

## The Strategy of Refusal - Mario Tronti

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This article develops a concept that has been fundamental to autonomous politics in Italy - the concept of the working class refusal - The refusal of work, the refusal of capitalist development, the refusal to act as bargaining partner within the terms of the capital relation.

If we accept his description of the working class as developing within the structures of capitalist production, but outside of, free from, its political initiative, then we have a test-bed for a radical critique of current forms of Marxist orthodoxy regarding organisation.

The argument contained in this piece is developed still further - in the context of a new class composition - in Toni Negri's concept of working class and proletarian "self-valorisation", contained in the article "Domination and Sabotage".

The Strategy of the Refusal was written in 1965 as part of the "Initial Theses" in Tronti's *Operai e Capitale* ("Workers and Capital"), Einaudi, Turin, 1966, pp. 234-252.

Note: other Tronti article from *Operai e Capitale* was published in the CSE pamphlet No.1: *The Labour Process and Class Strategies*, 1976, ISBN 85035 025 5.

[Original Intro.]

### THE STRATEGY OF THE REFUSAL

Adam Smith says - and Marx comments on the accuracy of his observation - that the effective development of the productive power of labour begins when labour is transformed into wage labour, that is, when the conditions of labour confront it in the form of capital. One could go further and say that the effective development of the political power of labour really begins from the moment that labourers are transformed into workers, that is, when the whole of the conditions of society confront them as capital. We can see, then, that the political power of workers is intimately connected to the productive power of wage labour. This is in contrast to the power of capital, which is primarily a social power. The power of workers resides in their potential command over production, that is, over a particular aspect

of society. Capitalist power, on the other hand, rests on a real domination over society in general. But the nature of capital is such that it requires a society based on production. Consequently production, this particular respect of society, becomes the aim of society in general. Whoever controls and dominates it controls and dominates everything.

Even if factory and society were to become perfectly integrated at the economic level, nevertheless, at a political level, they would forever continue to be in contradiction. One of the highest and most developed points of the class struggle will be precisely the frontal clash between the factory, as working class and society, as capital. When the development of capital's interests in the factory is blocked, then the functioning of society seizes up: the way is then open for overthrowing and destroying the very basis of capital's power. Those, however, who have the contrary perspective, of taking over the running of the "general interests of society", are committing the error of reducing the factory to capital by means of reducing the working class, that is, a part of society, to society as a whole. Now we know that the productive power of labour makes a leap forward when it is put to use by the individual capitalist. By the same token, it makes a political leap forward when it is organised by social capital. It is possible that this political leap forward does not express itself in terms of organisation, whereupon an outsider may conclude that it has not happened. Yet it still exists as a material reality, and the fact of its spontaneous existence is sufficient for the workers to refuse to fight for old ideals - though it may not yet be sufficient for them to take upon themselves the task of initiating a new plan of struggle, based on new objectives.

So, can we say that we are still living through the long historical period in which Marx saw the workers as a "class against capital", but not yet as a "class for itself"? Or shouldn't we perhaps say the opposite, even if it means confounding a bit the terms of Hegel's dialectic? Namely, that the workers become, from the first, "a class for itself" - that is, - from the first moments of direct confrontation with the individual employer - and that they are recognised as such by the first capitalists. And only afterwards, after a long-terrible, historical travail which is, perhaps, not yet completed, do the workers arrive at the point of being actively, subjectively, "a class against capital". A prerequisite of this process of transition is political organisation, the party, with its demand for total power. In the intervening period there is the refusal - collective, mass, expressed in passive forms - of the workers to expose themselves as "a class against capital" without that organisation of their own, without that total demand for power. The working class does what it is. But it is, at one and the same time, the articulation of capital, and its dissolution. Capitalist power seeks to use the workers' antagonistic will-to-struggle as a motor of its own development. The workerist party must take this same real mediation by the workers of capital's interests and organise it in an antagonistic form, as the tactical

terrain of struggle and as a strategic potential for destruction. Here there is only one reference point - only one orientation - for the opposed world views of the two classes - namely the class of workers. Whether one's aim is to stabilise the development of the system or to destroy it forever, it is the working class that is decisive. Thus the society of capital and the workers' party find themselves existing as two opposite forms with one and the same content. And in the struggle for that content, the one form excludes the 'other. They can only exist together for the brief period of the revolutionary crisis. The working class cannot constitute itself as a party within capitalist society without preventing capitalist society from functioning. As long as capitalist does continue to function the working class party cannot be said to exist.

