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**THE CLASS CHARACTER of the
HUNGARIAN UPRISING**

by V. Grey

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THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE HUNGARIAN UPRISING

By V. Grey

On October 23 the students and workers of Budapest demonstrated for a liberalization of the totalitarian Stalinist regime. Contrary to their own desires, the demonstration was swiftly converted into a full-scale, nation-wide counter-revolution throughout Hungary. This unexpected result did not come about by the evil machinations of fascists or "Horthy-ites" or other "outsiders". It was due to the relation of class forces inside and outside Hungary. It was due to the fact that there was no Marxist leadership (party) to direct the struggle. It was due to the universal reaction against the crimes of Stalinism, the brutal slaughter of the unarmed demonstrators being one of the worst. It was due to Stalinism unwittingly welding the opponents and supporters of communism into a common national bloc against both Stalinism and communism.

Hungary had been under a deformed workers' regime for nine years, and under a Red Army occupation for nearly twelve. The regime had not won even a good-sized minority of the population to Stalinism, let alone communism. The beginning of the occupation wasn't too helpful. There had been a two-month seige of Budapest, and relentless house-to-house fighting by the Red Army in 1945 when Hungary fought under the Nazis. Thousands were killed. Churches, public buildings, bridges, etc. were destroyed. Common people lost their homes. Farmers lost their stock, their horses, their crops. There was a sky-rocketing impoverishing inflation. There was the misery, the innumerable cases of individual injustice that accompany any military conquest -- progressive or otherwise. And there was a period of systematic looting of goods and machinery which were taken to the Soviet Union.

Under the new regime, even the most progressive things were done with intolerable bureaucratic methods. The native bureaucracy was a parasitic incubus upon the workers from the start. And the Moscow bureaucracy was a super-parasitic incubus upon the whole country, selling goods to Hungary at outrageously high prices, and buying from Hungary at extremely low prices. On top of all this, the Red Army stayed in occupation, eating up a large portion of Hungarian products.

The Russian occupation and the Russian influence seemed to be the source of all Hungary's troubles. In October 1956 the whole population rose up and tried to get the Red Army out. The whole nation united in its aim to remove the Red Army, and they began to establish "democracy". It would be very fine if this "democracy" was, or could have been, the workers democracy that Trotskyists have in mind when they criticize the Stalinist bureaucracy. But it wasn't. It was bourgeois democracy. Nobody called it that. But they didn't have to.

The working class had no conscious desire for capitalism of course. The only consciousness was for "freedom". But freedom from what? -- Freedom to do what? They wanted freedom from bureaucratic despotism. But their first duty was to defend their own dictatorship from the amorphous democratic majority that was taking the power away from them under Nagy. Their first duty was to keep the proletarian dictatorship. Apparently nobody understood this.

For example: Nationalized economy in Hungary falls with the fall of the Soviet Union. The workers were for the defense of "their own" plants. But they did not mention the defense of the Soviet Union. The world bourgeoisie has no reservations in supporting such "socialism" as this. -- Nor did the workers seem to think it strange that the world bourgeoisie should help them. They were in fact terribly disappointed that there was no intervention.

Furthermore, the workers' councils never condemned the bourgeois Smallholders Party, but made common cause with its leaders, -- and left it to the Red Army to arrest or shoot them. They never warned against the machinations of Mindszenty, but left it to the Red Army to chase him into the American Legation. They never condemned the United States as the chief supporter of Mindszenty and the Hungarian bourgeoisie -- but depended upon its aid in the struggle. Nor have they yet reviewed these errors and drawn the correct strategic conclusions. Thus the workers were not leading a working class struggle, but fighting somebody else's fight.

Some comrades think the workers were leading the peasantry because the peasants took food to the cities for the workers. This is a misunderstanding. It is probably due to a false analogy with 1917. The alliance of Russian workers and peasants in 1917 was based on their both being opposed to the same class. The landlord class was intermeshed with the bourgeoisie itself. The peasant could not get at his landlord without also fighting the bourgeoisie. And the bourgeoisie was thus the main enemy of both workers and peasants.

In Hungary the peasants are still opposed to the landlords. But the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeois democratic Smallholders (who got 57 per cent of the votes in 1946) will guarantee them the rights of private property in their farms. The peasants are for the bourgeoisie, and the workers are against them. This fact was not even mentioned in words and it was completely ignored in action.

True, both peasants and workers can be allied insofar as they are opposed to the same bureaucracy. But they are opposed for different class reasons. And the class that understands the difference has an enormous advantage over the class that does not.

The workers need the removal of the bureaucracy in order to establish a healthy dictatorship of the working class. The peasantry, insofar as they want private property (and that is their greatest urge at present) want the bureaucracy removed so they can have full and guaranteed rights to their own farms, to free trade, -- in a word, to capitalism.

The landless peasants acquired land from the landlords as early as 1945. The peasants had a stake in the new regime insofar as it protected them against a return of the landlords. But on the other hand thirty-three per cent of the land was collectivized after 1950. Because of backwardness and because there was little machinery, the collective farms were less productive than the private farms. The collective farm worker wanted his own private plot of land. And the small private owners began to worry about when they might be collectivized too.

The new social regime changed in the peasants' eyes, from a guarantee against the return of the landlords to an obstacle to the use of private property and the improvement of their well-being. And the same can be said of the small tradesman and petty proprietor of the cities.

There should have been a controlled de-collectivization in Hungary. There should have been a general retreat from "over-communization". If further sacrifices were required -- in the interests of the Korean War and the military program of the Cold War, then the regime should have appealed to the workers and based themselves on the workers. Of course this could not be done by Stalinists because

it would mean liquidating the bureaucracy as a privileged caste and allowing the workers to rule. But the retreat had to be led by the workers regime whether it was Stalinist or Trotskyist. If the peasants did their own retreating, they would retreat right back to capitalism, (not landlordism of course) which was just what they tried to do.

The collectivization was carried out brutally and stupidly in the first place, just as it was in the Soviet Union itself. The Stalinists did not collectivize especially to "build socialism". They collectivized because of their fear of being overthrown by the same bourgeoisie with whom they had previously collaborated. (and the bourgeois restoration would find its biggest base in the peasantry). It was this fear that motivated the Stalinist collectivizations in the Soviet Union in 1929-1931. But there, the regime had had twelve years to win at least a portion of the peasantry, and, more important, to consolidate itself in the cities. Above all, it rested on the greatest popular revolution of all time.

Even under Lenin the alliance of workers and peasants was uneasy. The peasant risings of 1921 were not against collectivization. That had hardly begun yet. These risings were against the dictatorship over them which deprived them of "free trade" and other freedoms. If the Bolsheviks had not given them the NEP, they would have established their own NEP. But if they had, its name would have been capitalism, its political form, a capitalist state.

In Hungary, the peasants did not start the fighting. But they finally gained the most material results from the fighting. They gained the land for their private use. They took it and it will be many a long day before any workers regime, Stalinist or Trotskyist, with good farm machinery or without, will dare to try collectivization again. The peasants made a social transformation when they took the land from the workers state. And comrades who make light of this by pointing to the impracticability of the collectives are simply deluding themselves. The whole Hungarian workers state is also "impracticable" without the aid of the world revolution. But a move to overthrow it cannot be justified by appealing to the advantages of the free world-market.

The students, writers, etc. who started the first demonstration, appear to have had the simple intention of liberalizing the hated Stalinist regime, more or less as had been attempted in Poland. The fact that they favored de-collectivization or the increased power ("freedom") of the church wouldn't have been so bad, if nothing else had happened. But it did.

Once the students and petty bourgeois masses had been provoked into an open battle, the workers quickly joined with them. But it was a battle the workers were programmatically unprepared for. They were unprepared to assume the leadership of the other forces in society. and it was the kind of a battle where this was an absolute necessity for the workers. This was not an ordinary battle. This was an insurrection. The whole "nation" was overthrowing the deformed workers government. The workers did not have a proletarian revolutionary leadership to put in that government's place. and the absence of such a leadership could not be filled at the workers' leisure. The question demanded an immediate answer.

A workers' uprising for limited working-class demands, as in East Germany

or Poznan, is one thing, It is automatically a working class action by the nature of its physical content. But in a nation-wide "revolution" which overthrows the government of a workers state, the working class must either take the full political power consciously with its own party or go down to defeat under the class whose leadership does take the power.

The first demonstrations succeeded in replacing Gero with Nagy. (That is, "Stalinism" fell before "National" Stalinism). But with what was Nagy and "National" Stalinism to be replaced? -- Who had the answer? At that moment only the petty bourgeoisie and their bourgeois leaders did. -- To replace Nagy -- or strangle him -- with the old bourgeois parties and "free elections". The call for "democratic socialism" combined with free elections for all parties, was a big step to the right of Nagy -- although Nagy soon caught up with it. (Nagy's third coalition government already included the principal parties).

It is quite true that the workers' councils are independent class organizations. And they would in the long run have made a revolution against the Nagy government (if that government did not turn them into harmless advisory councils first. -- That is what the Provisional government in Russia was doing before Lenin came on the scene). But the MILITANT editors make a purely literary conclusion from this, which disregards the reality of the class struggle.

