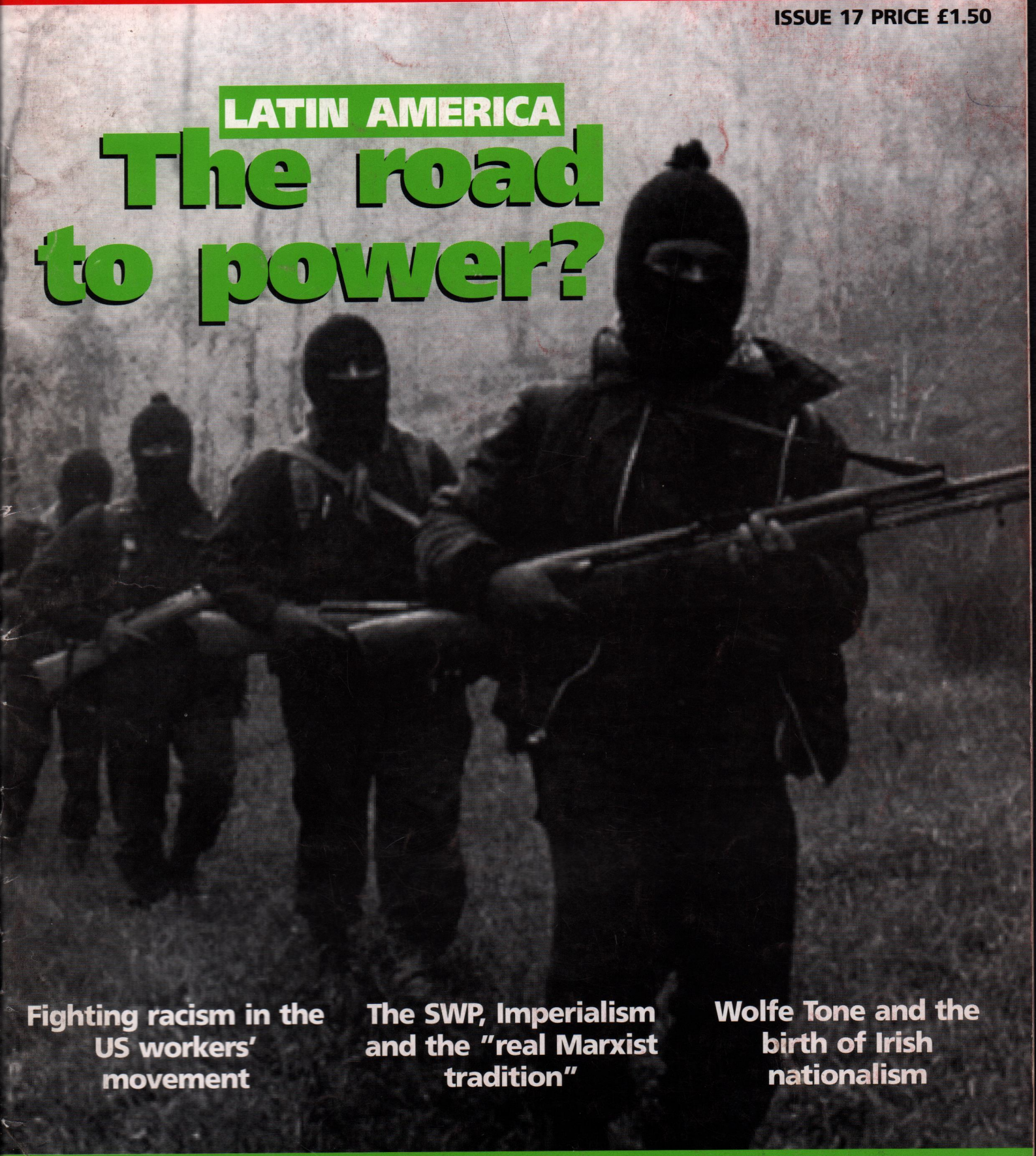
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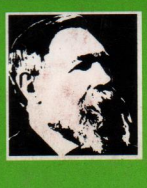


LATIN AMERICA
The road to power?

Fighting racism in the US workers' movement

The SWP, Imperialism and the "real Marxist tradition"

Wolfe Tone and the birth of Irish nationalism



ENGELS IN DEFENCE OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

Trotskyist INTERNATIONAL

ISSUE 17 MAY-AUGUST 1995

INCORPORATING PERMANENT REVOLUTION

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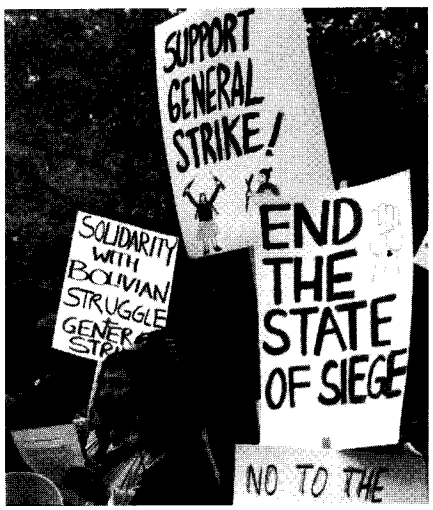
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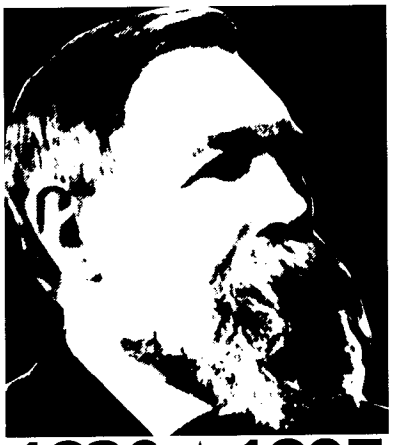
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Cover: Zapatista guerrillas, Mexico 1994

ENGELS



1820★1895

The struggle for scientific socialism

To mark the centenary of Engels death **Dave Stockton** chronicles Marx and Engels' fight for scientific socialism in the ranks of the early German workers' movement, and explains the lasting significance of Engels book *Anti-Dühring* for generations of socialists

The contribution of Frederick Engels to Marxism has been the subject of much controversy. Many attempts have been made to present him as the falsifier of Marx's doctrine and method.

It is claimed that Engels tried to turn Marxism into natural science, transforming it into a rigid set of predictions about the inevitable victory of socialism. Critics brand Engels as the man responsible for robbing Marxism of its "humanist essence" and for the reformist degeneration of the Second International. By association, Engels is found guilty of laying the basis for both Stalinism and reformist Social Democracy.

In short, Engels has been blamed for most of the problems that have beset Marxism since Marx's death in 1883.

In the 1920s and 1930s there had already been a reaction against the "scientism" of the Second International. Lukacs and Gramsci wanted to improve Marxism by a "return to Hegel"—an appeal to philosophy against science. They mainly targeted Karl Kautsky, the pre-1914 "pope of Marxism". But they often came close to attacking Engels. Only the crushing bureaucratism of Stalinism stopped the left intellectuals' assault on Engels in the 1930s.

In the 1960s, as the "new left" emerged, attacks on Engels multiplied. George Lichtheim in his 1961 book *Marxism—An Historical and Critical Study* claimed:

"For better or worse Socialist practice over the greater part of Europe came to reflect an attitude of mind which derived final confirmation from the materialist doctrine expounded by Engels in his writings of the late 1870s and 1880s."

This led to, "the transformation of Marxism into a 'scientific' doctrine emptied of genuine philosophic content—and hence powerless to stop the inrush of romantic irrationalism which began in the 1890s and reached a disastrous climax in the 1930s."[1]

Not only was Engels responsible for reformism and Stalinism, but fascism too!

Lichtheim's theme was developed by Marxist and "post-Marxist" writers alike—such as Alfred Schmidt, Lucio Colletti, Shlomo Avineri, Louis Althusser and Lesek Kolakowski. It reached a climax in the 1980s with the works of Norman Levine[2] and Terrel Carver's various works.[3]

What unites these writers is the idea that Marx and Engels were "opposites not twins". Marx—who referred to Engels as "my *alter ego*"—was Dr Jekyll to Engels' Mr Hyde. In order to dress up their own revisions of Marxism as orthodoxy, twentieth century intellectuals have loaded everything they do not like about Marx's Marxism onto Engels—creating in Engels a kind of fetish object, the irony of which would not have been lost on the two founders of scientific socialism.

Nearly all attacks on Engels start with his most encyclopaedic work, *Anti-Dühring*[4], or with its shortened and popularised version *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.*

But these works represent the most rounded and complete presentation of both the methodology of Marxism, and its main tenets: in economics, politics and history. This presentation was well known to Marx, approved of explicitly by him, and represents the combined views of the two comrades as they looked back on forty years of collaboration.

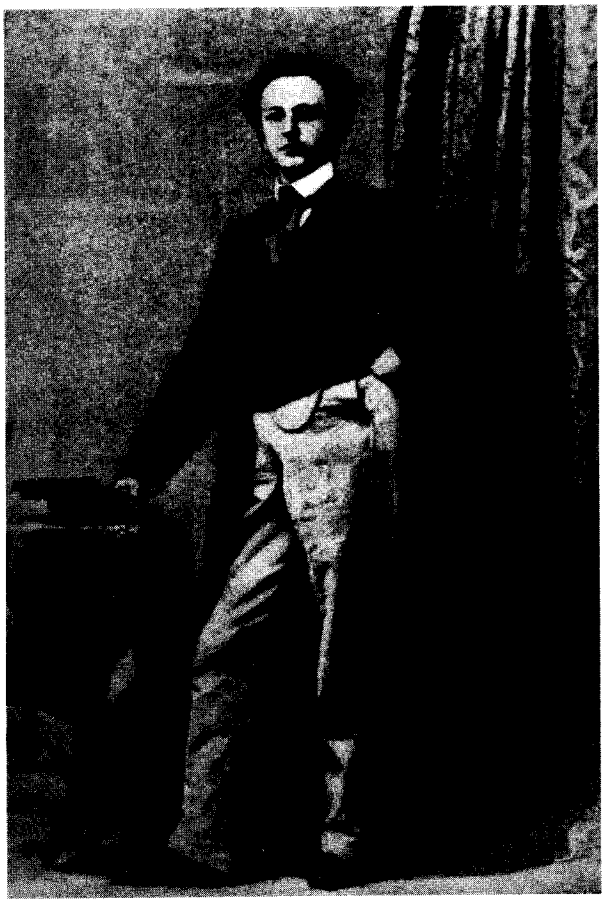
In this article we will look at the genesis of *Anti-Dühring*, what it added to Marxism, and why it should remain what Lenin called it: "a handbook for every class conscious worker."[5]

Winning the Labour Movement to Marxism.

After the defeat of the Paris Commune (1871), the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) held two Congresses, in London and the Hague (1871 and 1872 respectively) to discuss the lessons of the failed revolution.

These meetings marked a turning point in Marx and Engels' perspectives for the workers' movement. The clashes in the First International with the anarchists, the British trade union leaders, and even with their former allies, the French Blanquists, all convinced Marx and Engels that the era of relying on the existing forces assembled in the IWMA was over.

Marx and Engels had won the political battles in the International but they had not yet achieved the creation of parties in the main European countries and North America committed to scientific socialism. The failure of the



FERDINAND LASSALLE

Commune was the most spectacular confirmation of this.

Marx and Engels now realised that a new stage in the history of the workers' movement was beginning; that of building disciplined, democratic, mass workers' parties.

They recognised that the existing forms of workers' organisation would never accomplish the social revolution. The forces in the IWMA — a collection of secret conspiratorial societies, reformist trade unions and the propaganda sects of pre-scientific socialism — had to face up to this task or remain irrelevant. Marx and Engels therefore proposed an amendment to the IWMA Statutes which said:

Marx and Engels turned their attention to the newly unified Germany where two small but stable workers' parties already existed

"In its struggle against the collective power of the possessing classes the proletariat can only act as a class if it constitutes its own distinct political party, opposed to all the old parties formed by the possessing classes. The forming of a political party by the proletariat is indispensable in order to assure the triumph of the revolution and its ultimate object, the abolition of all classes. The coalition of working class forces already obtained in economic struggles, must also serve as a lever in the hands of that class in its struggle against the political power of its exploiters. The lords of the earth and the lords of capital always use their political privileges to defend and perpetuate their economic monopolies and to enslave Labour, and therefore the conquest of political power is the great duty of the proletariat."[6]

Having achieved their political victory over Bakunin's anarchists, Marx and Engels proposed that the International move its headquarters to New York, putting it out of the reach of the European sects. Yet within two years the First International was dead. It could not survive the shattering blow of the defeat of the Paris Commune and the ideological struggle that broke out within its ranks as a result of drawing the lessons of that experience. Engels recognised that the First International had served its function and outlived its usefulness:

"In order to produce a new International like the old one—an alliance of all the proletarian parties of all countries—a general suppression of the workers' movement like that which prevailed from 1849 to 1864 would be necessary. For this the proletarian world has become too big, too extensive. I think the next International—after Marx's writings have been at work for some years—will be directly Communist and will openly proclaim our principles."[7]

They realised that their next task in that direction was to win over the largest and growing national workers' movement directly to scientific socialism. Marx and Engels turned their attention to the newly unified Germany where two small but stable workers' parties already existed. The first was founded by Ferdinand Lassalle in 1863—the General German Workers' Union (ADAV). Marx and Engels tried to influence Lassalle and his successor J. B. Von Schweitzer.

Their attempts were shipwrecked on differences over which side to support in the conflict between Bismarck and the Progressive Party (Liberals) over constitutional liberties and the method of unifying Germany.

Marx and Engels insisted that German socialists must maintain the Great German perspective (i.e. union with German-speaking Austria) and support the Liberal bourgeoisie whenever it clashed with Bismarck's bonapartism over democratic issues. Lassalle and his successors, however, were willing to respond to Bismarck's approaches for a secret block against the Liberals.

They were ready to accept Bismarck's policy of excluding Austria and thus ensuring a Germany dominated by Prussia and its *Junker* (landowner) class. Bismarck was prepared to consider universal suffrage as long as any elected parliament was denied control over the executive and the armed forces. Bismarck had good reason to believe that the still predominantly rural electorate could be intimidated into voting for the Conservatives by their landowning employers, their pastors and their priests. Such "democracy", Marx and Engels always insisted, was a "fig leaf for absolutism".

The second strand in the German labour movement, inaugurated by the old Communist League member Wilhelm Liebknecht and the young worker August Bebel, was the Social Democratic Workers Party. It was founded in 1869 at a congress at Eisenach. The programme adopted there only took the first steps away from radical Liberalism but it had certain marked superiorities over that of the Lassalleans.

In a series of articles written by August Bebel[8], a key young worker leader, the deception that a "half free or despotic state could ever accomplish the workers' emancipation" was exposed. He stated explicitly the need to replace the Prussian state with one which embodied the will of the majority—a "Peoples State" (*Volkstaat*). In language designed to get round censorship, this meant only one thing—a republic.

In May 1875 the Social Democratic Workers' Party and the General German Workers' Union held a joint congress at Gotha. The Gotha Congress adopted a common programme for a unified workers' party in Germany. After a later congress at Erfurt this party came to be known as the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

Marx and Engels subjected this programme to withering criticism—and the thrust of their argument was directed as much against Bebel and Liebknecht as against the Lassalleans.

The demand for state aid to workers' co-operatives, Marx and Engels claimed, would have turned the workers' organisations into "pensioners of the King of Prussia". They insisted that all schemes for producer co-operatives



WILHELM LIEBKNECHT

under capitalism were, at best, limited and short-term measures. They were proof that workers *could* organise production and distribution. But limited in scale—by the pressure of the market, by the limited savings of the workers or, worse still, by hand outs from an authoritarian regime—they could never transform society.

Indeed, presented as a panacea, co-operatives marked a regression to utopianism, a diversion from the class struggle aimed at taking political power. Only when the workers seized political power and made use of it to expropriate the capitalists' property would it be possible to create a socialist economy, argued Marx and Engels.

Marx and Engels attacked the very term *Volkstaat*. This surprised Liebknecht and Bebel, as it was the title of their party's paper. As we have seen, it expressed their commitment to a thoroughly democratic transformation—to a republic. Yet Marx singled out the following formulation from the programme for an especially heavy attack:

"The Socialist Labour Party of Germany strives with every legal means for the Free State and the Socialist Society."

Marx's criticism of this was twofold. First, it was evasive even as a democratic demand—and Germany was a country where democratic tasks were the ones immediately facing the proletariat. Secondly, it failed to observe the key lessons the Paris Commune threw up about the nature of the state the working class would need to achieve a socialist society.

Marx insisted that, henceforth, any scientific socialist programme must point out that a democratic republic is only the "form of state of bourgeois society (in which) the class struggle has to be fought out to a last conclusion."[9]

The democratic republic was not the final goal of the proletariat's struggle but an arena of that final struggle. As a form of state it too was doomed to wither away after the proletariat had concentrated all power (a dictatorship) in its own hands. The Commune had shown that:

"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*."[10]

Because of these errors and omissions, Marx and Engels considered the Gotha Programme a "thoroughly objectionable programme that demoralises the party".

The attitude of the Eisenach party leaders to this advice was the scorn of activists who felt they were on the spot and knew what to do. Liebknecht asserted bluntly that, "the party is not under the direction of theoreticians".

Engels decided it was essential not only to defend Marx's life work against Dühring but to win the SPD to the whole range of ideas that he and Marx had worked on since the 1840s

But developments after the fusion at Gotha were to prove Marx and Engels right. The aid of the "theoreticians" was needed sooner than Liebknecht could have expected.

Herr Eugen Dühring . . .

In the mid-1870s there was a considerable influx of bourgeois intellectuals attracted by the size and potential influence of a mass party.

The central party paper opened its pages to all sorts of quacks and charlatans in the realms of economics and philosophy. The most prominent amongst these was the Berlin University Professor Eugen Karl Dühring (1833-1921). Dühring's achievements in the face of disability (he was blind), his courageous stand against the University authorities and the fact that he had openly declared himself a socialist, commended him to many leaders of the SPD.

The bulk of the leaders, journalists and parliamentarians had learned their socialism in the confused and deficient school of Ferdinand Lassalle. Some, like Johan Most, were muddled by semi-anarchist ideas.

This created a receptive medium in which Dühring's influence could spread like a disease throughout the party. The fact that Wilhelm Liebknecht—Marx and Engels' longest standing follower in the party leadership—was a natural born compromiser did not help matters.

Through his writings and well-attended lectures, Dühring began to influence a circle of Social Democratic intellectuals in Berlin, including the young Eduard Bernstein.

Marx and Engels became really alarmed when his influence extended to Johan Most, Social Democratic member of the Reichstag and newspaper editor. When Bebel, hitherto central to the Marxist faction, wrote that one of Dühring's books on political economy was the best thing written since Marx's *Capital*, Wilhelm Liebknecht at last woke up to the danger.

Panic stricken, he begged Marx and Engels to reply to Dühring, who had begun to attack Marx and, indeed, all previous socialist writers.

Dühring, an incredible egotist, regarded them all— from the great utopians like Saint Simon through to Marx—as his rivals and as obstacles to his newly concocted "socialitarian" system. And Dühring did not pull his punches. The following accusations against Marx give a flavour of his method of argument:

"impotence of the faculties of concentration and systematisation . . . deformity of thought and style, undignified affectation of language . . . anglicised vanity . . . barren conceptions which in fact are only bastards of historical and logical fantasy . . . deceptive twisting . . . personal vanity . . . vile mannerisms . . . snotty . . . buffoonery pretending to be witty . . . Chinese erudition . . . philosophical and scientific backwardness".[11]

Marx was working flat out to complete volumes two, three, and four of *Capital*. Thus, as Engels wrote:

"As a consequence of the division of labour that existed between Marx and myself, it fell to me to present our opinions in the periodical press, and, therefore, particularly in the fight against opposing views, in order that Marx should have time for the elaboration of his great basic work. Because of this, I had to expound our views in the majority of cases in polemical form, counterposing them to other views."[12]

Engels decided it was essential not only to defend Marx's life work against Dühring but to win the SPD to the whole range of ideas that he and Marx had worked on since the 1840s.

After the defeat of the Paris Commune the German workers' movement had, for a period at least, taken over the role of vanguard for the whole international movement. Engels believed it was necessary to educate the party leaders and cadres in consistent materialism, in the dialectical method, in the whole scope of Marx's political economy (not just on Volume I of *Capital*—the only part then published). In short he set out to explain scientific socialism and historical materialism.

From September 1876 to June 1878 he wrote a polemic, full of savage humour, which burst the bubble of Dühring's pretentious system. It was carried in instalments in *Vorwärts*, the Berlin paper of the SPD. This was then issued in book form in 1878 with the title *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*—known for short as *Anti-Dühring*.

Anti-Dühring—a classic of scientific socialism

Engels subjected Dühring's self-proclaimed system to penetrating criticism. It was no off-the-cuff polemic; its value long survived the hapless Dühring:

"I was compelled to follow him wherever he went and to oppose my conceptions to his. As a result my negative criticism became positive; the polemic was transformed into a more or less connected exposition of the dialectical method and of the communist world outlook fought for by Marx and myself."[13]

The first result of *Anti-Dühring* was to make available to a new generation of socialists the basic method which Marx and Engels had developed together in the second half of the 1840s and which Marx had applied in the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859) and Volume I of *Capital* (1867).

It also addressed a number of important new challenges for revolutionary theory. It provided the first ever com-

prehensive presentation of Marxism as an integral body of ideas linked by a scientific method— materialist dialectics.

The old utopians, like the eighteenth century materialists, were unable to extend their materialism into the realm of human thought and the development of ideas.

This was Engels' work but Marx helped both with the planning and even with part of the writing. He helped to collect the necessary material, wrote a critical outline of Dühring's book on the history of economic doctrines, which Engels used in a shortened form as Chapter X of Part II. Finally, Engels read the whole completed manuscript to him.

These facts, obvious from a reading of the two men's letters, were totally consistent with the way Engels helped Marx with his work (including *Capital*). Yet they have been subject to repeated challenges from those who wish to claim that Marx and Engels had fundamentally different methods.

The most decisive rebuttal of the charge of falsification is the content of *Anti-Dühring* itself.

Materialism and the Dialectical Method

Dühring's theory tried to pass itself off as a form of materialism or determinism. But for Dühring, political force, as opposed to the social relations of production, was the decisive motor force of history.

To refute that view, Engels had to restate Marx's materialist conception of history, that is to outline the basic logic of historical materialism. In addition, because Dühring posed his own theory as a universal one—applicable to the natural world as well as society—Engels was obliged to "follow him" into that sphere. This was a task Engels took up with relish—touching on subjects as diverse as infantry tactics and Euclidean mathematics.

In the process, Engels outlines the essential difference between Marxist historical materialism—the materialist conception of human history—and philosophical (or dialectical) materialism which encompasses the whole of nature. At the same time, Engels shows the fundamental similarity of the dialectical processes at work in both social history and nature. Engels' contemporary researches and commentaries on natural science were later published in the 1920s as *The Dialectics of Nature*.[14]

Engels' book was built on the foundations laid by himself and Marx from the mid-1840s up to the mid-1870s. It is based, most notably, upon *The German Ideology*.

Engels drew on his own and Marx's extensive reading, knowledge of philosophy, political economy, history, anthropology, and on his own researches into natural science and military affairs.

Many of these areas of interest he shared fully with Marx. Not only economics and politics, but also biology and anthropology. Marx was no less enthusiastic about the works of Charles Darwin and Lewis Morgan than was Engels. Written proof exists in large quantities that both men saw the work of such thinkers as confirming the dialectical and historical materialist method.

