und Kapital-ismuSy* op. cit., pp. 111–12.
6. These contradictions between the Southern 'semi-feudal' landowners and the big capitalist landowners surfaced during the rise of fascism in the question of *tariff protection for cereals*. The 'semi-feudal' landowners were *mainly* interested in maintaining corn prices through tariff protection, while the capitalist landowners were *mainly* concerned with *land rent*,
7. This does not mean that the two modes of production are impenetrable, but that this mutual 'coexistence' can in *certain cases* (as in Italy) lead to the penetration of capitalism into the countryside where the feudal mode of production is dominant. I stress this because of the ambiguity of the terms 'coexistence' and 'combination' (*combinaison*) which are still basically descriptive, because they do not precisely define the *relationship* between the two modes of production.
8. We may well ask if the term 'coexistence' (in the strong sense) of two modes of production in a social formation should not be confined only to the periods of *transition* from one mode of production to another (always presuming that 'mode of production' is used as I defined it in *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 11 ff., as an ensemble of instances). The 'coexistence' of the feudal mode of production in certain examples of competitive capitalism would therefore be due to the fact that the period was still largely marked by the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The gradual dissolution of the feudal mode of production, however, during the *phase of transition* to the monopoly capitalist stage, relates to the fact that this stage implies the consolidation of the conditions of the expanded reproduction of the CMP. Such a dissolution does not mean that the feudal mode of production simply disappears from the social formation, but that it only exists as a simple *form of production*, as 'elements' – and this also applies to the

superstructure.

9. This is basically a function of the *relations of production*. I shall develop this point below in the chapter on 'Fascism and the Countryside', pp. 271 ff. Because the problem relates to the relations of production, it does not depend on the *juridical forms* of landed property. As Lenin showed, the introduction of capitalism into the countryside does not necessarily follow the historic road of land distribution, on the model of the French Revolution: it may well follow the much more efficient Prussian road, and be achieved within the juridical framework of large landed property. This was one of the roads taken by Italian fascism, the reasons being political.

10. R. Romeo, op. cit, pp. 136 and 191; S. J. Woolf, in *The Nature of Fascism*, ed. Woolf, 1966, pp. 119 ff.

11. A. Giacomo, in *L'Economia italiana dal 1861 al 1961*, 1961, p. 146.

12. Barberi, ibid., p. 676.

13. The speech by Zinoviev quoted previously (see also D. Desanti, *L'Internationale communiste*, 1970, p. 113). This point of view was of course again strongly expressed at the Ninth Comintern Plenum in 1929.

14. Togliatti, 'A Proposito del fascismo', 1928, reproduced in *Società*, 1952, no. 4 (and see below, n. 17). I will have to be schematic, but the general lines of the PCI's view of fascism until 1928 can be summarized as follows: in a first step, the analyses stressed the relationship between fascism and the dominant classes as a whole; but while Bordiga saw fascism as the preferred representative of the 'most advanced' elements of the bourgeoisie, Gramsci was closer to Zinoviev's position-and saw fascism as expressing the reaction of the landowners (and of the petty bourgeoisie). Togliatti was quite wrong in ascribing to Bordiga the view that fascism represented landed interests. It was Bordiga's intervention at the Fourth Congress which prevented Zinoviev's conception in the Comintern 'Address' to the Italian proletariat of 20 November 1922 from being incorporated in the Fourth Congress resolutions. Bordiga returned to his views in his report on fascism to the Fifth Congress (in *Protokoll*, op. cit., pp. 715 ff.). To return to the PCI: in the Lyons Theses, inspired by Gramsci, its position changed, as did Gram-sci's own. Fascism was no longer seen as the preferred representative of the landowners, but they were none the less put on the same level as the fractions of the bourgeoisie. Although the accent was on the capitalist nature of the Italian social formation, the Theses in reality stress the 'heterogeneity' of the 'two sectors' in Italy; nowhere is there a glimpse of the now hegemonic role of big monopoly capital. ('Tesi sulla situazione italiana', in *Trent'anni di vita e di lotte del PCI*., 1952.) P. Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, 1967, vol. I, p. 493, seems to me to be wrong when he says that Gramsci's analysis and the Lyons Theses already contain the essentials of Dimitrov's definition of fascism.

15. 'Antifascismo, democrazia, socialismo nella rivoluzione italiana', *Critica marxista*, September-December 1966, p. 28.

16. In fact, although the feudal features were dominant in Italian agriculture until the period of monopoly capitalism, this was not (as Gramsci thought) because there was no land distribution, but because of the actual relations of production in the countryside.

17. The contradictions explaining and reflecting this misunderstanding are clear in Togliatti's writings about fascism. What he wrote in 1928 still expressed the view of Gramsci and the Lyons Theses that fascism was a 'united front' and 'organic unity' of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. This view fails to understand the hegemony of monopoly capital, but it at least has the merit of emphasizing the relationship between fascism and the *whole of the bourgeoisie* (including medium capital). In *Lezioni sul fascismo*, 1935, Togliatti made a self-criticism, and accepted the Comintern's Thirteenth Plenum definition (1933) confirmed by Dimitrov. Togliatti thus implicitly excluded medium capital (the 'liberal bourgeoisie') from the fascist bloc, but *he apparently kept to Gramsci's conception of the landowners*. In fact, while he now emphasized the advanced and concentrated nature of Italian capitalism, and the hegemonic role of monopoly capital, which he had not done previously, Togliatti still retained the *distinction* between the 'two sectors' under fascism in Italy (a monopoly capitalist sector, and a very backward, therefore feudal, agrarian sector), and failed to see the *penetration* of agriculture by monopoly capitalism. But the theory of 'feudal survivals', apparently a continuation of his previous analyses, served a quite different purpose: it only corroborated the strategy of alliances advocated by Dimitrov. As far as Gramsci is concerned, he did of course stress the need to fight fascism by a 'popular anti-fascist revolution', but only in the sense that he

was opposed to making the foundation of a soviet republic the immediate objective of the struggle against fascism, and saw the need for transitional aims. Gramsci was in no way the disciple of Dimitrov.

18. L. Salvatorelli and G. Mira, *Storia d' Italia nel periodo fascist a*, 1964, pp. 115 ff.; E. Santarelli, *Storia del movimento e del regime fascista*, 1967, vol. 1, pp. 167 ff. and 245 ff.

19. A. Tasca, op. cit., pp. 79 ff.

20. U. Terrancini 'The Italian situation' in *Inprekorr*, German edn, no. 216, November 1922.

21. During the rise of fascism the Popular Party was often in the government alongside the representatives of medium capital, which is an indication of the *reapprochement* between the landowners and medium capital against big capital. But it did not hesitate to vote with the socialists against the government (e.g. during the first Facta government, in July 1922), as a reaction against this 'infiltration' (A. Repaci, in *Fascismo e Antifascists*, pp. 128 ff., and especially G. Salvemini, *Le origini del fascismo in Italia*, 1966, pp. 140 ff.) Salvemini clearly shows that the Popular Party, because of its 'popular' base in the countryside (in 1920, 945,000 of the 1,189,000 members of the Catholic trade unions were from the *rural* classes), supported popular demands during the Italian crisis, which distinguished it from the pre-war Catholic organizations. On the other hand, however, 'The party was weighed down by all the conservatives who had controlled the political movement before the war … and had the support of the Vatican. These were aristocrats, big landowners and other important elements.' (p. 146). The landowners determined the general policy of the party: this was the *typical* phenomenon of '*feudal socialism*' defined by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, an ideology used by the landowners to win the support of the masses against capital. The Popular Party's 'opposition' to fascism was basically due to the contradiction between the landowners and big capital.

22. Gramsci, *Ordine Nuovo*, pp. 333 ff.

23. See A. Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, pp. 91, 136, 190–1.

24. Gramsci, *Ordine Nuovo*, pp. 109 ff.

25. M. Gallo, *L'ltalie de Mussolini*, 1966, p. 98.

26. L. Salvatorelli and G. Mira, op. cit., pp. 193 ff.

27. A. Tasca, op. cit., pp. 255 ff.

28. This was basically because medium capital's policy of 'class collaboration', initiated by Giolitti and based on a *rapprochement* of the industrial bourgeoisie and the working class *at the expense of the Southern peasantry* (Gramsci, 'The Southern Question'), depended, because of this and because of the weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie, on a State form with a *very narrow* electoral base. After the end of the war, with the electoral reforms won by the masses and the 'maximalist' turn of social democracy (rejecting both official 'class collaboration', and the uprising of the largely socialist mass of the peasantry), the 'liberal' representatives of medium capital, Giolitti, Bonomi, and Facta, saw no solution but to crush social democracy 'by parliamentary means' with the aid of the fascist party (P. Alatri, *Le Origini del fascismo*, 1963, pp. 33 ff.).