"The three elements in the situation were thus the Kremlin with its army; the working class in possession of the factories and organizing through their own workers councils, which in turn were proceeding to create a nation-wide centralized organization of councils; and the Nagy government around which bourgeois restorationist elements had rallied. (My emphasis. VG)

"Had the Kremlin stayed out of the national picture the class struggle that had been driven underground, by the Soviet occupation in 1945 between the working class and the capitalist class would have inevitably broken out again in full force."

- MILITANT November 19 -

What is the meaning of this surprising statement? That the government is capitalist, (the majority of its members were anti-communists by November 3) -- but that the class struggle against it would have broken out again "in full force" -- that the Kremlin should not intervene in this struggle, and that anyway, it is better to go back to the situation prevailing in 1945.

Do the comrades really mean to say this? Would they say that it would be all right to remove the Stalinist dictatorship of the Soviet Union in this way? That is -- to replace the Stalinist administration with a capitalist administration, all in the interests of seeing the struggle of workers against capitalism "break out again in full force". Surely the Soviet Red Army should defend the present government from such an overthrow. And surely the comrades are all in agreement on this point.

Take the analogy further. If the Soviet government had already been overthrown and replaced by "bourgeois restorationist elements", the Red Army would do better to replace it with Soviet bureaucrats than let the bourgeoisie

consolidate itself, its army, etc. while the workers are "proceeding to create" a nation-wide independent rival workers government. Such a movement of the workers is absolutely necessary for the overthrow of the bureaucracy. But if a bourgeois leadership took over the seats of government, the first duty of the workers would be to chase them out, not support them. (Actually the workers under a Trotskyist leadership would do this far quicker than the Red Army would).

Maybe the characterization of the Nagy government in this particular MILITANT article is not a definitive one. Maybe the comrades do not mean to call it a capitalist government. It is true there was much confusion in the situation.

As a matter of fact, Nagy's government on October 24 was very different than on November 3. When Nagy first started "negotiation" for the removal of Soviet troops, he still led a workers regime. (Whether or not Moscow was "sincere" in the negotiations is another matter). His regime was still holding out against the demands for bourgeois elections etc. But after Nagy had taken the "bourgeois restorationist elements" into the government and had three reshufflings of his cabinet, each time further to the right, then agreed to general elections for all parties, then in panic appealed to the UN to get the Soviet troops out, declaring as a "neutral" nation (October 30) it was clear that Nagy and his government were on the other side of the class line. Here it is no longer the debatable question of whether the peasant-bourgeois forces are numerically and ideologically stronger than the working class in the drive to oust the Red Army. Here it is an open fact that the government is for capitalism, whatever it calls itself.

It was not the return of capitalism to Hungary as such that Moscow feared so much -- although they justified their action before the workers by talking about "fascists" or "project X". The Stalinist bureaucrats have no particular anti-capitalist virtues. They just want to stay in power. But in this case the threat to their power was from the direction of capitalism, not communism.

It was especially Nagy's call for intervention by the capitalist West which crystallized the previously vacillating line of the Red Army command, and perhaps temporarily united the warring factions in Moscow. Now in a panic more justified than their panic of October 23, they re-entered Budapest (November 1) and deposed the Nagy regime (November 4). This was a progressive and necessary act.

The Soviet army set up the Kadar regime (November 4) which made the same generally relaxing and necessary decrees as the Nagy regime -- with these prominent exceptions: It did not call for the legalization of bourgeois parties and free elections; it did not declare as a "neutral" nation and call for UN intervention. (It may still do all these things under future pressure, but that is why it must be replaced by the revolutionary workers).

The Nagy regime (October 24 - November 4) became a counter-revolutionary bourgeois restorationist regime. The Kadar regime which replaced it was a Bonapartist deformed workers state regime, erected on the bayonets of the Red Army.

The lead article in the November 12 MILITANT says exactly the opposite:

"The Hungarian masses tolerated the Nagy regime as it tried to keep afloat on the revolutionary tide; Kadar's regime, however, is detested by all freedom fighters. For despite its similarity in composition and program to the Nagy regime, it is a counter-revolutionary puppet of the Kremlin."

Yes, the Hungarian masses did tolerate the Nagy regime -- that was their mistake. Kadar's regime was not similar "in composition and program" to Nagy's. Its composition was one hundred per cent Stalinist, and Nagy's regime on November 3 was 30 per cent Social Democratic and thirty per cent bourgeois. Nor was it similar in program. The giving in on de-collectivization, higher wages, and even factory workers councils, both in Nagy and Kadar's programs are only secondary features. -- Nagy was for imperialism, Kadar was against it. This is the fundamental difference. Nagy had capitulated to the bourgeois counter-revolution. Kadar remained loyal to the Stalinist bureaucracy which was based on the nationalized property and the Soviet Union.

The capitalist press also "tolerated" the Nagy regime, and more than tolerated the revolution which put it in power. The conservative New York Times editorialized the day after Nagy broke with the Soviet Union and declared for bourgeois democracy:

"All signs point to a victory for freedom in Hungary... the communist despotism there has at least temporarily been overthrown. That despotism can be restored only by Soviet troops. (My emphasis. VG) (November 1)

The Herald Tribune said on the same day:

"If Nagy's pledges are fulfilled, it would mean the end of a Communist controlled Hungary, and the creation of a potentially hostile stronghold in the heart of Soviet Eastern Europe..."

"The revolution is by no means over, but whatever happens from now on, it is certain that the Hungarian people have won a tremendous victory... They can never be robbed of this hour of glory."

The reactionary Daily News gloated in their editorial, "Communism Clobbered":

"...it looks as if (1) the anti-communist uprising in Hungary has been 100% victorious, and (2) world Communism has taken a disastrous defeat... A salute is due the heroic Hungarian rebels, we believe, from lovers of liberty everywhere, and we only hope they can make their victory stick."

Ludwell Denny, foreign editor of the right-wing World Telegram was more cautious about the Nagy regime, but not from the point of view of misunderstanding the pro-capitalist import of its program. On November 1 he said:

"If the present Nagy-Kadar regime survives, as a result of its declaration of neutrality and its appeal to the United

Nations for protection of Hungarian independence, it must share power with the non-Reds in an actual instead of a planned phony coalition."

Why "must" the Nagy regime have shared the real power with nonReds? (non-Reds meaning here the capitalist friends of Mr. Denny). Because the "revolution" was forcing the regime to do just that. Everything Nagy did was in capitulation to the "revolution", and by November 1 when he had guaranteed free elections for bourgeois parties, etc. etc. the fighting had practically stopped. The people relaxed on the assumption the Red Army was to leave and the new program would be effected.

The restorationist Nagy regime was in truth "tolerated" by the Hungarian masses as the Hungarian uprising was "tolerated" by the world capitalist class. But the MILITANT writers seem undisturbed by the bourgeois cheers for the "freedom fighters".

The above-quoted article in the MILITANT points to the obvious working-class character of the promises of Kadar (the Moscow-backed government of November 4). Since these promises are "bait to persuade the freedom fighters to lay down their arms" the article says, therefore the "freedom fighters" are fighting for a communist goal. But why does the author not use the same criterion in examining Nagy's program? Wasn't Nagy's program also "bait to persuade the freedom fighters"? And when he legalized the bourgeois parties (in reality the "revolution" legalized them), when he made Mindszenty Primate of Hungary, appealed to the UN for "protection" and declared Hungary a neutral, to what "freedom fighters" was he offering his "bait"? -- Obviously he was offering it to the bourgeois restoration. And the simple fact is that Nagy's program was and is more popular in Hungary than Kadar's.

But to use the yardstick of popularity, even popularity with the workers, in determining the class nature of a regime, is a very dangerous business for a Marxist. And because the Kadar regime is "detested by the freedom fighters" (who to be sure, are adored by the bourgeois world), we cannot therefore conclude that it is "counter-revolutionary". It is, of course, counter-revolutionary, insofar as it is Stalinist, and as compared with Trotskist or independent proletarian tendencies. But as compared with the Nagys, the bourgeois parties, the Mindszentys etc. it is revolutionary, and it is they who are counter-revolutionary.

Role of Mindszenty

"The release of Cardinal Mindszenty after seven years of confinement and his triumphal return to Budapest set a dramatic seal on the revolution of the Hungarian people against Communist oppression." - Herald Tribune editorial, Nov. 1 -

This was the general consensus of capitalist press opinion. By and large, and all proportions guarded, it was a correct opinion. The apparently opposite thought has been emphasized by some papers including the MILITANT, and the Herald Tribune itself, that -- "Mindszenty was almost medieval...he antagonized not only the Communists, but the larger number of Hungarian democrats." (My emphasis -VG)

What does this mean? It means that the larger number of "revolutionaries" wanted bourgeois democracy without the clerical semi-fascism that Mindszenty had been identified with in the past. -- Actually, the "larger number of democrats" didn't need to worry, at least not about "medievalism". Mindszenty is now a world figure of modern capitalism, a friend of the sophisticated Cardinal Spellman and the at least equally sophisticated Wall Street politicians. He is not such an utter fool as to talk about the return of the church lands, the landlords and Esterhazy, etc. He knows that no one in Hungary will fight for the return of the landlord rule. And that is not too important to Mindszenty anyway. Mindszenty is not really that "medieval".