In the introduction to *Anti-Dühring*, Engels outlines in brief the development of the theoretical starting point and method of scientific socialism. While giving full recognition to the merits of the great utopians, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, he stresses that, for them:

"socialism is the expression of absolute truth, reason and justice and has only to be discovered to conquer all the world by virtue of its own power."[15]

In contrast to the utopians, Marx rooted socialism in the development and transcendence of the capitalist mode of production and the class struggle to which it gave rise. Only on this basis could a consistent materialism be achieved.

The old utopians, like the eighteenth century materialists, were unable to extend their materialism into the realm of human thought and the development of ideas.

"Now," writes Engels, "idealism was driven from its last refuge, the philosophy of history . . . and a method found of explaining man's 'knowing' by his 'being', instead of, as heretofore, his 'being' by his 'knowing'."[16]

Engels asserted that it was Marx's two great discoveries, the materialist understanding of history and the theory of surplus-value, which laid the theoretical foundations of a truly scientific socialism.

By "scientific" Engels did not mean to claim that Marxism was some sort of natural science. Rather, Engels repeatedly distinguishes between the spheres of natural history, human history and human thought, without, of course, failing to appreciate their interconnections.

In Part I of *Anti-Dühring* Engels explains a consistently materialist approach to the solution of the fundamental problem posed by previous philosophies.

Engels' contends, against Dühring, that:

"the unity of the world does not consist in its being . . . Being, indeed is always an open question beyond the point where our sphere of observation ends. The real unity of the world, and this is proved, not by a few juggled phrases, but by a long and wearisome development of philosophy and natural science, consists in its materiality."[17]

Thinking is both a part and a product of a material universe—which exists prior to and independent of our ability to perceive it. The laws of thinking, whether they be formal logic or dialectics, must correspond to the objects of thought, the world, the universe and its laws.

BEBEL ADDRESSES THE GOTHA CONGRESS





Engels insists that, "to me, there could be no question of building the laws of dialectics into nature, but of discovering them in it and evolving them from it."[18]

Engels shows the inseparable relationship between matter and motion:

"*Motion is the mode of existence of matter.* Never anywhere has there been matter without motion . . . All rest, all equilibrium, is only relative, only has meaning in relation to one or another definite form of motion."[19]

The world is in constant motion, constant change. Nature proceeds not only by long phases of evolutionary development but sometimes by leaps in which new phenomena appear which both destroy and preserve previous ones. Dialectics is the only possible means of adequately understanding it. Metaphysical modes of thinking are quite useless:

"To the metaphysician, things and their mental reflexes, ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after the other and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once for all."[20]

The dialectical method takes things and their thought reflections in their mutual connections, in movement, in emergence and disappearance.

Modern critics of Marxism make much of the "reflection" image, suggesting that Engels means that mental life, consciousness, is passive—exactly like an image in a mirror.

This was, of course, the view held by the pre-Marxist materialists of the eighteenth century, such as the French philosopher Diderot who compared the human brain to a wax drum upon which external things left their imprint. But Engels, like Marx, saw cognition as an interactive process.

Engels placed enormous stress on labour (i.e. human practice) not only as the modifier of external nature but as the modifier of Man as a species and, in particular, human consciousness.

But he insisted that being is prior to thinking. Without this approach no consistent materialist standpoint is possible.

Engels examines in detail the law of the unity and struggle of opposites, the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative ones, and the law of negation of the negation.

Subsequent anti-Engels "Marxists" have stigmatised this law as so much mysticism and confusion. In fact, the only person likely to be confused and mystified by it is a hopeless empiricist.

Engels shows that, in contrast to the usual common sense conception of negation as outright destruction or cancelling, a dialectical negation involves the preservation of certain qualities of the thing negated; these qualities themselves become embodied in a new entity. Engels demonstrates, with copious examples drawn from mathematics, natural and social science and economics, that this is a general feature of all development.

The law of the negation of the negation, writes Engels, is "an extremely general—and for this reason extremely far-reaching and important—law of development of nature, history, and thought."[21]

Engels also examines how a dialectical understanding differs from the metaphysical understanding of key philosophical terms: necessity and chance, essence and appearance, causality and interaction. Centrally, he explains the Marxist theory of cognition, rejecting the idea that any philosophical system can obtain absolute truth.

Dühring's claim that his system is an exception is exposed as an unacknowledged theft from Hegel's idealism. Engels shows that all truth is relative but no less scientifically knowable for that.

Truth can only be established through interaction with the objective world. In the natural sciences this is done by observation, analysis and experiment. In the historical (social) sciences it has to be done through the gathering of economic and political data, analysing it and verifying it in theory-guided practice.

Criticising Dühring's subjective and voluntaristic views, Engels examined the correlation between freedom and determination.

He showed graphically the dialectical interrelation of these two *opposed* or polar categories. He shows that freedom is in fact based on the *understanding* of necessity, (i.e. of the determinants arising from both natural and social conditions). It lies in the active use of the objective laws of nature and society to modify and transform both nature and society:

"Freedom does not consist in any dreamt of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work to definite goals.

"to me, there could be no question of building the laws of dialectics into nature, but of discovering them in it and evolving them from it".

This holds good in relation to the laws of external nature and to those which govern the bodily and mental existence of men themselves . . . Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature, a control founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development."[22]

The historic "leap forward in the development of the productive forces", which capitalism has achieved, "alone makes possible a society in which there are no longer class distinctions or anxiety over the means of subsistence for the individual and in which for the first time there can be talk of real human



ENGELS, CLARA ZETKIN AND (RIGHT) BEBEL AT THE BASLE CONGRESS OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL 1893

freedom, of an existence in harmony with the laws of nature that have become known."[23]

Engels' critics, who claim that he was a passive optimist, are profoundly mistaken. There is no rigid determinism in his thinking, which leads to either a pessimistic or an optimistic passivity. Engels simply insists that social development has created conditions where our notions of freedom are realisable by the productive forces brought into existence by historic development.

But it is humanity alone, and in particular certain classes within humanity, which can realise or frustrate this possibility.

The Political Economy of Capitalism and Socialism

Dühring's socialism, like that of so many other charlatans and misleaders, before and after, essentially amounted to a critique of capitalist distribution, not production. Engels rebutted Dühring's theory with a didactic restatement of the fundamentals of Marx's political economy. It was in this form that a whole generation of socialists first learned about the revolutionary critique of capitalism.

Marx and Engels did not "invent" the road to socialism—they discovered it in the inner laws of capitalism

The economics section of *Anti-Dühring* draws on the achievements of Marx's life work in political economy. Engels used and popularised not only Volume I of *Capital* but also the ideas of Marx contained in, at that time unpublished, economic manuscripts—above all in those of 1857-1858 (*Grundrisse*) and those of 1861-1863.[24] He also defended and explained the positions which Marx set out in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

Engels explains simply and clearly the importance of Marx's discoveries about necessary labour time, use and exchange value, capital and surplus-value. In the absence of volumes II and III of *Capital Anti-Duhring* was an added contribution to the published political economy of Marxism. Engels was able for the first time to show that the bedrock of scientific socialism lies in Marx's demonstration of the nature of capitalist exploitation as the appropriation of surplus-value.

Engels gives a clear overview of the theory of capitalist crises (a theory only briefly touched upon in *Capital* Volume I) insisting that they are crises of overproduction, not of a lack of consumption power by the masses, but of a superabundance of capital and the inability to apply it to the exploitation of living labour power:

"In these crises the contradiction between socialised production and capitalist appropriation ends in a violent explosion. The circulation of commodities is, for the time being, stopped. Money, the means of circulation, becomes a hindrance to circulation. All the laws of production and circulation of commodities are turned upside down. The economic collision has reached its apogee. *The mode of production is in rebellion against the mode of exchange, the productive forces are in rebellion against the mode of production which they have outgrown.*"[25]

Engels also draws attention to the latest developments within capitalism which were to become central features in the era of monopoly capitalism—imperialism.

He notes the emergence and domination of the economy by huge joint-stock companies and the transfer of whole branches of the economy into state ownership. Engels asks what attitude the working class should take to this process. His answer added a vital new ingredient to the Marxist programme.

He stresses that these developments will not change the *capitalist* character of production either in these sectors or in the economy as a whole:

"But the transformation, either into joint-stock companies, or into state ownership, does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces . . . The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital

. . . The workers remain wage-workers—proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head . . . State ownership of the productive forces is not the solution of the conflict, but concealed within it are the technical conditions that form the elements of that solution."[26]

Engels explains why revolutionaries should support the concentration of the means of production in state hands—state capitalist nationalisation—without believing for a moment that this is socialism, or that a process of reform will gradually lead to its disappearance.

Engels in *Anti-Dühring* also deals, at greater length than he or Marx had done hitherto, with the economic nature of the future communist society. In the process, Engels formulated for the first time in their modern, conceptually different forms, the ideas of communism, socialism and the transition to socialism.

This theoretical framework was to be a vital weapon in the hands of the Bolsheviks, during the first years after the revolution, as they struggled against both the remnants of capitalism and against those in their own party who thought they could "leap" straight to communism.

Engels suggests a number of key measures which are necessary if the law of value is to be suppressed as the regulator of production and distribution.

He draws attention to the *planned* nature of its development after the working class takes power and the crisis-free mutual interaction of production and distribution which will then be possible:

"Distribution . . . ", writes Engels, "will be regulated by the interests of production, and . . . production is most encouraged by a mode of distribution which allows *all* members of society to develop, maintain and exercise their capacities with maximum universality."[27]

He speaks of the necessity for a rational distribution of productive forces and predicts certain features which must be inherent in labour under communism.

The new relations of production will exclude the "exploitation of man by man" and will overcome anarchy in

production. But they will not, at first, abolish inequality.

For that, the growth of productive forces has to accelerate. By finally overcoming scarcity–the cause of all forms of social inequality–a higher phase of socialism, *communism*, will be reached.

The unforeseen damaging effects on nature, which all class societies have wrought, can be avoided.

The power of humanity over nature will cease to be that of a destructive tyrant and will become that of a careful planner. The negative consequences of the division of labour for the free development of the individual will disappear.

Labour will be changed from an onerous burden into the first demand of a fruitful life. The antitheses between mental and physical labour, between town and country will disappear. Education will be combined with labour.

Engels goes on to explain the theory of the state that he and Marx had worked out, or rather completed, as a result of the experience of the Paris Commune and the debates with the anarchists in the early 1870s.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is a temporary stage. As classes wither away, so organised social coercion will disappear too:

"the government of persons will be replaced by the administration of things and by conduct of processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. It dies out."[28]

Under communism, people will become the real and conscious masters both of nature and society:

"The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, with full consciousness, make his own history . . . It is humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom."[29]

Religion will thus disappear as humanity comes to understand and direct both nature and its own social life, Engels writes. It will not need to be suppressed or abolished.

Conclusion

Engels' work resulted not only in the destruction of Dühring's influence over the German Social Democrats. It also led to the rapid adoption of Marxism by the leading representatives of the growing working-class movement on the continent and, later, throughout the world.

On their own admission, it was through this book that many of the leaders of the Second and Third Internationals were won to Marxism's world outlook. For the first time, under one cover, was a text that combined a scientific method, a critique of exploitation and a strategical and tactical guide to the class struggle.

To the modern reader, aspects of this book look quaint. It is not the complexity of some of its language which affronts modern academics however—they are used to impenetrable "post-modernist discourses".

What affronts them is Engels' willingness to apply the Marxist method—within its self-defined limitations—in order to contextualise and understand the major advances in natural science which were taking place. In a book which deals with philosophy, economics, physics and military history they see only the work of a "system builder", a philosophical amateur.

Perhaps, had he lived today, when not even the most adventurous economists, natural scientists and philosophers really dare to stray into each others' realms, Engels would have been obliged to structure such a work differently. Certainly—and Engels would have recognised this without hesitation—some of the scientific data and theory he leans upon has been superseded by later research.

But *Anti-Dühring* stands the test of time as one of the building blocks of scientific socialism. Its basic components were used by the Bolsheviks in their debates over everything from economic policy to military strategy within the Red Army.

In both of these spheres the essential lessons are that socialism is possible because it can take advantage of decaying capitalism, that socialism is built on the foundations of capitalism and that it must conquer capitalist technique before humanity can make a "leap into freedom".

Before Marxism, men and women dreamed of socialism the way the ancients dreamed of human flight. They mythologised it, idealised it and yearned for it, but had no idea of how to get it. Marx and Engels did not "invent" the road to socialism—they discovered it in the inner laws of capitalism, just as the early aviators discovered how to fly by mastering the laws of aerodynamics and gravity. They discovered, too, that the modes of thinking which best reflect reality—whether in the aircraft designer's laboratory or in the revolutionary party—share common laws.

The scientific nature of socialism, the dialectical materialist nature of all that is true and objective in science—this is the subject matter of *Anti-Dühring*.

Its claims drive the modern apologists of capitalism—from the cabinet minister to the chemistry professor—to distraction.

But they are true and their final proof will be found in the destruction of the capitalist system. There is no better way to commemorate the memory of the co-founder of Marxism than to read his greatest work and to renew the struggle to which Engels dedicated his life.■

1 G. Lichtheim, *Marxism—An Historical and Critical Study*, London, 1961 p 243

2 N Levine, *The Tragic Deception: Marx contra Engels*, Santa Barbara, 1975

3 See T Carver, *Marx and Engels: the intellectual relationship*. Brighton, 1983 and *Engels*, London, 1981

4 F Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, in "Marx and Engels Collected Works" (*MECW*),Vol 25, pp5-309

5 V I Lenin *Collected Works*, London, Vol 18 p24

6 "Amendment to Statutes of the IWMA, 7(a)", *MECW* Vol 23, p 243

7 Engels to Friedrich Adolph Sorge, 12 September 1874, *MECW*, Vol 45, p42

8 August Bebel (1840-1913). These articles were later collected as a pamphlet entitled "Our Goals".

9 "Critique of the Gotha Programme", *MECW* Vol 24, p96

10 ibid, p95 (emphasis in original)

11 *MECW* Vol 25, p32

12 *MECW* Vol 26, p427

13 Preface to the second edition, London September 1885, *MECW*, Vol 25, p8

14 "The Dialectics of Nature", *MECW*, Vol 25, pp313-464

15 "Anti-Dühring", *MECW*, Vol 25, p 20

16 ibid pp 26-27

17 ibid p 41

18 ibid pp 12-13

19 ibid p 55 (emphasis in original)

20 ibid p 22

21 ibid p 131

22 ibid p 105

23 ibid p 106

24 See *MECW*, Vols 28-34

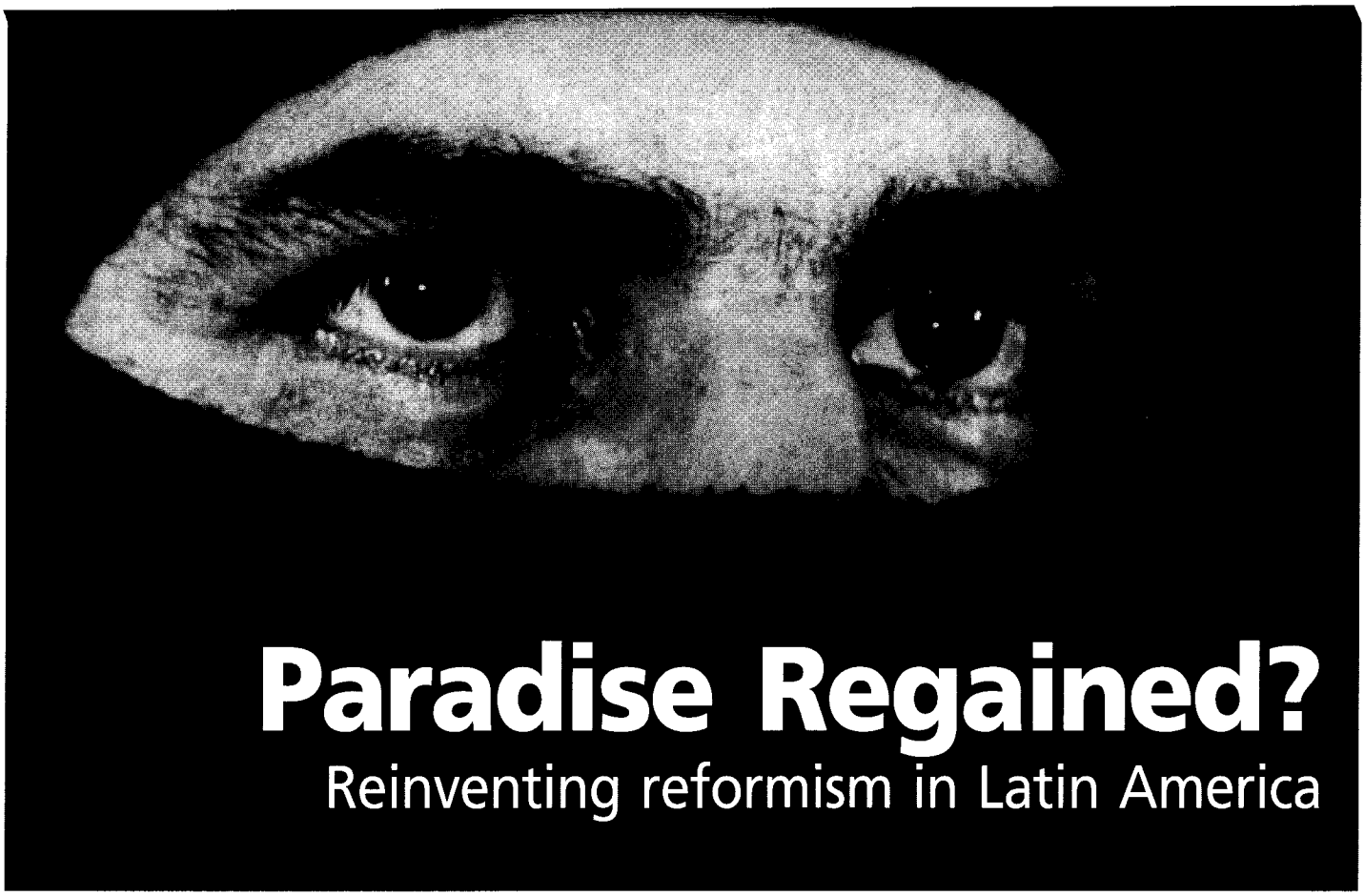
25 *MECW* Vol 25, p 263 (emphasis in original)

26 ibid pp 265-6

27 ibid p 186

28 ibid p 267

29 ibid p 270



Paradise Regained?

Reinventing reformism in Latin America

Jorge Castañeda's ground-breaking history of the left in Latin America* has become the focal point of political discussion amongst socialists of that continent. In an extended review **Keith Harvey** explains the allure of Castañeda's renovated reformism and catalogues its errors.

Towards the end of March this year Joaquin Villalobos announced the formation of a new party in El Salvador—the Democratic Party. It was formed by three of the five factions that went to make up the former guerrilla opposition, the FMLN, plus a splinter from the old ruling Christian Democrats. The new party was necessary, according to Villalobos, because the FMLN "persists in staying a traditional left wing party".

Villalobos was one of the main leaders of the FMLN. His new party considers itself to be social democratic and reformist, renouncing Marxism and embracing aspects of the right's pro-market policies. It is a model of the kind of party, programme and broad alliance advocated in Jorge Castañeda's book.[1] Published in 1993, it has only been available in English in Britain since the end of 1994. By then it was already considered a seminal work amongst Latin American specialists, provoking lengthy reviews, inspiring conferences in Latin America, the USA and Europe.

This is not surprising, since Castañeda's book fits in well with the response of much of the left to the collapse of Stalinism. His survey concludes with a call to turn away from the search for "utopias". The alternative to neo-liberal, free market capitalism, is not socialism, but "social market" capitalism as practised in Germany and Western Europe. Castañeda declares:

"After years of seeking vanguards and justifiably engaging in confrontational activism, the left must move on to a politics of broad coalitions, or historical compromises. It should strive to extend the backing for its programme to as much as two thirds of the electorate and political forces of any given nation. Its programme must consequently be strictly reformist, yet sufficiently radical to make a difference."

Herein lies Castañeda's own utopianism: a belief that it is possible to persuade the Latin American ruling classes to repatriate their capital and accept the higher taxes attached to a welfare statist strategy; a belief that it is possible to persuade the imperialist powers to provide massive aid, while abandoning their demands for open markets in Latin America!

Nevertheless, despite the underlying political thesis of the book, *Utopia Unarmed* is a well-researched and thought-provoking survey of the Latin American left.

The left in question

Guerrilla movements such as the FMLN were among the most important components of the Latin American left, notching up some spectacular successes (Nicaragua, 1979) and bloody failures (Argentina after 1973). But

*** Utopia Unarmed: the Latin American Left After the Cold War by Jorge G Castañeda**
Footnotes begin page 14

Castañeda's book deals with other major components of the left.

The rise and fall of Stalinism in the industrial working class between the wars is accounted for, as is the experience of left populism which eventually largely displaced Stalinism within the ranks of the working class.

The "social left" is also analysed: the community-based movements that arose in response to the abuse of human rights by military regimes or mushroomed with the rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation of the 1960s and 1970s.

A whole chapter is devoted to the role of the intellectual left who have played an enormous and unique role in Latin America "at the seam of a strong state and weak civil society".[2]

But defining the "left" in Latin America is not an easy matter. By European standards, Latin America has witnessed a rapid but relatively recent growth in the urban working class. By contrast, a very large peasantry presses it on one side and a growing legion of under-employed and unemployed urban poor (often self-employed stall holders, the "ambulantes") overshadows it on the other. All this has given a fluidity to the boundaries of the "left" in Latin America. Programmes reflecting combined, not to say confused and contradictory, class aspirations are often brought together under its banner.

Castañeda defines the left he is examining early in his book:

"Ideologically and politically, the LA left can be broken down into four groups: traditional Communist parties, the nationalist or populist left, the political-military organisations, and the region's reformists. Functionally, two groups can be added: the grass-roots and the intellectual left."[3]

During the course of the last 35 years the importance of these currents within the left has naturally varied, along with the key ideological and programmatic debates.

Paradise lost

There is no doubt, as Castañeda says, the Latin American left in the 1990s is weaker and more marginalised than at any time since the second world war. But why? And was it inevitable?

Castañeda answers the last question with a qualified yes. The existence of the USSR and, later, Castro's Cuba gave shape and meaning to the region's left. Yet the proximity and power of the USA and its determination to set aside other countries' national sovereignty in pursuit of anti-communism all, according to Castañeda, made the left's project improbable if not impossible.

Not content with this generalisation, however, Castañeda examines in detail the left's chosen strategies for power. His critique is on strongest ground when he examines Stalinism.[4]

The Communist parties were never mass parties in Latin America the way that the Italian, German or French parties were. But in the 1940s some of the region's CPs were sizeable and well rooted in the working class. In Chile, Brazil and Uruguay they were able to win 12-17% of the vote in national elections.

These parties were among the most devoted to the implementation of Stalin's international policies. After the seventh Comintern Congress in 1935, the People's Front line dominated everywhere. In Mexico, the CP pursued "unity at any cost" with the radical nationalist Cárdenas regime from 1936. In Chile, the party backed the government after 1938 "even in the face of strikes and discontent among its own rank and file".[5] In Cuba, the CP was fanatical in its support for General Batista, eventually overthrown by Castro 20 years later.