29. L. Basso, 'Le Origini del fascismo', in *Fascismo e antifascismo*, pp. 19 ff.

30. P. Alatri, op. cit., pp. 5 ff., and E. Santarelli, op. cit., pp. 85 ff., give important information on what follows.

31. Gramsci, *Ordine Nuovo*, pp. 351 ff. In Germany there was collusion between very different ideological sub-systems, but here the relationship between the traditional 'liberal nationalist' ideology of the bourgeoisie and the fascist ideology is much clearer: the 'seeds of fascism' can be seen in 'liberal' ideology. This is the more important because bourgeois theories of fascism, relying on the complexity of the German case, hold that there is some irreconcilable antagonism between 'liberal ideology' and 'fascist ideology'.

32. A. Tasca, op. cit., pp. 57 ff.; pp. 71 ff.

33. This is particularly true of the notorious liberal fascist' G. Gentile, *Origini e dottrina del fascismo*.

34. Paris I, p. 40.

35. A. Tasca, pp. 103 ff.

36. G. Salvemini, *Scritti sul fascismo*, 1961, pp. 385 ff.

37. E. Nolte, *The Three Faces of Fascism*, London, 1965, pp. 145 ff.

38. A. Tasca, op. cit., pp. 175 ff.; L. Salvatorelli and G. Mira, op. cit., pp. 200 ff.

39. G. Salvemini, *Le Origini del fascismo in Italia*, pp. 351 ff.

40. D. Guérin, op. cit., pp. 144 ff.

41. G. Salvemini, op. cit., p. 344; A. Aquarone, *VOrganizzazione dello stato totali-tario*, 1965, Chapter III; H. Lasswell and R. Sereno, 'The Fascists: The Changing Italian Elite', *American Political Science Review* (1937), pp. 914 ff.

42. V. Foa, 'Le strutture economiche e la politica economica del regime fascista', in *Fascismo e antifascismo*, op. cit., p. 278. Foa observes: 'It would be a grave error to think that the fascist government was a puppet of the big industrialists, or their mechanical arm … The State has an autonomy of its own.'

Part Four: Fascism and the Working Class

1. General Propositions

1. S. Schwab, 'Le caractère de la dictature fasciste', *L'Internationale communiste*, January 1933.

2. In strategic terms, *'protracted war'* does not mean, for Mao, the abandonment of historical periodization of the class struggle into steps (offensive, defensive, stabilization) and into the strategic turns based on them. 'Protracted war' means that the revolutionary process is not a simple 'gradual' development until the 'final', 'exact' moment; thus it implies that throughout any 'defensive' steps or 'positional warfare', strategy must not lose sight of the revolutionary objective.

3. A. Rosenberg, 'Der Faschismus als Massenbewegung', op. cit. See also W. Abendroth, *Antagonistische Gescllschaft und politische Demokratie*, 1967, pp. 56 ff.

4. The *positive* aspect of both anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism lay mainly in the fact that they demanded *'autonomy'* for the workers' movement in the face of its attempted take-over by 'bourgeois' organizations.

5. I shall return to the reputedly 'ultra-left' analysis made by the Comintern at the Sixth Congress (1928). In immediate terms, note that although Comintern policy after 1928 was 'ultra-left' in appearance only, *certain secondary aspects of the KPD's own policy* in the period of this turn really were left opportunist.

6. J. Degras, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 139 ff.: Fifth Congress resolution on fascism.

7. H. Weber, *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, p. 117.

8. *Inprekorr*, German edition, no. 69, August 1930.

9. Sixth Congress resolutions, in Degras, op. cit., vol. II.

10. *Die Internationale*, December 1931.

11. See also the Eleventh Plenum resolutions, in Degras, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 151 ff.

12. ibid.

13. *Die Internationale*, January 1932. The same errors were there when the theory of social fascism first appeared in 1924 (Fifth Congress). Zinoviev, in the report already mentioned, declared, 'I repeat, the peaceful democratic era signals the death of capitalism. It matters little whether it takes the form of "democracy" or the form of fascism.'

14. The only concrete case of this is in fact that of the SF10 in France, which poses a problem in the definition of the social democracy of the period as a 'workers' party': (a) because of the particular anarcho-syndicalist tradition of the French workers' movement and its distrust of 'parties', which was only overcome by the PCF, at a fairly late date at that; (b) because of the close relationship soon established between the SFIO and the French *petty bourgeoisie*, through 'Jacobin radicalism'. It has sometimes been argued, especially by A. Kriegel (*Le Pain et les roses*, Paris, 1968, p. 167), that German social democracy alone was a real 'workers' party'. This is incorrect. Kriegel's view is obviously obscured by her familiarity with the French case. Thus she identifies the SFIO with the other European social-democratic organizations, the German party excepted. For some support of my own view, see R. Michels, *Political Parties*, 1966 reprint, pp. 254 ff., and S. Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties*, 1966. The *organizational forms* of social-democratic parties differ considerably from one party to another, and from one era to another. While the parties are *as a whole* much more *disciplined* and *centralized* than the 'bourgeois parties', their organizational forms vary from a very high degree of bureaucratic centralization (e.g. Germany and Austria) to a relatively liberal regime (as in England). In fact, because of their political line too, it is almost impossible to talk of a *typical* organizational form of social-democratic parties, in the way one can, for

example, of Bolshevik organizations. See the comparison of European socialist parties in M. Duverger, *Political Parties*, London, 1966.

15. A social-democratic party can also stretch to include the *petty bourgeoisie*, but it still serves as a kind of *communication channel* for bourgeois ideology and policy within the working class. But in a party of the social-democratic type, the importance of this 'petty-bourgeois' element, an importance which is not only or mainly numerical, but rather political, ideological and organizational, *has certain limits*, beyond which it *goes over* to being a *bourgeois party with a working-class clientele*. Despite the unevenness of this process, this was how most of the European social-democratic parties evolved, especially after the Second World War.

16. *The Third International after Lenin*, pp. 112–13.

17. See above, p. 93.

18. J. Degras, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 422 ff.

19. ibid.

20. *Chronologically*, the turn did not correspond *precisely* to the Sixth Congress. The first signs of the turn appeared at the Eighth Plenum in 1927: the left current of social democracy was seen as more dangerous to communists than the right. The actual Sixth Congress resolutions bear traces of a degree of precarious compromise between Stalin's and Bukharin's positions. The turn only became clear with the 1929 Tenth Plenum.

21. H. Remmele, *Die Internationale*, March 1930.

22. *Die Rote Fahne*, March 1931.

23. Moreover, when *Die Rote Fahne*, on the basis of the policy of the 'anti-fascist front', applied this definition only to the 'leading circles' of the SPD (on 8 June 1932), it was *denounced* by *Die Internationale* (vol. XV, p. 274) for an *'opportunist deviation'*.

24. Tenth Plenum (1929) Resolution in Degras, op. cit., vol. III, p. 48.

25. *Die Internationale*, June 1932.

26. Ibid., July 1931.

27. Hirsch, in *Die Internationale*, January 1932. Only at the Eleventh Plenum in 1931 was there some opposition to the 'excesses' of the notion of the 'main enemy'. Some scepticism was also expressed at the Plenum about the imminence of revolution. Manuilsky himself admitted that fascism 'is one form of capitalist offensive' and that 'the main enemy of the working class is still the bourgeoisie'. But nothing resulted from the discussions.

28. I attempt to make the positions revealed here clearer by referring to what actually happened in the USSR at this time. See the Appendix below. Trotsky had his own view of what was happening in the USSR, and gave two apparently contradictory interpretations of the relationship between 1928 and 1935, both of which I find incorrect, (a) He was tempted to interpret it as a swing from left opportunism to right opportunism ('bureaucratic' zig-zags); (b) At the same time he was tempted to say that there was no basic change after 1928.

29. None the less, the extremely strong reactions of the European communist parties to Hitler's victory and the policy of the KPD, did move the Comintern executive to pass a resolution on 5 March 1933 (in response to a call for common struggle against fascism made by the Socialist International on 19 February), which made the first move in the direction of Dimitrov's position on the united front of the proletariat. The executive *recommended* contact with the central committees of social democracy in *certain countries*, because of their *special situation*, with a view to *joint actions* against fascism: for the period of these actions,'the ECCI calls on all communist parties to make a further attempt to establish a united fighting front with the social-democratic working masses through the social-democratic parties' (Degras, op. cit., vol. III, p. 253). But in fact the Thirteenth Plenum in November-December 1933 *went back on* the whole of this monetary tactic. The first real signs of the 1935 turn came only in 1934 (see also D. Desanti, *L'Internationale communiste*, op. cit., p. 205).

30. Dimitrov, *Selected Works*, op. cit., p. 586.

31. ibid., pp. 587–8.

32. ibid., pp. 588–9.