Mindszenty is literate enough to understand that it is not necessary nowadays as in 1917 to counterpose Czarism and landlordism to communism. Today, Wall Street is willing to foot the bill for "democracy". It is not even necessary to de-nationalize the factories -- for quite awhile. While democratic socialists and social-democrats congratulate themselves that the "workers will never give up the plants" Wall Street would merely walk in like Santa Claus through the broken walls of the state monopoly of foreign trade. And where Trotsky spoke of the "cheap commodities in the baggage trains of an invading army" being more dangerous than guns, we will have to speak at this time of the free commodities of Wall Street.

The "democratic" government of Nagy was no sooner organized than there were pressures for a "Mindszenty Government". But this was travelling too fast. -- "Others urged Mindszenty at least for membership in a super-council of trusted national leaders who could serve as a sort of regency nominating premiers and cabinets." (Herald Tribune November 17)

Not that Mindszenty was wholly opposed to Nagy. On the contrary, Mindszenty, like the "freedom fighters" generally, welcomed the Nagy regime. He said, "It was obvious that the Nagy government was far better than the previous ones. Its policies were evolving. (My emphasis) By proclaiming Hungary's neutrality, by promising free elections and by demanding the withdrawal of Russian forces, it went far to meet the desires of the people. But now the Russians will not permit those things." - Look Magazine article December 25 - (Mindszenty is a little smarter than some of his naive critics).

Edmund Taylor, a feature writer for the Reporter is less impressed with Mindszenty as a politician although admitting his great popularity and power.

"Unlike his more astute Polish colleague, Cardinal Wyszynsky, who threw the tremendous power of the Church behind the Gomulka regime, Cardinal Mindszenty withheld his support from the Nagy government at its most critical moment and even helped undermine it by encouraging the untimely demands for legalization of the new Hungarian Christian People's Party." - December 27 -

The demand was "untimely" because it panicked the Russians who "will not permit those things" -- not, unfortunately, because it exposed Mindszenty as a reactionary before the masses.

Whether Mr. Taylor is libelling Mindszenty for not being astute enough is another thing. He himself (Taylor) points out that the revolution "swung too far to the right too fast." The Cardinal can hardly be criticized for crowding

his luck a little when events were going so swiftly in his favor.

The bourgeois democratic leaders relied on this "medieval" figure mostly for his really medieval hold on a large portion of the population. Mindszenty did not represent either capitalism or feudalism to the majority of the Hungarian people. He represented God and was the symbol of opposition against "godless communism". Both Bela Kovacs and Zoltan Tildy, Smallholders Party leaders, whom some comrades regard as accidental figures in the Nagy government, were so powerful that they were successful in pressuring Nagy to agree to Mindszenty's release and his restoration as Primate of Hungary. They were both "ardent supporters" of Mindszenty, and although they headed the "moderate" party, they would have worked very closely with the new reactionary "Christian Peoples" party of Mindszenty, if the Red Army had not snuffed it out.

Mindszenty was so powerful and so popular that after the counter-revolutionary victory, "two prominent Communists believed that only Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty could stop an anti-Communist terror...such as followed the short-lived Communist regime of Bela Kun after World War I." (NYT Nov. 1) (On October 31 the mass book-burnings, and house-to-house search for more "secret police" had begun). Just before Nagy was ousted on the morning of November 4, Mindszenty was invited to a cabinet meeting for a last minute decision on what to do against the Russians. When he entered the Parliament building (wearing his cassock) a secret-police man chased him out at gun-point. (Look Magazine article)

Under the Nagy government the masses hung the secret police by the heels and flogged them to death. Such hatred of the Stalinist cops is very understandable. It must be recorded, however, that it was the Stalinist government that imprisoned this "sixteenth century" politician, and the Nagy government, in the middle of the "revolution" that released him. Mindszenty was not hung by his heels, but put in a palace as Primate of Hungary. The bells of all the churches rang out as he entered Budapest, and people kneeled on the streets "as far as the eye could see" when he gave his benediction the next day. (According to Radio Free Europe's compilation of rebel broadcasts).

Why couldn't Mindszenty get along with the secret police and the Red Army like he could with Nagy? Because he would not be a stooge-priest for the deformed workers state. He wanted "freedom" -- bourgeois imperialist freedom -- not only for himself but for all Hungary. The whole capitalist world as well as the Hungarians, understands this.

Some comrades may think it "accidental" that the revolution freed Mindszenty -- that his release falls into the same category as the freeing of criminals in the melee of a revolt, or that it can be attributed to the over-generosity of the oppressed on such occasions. Others may think it "accidental" that Mindszenty scurried to the American Legation when the Red Army overthrew the "revolutionary" government of Nagy. But this is a misunderstanding of both the Hungarian situation and the role of Mindszenty.

Hungary had had a deformed revolution. And the masses had not disposed of Mindszenty in a revolutionary way. The Stalinists had tried to bribe him into accepting the reduced role of the church institutions, by greater emoluments for his person. These he refused, and generally made a hero out of himself with the faithful.

He was the most important human obstacle to the secularizing of Hungary's school system, which was in its largest part Catholic-parochial. In spite of his intransigent opposition, the Stalinists secularized the school system completely in 1948. The Church lands had been taken away soon after the war, but Mindszenty was astute enough to soft-pedal his opposition to any actions against the income of the church. He put nearly all the emphasis on freedom of religion, and against persecution. Like the students in 1956 (who were much more innocent of course) he confined himself to being a "freedom fighter". He was just against tyranny.

On August 20, 1947, he led the St. Stephen's Day parade in Budapest. The parade, under the noses of the Red Army, was probably the largest ever held in Budapest -- 600,000 people. It was in reality a political demonstration -- pro-Catholic and anti-communist. (The Stalinists had already begun their "three year plan" and started arresting the bourgeois-democratic elements, closing down on the Smallholders Party, etc.)

Mindszenty was immensely popular in this 65% Catholic country. But worse than that, he enjoyed some influence among the urban masses. And while the CP had gotten 17% of the popular vote it was not a very solid 17%. The CP could not depend upon even these voters to unanimously support it against Mindszenty. The Stalinists wanted to destroy his popularity, to discredit him and disgrace him. This they tried to do in his world-famous trial.

In that trial they went to great lengths to implicate him with the United States and the U.S. diplomats. They greatly feared U.S. influence in Hungary in 1948-9 as now. Just a year or so previous to the trial, more than three hundred thousand peasants held a convention in Budapest where they wildly cheered the U.S. military representatives. The Stalinists couldn't hope to make any dent on these elements with their accusations against Mindszenty. They were aiming at the more class-conscious workers who understood that the U.S. represented Capitalism, and Capitalist restoration in Hungary.

But when the Cardinal went to the U.S. Legation as the most logical place for sanctuary on November 4 the Stalinists thereby had much more tangible proof than all his "confessions" that he was actually working with the U.S. But now they did not dare to use it. They have not dared to accuse Mindszenty of anything during this period. (That is, the Stalinists of Hungary). They are frightened at the anti-communist reaction. They are appealing for support from the workers by falsely attributing the uprising to fascist sources. But they do not dare affront the religious sentiments of the masses by telling the truth about Mindszenty, whereas in 1948 in a more radical period, they could get away with telling lies about him if necessary.

Mindszenty was admired by Catholics everywhere for his asceticism and his self-sacrifice. (He refused to take any salary at all from the Stalinist government when he was national primate after the war. -- They offered him the same salary as the Prime Minister). But he was especially admired for his intransigence against communism. He was the good friend of Cardinal Spellman, who on the occasion of Mindszenty's imprisonment delivered his famous sermon at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York: "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God." He was the author of numerous sermons which were thinly veiled appeals to the West for intervention in 1946 to 1948. Mindszenty's emergence as an open, full-fledged political leader in addition to clerical intriguer was inevitable under the Nagy regime.

"Told that several Hungarian politicians had said that the key of Hungary's future might be in his hands, the Primate smiled... (N.Y. Times, Nov. 1). Fortunately, he smiled too soon.

THE WORKERS COUNCILS

The working-class role in the uprising was politically a subordinate one. The workers and even the workers' councils, were united behind the nation, not leading it. The workers made independent class demands in the form of wage increases, better conditions, even the legalization of their soviets. But the general political demands were for "freedom", "free elections for all parties" (at first). Above all they demanded the ousting of the Red Army while they left a question mark on the nature of the new regime. These demands were not those which would regenerate the workers' deformed dictatorship, but those which would destroy it.