When the Second World War broke out, the People's Front was formally hailed by the CPs as an anti-imperialist united front against fascism and imperialism. In reality, it was an alliance with their "own" bourgeoisie and US imperialism against Germany.

In Argentina, this strategic alliance pitched the CP headlong against Peronism, a populist regime which veered towards Germany during the war. In this head-to-head contest Stalinism lost much of its working class constituency.

By 1947, almost all the CPs in Latin America were "seriously weakened, divided, or divorced from their traditional or political constituencies."[6] As a result it was easy, when the Cold War was opened by the US in 1947, for the ruling regimes in Latin America to declare the Stalinist parties—in Brazil, Chile, Mexico and elsewhere—illegal.

This did not deter the Stalinists from pursuing their goal of a "national, democratic revolution" in an alliance with the national bourgeoisie, this time against the USA. But outside of Brazil, Chile and Uruguay they did not prosper. In the case of the first two they were crushed by military coups, victims of a paradox that afflicted all the Stalinist parties:

"On the one hand, no matter what it did or said, no matter how often and vigorously it stressed its moderation and pragmatism, it could not shake the image of Communist rule as it existed elsewhere . . . At the same time, the oldest, best-implanted Communist leaderships, could not forsake their proverbial moderation and adopt the approach of the extreme left . . . "[7]

With the accelerated collapse of Stalinism, after Gorbachev's assumption of power in 1985, the writing was on the wall. By the 1990s, only in El Salvador and Uruguay did Stalinist parties retain any influence.

Cuba, Sí

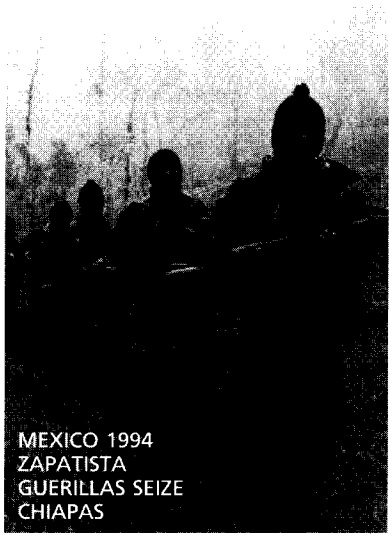
The Cuban revolution was a defining moment for the left in Latin America; in many ways it still is. With the passing away of the Sandinista revolution and the unremitting hostility of the US to this small island, there are no causes remaining for many on the left except "defence of the Cuban revolution". As bad as things are, it is reasoned, things will be a lot worse if the mass of oppressed and exploited of the region are forced to watch either the self-destruction or forcible overthrow of the Cuban revolution.

In Argentina, this strategic alliance pitched the CP headlong against Peronism, a populist regime which veered towards Germany during the war. In this head-to-head contest Stalinism lost much of its working class constituency.

Castañeda gives full recognition to this:

"The Cuban Revolution impacted the left in Latin America as nothing had ever done before . . . Before Fidel entered Havana, the left in Latin America was reformist, gradualist, or resignedly pessimistic about the prospects of revolution. For the three decades that followed, revolution was at the top of the agenda . . . "[8]

The 1956 *Granma* expedition launched by Castro opened an era of revolutionary guerrilla struggle in Latin America which even now has not completely ended.[9] Armed struggle was not new to Latin America. In Colombia, for example, the Stalinists were leading a peasant-based guerrilla movement (Marquetalia) from 1955. But Castro's victory inspired a continental movement and induced splits within the Communist Parties which (Colombia



MEXICO 1994 ZAPATISTA GUERILLAS SEIZE CHIAPAS

and Venezuela apart) were firmly opposed to armed struggle.

Castro declared the revolution to be armed and socialist, not just peaceful or national. He insisted that the national bourgeoisie and the working class were not revolutionary classes, but the urban and rural petit bourgeoisie were. It was not a revolution carried out by the masses but a strategy carried out by dedicated nuclei (*foco*), by turns inciting, evading and leading the small band to victory. Importantly, given the nature of Latin America's exploitation and oppression at the hands of imperialism, the Cuban road was relevant to all countries in the region.[10]

In Argentina and Uruguay, where the population was heavily concentrated in urban centres, or in Brazil where the CP was well rooted in the main cities, the Cuban revolution inspired urban guerrilla movements. They were, in the main, not mass organisations and were led and mainly composed of disaffected urban intelligentsia, including students. Manual workers were an important but secondary group.

The Tupamaros in Uruguay were the most resilient and successful in terms of putting the ruling regime on the defensive for periods, but they, like all the others, were ruthlessly crushed by military dictatorship.[11] It was the ferocious destruction of the guerrilla cadre in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay that brought this strategy literally to a dead-end.

The second wave remained wedded to guerrillaism as a strategy but realised that they needed a broader and firmer base of social support for their actions as well as a less immediate and provocative attitude to the armed struggle

In addition, Che's death in 1967 took the shine off the *foco* version of the guerrilla struggle. Castro's support for the Kremlin's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 left many of the armed groups disillusioned with the Cuban regime. Between 1967 and 1975 the uneven process of convergence between the foreign policies of the Cuban state and the Kremlin was finally completed[12] signalling an end to tacit or overt support for the guerrillas inspired by the Cuban revolution.

The second wave

In the 1970s, a new form of guerrillaism was to emerge, this time in Central America. In 1969 Salvador Carpio, leader of the Communist Party in El Salvador, split with his own party to launch an armed struggle. He expressed a different conception to the *foco* line:

"The new organisations had to lead two struggles simultaneously: the mass struggle and the armed struggle . . . We understood that the people had to be the ones to make war and that the armed groups should not become an elite, a bunch of heroes unlinked to the masses, who were going to save the masses the trouble of making the revolution."[13]

The second wave remained wedded to guerrillaism as a strategy but realised that they needed a broader and firmer base of social support for their actions as well as a less immediate and provocative attitude to the armed struggle (the "prolonged war" concept). Additionally, the new wave placed less reliance upon Moscow or Peking as models or bastions of support.

In El Salvador many groups of this kind were formed in the 1970s, only gaining a serious military capability around 1980 when they joined together to form the FMLN.

They began to receive arms from Ethiopia and Vietnam, shipped via Cuba. They reacted to the army's huge urban offensive by taking to the mountains. They fought a "prolonged war" in the countryside, establishing liberated zones and organising big political protest movements in the cities and towns.

Castañeda claims that the FMLN developed what would "qualify as the most important mass movement in Latin America since the Popular Unity in Chile."[14]

But in the last analysis the political struggle was subordinated to the military. Both, in turn, were increasingly subordinated to bourgeois horizons. Castañeda says that the FMLN "became essentially an army with a political wing, instead of remaining what it had set out to be—a broad based political movement that also participated in the armed struggle." Urban mass political actions became less and less important in the strategy.

SANDINISTA LEADERS MARCH INTO MANAGUA



The great success of the "second wave" was the revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 led by the FSLN.

Castañeda stresses the importance to this victory of having won over sections of the bourgeoisie:

"The national bourgeoisie was brought over to the revolutionary camp because serious concessions had been made in its direction, and because it had nowhere else to go."

When Pedro Chamorro (leader of the bourgeois opposition to Somoza) was assassinated by the dictator in 1978 the main part of the bourgeoisie went over to the Sandinistas.

Although committed guerrillaists the FSLN carried out fewer major actions and possessed fewer arms than the FMLN. Years after victory Humberto Ortega acknowledged that, "the central axis of victory was not the military aspect, but rather the masses' participation in the insurrection."[15]

In fact, Castañeda makes clear that the greatest militarisation of politics, so characteristic of guerrillaism, came *after* victory in 1979. Determined to not to be overthrown by internal or external armed force, the FSLN drafted in the Cubans to build a massive security apparatus and armed forces. The Sandinistas had the armed power, while the bourgeoisie retained its hold over much of the economy.

The Nicaraguan masses suffered both ways. They paid the price of economic concessions to the national bourgeoisie. But they also suffered from having no control over their political administration. It was clear from around 1985 that political support for the FSLN from the masses was ebbing

away.

Castañeda is uneasy with the Nicaraguan revolution. He admires the way it brought the bourgeoisie into the fold, and the way the factions inside the FSLN avoided internecine conflicts, unlike so many other groups in Latin America. But in the end, for Castañeda, despite the fact that it was a popular and justifiable revolution, it proved ultimately unsustainable and thus should not have been attempted:

"If revolution was the goal, theirs was probably, regrettably, the only way to go about it."[16]

But, of course, Castañeda's goal is not revolution but how to avert it.

He is wrong. It is certainly true that in a small economically backward Central American republic a successful revolution that overthrows or restricts capitalism will not be likely to survive indefinitely without outside help when faced with hostility and sabotage from stronger states. But from where should that help come and of what character should it be?

The FSLN should have put all their efforts into extending the revolution in Central America. Conditions between 1979 and 1982 were particularly favourable for this in El Salvador. The US bourgeoisie was also divided and weakened at precisely this time, before Reagan came to office in 1981. But the FSLN decided to lean upon Castro. This bureaucratised the revolution and, by 1983, turned the FSLN into Cuban intermediaries in seeking to wind down the El Salvador struggle.

The FSLN thought they were buying time by this, but it only emboldened the White House. The FSLN refused to overthrow capitalism and with it get rid of the main long term source of counter-revolution—the national bourgeoisie. They gambled on its patriotism and decency—and lost.

Castañeda abjures guerrilla wars that have a social content. He regards them as doomed to end in a glorious failure that underscores the futility of the revolutionary armed struggle for power. Castañeda sees the militarisation of politics as the inevitable result of any recourse to arms and therefore best resisted.[17]

Revolutionary socialists, in contrast, see militarisation as endemic to guerrillaism *when elevated to a strategy*.

In this case political mass struggle is subordinated to armed actions. The secrecy and conspiracy required atomises class consciousness and prevents political control of the struggle by the oppressed masses themselves.

In the revolutionary Marxist strategy for power, the development of mass organisations of political struggle and the general strike weapon are central. They are the overwhelming preoccupation of revolutionary forces for most of the time. In most urban societies the military struggle will be confined to necessary self-defence actions before the insurrectionary wave. Propaganda and agitation inside the standing armies of the state in order to destabilise them are as, or more, important during most of the revolutionary process. But even where, as in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), protracted armed struggle over much of the country is forced upon the working class, political strategy is decisive. Popular frontism, the failure to offer the Spanish colonies their freedom or the Spanish peasants the land—these were the main causes of the ultimate victory of Franco, not German planes.

The FSLN should have put all their efforts into extending the revolution in Central America. Conditions between 1979 and 1982 were particularly favourable for this in El Salvador.

The other main lesson of the "second wave" that Castañeda fails to draw is that the Nicaraguan revolution stopped half-way.

While certain compromises with the national bourgeoisie were legitimate and necessary to secure the overthrow of Somoza, they should never have extended to guarantees on its property rights.

The decisive force in pushing aside Somoza's military was the action of the masses. Concessions to the bourgeoisie meant that the material foundation for a social and political backlash were left in place and, after 1985, were built upon. The loss of popular support guaranteed the downfall of the revolution—not any intrinsic fault in revolution *per se*.

At the end of the day, the link between the first and second waves of the guerrilla struggles in Latin America was their petit-bourgeois character.

They were never aimed at the overthrow of capitalist private property and as such could never ally themselves with the only class that had the power to effect fundamental social change—the working class. The alliance with plebeian social strata such as the peasantry and proletariat was, in the end, not fundamental to their objective. It was a necessary expedient—a way of broadening their support, giving their armed struggle some chance of durability in the face of a hostile regime.

Convergence?

As a social democrat who sees the only future for the left in Latin America in a revival of social democracy, Castañeda has the honesty to admit that it has been a poor relation of the region's left for much of this century. The structures of capitalism that gave birth to it in Europe (e.g. large industrial working class) are absent or much eroded.

Even where these conditions existed most (Argentina) it was at its weakest. Squeezed between Stalinism and populism in the first part of this century, social democracy "found little more than barren soil in which to take root."[18] Indeed, those parties formally affiliated to the Socialist International (e.g. Accíon Democrática in Venezuela are on the right wing and are Cold War creations of the CIA.

But according to Castañeda the broad reformist left has improved its fortunes in the 1980s. A melting pot of ex-guerrillas, democratic populists (Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas' Party of the Democratic Revolution in Mexico) ex-Stalinists, and new forces, (Lula's Workers Party in Brazil) has created a spectrum of parties broadly characterised by their commitment to an electoral road to power, social justice and redistribution, and the assertion of national sovereignty.

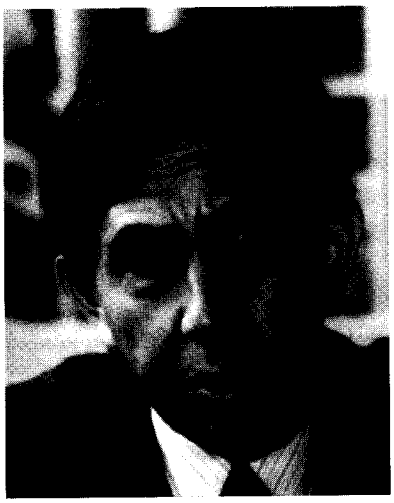
The problem for reformism, as Castañeda sees it today, is that competing fragments of social democracy exist inside several of the region's countries and this undermines the overall effectiveness of reformism. Because of this division, reformism has not successfully solved the problem of marrying a large, electorally viable, constituency with a realistic yet radical programme.

Castañeda clearly sees the stance of the Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil in maintaining its independence from other "reformist" forces, the PSDB (President Cardoso's party) and the PDT, as an example of the divisions that must be swept away to achieve his new "broad alliance".

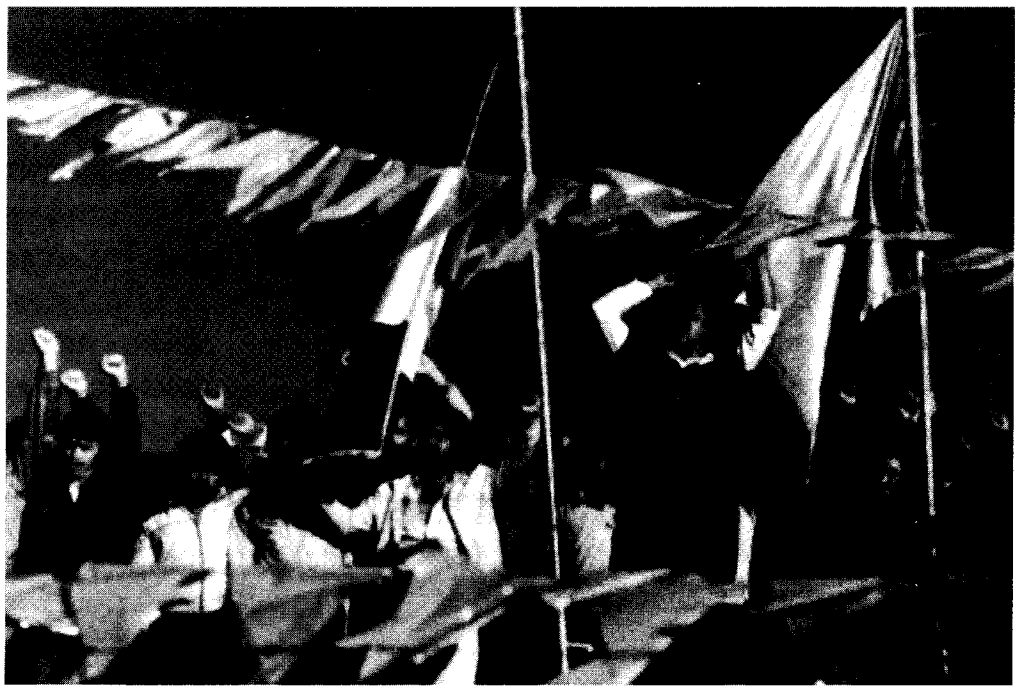
In Venezuela, the MAS, after wild ideological fluctuations in the 1970s and 1980s, has "many facets of a social democratic programme" and around 20% of the vote but is narrowly based within the young urban middle class.

Meanwhile, Causa-R, very similar in origins to the PT in Brazil and controlling several mid-sized cities in the biggest regions of the country, is marred, for Castañeda, by a too simplistic, radical reformist message.

In Mexico, the Party of the Democratic Revolution's (PRD) emergence in 1988 seemed to present the best hope for the reformist left. It originated as a split within the ruling Institutional



CARDENAS



GUATEMALAN COCA-COLA WORKERS' STRIKE

Revolutionary Party (PRI) and immediately had to champion the cause of free and fair elections, a novelty in Mexico where by fraud and manipulation the PRI has sustained itself in power for sixty years.

Moreover, while the PRD is mildly redistributionist, it is no enemy of the market. The very formation of the PRD also united the left in Mexico. The PRD won 30% of the popular vote in 1988, mainly from the lower-middle class in the cities, with pockets of rural support.

But the development of the PRD shows the problems for such movements. After these elections the PRI pursued a twin track strategy. First, it continued to harass and exclude the PRD. Secondly, through various social programmes, the government sought to lure back much of the of the PRD's urban support.

By 1991 the PRD's vote was down to 9%. In the 1994 Presidential elections, the vote for Cárdenas was well down on the 1988 vote. Failure to break the PRI's populist, state-corporatist ties with the trade unions was another reason for this marginalisation.

As the Cold War ended, reformism in Latin America faced considerable problems of its own: restricted access to a level electoral playing field (in some cases no access), absence of a broad enough constituency for electoral change and a programme that was either insufficiently radical, or ambivalent about the virtues of the democratic process.

Reinventing reformism

Despite the history of failure, Castañeda is optimistic about the future; he is convinced that there *is* a future for the left in Latin America.

On the one hand, the degree of social inequality and poverty in the region—directly a function of the right's neo-liberalism of the 1980s—has hardly ever been greater. The fact that there have not been more social explosions against this state of affairs is in part due to the spread of electoralism over the last ten or so years, a trend that has diffused struggles and redirected them off the streets into the electoral and parliamentary arena.

Ideologically, the collapse of Stalinism opens up the chance that the left can free itself from its political dependence on the Moscow-Peking-Havana axis, while the end of the Cold War removes a major rationale for US interference in the region's national affairs.[9]

To take advantage of the opportunities Castañeda believes that a new modernised reformism is necessary. Demilitarisation has created the possibility of a level playing field and the left can advance its programme for major structural reforms within this context without resorting to the pitfalls of vanguardism or insurrectionism. There is nothing inevitable about success; democratisation and economic decline have not always, or necessarily, benefited the left in Latin America.

Castañeda's reformism is a detailed and costed programme, carefully argued and grounded in a thorough knowledge of the continent. It is a reformism that is clear:

"that there must be a fundamental shift in resources and policy emphasis from the rich to the poor in order to solve the region's problems . . . "[10]

It has three interlocking components:

- a reformulated nationalism;
- a commitment to structural changes in bourgeois democracy;
- an economic policy that is based on export-led growth and the redistribution of the fruits of this growth.

For its viability the programme depends upon welding a coalition of two-thirds of the region's population around it. It explicitly appeals to the bourgeoisie, nationally and internationally to make the necessary sacrifices out of self-interest and self-preservation.

Vertical nationalism?

Castañeda argues that the left in Latin America never had any choice but to be nationalist. Ever since independence the white elites excluded the mass of poor and indigenist peoples (sometimes a majority) from nation-building. The elites could not build the nation since they were too foreign oriented; they speak foreign languages, are educated abroad and send their children to foreign schools. They even live abroad for much of the time. Most importantly, they have been agents for the (mainly US) foreign domination of the nation's economy. Part of the struggle, then, against the right has involved a struggle to "recapture the confiscated nationality".[20]

Yet Castañeda is aware that Latin America may have already arrived too late on the scene of nation-building in the early 19th century; it is certainly too late now:

" . . . it could well be—indeed, everything today suggests—that for many, if not all, of the developing countries, time has run out to construct nations like others: with their own national language, administration, market and currency."[21]

The development of a fluid world economy, mass migration, continuing poverty and exclusion of the masses — all combine to make this so.

But Castañeda does not think this makes nationalism redundant; far from it. Social change involves bringing "the excluded" into the nation. But this nationalism should not be aimed indiscriminately at other countries; rather, it must be targeted at *issues*, above all issues of sovereignty in domestic non-economic affairs. He is opposed to US involvement in drug enforcement or immigration controls, for example.

At the same time dependence on finding scarce economic resources abroad necessitates abandoning anti-Americanism; rather, when it comes to gaining support for debt cancellation or help with human rights abuses, some of Latin America's best allies may be found in the USA. Meanwhile, some of the worst enemies of the nation's progressive causes are to be found inside the nation itself, not least among the rich and powerful.

What Castañeda calls "vertical nationalism" is, at its best, internationalism, though he will not call it that. The problem is that Castañeda is happy to see the region's poor best served by US

Congressmen rather than the working class and progressive middle class of the USA.

He believes that the answer to squaring the circle of nation-building and global economic integration is best served, in the medium term, by regional integration. He fully supports Mercosur and the CACM[22] and suggests that they are ways the left can strengthen the economies of the region (while avoiding unequal integration under US domination, such as NAFTA) with minimum loss of national sovereignty. His model for development is the European Union, with each nation state within this arrangement pursuing a mixture of German-style social market economics (worker participation, social insurance and welfarism) and Japanese-style state directed and export oriented industrial development.

Castañeda's ambitious programme will not materialise in the actions of government in Latin America. His artificial attempt to graft onto the region this combination of everything that is efficient and just in capitalism's post-war development while discarding everything that was reactionary, exploitative and yet *necessary* to that development, is astonishing in its naïveté.

It does not occur to Castañeda that Germany's success depended on the systematic super-exploitation of millions of Turkish and Kurdish "guestworkers", deprived of citizenship rights and as much excluded from the German nation as any indian in Peru or Bolivia are from theirs.

It seems not to cross his mind that the condition of the Japanese state's success in directing industrial growth was bought at the price of the almost complete loss of trade union independence of the Japanese working class, as extensive as that to be found in the history of Argentina.

The fact that in Argentina it was incorporation into the state, and in Japan, into a handful of business corporations, is purely secondary.

Castañeda abstracts from history. At the time when the economic models he so reveres are coming under strain as a result of international capitalist competition he seeks to emulate them and to do so when none of the specific historical conditions that made them possible are in place.

Idealising the state.

Much the same criticism can be levelled at Castañeda's political project. He does not disguise the limits of democracy in Latin America. Although universal suffrage has existed for a long time in most countries, liberal bourgeois democracy has never delivered much.

In Colombia in the 1950s, Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s and Chile in the 1990s, it has been hoped that "representative democracy" would sink roots and evolve. The left, meanwhile, has rightly been sceptical of liberal democracy, since whenever it won elections it was kicked out of office (Chile 1973, Guatemala 1954). In each country of Latin America the ruling class has found various ways of rendering the vote of the people meaningless: suspending democratic rule; buying votes and manipulating the poor. Bourgeois electoral politics remain a game played within a narrow circle of the business and intellectual elites of each country.

Castañeda thinks things can and must be improved. But he demands changes in the practice both of the left and the ruling elite. The left must set aside its "instrumentalist" view of democracy which uses it and exploits it when it seems useful to it and not otherwise. In addition, the political left must respect the autonomy, indecisiveness and even chaos that comes from



too much democracy in the social and community left; a price worth paying according to Castañeda because the:

"ravages of the Leninist tradition are so pervasive and the distrust regarding the left's democratic convictions so widespread and justified that there can be no excess in this direction for now."[23]

His attacks on the left may well hit home when directed at guerrillas and Stalinists, but not at genuine Leninists.