33. Taking this a litde further, it is easy to verify what I said above about the relation between 1928 and

1935. Firsdy, the constantly more restricted definition of the class basis of fascism in Comintern theory, begun well before 1928, was not interrupted by the 'ultra-left' Sixth Congress, which saw 'finance capital' as its only base. Later, and this is important for the relation of 1928 to 1935, Dimitrov's definition, limiting the basis still further to 'the most reactionary, nationalist and imperialist elements' of big capital, an essential part of the Dimitrov 'turn', *was already present in the resolutions of the Thirteenth Comintern Plenum* (November-December 1933), at the height of the so-called 'ultra-left' period. See the Thirteenth Plenum resolutions in Degras, op. cit., vol. III pp. 285 ff.

2. Germany

1. For the period 1920–3 in Germany, see also D. Desanti, *L'Internationale commu-niste*, Paris, 1970.
2. Moreover the KPD's attitude towards the Kapp putsch, at the height of its 'infantile leftist' phase, was very ambiguous: on 13 March, the first day of the putsch, the Party *Zentrale* refused 'to lift a finger to defend the bourgeois republic', and rallied to action only the day after, because of mass pressure and the success of the strike.
3. Lenin, *Complete Works*, vol. 32, p. 513.
4. The total aberration of the Schlageter line is apparent in retrospect, but was not evident at the time. The resolution of the June 1923 Plenum, which put forward this line, insisted on the primary necessity of *an intense and active struggle against fascism on the international plane*. But the Plenum considered: (a) that fascism, given its 'internal contradictions', consisted of '*two* wings', one 'sold out' to capital, the other composed of 'revolutionary nationalist' elements, petty bourgeois 'gone astray' whom it was absolutely vital to win to the revolution; (b) that 'fascism' in Germany would come from the army and von Seekt, who were not yet in direct collusion with national socialism: von Seekt had in fact suppressed Hitler's putsch in Bavaria. There was as yet no clarification about the 'national-Bolshevist' current in Germany at the time. But the error of the Schlageter line lay elsewhere – to be precise, in the 'social-chauvinist' turn of the KPD, exploiting in a clearly *nationalist* way the agitation against the Versailles Treaty, to win over the 'nationalist petty bourgeois'. The key factor in this is that the chauvinist turn *produced no reaction in the Comintern Plenum*. The view was even expressed that the agitation against the treaty had not been sufficiently exploited. Lenin, of course, had described this treaty as the 'most monstrous act of piracy' in history, but he *never lent his authority* to a social-chauvinist use of the question.
5. A. Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, pp. 192 ff.
6. Badia, op. cit., p. 201.
7. One of the best historical accounts of this period, including the tactics of the Comintern and the KPD, is E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia: The Interregnum 1923–1924*, London, 1969, pp. 208–51. The classic work is still W. Angress, *Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid for Power in Germany 1921–1923*, New York, 1963. The East German SED still maintains today that there was no objectively revolutionary situation in autumn 1923 (*Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, vol. III, 1965).
8. Rosenberg, op. cit, pp. 249–51.
9. op. cit., pp. 297–8 (retranslated).
10. G. Castellan, op. cit., p. 68.
11. G. Badia, op. cit., pp. 249, 268,283; Ossip Flechtheim, *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt, 1969, pp. 258 ff.
12. *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des 12. Parteitages der KPD*, Berlin, 1929, pp. 81, 91, 258.
13. E. Collotti, *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutchslands 1918–1933*, 1961, p. 210. The figures were as follows: 294,000 in 1923; 160,000 in 1926,125,500 in 1929; 176,000 in 1930, 180,000 in 1931; 300,000 in 1932.
14. 'The workers voted SPD … because they accepted that within German capitalism the SPD and the social-democratic unions concerned themselves with the daily interests of the workers. Basically, the communist party voters thought in the same way. Their party had … in recent years become quite prepared for social peace.' A. Rosenberg, *History of the German Republic*, p. 276 (retranslated).
15. Rosenberg, op. cit., p. 276.
16. R. Heberle, op. cit., p. 98 ff.
17. G. Badia, op. cit., p. 289.

18. F. Borkenau, *World Communism. A History of the Communist International*, Michigan, 1962, p. 340. Its anti-communism makes this a *very suspect* work, but the information is corroborated by F. Neumann, *European Trade Unionism and Politics*, 1936, pp. 28 ff.

19. See K. H. Tjaden, *Struktur und Funktion der KPD* (0). *Eine Organisations-soziologische Untersuchung des 'Rechts' Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik*, 1964.

20. Flechtheim, *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, pp. 321 ff.; H. Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus*, 1970.

21. M. Duverger, *Political Parties*, pp. 98 and 154.

22. G. Castellan, op. cit., pp. 88–9. Until about 1930, however, the SPD also recruited among salaried employees (petty bourgeoisie): the percentage of petty bourgeois *members* was 25% (R. Michels, *Political Parties*, 1966, reprint, p. 255). As for the class composition of the social-democratic *voters*, in 1930 this was 40% petty-bourgeois (S. M. Lipset, Taschismus-Rechts, Links und in der Mitte', in *Soziologie der Demo-kratie*, 1962, p. 154).

23. O. Flechtheim, op. cit., pp. 316 ff.

24. G. Badia, op. cit., p. 300 and vol. II, pp. 11–12.

25. J. Droz, op. cit., pp. 56 ff.; see also the same author's *Le Socialisme démocratique, 1864–1960*, pp. 198 ff.

26. W. Abendroth, *A Short History of the European Working Class*, London, 1972, p. 91.

27. The KPD, however, recruited mainly in small and medium firms: see O. Flechtheim, op. cit., pp. 241 ff. and 312 ff., and H. Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus*, Frankfurt, 1970. Taking into account the information about social democracy, *the 'economistic' aspect of the theory of the 'labour aristocracy'*, which the Comintern translated into a conception of the 'numerical majority' of the most highly skilled and best paid workers following social democracy, had little relevance to the facts. The difference in this respect between social democracy and the communist party throughout the period under consideration is far from being as great or as important as the Comintern made out. But the problem is not resolved by rejecting the conception of the 'numerical majority' while keeping an economistic definition of the labour aristocracy. In other words, it resolves nothing to say vaguely that the labour aristocracy, *defined primarily in economic terms*, played the 'leading role' within social democracy, in other than a numerical sense, but did not do so in the communist party. The 'labour aristocracy' is mainly to be defined in *political* and *ideological* terms. The labour aristocracy is that stratum of the working class through which the influence of the bourgeois ideology and politics is mainly transmitted to the working class. The 'standard of living' created by the distribution of the crumbs of imperialist surplus profits in certain sectors of production has a role to play, but it is not the decisive role, and *does not coincide* with these divisions within the working class. Therefore: (a) The labour aristocracy should include 'bureaucracies' in trade union and political organizations (local government, etc.), (b) Skilled, 'well-paid' workers with a revolutionary class consciousness can evidently not be considered a part of the 'labour aristocracy'.

28. Dimitrov, op. cit., p. 570.

29. On 25 April 1932, the KPD and RGO called for a *joint struggle* with the SPD and social-democratic unions, for the first time since 1928, and with contact at the upper levels. But the attacks on 'social fascism' were taken up harder than ever (see *Die Internationale*, vol. XV, p. 346, for the call). To show the effects of the line, in 1932 the communist group in the Baden regional parliament decided to introduce a bill to ban the Iron Front and the Reichsbanner, though the party leadership immediately condemned this (*Die Internationale*, vol. XV, 1932, p. 247).

30. Thälmann, at the Twelfth Congress of the KPD in Wedding (1929), posed the problem as follows: 'Is a correct policy all we need to carry out our present tasks? No! We also need a better organizational system.' This was the RGO and, as was to be expected, the resolution of the KPD Central Committee in January 1931 said: 'The most important link in the proletarian revolution is undoubtedly the organization … of the *economic struggles* of the working class.' (*Die Internationale*, vol. XIV, p. 57.) As for the other mass organizations, the KPD basically had only the two organizations of mutual aid, *International Red Aid* and *International Workers' Aid*.

31. Closing speech to the Twelfth Plenum, September 1032.

32. See the detailed account in E. Collotti, op. cit., pp. 146 ff.; H. Weber, op. cit.

33. The first revocation of this slogan came in a resolution of the KPD political bureau on 7 July 1930. The official justification for this was the need to refrain from 'individual terrorism', and carry out a 'militant defensive political struggle'. But when it came to an effective struggle against fascism, the KPD did not hesitate even to renege on the 'offensive' struggle which it constantly advocated on other fronts. The withdrawal of the slogan was sealed by a resolution of the KPD Central Committee in November 1931. In October 1932, at the KPD's Third Conference (*Die Internationale*, vol. XV, pp. 386 ff.), the 'Neumann group' was sharply criticized for upholding this slogan (see also D. Desanti, op. cit., p. 175). As a result, Neumann was sent to Nazi meetings to announce his retraction. To show how far the party had come, at the time of the 'left' faction of Fischer and Marlow, in 1924, the KPD had held firmly that 'fascism must be fought by the methods and techniques of revolutionary communism' (Frankfurt Congress theses).