Remember: "the existence of a class of capitalists is based on the productive power of labour". Productive labour, then, exists not only in relation to capital, but also in relation to the capitalists as a class. It is in this latter relationship that it exists as the working class. The transition is probably a historical one: it is productive labour which produces capital; it is the fact of industrial workers being organised into a class that provokes the capitalists in general to constitute themselves as a class. Thus we see that - at an average level of development - workers are already a social class of producers: industrial producers of capital. At this same level of development the capitalists, themselves, constitute a social class not of entrepreneurs so much as organisers: the organisers of workers through the medium of industry. A history of industry cannot be conceived as anything other than a history of the capitalist organisation of productive labour, hence as a working class history of capital. The "industrial revolution" necessarily springs to mind: This must be the starting point of our research if we are to trace the development of The contemporary form of capital's domination over workers, as it increasingly comes to be exercised through the objective mechanisms of industry, and also the development of capital's capacity to prevent these mechanisms being used by workers. This would lead us to see that the development of the relationship between living labour and the constant part of capital is not a neutral process. Rather, it is determined, and often violently so, by the emerging class relationship between the collective worker and the whole of capital, qua social relations of production. We would then see that it is the specific moments of the class struggle which have determined every technological change in the mechanisms of industry. Thus we would achieve two things: one, we would break free of the apparent neutrality of the man-machine relationship; and two, we would locate this relationship in the interaction, through history, of working class struggles and capitalist initiative.

It is wrong to define present day society as "industrial civilisation". The "industry" of that definition is, in fact, merely a means.' The truth of modern society is that it is the

civilisation of labour. Furthermore, a capitalist society can never be anything but this. And, in the course of its historical development, it can even take on the form of "socialism". So.... not industrial society (that is, the society of capital) but the society of industrial labour, and thus the society of workers' labour. It is capitalist society seen from this point of view that we must find the courage to fight. What are workers doing when they struggle against their employers? Are they not they, above all else, saying "No" to the transformation of labour power into labour? Are they not, more than anything, refusing to receive work from the capitalist?

Couldn't we say, in fact, that stopping work does not signify a refusal to give capital the use of one's labour power, since it has already been given to capital once the contract for this particular commodity has been signed. Nor is it a refusal to allow capital the product of labour, since this is legally already capital's property, and, in any case, the worker does not know what to do with it. Rather, stopping work - the strike, as the classic form of workers' struggle - implies a refusal of the command of capital as the organiser of production: it is a way of saying "No" at a particular point in the process and a refusal of the concrete labour which is being offered; it is a momentary blockage of the work-process and it appears as a recurring threat which derives its content from the process of value creation. The anarcho-syndicalist "general strike", which was supposed to provoke the collapse of capitalist society, is a romantic naivete from the word go. It already contains within it a demand which it appears to oppose - that is, the Lassallian demand for a "fair share of the fruits of labour" - in other words, a fairer "participation" in the profit of capital. In fact, these two perspectives combine in that incorrect "correction" which was imposed on Marx, and which has subsequently enjoyed such success within the practice of the official working class movement - the idea that it is "working people" who are the true "givers of labour", and that it is the concern of workpeople to defend the dignity of this thing which they provide, against all those who would seek to debase it. Untrue...The truth of the matter is that the person who provides labour is the capitalist. The worker is the provider of capital. In reality, he is the possessor of that unique, particular commodity which is the condition of all the other conditions of production. Because, as we have seen, all these other conditions of production are, from the start, capital in themselves - a dead capital which, in order to come to life and into play in the social relations of production, needs to subsume under itself labour power, as the subject and activity of capital. But, as we have also seen, this transition into social relations of production cannot occur unless the class relation is introduced into it as its content. And the class relationship is imposed from the very first moment and by the very fact that the proletariat is constituted as a class in the face of the capitalist.

Thus, the worker provides capital, not only insofar as he sells labour power, but also insofar as he embodies the class relation. This, like the inherent social nature

of labour power, is another of those things acquired by the capitalist without payment, or rather, it is paid for, but at the cost (which is never subject to negotiation) of the workers' struggles which periodically shake the process of production. It's no accident that this terrain is the terrain that is chosen tactically by the workers as the ground on which to attack The employers, and is therefore the terrain on which the employer is forced to respond with continual technological "revolutions" in the organisation of work. In this whole process, the only thing which does not come from the workers is, precisely, labour. From the outset, the conditions of labour are in the hands of the capitalist. And again, from the outset, the only thing in the hands of the worker are the conditions of capital.

This is the historical paradox which marks the birth of capitalist Society, and the abiding condition which will always be attendant upon the "eternal rebirth" of capitalist development. The worker cannot be labour other than in relation to the capitalist. The capitalist cannot be capital other than in relation to the worker. The question is often asked: "What is a social class?" The answer is: "There are these two classes". The fact that one is dominant does not imply that the other should be subordinate. Rather, it implies struggle, conducted on equal terms, to smash that domination, and to take that domination and turn it, in new forms, against the one that has dominated up till now. As a matter of urgency we must get hold of, and start circulating, a photograph of the worker-proletariat that shows him as he really is - "proud and menacing". It's time to set in motion the contestation - the battle, to be fought out in a new period of history - directly between the working class and capital, the confrontation between what Marx referred to in an analogy as "the huge children's shoes of the proletariat and the dwarfish size of the worn-out political shoes of the bourgeoisie".