In fact, the intellectual laziness of Castañeda in his easy and false elision of Leninism and Stalinism is one of the worst aspects of his book. One never finds a discussion or an argument to prove his attacks on Leninism. Its "Jacobin" hostility to democracy[24] or its "dogmatic and abstract" critique of "bourgeois democracy"[25] are asserted and no more.

Leninism does not dismiss bourgeois democracy. Leninism defends the widest extension of democratic rights since the exploited and oppressed gain most from their preservation.

But Castañeda wrongly identifies these rights (labour rights, human rights) as synonymous with parliamentary liberal democracy and the bourgeois state. It is not at all the same thing and it is Castañeda who is wrong to place the defence of these rights in the hands of the state and its personnel.

As for relations with the non-party left, the answer is, in essence, a simple one. The meeting ground between leadership (i.e. "vanguardism") and democracy is *accountability*. All social layers are stratified politically and in terms of their consciousness; how else can the poor be manipulated, a practice, which, as Castañeda observes, is endemic?

How can this be overcome except by leaders formulating policies that correspond to the objective (i.e. historic and long term) interests of the poor, as against their illusory ones? But leadership cannot subordinate the vitality of the mass organisations wherever real meaningful accountability exists. And on this issue Castañeda is incredibly weak.

For all his detailed proposals for viable-but-radical reform, Castañeda never once attempts to refute the central objection raised by the Marxist revolutionary left to his schema; namely, the partisan, class character of the capitalist state. His programme depends for its plausibility on his assumption (for it is no more than that) that the state (in contrast to venal governments or Presidents) is essentially *neutral* or can be made so with a few policy reforms.

LEFT: "MILITARY DEMOCRACY" IN THE 1995 PERUVIAN ELECTIONS

He is clear that holding free elections has been insufficient. He makes detailed proposals for electoral reforms (among others on party financing, proportional representation, access to media). He calls for an "independent judiciary" and a professional civil service since "destroying the symbiosis between public office and private patronage is the paramount structural reform Latin American democracy requires".[26]

In this way:

"Congressional majorities and the governments they support come and go; the continuity of the state is guaranteed by the stability of an apolitical and honest civil service".[27]

The idealisation and limitation of his version of democracy is obvious here. Leave aside that these structures exist in many countries outside the region and do not prevent the state's permanent executive machine being pro-capitalist. It never strikes Castañeda for a moment that there is a contradiction between his critique of the left's lack of democracy and his own advocacy of an unaccountable and apolitical civil service that remains permanently in place to oversee state affairs, while elected governments come and go!

Leninism defends the widest extension of democratic rights since the exploited and oppressed gain most from their preservation.

Castañeda shares the thoroughly idealist view of the state as being raised above the contending classes, and pro-

motes the gross deception that the more unaccountable and "professional and hierarchical"[28] the permanent executive of the state is, the more likely it will be to promote a major structural transformation of capitalism and repair centuries of social injustice.

The whole history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is one in which the growth and extension of suffrage has been accompanied by a parallel growth in the unaccountable, non-elected state machine which acts as a safeguard against the vagaries (as far as the bourgeoisie is concerned) of elections.

Castañeda see it all upside down. He wants to strengthen the state bureaucracy against civil society and even against government because he believes that private business interests have abused the political machine for their own narrow class interests.

But every structural democratic reform Castañeda proposes would be balanced by a further undemocratic safeguard, some of which he unwittingly suggests himself.

Castañeda's democracy is also timid. He never once—despite the detailed provisions—calls for the military, the armed power of the state, to be even fundamentally democratised, still less done away with. Nor even, though he favours an independent judiciary, does he insist that it be elected.

Leninists are not dogmatic opponents of democracy; we just happen to have a more realistic (that is, one grounded in the lessons of history) view of how state's operate. We favour more democracy not less—every day and everywhere. We favour the democracy of struggle to the democracy of incorporation and diffusion of anger. Leninists aim to direct the energy of the "social left" to smash the edifice of exclusion and oppression that atomises and manipulates the mass of people. Therein lies the difference between Castañeda's pragmatic reformism—which in the end shares the same deficiencies of the reformists and ex-guerrillas he criticises—and the real revolutionary left.

Conclusion

The scale of the social problems in Latin America are only too evident to Castañeda. His book is a catalogue of injustices, inequality and repression. The necessity for an EU-type evolution for Latin America is clear to Castañeda since mere redistribution of existing wealth is insufficient to solve the scale of the problem. Castañeda wants to generate a capitalism that can sustain a welfare state for a majority of the population and so growth has to be the long-term key to this.

In the short-term, however, he proposes massively expanding the tax base, cutting military spending in half and implementing a major debt relief programme.

In proposing these reforms he explicitly makes an appeal to the common sense of the domestic and international capitalist class. The West must help out, since if it fails to respond to a worsening situation then the drugs, the poverty, the destruction of the eco-system, the crime—all will be exported to the USA and Europe. The OECD tax payers must foot the bill for tax relief for Latin America.

They must also close the present tax loopholes which allow the national bourgeoisie to evade their responsibilities at home by keeping their assets abroad, safe from tax claims.

Castañeda shows a touching, if completely misplaced, rationalism. The rich will prefer to keep their wealth safe from the hands of the tax offices and use some of it to fence themselves off from the sight and smell of the poor and oppressed who create their wealth. For exactly the same reason, they will defend the level of military spending, not because there is any pressing external threat to national sovereignty, but in order to finance a machine of domestic terror against the workers and poor peasants.

The influence of Castañeda's book in the end depends not so much on its internal coherence or novelty, but on the manifest failure of the non-social democratic left in Latin America this century. Stalinism and left populism were indeed varieties of reformism. The guerrillas turned out to be no more than liberals (or social democrats) with guns.

In fact, it is reformism and petit bourgeois revolutionary democracy that have backfired in Latin America. Like all utopias, ("socialism in one country" or the "third way to national development") they turned out to be reactionary failures in practice.

Castañeda's wealth of insights into the weaknesses of those utopias should not blind anyone to the reactionary character of his own—elaborate if less ambitious—utopia. His striving to reproduce the structures of European and Japanese capitalism on Latin American soil, this time stripped of the very social defects that made them successful, is a project whose time has passed.

When the book was in preparation Fernando Cardoso found his way into the book as a Brazilian sociologist and social democrat (member of PSDB). Now he is President of Brazil. He is formally committed to many of Castañeda's policies.

Whether there, or somewhere else in Latin America, the laws of history dictate that when put to the test of office this project will, to use Castañeda's own words about his opponents, "be exposed as irretrievably incompetent and obsolete."[29] ■

1 Utopia Unarmed, New York 1994 £11.99 (Pbk). All page references are to this book unless otherwise stated. Castañeda is a Mexican sociologist and was active in the Mexican student struggles of the mid-1980s.
2 p179
3 p19
4 He makes no attempt to distinguish between Leninism and Stalinism and subsumes both under "Communism".
5 p27
6 p29
7 p38
8 p67-68. The earlier pessimism had seemed entirely justified in the light of the USA's overthrow of the elected, radical social democratic government of Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954.
9 Peru and Guatemala's guerrilla armies persisted into the mid-1990s and have now been joined by the Zapatistas in Mexico.
10 The Organisation of Latin American States (OLAS) was set up in 1967 as an international centre dedicated to these objectives.
11 First in Brazil in 1964 (mainly after 1968) and then in Argentina and Uruguay in 1973 and 1974 respectively.
12 The joint statement between the Cuban and the USSR parties in 1975 stated, " . . . we Communists are willing to back and encourage the positions of those Latin American governments that imply the defence of our natural resources or the effort to set limits on multi-national corporations . . . " (p83)
13 Carpio quoted on p96
14 p99
15 Quote from 1983 interview, p109
16 p112
17 Even a reformist academic such as James Dunkerley criticises Castañeda for this: "Castañeda comes dangerously close to the view that the left's fascination with military struggle in Latin America, set in train by the Cuban revolution and the cultural obsession with militarism has now come to its natural end. But is the Haitian resistance to Cedras' terror by force of arms not necessary? Is the Zapatistas' uprising not justified by the one party state and fraudulent elections?" "Beyond Utopia: the state of the left in Latin America." in *New Left Review* No206 p31.
18 p135
19 p429
20 p277
21 p287
22 Mercosur is the economic regional free trade agreement between Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. CACM is the Central American Common Market.
23 p361
24 Chile in the 1990s
25 p340
26 p383
27 p388
28 p387
29 p265



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The genesis of Irish nationalism

The United Irishmen and the failed revolution of 1798

Jim Lineghan begins a series on the Irish national struggle, yesterday and today

In 1795 the United Irishmen, the first Irish republicans, refounded themselves as an underground revolutionary organisation. In September of the same year, the Orange Society was established as a mass reactionary alliance of landlords and loyalist peasantry. The aim of the United Irishmen was to recreate the French Revolution in Ireland; the Orangemen's goal was to prevent it. So the "two traditions" referred to in the Downing Street Declaration both have something to commemorate this year.

The closing years of the eighteenth century were a historic turning point for Ireland. Had a democratic, bourgeois revolution succeeded it would have altered the course of Irish and British history—and thereby major developments in Europe as a whole. Its failure was crucial in moulding the movements and the people that dominated the next two centuries.

In 1798 the United Irishmen were able to mobilise hundred of thousands of poorly armed peasants in a mass rising. It was drowned in blood. The Irish parliament was abolished and the Irish colonial state was forced into a political union with Britain. However, this forcible union was stillborn. It did not follow the pattern of the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707. Within a few decades it plunged Ireland into the hell of Western Europe's last great famine (1845-50). The terrible suffering of those years fired a new revolutionary nationalism which looked for inspiration to the United Irishmen. It lives on in the 1990s in the IRA who claim historical continuity with the revolutionaries of the 1790s.

Origins of the Irish national movement

The formation of an Irish national movement arose out of the paradoxes of economic development in Ireland in the long 18th century (1691-1800) and the revolutionary climate internationally. Wave upon wave of conquerors—Normans, Tudors, Cromwellians and finally William of Orange—attempted and finally succeeded in subduing all of Ireland. After 1691, centuries of war, both against the invaders and amongst the Gaelic lords themselves, gave way to an English "peace" and to rapid economic development.

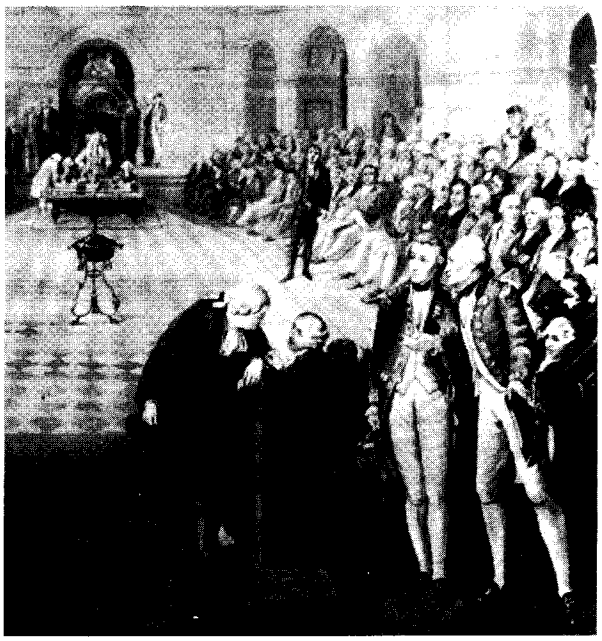
British capitalism was developing at a breakneck speed. Ireland, as close to London as many parts of Britain itself, could not but benefit from this, despite its subjection. However, manufacturers and traders in mainland Britain worked overtime to make sure that competition from Irish producers was restricted by the British state.

Ireland was ruled from Dublin Castle by viceroys—directly appointed by, and accountable to, the English privy council and cabinet. Ireland, despite having its own parliament, was subject to legislation by the Westminster parliament in which there were no Irish representatives.

Parliaments had been convened in Dublin since the first French-speaking Norman administration. They directly represented the occupiers of Irish land. The parliament of 1691 was exclusively Protestant—indeed Anglican. It was dominated by the landlord aristocracy of old and new planters, who settled in successive waves during 150 years. A decade after William of Orange had left Ireland with his armies only 14% of agricultural land remained in the hands of Catholic gentry. Even these were not the aboriginal Gaelic Irish but the descendants of pre-reformation Anglo-Norman conquerors and planters. Some of them had adopted and continued to speak the Gaelic language. But it was their religion which stamped them as "disloyal" under the anti-Catholic Penal Laws.

The Penal Laws may have hit English Catholics as hard as they did Irish ones, but in Ireland there was one enormous difference. In Ireland they were a weapon of colonial rule by an alien ruling class with no legitimacy in the eyes of the peasant masses who made up the vast majority of the population. A son of a Catholic landowner could only inherit the family land if he converted to Protestantism. Of course, many Catholic landowners did, indeed, convert to the Established Church so as to preserve their wealth.

Despite the legal restrictions on property rights, despite denial of all political rights, it was impossible in a growing economy to prevent the gradual emergence of a trading, commercial and professional Catholic middle class over a period of half a century.



THE IRISH PARLIAMENT IN 1790

They remained, however, excluded from political life and the law. This favoured the social leadership of the Catholic clergy who, in practice, escaped persecution.

The Anglican Ascendancy could generally rely on the support of the Presbyterians as a mass base for Protestantism in the face of Catholic resurgence—except in the crucial decades of the 1780s and 1790s. They had little interest, however, in converting the Catholic masses to their Episcopalian creed which served them as the title to their legal privileges. They imposed a steep 10% tax on the Catholic and Presbyterian majority for the upkeep of the Episcopalian clergy. These hated "tithes" became a key issue in local peasant uprisings throughout the eighteenth century.

One third of the population was Protestant and English-speaking at the start of the century and a third of these were Presbyterian small-holders, tenants and artisans concentrated in the North-East. Most originated from the Scottish lowlands. They spoke Scots, a distinct language, but cognate to English. As "dissenters" they suffered political exclusion from parliament, town corporations and public office. Whereas the British State recognised the Presbyterians as the Established church in Scotland, the Irish Anglican Ascendancy excluded them politically from the "Irish Nation".

The Irish and the British Nations

Great Britain was created by the union with Scotland in 1707—a new nation state. It was dominated politically by the Whig landed aristocracy, committed to protecting the interests of British merchant capitalists and industry. As against the old Tory aristocracy and the Stuart monarchy, they were landowners in the process of becoming agrarian capitalists. This union, though at first beset with problems, ultimately proved viable because of the influence of Scottish merchant capitalists and landowners in the lowlands who benefited enormously by sharing in the new industrial development and the colonial expansionism of a unified British state. No such class existed in Ireland.

On the contrary, the Anglican Ascendancy was hostile to the Whigs, a supporter of aristocracy, monarchy and the English Tories. A limited "self-rule" had been conceded to the old forces of the aristocracy in the revolution of Parliament against Crown of the 1640s. Much as the new forces at work in Britain after the Cromwellian revolution and the Glorious Revolution (1688) might have wished to incorporate Ireland fully into the new British nation state, it was too great a risk. Full union was never more than an idea for most of the 18th century.

This had profound consequences for economic relations between the islands. Even more important were its effects on social development within Ireland itself. The Ascendancy drew its wealth and privilege almost entirely from semi-feudal landlordism. Subjecting the poor peasantry to intense exploitation, repressing and excluding the Catholic petit-bourgeoisie, and defining themselves socially by means of an elite religion, the Ascendancy constituted an enormous obstacle to Irish social development.

Britain's mercantilist protection of its own trade certainly crippled Irish economic activity wherever the latter competed with Britain. Economically as well as politically, it continued to create and define its own nation state to the exclusion of Ireland. Ireland functioned in effect as a major agricultural supplier of Britain's needs throughout the century. This benefited the Irish landed aristocracy as much as it harmed the development of an embryonic Irish bourgeoisie. It was this internal class structure in Ireland, more than British trade restrictions, which stood in the way of the British industrial revolution being replicated in Ireland.

This class structure could slow and divert the development of the island's productive forces, but they could not stop it. Over the long 18th century the population grew from three to six million. Before the Famine in the 1840s it would rise to eight million. This growth, despite serious famine in the 1720s, reflected real economic development in agriculture and, eventually, a linen industry based on the flax crop. Irish exports of cereals and meat were vital to the growing British economy. Trade with France, Spain and the European mainland, trade with the American colonies, and the victualling of westward-bound fleets greatly stimulated the market for Irish agricultural produce.

Particular measures of protection were imposed in favour of British merchants and manufacturers against Irish exporters. These were in direct response to pressure from groups of merchants in Britain rather than an overall policy to retard Irish development. Jonathan Swift directed the sharpest polemics of the early 18th century against British restrictions on Irish trade. In 1729 he summed up the sense of grievance in Ireland:

"If two thirds of any kingdom's revenue be exported to another country, without one farthing of value in return and if the said kingdom be forbidden the most profitable branches of trade wherein to employ the other third, and only allowed to traffic in importing those commodities which are most ruinous to itself, how shall that kingdom stand? "

Swift, like other critics from within the Ascendancy, was moved by the awful poverty amidst aristocratic wealth in a fertile land where manufacturing seemed to be stillborn compared to England and lowland Scotland. His answer was protectionism for the Irish economy.

Some 5,000 Protestant landlords were drawing income from rents imposed largely on poor Catholic tenants, and from the labour of a growing mass of landless families. About a quarter of this was being remitted to absentee landlords in Britain along with other revenues to the Crown. Much of this wealth was consumed unproductively, in aristocratic luxury, rather than being re-invested in agriculture or industry.

Present-day revisionist historians claim that Ireland's backwardness was simply due to an accident of history and geography, that it was even self-inflicted. Above all, it was not a result of British colonial policy. None of England's restrictions on Irish manufacturing, shipping or trade between 1663 and 1778 had any decisive effect, according to this view. Irish nationalism takes the exact opposite view—that Britain deliberately destroyed the basis for Irish manufacture by its commercial restrictions, and this was the essence of the colonial oppression of the Irish "nation".

The revisionists' act as apologists for Britain, or rather for the Irish bourgeoisie's new rapprochement with it. Nevertheless, they have a point against the nationalists. Even if there had been no mercantilist restrictions on Irish trade and manufacture, the existing social and political relations of Irish society would have continued to be the main obstacle to capitalist development.

It is generally true that particular measures restricting exports of agricultural commodities from Ireland did not in themselves reduce Ireland from pros-

perity to poverty. So, for example, when British Cattle Acts in 1663 and 1666 banned imports from Ireland, traders found new markets in Flanders, France, Spain and further afield.

Irish society, radically divided between Protestant landlords and Catholic rural masses, was obstructed in transforming itself along the lines which brought such evident prosperity and national unity to Britain in the 17th and 18th centuries. Semi-feudal landlordism became permanently entrenched and degenerate instead of giving way to capitalist agriculture. Most importantly, early industrial development was hamstrung.

The 19th century nationalist leader Isaac Butt suggested that had England not suppressed the Irish woollen industry at the start of the 18th century the landlords "would have been enabled to get rid of their 'popish tenantry' by making sheep walks of their estates". Indeed, the rural masses would have suffered immediately by such clearances, just as in Britain, but that would have at least been an early step towards capitalist development. Instead, rural misery intensified while rents rose, meat and butter exports grew and luxuries were imported for the elite. Recurrent cycles of hunger for the masses followed bouts of bad weather until in 1741, the "year of the slaughter", about 12% of the entire population died in a horrific famine—over 300,000 people in one year.

Throughout the first 40 years of the century, Ascendancy politicians and even key figures in the Dublin administration whose primary loyalty was to the Crown, repeatedly quarrelled with the British privy council and parliament and asserted the right of the Protestant "Irish nation" to determine its own laws. But all of these confrontations proved soluble through diplomacy or the manipulation of patronage.

Despite the famines, despite the Penal Laws, there was no national movement of any kind among the Catholic masses. The growing commercial Catholic middle class kept a low profile in order to survive. By mid-century only 5% of agricultural land remained in the hands of Catholic gentry and then in the areas most remote from Dublin. The rural masses' hopes of liberation from their oppressors were generally fixed on a victory for European Catholic powers in a war with Britain. This delusion led tens of thousands of the most courageous and rebellious young men to escape rural misery by joining the armies of Spain and France. But Irishmen also joined the British army in large numbers and Irish economic conscripts were the mainstay of many a British army across the world throughout the century.

Social backwardness in Ireland, in contrast with rapid economic development in Britain and America, in part also explains why growing waves of Presbyterian emigrants left the north-east for the new world between 1718 and the American war of independence, perhaps more than 100,000 in all. Thousands of them enthusiastically enlisted for the colonies against Britain in 1776.

Semi-feudal landlordism became permanently entrenched and degenerate instead of giving way to capitalist agriculture. Most importantly, early industrial development was hamstrung.

Industrial development

National income in Ireland multiplied fivefold from 1730 to the end of the century—from about £15m to £75m—while the population grew from three to six million. In the same period, rents from the landlord system grew at least sixfold to about £12m. Rents were about one-third of total agricultural income. About 52% of national income was "non-agricultural". Urban life centred around trading ports—there was only one substantial inland town, Kilkenny. The state undertook development of the roads and canals for the most part, especially from the 1760s.

Banking was well developed by the second half of the century and landlords in particular borrowed heavily to buy Government and canal stock. Merchants also played a major role in advancing credit. They were most influential in the capital, Dublin, from which they initially controlled much of the trade in the more developed north-east around Belfast.

Linen manufacture, through all stages, was the basis of economic development in the north-east. At the outset of the century English capitalists were happy to suppress the Irish woollen industry but to encourage linen. Huguenot craftsmen, Protestant refugees from France, were financed to organise its beginnings among the Presbyterian settlers. As tenants of planter landlords in the north-east, the Presbyterians enjoyed much more favourable leases and conditions than Catholics throughout the south.

Within a generation the processing of flax into linen became the major source of income in the north-east. Spinning and weaving was done in the homestead by the families who grew the flax. The finishing process called for bigger investment in water-powered machinery, by wealthier farmers who usually continued to work their farms as well.

Reliance on water power in this as in the grain milling industry meant that industrial centres were often dispersed along the river courses. Little coal was mined in Ireland and its absence discouraged iron and steel smelting. Cheap imported fuel was important to industrial development. Improvements in roads, canals and eventually railway communications into the countryside made it as easy for external imports to penetrate the country as for goods to be exported.

Linen "colonies" on the Ulster model spread through the western province of Connacht and in areas of the south around Cork, but they did not survive and develop as in the north. Nevertheless, in the second half of the century, processing of linen, wool and cotton, particularly by women in the home, was a major source of subsistence income for hundreds of thousands of often landless labourers around the country.

The prosperity of the Dublin merchants was contested by rival manufacturers and merchants in the north-east who took control of the trade away from Dublin. The industry gradually centralised in east Ulster and eventually stagnated in the rest of the country. Linen's 200 years of continuous growth as a profitable export was possible, unlike the fate of wool, because of the complete absence of any restriction on it in the British market. Flour milling, sugar baking, brewing and distilling and mechanised cotton spinning were the other major industries which each sustained several hundred capitalist companies in the second half of the century.

Overall, the level of economic development, a thriving linen industry organically linked to the cottiers and small farmers over much of the country, and the rapidly growing population compared favourably with the European mainland as preconditions for the leap to capitalist industrial revolution. That leap could not be made without breaking the social power of the Ascendancy landlord system. Given the historic failure to assimilate Irish society fully into British economic and social development, the development of a successful capitalism in Ireland would also hinge on creating and protecting a unified home market and uniting the masses nationally, enabling a developing bourgeoisie to mobilise the vast resources of labour in Ireland in capitalist agriculture and industry.