34. See especially *Die Internationale*, vol. XV, 1932, where Thälmann constantly counterposes 'individual terror' and 'electoral success'.

35. Manuilsky's speech in *Der Faschismus in Deutschland*, op. cit., p. 57.

36. All this does not mean that the party, which was expecting revolution, did not prepare the military side of the insurrection *in its own way*. During 1932, illegal pamphlets and books on the 'art of insurrection' abounded. Erich Wollenberg, the Comintern military expert, returned to Germany. But in the general context of the KPD line, as Flechtheim observes, all this seemed '*dillettantisch*' (Flechtheim, op. cit., p. 279).

37. S. Schwab, in *Die Internationale*, no. 4, 1932.

38. K. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, pp. 200 ff.

39. Guérin, op. cit., p. 67.

40. Bracher, op. cit., also Rosenberg, 'Der Faschismus als Massenbewegung', op. cit, pp. 131 ff.

41. S. M. Lipset, 'Elections, an expression of democratic class struggle', in Lipset and Bendix, *Class, Status and Power*, New York 1967, p. 427.

42. Bracher, op. cit.; A. Rosenberg, op. cit. On the general social and political repercussions of unemployment, see R. Ledrut, *Sociologie de chômage*, Paris 1966, pp. 417 ff.

43. Bracher, op. cit., pp. 294–5.

44. See also R. Heberle, op. cit., pp. 89 ff. Note that, as thorough studies of German elections from 1930 to 1933 have established, a large part of the national-socialist electorate were *new voters*. The slide of the 'traditional' electorate of the left parties towards national socialism was much less important than was for a long time thought (S. M. Lipset, op. cit., p. 155).

45. A. Rosenberg, op. cit., p. 295; R. Kühnl, op. cit.

46. op. cit, p. 276.

47. *Statistisches Jahrbuch des deutschen Reiches*, 1933–9; C. Bettelheim, op. cit., pp. 209 ff.; S. J. Woolf, op. cit., pp. 119 ff.; G. Castellan, 'Bilan social du III^{e} Reich', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, July-September 1968; and the articles by T. Mason quoted below.

48. Taking *general* statistics for *wages as a whole*, including those of white-collar workers and civil servants, the *average real wage*, on an index of 100 in 1929, was 108 in 1931,104 in 1932,103 in 1933, and fell to 99 in 1936 (G. Castellan, op. cit.). But this does not take into account that the general fall was mainly due to the fall in real wages of non-productive employees, which fell much more than the average. Taking 1936 as 100, S. H. Woolf, op. cit., p. 133, calculates the average real wage for manual workers as 102 in 1928, 88.5 in 1932, 103 in 1937 and 107.5 in 1938.

49. The increased exploitation of industrial workers through *speed-up* should not be ignored either, though this acceleration is countered by spontaneous reactions of the working class such as absenteeism, lower productivity, etc.

50. T. Mason, 'Der Primat der Politik …', op. cit., in *Das Argument*, December 1966, pp. 486 ff.; 'Labour in the Third Reich', *Past and Present*, no. 33, April 1966.

51. F. Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 433.

52. See D. Guérin, op. cit., pp. 187 ff.; K. Bracher, op. cit.

53. On the ideological state apparatuses, see below, pp. 299 ff. In particular, specific parties or unions do not *as such* constitute apparatuses in the strict sense; they are only branches of the political apparatus, of the trade-union apparatus, etc.

54. Op. cit., p. 600. See also Togliatti's excellent analysis in *Lezioni*…, p. 177.

3. Italy

1. A. Tasca, *Naissance du fascisme*, 1969; G. Salvemini, *Scritti sul fascismo*, 1961; E. Santarelli, *Storia del movimento e del regime fascista*, 1967.
2. A. Tasca, op. cit., p. 117.
3. P. Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista italiano*, vol. 1, 'Da Bordiga a Gramsci', 1967, pp. 168 ff.
4. The quotations from Labriola are from his article 'Syndicalisme et socialisme' in *Le mouvement socialiste*, October 1906. See H. Dubief, *Le syndicialisme revolutionnaire*, Paris, 1969.
5. G. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, Glencoe, 1950, pp. 90–1.
6. ibid., pp. 241 ff.
7. I have some hesitation about appearing to dismiss Sorel so readily. Compared with Jaurès's deadening humanism, his thought had some temporary positive effects on the French labour movement, as Gramsci recognized.
8. Paris I, pp. 30 ff.
9. R. Michels, *Political Parties*, op. cit., pp. 255 ff.
10. A. Gramsci, 'Les Origines du cabinet Mussolini' in *Inprekorr*, French edition, 20 November 1922. At that time, however, Gramsci was far too inclined to explain the Socialist Party's 'conciliation' policy by the fact that it had 'two souls', i.e. that it had a high proportion of members of peasant origin. This explanation stems from the fact that at the time Gramsci, like Bordiga, underestimated the revolutionary potential of the poor peasantry (Gramsci's position only changed publicly in 1926, in his report on the Southern question to the Lyons Congress). This was clearly incorrect: the class struggles of the poor peasantry in Italy took particularly acute forms at this time.
11. *Avanti*, 25 June 1920.
12. P. Togliatti, *Le Parti Communiste Italien*, Paris, 1961, p. 44; G. Salvemini, op. cit.
13. A. Tasca, pp. 388 ff.
14. J. Droz, *Le Socialisme démocratique*, op. cit., p. 197.
15. op. cit., p. 197.
16. P. Spriano, op. cit., p. 132.
17. Until 1926, Bordiga was undoubtedly one of the most notable Comintern figures, of quite a different stature to the German 'ultra-lefts' (Maslow, Fischer, Korsch, Rosenberg, etc.).
18. *Partito Comunista d'Italia: Manifesti ed altri documenti politici* (1921), Feltrinelli edition, pp. 46–7.
19. P. Spriano, op. cit., p. 127.
20. ibid., p. 126.
21. A. Gramsci, 'La reazione', in *Avanti*, Piedmont edition, 17 October 1920. This led Trotsky to say in 1932 that none of the Italian communists 'except Gramsci had seen the possibility of a Fascist dictatorship' (quoted by J. Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism*, Stanford, 1969, p. 159). This view of Gramsci was shared by the Comintern, notably by Lenin and Zinoviev (P. Spriano, op. cit., p. 95).
22. *II Soviet*, 15 May 1921.
23. Zinoviev, at the First Plenum, in *Compte Rendu de la Conférence de l'Exécutif élargi de l' I.C.*, February-March 1922, Paris, pp. 159 ff., and at the Fourth Congress, in *Protokoll*…, op. cit., pp. 897 ff.
24. To be more precise, the Leninist term 'mass party' does not refer to the number of its members, in the way Togliatti used the term. But Bordiga went to the other extreme, identifying the notion of 'vanguard' with a 'limited number' of members, the 'initiated sect'.
25. Communique of the PCI Central Committee, 7 August 1921, in *Manifesti ed altri documenti politici*, p. 93.
26. 'Gli Arditi del popolo', *Ordine Nuovo*, 15 July 1921.
27. The strong differences between Gramsci and Bordiga did not come out in Gramsci's *open opposition* to the 'official' PCI line until 1924. Gramsci later explained this by saying that he had not wanted to act as surety for the right-wing opposition to Bordiga.
28. 'Lo strumento del lavoro', *Ordine Nuovo*, 15 July 1921, p. 79.

29. See Gramsci's various articles in *Ordine Nuovo*.

30. The Bordiga texts are reproduced in *Programme communiste*, October-December 1969, no. 46, pp. 5 ff. See also P. Spriano, 'II Dibattito tra "II Soviet" e "L'Ordine Nuovo"', *Rinascita*, no. 1, January 1961.

31. Varga's extremely significant position on this question is worth quoting in full: 'Communists must resolve this task of acting as a revolutionary mass party … Their task is to be a *vanguard* working unceasingly towards the objective of revolution …, but without ever setting themselves apart from the mass of workers and becoming an isolated sect. *They must be mass parties*. This means that they must defend the day-to-day interests of the working masses and of all the exploited, and consistently fight the bourgeoisie as is necessary within capitalism.' (*L'économie de la période du déclin du capitalisme*, Paris, 1927, p. 131.) This was what Varga, and with him, the Comintern, meant by a 'mass party'. The party as vanguard meant the revolution; the party as mass was the trade union!

32. J. Degras, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 145–50.

33. 'Report on factory councils', *Résolutions et décisions du I^{er} Congrès*, Moscow, 1921, Feltrinelli edition, p. 43.