If the conditions of capital are in the hands of the workers', if there is no active life in capital without the living activity of labour power, if capital is already, at its birth, a Consequence of productive labour, if there is no capitalist society without the workers' articulation, in other words if there is no social relationship without a class relationship, and there is no class relationship without the working class., . then one can conclude that the capitalist class, from its birth, is in fact subordinate to the working class. Hence the necessity of exploitation. Working class struggles against the iron laws of capitalist exploitation cannot be reduced to the eternal revolt of the oppressed against their oppressors. Similarly, the concept of exploitation cannot be reduced to the desire of the individual employer to enrich himself by extracting the maximum possible amount of surplus labour from the bodies of his workers. As always, the economic explanation has no other weapon against capitalism than moral condemnation of the system. But we are not here to invent some alternative way of seeing this problem. The problem is already the other way round, and has been right from the start. Exploitation is born,

historically, from the necessity for capital to escape from its de facto subordination to the class of worker-producers. It is in this very specific sense that capitalist exploitation, in turn, provokes workers' insubordination. The increasing organisation of exploitation, its continual reorganisation at the very highest levels of industry and society are, then, again responses by capital to workers' refusal to submit to this process. It is the directly political thrust of the working class that necessitates economic development on the part of capital which, starting from the point of production, reaches out to the whole of social relations. But this political vitality on the part of its adversary which is, on the one hand, indispensable to capital, is, at the same time, the most fearful threat to capital's power. We have already seen the political history of capital as a sequence of attempts by capital to withdraw from the class relationship; at a higher level we can now see it as the history of the successive attempts of the capitalist class to emancipate itself from the working class, through the medium of the various forms of capital's political domination over the working class. This is the reason why capitalist exploitation, a continuous form of the extraction of surplus value within the process of production, has been accompanied, throughout the history of capital, by the development of ever more organic forms of political dictatorship at the level of the State.

In capitalist society the basis of political power is, in truth, economic necessity: the necessity of using force to make the working class abandon its proper social role as the dominant class. Looked at from this point of view, the present forms of economic planning are nothing more than an attempt to institute this Organic form of political dictatorship within democracy as the modern political form of class dictatorship. The intellectual consensus as to the future State-of-well-being - of which G.Myrdal speaks - that society which J.S.Mill, K.Marx and T.Jefferson alike would probably approve, might even be realisable. We would find ourselves with a synthesis of liberalism, socialism and democracy. Liberalism and democracy would finally be reconciled, finding an ideal mediator in the shape of the social State - a system commonly known as, quote, "socialism". Yet here too we would find the inexorable necessity of working class mediation, even at the level of political theory. As for the workers they would find in this "socialism" the ultimate form of automatic - i.e. objective - control; political control in economic guise; control of their movement of insubordination. The surpassing of State capitalism by a capitalist State is not something that belongs to the future: it has already happened. We no longer have a bourgeois State over a capitalist society, but, rather, the State of capitalist society.

At what point does the political State come to manage at least some part of the economic mechanism? When this economic mechanism can begin to use the political State itself as an instrument of production - the State as we have come to understand it, that is, as a moment of the political reproduction of the working class.

The "end of laissez-faire" means, fundamentally, that working class articulation of capitalist development can no longer function on the basis of spontaneous objective mechanisms: it must be subjectively imposed by political initiatives taken by the capitalists themselves, as a class. Leaving aside all the post- and neo-Keynesian ideologies, only Keynes has provided the capitalist point of view with a formidable subjective leap forward, perhaps comparable in historical importance with the leap which Lenin made possible from the working class point of view. However, this is not to concede that this was a "revolution" in capital's mode of thinking. If we look closely, we can see that this was already embodied in the preceding development. The capitalists have not yet invented - and in fact will obviously never be able to invent - a non-institutionalised political power. That type of political power is specifically working class power. The difference between the two classes at the level of political power is precisely this. The capitalist class does not exist independently of the formal political institutions, through which, at different times but in permanent ways, they exercise their political domination: for this very reason, smashing the bourgeois State does mean destroying the power of the capitalists, and by the same token, one could only hope to destroy that power by smashing the State machine. On the other hand, quite the opposite is true of the working class: it exists independently of the institutionalised levels of its organisation. This is why destroying the workers' political party does not mean - and has not meant - dissolving, dismembering, or destroying the class organism of the workers.

The very possibility of workers abolishing the State in society is located within the specific nature of this problem. In order to exist, the class of capitalists needs the mediation of a formal political level. Precisely because capital is a social power which, as such, claims for itself domination over everything, it needs to articulate this domination in political "forms" which can bring to life its dead essence as an objective mechanism, and provide it with subjective force. In immediate terms, the nature of capital is merely that of an economic interest, and, at the beginning of its history, it was nothing more than the egotistical interest of the individual capitalist: in order to defend itself from the threat posed by the working class, it is forced to turn itself into a political force, and to subsume under itself the whole of society. It becomes the class of capitalists, or - which amounts to the same thing - it turns itself into a repressive state apparatus. If it is true that the concept of class is a political reality, then no capitalist class exists without a capitalist state. And the so-called bourgeois "revolution" - the conquest of political power by the "bourgeoisie" - amounts to nothing more than the long historical transition through which capital constitutes itself as a class of capitalists in relation to the workers. Once again, the development of the working class displays totally the opposite features: when the working class begins to exist formally at an organised political level, it initiates the revolutionary process directly, and poses nothing but the demand for power: but it has existed as a class from the start, from a long time before, and precisely as such,