The most socially coherent class of capitalists were the Presbyterian linen manufacturers and merchants of the north-east. Their regional capital, Bel-



1890: BRITISH TROOPS EVICT IRISH PEASANT

fast, thrived as an exclusively Protestant town with the beginnings of a cultural and political life of its own, but embittered against the colonial regime which oppressed them as religious dissenters. It was this class who were most aroused by the French revolution of 1789 to take up in Ireland the fight for a republic through the society of United Irishmen.

From Parliamentary Reform to Bourgeois Revolution

The American declaration of independence in 1776 was celebrated in Ireland even among the more liberal Protestant politicians. These Irish "Whigs" argued for free trade, condemned parliamentary corruption and called for electoral reform and freedom for the Irish parliament to determine its own laws. Seats in the Irish parliament were often the property of particular landlords, the electorate comprising only a tiny stratum of propertied Protestants.

The American war itself sharpened awareness of economic restrictions on Ireland as England introduced new measures, and thus intensified hostility to English commercial control. When France entered the war and troops were withdrawn from Ireland, local gentry and great landowners organised Volunteer corps as defence militias. Ostensibly, these were to defend Ireland against the French. But soon they took on a more radical stance, becoming overtly the Irish nation under arms. Presbyterian corps led the way in allowing Catholics to join and bear arms despite official disapproval. The rank and file were generally tradesmen or prosperous artisans. Some 900 Volunteers with muskets paraded in Dublin outside Parliament House in November 1779 with slogans for "free trade or else". Angry artisans followed up with more riotous demonstrations.

The British cabinet moved to permit free trade with the British colonies. Emboldened, the parliamentary opposition under Henry Grattan pressed for parliamentary independence from Westminster. In February 1782 delegates of 143 Volunteer corps from the north met in Dungannon and denounced the British claim to legislate for

Marxism and Irish history

It is scarcely surprising that the development of the "peace process" in 1995 has further stimulated a debate about Irish history. Revolutionary Marxists must intervene in this debate. Neither fashionable trends in bourgeois history, so-called "revisionism", nor the old Irish Nationalist myth-makers can provide an orientation for those who wish today to fundamentally re-orient the struggle against British imperialism and its loyal servants in Ireland.

Historians such as Ronan Fanning (*Independent Ireland*) and Roy Foster (*Modern Ireland, 1600- 1972)* are the most general synthesizers of the revisionist approach. Others have contributed to the assault on the nationalist "myths" in specific fields; Tom Dunne (on Wolfe Tone), Ruth Dudley Edwards (on Patrick Pearse), Austen Morgan (on James Connolly) and Tom Garvin. Many insist that Ireland's past is detachable from present-day political agendas but their work has been used to back up a very definite agenda, that of reconciliation with Orangeism and Britain. This means that the historic oppressor has to be exonerated and the heroes of the nationalist pantheon dethroned.

Their general method is to contextualise and thereby relativise all the key events and processes which Irish nationalist historians have interpreted as "800 years of English oppression". Their claims include:

- the conquest by first Norman and then by Tudor England was not unique in the conditions of pre-and early capitalist Europe;
- colonial plantation in Ulster was just one more instance of worldwide migrations of peoples in the 16th and 17th centuries;
- the penal laws against the Catholic masses were of little consequence;
- the landlord Ascendancy in Ireland was mostly either well-meaning or self-destructive;
- the 18th century British restrictions on Irish economic development are by and large a myth created by nationalists.

In this view, the United Irishmen who rose up in 1798 due to this "misperception" were tragically mistaken. Even the Great Famine of the 1840s was a "natural" tragedy for which it is "unfair" to blame the British state. The anti-landlord and anti-British republicanism of the Fenians from the 1860s onwards was supposedly sectarian, terrorist, and obsessed with "blood sacrifice". Its pursuit of a mythical all-Ireland republic could only mean civil war against the Protestants—who were, in the North-East, a distinct nationality. The results of all this farrago of misunderstanding and mythology was an unnecessary and bloody war with England, the partition of the country and the entrenchment of mass Orange sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

Of course, no single revisionist writer would subscribe to all of these views. Most hide behind the claim of being "specialists" in discrete periods or aspects, escaping into empiricism and economic statistics, and pretending to be champions of a "value-free" method.

The revisionists have been answered by a number of nationalist professional historians such as Brendan Bradshaw, probably the best of them. Unfortunately, even he remains fundamentally idealist in his conception of the Irish nation and the historical basis of its right to struggle.

An overall Marxist position has yet to be argued in this debate notwithstanding the outraged abuse from Stalinised left nationalists and a few Marxist studies in political economy. "Marxist" historiography began with James Connolly's republican socialist historical propaganda and was resumed by post-war Stalinist writers such as T.A.Jackson and Desmond Greaves.

The Marxist position is distinct from either the revisionist servants of the Irish bourgeoisie's latest tactical turn or Stalinist attorneys of Irish nationalism. Contrary to the nationalists' views, the present conflict is not a simple reprise of the millenial struggle of an ancient nation. It is the unfinished business of a roughly two-century-old struggle against the colonialism and then the imperialism of Britain by different organised expressions of an Irish national movement.

That movement was born in a revolution whose leading social force (the rising industrial bourgeoisie) was smashed almost as soon as it was created. This had tremendous consequences for the later organised manifestions, revolutionary and reformist alike; O'Connell's Repeal movement, the Fenians, Parnell's Irish Party, Pearse's IRB, the IRA over the last seven decades

The relation of past to present can never be adequately understood outside of a historical materialist approach. It is to this task that our present series of articles are devoted.■

Ireland, demanded free trade and an independent judiciary. The cabinet was warned that any delay in granting liberal concessions would end in the British connection being broken. Grattan was triumphant. Britain granted a Catholic relief act and a constitutional amendment. This "revolution of 1782" amounted to formal parliamentary independence for Ireland. However, no social progress of any substance came of it, nor did it imply any new attitude on the part of Britain which was merely making short-term concessions to minimise dissent in Ireland in time of war.

At the time, Prime Minister Lord North privately expressed his preference to engineer a union of Britain and Ireland rather than to tinker with existing legal and commercial relations between the two countries. British capitalism no longer had a need for mercantilist policies to dominate Irish manufacture. Having undergone dramatic economic and political development since the 1707 union with Scotland, Britain was now a highly centralised state which possessed a formidable naval and military power to oversee a rapidly expanding colonial empire. Great Britain now had little to fear from fully integrating Ireland into this state. But the political difficulties of carrying out such a union still outweighed any pressing imperial necessity. War with revolutionary France in the 1790s would change that.

By the end of 1782 the Volunteers were already making clear their discontent with the constitutional "revolution". But as their movement became more centralised nationally it fell under the influence of "moderate" men and "gentlemen of property and station" who made clear to the King their loyalty to the constitution. The more radical elements had clarified their attitude in this process. One discovery was the supreme importance of fighting for equality for the Catholics—or at least the Catholic middle class, if the corrupt and divisive rule of the Protestant Ascendancy was to be smashed and thereby the subordination of Ireland to Britain ended. But if these increasingly revolutionary elements were to unite an Irish Nation and thereby break its subordination to England, it would have to address the social grievances of the huge majority of the nation—the Irish peasantry, both Catholic and Protestant.

Agrarian Conflict and Sectarianism

Any revolutionary movement in Ireland would have to relate to, and indeed transform, the defence organisations of the peasantry. Agrarian terror in Ireland dates back to the "tories"and "raparees" who raided the estates from which colonial planters had expelled them. In the 18th century rural resistance and vendettas were conducted by Whiteboys, Oakboys, Defenders and others.

From the 1760s onwards, organised peasant actions provoked increasing alarm. In 1763 in the north it was the most insecure Protestant tenants, faced with rent and tax increases, who conducted a campaign under the name of "Oakboys", leading to a pitched battle with the cavalry. Disturbances followed across the southern counties where "Whiteboys" and "Levellers" opposed enclosures, high rents for potato plots, and tithes. Large numbers bound themselves by oaths, levelled fences, raided houses and terrorised members of the unpopular gentry. They armed themselves with guns, billhooks and hatchets in occasional confrontations with the professional militia.

However, there were developments which acted in a contrary direction, that is, dividing Catholic and Protestant peasants, and thereby creating the mass base of a reactionary movement—the Orange Societies. Poor Catholic tenants were barely capable of subsistence farming over and above meeting the demand for rent and produce. They were thus more easily drawn into the more centralised industrial production as cheap labour and were used to break competition from the independent weavers and tenants who were capable of both subsistence farming and cottage manufacture. The poorer Protestant tenants and landless labourers were squeezed by increasing rents and forced into competition with Catholic tenants for land and work as wealthier linen manufacturers bought up land.

It was after one such confrontation, in September 1795, that the "Peep o' Day Boys" created the Orange Society. Immediately it became something quite other than a local defence organisation. It began to organise Protestant tenants, yeoman farmers and artisans—mostly those of the Established Church—into Lodges, wherever possible under the patronage of important gentry. Its published aims were to preserve the foundations of the Protestant Establishment in Ireland won by their forefathers in the Williamite wars—defence of the established church and loyalty to the monarch and constitution.

Their actual programme was one of undisguised sectarian terror, which created a widespread panic among Catholics even in areas where there were no Lodges. Though mobilising large numbers only in the north, they drew into their ranks Protestant gangs such as the "Black Mob" who operated as bounty-hunters in the mountains south of Dublin. Much as the government wanted to quell disorder in the countryside, they saw that the Orangemen could be an ally against radical conspiracy and the threat of French invasion. Prior to the insurrection of 1798, the Orange societies had built up their membership to 100,000 and were patronised by Ulster grandees and aristocratic Dublin politicians.



CENTURIES OF NATIONAL OPPRESSION FUEL TODAY'S REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT

The Catholic Middle Class

A middle class Catholic Committee was formed in 1760 to fight for the repeal of the Penal Laws. Until the crisis period of the American war they made no gains, even in getting full membership of the trade guilds. The first Catholic relief bill followed on the agitation of the Volunteers who, at first, took no position on equal rights for Catholics. It was revolution in France which made Catholic emancipation a slogan of the Protestant radicals. Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* was widely read and reprinted in Ireland by a committee which included several of the future organisers of the United Irishmen. It was celebrated as a defence of French revolutionary principles and an answer to the writings of Edmund Burke, the great Anglo-Irish ideologue of British counter-revolutionary conservatism.

In 1790 the Catholic Committee, largely Dublin businessmen, some of them social radicals, re-launched their campaign for a limited franchise for Catholics. This committee was riven by internal feuding along class lines—the few prestigious gentry and Catholic landlords resenting the radicalism of the Catholic businessmen. The British government, however, proposed to the administration in Dublin measures to extend a limited franchise to Catholics and relief from disabilities connected with trade, professions, education and marriage.

Westmorland, the viceroy in Dublin, opposed such moves and replied to Pitt in 1792 that, "if Ireland was at the bottom of the sea it might be one thing but while she exists you must rule her". What was required was, "a very strong interior management that will render Ireland subservient to the general order of the empire". This, Westmorland thought, could only be provided by Irish Protestants, "in possession of land,

magistracy, and power". Concessions to the Catholics were bound to make the Irish parliament "more subservient to the feelings of the nation at large", and Westmorland asked: "Do you believe England can govern Ireland by the popularity of government? . . . Is it not the very essence of your imperial policy to prevent the interests of Ireland clashing and interfering with the interests of England?" The bill which was then agreed did not give any voting rights to Catholics and allowed them only into the lower levels of the law.

Whig liberalism in the Irish parliament betrayed its cowardice as the overwhelming majority reacted against the petition of the Catholic Committee for political inclusion of Catholics. The great reformer, Grattan, found himself in a minority of 25 against 208. His fundamental belief in the ability of the British constitution to guarantee its own reform was manifestly bankrupt. Yet constitutional nationalists forever after made "Grattan's Parliament" the touchstone of their methods, as against the revolutionary tradition of Wolfe Tone.

Tone's appointment as secretary of the Catholic Committee in July 1792 was of major significance. Son of a Protestant Dublin coach builder, Tone was a distinguished student of law, though he found little work. Profoundly influenced by Paine's *The Rights of Man* he soon became a leading radical. When the Belfast Volunteers decided to demonstrate on Bastille Day 1791, Tone was one of the two propagandists commissioned to draft their address. In August he published *An argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, the essential manifesto of Irish radicalism. Not only did it win Irish radical nationalism to recognise the necessity of uniting with the Catholics for their emancipation and Irish independence, it began to create that political unity by winning Tone a key organisational position in the Catholic movement.

The leadership were deeply divided: could their purpose be achieved by a coup with French aid or must they resort to mass insurrection?

In autumn 1791 the radicals founded the Belfast Society of United Irishmen. Its manifesto in October was drafted with Tone and based all hope of radical reform upon the inclusion of all, irrespective of religion. Dublin followed suit. Tone's own ideas, he confided in a letter seized by the authorities, were too advanced to be publicly stated—the breaking of the connection between Ireland and England.

The growth of United Irishmen societies around the country, the powerful influence of the radical paper, *The Northern Star*, published in Belfast, and the tide of radical propaganda throughout the country, all terrified the administration. Under the impact of the French revolution the programme of the United societies became clearer. It stood openly for the vote for males irrespective of religion, though it was reluctant to drop the property qualification. It was for radical parliamentary reform and annual parliaments. It was for the independence of Ireland, but equivocated on whether this should be a republic or in a union of equals with Britain. Its world view was to create the economic conditions for prosperity.

As to its composition, the United Irishmen comprised the politically active sections of the bourgeoisie. In Belfast it was the radical dissenters, the Presbyterian businessmen. In Dublin it had about 350 members, professionals (56 lawyers, 24 medical men), merchants, manufacturers, printers, booksellers, shopkeepers and a few country gentlemen. The only employees were a few clerks.

When the society began to revive Volunteer militias—in a new uniform of green with French cockades—and to agitate for popular extra-parliamentary assemblies, amidst growing Catholic agitation and agrarian unrest, the government embarked on a policy of repression. Popular assemblies and the Volunteer corps were banned. Prosecutions of United Irishmen leaders put several in jail along with the printers of their press. When the government got evidence that Tone was considering the possibility of getting French military aid, he agreed to exile to America. Even before he sailed the police raided and shut down the Dublin society in May 1794.

This repression was a turning point since it made clear that the "legal revolution" of 1782 could not be repeated in the 1790s. The British were engaged in a life or death struggle with revolutionary France and neither would, nor could, allow the sea lanes to its colonies to be dominated by an independent power friendly to France. No compromise was possible and Irish radicals soon realised this. By the end of that same year the United Irishmen were reorganising as an underground movement of small committees, each of no more than 35, and winning the support of the agrarian Defenders across the country. It was widespread in three quarters of the country, especially strong in the north, by 1796. By then Wolfe Tone was in Paris winning the directorate of Carnot to organise the invasion of Ireland as a strategic blow against Britain.

The Road to Revolution

For three years the by now frankly republican United Irishmen grew as a mass secret organisation of a historically unprecedented kind. It had a formal membership of 280,000 early in 1798 and claimed the active support of up to 600,000, or 10%, of a national population who were for the most part illiterate and impoverished rural labourers and poor peasants. Elements of the government militia were in sympathy with the radicals in many parts of the country. The popular base of the movement was strongest in the north-east. There were 23,000 members in one county, Antrim, a stronghold of Presbyterianism. In the same county their allies included 8,500 organised Catholic Defenders.

From 1795, the United Irishmen in the the north-east began to recruit Catholic Defenders directly. The Defenders had broadened their support to include middle-class Catholics and began to develop and train armed detachments. United Irishmen leaders saw them as a key force for revolutionary action. United Irishmen organisation at a local level nominally had a military function. However, the national leaders still discouraged actual military preparations in the hope that it might yet be possible to avoid violent confrontation.

Here their fear of a mass agrarian rising for the poor peasantry's own goals undoubtedly deterred them. Tone hotly denied that he was in favour of a "lex agraria"—the expropriation of the great estates and their division amongst the peasants. But in many areas the rank and file systematically raided the gentry for arms and forged innumerable pikes in imitation of the French revolutionaries.

In 1796 the government passed an insurrection act, suspended habeas corpus and proclaimed the formation of local militias of loyal Protestant gentry (the yeomanry). They then set about visiting terror on district after district of the country. The aim was to smash the revolutionary conspiracy and force it to surrender its arms. Tens of thousands of weapons were surrendered as local activists were tortured, houses burned down and brutal troops quartered on local communities. *The North-*



WOLFE TONE



BASTILLE DAY CELEBRATIONS, BELFAST 1792

ern Star's presses were smashed up by troops. This finally convinced the movement that an armed insurrection was inevitable. The stumbling block was whether to wait for French aid. The leadership were deeply divided: could their purpose be achieved by a coup with French aid or must they resort to mass insurrection? Despite their earlier declarations, in which they styled themselves Jacobins (that is, the radical wing of the French Revolution), the United Irishmen at national level were more of an uneasy alliance of Jacobins and Girondins (the more conservative wing of the French republicans).

The obvious need to rally the support of the Catholic peasantry was accompanied by profound fear of uncontrolled peasant insurrection. Hence, there were no explicit demands for the expropriation of the landlords, for land to the peasants. Yet this was exactly what would have given political direction and coherence to a revolutionary peasantry. It would be profoundly ahistorical to imagine that even bourgeois revolutionaries would encourage a peasant revolution aimed at introducing mass peasant proprietorship. Only the most radical elements considered this option and they were firmly rejected by the national leadership. A United Irishmen organiser, and Catholic gunsmith, Watty Cox, published the extremist *Union Star* in which he proclaimed: "The lands which royal villainy wrested from murdered Irishmen shall be the rewards of the deliverers of their country." United Irishmen leaders such as Thomas Addis Emmet were happy for the government to ban the *Union Star*.

The United Irishmen leadership vacillated for two years between hopes of a French invasion, backed by a coup, and the inevitability of mass insurrection. Meanwhile, the government and aristocratic reaction mobilised with a vengeance. The local "yeomanry" armed the Protestant gentry, and some Catholics, against the threat of insurrection and French invasion which would inevitably bring destruction to all landowners. In Dublin, the professional classes rushed to display their loyalty in a 2,000 strong parade in defence of the city. Many of the yeomanry who now marched in defence of the government had previously been part of the militant, reforming Volunteers.

The failure of the United Irishmen to mobilise earlier meant that all those vacillating sections of society who had sustained the Volunteer movement were lost to the revolution. The reliance on aid from France and the fear of uncontrolled peasant revolution proved fatal.

The French, however, took Tone and the United Irishmen very seriously. In 1796 General Hoche, then one of the two or three most prominent generals, was authorised by the French Directory to lead an invasion fleet, "destined to effect the revolution in Ireland". But its sailing was delayed until the December gales began.

The fleet of forty three vessels, seventeen of them ships of the line, successfully evaded the English naval blockade and reached the Irish coast. But they were unable to land their 15,000 troops. Tone had to return in frustration to France. Never had British rule in Ireland had such a narrow escape.

But the presence of such a major invasion force was noted by both the government and the revolutionaries. It was not until the autumn of 1798 that Napoleon, now in the ascendant, authorised another expedition. French troops finally arrived in the west in August, with Wolfe Tone as a French general, but a month after the mass insurrection had been crushed.

The insurrection

In the capital, a mobilised gentry and intense repression deterred any revolutionary action. No popular revolutionary organisation in the city had survived the government terror. The national leadership in Dublin therefore hoped to take the city with armed masses from nearby districts, as the signal for a national rising. But the leaders were hunted down and arrested on the very eve of the event. Armed crowds of United Irishmen and peasantry assembled in huge numbers at many points in the east of the country on the night of 23-4 May. Those closest to the capital waited in vain for directions from Dublin, gradually dispersed and were finally scattered by detachments of troops.

In the south-eastern county of Wexford on 23 May a mass untrained peasant army with United Irishmen, Catholic gentry and the renowned Father Murphy in the lead, began an extraordinary campaign, seizing towns, fighting savage battles with the yeomanry, traversing hundreds of miles back and forth across the region throughout the month of June. Finally, they were smashed and dispersed by companies of professional soldiers sent from Dublin to prevent the insurrection linking up with rebel armies near the capital. The slaughter of many thousands of rebels harked back to the Cromwellian conquest.

The north-east rose also in the first week of June. Armies under Henry Joy McCracken, a cotton manufacturer, took the richest country, Antrim, north of Belfast. Henry Munro, a linen manufacturer, took county Down, south-east of Belfast. About 50,000 United Irishmen and Defenders turned out. Belfast, the seat of republican radicalism, had seen floggings and arms seizures over several months, but it was the recent rapid growth there of the loyalist Orange movement that made it possible for the English general, Nugent, to set out against the rebels without fearing the loss of the city. Offers of amnesty, combined with the threat of burning their towns and homes, finally undermined the isolated rebel armies after a week of skirmishing which claimed the lives of several hundred rebels.

In the south-eastern county of Wexford a mass untrained peasant army began an extraordinary campaign, seizing towns, fighting savage battles with the yeomanry, traversing hundreds of miles back and forth across the region throughout the month of June.

Few of the many other attempted

insurrections across the country rivalled Wexford, Antrim or Down in their importance or heroism. The August landing of General Humbert with Wolfe Tone and an inadequate 1,000 men in the most remote part of the west created a brief new emergency for the government. After a month of manoeuvres and skirmishes the French arrived in Dublin, but as prisoners of war. They had surrendered when promised that they would be allowed to sail for home. They were accorded full military honours. Not so Wolfe Tone, who despite his French army commission, was condemned for high treason. He took his own life rather than be hanged.

By the time an Irish republican movement would once more plan and execute insurrection against British control, it would be in a profoundly altered historical epoch.

The Napoleonic wars with England had made French aid a real possibility. However, despite the extraordinary conjuncture of economic and social circumstances and brilliant achievements, the French aid arrived late, in the wrong places or their fleets suffered dispersal or shipwreck. The national leadership of the United Irishmen was broken by a network of informers and repression. The untrained rank and file of the peasantry and Catholic gentry, despite surviving years of vicious pre-emptive state terror, proved confused and directionless in open revolt. In the north-east the Orange *Vendée*, supported by the magistrates and troops, was a growing force. In these conditions professional British troops were sufficient to decisively defeat the ill-armed and undisciplined peasant masses. Ireland was saved for the Ascendancy landlords and the Crown. Not for nearly one hundred and twenty years was Ireland to witness such a rising again.

A failed bourgeois revolution

Some 30,000 rebels were killed in the insurrection, scores executed and many of the arrested leaders exiled. Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger resolved to end once and for all the danger of an Irish alliance with continental powers against Britain. He decided to abolish the Dublin parliament and simultaneously wipe out all economic restrictions on Ireland by forcing it into full political union with Britain in an expanded United Kingdom. The widening gap in economic level between the two countries posed no continuing threat of economic competition from a country which would serve as an agricultural region of the kingdom with a limited industrial base integrated into the British market.

The plan was forced on the Irish Ascendancy. A majority was procured for it in the Irish parliament by unprecedented bribery. From 1800 onwards 100 Irish members of parliament from British-style constituencies would sit at Westminster. Meanwhile, the rapid concentration of industry in Britain and the revolution in industrial technique was beginning to undermine the diversification of industry in Ireland. All of Ireland, outside of the north-east, was facing rapid economic decline, and around Belfast the further development of industry became an extension of the industrial revolution in Britain, with little organic connection to its own national hinterland.