34. Fifth Congress resolution on the trade union question, in H. Weber, op. cit., p. 112.

35. A. Rosenberg, 'Der Faschismus als Massenbewegung', op. cit., p. no; A. Tasca, op. cit., p. 127.

36. K. Bracher, op. cit., pp. 294–6.

37. Istat (ed.), *Sommario di statistiche storiche italiane*, 1948, pp. 39, 65, 106, 159; V. Foa, op. cit., in *Fascismo e antifascismo*, pp. 267 ff.; M. Roncayolo, in *Le Monde et son histoire*, vol. IX, p. 342.

38. C. Vannutelli, 'Occupazione e salari dal 1861 al 1961', in *Economia Italiana dal 1861 al 1961*, 1961, pp. 570 ff.

39. P. Guichonnet, *Mussolini et le fascisme*, 1968, p. 54; C. Vannutelli, op. cit.

Appendix: The USSR and the Comintern

1. I am using such descriptive terms as 'particularly close' on purpose here, but I should point out that they are not primarily intended to denote the organizational ties. The event which affects these organizational ties between the USSR, the Comintern and the national parties is the Fifth Congress of 1924 (The Congress of Bolshevization), whereas the particularly close relation between the USSR and the Comintern which I am referring to here was not established until after 1928. Neither the 'organizational ties' nor even the problem of organization in general are of primary importance.

2. P. Broué, *Le parti bolshevik*, 1963, is a typical example of such an explanation.

3. Those authors who fail to mention the link of the political line explain the strain put on the tie between China and the Comintern/USSR in terms of *difficulties of communication* between the Chinese red bases and the Soviet Union.

4. To mention only the best-known author, I cite Isaac Deutscher, who deals with this question quite correctly: 'Suffice it to say that after the collapse, one of the phrases that were current among the men of the German left was that "without Stalin there would have been no Hitler". The saying should be taken with a grain of salt. Amid the *Katzenjammer* which befell them after 1933, most leaders of the German left were only too eager to explain away their own failure and ascribe it to Stalin's evil influence. Nevertheless, as the inspirer of the Comintern policy, Stalin must be held to bear his share of responsibility for the contribution which that policy unwittingly made to Hitler's triumph.' (*Stalin*, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 401.) What Deutscher fails to explain is the 'root' of these 'errors'.

5. I have only mentioned a few examples so as to avoid discussing the vast literature on this subject. For the case in question (the two turns of 1928), Deutscher points out: 'There was an undeniable contradiction between his two lines of policy, the one he pursued in Russia and the one he inspired in the Comintern' (op. cit., p. 400). Deutscher naturally fails to explain this 'contradiction'.

6. This does not mean that those 'critiques' of concrete aspects of the line made by various opposition elements, including Trotsky, had no class significance: they had, particularly in the differential realization of one and the same basic line that they implied.

7. In particular, the lack of proletarian democracy within the Bolshevik party and the party leadership's conception of politics as a police operation are neither simple errors nor 'first causes'; they are rather the

consequences of the line.

8. Bettelheim's current work on the USSR casts a decisive light on this periodization.

9. In the present book this aspect of the general line – the progressive abandonment of proletarian internationalism – has not been discussed separately. This is because it makes its principal appearance within the Comintern in the theses and concrete policy adopted on the 'national and colonial questions'. These are questions which fall outside the scope of this text.

Part Five: Fascism and the Petty Bourgeoisie

1. The Class Nature of the Petty Bourgeoisie and Petty-bourgeois Ideology

1. *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 57–93. In this book I also tried to show that the determination of social classes even in a 'pure' *mode of production* involves the intervention of the economic, the political and ideology.

2. See above, p. 118.

3. See Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 331–2, vol. II, pp. 133–5 etc.

4. The KPD published figures in *Die Internationale*, 1928, including in the category 'proletariat' 3 million 'lower' white-collar workers, and 1.5 million 'lower' civil servants! (Quoted by W. Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, New York, 1946). This part of the 'proletariat' must have given it a few surprises. The KPD's 'ultra-leftism' evidently did not save it from falling into the trap of the myth of the 'wage-earning class'.

5. According to figures for social mobility by generation in an IN SEE survey carried out in 1964 (*Etudes et Conjunctures*, No. 2, 1967), only 14.9% of the sons of white-collar workers went into the same kind of jobs as their fathers, while 39.7% of the sons of skilled workers did so, the percentage for bourgeois and professional families being higher still. 38% of white-collar workers' sons became manual workers, and 28% went into management or the professions.

6. The 'traditional' petty bourgeoisie, a *transitional* group in the strong sense, is more strongly attracted to *right-wing extremist movements* in 'normal' conjunctures than the new petty bourgeoisie: for example, McCarthyism in the United States and Poujadism in France. (See W. Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society*, 1965, pp. 201 ff.) The political divisions within the petty bourgeoisie are not of course identical with the 'economic' divisions mentioned.

7. While he stressed the fact that fascism represented the interests of big capital, Trotsky still insisted that fascism was 'basically (the) program of petty bourgeois currents. This fact alone, more than anything else, shows of what tremendous – rather, of what decisive – importance *the self-determination of the petty bourgeois masses of the people* is for the whole fate of bourgeois society.' (*The Struggle against Fascism*, op. cit., pp. 280–1.) Gramsci too, while emphasizing that fascism was 'the servant of capital and of the landowners', was *the first* to point out (in 1921) that fascism was at the same time 'the ultimate political incarnation of the petty bourgeoisie.'

8. As early as the discussion on fascism at the Plenum of the Comintern Executive in June 1923, the emphasis was laid on the relationship of fascism to the petty bourgeoisie, but the latter was considered a mere 'appendage' of big capital. The Plenum adopted a resolution by the KPD published in *Die Rote Fahne* on 18 May 1923, describing fascism as divided between two wings: one 'sold out to capital', the others were 'misled petty-bourgeois nationalists'. Radek and Clara Zetkin made similar analyses at the time. Increasingly, however, and especially after the Sixth Congress (1928), the relationship of fascism to the petty bourgeoisie was brought up above all to combat the social-democratic conception of the third force, and amalgamated it with Trotsky's analyses. Wilhelm Pieck, at the Thirteenth Plenum of the Comintern, said: '"Left" Austrian social democracy … has produced the theory of the fascist dictatorship as the "dictatorship of the petty bourgeoisie". Trotsky has called it petty bourgeois counter-revolution.' (Report quoted in *Der Faschismus in Deutschland*, op. cit.). Moreover, this position did not change with the Seventh Congress, when the emphasis was placed on the 'exclusive' relationship of fascism to the 'most reactionary' monopoly capital, etc. See for example Togliatti's own position in *Lezioni sul fascismo*, written in 1934 – though in his report on fascism to the Fourth Congress, toned down by Bordiga, he had accepted

Gramsci's position.

2. General Propositions

1. In this step, the *tendency* to *relative pauperization* of commercial wages indicated by Marx was in fact realized: 'The commercial worker, in the strict sense of the term, belongs to the better-paid class of wage-workers – to those whose labour is classed as skilled and stands above average labour. Yet the wage tends to fall, even in relation to average labour, with the advance of the capitalist mode of production. This is due partly to the division of labour in the office … [It is due] secondly, because the necessary training, knowledge of commercial practices, etc., is more and more rapidly, easily, universally and cheaply reproduced with the progress of science and public education the more the capitalist mode of production directs teaching methods, etc. towards practical purposes… Moreover, this increases supply, and hence competition. With few exceptions, the labour-power of these people is therefore devalued with the progress of capitalist production.' (*Capital*, vol. III, p. 295.) Anyway, in the case of the rise of fascism, the most important aspect of the question is not so much the 'economic' process itself, but its *ideological* repercussions, given the specific ideology of the petty bourgeoisie. During the rise of fascism, the petty bourgeoisie is frustrated in its hope of passing to the status of the bourgeoisie: and much more so than in 'normal' periods. On this, see H. Lasswell, in the article quoted in note 2 below.
2. See T. Geiger, 'Die soziale Schichtung des deutschen Volkes' in *Arbeiten zur Soziologie*, 1962, p. 335; R. Bendix and S. M. Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status and Power*, 1956, pp. 605 ff.; S.M.Lipset, *Der Faschismus…*, op. cit.; R. Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*, 1961, pp. 260 ff.; W. Mills, *Power, Politics and People*, for his account of Neumann's *Behemoth: Structure and Practice of National Socialism;* H. Lasswell, 'Psychology of Hitlerism', *Political Quarterly*, No. 4, 1933, reproduced in *The Analysis of Political Behaviour*, 1947, pp. 235 ff.; W. Reich, op. cit.
3. Togliatti pointed out: 'Fascist ideology contains a number of heterogeneous elements … It acts to weld together the different forces struggling to establish a dictatorship over the mass of the working people. Fascist ideology is an instrument forged to keep these elements together … I would warn you against the tendency to see fascist ideology as something solid, complete and homogeneous.' (*Lezioni…*, op. cit., p. 15.) It is no accident that there are no authentic works of fascist political ideology. The bibliography on 'fascist ideology' is very extensive, but it is necessary to mention the writings of the Frankfurt School between 1930 and 1939, whatever doubts one may have about them in other respects. In particular, H. Marcuse, 'The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State' and 'The Affirmative Character of Culture' in *Negations* (London, 1968); M. Horkheimer, *Die Juden und Europa*, and *Egoismus und Freiheitsbewegung*; T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (London, 1974), etc. Mannheim's analyses are also not without interest.
4. See *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 210 ff.
5. The political role of religion for the urban petty bourgeoisie is much less important that it was held to be by W. Reich (op. cit., pp. 97 ff.). S. M. Lipset shows this quite clearly in R. Bendix and S. M. Lipset, op. cit., p. 423.
6. There are of course attempts to explain fascism by reference to 'bureaucracy': for example, B. Rizzi, *La bureaucratisation du monde*, Paris, 1939.