Threatens bourgeois order. Precisely because the collective worker is that totally particular commodity which counterposes itself to the whole of the conditions of society, including the social conditions of its labour, so it manifests, as already incorporated within itself, that direct political subjectivity, that partiality which constitutes class antagonism. From the very beginning the proletariat is nothing more than an immediate political interest in the abolition of every aspect of the existing order. ) As far as its internal development is concerned, it has no need of "institutions" in order to bring to life what it is, since what it is nothing other than the life-force of that immediate destruction. It doesn't need institutions, but it does need organisation. Why? In order to render the political instance of the antagonism objective in the face of capital; in order to articulate this instance within the present reality of the class relationship, at any given moment; in order to shape it into a rich and aggressive force, in the short term, through the weapon of tactics. This, which is necessary for the seizure of power, is also necessary before the need to seize power has arisen. Marx discovered the existence of the working class long before there were forms to express it politically: thus, for Marx, there is a class even in the absence of the party. On the other hand, the Leninist party, by virtue of having taken shape, gave the real illusion that there was already under way a specific process of working class revolution: for Lenin, in fact, when the class constitutes itself as a party, it becomes revolution in action. Here, then, are two complementary theses, just as the figures of Marx and Lenin are complementary. Basically, what are these two people if not admirable anticipations of the future of the class itself?

If we accept that the class is not identical with the party, nevertheless one can only talk of class on a political level. While it is true that there is class struggle even without a party, nevertheless we also have to point out that every class struggle is as a political struggle. If, through the party, the class puts into action what it is, if it does so by dissolving in practice everything that it must destroy in theory, by leaping from strategy to tactics, and if only in this way does it seize power from the hands of those who hold it, and organise that power in its own hands, in new forms.... if all this is true, then one must conclude that the relationship Class-Party-Revolution is far tighter, far more determinate and much more historically specific than the way it is currently being presented, even by Marxists. One cannot split the concept of revolution from the class relationship. But a class relationship is posed for the first time by the working class. Thus, the concept of revolution and the reality of the working class are one and the same. Just as there can be no classes before the workers begin to exist as a class, so there can be no revolution before the destructive will that the working class bears within itself, by the very nature of its existence, takes solid form. The working class point of view has no interest in defining the revolts and upheavals of the past as "revolutions". Furthermore, to hearken back to a set of "historical precedents" which are supposed to anticipate and prefigure the present movements of the workers - this is always reactionary,

always a conservative force acting to block the present movement and control it within the limited horizons of those who control the course of history today, of those who therefore control the development of society. Nothing is more alien to the working class point of view than the opportunistic cult of historical continuity; nothing more repugnant than the concept of "tradition". Workers recognise only one continuity - that of their own, direct political experiences; one sole tradition - that of their struggles.

So why should we concede that the bourgeoisie should ever have been capable of organising a revolution? Why accept passively the intimately contradictory concept of "bourgeois revolution", as if it was a given fact? Has there ever, in fact, been a class that was bourgeois? Because if, following the errors of historical materialism, we choose to confuse the "bourgeoisie" with the subsequent class of capitalists, then one has to explain how the organic relation between class and revolution functions; in the light of an historical experience which, so far from seeing the so-called bourgeois class making its revolution, in fact sees the so-called bourgeois revolution laying the foundations from which, after a long process of struggle, only a class of capitalists will emerge.

At this point a mass of concrete research becomes necessary in order to overthrow these false interpretations: for too long the Marxist "tradition" has stifled the debate within schemas that are as theoretically false as they are politically dangerous. We think that this overthrow is possible today even at the simple level of basic historical enquiry. We think that the time has come to start the work of reconstructing the facts, the moments, the transitions, which the inner reality of capitalism only reveals - and can only reveal - to the working class viewpoint. It is now time to set in motion that working class history of capitalist society which alone can provide the movement of practical overthrow with rich, fearful, decisive weapons of theory. Theoretical reconstruction and practical destruction, from this moment, have no choice but to run together, as the two legs of that single body which is the working class.

Proletarian revolutions, said Marx, "criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only so that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: Hic Rhodus, hic salta!" (The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte)

We say, though, that this is not the process of proletarian revolutions. This is the process of revolution tout court. This is revolution as process. Only the working class, because it is what it is, because of the point where it has to act, because of the mode in which it is forced to fight -only the working class can be revolutionary process.

Bourgeois revolutions, says Marx, "storm swiftly from success to success; their dramatic effects outdo each other; men and things seem set in sparkling brilliant; ecstasy is the everyday spirit; but they are short-lived; soon they have reached their highest point and a long crapulent depression lays held of society before it learns soberly to assimilate the results or is? storm-and-stress period." (ibid.)