The objective basis for national revolution by a rising all-Ireland industrial bourgeoisie was being rapidly eliminated. The national unity of "Catholic, Protestant and dissenter", so brilliantly achieved for such a short time by Tone, the United Irishmen and the Defenders, was never to be rebuilt.

The "Great Irish Rebellion" of 1798 was indeed a major bourgeois revolution albeit one which failed, tragically for Ireland and for the popular forces in Britain itself.

It united the Irish masses for the first time, though briefly, in a national movement, for a republican state free of British colonial rule. It was free of the cultural nationalism and claims to Gaelic ancestry in which the later nationalist movements were steeped. It took its powerful dynamic from the objective realities of the new capitalism in Ireland which provided a brief window of opportunity to lead Irish society out of its semi- feudal rural backwardness.

Such a revolution was only possible because of a combination of factors. Although economic development provided the fundamental motor, a national movement could not have emerged or hoped to succeed without the powerful ideological impulse of the American and French revolutions—and the prospects of aid from revolutionary France.

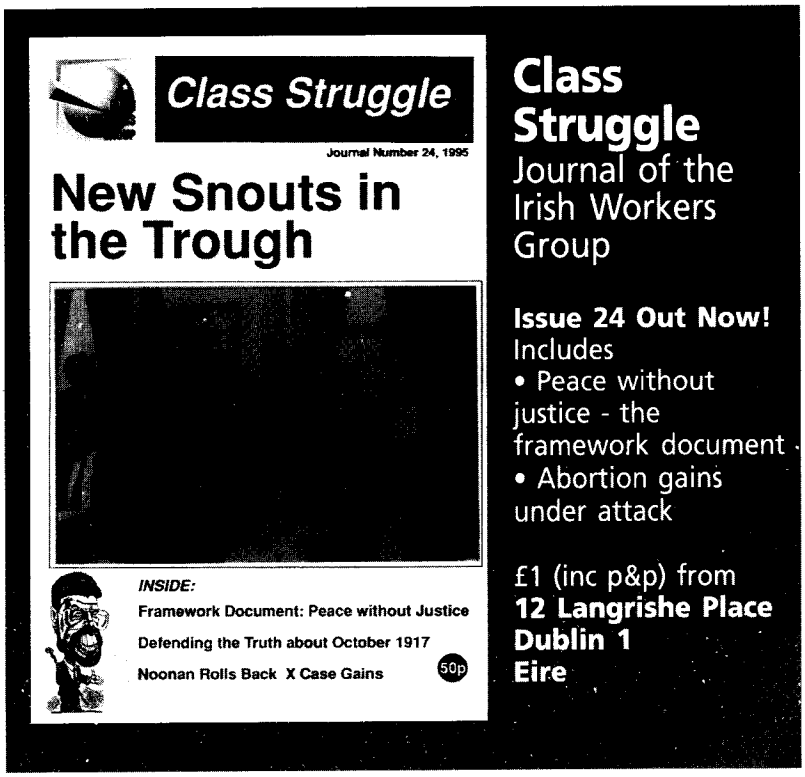
The degree of capitalist development in Ireland, and the real possibility of accelerated social development in an independent republic, made it a classically bourgeois revolution; but the young Irish bourgeoisie, as in the American war of Independence, was pitted against a capitalist and colonial Britain.

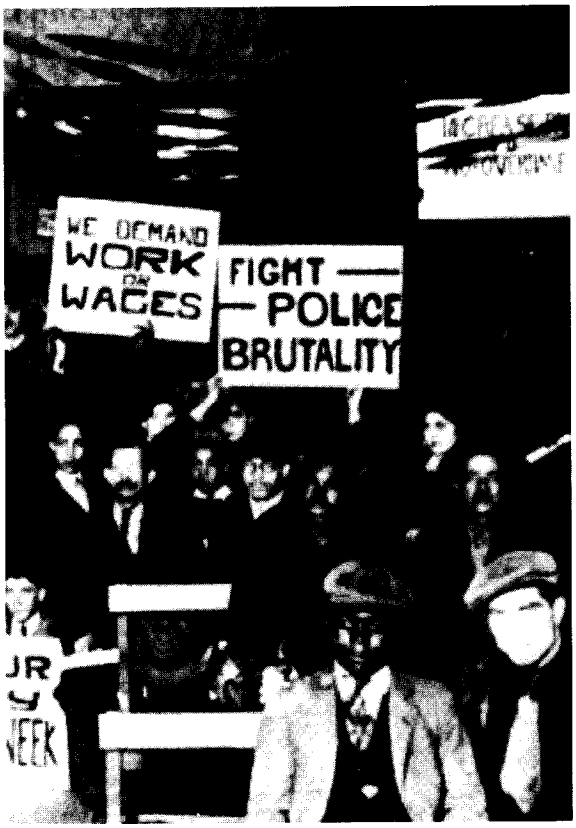
Even though Britain's economic interests in Ireland were increasingly at odds with the monopoly of the semi-feudal landlord Ascendancy, its imperial strategy could not tolerate the threat to its domination by the "Great Irish Rebellion".

That would have opened the road to a French victory in Europe and to a radical democratic revolution in Britain. The brutal reaction to the Irish revolution was part of Britain's consolidation of its colonial empire and its trading power against the prospect of a Europe of republics.

By the time an Irish republican movement would once more plan and execute insurrection against British control, it would be in a profoundly altered historical epoch.

But no reconsideration of "the Year of Liberty" in Ireland can deny that it set in train one of the most enduring of all national struggles, one which remains as yet unresolved.■





From the Civil War to the Comintern

Fighting racism in the USA

The oppression suffered by black workers in the USA from the last quarter of the nineteenth century eliminated much of the gains of the early post-Civil War period. The reformist labor leaders of the time helped entrench this racism within the trade unions.

In the first of two articles (concluding part in TI 18), **John McKee** explains the roots of this apartheid within the labour movement and shows how a radical, if incomplete, break with this legacy formed part of the early years of US communism under the influence of Lenin's Third International.

The revolutionary Communist International (CI) quickly involved itself in the development of a Marxist analysis of the black question in the United States. From its foundation in 1919, the CI tackled the racism and indifference towards it that tainted the US labour movement. It was aware of the rotten tradition of the Second International on this issue. It was determined to prevent this legacy from infecting the young US communist movement.

With the founding of a communist party (at first known as the Workers Party), the leadership of the CI intervened to ensure the American party took up the question energetically. The experience and positions developed by the Bolsheviks on the Jewish question, the Bund and the relations with the oppressed nations within the Tsarist empire, were used as a basis to develop a revolutionary position on the "Negro question" as it was then called.

From Reconstruction to Jim Crow

The American Civil War (1861-1865) resulted in the abolition of slavery in the United States. The victory of the North, under Abraham Lincoln's leadership, meant that the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, abolishing chattel slavery, was now the law of the whole land.

There was optimism amongst the freed black slaves, and progressive white workers, that the abominable oppression of black people was finally at an end. In 1866, the National Labour Union, meeting in Baltimore, declared its intention of organising black workers:

"What is wanted then, is for every union to help inculcate the grand ennobling idea that there should be no distinction of race or nationality . . . there is but one dividing line—that which separates mankind into the two great classes, the class that labors and the class that lives by others' labor."[1]

The optimism and spirit of integrationism were both tragically short lived. After the war, the then radical Republican Party carried out a programme of Reconstruction. This sought to appease the defeated southern whites by providing economic assistance and, in addition, outlined a plan to absorb some four million new "citizens", the freed slaves.

The more radical proposals to grant black people the right to vote and give them full civil rights were resisted by Lincoln's successor, President Andrew Johnson.

Eventually, Congress defeated him and black people were enfranchised in the South. The Republican Party even began to organise black voters in order to oust the still dominant "Dixiecrats" (the Southern Democrats). But legally sanctioned racism persisted in the "Black Codes" under which landless or unemployed black people could be placed in bonded labour, or else arrested.

From the end of the war through to the late 1870s, the Reconstruction did result in advances for the freed slaves. In 1873, there was even a common struggle for land in the South, alongside poor whites, against the old landowners.

By 1876, however, Reconstruction effectively came to an end with the election of Rutherford B. Hayes as President. He was a Republican of the new breed—a hard headed representative of the industrial magnates who had come to dominate the party and who had replaced the old generation of civil war radicals. In return for Southern Democrat support in getting his election result ratified by Congress, Hayes promised to end Reconstruction. He was as good as his word.

Even a capitalism as dynamic as that

of the USA was incapable of eradicating racism. In the North, the industrial bosses were content to utilise white labour rather than unskilled black workers.

A reactionary compromise with the more labour aristocratic sections of the working class was made which resulted in a colour bar, as white workers sought to preserve their jobs. In the South, the fleeting alliance between black and poor whites gave way to the mobilisation of those same whites in the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and other death squads, whose purpose was to drive blacks from their land. The freed slaves were targeted by demagogic Southern Democrats as the scapegoats for the economic hardship suffered by the whites.

By the 1880s a mood of counter revolution swept the South. The United States was developing as an imperialist power and the formerly divided Southern and Northern rulers now found common cause in the pursuit of the USA's overseas interests.

All the gains of Reconstruction were destroyed. Initially, the Democrats used violence to force black people to vote for them. Organisations like the KKK and the Knights of the White Camelia terrorised the black community, murdered its leaders and organisers and intimidated black voters. Between 1882 and 1903 there were 2060 public lynchings of blacks.

Organisations like the KKK and the Knights of the White Camelia terrorised the black community, murdered its leaders and organisers and intimidated black voters.

Over time, this terror was redirected to enforce apartheid on the black population in the South—Jim Crow[2]. Throughout the court houses of the southern states, lawyers devised means of overcoming the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

This had originally given blacks the right to vote. In 1870 the Supreme Court revised this interpretation of the amendment and ruled that it merely meant that blacks should not be discriminated against at the polls. Since discrimination was rife in the Southern states, a way round this had to be found. A Supreme Court decision in 1883 declared the 1875 Civil Rights Act illegal. Then in 1896, in the case of Plessy v Ferguson, the Supreme Court ruled that the "separate but equal" doctrine—apartheid—was legal. Segregation appeared in every aspect of public life and "whites only" signs proliferated.

The 1890s saw many state constitutions re-written to deny blacks (as well as many poor whites) the right to vote. In 1900 Carter Glass, speaking to the Virginia state Convention, explained:

"We are here to discriminate to the very extremity of permissible action under the limitations of the federal constitution, with a view to the elimination of every Negro voter who can be gotten rid of, legally, without materially impairing the strength of the white electorate."[3]

In the economic sphere, things were no better for the freed slaves. While slavery was abolished in the rural areas, the economic system which underpinned it was left virtually untouched. As the plantation owners reasserted their political power, the former slaves found themselves tied into a system of economic exploitation on the land. As sharecroppers and tenant farmers, blacks were oppressed and exploited almost as much as in the earlier system of chattel slavery. In his article on "Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States" Lenin described these "semi-feudal" relationships:

"The share cropping region, both in America and Russia, is the region of greatest stagnation, where the toiling masses are subject to the greatest degradation and oppression... Segregated, hidebound, a stifling atmosphere, a sort of prison for the 'emancipated' Negroes—this is what the American South is like."[4]

It was little wonder that the Southern blacks migrated North in growing numbers: 170,000 between 1900-10, 454,000 between 1910-20, 749,000 between 1920-1930. Migration slowed during the depression, but dramatically accelerated in the 1940s. The decade 1940-50 saw 1,599,000 move North. But before the war the great bulk of the black population still lived in the south—nearly 75% of the 11.8 million black population in 1930.

The Trade Unions and Black Workers

The National Labour Union insisted on its declaration in favour of unity across the races, "unpalatable as the truth may be to many".[5] Racism had been widespread in the North as well as the South, amongst workers just as much as amongst farmers. White workers had rioted in many northern cities against freed slaves being given work during the Civil War. White troops in the Union army were for a long time hostile to black troops, and regiments were strictly segregated on racial grounds. With the end of Reconstruction, therefore, it came as no surprise that unions dominated by labour aristocratic workers should resort to racist policies and practices.

The American Federation of Labour (AFL), founded in 1886, was to become the dominant union federation in the USA. In its early years, despite its nature as a craft organisation, it took a reasonably progressive stance on the question of the organisation of *skilled* black workers. A candidate for membership of the AFL in its early years had to take the following pledge:

"I promise never to discriminate against a fellow worker on account of color, creed or nationality."[6]

In many areas, the AFL was still in competition with the Knights of Labor, an organisation which deliberately attempted to unite workers of all races within its ranks.

Despite the small numbers of skilled black workers in the 1880s, they had a significant place in the rail, shipping, building and mining sectors. Samuel Gompers, the first President of the AFL, was in favour of organising black workers. This often went against the desires of existing unions, many of which enforced a colour bar.

The early AFL refused to allow unions to affiliate if their statutes barred black workers. While they allowed separate locals (i.e. branches) for blacks, this was initially seen as a last resort and such locals were to have the same rights as any other within the national organisation. In 1890, the AFL refused admission to the National Association of Machinists because of its colour bar, and set up a rival union.

Gompers pitched this policy, especially to the racist workers, on the grounds of practical trade unionism:

"If we fail to make friends with them, the employing class won't be so shortsighted and will play them against us. Thus if common humanity will not prompt us to have their co-operation, an enlightened self-interest should."[7]

This policy of integration was not to last. In the 1890s, the AFL itself became a bastion of apartheid, reflecting Gompers' "business unionism". This was a species of class collaboration that enabled the unions to "do business" with the industrialists in return for favours for the skilled workers. Like its development elsewhere in US society, systematic racism within the labour movement was an indication of the USA's development as an imperialist power. It was directly related to the growth of an "aristocracy of labour", preserving its privileges at the expense, not only of unskilled workers, but of the mass of poor blacks.

In 1895, the AFL promoted the amalgamation of the two rival machinists' trade unions on the basis of allowing the colour bar to exist in the joining "ritual", rather than being embodied in the union's statutes. By the late 1890s, AFL unions were openly changing their statutes to bar black workers. At the same time black workers were being squeezed out of skilled employment with the active participation of the AFL unions.

These unions came to control the newly introduced apprenticeship system which, during the 1890s, steadily replaced "picking up" the trade on the

job as a method of training. Potential black trainees were refused places. Moreover, many unions had policies of refusing to work with non-union labour and this provided an excuse to refuse black union membership.

A 1902 survey showed that 43 national trade union organisations had no black workers in them and that the AFL had only 40,000 black members, 50% of these in the United Mineworkers. In many unions, the number of black workers had declined in the previous decade.

The 1900 convention of the AFL declared, in reply to criticism of its racist policy, that the Federation, "does not necessarily proclaim that the social barriers which exist between the whites and black could or should be obliterated". It even blamed the black workers for allowing themselves to be used as strike breakers. This, indeed, became a big problem because black workers had little to thank the unions for by the late 1890s. And in the early 1900s the one integrationist union, the Industrial Workers of the World (the "Wobblies") remained too small to challenge the increasingly ingrained racism of the US unions.

The Socialist Tradition

The racist positions of the AFL were reflected in the positions of the right and centre factions of the Socialist Party (SP), which was founded in 1901. The right wing was represented by Victor Berger who was the first "socialist" elected to Congress. He wrote in 1902:

"There can be no doubt that the negroes and mulattoes constitute an inferior race. The many cases of rape, which occur whenever negroes are settled in large numbers, prove, moreover, that the free contact with whites has led to the further degeneration of the negroes, as of all other inferior races"[8]

In 1903, the Party's indifference to lynchings led to an investigation by the International Socialist Bureau. The party's executive explained:

"The Socialist Party points out the fact that nothing less than the abolition of the capitalist system and the substitution of the Socialist system can provide the conditions under which the hunger maniacs, kleptomaniacs, sexual maniacs and now lynchable human degenerates will cease to be begotten or produced."[9]

This racist explanation seems to have satisfied the Second International's Bureau. No more was heard of the investigation.

If the right wing saw the root of racial antagonism in the degenerate nature of the inferior black race, the centre led by Morris Hillquit, laid more emphasis on the role of the capitalists in fanning black-white antagonism as a means of pursuing a policy of divide and rule in industry. Both factions of the SP, however, agreed that socialism would solve the race question in the "only possible way"—by complete segregation of the races.

This vile racism did not go unchallenged in the Socialist Party. Eugene Debs was the SP's leading propagandist and led the left wing. Debs encouraged blacks to struggle for their rights and to join the Party. He refused to speak to segregated audiences and opposed segregated branches of the SP in the South. Debs denounced the 1910 Party congress' stance against immigration as "utterly unsocialist, reactionary and, in truth, outrageous".

But the left's attitude towards the black struggle suffered from a tremendous weakness. The "negro problem" was seen purely an an economic one, their oppression stemming from their super-exploitation and the legacy of slavery. The emancipation of black people was a job for the socialist revolution. Complete social equality would have to wait until then and there was no need for any special work or special programme of struggle for the blacks in America. This is what Debs was driving at in his oft quoted remarks:

"We have nothing special to offer the negro and we cannot make special appeals to all races. The Socialist Party is the party of the entire working class, regardless of colour—the whole working class of the whole world."[10]

The result was that the left did little to take up the cause of the blacks in the South, or to push the party to campaign against lynchings and the Jim Crow laws.

This position was shared by Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labour Party (SLP). While De Leon denounced the racism of the SP at the Amsterdam congress of the Second International and forced the removal of references to "inferior races" in its resolutions, he had little time for looking at the specific problems and demands of black workers:

"More difficult, withal useful to the Movement, is the discovery of that which may be identical in all—their proletarian character. This is the creative discovery." [11]

As a result, agitation around non-economic questions, such as disenfranchisement, beatings, frame-ups and lynchings were a distraction from the "real" struggle around economic issues. Despite calls from SLP members to make the struggle in the South a special issue for the party's paper, *The People*, as a means of organising and recruiting amongst black people, this agitation and work was stillborn.

It was from the left in the Socialist Party that the communists emerged in the early 1920s. They carried with them its general approach to the black question in America. As James Cannon, a founder member, put it:

" . . . the American communists in the early twenties, like all other radical organisations of that and earlier times, had nothing to start with on the Negro question but an inadequate theory, a false and indifferent attitude and the adherence of a few individual Negroes of radical or revolutionary bent."[12]

It was to take the intervention of the CI and Lenin himself to begin a serious reorientation of the party's work.

The Comintern and the US Communists

In 1919, there were two parties claiming adherence to the CI. The Communist Party of America, dominated by the foreign language federations (made up of European migrants), devoted a paragraph to the Negro question in its founding programme. This reflected the traditional position of the Socialist Party's left wing on the question:

"The Negro problem is a political and economic problem. The racial oppression of the negro is simply the expression of his economic bondage and oppression, each intensifying the other. This complicates the Negro question but does not alter its proletarian character."[13]

The Communist Labour Party, one of whose leaders was John Reed, did not even mention the question in its founding documents.

The issue was discussed at the Second Congress of the CI in 1920. Lenin, in drafting the theses on the national and colonial question, submitted a number of the theses to delegates and solicited their opinions. One of these was headed, "The Negroes in America". This set the tone for the early discussions of the black question in the USA. It was placed within the framework of the question of nationality even though this was not how American socialists had traditionally viewed it. John Reed made the major contributions to the commission and the plenary sessions.

Reed had no objection to viewing blacks as a "nationality". But he referred to them in commission as one of the three groups of "oppressed nationalities" in the United States, the others

BLACK SOLDIERS SUFFERED FROM ACUTE DISCRIMINATION IN WORLD WAR ONE



being the immigrants and oppressed nations such as Filipinos. While he emphasised their growing integration into the Northern labour movement, Reed recognised there was a growing "race consciousness" amongst blacks after World War 1, and that they had taken up arms against white pogroms in Washington, Chicago and elsewhere.

He argued that Communists should energetically support "the Negro self-defence movement", while cautioning against the idea of an armed black insurrection. Without the co-operation of the white proletariat, this "would be the signal for the counter-revolution"[14]

Reed was overly dismissive of the existence of any movement for independence or self-determination amongst the black population, underestimating the significance of the "Back to Africa" movement as a symptom of this tendency:

"If we consider Negroes an enslaved and oppressed people, we confront two problems: on the one hand, that of a strong racial and social movement; on the other, that of a powerful proletarian labor movement that is rapidly gaining class consciousness. Negroes have no demands for national independence. All movements among the Negroes aiming for separate national existence fail, as did the Back to Africa movement of a few years ago. They consider themselves first of all Americans at home in the United States. That makes it very much simpler for the communists."[15]

However, the finally agreed theses seemed to recognise the *right* of blacks in the USA to self-determination and demanded communist support if such movements demanded secession:

" . . . secondly, Communist Parties must give direct support to the revolutionary movements among dependent nations and those without equal rights (e.g. Ireland, and among the American Negroes), and in the colonies.

Without this last particularly important condition, the struggle against the oppression of the dependent nations and colonies, and the recognition of their right to secede as separate state, remains a deceitful pretence, as it is with the parties of the Second International."[16]

Reed also argued that communists "must not stand aloof from the Negro movement for social and political equality", which was spreading rapidly. "Communists", he argued, "must use this movement to point out the futility of bourgeois equality and the necessity of social revolution—not only to free all workers from servitude but as the only means of freeing the Negroes as an enslaved people."[17]

However, such positions were not reflected in the practical activity of the newly fused Communist Party of America. In 1921 it took a direct intervention by Lenin himself to push the party into taking up serious work amongst black workers. Lenin sent the party a letter in 1921 expressing concern that CPA reports did not mention party work amongst blacks and called on it to make this a strategically important part of its future work. Joseph Zack was then put in charge of black work. For the first time, articles on the "Negro question" began to appear regularly in the party's press.

The new emphasis of the communists led to the recruitment of the first significant group of black cadre. These came from an organisation called the African Black Brotherhood (ABB) which published a magazine, *The Crusader*.

Again it was not the activities of the communists in America that attracted the leadership of the ABB, but rather the policies and actions of the Soviet Republic, in particular its attitude towards the oppressed nationalities of Tsarist Russia and the vigorous defence of their right to self-determination.

The Crusader, and its editor, Cyril Briggs, fought for "self-determination" for the Negro people. Having taken an anti-war stance in 1914, Briggs used *The Crusader* to argue for the social and national rights of Negroes. President Wilson was denounced for his hypocrisy in "supporting" the right of small nations to self-determination in Europe while not lifting "a finger for justice and liberty for over TEN MILLION colored people, a nation within a nation, a nationality oppressed and Jim Crowed, yet worthy as any other people of a square deal or failing that, a separate political existence."[18]

Increasingly, after 1919 the ABB moved in the direction of socialism and sympathy with the Russian revolution. Sometime in 1920 or 1921 almost the entire leadership of the ABB was won to the Workers Party (the name at the time of the CP). Many in Harlem, like Briggs, came from the Caribbean, but in Chicago there was a native born Afro-American chapter (i.e branch). The initial cadre of black communists were largely intellectuals, from the ABB. Cyril Briggs was a journalist, Grace Cambell was a school teacher, Richard Moore was a professional lecturer for the Socialist Party, Lovett Fort-Whiteman a drama critic.

For a period, the CP used the ABB to mount an intervention into Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) movement but little headway was made. The UNIA was moving rightwards, emphasising capitalist values for black progress, "racial purity" and even organising meetings with the KKK, both organisations supporting "segregation" of the races. Garvey refused to seat delegates from the ABB at UNIA conferences and the possibility of work from the inside did not materialise.