The simple fact is, that lacking an independent political program in the middle of a nation-wide uprising they had to follow the bourgeois lead, and as in February, 1917, erect a bourgeois regime (the Nagy government). But unlike February 1917, the result was a terrible relapse -- from a deformed totalitarian workers state to a democratic bourgeois regime.

The newly-formed workers councils half-supported this regime, and according to reports, some of their leaders wished to enter the regime in collaboration with the bourgeois parties. This did not mean the workers were for capitalism, but as Lenin observed: "Under Menshevik leadership, the soviets were instruments for the subjection of the workers to the bourgeoisie." - Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky -

There were two separate class forces in the rebellion, but only one class program. There was the working class and there was the petty-bourgeois-intellectual student-peasant "freedom fighter" block. It was precisely this "freedom fighter" block which had the vaguest "democratic" program of abstractions. These abstractions were fated from the beginning to be concretized by the bourgeois restoration unless the workers counterposed to it a program of their own. The workers had to break with Nagy from the left, expose him as a conciliator with the world bourgeoisie. But this they did not do. Those who were against Nagy from the right, who wanted more bourgeois freedom -- "elections" etc. carried the day.

Workers councils are class instruments of the workers. But a deformed workers state is also an instrument of the workers. The workers councils must have the purpose to reform the state in a leftist direction; they must be more revolutionary, they must be more opposed to capitalism (e.g. United States capitalism) than the leadership they are opposing. We can welcome the formation of the workers councils and oppose anyone preventing their meetings etc. We can contend within these councils against the social democrats and the bourgeois party supporters, we can contend to win these councils to a revolutionary line. But we must realize that under Menshevik leadership "the soviets were instruments for the subjection of the workers to the bourgeoisie."

Even after the main forces of the counter-revolution were defeated by the

Red Army's November 4 intervention, the workers councils still demanded the return of the Nagy government. As late as November 12, the workers council of the 11th District of Budapest demanded "the immediate freeing of the members of the Imre Nagy government which was elected by the revolution as well as the release of the freedom fighters." (My emphasis - VG) This demand was part of a series quoted prominently in the MILITANT (December 24). The headline touching on the first point in the program was "The Factories Belong to the Working People."

The MILITANT was thus only repeating and succumbing to the delusion and fatal error of the workers and the workers councils. The workers although by November 12 definitely organized in their own class bodies, and apparently being the main point of remaining resistance to the Kadar regime, still did not understand the restorationist character of the Nagy regime. They would give the country over to the restorationist regime but they want to keep the socialized factories. This is like the story of the young farm girl who took her pet lamb to the butcher, but made him promise not to kill it!

Whoever thinks that the workers councils will "find their own road" to a correct program of struggle under these circumstances is deluding himself and disarming the already disoriented Hungarian workers.

It is perfectly true that the workers were the most cohesive and consistent fighting force, and they continued to fight long after the "freedom fighters" of the cities were dispersed or fled. But the counter-revolution took over in the first place (under Nagy) because of the utter leaderlessness and confusion of the workers. Without a proletarian Marxist party, bourgeois ideology won the day. Without the Bolsheviks, "the soviets were instruments of the bourgeoisie."

It would have been a wonderful fluke of history if the Red Army in destroying the counter-revolution (November 4) had left a pure residue of workers councils, orienting to power on an independent revolutionary working class program. But it was not so. Aside from the fact that the Red Army is an instrument of the bureaucracy as well as the workers state, and aside from the fact that we can expect it to oppose revolutionary as well as counter-revolutionary threats -- the fact is that the workers councils did not seriously think of creating an independent workers dictatorship. At one point Kadar claimed that they did in order to justify arresting their leaders. But the councils themselves never made any such claim. And the world bourgeoisie never repudiated the councils.

Under these conditions to talk of "dual power" as though it solves something in and of itself, is to delude ourselves. In such an uprising, the real question is not what is implicit in the situation but what is explicit.

Some people (not the comrades) think there was a real civil war within the "freedom fighters" ranks, between the revolution and the restoration. This is not true. Isaac Deutscher is one of these people. He points out (in the November 15 Reporter) the contrast between Miskolc and Gyor:

"...two distinct centers of insurrection sprang into being, at Miskolc in the northeast and at Gyor in the west. In both cities they soon came to blows with one another. At Miskolc, the insurgents appealed to the country in the

Marxist-Leninist idiom, and it was in the name of proletarian internationalism that they demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the restoration of Hungary's sovereignty.

"The real headquarters of the rising in the provinces was at Gyor, where after an interval during which Attila Szigeti, a Communist, led the insurgents, the anti-Communists -- among whom the clergy were prominent -- gained the upper hand. It was no longer de-Stalinization that was the battle cry at Gyor. It was "Down with Communism".

"The split in the rebel camp came to a head when the Communist insurgents, responding to the appeal of Nagy -- their man -- were ready to lay down their arms and demanded that their comrades in arms do the same. By this time a religious peasantry had risen and thrown its weight behind the anti-Communists..."

Naturally the most class-conscious workers would not join in the cry "Down with communism" or the book-burnings or desecration of Lenin's pictures along with Stalin's and Rakosi's. But the truth is that there was no real civil war between the proletarian and bourgeois camps. There was a general unity of both class camps against the bureaucracy and the Red Army. It was probably true that there was frustration and fist-fights for control of some of the rebel councils. It is true that there was an implied class war within the national struggle. But it lacked direction and consciousness. That was its tragedy.

Miskolc, for example, did not condemn Gyor. It certainly did not declare war on Gyor, as it would have done, if the national anti-Stalinist, anti-Russian movement had not been uppermost.

It is false to say, as the MILITANT does, that the working class "launched the general strike on the background of which the fighting took place." (MILITANT November 19) This implies that the workers really led the uprising, and gave it a proletarian class character. This is simply not so.

The general strike of the Hungarian workers was in support of the "revolution". It was subordinated to the national struggle. The above-quoted demand for the return of the Nagy "all-national" government is crystal-clear proof of that. A general strike is first of all a political strike. Its basic political demands were in support of the all-national struggle, not vice-versa.

The task for class-conscious proletarians in the Hungarian workers councils was and is, to separate from the counter-revolution consciously, openly, programmatically (not merely to talk about defending a Hungarian nationalized property that nobody in the world is at this moment challenging) -- to raise the slogan of Independent Soviet Hungary; to bloc with the Kadar regime against Mindszenty, Kovacs, Tildy, Imre Nagy, and all the supporters of the Nagy regime; (Kadar being a Bonapartist may later bloc with these same elements against the workers, but that is another matter); to demand the full independence of the workers councils both economically and politically; and the creation of a nation-wide congress of councils which stands both for the defense of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Hungarian workers.

"To bloc with Kadar" against the counter-revolution -- this sounds impossible and unrealistic? And yet that is just what Trotsky promised: "The new International will offer the Stalinist bureaucracy a united front against the common foe." - Class Nature of the Soviet State p. 22 - Of course Trotsky meant this as the absolutely necessary preparatory step to the overthrow of the bureaucracy itself.

The proletariat must bloc with the centrist bureaucracy against the rightist restoration as long as the bureaucracy is willing to fight. This is not a moral prescription, but a strategic necessity. In Hungary under the circumstances and without a political party which has earned the masses' confidence it is well-nigh impossible. But whoever knows the truth must say so.

The proposition for such a bloc, if it were only in words would have given a class direction to the fight, would have given it a genuine proletarian character, no matter what defeats it suffered. Failing such a proposition at the very least, no amount of references to "ragged fighters", holes-in-the-shoes, etc. etc. have any value whatsoever. The bourgeois reporters had a field day emphasizing how plebeian the movement was, how it was the "common people themselves" turning against communism. The bourgeois press ate it up with front-page features. -- Unfortunately the MILITANT fell for it too. When did capitalists ever fight in any struggle directly? Has anyone ever seen them wearing silk hats and cutaway coats standing on the barricades? Ask the worker who has fought an overwhelming majority of pro-capitalist red-baiters in his union when they are out for blood -- ask him how many capitalists come around to finish the job.

It's not necessarily because the capitalists are personally cowards. They have too much good sense to involve themselves in such things. They have politicians, clergymen, petty bourgeois masses, misled workers, and above all "the ruling ideas" of the age which "are the ideas of the ruling class" on a world basis. At the dawn of capitalism, the masses fought for the right to worship God and read the Bible -- later they fought for capitalist "liberty". They never, never fought for the "right of exploitation of man by man". Oh no! And how ridiculous to suppose that capitalism should want them to use such a slogan in Hungary. There never was and never will be such a counter-revolution.

How can capitalists engineer such a fight without participating? How does it work within the working class? Consider a union fight between a progressive caucus and a right-wing caucus: The right-wing union man is often just as anti-company as the left-wing man is. If all the right wingers were company men and all the left-wingers good union men, how simple everything would be. -- There is no doubt at all that the great majority of Hungarian workers are for socialism. But that doesn't guarantee them from fighting against it.