We must go further, however<sup>1</sup> and say that these are not revolutions but something else - and something different each time: coups d'etat; government crises; dramatic changes in the form of power; the passage of government from one fraction of a class to another fraction of the same class; sudden restructurings of that class's domination of the other class. The classic model of the bourgeois "revolution" - invented by historical materialism -conceives of a sudden seizing of political power only after the completion of a long, slow, gradual taking-over of economic power. Thus the class, having already dominated society as a whole, then lays claim to the running of the State. Now, if these infantile schemes had only been used to illustrate a history beck or two, well and good: after one might expect that of a "history book". But in the Marxist camp, errors of theory are paid for in very practical terms: this is a law whose consequences the workers have 'had to suffer all too often. When the attempt; was made to apply the model of the bourgeois revolution to the course of working class revolution, it was at that point (and we have got to understand his), it was at that point that we saw the strategic collapse of the movement. The workers were supposed to copy this model, they were supposed to demonstrate, in practice, that they were capable of managing the economy of the society (far more capable, of course, than the capitalists), and on this basis. They were to demand the running of the State. Hence, worker's management of capital as the prime way, the "classic" road to socialism. For historical materialism, social democracy is theoretically the most orthodox workers movement. Basically, all the communist movement has done has been to break and overturn, in some aspects of its practice, the social democratic logic of what has been its own theory.

And yet, at the beginning the dividing line between social democracy and the communist movement was clearly fixed. And if an internal history of the working class is to be reconstructed - alongside that of capital - it will certainly include both of these organisational experiences - although not under the same heading, and

not with the same significance accorded to each. There is in fact a difference of quality between different moments of the working class struggle itself. August 9th 1842, when 10,000 workers marched on Manchester, with the Chartist Richard Pilling at their head, to negotiate with the manufacturers at the Manchester Exchange, and also to see how the market was going, is not the same as Sunday May 28th 1871 in Paris, when Gallifet called out of the ranks of prisoners those with grey hair and ordered them to be shot immediately, because as well as being present at March 1871, they had also lived the experience of June 1848. And we should not summarise the first case as an offensive action by the workers and the second as an act of repression by the capitalists, because perhaps it is quite the opposite.

It is true that here we see the working class articulation of capitalist development: at first as an initiative that is positive for the functioning of the system, an initiative that only needs to be organised via institutions; in the second instance, as a "No", a refusal to manage the mechanism of the society as it stands, merely to improve it - a "No" which is repressed by pure violence. This is the difference of content which can exist - even within one and the same set of working class demands - between trade union demands and political refusal. Social democracy, even when it has conquered State political power, has never gone beyond the limited demands of a trade union facing an employer. The communist movement, in individual, short-lived experiences, has blocked the peaceful development of capitalists initiative with the weapon of the Party-of-non-collaboration. Now, if workers simply had to choose between these two options as part of past history, the choice would be fairly simple. This is not, in fact, the problem. The problem is the price to be paid at the level of theory if we take on board the tradition of struggles of the communist movement. However, This problem cannot be answered without taking into account the short-term practical results that will arise from taking this path. At this point we must guard against the subjective illusion that poses the strategic overthrow proposed here, first as the birth of working class science, and then as the first real possible organisation of the class movement. Instead we must cultivate and recover a specific type of internal development of the working class, a political growth of its struggles, and we must use this as a lever in order to make a leap forwards - without objectivism, without harking back to days gone by, and without having to start from scratch. Once again, the crude proletarian origins of the modern worker need to be grasped and made to function within the present needs of struggle and organisation. We must fight fiercely this current image of a "new working class" which is somehow continually being reborn and renewed by the various technological advances of capital, as if in some scientific production laboratory. At the same time, it is not that we are disowning the rebellious past of the working class - the violence, the insurrections, that succession of "desperate follies". We should not make the same mistakes as the cold-blooded history scholars, by crying "people's revolt" every time the masses put up barricades, and

then finding the "true" working class struggle only in more recent forms of bargaining with the collective capitalist. Were 1848, 1871 and 1917 working class struggles? Empirically, historically, we could demonstrate that they were not, according to the objectives actually put forward in those events. But try to reconstruct the concept and the political reality of the working class without the June insurgents, without the Communards, and without the Bolsheviks. You will have a lifeless model, an empty form in your hands.