But the CP now had a significant number of black cadres. The CI's intervention had appeared to bring results. The question now was what slogans should be at the centre of the programme for the mass of oppressed blacks in the USA and how should the CP use that programme?■

In Part 2:
National self-determination or revolutionary integration - how did the US communists face this question? What role did Stalinism play? How did the CP gain mass support amongst black workers in Harlem?

1 Quoted in *Beyond Equality*, David Montgomery, New York, 1967, p180

2 "Jim Crow" was a common derogatory term for black Americans, popularised in the lyrics of a nineteenth century minstral show song. It became a short-hand term for the arsenal of apartheid legislation that spread across the former Confederate states in the 1890s.

3 Quoted in *The Negro Revolt*, Louis E. Lomax, New York 1971, p40

4 Lenin, *Collected Works* Volume 22, Moscow 1964, p26

5 D Montgomery, op cit, p 180

6 P.S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, Volume 2, New York 1975, p347

7 ibid p196. Gompers and the AFL had a very different attitude to Asian (primarily Chinese) workers. They not only had to be kept out of the unions but out of the country, excluded by law or "driven out by force of arms". Gompers regularly referred to the "yellow menace" and the "inborn inferiority" of Asian peoples.

8 Foner, "Socialism" quoted in A Shawki, *International Socialism* 2:47 p46

9 I Kipnis *The American Socialist Movement* New York 1972, p132

10 H Draper, *American Communism*, New York 1973, p316

11 D Herreshoff *Origins of American Marxism* New York p169

12 J P Cannon, *The First Ten Years of American Communism"* New York 1973, p230

13 Quoted in Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* Chicago 1989, p192

14 *The Communist International in Lenin's Time, Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920*, Volume 1, New York 1991, p227

15 ibid, p228

16 J Degras (ed), "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions", in *The Communist International 1919-1923, Documents* London 1971, p142

17 J Riddell, op cit, p228

18 H Draper, op cit, p[illegible] original)



DEBATE

The SWP, imperialism and the "real Marxist tradition"

Paul Morris surveys the twists and turns of the Socialist Workers Party on the theory of imperialism, permanent revolution and the "permanent arms economy"

In his article "What is the real Marxist tradition?" John Molyneux answers his own rhetorical question by claiming that a line runs from Marx and Engels, through Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, to today's SWP. He lists the SWP's major theoretical contributions to the development of that tradition as:

"the state capitalist analysis of the Stalinist states, the theory of deflected permanent revolution in the third world, the analysis of the arms economy boom and the new economic crisis, the critique of the trade union bureaucracy."[1]

We have dealt with the SWP's theory of state capitalism elsewhere.[2] The purpose of this article is to show that on imperialism and all questions related to it—"deflected permanent revolution" and the permanent arms economy—the SWP's theory represents a break with the Marxist tradition, not a continuation of it. It will show that these errors flow from the failings of the theory of state capitalism when applied to the entire world system, and from the SWP's economism.

We look in detail at three related questions:

- Does the SWP support or reject Lenin's theory of imperialism as the starting point for a modern Marxist theory? Was it valid in Lenin's time; is it valid today?
- Does the "permanent arms economy" explain the post-war boom?
- Does Cliff's theory of "deflected permanent revolution" help Marxists to understand the emergence of strong "Third World" capitalisms and guide revolutionaries in their practice?[3]

Lenin's theory of imperialism

What do we mean by the term "imperialism"? We can agree with Alex Callinicos when he notes that:

"Imperialism is neither a universal feature of human society nor a specific policy but 'a special stage in the development of capitalism', indeed, as the title of Lenin's pamphlet states, 'the highest stage of capitalism'."[4]

Lenin and other Marxists, however, engaged in a series of debates during the first two decades of the century over the exact nature of imperialism. Often, they could not agree on an answer. But they were all motivated by the same question: what was the cause and consequences of the transformation that capitalism underwent between the mid-1890s and the First World War?

Surveying the new shape of the capitalist economy, Lenin drew what he called a "composite picture", which identified five features. They were to be found, in various stages of development, in all mature industrial capitalist countries:

- the concentration of capital into monopolies and cartels
- the merging of banking and industrial capital into "finance capital"
- the new importance of foreign investment (the "export of capital") as opposed to foreign trade
- the division of the world between international monopolies
- the territorial division of the world between the big imperialist powers.[5]

This was the highest and last stage of capitalism according to Lenin, one in which capitalism's own contradictions had begun to strangle it. Though the epoch could include periods of economic growth—indeed, during the 20 years before Lenin wrote his famous pamphlet growth had prevailed over crisis—for Lenin the overall trend in the imperialist epoch was one of stagnation and decline.

Imperialism had evolved as a systemic response by capitalism against deepening cyclical crises which, after 1873, became a prolonged stagnation phase. After 1896, capitalism entered its new epoch and achieved considerable success in restoring profit rates, stabilising the economies of the major powers and promoting the global spread of the system. But it had not succeeded in overcoming its own basic contradictions.

Indeed, for Lenin, imperialism constituted an intensification of these contradictions:

"The intensification of contradic-



LENIN

tions constitutes the most powerful driving force of the transitional period of history, which began from the final victory of world finance capital".[6]

Monopoly, the main defining feature of imperialist capitalism, produced a tendency to decay because it suppressed competition (and with it, innovation and productivity) within increasingly large areas of the capitalist economy, only to reproduce the contradictions at a higher level in the form of competition between monopolies and nation states.

It also produced a tendency towards parasitism, with greater and greater areas of the economy devoted to non-productive activity. Parasitism was a key feature of the imperialist epoch for Lenin, signifying the qualitative degeneration of capitalism as compared to its 19th century apogee. It signified a tendency to retard the development of the productive forces, and stimulate the growth of non-productive activity.

Politically, the imperialist epoch placed on the agenda repeated revolutionary opportunities, in marked contrast to the thirty year period which followed the Paris Commune (1871). It imparted a revolutionary and progressive dynamic to bourgeois democratic struggles in the countries subjugated by imperialism.

Though Lenin's pamphlet *Imperialism—the highest stage of capitalism* was only a "popular outline", and was written under conditions of semi-legality, it remains the starting point for any modern Marxist attempt to understand the dynamics of imperialism.

Before we look at the SWP's relationship to Lenin's theory we must first outline our own attitude to that theory.

Of all the theories of imperialism developed in the first quarter of the century, Lenin's remains the most coherent and rounded explanation of the new epoch. But Lenin's theory did contain a number of weaknesses.

For example, he painted a picture of the imperialist heartlands becoming progressively more parasitic on world production, with entire countries and continents becoming devoid of productive industries with, as Hobson put it: "the staple food and manufactures flowing in as tribute from Asia and Africa".

In addition, Lenin heavily emphasised the export of capital as opposed to the export of commodities to the colonial countries. He predicated this on the inevitable unevenness of economic development in the colonial countries, predicting that imperialism was bound to leave much of the third world backward, underdeveloped and the site of high rates of return on capital compared to returns in the imperialist heartlands.

In fact, the imperialist heartlands did not become centres of parasitic consumption in contrast to a Third World dominated by production. Likewise the majority of capital exports were then, and are now, exported *between* the imperialist countries, not *from* them to the third world.

Lenin also closely identified the colonial conquest of the less developed countries with the overall tendency to export capital. Whilst he identified a category of "semi-colonial" countries, giving the examples of Argentina, China, Turkey and other countries, which imperialism had been unable to conquer, he expected these to be eventually turned into colonies.

However, a contrary tendency emerged in the decades after the Second World War: a generalised system of semi-colonies, nominally "independent" but in reality subject to varying degrees of political and economic subordination to the imperialist countries.

Despite the weaknesses mentioned above, Lenin's overall view of imperialism as a specific stage of capitalism, its declining stage, remains valid—even though it must be modified to take account of new features produced in later periods within the imperialist epoch. It remains, as Lenin said, an epoch marked by the spontaneous self-negation of the law of value; monopoly, state intervention, stagnation and parasitism.

The SWP's recent theoretical output on this question, collected in the book *Marxism and the New Imperialism*, purports to defend and extend Lenin in similar terms[7]. But it does not. It has a different project entirely— that of pure apologetics. The SWP has been forced by events over the last decade to have recourse to parts of Lenin's theory— a theory which twenty or thirty years ago they explicitly rejected. This book is an attempt to square the circle between a current, pragmatic "orthodoxy" and the SWP's former very deep and open disagreements with Lenin.

Twice during the life of the IS/SWP tradition its major theorists—Mike Kidron in the 1960s and Nigel Harris in the 1980s—have launched frontal assaults on the Leninist theory of imperialism.

Today few of the SWP's recent "supporters" of Lenin dare even acknowledge the bald rejection of Lenin's theory once carried in the pages of ISJ by its then editor, Michael Kidron.

But, looked at more closely, the criticisms of Lenin they make today remain very similar, both to those made by Kidron in the 1960s and 1970s, and by Nigel Harris in the 1980s. This makes their "critical support" for Lenin seem more like the proverbial rope supporting a hanged man.

By way of approach to *Marxism and the New Imperialism* therefore, we have first to outline the "history" of the theory of imperialism in the SWP/IS, focusing on the ideas of Kidron and Harris—its principal economists for two decades or more.

Kidron versus Lenin

Kidron argued that Lenin's understanding of imperialism had been invalidated by the deep and sustained global growth of post war capitalism, and by the decline of colonialism.

He developed the theory of the Permanent Arms Economy (PAE) as a way of explaining the long post-war boom (see box, page 30). The marked stability of capitalism in its main metropolitan centres, for Kidron, removed the impetus to export capital to the Third World and thus led to the decline of colonialism.

In a 1965 article for *International Socialism* Kidron concluded that:

"However correct the analysis in his day, and however justified the conclusion—and these are essentially true even in retrospect—[Lenin's theory] must be rejected on at least four counts: finance capital is not nearly as important for and within the system as it was; the export of capital is no longer of great importance to the system; political control in the direct sense meant by Lenin is rapidly becoming dated; and finally resulting from these, we don't have imperialism but we still have capitalism . . . If anything, it is the permanent war and arms economies that are the 'highest stage of capitalism'."[8]

What also disappeared, along with Lenin's theory, for Kidron, was any idea that the world's nation states could be divided hierarchically into imperialist powers on the one side, and subordinate, colonial or semi-colonial ones, on the other. Instead, the picture emerges of:

"a far more homogeneous world in which many centres of capital and many more potential ones—some large and powerful, others weak and willing, yet independent—jostle and compete, forming, dissolving and reforming alli-

ances of expediency where before division of labour and the labour of divisions imposed an immutable pattern of relationships . . . the transition from imperialism into an arms economy in the mature capitalist countries has corroded a system in which backward countries fulfilled a special function in the world capitalist economy".[9]

What does this mean for revolutionary socialists? Quite simply, that Lenin and Trotsky were wrong when they said that the national bourgeoisie of backward countries could not lead a revolution against imperialist domination in the 20th century:

"To repeat, the national bourgeoisie—or failing it the national bureaucracy—has been rescued from oblivion by imperialism's withdrawal . . . [the new conditions] demand a practical internationalism based on the growing uniformity in the conditions of exploitation, the growing irrelevance of national struggles and the growing similarity in the immediate aim of the working class the world over."[10]

The class struggle was becoming the same the whole world over. National struggles were a thing of the past. The Third World bourgeoisie did lead successful bourgeois revolutions against imperialism. These were the main tenets of Kidron's position.

Kidron's theory was modified under the pressure of major changes in the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The "long boom" gave way to a period of generalised world recession. The pattern of capital exports changed markedly. Kidron saw weaknesses in his own account of PAE. As an honest empiricist, finding its description of the world at odds with the new reality, he effectively abandoned it. He decided to return to the "classics", not to Lenin but to Bukharin. And to Tony Cliff, whose state capitalist theory rested on Bukharinite foundations.

Without repudiating his view that imperialism was outmoded as a theory, Kidron did reassert the fundamentally degenerate, declining character of the epoch. Free of the distorting effects of the boom period, and now in a period of "stagflation", renewed mass unemployment, and severe cyclical recessions, he rediscovered the essentially parasitic and declining character of world capitalism in the 20th Century. Looking to Bukharin, he decided it lay in the form of a universal state capitalism:

"which ultimately saps the sources of progressive growth (through accumulation) at the same time as it makes parasitic growth more dangerous".[11]

This, indeed, restored the theoretical status of the 20th century to that of a transitional epoch, and an epoch of decline. But it rested fundamentally on the notion that there was no division in the world—economically or politically—between imperialist states and their colonial or semi-colonial subordinates. "There are no empires left", Kidron claimed with characteristic directness.

He chose to espouse an updated Bukharinite view of imperialism as a world state capitalism. Lenin was thus once more redundant. Anything that was valuable within *Imperialism; the Highest Stage* was already contained within Bukharin's work; what was distinctive in Lenin had been refuted by developments since the war.

In the mid 1980s, SWP leader Nigel Harris wrote a book called *The End of the Third World*, in which he reached much the same conclusion. He reiterated much of the later Kidron's understanding of modern capitalism. For Harris, state and capital were so fused as to change the classic relationship between the state and individual capitalists. Instead of the guarantor of a process of accumulation, the state in the West had become a prime actor in the accumulation process—just as Tony Cliff had always insisted it was in the USSR.

The results, for Harris, undermined any notion that imperialism "underdeveloped" certain countries systematically. The emergence of the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs), such as South Korea, signified for Harris a future in which the potential for bourgeois national development in the Third World was unlimited. Indeed, as the title of the book suggests, for Harris as for Kidron, the "imperialised" Third World no longer existed.

According to this view, imperialism was synonymous with "militarised state capitalism". Since this concept suggested that autarkic state capitalist industrialisation by a semi-colony was impossible, Kidron and Harris saw Third World economic development as having destroyed the theory of imperialism.

Such blatant revisionism placed the SWP in a difficult position. They could hardly espouse a theory which said that capitalism was the way forward for the "Third World". How could they continue to defend their theoretical tradition on the subject of imperialism when the very theorists responsible for it had come to this unpalatable conclusion? The SWP had to denounce Kidron and Harris but rescue their tradition. Enter a new generation of theorists.


BUKHARIN

Bukharin, state capitalism and imperialism

In 1987, in a reply to Harris, Alex Callinicos was forced to reconsider the relative strengths and weaknesses of Lenin and Bukharin's visions of imperialism. Callinicos wanted to draw back from the conclusions reached by Kidron and Harris.

He correctly attributes their break with the whole concept of imperialism to an "over-reliance" on the Bukharinite view. Nevertheless, he has to reassert the view that:

"Bukharin's more rigorous version of the theory of imperialism proved to be a better guide to capitalism in the first half of the 20th century than Lenin's account".[12]

More than that, with regard to the post-1945 world economy:

" . . . Bukharin's vision of the theory of imperialism provided the best framework for understanding the changes that had taken place".

Here the puzzled reader is entitled to ask a number of questions: if Bukharin's one sided theory of imperialism led to the dramatic errors of Kidron and Harris, how much of it can be used to understand post-war developments? Which side was the good one? Wherein was it superior to Lenin's theory? Why is Bukharin's theory so central to the SWP's understanding of the world?

Callinicos himself provides a clue:

"Bukharin's analysis, with its vision of a world system composed of militarised state capitals, informed the cornerstone of our tradition, Tony Cliff's theory of state capitalism in Russia".[13]

But by the late 1980s the world no longer fitted that description. Stalinism was collapsing. Imperialism had, since the end of the long boom, been reordering production on a world scale. Not "crisis-free, militarised state capitalisms" but crisis-ridden multinational capitalism now confronted the SWP. It appeared that the cornerstone was crumbling. Bukharin has to be defended, lest the whole edifice of State Capitalism as a theory comes crashing down, but he must not be used as cover for Third World nationalism. At the same time, the "weak side" of his model had to be admitted to when it comes to analysing global capitalism in the 1980s and beyond.

Similarly, the Permanent Arms Economy (PAE) had to be defended as another cornerstone of State Capitalism——the arms race between the su-

perpowers as the "competition" which made Russia capitalist. It also explained the post-war boom and partly underpins the SWP's dismissive attitude to national struggles in the Third World, both still in place today.

Finally, Lenin had to be reincorporated into the picture. After all, he cannot be left out without endangering their claim to stand in the Marxist tradition. Like the curate's egg, Lenin can be pronounced "good in parts". These parts can then be used to offset the one-sidedness of Bukharin.

Mixing all these ingredients into a digestible dish is not easy and, in fact, the SWP have failed. All they have done is to arrive at a thoroughly eclectic and ramshackle theory of imperialism—one that falls to pieces at the first inspection. It is one, moreover, that empties Lenin's theory of all that is unique and particular to it.

Callinicos "improves" on Lenin and Bukharin

In *Marxism and The New Imperialism* Callinicos, after examining Lenin and Bukharin's definitions of imperialism, makes his own attempt at a definition. It is worth quoting in full:

"1. Imperialism is the stage in capitalist development where

i) the concentration and centralisation of capital tends to lead to the integration of private monopoly capital and the state; and

ii) the internationalisation of the productive forces tends to compel capitals to compete for markets, investments and raw materials at the global level.

The "permanent arms economy"

The theory of the permanent arms economy (PAE), like the theory of state capitalism, has its roots in a rejection of Trotskyism.

It first made its appearance in *The New International*, edited by Max Shachtman, in 1944, in an article by W. J. Oakes (T. N. Vance). Tony Cliff brought it over to Britain and it made its first appearance in *Socialist Review* in 1957.

By the mid-1960s, Mike Kidron, editor of *International Socialism*, had declared that "imperialism . . . is dying as reality and therefore as a useful concept."[1]

PAE was designed to replace the theory of imperialism and explain "western capitalism's stability and growth since the war".

Reformists argued the long boom was a result of Keynesian policies, state regulation, technological changes or the expansion of world trade. The IS disagreed and argued that it was to be found instead in the phenomenon of the "permanent arms budget".[2]

Arms spending by the major capitalist nations, it was argued, was a form of unproductive government expenditure, a form of waste. A growing portion of the governments' taxation revenues was siphoned off from the process of capitalist accumulation (i.e. not reinvested in productive activities) and spent on, among other things, arms. But why should this help prolong the life and vigour of capitalism?

Mike Kidron put it like this;

"As I understand it the key point at issue is whether it is or is not legitimate to segregate a waste sector from a productive sector and to impute to the latter, and to it alone, the dynamics of the capitalist system. If it is legitimate, a shift of resources of a certain mix from the productive to the waste sector could, in principle, prevent the value structure of capital in the productive sector from changing, or could change it in a benign direction, and so maintain or even augment the rate of profit."[3]

By Kidron's own admission the original theory of PAE was a piece of bourgeois economics[4]. The IS set about trying to "Marxise" the theory by analysing arms expenditure in terms of value theory and in particular arms spending as a form of "luxury" production within Marx's system.

A central component of Marx's theory of crisis centres on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. This tendency is a function of the competitive compulsion to accumulate. More and more surplus value is invested into new technologies relative to that which is invested in hiring new workers; this is known as the tendency for the organic composition of capital to rise. This rising investment can increase productivity, lower costs and increase the mass of profits, which is why it is undertaken.

But a problem arises. Living labour (workers) is the only source of surplus value and this surplus has to be measured across a growing volume of capital invested in machinery and technology. Hence, the *rate* of profit has a tendency to fall if left unchecked by other trends.

The PAE theory stands or falls by the proposition, as stated by Kidron above, that some of the surplus value that originates in production "leaks" from the system and does not find its way back into the next round of capitalist accumulation. This then slows down the process of rising productive investments and slows down the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

The SWP's case rests, in large measure, on a criticism of Marx. Chris Harman has recently said;

"In his (Marx) model value created in one round of production feeds back into accumulation in the next round, either as new means and materials of production or by providing for the consumption of value-producing workers. He barely considered the impact on the development of the system of flows of value that did not feed back into accumulation."[5]

But since the twentieth century has seen a massive growth in unproductive expenditures—advertising and war, for example, then:

"These all have the effect of using up value that would otherwise have been available for productive accumulation—and which would, in that case, have increased the pressure for investment to grow much more rapidly than the productive labour forces and for profit rates to fall."[6]

In a primer text for new members Alex Callinicos has also argued that arms productiion makes:

"no contribution to further production, since they are paid for by surplus value which might otherwise have been reinvested" and "by removing some capital from the production of commodities the pressure which leads towards crises are relieved."[7]

Arms spending was held to account for as much as half of all gross capital formation in the 1960s and far outstripped other forms of unproductive spending. There was no question but that this spending was also more and more capital intensive, more and more technologically sophisticated. But since it was a form of luxury production it could not effect the determination of the rate of profit, according to Kidron. The implications were clear. As originally formulated, under the impact of the long boom, arms production was at the centre of this new, higher stage of capitalism:

". . . arms production is the key, and seemingly permanent, offset to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall."[8]

And since arms production by one nation forces others to compete, the "system and the tendency becomes worldwide."[9]

The political economy of waste

Judged in the light of Marx's labour theory of value the PAE makes no

2. Among the main consequences of these two tendencies are the following:

i) competition between capitals takes on the form of military rivalries among nation states;

ii) the relations among nation states are unequal; the uneven and combined development of capitalism allows a small number of advanced capitalist states (the imperialist countries), by virtue of their productive resources and military strength, to dominate the rest of the world;

iii) uneven and combined development under imperialism further intensifies military competition and gives rise to wars, including both wars among the imperialist powers themselves and those arising from the struggles of oppressed nations, against imperialist domination."[14]

Callinicos claims that, though more abstract than Lenin's definition, the above "captures the core of his conception" and "can be used to show how the dynamics of imperialism give rise to distinct phases in its development".[15]

Certainly, any modern definition would have to abstract from the peculiarities of the particular phase of imperialism Lenin observed, in order to account for the distinct phases Callinicos refers to. But this definition, and the understanding it encapsulates, does not "capture the core" of Lenin's conception.

This is a definition of imperialism which is missing two core features.

First, and crucially, it has nothing to say about the *place in history* of the imperialist epoch. For Lenin, imperialism was not just "a phase" of capital-

sense. Since it was first championed by the IS (SWP) it has been subject to devastating criticism.[10] The central objection is to the idea that arms spending is simply a "leak from" the system of capital accumulation and that, as a result, it cannot have an effect on the determination of the rate of profit. This is plain wrong. Marxists have long analysed the role that arms production plays within capitalism. Lenin and Luxemburg recognised that it played the same role as the export of capital to the colonies. It provided an outlet for surplus capital which could not be profitably invested in existing productive spheres. Since the state was the main purchaser of arms it also had the advantage for capitalism of providing a steady market "free of the vagaries and subjective fluctuations of personal consumption."[11]

In the pre-imperialist epoch most taxation revenues were used to satisfy the unproductive consumption of the capitalist class. But it is a feature of the imperialist stage of capitalism (rather than a new stage) that it broadens the use of such revenues to offer the capitalist class new opportunities for accumulation.

The basic confusion at the heart of PAE is between unproductive and productive consumption. The SWP believe that arms spending by the state is simply like the capitalists' spending on their own food and pastimes.

They believe that government tax on surplus value is simply a waste of surplus value, a drain that could be used to invest in production. But some of the taxation revenues also create surplus value. As Luxemburg understood, state revenues represent a new purchasing power and "it becomes interested in new products, in a special branch of production which does not cater for either the capitalists or the working class, and thus it offers capital new opportunities for creating and realising surplus value."[12]

The state transforms the *revenue* from taxation into *capital* by investing it in the elements of production (raw materials, machinery, labour power). Arms are produced which embody surplus value created by the workers. If these then find a buyer at their price of production then the surplus value is realised.