NATIONAL FREEDOM

(Bourgeois Separatism versus Class Independence)

Regardless of all the Stalinist crimes and Stalinist deformations, Hungary was a conquest of the working class. Largely because of the Stalinist crimes, however, only a small portion of the people of Hungary ever supported the idea of revolutionary socialism. Many letters to the Daily Worker point to this, and then conclude that therefore the "people" of Hungary should have the right to

institute bourgeois democracy, and that socialism does not deserve to remain in Hungary if such a majority is against it, that the "right of nations to self-determination" demands that we support a bourgeois-democratic Hungary if that is what the majority wants, etc. etc.

First, it is not true that the majority want capitalism. The overwhelming majority were fighting against communism, which they identify with Stalinism. But they were not fighting consciously for capitalism.

Second, the "right of national self-determination" is a progressive bourgeois demand in small, backward, oppressed bourgeois and semi-feudal countries. The correct progressive application of this "right" in a country such as Hungary is the same as Trotsky's formula for the Ukraine -- For an Independent Soviet Hungary. The slogan for an independent Hungary without the "soviet" qualification means that it is immaterial which class leads this nation, i.e. which class is independent and which is dependent.

Third, we are for the "right of nations to self-determination" as we are for all other rights -- from the point of view of the proletariat. Eisenhower is for the "right of self-determination" for Hungary, but from the point of view of the bourgeoisie.

An "independent Hungary" which is not an independent soviet Hungary is, in reality, a dependent capitalist Hungary. Such a Hungary must be tied to the West no matter what is said about "neutrality", (Freedom fighters told reporters "we would like to be like Austria or Switzerland"). Eisenhower and the bourgeoisie are much clearer on this point than some modern-day theorists of national self-determination.

"Neutral, independent, democratic and socialist Hungary" is only a social-democratic way of making the pro-Western, pro-capitalist orientation more palatable to the workers. It is true that the "Armed Revolutionary Youth" who raised this demand (on November 12) may have had in mind nothing more serious than the Yugoslav system, not actually a social-democratic form of capitalism. But they raised this vague and wishy-washy slogan in the midst of an all-national, all-class struggle. Here the greatest sharpness was required, precisely because other classes could invest this slogan with an opposite class content. And considering that these other classes not only could, but did do just this from October 24 to November 4, the "Armed Revolutionary Youth" did not trouble to condemn or repudiate them -- the "socialist" content of the slogan cannot be taken seriously.

There is no such thing as a broad national struggle which is not under the leadership of some class. Nearly every reporter marvelled at how leaderless and how spontaneous the rebellion was. But a lack of individual leaders did not mean that everyone was going his own way. On the contrary, all classes were united behind the glittering slogan of "freedom" -- (and the bourgeoisie all over the world quickly hailed the "freedom fighters" for their heroism). The slightly more concrete demand for general free elections and the legalization of "all" parties began to clothe this modest goddess of abstract "freedom" in more familiar class garments.

The first premise for getting this freedom, according to the world

bourgeoisie, and all its spokesmen, is to get the Red Army out of Hungary. If this freedom is something good for the proletariat, and if it is correct for the Hungarian working class to unite with the restorationist Hungarian bourgeoisie in a "national" struggle to gain it -- then why isn't it all right for the Hungarian workers to call upon the American bourgeoisie and its army as they did?

No comrade is for the American army to enter Hungary of course. But what is the class difference between the aims of the American army and the pro-clerical private-property-seeking peasantry with whom the Hungarian workers are allied?

And there is no doubt whatsoever that an invading army would march under the slogan of "self-determination" for Hungary. The class instinct of the world bourgeoisie was quite in order when it appealed so promptly to the "right of self-determination" (for Hungary, that is, not Cyprus, Latin America, etc.).

We are for the right of nations to self-determination under capitalism, in the sense Lenin explained it; and we are for the right of self-determination of nationally oppressed workers' states in the sense Trotsky explained it, using the slogan of the "Independent Soviet Ukraine."

FREE ELECTIONS

The whole world bourgeoisie is plumping for "free elections" for Hungary (but not quite so enthusiastically for Viet Nam, Spain, South Africa, half of South America, and the southern half of the United States).

Every class-conscious worker must pause and ask himself what is the class meaning of "free elections" in Hungary?

Lenin showed how the demand for "free elections" could be a bourgeois fraud, particularly in a backward country after the proletarian revolution. He justified the Bolsheviks breaking up the Constituent Assembly (of all parties) in 1918 on this ground.

There was an uprising led by the Kronstadt Soviet in 1921. In discussing its "innocent" Menshevik demand for universal suffrage, Lenin said:

"The petty bourgeois Narcissuses think that 'universal suffrage' abolishes the nature of the small producer under capitalism; as a matter of fact it helps the bourgeoisie with the aid of the church, the press, the teachers, the police, the militarists, and a thousand and one forms of economic oppression; helps it to subordinate the scattered small producers to itself". - Selected Works Vol. IX p. 198)

Ruling classes have always weighted elections, even the "free-est" in their own favor. The working class is no exception to this rule. Hungary is a classical case in point. Before 1945 the smaller cities and "safe" places for the rulers were given larger representation -- and the parliamentary system was rigged even more effectively than for the United States Senate, to give greater

strength to one locality than another.

Under the Stalinists the same thing was done in reverse, and as early as 1946. Ferenc Nagy, leader of the Smallholders Party and last real bourgeois premier of Hungary complains: "Towns where large numbers of left-wing workers and landless peasants lived, were assigned many representatives, while communities favoring liberal democracy received correspondingly fewer. For example, the leftist town of Orozaga, with its population of 30,000 was assigned 14 representatives, while Pecs with 80,000 and the surrounding county of Baranya with 300,000 were allowed only seven representatives between them." - Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain p. 74 -

This slanting of the vote in favor of the working class was a progressive act of the Stalinists. It was necessary, in order to reinforce the working class character of the dictatorship. Moreover, when the Stalinists drove Ferenc Nagy's majority party, the Smallholders, off the political arena, they performed a task necessary to the preservation of the class dictatorship as well as the bureaucratic one.

The sudden revival of the powerful Smallholders Party in October not as a prisoner of a deformed workers regime, but resting on the armed power of a "revolution" and under a "genuine", "free" "universal suffrage" was capital's first step in "subordinating the scattered small producers to itself."

It is worth adding that the bourgeois-democratic Smallholders Party nobly bestrides the bridge of the "golden mean" on the issue of weighting elections. And of course, they make the most of it. Contrary to the equally "undemocratic" Right and Left, they stand four square for equal rights and equal weight to every vote, regardless of class. And if by the merest chance, the class they happen to be the most popular with (the peasantry) are also the most numerous class in the country, why that is only the will of God, the reward for being fair-minded and going to church on Sunday. (It may be also the merest chance that after the defeat of the Bela Kun communist government in 1919, only the Smallholders Party could stabilize society in the period before the reaction took over completely).

Pro-Socialist Elections

After November 12, the workers councils began asking for free elections for "only those parties...that recognize and have always recognized the socialist order". This is as different as day and night from the "free elections" demand during the Nagy period. It is class-conscious and revolutionary, and it is to the left of the Kadar regime insofar as that regime conciliates with Nagy, the bourgeois Smallholders Party, Mindszenty, etc.

The bourgeois press referred to this as a "limiting of the workers demands". (Unfortunately, the MILITANT followed suit, November 19). And it really is difficult to determine how great a number of the workers regard it as a necessary compromise rather than a better demand. It was the Red Army that broke up and smashed the bourgeois parties that mushroomed in the new democracy. The new demand of the workers implies that this action was progressive, but nowhere

says so. Moreover, the Smallholders Party could claim to have "recognized the socialist order" by virtue of the fact that some of their leaders had served as prisoner-members of the early Stalinist cabinets. And considering that the very next demand of the council (on November 12) was for the freedom of the members of the Nagy government, which included these characters, we have to be cautious about the real class meaning of the demand.

But it should be obvious that the demand for elections for only pro-socialist parties is infinitely superior to "free elections". As early as October 31 I raised this point with the comrades on the MILITANT staff, and more formally at the PC meeting on November 5. But the comrades, like the Hungarian workers at that time, fell for the general "free elections" hokum of the bourgeoisie. After the workers changed their demands, then the MILITANT did also. But in the meantime, a bourgeois government had taken over, "free elections" were already provided for (October 30) with no objection from the Hungarian "freedom fighters" or from the MILITANT.

The national-Stalinist Gomulka informed the world on November 29 in a categorical statement that "the Communist program could not include freedom for all parties, because that would include bourgeois parties." The MILITANT first made this point clear on December 7.

It is not that the Stalinists really regard the question programmatically of course. It is because they, being in power, see where the threat to their power is coming from at the moment. And it goes without saying that the Stalinists, having suppressed and terrorized the pro-bourgeois parties in Hungary, are in no hurry to revive any "pro-socialist" parties other than their own or their stooges. But the Trotskyists have a duty to explain to the workers how to fight both the Stalinist bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie -- and which enemy is the main one. Our revolutionary leadership does not consist in applauding every mistake of the workers.