3. Germany

1. G. Castellan, op. cit, p. 146.
2. ibid., pp. 178–9.
3. ibid., p. 150.
4. *Communist Manifesto*, Progress Publishers, p. 92.
5. F. Engels, *Germany, Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, Chicago, 1967, p. 128.
6. See K. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 295.
7. H. Gerth, 'The Nazi Party: its Leadership and Composition', in *Reader in Bureaucracy*, R. Merton (ed.), 1952, pp. 100 ff.
8. R. Heberle, op. cit., pp. 112 ff.; K. Bracher, *Die Auflösung*, op. cit., pp. 94 seq.

9. M. Duverger, op. cit., pp. 46 ff.; 172 ff.; 271 ff.
10. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 195. There is a very interesting point observed by Geiger (*Die soziale Schichtung*, p. 353): because of their situation the white-collar workers and civil servants, the 'new' petty bourgeoisie, are drawn more into *union* organizations than the 'traditional' petty bourgeoisie, and so a dilemma soon arose for the national socialist party: should it orient itself towards 'trade-union representation of interests', or 'corporate representation by profession'? The second solution prevailed, producing friction between the party and the DHV.
11. D. Guérin, op. cit., pp. 253 ff.
12. C. Bettelheim, op. cit., pp. 152 ff., 114 ff.
13. K. Bracher, op. cit., p. 435.

4. Italy

1. A. Tasca, op. cit, p. 187; A. Rosenberg, *Der Faschismus*, p. 111.
2. H. Lasswell, *The Analysis of Political Behaviour*, 1947, p. 161.
3. E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, pp. 287 ff.
4. R. Romeo, *Breve Storia delta grande industria italiana*, p. 188.
5. *Sommario di statistiche*; C. Vannutelli, article quoted in *L'Economia italiana dal 1861 al 1961*, pp. 583 and 588–9.
6. P. Guichonnet, *Mussolini et le fascisme*, 1968, p. 67.

Part Six: Fascism and the Countryside

1. Even D. Guérin, op. cit., p. 57, says, 'It is a well-known fact that the peasantry, although it is a homogeneous class with identical interests …'

1. Classes in the Countryside

2. None the less, these indices do not all have the same importance: *capital investment per hectare* is by far the most important, because it is *directly* related to the development of capitalism in agriculture.
3. See above, p. 118.
4. For the steps in the 'acquisition of knowledge' resulting in a 'concrete analysis of concrete situations', see *Political Power and Social Classes*, p. 18, n. 6. For Lenin's 'two roads', see 'The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx"' (*Collected Works*, vol. 5) and 'The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the first Russian Revolution, 1905 to 1907' (*Collected Works*, vol. 13).
5. One of the best Marxists works on this subject is A. Stinchombe, 'Agricultural Enterprise and Rural Class Relations', in S. M. Lipset and R. Bendix, op. cit., pp. 182 ff.
6. Lenin, 'Preliminary Draft Theses on the Agrarian Question', *Collected Works*, vol. 31.
7. K. Kautsky, *La Question Agraire*, pp. 127, 297.
8. Kautsky quite clearly posed the problem of distinguishing *juridical ownership* and *economic ownership*: 'In this case exploitation and ownership do not coincide …' (ibid., pp. 227–8), where he shows the effects of this situation on *rent*.
9. The division I suggest there is based, if only in essentials, on Lenin's remarks about the advanced capitalist countries in 'Preliminary Draft Theses …'

2. General Propositions

1. This is fortified by *political effects*: the popular classes in the countryside characteristically tend to delegate their political functions to the 'rural bourgeoisie'.
2. See in particular C. Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism*, 1954, pp. 47 ff.; W. Korn-hauser, op. cit., pp. 210 ff., etc.
3. *L'Economie allemande sous le nazisme*, p. 36.
4. K. Kautsky, op. cit., pp. 216 ff., 242 ff.

3. Germany

1. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, in particular, mechanization and the use of fertilizers advanced considerably (K. Kautsky, op. cit.).
2. M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1924, pp. 470 ff.
3. G. Castellan, op. cit., pp. 148 ff.
4. ibid., p. 166.
5. K. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 197.
6. ibid., pp. 198–9.
7. ibid., p. 198.
8. Quoted by W. Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, op. cit., pp. 41–2.
9. K. Bracher, op. cit., pp. 198, 295.
10. On what follows, see: R. Heberle, *Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology*, 1951, pp. 226 ff.; C. Loomis and A. Beagle, 'The Spread of German Nazism in Rural Areas', *American Sociological Review*, December 1946, pp. 724 ff.
11. M. Roncayolo, op. cit, p. 361.
12. The percentage of *Erbhöfe* by size are also interesting: in 1939, 13.9% of *Erbhöfe* were between 10 and 15 hectares; 13.2% were 15–20 hectares; 10–9% were 20–25 ha.; 32% were 25–50 ha.; 12.7% were 50–75 ha. (F. Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 395; he also points out that the average size of *Erbhöfe*, which was 12.3 ha. in 1933, rose to 22.5 ha. in 1939.)

4. Italy

1. On what follows, see: *Sommario di statistiche* …; S. B. Clough, op. cit.; R. Romeo, op. cit.; M. Roncayolo's article on Italy in *Geographie universelle;* A. Tasca, G. Salve-mini, L. Salvatorelli, etc.
2. See L. Luzzatto, *Elezioni politiche e leggi elettorali in Italia*, 1958, passim. It is a significant fact that fascism put forward for election in the South not fascist cadres, but basically 'liberal' politicians who had been won over to fascism, such as Salandra, Orlando, etc. As Santarelli points out (op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 363 ff.), this was the main reason for the electoral success of fascism in the South.
3. This comparison between the German and Italian cases shows once more that *capitalism can penetrate agriculture by many roads*: this is due mainly to the specific *political and ideological* conditions of each social formation. It does not negate Lenin's schema of the 'two roads' ('American' and 'Prussian'); Lenin only elucidated the *general features* of the historical *tendency* to take these 'two roads'.
4. Lenin, 'New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture', *Collected Works*, vol. 22.
5. This is particularly true of E. Serreni, 'La Politica agraria del regime fascista', in *Fascismo e Antifascismo*, pp. 296 ff.

Part Seven: The Fascist State

1. The State Apparatus and the Ideological Apparatuses

1. Apart from the *Ordine Nuovo* texts, see *Passato e presente*, pp. 92 ff.; *The Modern Prince*, passim; *Il materialismo storico*, pp. 204, 231, 240 ff. etc.
2. I refer to a recent essay by L. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', now in *Lenin and Philosophy*, London, 1971. I think this text suffers to some extent from both abstractedness and formalism: it does not give the class struggle the place it deserves. In my view, there are some mistakes in this article which should be taken up.
3. I say apparatuses or institutions, but from now on I shall only use the term 'apparatus'. In *Political Power and Social Classes* I defined an institution as a 'system of norms or rules which is socially sanctioned', and distinguished it from the structure (p. 115, n. 24); I wished explicitly to attack the 'institutionalist' problematic. The same definition and distinction are valid for the 'apparatuses' (a term I used synonymously with 'institution'). I intended to emphasize the intervention of both ideology (norms

and rules) and political repression (social sanctioning) in the workings of these institutions or apparatuses. (I think that the term 'institution' can therefore be abandoned, since at least for the moment, I do not see what it can add to the concept of apparatus.) See also D. Vidal, 'Institutions ou rapports sociaux', *Atelier*, no. 3; C. Raguin, 'Le Droit naissant et les luttes du pouvoir', *Sociologie du travail*, no. 1, 1970; M. Castells, *Vers une théorie sociologique de la planification urbaine*, ibid., no. 4, 1969. An important analysis is now to be found in Bourdieu and Passeron, *La Reproduction*.

4. The previous formulations can now be made more precise. Strictly speaking, a party, a union, or a school are not in themselves apparatuses, but branches of the political, trade-union or educational apparatus, etc.