Of course, the working class is not the people. But the working class comes from the people. And this is the elementary reason why anyone - like ourselves - who take up the working class viewpoint, no longer need to "go towards the people". We ourselves, in fact, come from the people. And just as the working class frees itself politically from the people at the moment when it is no longer posed as a subaltern class, so too working class science breaks with the heritage of bourgeois culture at the moment that it no longer takes the viewpoint of society as a whole, but of that part which wishes to overthrow society. Culture in fact, like the concept of Right, of which Marx speaks, is always bourgeois. In other words, it is always a relation between intellectuals and society, between intellectuals and the people, between intellectuals and class; in this way it is always a mediation of conflicts and their resolution in something else. If culture is the reconstruction of the totality of man, the search for his humanity in the world, a vocation to keep united that which is divided - then it is something which is by nature reactionary and should be treated as such. The concept of working class culture as revolutionary culture is as contradictory as the concept of bourgeois revolution. Furthermore, the idea implies that wretched Counter-revolutionary thesis whereby the working class is supposed to re-live the whole experience of the history of the bourgeoisie. The myth that the bourgeoisie had a "progressive" culture, which the working class movement is then supposed to pick up out of the dust where capital has thrown it (along with all its old banners), has carried Marxist theoretical research into the realm of fantasy. But at the same time it has imposed a daily task - that we act to safeguard and develop this official inheritance as the heritage of the whole of humanity as it advances down the road of progress. The situation here is so bad that - as in other cases - it will take a violent, destructive blow to unblock it. Here the critique of ideology must consciously pose itself within the workerist perspective, as a critique of culture. It must work towards a dissolution of all that already exists - a refusal to continue to build on the old foundations. Man, Reason, History, these monstrous divinities will need to be fought and destroyed as if they were the power of the bosses. It is not true that capital has abandoned these ancient gods. It has simply turned them into the religion of the official workers movement: in this way they actively continue to govern the world of men. Meanwhile, the negation of these gods (which could hold a mortal danger for capital) is in fact managed directly by capital itself. Thus anti-humanism, irrationalism, anti-historicism, instead of being practical weapons in the hands of the working class struggle, become cultural products in the hands of

capitalist ideologies. In this way, culture - not because of the particular contents that it takes on in a particular period, but precisely through its ongoing form, as culture becomes a mediation of the social relation of capitalism, a function of its continued conservation. "Opposition" culture does not escape this fate either; it merely presents the body of labour movement ideologies dressed in the common clothing of bourgeois culture.

We are not concerned with whether or not in past historical periods it has been possible for the historical figure of the intellectual-on-the-side-of-the-working-class to exist. Because what is decisively not possible is that such a political figure can exist today. The organic intellectuals of the working class have in reality become the only thing that they could be: organic intellectuals of the labour movement. It is the Communist Party, it is the old form of organisation outside of the working class, that needs them. For decades they have assured the relationship between the Party and society without passing through the medium of the factory. And now that the factory is imposing itself, now that capital itself is calling them back' into the world of production, they arrive as objective mediators between science and industry: and This is the new form that is being taken by the traditional relationship between intellectuals and the party. Today's most "organic" intellectual is the one who studies the working class - the one who puts into practice the most diabolical bourgeois science that has ever existed - industrial sociology, the study of the movements of workers on behalf of the capitalist. Here too the whole problem needs rejecting en bloc. We are not speaking of a culture that is "on the side of the working class", nor of intellectuals under a working class aspect - but no culture and no intellectuals (apart from those serving capital). This is the counterpart of our solution to the other problem: no working class re-enactment of the bourgeois revolution, no working class retracing of the path taken by the bourgeois revolution - rather no revolution, ever, outside of the working class outside of what the class is, and thus outside of what the class is forced to do. A critique of culture means to refuse to be intellectuals. Theory of revolution means direct practice of the class struggle. It is the same relationship as that between ideology and working class science; and as that between these two combined and the moment of subversive praxis.

We said earlier That the working class point of view cannot be separated from capitalist society. We should add that it cannot be separated from the practical necessities of the class struggle within capitalist society.

What, then, are these necessities? And above all, is a new strategy necessary? If it is necessary, then one of the most urgent tasks in the struggle is to discover it, to assemble it and to elaborate it. At the level -of science there is no other task than this to be carried out. Formidable and new powers of the intellect must be

organised around this work. Powerful brains must begin to function collectively within this single, exclusive perspective. A new form of antagonism must instill itself in working class science, bending this science towards new ends, and then transcending it in the totally political act of practice. The form we refer to is the form of the struggle of refusal, the form of organisation of the working class "No": the refusal to collaborate actively in capitalist development, the refusal to put forward positively programme of demands. In the working class history of capital, it is possible to discover the germ of these forms of struggle and organisation right from the very start, right from the time that the first proletarians were constituted as a class. But their full development, their real significance, comes much later, and they still exist as a strategy of the future. Their possibilities of functioning materially increase as the working class grows quantitatively, as it becomes more concentrated and unified, as it increasingly develops in quality and becomes internally homogeneous, and as it increasingly succeeds in organising itself around the movements of its own overall power.