ROLE OF THE WEST

All observers are unanimous that it was a genuine "popular upheaval" -- an "insult" to call it "fascist-led", American-led, etc. But eye-witnesses are equally unanimous that all Hungarian people interviewed wanted to know what the US was going to do, when the "UN" troops were going to come to their aid. The people condemned "fascism", but they did not condemn bourgeois democracy. They did not condemn the role of the United States (except insofar as the U.S. did not give armed assistance).

Now you can't have it both ways. Some comrades say the U.S. did not intervene because Wall Street was afraid of a more revolutionary government arising in Hungary and hence a greater danger to the U.S. Some of the same comrades say -- "but of course the U.S. supported the fight progressive though it was, because the U.S. is for anything that hurts the Soviet Union!"

Could the U.S. have stayed out of the fighting because they feared the "freedom fighters" would have suddenly turned their guns on the Wall Street army and made a united front with the Red Army? Nonsense. No one in his right mind will believe that was the situation. But it would have been the situation if

this was a genuine proletarian revolution.

The American reporters were unanimous in their story that the plebeian masses of Hungary made the rebellion (who else could make it?). And they were also unanimous in their reports of the people's "pathetic" belief that the U.S. would help them. Some of our leading comrades add this up to equal a genuine workers revolution slightly marred by illusions about the U.S.

But it is well understood in Hungary that the U.S. is opposed to communism. Of course the masses do not want Horthy back. And of course they do not want the landlords back. But what is wrong with being like the U.S. where they have neither Horthys nor Rakosis? -- Where they have democracy and good living?

About every third person in Hungary has relatives or friends in the United States. The Hungarians do not believe the crude Stalinist lies about the United States. On the other hand they would have to be developed Marxists at this point (or have a real Marxist party to tell them), to understand the counter-revolutionary nature of United States world-politics. Outside of the Stalinist bureaucrats, nobody in Hungary condemned the United States (except for failure to intervene). Nobody condemned Radio Free Europe (except for making false promises of aid from the West).

"For eight years the United States has been telling us through Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America to resist Communism," said a gaunt, bitter-voiced Hungarian freedom fighter I interviewed at the little Austrian border post of Nickelsdorf. "But when resistance finally leads to revolution, you stand and watch the damned Russian tanks shoot us down without lifting a finger." - Quoted by E. Taylor in December 27 Reporter -

This was a common reaction, and there were many similar reports in the press. It would be pleasant to believe that the ruthlessly anti-Soviet United States high command was too worried about the proletarian character of the Hungarian "revolution" to move into Hungary. The fact is that the capitalists prefer a "slow" revolution against communism, and prefer the stage of "national Communism" as an interim period they hope will lead to capitalism, because they don't want a war if they can avoid it.

"The American charge d'affaires was instructed to call on Premier Imre Nagy and urge him in effect to please maintain at least a slightly suspicious attitude toward the West until the Soviet forces were safely out of the country ..." but things went "too far to the right too fast". - Reporter December 27 -

There is no doubt that Nagy was voicing the general sentiments of the rebellion when he called upon the UN for intervention on October 30. The West played a great and dynamic role in all this, even though the West's activity took place before the rebellion.

Everyone is now familiar with the capitalists' tendency to "blame" Radio Free Europe for the revolt being so sudden, so bloody and so hopeless. It is worth quoting the "defense" of RFE against the charge that it engineered the

the rebellion. (all from the World Telegram, November 14).

"RFE acted as a relay station for the rebel radios," one RFE official said, "In a sense it mirrored (!) the revolution, but no more than that."

"The standard leaflet theme (of RFE) began: 'The National Opposition Movement believes the time has come to use new and more effective legal means to win liberty for the people and dispel the Communist darkness over our land.' (note the cautious word, "legal")

"It went on to delineate 12 demands -- local autonomy, free speech and assembly, rule of law rather than reign of the Communist Party, private ownership of land, free trade unions, an end to industrial slavery, production to remain in Hungary rather than be exported to the Soviet Union, increased living standards, denationalization of retail shops, better housing, freedom of education and worship (a complete formula for democratic freedom, and not a single word about capitalist restoration)

"These demands, RFE officials point out, did not mention free elections or the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary. It was felt these things were beyond attainment, and therefore it was pointless to ask them." (our emphasis)

And yet there are comrades who think that these wonderful "beyond attainment" bourgeois dreams are so good that it is immaterial which class ousts the Red Army, which class runs the elections, and under the leadership of which class all the other more "attainable" demands are fought for.

COMPARISON WITH KRONSTADT

Naturally every comrade is uncomfortable about the way the world bourgeoisie greets the Hungarian events with such undisguised joy. Some comrades comfort themselves however, by saying that the bourgeoisie is only "exploiting" the harsh Soviet suppression of the rebellion. -- Is this true? Is this really all? -- Isn't it also true that the bourgeoisie is supporting the rebellion?

A number of capitalist countries are opening their doors wide to the refugees. The U.S. is changing its immigration laws, giving jobs, scholarships, (in one case re-organizing a whole Hungarian university on American soil) giving defense bonds, Christmas dinners, and so on. Franco Spain is taking pains to give a quarter of a million dollars for refugee aid. This is not done with the aim of getting on the right side of the revolutionary-minded working class.

The MILITANT entirely misses the point by editorializing about "hypocrisy" over the refugee problem. If there is one thing the bourgeoisie is not hypocritical about, it is their sympathy with these refugees and their unsuccessful struggle. The overflowing streams of tears in the press, the picket lines, the fund-raising campaigns, the sober-minded editorials urging to raise the immigration limit, etc. etc. -- these are the sincerest effusions of the bourgeoisie in many a day. True, they are not at all sorry for the Egyptian masses, the Mau Mau, the

American Negro; but that does not mean they are hard-hearted about the Hungarian "freedom fighters". These they are taking to their heart, and they mean it.

The world bourgeoisie is supporting the Hungarian rebellion as they supported the Kronstadt uprising in 1921. In fact, anyone who takes the trouble to look up the New York Times for the month of March 1921 will find that they are now supporting Hungary a hundred times more than they did Kronstadt. During the first seven-week period of the events in Hungary, the Times hardly missed a single day's opportunity to editorialize on "poor" Hungary. This fact alone should give us pause.

The bourgeoisie supported the Kronstadt rising (although not so vociferously as they supported Hungary). And if Stalin had been in power instead of Lenin in 1921, the bourgeoisie would have been just as enthusiastic about the democratic Mensheviks against the undemocratic Stalin. If Stalin had been in power the Kronstadt uprising would have been just as reactionary. And Trotsky would still have ordered the Red Army to suppress the uprising; he would not have blocked with the uprising against Stalin. Actually, if Stalin had been in power, the rebellion would have been that much more dangerous, that much more likely to succeed -- because it would have been popular with a greater mass of the population. -- Its slogans were "freedom", "constituent assembly", "free soviets", "against dictatorship". And needless to add, they were led by a "democratic socialist" soviet.

Why did Lenin and Trotsky see so much danger in this? How can capitalism come back to power using slogans so similar to genuine revolutionary working class demands? -- As a matter of fact, it's the only way capitalism can come back to power.

Here is what Miliukov had to say about the Kronstadt Soviet -- the "workers council" of 1921. (Miliukov was "the most authoritative spokesman of the Russian counter-revolution"):

"It is self-evident for us, that leaving aside a forceful installation of power from the right or left, this sanction (of the new power-JGW) which is of course temporary, can be effected only through institutions of the type of Soviets. Only in this way can the transfer be effected painlessly and be recognized by the country as whole." - quoted by John G. Wright New International February 1938 -

How and why could the leading political exponent of Russian capitalist restoration make such a statement and take such a position? -- For the same reason that Radio Free Europe called for the creation of "soviets" in Hungary and the infinitely more sophisticated (than in 1921) world bourgeoisie now supports the workers councils of Hungary.

Lenin commented on Miliukov's statement as follows:

"The wise leader of the bourgeoisie and the landlords the Cadet, Miliukov, is patiently explaining to the fool, Victor Chernov (and to Dan and Rozhkov, who are in Petrograd jail for their connection with the Kronstadt Mensheviks indirectly) that they need

be in no hurry with their Constituent (Democratic parliament and "free elections" VG), and that they can and must support the Soviets -- only without the Bolsheviks. (Lenin's emphasis)
- Selected Works Vol IX p. 195 -

And this is exactly what the "wise leaders of the bourgeoisie" have in mind today, when they say that the Polish path is better, when they say Nagy went "too far to the right too fast."

At the time Lenin made the above speech, to be sure, the principal Soviets were already led by Bolsheviks. Miliukov wanted to remove the Bolsheviks, and understood that "without the Bolsheviks", the soviets would become "instruments of the bourgeoisie", just as Lenin said they were in 1917 before the Bolsheviks gained the leadership of them. -- In Hungary, the new soviets ("workers councils") didn't yet have Bolsheviks (i.e. Trotskyists) and somewhat like early 1917, but also like the soviet of Kronstadt, they were still "instruments of the bourgeoisie!"