5. *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 50 ff. Althusser badly under-estimates the economic role of the State apparatuses, to the extent of completely neglecting it theoretically. He distinguishes (in a questionable manner), (a) reproduction of the means of production (in which he includes the circulation of capital and the realization of surplus value); (b) reproduction of labour-power; (c) reproduction of the 'relations of production', in the sense of reproduction of the social conditions of production. This last field seems to Althusser to be the only one in which the State apparatuses intervene: 'The role of the repressive state apparatus … consists essentially in securing by force (or otherwise) the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production … and it is here that the role of the ruling ideology is heavily concentrated'. (*Lenin and Philosophy*, p. 142.) Taking this to its logical conclusion, the State would have only a repressive and an ideological role! The only exception Althusser mentions is education, and only because of its role in the reproduction of labour-power (case (b) above). But even in the case of the reproduction of labour-power, Althusser contradicts himself when he talks about the family: 'The family obviously has other "functions" than that of an ISA [ideological state apparatus]. It intervenes in the reproduction of labour-power …' (ibid., p. 136, n. 8). It need scarcely be pointed out that with a concept of State = ideology + repression, Lenin's analysis of monopoly capitalism and imperialism could never be understood.

6. I would point out here that Althusser (op. cit., pp. 136–7) loses his way by applying the concept of apparatus only to the State apparatuses and not to the 'units of production'. Bettelheim is quite right to use the term 'economic apparatus'. P. Sweezy and C. Bettelheim, *On the Transition to Socialism*, New York and London, 1971, p. 43). Bettelheim does not speak of ideological *State* apparatuses, but just of ideological apparatuses. In my view, however, the term 'ideological *State* apparatus' is the more necessary when the term 'apparatus' is also used for the economic apparatus. Otherwise the distinction between ideological apparatus and economic apparatus could become blurred, and thereby the distinction between 'superstructure' and 'base' also.

7. See *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 131 ff.

8. In fact while these apparatuses are one of the *social forms of existence* of ideology, ideology itself is the *condition of existence* of these apparatuses. Ideology as the condition of existence of ideological apparatuses may be understood as 'spontaneous ideology': for the ruling class in the capitalist mode of production, this is the ideology related to 'commodity fetishism'. On the relationship between 'ideologies' and 'institutions', see also M. Verret's remarks: 'Superstructures are above all political, legal, etc., *institutions*, to which, as Marx often says, forms of social consciousness correspond. Correspondence does not mean identity. It is not certain that the historical destiny of forms of social consciousness automatically follows that of the superstructures …' (*Théorie et politique*, 1967, p. 78).

9. Here we come to what I see as the most questionable aspect of Althusser's proposed interpretation of the ideological State apparatuses. It is true that he mentions their 'relative autonomy', but he does so in a descriptive way. On the other hand (pp. 141 ff.) he stressed their 'unity', by the following reasoning: (a) Their 'unity' is due to the ruling ideology; (b) the ruling ideology is 'the ideology of the ruling class, which holds State power' (p. 142). As a result, the 'unity' of the ideological apparatuses is abstractedly reduced, through 'ideology' alone, to the unity of *State power*. But this analysis is abstract and formal, because it does not concretely take the *class struggle* into account: (a) It does not take into consideration the fact that several contradictory and antagonistic class ideologies exist in a social formation; it seems as if when Althusser speaks of the 'ruling ideology' as the 'unity' of the ideological apparatuses, he in this case means by 'ruling ideology' what he describes as 'the mechanism of ideology in general' (pp. 150 ff.). (b) It does

not take into consideration the dislocations of State power. The Cultural Revolution in China essentially demonstrates *what Lenin so clearly foresaw: that the power relations in the ideological State apparatuses do not depend directly on the class nature of State power, and are not exclusively determined by it*. In particular, the transformation of these apparatuses can only be the result of a 'revolutionizing' practice direcdy affecting them. State power (i.e. its class nature) imposes limitations (which vary with the class or classes in power) on the ideological State apparatuses. These limitations, which delimit the 'unity' of the ideological apparatuses, are by no means the exclusive effect of the 'ruling ideology', but of State power itself within the (repressive) State apparatus. *I think it necessary to stress that if these points are not made quite clear, we risk falling into the 'official' interpretation of Gramsci favoured by contemporary reformism*.

10. These apparatuses can even fulfil these two roles consecutively for one and the same class. It is now well known that in a socialist revolution, when the bourgeoisie is excluded from the repressive State apparatus, it can take refuge in the ideological apparatuses, preserved in their bourgeois form, and use them as weapons to take back State power.

2. The Exceptional State and the Fascist State: Type of State, Form of State and Form of Regime

1. Above, pp. 57 ff.
2. On what follows, see *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 142 ff., 153 ff. and 30825.

3. General Propositions on the Exceptional State

1. I shall not examine this question in detail here, as Bettelheim (op. cit.) discusses it exhaustively.
2. This is particularly the case with H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*; W. Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society*; C. Friedrich's collection, *Totalitarianism*, etc.
3. There is an apparendy paradoxical feature here. The exceptional State is characterized both by *increased* autonomy from the hegemonic class or fraction, and by a limitation of the relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses. The paradox was noted by Marx in his work on Bonapartism: the greater the relative autonomy of the State from the hegemonic class or class fraction, the stronger is its internal 'centralization'. But the paradox is only superficial: such relative autonomy from the hegemonic class or fraction is necessary precisely so that the State can establish its hegemony, by reorganizing and consolidating the power bloc. In this conjuncture of crisis, this implies the restriction and radical control of the power 'game' which was previously sanctioned by the relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses. The class contradictions within the exceptional State, contradictions which it is in fact based on, take different forms.
4. Particular care should be taken with the use of the term 'intellectuals', given the ideological connotations of its common use. This is why I prefer to use the more limited term of 'ideological spokesmen'.
5. When the Comintern referred to *State apparatuses* in the case of fascism, it generally only meant increased 'physical repression' or 'open terrorism' (Dimitrov). Fascism is therefore primarily defined, at the level of the apparatuses, in a *negative* way: *things have changed*, because now there is more repression. Dimitrov quotes Stalin, for whom 'the bourgeoisie is no longer in a condition to exercise power by the old parliamentary means or by the methods of bourgeois democracy, and is therefore obliged to resort to terrorist methods of government'. The Comintern certainly insisted continually on the *ideological role* of fascism. Clara Zetkin pointed out that only social democrats define fascism as 'violence' alone. It is however very typical that even where the Comintern emphasized the ideological role of fascism, *it rarely accompanied its analysis of 'fascist ideology' with a concrete study of the ideological apparatus*. In the official documents at least there are at best a few scattered remarks, mainly about the role of the Church. The only point noted is the 'attitude' of the 'members' of these apparatuses towards fascism.
6. F. Neumann, 'Der Funktionswandel des Gesetzes im Recht der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft', reproduced in *Demokratischer und autoritärer Staat*, 1967, pp. 31 ff.; H. Marcuse, 'The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State', reproduced in *Negations*, London, 1968.
7. When we say that 'bourgeois' political parties have a mainly ideological role, this does not mean that they do not also have an *organizational* role among the classes and fractions they represent, even if this is

generally secondary. These parties do not organize the classes and fractions they represent in a *similar* way to the workers' parties (first socialist, then communist). It is the repressive State apparatus itself – (the army, administration, government, etc.) as well as ideological State apparatuses, other than the political parties, that generally function as 'political organizers' for the power bloc. See below, n. 9.

8. In particular R. Aron, *Democratic et totalitarisme*.

9. The positions of the Seventh Comintern Congress and Dimitrov himself on 'political parties' and 'bourgeois parties' in particular are of interest here. Dimitrov, precisely because he did not see the parties as ideological State apparatuses, both overestimated their 'organizational' role for the fractions of the bourgeoisie, and thought that they were the only network within which power could circulate among the fractions. This comes out in his analysis of the 'contradictions of fascism': 'Fascism undertakes to overcome the differences and antagonisms within the bourgeois camp, but it makes these antagonisms even more acute. Fascism tries to establish its political monopoly by violendy destroying other political parties. But … the party of the fascists cannot set itself the aim of abolishing classes and class contradictions. It puts an end to the legal existence of bourgeois parties. But a number of them continue to maintain an illegal existence … the political monopoly of capitalism is bound to explode.' (op. cit., pp. 576–7.) Clearly, for Dimitrov the elimination of the 'bourgeois parties' meant that all fractions of the bourgeoisie other than 'the most nationalist and reactionary' big capital (the fascist party) were *excluded* from power, since they were seen as unable to participate in the exercise of power except through their 'parties', the only way in which they could possibly organize. Hence the reasoning: (a) the elimination of other bourgeois parties by fascism means the exclusion of other fractions of the bourgeoisie from State power; (b) this situation could not last long because of its 'internal contradictions'. The International's conception of non-proletarian parties had deep roots. It could be argued that the Comintern had a wrong and mechanistic understanding of Lenin's theory of the working-class party, unwarrantedly applying it to other social forces. *It could not see that these other social forces could also be organized through other State apparatuses*. Did the Bolshevik party itself not tend to believe that the banning of other political parties in the USSR excluded the possibility of the bourgeoisie reorganizing itself as a social force?