These forms, therefore, presuppose a process of accumulation of labour-power, which - unlike The accumulation of capital - has a directly political meaning. It implies the concentration and growth not of an economic category, but of the class relation which underlies it; an accumulation, therefore, of a political power which is immediately a terror~tive, even before it comes to be organised as such through the "great collective means" that are proper to it. The refusal is thus a form of struggle which grows simultaneously with the working class - the working class which is, at one and the same time, both political refusal of capital and production of capital as an economic power. This explains why the political struggle by workers and the terrain of capitalist production always form a whole. The first demands made by proletarians in their own right, the moment that they cannot be absorbed by the capitalist, function objectively as forms of refusal which put the system in jeopardy. Whenever the positive demands of workers go beyond the margins that the capitalists is able to grant, once again they repeat this function -the objective, negative function of pure and simple political blockage in the mechanism of the economic laws. Every conjunctural transition, every advance in the structure, in the economic mechanism, must therefore be studied in terms of its specific moments: but only in order to arrive at the point where the workers can demand that which capital, at that particular moment in time, cannot give. In such circumstances, the demand as a refusal sets off a chain of crises in capitalist production, each of which requires the tactical capacity to make a leap forward in the level of working class organisation.

As, together, 'both workers and capital grow, there is a gradual process of simplification of the class struggle. The fundamental strategic importance of this must be grasped. It is not true that the "elementary" nature of the first clashes

between proletarians and individual capitalists later became enormously complicated as the working masses found themselves faced with the modern initiative of big capital. In fact, precisely the opposite is true. In The beginning, the content of the class struggle has two faces - that of the working class & that of the capitalists - which are not yet separated by a radical division. The struggle for the working day is instructive in this respect. Moreover, the platforms of demands which workers have for decades, presented to the capitalists have had - and could only have had -one result: the improvement of exploitation. Better conditions of life for the workers were not separable from greater economic development of capitalism. As far as the official working class movement is concerned), both the trade union strand, and later the reformist strand, have functioned within the spiral of this process, in their attempts at economic organisation of the workers. It is no accident that, in our exposition, we have preferred to stress those moments of working class struggle that challenge, even at a less advanced social level, the political power of capital. The fact remains that this historical terrain of the class struggle, which has by no means disappeared from the present-day world, can be reduced to the simplicity of a direct clash between antagonistic forces only through a work of analysing the high points of successive developments and by criticism of the results they achieve. We find this to be a terrain in which the class struggle has always been complicated and mediated in its outward relations by situations, even political situations, which were not in themselves class struggle. In the process of things these situations increasingly lose importance (ie the residues of the pre-capitalist past are burned away) thus causing the downfall of all the future Utopias which have been built on the working class, and this finally offers the subjective possibility of enclosing the class struggle within the chain of the present in order to smash it. In this process we have to grasp from the working-class point of view not only the quantitative growth and massification of the antagonism, not only its ever-increasingly homogeneous internal unification, but also, through this, the way it progressively regains its primitive, direct elementary nature, as a counter-position between two classes, each of which gives life to the other, but only one of which holds in its grasp the possible death of the other. Leaving aside earlier historical periods, and coming forward to the highest point of development, we can see the evident truth of that simplest of revolutionary truths: capital cannot destroy the working class; the working class can destroy capital. The cook who, according to Lenin, should be able to govern the workers State, must be enabled to function - as from now, and on the basis of these elementary categories - as a theoretician of working class science.

Thus the masses of working class demands simplify and unify into one. There must come a point where all will disappear, except one - the demand for power, all power, to the workers, This demand is the highest form of the refusal. It presupposes already a de facto reversal of the balance of domination between the two classes. In other words, it presupposes that from that moment it will be the

capitalist class putting positive demands, making their requests, presenting their Bill of Rights (in the name, naturally, of the general interests of society). And it will be the workers who are rejecting the pleas that are put to them. There must also be a point here, where all the requests and demands will come explicitly from the capitalists, and only the "No" will be openly working class. These are not stories of some far-distant future. The tendency is already under way, and we must grasp it from the start in order to control it.

When capital reaches a high level of development it no longer limits itself to guaranteeing collaboration of the workers - i.e. the active extraction of living labour within the dead mechanism of its stabilisation - some-thing which it so badly needs. At significant points it now makes a transition, to the point of expressing its objective needs through the subjective demands of the workers. It is true - and we have seen - that this has already happened, historically. The spectre of capitalist necessities of production being imposed as working class demands, in the struggle, is a recurrent theme in the history of capital, and it can only be explained as a permanent working class articulation of capitalist society. But whereas in the past this happened as an objective functioning of the system (which was thereby virtually self-regulating), today it happens, on the contrary, by conscious initiative of the capitalist class, via the modern instruments of its power apparatus. And in between there has been that decisive experience of working class struggle, which no longer limited itself to asking for power, but actually conquered it. It was with 1917 and the Russian Revolution that the working class articulation of capital was subjectively imposed on the capitalists. What previously had functioned of itself, controlled by nobody, as a blind economic law, from that moment had to be moved from above, politically promoted by those who held the power: it was the only way to control the objective process, the only way to defeat the subversive threat of its possible consequences. This is the origin of that major development in capital's subjective awareness, which led it to conceive and put into practice a plan of social control over all the moments of its cycle, all conceived within a direct capitalist use of working class articulation. Thus, once again, an experience of working class struggle spurs a major advance in the capitalist point of view - an advance which it would never have made of its own accord. The demands of the working class are henceforth recognised by the capitalist~ themselves as objective needs of the production of capital: and as such they are not only taken on board, but are actively solicited; no longer simply rejected, but now collectively negotiated. The mediation of the institutional level of the working class movement, 'particularly at the trade union level, takes on a decisive and irreplaceable' importance. The platform of demands that the trade union puts forward is already controlled by those on whom it is supposed to be imposed: by the bosses who are supposed to "take it or leave it". Through the trade union struggle, working class demands can be nothing more than the reflection of capital's necessities. And yet capital cannot pose this necessity directly, of itself -not even if it wanted to, not even when it reaches its

highest point of class awareness. Rather, at this point it acquires quite the reverse awareness: that it must find ways to have its own needs put forward by its enemies, it must articulate its own movement via the organised movements of the workers.