Moreover, Kronstadt put far more emphasis on "pro-socialist" parties than the Hungarian rebellion had. Kronstadt's call for general "free elections" was in the nature of an exception -- a political "boner" that revealed their true course. (In Hungary the pressure for general free elections for all parties was universal and still is very great). The demand for "pro-socialist" parties in Kronstadt without the Bolsheviks, was a formula for capitalist restoration. In Hungary too, if the "pro-socialist" parties are to be the Social Democrats and the Peasants Party even without the obviously bourgeois Smallholders and without the genuinely revolutionary Trotskyists, it can still be a formula for restoration.

The bourgeoisie insists that the Hungarian revolution is strictly an internal affair, wholly without help from outside, and the most responsible bourgeois want it to stay that way. Qualified voices of non-intervention were raised in the case of Kronstadt too. -- Kerensky explained very carefully to the bourgeoisie as follows:

"The Soviet claims that the present risings are due to allied intrigue are entirely unfounded...The success of the present movement depends largely on non-interference from the outside world. Russia must be left alone." - Times March 12, 1921 -

One can imagine how Kerensky itched to get back into personal power in Russia, and yet he knew that open intervention would be the wrong thing -- even then. He, like Miliukov, understood that a "socialist" movement was better for capitalism at that point.

Of course the core of the Kronstadt movement was the young sailors with mostly peasant and petty bourgeois backgrounds. But they immediately "appealed to the workers of the world...against communism." - Times March 10, 1921 -

The Kronstadters did not just appeal to the workers of the world as an after-thought, or as an exception to some general rule of appealing to the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, they regarded themselves as a plebeian and working class movement. They went about the streets of Petrograd just before the rising,

calling for action by the workers (with some success). During the actual rebellion, they insisted that the truce commission sent by the government be composed of "laborers and soldiers" and "only 15 per cent Communists".

And of course the Kronstadt men were against a return of the reaction. The Times reported on March 8:

"The Moscow government is trying to influence opinion in Kronstadt by prophesying general reaction if the rebels succeed. The Kronstadt rebels replied that no such danger exists. 'We have formed a new independent republic, and elected a new Democratic Council which will guarantee the safety and interests of the workers', said the Kronstadt dispatch."

Some comrades might think that because the workers councils of 1956 were fighting a Stalinist dictatorship instead of a Bolshevik leadership as was the case with Kronstadt, that the councils could afford to make more mistakes. It might seem that, considering how far to the right the Stalinist dictators are -- that almost anybody could be to the left of them, especially in an armed struggle. -- This idea is totally false. It ignores the class character of the Stalinist dictatorship. It is just because the Stalinist dictatorship is so ugly and perverse, that it takes a more profound and skilled proletarian leadership to understand its class character, and understand how to fight it.

Here is what Trotsky thought might happen in the Soviet Union, if there was no Bolshevik leadership:

"The first social shock, external or internal, may throw the atomized Soviet society into civil war. The workers, having lost control over the state and economy, may resort to mass strikes as weapons of self-defense (Trotsky's emphasis). The discipline of the dictatorship would be broken. Under the onslaught of the workers and because of the pressure of economic difficulties, the trusts would be forced to disrupt the planned beginnings and enter into competition with one another. The dissolution of the regime would naturally find its violent and chaotic echo in the village, and would inevitably be thrown over into the army. The socialist state would collapse, giving place to the capitalist regime, or, more correctly, to capitalist chaos." - Class Nature of the Soviet State p. 16 -

Trotsky wrote this sixteen years after the October Revolution, at a time when there were still some thousands of Trotskyists, or at least sympathizers with Trotskyism in the Soviet Union. He wasn't talking about capitalist intervention. He was talking about the forces within Soviet society. He understood that the "fundamental historic task is to create the revolutionary party in the USSR." - same p. 17 -

Without the party, without the revolutionary leadership, the workers merely tend to "break the discipline of the dictatorship" in their blind fight for "freedom", and fall victim to the bourgeoisie.

Comrades point to the remarks the Hungarian workers made about keeping the industries nationalized. But this is the most pathetic side of the whole

tragedy. -- They wanted to call the UN in to get the Red Army out. They wanted to put the "non-Communists" (assorted trash from the Social Democrats to the bourgeois Smallholders and the reactionary Popular Christians) in office. But they wanted to keep their nationalized plants. A praiseworthy desire but not very realistic.

And suppose that under the hegemony of the UN, or under the leadership of Tildy, Kovacs, Mindszenty and their ilk (but not as prisoners or stooges of the Red Army) the plants still remained nationalized. -- What of it? Many plants in Britain are nationalized too. The point is, which class rules? And what good are nationalized plants when peasants can get more shoes from American factories than they can get from the Budapest factories and for less Hungarian cabbages.

Anyway, it's ridiculous to think that nationalized industry in Hungary means anything to Wall Street. Wall Street's enemy is the Soviet Union and the workers' state bloc as a whole. (Likewise Hungarian socialism's fundamental enemy is Wall Street rather than the Soviet bureaucracy). Economically speaking, Hungary by itself is hardly more important on a world scale than some little socialistic model community of the 19th century in America. Were the Soviet Union to be destroyed by the American friends of the Hungarian "revolution", the nationalized property of Hungary, -- if it still remained -- would be a joke, like the "middle way" in Sweden, or like Switzerland's "independence".

That is why Wall Street greets the Hungarian "revolution", workers councils and all, with a wild enthusiasm whose only restraint is their fear of an immediate atomic war. Considering the very real possibility of such a war, the amazing thing is that they express their feelings so frankly (particularly in the case of East Germany) and so much more volubly than they did in the case of Kronstadt. -- But then, this is their first big break in ten years.

THE KADAR GOVERNMENT

The Kadar government, imposed by Russian bayonets though it is, represents a deformed workers state, and it is not at all counter-revolutionary in the sense used by the MILITANT. This will not prevent Kadar from making all kinds of bourgeois concessions, however, to propitiate the "revolution". (As the MILITANT surprisingly concedes, a cabinet composed of Smallholder and Peasant Party representatives would be "less hateful to the Hungarian people." - lead article December 24 - Kadar's motivations are never from principle of course, but from the Bonapartist self-interests of a workers' state bureaucracy. In typical Bonapartist fashion, he made constant class appeals to the workers in the first days after November 4 in order to win them from the counter-revolution; then, after encouraging the already existing workers councils, he dispersed the first attempted nation-wide "workers parliament" (November 21). Following Nagy's example, he may call more and more bourgeois elements into his cabinet (although keeping a stronger control over them). And like his predecessors did for the last ten years, he may try to win Mindszenty's support for the regime. This time Mindszenty might shrewdly decide to give it, without of course, withdrawing one iota of his support to the Hungarian "revolution".

OUR POSITION

We condemn the first Soviet military intervention against the unarmed demonstration on October 23. But recognizing that the consequent nation-wide uprising was swiftly turned into a restorationist movement, we should support the second entry of the Red Army and its overthrow of the Nagy regime.

We should call for an Independent Soviet Hungary allied to and equal to the Soviet Union. This is integral to our call for the political revolution to regenerate the Soviet State under the banner of world revolution. -- "The overthrow of the bureaucracy presupposes the preservation of state property and planned economy." - Trotsky, In Defense of Marxism - The overthrow of the Hungarian bureaucracy must presuppose the preservation of state property and planned economy in both Hungary and the Soviet Union.

We should strongly reiterate our defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism, and our subordination of the task of overthrowing the bureaucracy to this defense. We should arm the advanced workers ideologically for the coming great conflict, which Hungary may have brought closer. In the long run, the bureaucracy cannot successfully defend the Soviet Union itself, not to mention Hungary. Only genuine proletarian revolutionists can do so.

The great lesson of the half-blind Hungarian counter-revolution is the necessity for the Marxist party. The Chinese revolution proved that there could be the possibility (after 24 years of armed struggle) of one class defeating another class without a Marxist leadership. Hungary has proved that the substitution of the bureaucratic leadership by a revolutionary leadership within the same class cannot be accomplished without the Marxist party.

The bourgeoisie says the Hungarian revolution "will not have been in vain". By this they mean that genuine communism has had a historic set-back. It is hard to deny that this is so. But if the proletarian vanguard learns all the lessons of Hungary and learns them thoroughly, it will prepare itself to lead the whole class in the next inevitable leap forward. This leap will come earlier and extend farther than the bourgeoisie now imagine on the basis of their estimate of Hungary. But our estimate is more profound than theirs. In the deeper sense, the Hungarian uprising, counter-revolutionary though it proved to be, is a training ground for proletarian revolutionaries. It will be studied and debated for a long time. Its lessons will be deeply pondered and well learned. The more clearly the proletarian vanguard assimilates the lessons of Hungary and the reasons for it -- the more surely "it will not have been in vain."