10. For a more detailed analysis see *Political Power and Social Classes*, pp. 325 ff.

4. General Propositions on the Fascist State as a Form of Exceptional Regime

1. The role of the 'political police' cannot be understood without analysing the reorganization of the whole State system and the displacement of functions within it. The Comintern did not always pay attention to this factor, generally limiting itself to analysing the role of the *army*, and so often confusing military dictatorship and fascism. The same is true of Trotsky: 'To be sure, fascism, as the Italian example shows, leads in the end to a military-bureaucratic dictatorship of the Bonapartist type.' (*The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, New York, 1971, p. 278.) *The only exception was Gramsci*, who, with his concept of the ideological State apparatus, was able to point to the problem: 'In the period up to Napoleon III, the regular military forces or soldiers of the line were a decisive element in the advent of Caesarism, and this came about through quite precise coups d'état, through military actions, etc. Modern political technique became totally transformed … after the expansion of parliamentarism and of the associative systems of union and party, and the growth in the formation of vast State and "private" bureaucracies … and after the transformations which took place in the organization of the forces of order in the wide sense – i.e. not only the public service designed for the repression of crime, but the totality of forces organized by the State and by private individuals to safeguard the political and economic domination of the ruling classes. In this sense, entire "political" parties and other organizations – economic or otherwise – must be considered as organs of political order, of an investigational and preventive character.' (*Prison Notebooks*, London, 1971, pp. 220–1.)

2. In particular this is the position of A. Tasca, op. cit., p. 355.

3. E.g. A. Rosenberg, *Der Faschismus* …, p. 89.

5. Germany

1. It should however be pointed out that after the failure of the Kapp putsch, and with von Seekt's

succession to power, there was a certain *rapprochement* between the leading army circles and big capital.

2. H. Schorn, *Der Richter im Dritten Reich*, 1959; F. Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 271.

3. R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, pp. 116 ff.

4. K. Bracher, op. cit., pp. 271–2, 289 ff.

5. For example, in the 'Anordnung über die Verwaltungsführung in den Land-kreisen', 1939, it is specified that the responsibility for administrative duties falls on the *Landrat*, the hierarchy of the party having no right to interfere. This is pointed out by F. Neumann: the State bureaucracy, he says, had become the most important body for policy making, especially in economics, finance, and social and agricultural policy (*Behemoth*, pp. 72 and 381).

6. T. Vogelsang, *Reichswehr, Staat und NSDAP*, 1962.

7. K. Bracher, op. cit., pp. 436 ff.

8. E. Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, London, 1950, pp. 258 ff.

9. H. Gerth, in R. Merton (ed.), *Reader in Bureaucracy*, pp. 100 ff.; D. Lerner, *The Nazi Elite;* Neussüss-Hunkel, *Die SS*, 1956.

10. I. Staff, *justiz im Dritten Reich*, 1964.

11. F. Neumann, *Behemoth*, pp. 250 ff.

12. These conceptions of the Third Reich were theorized by Frank, lawyer and notorious hangman of Poland, and by C. Schmitt, the jurist.

13. K. Bracher, op. cit., pp. 429 ff.; F. Neumann, op. cit., p. 74.

14. *The Dual State*, 1941.

15. E.g. H. Mommsen, *Beamtentum im III. Reich*, 1966.

16. This is done for example by D. Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution*, 1966.

17. Z. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 1964.

18. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, pp. 33 ff., 8 ff. See also the collective work, *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, 1933, especially the contributions by E. Fromm, M. Horkheimer and H. Marcuse.

19. R. Eiler, *National-sozialistische Schulpolitik*, 1963; M. H. Böhm, *Die deutsche Universitat im Dritten Reich*, 1966.

20. K. Bracher, op. cit., pp. 470 ff.

6. Italy

1. A. Tasca, op. cit., pp. 153 ff.

2. ibid., pp. 142 ff.

3. G. Salvemini, *Le Origini del fascimo in Italia*, pp. 322 ff.

4. Paris II, p. 326.

5. L. Salvatorelli and G. Mira, *Storia d'Italia nel periodo fascista*, 1964, pp. 367, 390; A. Aquarone, *L'Organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, 1966, pp. 120 ff.

6. L. Salvatorelli, op. cit., pp. 420 and 430 ff.; A. Aquarone, loc. cit.

7. Brady, *Business as a System of Power*, 1942, p. 81.

8. See M. Prelot, *L'Empire fasciste: les tendances et les institutions de la dictature et du corporatisme italiens*, 1936.

9. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1968, p. 308.

10. op. cit., p. 398.

11. L. Salvatorelli, op. cit., pp. 445 ff.

Conclusion

In this book I have attempted to give an explanation of the political phenomenon of fascism, and to distinguish its basic characteristics, having defined it as a specific form of regime within the exceptional capitalist State form. I have also outlined the theory of this form of State.

To avoid an abstract typology, I have had to bypass the other forms of exceptional regime, such as Bonapartism and the various kinds of military dictatorship, which correspond to different kinds of political crisis. The general characteristics of the political crisis and the exceptional State which have been revealed by the analysis of fascism and the specific kind of crisis to which it corresponds, may none the less be of use in the analysis of other kinds of crisis and exceptional regime.

I must however point out that such crises and exceptional regimes as have been established in theory often appear, in *reality*, in *combined* forms. These regimes generally have features stemming from various kinds of crisis and exceptional regime, although they are dominated by a single form. To some extent this is even true of German and Italian fascism, though I have used these here only to illustrate fascism as a general type, because the basic characteristics of fascism are very clear in these two cases, and in fact overwhelmingly dominant. The case of Spain, for example, differs in that it is a concrete form combining fascism and military dictatorship, the latter being dominant.

The combination of forms of exceptional regime in a particular case further depends on the historical step in which it is situated. A particular case of exceptional regime can also evolve during its historical course, so that the dominant features are transformed, and the dominance of one form of regime is replaced by another.

I indicated in the Introduction that this study of fascism and the exceptional State was undertaken because the question of fascism is important today. But it would be wrong to think that the possibility of other exceptional regimes has disappeared. Fascism is only one side of the danger: Bonapartism and military dictatorship still have their opportunities. There are also particular combined forms of exceptional regime which may appear in specific conjunctures.

It is possible for fascism itself to recur, but of course it would not necessarily arise or come to power in the same forms as in the past. History never repeats itself exactly. A given form of exceptional regime and a given type of political crisis have different features according to the historical periods in which they appear.

Marx, following Hegel, said that history can sometimes repeat itself: but what the first time was tragedy, is the second time farce. The formulation is striking, but it is true in one sense only: there are such things as black comedies. Louis Bonaparte was only funny from a particular point of view. And there are funny men in history who only kill others.

There is still the fundamental problem whether today, in any of the imperialist countries, fascism is about to rise again, or has already begun to do so. It is a question I have not been able to deal with in the course of this book, because it would require a concrete analysis of present conjunctures. But taking into account all that is being written on the subject today, it becomes plain that it is not possible to give an answer without knowing what fascism and the exceptional State really are: and this has been the aim of my book.

I should like to point out some pitfalls to be avoided in any attempt to reply to this question:

1. It is quite true that the spectre of fascism or dictatorship is often raised, and not only by the self-confessed Right, in order to hold back the revolutionary fervour of the working class and the masses. This fascist bogey takes many familiar forms, and it can make fascism into a pure justification, even for the Left. Sometimes, however, the phenomenon can have another side. How many sincere militants are there who have experienced and fought against the nightmare of fascism, and become so obsessed by it that their automatic reflex is to see the spectre on every side?

2. It is none the less true, however little the lessons of history have been learned, that fascism is a problem today, and it must be correctly dealt with. If history has a meaning, it is as a lesson for the present. To be wrong now, and to fail to see the reality of a future rise of fascism, would not be excusable,

however much it might have been so in the past. Fascism, like other exceptional regimes, is not a ‘disease’ or an ‘accident’; it is not something that only happens to other people.

3. The question of the eventual reappearance of fascism is complicated by the fact that in the present step of imperialism, a series of transformations is taking place in the whole State institutional systems of the imperialist countries. The difficulty is to avoid superficial analogies and not to confuse this with a possible rise of fascism. (This problem existed in the inter-war period with the relationship between the transformation of the State into the interventionist State, and the rise of fascism leading to the fascist State.) On the other hand, the current process of transformation should not hide from us the real advance of fascism which could take place.

4. I should give one last warning because of the current importance of the last-mentioned aspect. This book has shown that increased repression alone is not enough to define the rise of fascism. According to the forms it takes, however, and in relation to the whole range of characteristics in which it is situated, such increased repression can be significant.

Given the aim of this book, I prefer to give this conclusion a date.

Parts, July 1970

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