We might ask a question: what happens when the form of working class organisation takes on a content which is wholly alternative; when it refuses to function as an articulation of capitalist society; when it refuses to carry capital's needs via the demands of the working class? The answer is that, at that moment and from that moment, the systems whole mechanism of development is blocked. This is the new concept of the crisis of capitalism that we must start to circulate: no longer the economic crisis, the catastrophic collapse, a Zusammenbruch, however momentary, arising from the impossibility of the system's continued functioning. Rather, a political crisis imposed by the subjective movements of the organised workers, via the provocation of a chain of critical conjunctures, -within the sole strategy of the working class refusal to resolve the contradictions of capitalism. A tactic of organisation within the structures of capitalist production, but outside of, free from, its political initiative. Of course, it remains necessary to block the economic mechanism and, at the decisive moment, render it incapable of functioning. But the only way to achieve this is via the political refusal of the working class to act as active partner in the whole social process, and furthermore, the refusal of even passive collaboration in capitalist development: in other words, the renunciation of precisely that form of mass struggle which today unifies the movements led by the workers in the advanced capitalist countries. We must say clearly that this form of struggle - for such it is - is no longer enough. Non-collaboration, passivity (even on a mass scale), the refusal (insofar as it is not political, not subjectively organised, not inserted into a strategy, not practiced in tactical terms), the advanced font of spontaneity which has been forced on the class struggle for decades - not only is all this no longer enough to provoke the crisis, but it has become, in fact, an element of stabilisation of capitalist development. It is now one of those same objective mechanisms whereby capitalist initiative now controls and makes use of the class relationship that motivates it. We must break this process before it becomes yet another heavy historical tradition for the working class movement to bear.

A transition to another process is necessary - without, however, losing the basic positive elements of this one. Obviously non-collaboration must be one of our starting points, and mass passivity at the level of production is the material fact from which we must begin. But at a certain point all this must be reversed into its opposite. When it comes to the point of saying 'No', the refusal must become political; therefore active; therefore subjective; therefore organised. It must once again become antagonism -this time at a higher level. Without this it is impossible to think of opening up a revolutionary process. This is not a matter of instilling in the

mass of workers the awareness that they must fight against capital that they must fight for something which will transcend capital and lead into a new dimension of human society. What is generally known as 'class consciousness' is, for us, nothing other than the moment of organisation, the function of the party, the problem of tactics - the channels which must carry the strategic plan through to a point of practical breakthrough. And at the level of pure strategy there is no doubt that this point is provided by the very advanced moment in which this hypothesis of struggle becomes reality: the working class refusal to present demands to capital, the total rejection of the whole trade union terrain, the refusal to limit the class relationship within a formal, legal, contractual form. And this is the same as forcing capital to present the objective needs of capitalist production directly, as such. It cuts out working class mediation of development. It blocks the working class articulation of the mechanism. In the final event, this means depriving capital of its content, of the class relationship which is its basis. For a period the class relationship must be exercised by the working class, through its party - just as up till now it has been exercised by the capitalist class, through its State.

It is here that the balance of domination between the two classes is set into reverse, no longer just in theory, but also in practice. In fact, the revolutionary process sees the working class becoming ever-increasingly what it actually is: a ruling class on its own terrain (a specifically political terrain), a conquering power which, in destroying the present, takes revenge for a whole past (not merely its own) of subordination and exploitation. This is the sense of the hypothesis which poses, at the highest point of this process, on the one hand capital making demands, and on the other hand the working class refusal. And this presupposes the existence of a political force of the working class, organised per se, and able to constitute an autonomous power of decision in relation to the whole of society, a No Man's Land where capitalist order cannot reach, and from which the new barbarians of the proletariat can embark at any moment. Thus the final act of the revolution requires that there should already be the workers' State within capitalist society - the workers having power in their own right and deciding the end of capital. But this would not be a pre-figuration of the future, because the future, from the working class point of view, does not exist; only a block on the present, the impossibility for the present to continue functioning under its present organisation, and thus an instance of its possible reorganisation under an opposite notion of power. An autonomous working class political power is the only weapon that can block the functioning of capital's economic mechanisms. In this sole sense the workers' State of tomorrow is the party of today.

This brings us back to the concept, which we attributed to Marx, of communism as the party, which instead of constructing a model of the future society, supplies a practical means for the destruction of the present society.