December 28, 1956

TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

New York, New York
November 3, 1956

PROPOSED RESOLUTION ON THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE
NEW HUNGARIAN REGIME

(Submitted to PC Meeting of November 5, 1956)

1. The present regime in Hungary must be characterized as a bourgeois counter-revolutionary restorationist regime.
2. Responsibility of Stalinism. The fundamental responsibility for the terrible defeat in Hungary lies exclusively at the door of the Stalinist bureaucracy.
3. The Hungarian Stalinist Regime was a deformed dictatorship of the working class (deformed workers state). It had shattered the power of the old ruling classes, but it had not destroyed the classes themselves. The old classes remained, and have now come out in the open. The uprising has changed the relation of class forces in the country. The peasantry and peasant poor (the majority of the country) are now following the lead of the bourgeois elements. The working class has no political leadership which expresses its own independent class interests. Lacking a firm leadership from the workers, and hungering for private land, the peasants are accepting a bourgeois leadership and a bourgeois program.
4. There has been a shift in class power in the country, which was first recorded juridically in Nagy's invitation to Tildy and Kovacs to enter the government on October 26th. Nagy's act was the first official recognition that the counter-revolution was so strong, and it was the first beginning of a series of coalition governments. The fundamental difference between these coalitions and the coalitions of '47 and '48 is that in the latter case, the bourgeois parties were prisoners. In the new regime, it is the workers' parties who are prisoner.
5. The overturn of state power began with the masses seeking liberalization of Stalinist rule. But the brutal assault of Soviet troops against the unarmed demonstrators, united all the class forces in the country (in addition to the workers) against the government. As the struggle took on more and more of an anti-communist as well as anti-Stalinist character, many workers and even perhaps some of the workers' councils themselves, were overcome and taken in tow ideologically by the bourgeois politicians. And in backing the politicians against the Stalinists, they unwittingly created a great social support for the bourgeoisie itself.
6. The Workers Councils. Workers councils -- or soviets -- are class instruments, as labor unions themselves are class instruments. But like labor unions, they do not automatically play a progressive role.

We support the ruling power of such councils, of course, as against

bourgeois rule, i.e., a workers' as against a bourgeois state. And we call on the workers' councils to take exclusive state power as against the bureaucratic state power within a workers state. But to attain this exclusive power of their own, to replace the bureaucracy with the armed workers ruling in their own name, there must be a clear program, and strong leadership. It is not only doctrine that dictates this, but strategic necessity.

It is true the "workers councils" in Hungary had a general list of progressive demands varying in different parts of the country. But these demands often confused the question of socialist democracy with bourgeois democracy. The counter-revolution always enters under vague and ambiguous slogans, and never wears the identification tag -- "reaction."

7. The Leadership of these Councils. It is still not known how many "workers councils" there were established, or how correctly they were so named. But even were they 100% composed of workers, there was no guarantee that they could not be led in a counter-revolutionary direction. And since they were attacking a workers' regime, no matter how deformed, the question of leadership proved to be decisive.

Had the workers soviets of 1917, while still under the leadership of the double-dealing Mensheviks, somehow destroyed the Russian capitalist state and taken complete power, the result would have been a workers state, regardless of the essentially anti-working class nature of the Menshevik leadership. But in Hungary, the class character of the state was already established. The workers already held power, although they held it in a most distorted form. The distortion was most clearly expressed precisely in the leadership. What the workers needed was precisely a new leadership for their state. This they did not have, and could not develop in so short a time.

Today the old leadership is coming back. The workers are looking around the ruins in bewilderment, asking themselves what has happened. But the petty landholders, especially those who have seized the land of the collectives from under the guns of the Soviet army, are cocky and self-confident. They have already found a leadership, and with the legalization of all political parties, will once again outweigh the workers in the relation of class forces, and provide a political vehicle for the returning bourgeoisie.

8. The role of the Petty-bourgeoisie -- The Peasantry. The revolutionary and counter-revolutionary possibilities in the petty-bourgeoisie are endless. But it is obvious that the peasants in Hungary (the majority of the population) are now going in a historical direction diametrically opposite to the peasants of China in the recent revolution there. In China, the peasants were fighting landlords and capitalists and seizing the land from them, and in order to keep the land they had to overthrow both landlord and

it would mean liquidating the bureaucracy as a privileged caste and allowing the workers to rule. But the retreat had to be led by the workers regime whether it was Stalinist or Trotskyist. If the peasants did their own retreating, they would retreat right back to capitalism, (not landlordism of course) which was just what they tried to do.

The collectivization was carried out brutally and stupidly in the first place, just as it was in the Soviet Union itself. The Stalinists did not collectivize especially to "build socialism". They collectivized because of their fear of being overthrown by the same bourgeoisie with whom they had previously collaborated. (And the bourgeois restoration would find its biggest base in the peasantry). It was this fear that motivated the Stalinist collectivizations in the Soviet Union in 1929-1931. But there, the regime had had twelve years to win at least a portion of the peasantry, and, more important, to consolidate itself in the cities. Above all, it rested on the greatest popular revolution of all time.

Even under Lenin the alliance of workers and peasants was uneasy. The peasant risings of 1921 were not against collectivization. That had hardly begun yet. These risings were against the dictatorship over them which deprived them of "free trade" and other freedoms. If the Bolsheviks had not given them the NEP, they would have established their own NEP. But if they had, its name would have been capitalism, its political form, a capitalist state.

In Hungary, the peasants did not start the fighting. But they finally gained the most material results from the fighting. They gained the land for their private use. They took it and it will be many a long day before any workers regime, Stalinist or Trotskyist, with good farm machinery or without, will dare to try collectivization again. The peasants made a social transformation when they took the land from the workers state. And comrades who make light of this by pointing to the impracticability of the collectives are simply deluding themselves. The whole Hungarian workers state is also "impracticable" without the aid of the world revolution. But a move to overthrow it cannot be justified by appealing to the advantages of the free world-market.

The students, writers, etc. who started the first demonstration, appear to have had the simple intention of liberalizing the hated Stalinist regime, more or less as had been attempted in Poland. The fact that they favored de-collectivization or the increased power ("freedom") of the church wouldn't have been so bad, if nothing else had happened. But it did.

Once the students and petty bourgeois masses had been provoked into an open battle, the workers quickly joined with them. But it was a battle the workers were programmatically unprepared for. They were unprepared to assume the leadership of the other forces in society. And it was the kind of a battle where this was an absolute necessity for the workers. This was not an ordinary battle. This was an insurrection. The whole "nation" was overthrowing the deformed workers government. The workers did not have a proletarian revolutionary leadership to put in that government's place. And the absence of such a leadership could not be filled at the workers' leisure. The question demanded an immediate answer.

A workers' uprising for limited working-class demands, as in East Germany

12. Bourgeois vs. Proletarian Opposition to Stalinism. Nearly all strata in Hungarian society are opposed to Stalinism. But each stratum has a different reason for its opposition. The proletarian anti-Stalinists have different aims, different class objectives from the bourgeois anti-Stalinists. And it is impermissible to merge or cloud these differences. We have just seen this principle demonstrated as a matter of life or death for the workers' regime.

13. Not February 1917! It is false to equate the Hungarian events with February 1917 in Russia. In 1917, all factions and classes were generally united in opposing the Czar. In October 1956, in Hungary, all factions and classes were united in overthrowing Stalinism. But there the analogy ends.

The overthrow of centuries-old Czarism would have been progressive in almost any case. There was no grouping in Russia in February 1917 that could possibly be considered to the right of the Czarist bureaucracy.

In Hungary, however, there were several groupings to the right of the Stalinist bureaucracy -- not so much in ideology, as in class orientation and social position. The only articulate leadership, it is true, the generally socialist leadership of the students and intellectuals around the Petofi Clubs, and their similars, was an apparently leftist leadership. But whatever the real character of this group, it has proved to be only a minor factor in the overwhelming events.

14. A Working Class Program for Hungary would make the following minimum demands for execution by any regime taking the place of the old one:

1. For the retention and further extension of nationalized property.
2. Legalization of all parties who support this demand.
3. Outlawing of all parties who oppose it.
4. A direct appeal for support from the workers of the world.
5. Maintenance of the anti-imperialist military alliance with the Soviet Union, but with full independence to pursue a genuine socialist domestic and foreign policy.
6. Withdrawal of all Soviet troops on the request of an independent workers government in Hungary.

15. World Revolutionary Perspective. The Hungarian counter-revolution will prove to be only a brief, though horribly bloody episode. Already, through its tragic confusion there emerge giant lessons for the proletariat. The experience smashes to smithereens the concept of socialism-in-one-country. And it destroys the myth of the "self-reform" of the bureaucracy. Most important, it affirms once again from the negative side, and with the irrefutable logic of the events, the indispensable need of the workers for a vanguard party.

Only the strongest of the strong will build such a party today. But the coming world events will redeem the black relapse of history in Hungary, and carry the Trotskyist movement forward in the

minds and hearts of millions, when the still-gathering contradictions burst out anew on the world arena. True, there will be no "spontaneity" for Trotskyism. But the vanguard will reach the class with its program, and the class will respond by throwing up from its depths new cadres and new carriers of the program. The full assimilation of the lessons of the Hungarian events is an absolutely necessary precondition for this revolutionary outcome.

V. Gray