It is completely irrelevant whether or not these commodities (arms) enter into a further round of production, as means of production and consumer goods destined for the working class do. Once the surplus value has been realised in a sale then this becomes distributed as part of the total social surplus value between various parts of the capitalist class just as much as the surplus value generated in the other departments of production.

It, therefore, enters into the general determination of the rate of profit. It has not leaked out of the system at all. There is thus *no general and one-way* tendency for arms spending to arrest the decline in the rate of profit. The role of arms spending and production has to be judged from a different, more concrete, standpoint than this.

It *is* possible for arms production to offset the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (TRPF) providing certain conditions prevail. One would be if the overall organic composition of capital (OCC) was lower in this sector than elsewhere, thus lowering the average OCC for capitalism as a whole. But anyone who remembers the Gulf War will realise that the arms sector is an especially high-tech one. In addition, the spin-off effect from this sector into that of consumer goods will have the effect of raising the average OCC rather than lowering it.

The second circumstance whereby arms production could dampen the TRPF is if this sector enjoyed a higher rate of exploitation than the average so that it helped raise the average. But again this is unlikely since the overwhelming improvement in the rate of exploitation comes about due to improvements in lowering the value of the commodities that go into determining the value of labour power. Thus the PAE cannot explain the offsetting of the TRPF after the war or the long boom. Nor were its supporters able to explain why it failed to continue to operate during the seventies and the Second Cold War (1979-89), despite continued and even increased, arms spending by the superpowers.■

1 M. Kidron, "International Capitalism", in IS1:20 1965, p159

2 M. Kidron, "A Permanent Arms Economy" in IS1:28, 1967. Or, "The arms economy was the root cause of the long boom." as he said in *Western Capitalism Since The War*, London, 1969.

3 M. Kidron, "Two insights don't make a theory" IS1:100, July 1977, p7

4 ibid p6

5 C. Harman, "Where is capitalism going?", IS2:58, Spring 1993, p7. It should be stated at the outset, however, that this argument is not original. It was first put by Von Bortkiewicz, a Russian critic of Marx. According to Kidron he argued that "the organic composition of capital in luxury goods production had no part in determining the rate of profit." See Kidron IS1:28 op cit.

6 ibid, p7

7 A. Callinicos, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx*, London, 1983, p189

8 M. Kidron, IS1:28 op cit p12

9 ibid, p12

10 See for example, E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, London, 1975 Chapter 9; *Revolutionary Communist* 3/4 November 1975.

11 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, quoted in E. Mandel, ibid p300.

12 ibid p283



"The transition from imperialism into an arms economy in the mature capitalist countries has corroded a system in which backward countries fulfilled a special function in the world capitalist economy"- KIDRON

ism: it was *the* epoch of capitalist decline and socialist revolution. It was the epoch of transition to socialism in which capitalism's own spontaneous economic laws were operating to undermine and destroy the system as a whole. This merited a whole chapter in Lenin's book, entitled, "The place of imperialism in history".

Such an omission is no trivial blemish. It is akin to an analysis of a living organism which fails to place it within the life cycle of its species. It violates the most elementary laws of the dialectic. Imperialism, as *the* negation of free competition capitalism—not just one phase amongst many following the demise of free competition capitalism—disappears as a concept. There is no mention of imperialism as the "highest stage". *Parasitism* doesn't get a look-in either.

Secondly, this definition omits any concept of *economic relations of exploitation* between imperialist countries and the dominated countries. It is an exclusively political-military definition.

Despite an implicit rebuttal of Kidron's view, that differences between capitalist states were now only ones of "degree", Callinicos suggests that what divides an imperialist power from an oppressed country is its level of productive resources and military strength. How it gets and maintains such resources, and what prevents lesser capitalist countries from gaining them, is not referred to.

Thus, whilst Callinicos' definition is an attempt to secure a Leninist orthodoxy for the SWP, at least at an "abstract" level, it fails from the very beginning. To preserve the "insights" of the PAE, Callinicos is obliged to give a definition which is so abstract as to allow Lenin's theory and Kidron's rounded rebuttal of it to co-exist. In addition it attempts to preserve and defend Bukharin's theory. As we shall see, having to square so many circles does not help clarify anything about the shape of imperialism, old or new.

Do imperialist countries "exploit" Third World countries?

This is the central question, avoided by Callinicos' definition. Callinicos reiterates the critique of Lenin put forward by Kidron and others in the IS/SWP tradition: that he overemphasised the role of the "export of capital" in his own time, and that this concept is not relevant for understanding imperialism today:

"Far from the prosperity of the capitalists (and workers) in the advanced countries depending on the poverty of the Third World, the main flows of capital and commodities . . . pass the poor countries by . . . As we have seen the colonies' chief importance under classical imperialism lay in the raw materials they provided for the increasingly specialised industrial economies of the imperialist metropolis."[16]

Can it really be true that the only interest of the Lonrhos, the Unilevers, the Glaxos of this world, in maintaining the subordinate nature of the colonies/semi-colonies, is to guarantee raw material sources? The example of India under the British Empire, cited by Kidron extensively in "International Capitalism", should allow us to deal with the question of whether colonies were exploited under the colonial form of imperialism.

For Kidron the British in India provided a textbook example of the imperialist system which Lenin had accurately described, but which had now disappeared.

Kidron had no problem with describing the cheap labour, the rigged terms of trade, the huge underdevelopment of Indian industry and agriculture, the massive net transfers of wealth from India to the British state, as "colonial exploitation".

Callinicos cannot have it both ways. Either colonial exploitation did exist in Lenin's time or it didn't.

All the evidence shows that relations of economic domination and subservience *did* exist. The result was *surplus profits* for the imperialist bosses, or "super-profits": a higher rate of surplus value on capital invested in the colonies compared to the domestic imperialist economies.

That is why Lenin emphasised the export of capital in his "composite picture" of imperialism. It was the economic underpinning of the imperialist system. It was the secret of understanding why "imperialism is not simply a policy" of the bourgeoisie, to be reversed by a more benign, liberal capitalism. Colonialism was predicated on the need to protect the arena of foreign investment—both from competition by other imperialisms and from the development of an indigenous bourgeoisie.

Here we come to another classic feature of imperialism which Kidron—because he believed it had been superseded—had no problem with. Imperialism, for Lenin, necessitated a struggle between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie of the colonial country.

To impose and maintain conditions of colonial exploitation imperialism had to wage a struggle against the nascent colonial bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie. It had to deny them access not just to political power and to democratic rights, but to the super-profits produced by the highly efficient system of exploitation introduced by imperialism itself. Imperialism often had to destroy the traditional, and restrict the nascent modern, industries of the colonial countries to preserve them as markets for the industry of the "home country".

In summary, it is utterly wrong, not to say ludicrous, for Callinicos to deny, ignore or gloss-over the economically exploitative nature of relations between imperialist and colonial states at the time Lenin and Bukharin were writing.

Does that mean imperialist capital's profits and wealth came *predominantly* from the exploitation of the Third World? No. If the centres of concentration of capital are the imperialist heartlands then it is here that the greatest mass of profits will made, and the capital accumulation process will be strongest. Lenin's argument was that a differential rate of return on investment, in the first place, encouraged the export of capital.

The role of super-profits in imperialism

Lenin's theory of imperialism includes the linked concepts of "super-profits" and, on the basis of their existence, "colonial exploitation". So, we might add, does Bukharin's "superior" theory. But these two concepts do not appear in Callinicos' definition. Whatever the theoretical rationale for this, the real reason is the SWP's fear of its political implications. They fear that, if imperialism can be shown to "exploit" the Third World, then the class struggle has to be subsumed into the national struggle. They fear that, if superprofits exist, this will confirm the positions of "Third World-ists" who describe the British working class, as a whole, as "labour aristocrats". As

we shall see, their fears are groundless (see box page 34).

The labour theory of value, and the Marxist understanding of capitalist profits, presuppose, at the highest level of abstraction, equal *exchange.*

The extraction of surplus value from the labour of the worker takes place through the exchange of wages equal to the value of the labour power of the worker. It does not involve any kind of theft by the bosses. The surplus value originates from the capitalists' ability to deploy the labour bought "fairly" on the market, to create more value than it, itself, embodies.

Nevertheless, at the very heart of Marxist political economy lies the concept of "surplus profit". This is dealt with by Marx in Volume III of *Capital.* Individual capitalists *can* make *surplus profits.*

This suggests that some capitalists can make more than the average, despite the fact that in general, and over time, these differences in profit levels are ironed out. So how do these surplus profits arise? As Marx explains, they arise:

"not because they [some capitalists] sell their commodities above the price of production, but because they sell them at this price, because their commodities are produced, or their capital functions, under exceptionally favourable conditions, conditions that stand above the average level prevailing in this sphere."[17]

As Bukharin writes:

"additional profit has its source in the difference between the social value of the goods (understanding under 'society' world capitalism as a united whole) and their individual value (understanding under 'individual' the 'national economy')."[18]

Surplus profits, in short, can be generated within a system of *equal exchange.*

When we turn to the real world, both in the 19th century and the 20th, it is clear that the process of competitive accumulation is, as Ernest Mandel puts it, "dominated by the indefatigable search for surplus profits."[19]

Mandel cites four mechanisms which allowed the extraction of surplus profits by imperialism from its colonial capital investments in the "classic" phase.

First, the low average organic composition of capital (capital spent on machinery and materials), compared to the manufacturing sector in the imperialist countries, allowed a greater rate of profit to be earned in the former, since the mass of profits had to be spread over less overall investment.

Secondly, the average rate of surplus value in the colonies often exceeded that of the metropolitan countries, especially because in the colonies the capitalists could extend "absolute surplus value" (which arises from making workers work harder and longer) rather than "relative" surplus value arising from higher productivity.

Thirdly, the presence of a larger reserve army of labour in the colonies allowed the capitalists to push the price of labour power systematically below its value—something which could not be achieved for any length of time in a fully developed capitalist economy.

Finally, the colonial system transferred a portion of the cost of administrating the capitalist system onto the colonial peoples, including the bourgeoisie; reducing the amount which had to be raised through taxation in the imperialist heartlands and thus boosting profitability there. Callinicos himself gives a good example of this in his discussion of the role of the "Home Charges", by which Britain "settled more than one third of her deficits with Europe and the United States through India."[20]

Mandel writes that, in all these cases: "We are dealing with surplus-profits which do not enter the process of equalisation in the short term, and so do not lead simply to a growth in the average social rate of profit."[21]

He goes on to show that, whilst this impulse to search for super-profits is inherent in all epochs of capitalism it only leads to capital *exports* on a wide scale in the imperialist epoch. During the free competition epoch, there were readily available sources of surplus profit in the developed countries themselves until the last quarter of the 19th century.

Mandel further demonstrates how the massive turn to capital export was instrumental in engineering a general, if temporary, rise in the average rate of profit, unleashing the long economic boom (1893-1914) which preceded the First World War.

However, alongside the generation of super-profits through investment, classic imperialism also involved aspects of *unequal exchange.*

As Mandel puts it:

"The colonies and semi-colonies tended to exchange increasing quantities of indigenous labour (or products of labour) for a constant amount of metropolitan labour (or products of labour). The long term development of the terms of trade was one gauge of this tendency, although other determinants also influenced them . . ."[22]

Thus it is clear that classic imperialism contained forms of *unequal exchange.* However, as Mandel writes:

"Before the First World War and in the inter-war period unequal exchange was quantitatively less important than the direct product and transfer of colonial surplus-profits."[23]

But neither the concept of super-profits, nor of economic exploitation are present in Callinicos' definition of imperialism. "Super profits" and "colonial exploitation", are written off inside the SWP as concepts more akin to "Third Worldism" than to Marxism.

According to Nigel Harris, in an article commended by Callinicos himself:

"While the dominant states do indeed use their dominant position to attempt to transfer resources to themselves, employing brute force, political power, elements of monopoly against weaker states, it is a dangerous theoretical confusion to call this 'exploitation' as if it were the same as the relationship of capital to labour."[24]

Yet it was Lenin who wrote:

"The imperialism of the beginning of the twentieth century completed the division of the world among a handful of states, each of which today *exploits* (in the sense of drawing superprofits from) a part of the whole world only a little smaller than that which England *exploited* in 1858."[25]

That *is* the "real Marxist tradition", like it or not. And as we shall see it still works as a basic definition of imperialist relations with the Third World.



MEXICAN WORKERS EARN SIX TIMES LESS THAN THEIR US COUNTERPARTS

Imperialist super-profits today

Today the colonial system has, by and large, disappeared. But colonialism did not disappear because imperialist exploitation of the Third World disappeared. It did so because the mechanisms for achieving this changed.

Lenin had described "semi-colonial"

status, such as that enjoyed by China or Argentina pre-1914, as a "transitional form". Such countries were "formally independent but in fact enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence."[26]

The emergence of a world hegemonic power—US imperialism—after World War Two necessitated the destruction of the colonial empires of its former allies, and the opening up of the colonial economies to US imperialist penetration. Instead of a "transitional" form, the semi-colony—formally independent but politically and economically dominated by imperialism—became the norm.

Germany and Japan received the lion's share of investments due to the need to build them up as bulwarks against the USSR during the Cold War. This transformed the relative importance of super-profits derived from the export of capital to the Third World and the forms of unequal exchange which existed alongside them. Ernest Mandel even went so far as to argue that:

"The proportions changed in the late capitalist epoch. Unequal exchange henceforth became the main form of colonial exploitation, the direct production of colonial surplus-profits playing a secondary role."[27]

Written in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mandel's work did not anticipate just how much this state of affairs was about to change once again as generalised recession hit world capitalism and the major multinationals resorted to different forms of exploitation of the semi-colonies to offset this crisis. As profit rates began to decline in the late 1960s, there was a surge in foreign investment from the imperialist heartlands to the semi-colonial world as the multinationals relocated parts of their production processes abroad.

In 1960 private direct foreign investment to developing countries stood at $1,741 million. By 1976 it was $7,593 million. Far from becoming "irrelevant" to the developed capitalist economies, the Third World increasingly became the site for direct investment by impe-

The "labour aristocracy": Cliff versus Lenin

The appeal of the SWP's politics relies in part upon the idea that the working class is more or less homogeneous and "the same the whole world over".

Their political method (economism) insists that sectional struggles, generated by economic exploitation alone, will become sufficiently generalised that they flow over spontaneously into political consciousness. Any significant objective stratification or division within the working class, be it by wage or salary level, status, gender, ethnic origin or political affiliation, is strongly denied or its effects minimised.

Hence, male workers "gain nothing from women's oppression"; the privileges in terms of jobs, housing and so on, of white workers over black workers, of the Protestants over Catholics in the Six Counties, have little or no significance. Unity in economic struggle will easily overcome this false consciousness.

If the SWP accepted that such social obstacles exist in the path of the development of class consciousness—even pitting one sector of a working class against another—that these obstacles have to be consciously challenged and overcome, it would hole their political method below the waterline.

Lenin's theory of imperialism was a time bomb ticking away at the foundations of economism. It suggested that the world was divided up into oppressed and oppressor nations. The latter exploited the former through a number of mechanisms, including the export of capital. This capital earned greater than average returns on the investment (super-profits or super-exploitation). That is why it went there in the first place. Moreover, part of the super-profits were set aside to provide premium wages in the oppressor nation (or imperialist country) for a layer of skilled workers—an aristocracy of labour within the working class.



ENFIELD RIFLE WORKERS CELEBRATE BRITISH VICTORY AT MAFEKING

For Lenin, a labour bureaucracy arose out of this aristocracy which had an interest in capitalist stability so as to maintain its privileges. This was the basis of their reformism:

"Opportunism [i.e. reformism] was engendered in the course of decades by the special features in the period of the development of capitalism, when the comparatively peaceful and cultured life of a stratum of privileged workingmen 'bourgeoisified' them, gave them crumbs from the table of their national capitalists, and isolated them from the suffering, misery and revolutionary temper of the impoverished and ruined masses."[1]

"Imperialism, which means the partitioning of the world and the exploitation of other countries . . . which means high monopoly profits for a handful of very rich countries, makes it economically possible to bribe the upper strata of the proletariat and thereby fosters, gives shape to and strengthens opportunism."[2]

The emergence of the new epoch, in Lenin's view, underlined a view he had fought for in *What is to be Done?*. Any real class struggle must be a *political*

1 V I Lenin, "The collapse of the Second International", *Collected Works* 21, Moscow 1964, p242

2 V I Lenin, *Imperialism*, *CW* 22, p281

3 T. Cliff, *Neither Washington nor Moscow*, London 1982

rialist bosses who could not profitably invest capital at home or in another developed country. The "classic" phenomenon observed by Lenin and pronounced dead by Kidron had sprung back to life with a vengeance.

What drew the multinationals to Third World sites of direct investment? In 1915 Lenin had written:

"In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap."

As a result of experience over the last twenty five years one could develop each of Lenin's points:

Capital is scarce so the semi-colonial bourgeoisie enforces a regime of low taxation to attract foreign investment. This regime is often imposed by supranational imperialist bodies like the IMF and World Bank as a condition of debt re-scheduling. Elsewhere, it is the "voluntary" action of a local bourgeoisie pursuing vigorous "open door" policies. In the Republic of Ireland foreign investors are guaranteed a fixed rate of tax of 10% on profits until the year 2010.[28]

The price of land is relatively low and huge government handouts are available for manufacturers relocating to Third World sites. Today it is not land prices alone which determine the location of foreign investment, but the willingness of semi-colonial governments to bear the costs of that location. Again, using the example of Southern Ireland:

"There are plants of multinational companies sprinkled over the Republic like confetti, conforming to no economic logic but the carrot of tax holidays and massive incentives—and the need of every member of the Irish parliament to boast his or her own piece of the action . . ."[29]

Wages are low, but post war infrastructural investment means that skills can be high. In addition, repressive regimes which undermine workers' ability to fight for higher wages enable the rate of exploitation to be pushed to its limits. The example of the Mexican *maquiladores* sector, located just across the border from the USA, shows what the benefits can be for imperialist foreign investors:

"The *maquiladoras* are manufacturing plants that assemble components imported tax-free for re-export. The chief lure is cheap labour. In the motor industry, for example, American workers still earn eight times more than Mexican workers."[30]

Raw materials are cheap and their prices relative to industrial goods have decreased in the 1980s and 1990s. In part, energy saving technologies and processes have been consciously introduced which has lowered demand for them. In other countries traditional agriculture has been abandoned to be replaced with one cash-crop export economies dominated by multinationals and servicing the needs of the metropolitan centres.

These few examples show that private foreign direct investment remains a fact of life in the semi-colonial countries. Its motive is the search for higher profit rates, even if it remains a small proportion of total foreign investment world-wide, and is concentrated in a few "Newly Industrialised Countries" (NICs).

A 1984 study by Wladimir Andreff describes the advantage the higher semi-colonial profit rate gives to multinational corporations (MNCs):

"The profit rate of US MNCs is consistently higher in subsidiaries located in Less Developed Countries (LDCs) . . . The high profitability of their overseas investments has allowed the MNCs to restore their overall profit rates, taking into account the consolidated results of parents and subsidiaries, after 1972."[31]

Nevertheless, foreign direct investment always accounted for only a minority share of the flow of capital to the semi-colonies. In 1976 for example it accounted for only 35% of capital exported to the Third World.

The mid-1970s saw a dramatic rise in loan capital exported to the Third World, a rise which culminated in the debt crisis of 1982 and which ushered in a decade of IMF "structural adjustment" programmes. In return for debt rescheduling, semi-colonial governments were obliged to tear open their national economies for the benefit of imperialist investors.

According to Susan George:

"If payments of principal are included in the tally, then each of the 108 months from January 1982 through December 1990 witnessed payments from debtors to creditors averaging $12,450,000,000 . . .

At the behest of the [World] Bank and the [International Monetary] Fund, debtor countries have deprived their people—particularly the poorest among them—of basic necessities in order to provide the private banks and public agencies of the rich countries with the equivalent of six Marshall Plans. This unprecedented financial assistance to the rich from the poor may be startling but it is nonetheless arithmetically true."[32]

The point of all this is to show that, while imperialist superprofits may not be decisive for the balance sheets of the multinational corporations and banks, their reasons for exporting capital to the Third World remain the same as under "classic" imperialism.

They do precisely what Kidron denied: they play a *special function* for modern capitalism. First, they are the source of super-profits which, as Andreff shows, allowed the MNCs to maintain overall profit rates throughout the two recession cycles of 1973 and 1979. Second, they can be made to bear the costs of recession more harshly than capital in the metropolitan countries, through the terms of debt rescheduling and raw material price reduction.

But this is something Callinicos simply will not accept. Discussing the net transfer of value from semi-colonial countries to imperialism, via debt repayment, he writes:

"It would be a mistake, however, to see the debt crisis as simply marking the imposition of a new form of 'dependency' on the Third World."[33]

He cites the phenomenon of capital flight from indebted countries to show how the Latin American bourgeoisie

struggle, for this is the only way to overcome the divisions "spontaneously" generated by capitalist society.

No amount of spontaneous trade union struggle could forge nationwide and international class solidarity. Under the conditions of imperialism this was made even truer by the growth of a powerful privileged bureaucracy in the unions and the reformist parties.

This meant that the workers could only make a revolution *against* the material interest of the labour bureaucracy, and by overcoming the political opposition of a conservative section of the working class itself—the labour aristocracy.

This layer's conservatism was nourished from the table of the imperialists themselves by means of substantially higher wages than the mass of the workers. It is precisely the task of a party of the revolutionary vanguard to lead the various oppressed and exploited sections of the class in struggle against capitalism and so weld it together into a class for itself, a class conscious of its goal, the overthrow of capitalism internationally.

For the Cliff/Kidron tradition the denial of super profits led to the denial of the labour aristocracy's existence, and with it any material basis for working class reformism.

The SWP's theory of imperialism provides support for their economism. Cliff's claim that it "invalidates the whole of Lenin's analysis of reformism"[3] represents, to say the least, something of a challenge to an organisation that claims to represent "the real Marxist tradition".■



IMPERIALIST VICTORY IN THE GULF

has tried to protect itself from the worst effects of depreciation during the debt crisis. From this, Callinicos draws an extraordinary conclusion:

"The debt crisis thus involves not so much a conflict between nation states, rich and poor countries, but a class struggle in which the Latin American bourgeoisie, increasingly integrated into the international financial circuits, aligns itself with the Western banks and multinational corporations in demanding solutions which further open up their economies to the world market."[34]

This is wrong on two counts. First, what are the Latin American and imperialist bosses opening countries like Mexico up to? Collaborative, friendly trade on equal terms? No. The demands of the World Bank and IMF constantly emphasise the need for the removal of obstacles to imperialist exploitation and the imposition of further dependency.

One does not have to be a "dependency theorist" to recognise dependency when it hits you in the face. Imperialism demands the right to set the terms of trade (e.g. NAFTA). It demands the right to set exchange rates, raw material prices and interest rates. It demands guaranteed returns on investments.

It demands scores of mechanisms which make the economic development of countries like Mexico *dependent* on the imperatives of the imperialists. Listen to *The Economist*:

"The American economy is all important to the Mexican.

The reverse is clearly not the case, even though Mexico is America's third-largest trade partner after Japan and Canada . . . [In 1991] Mexico's exports to America came to $29 billion, or 11.9% of Mexico's GDP, but only 0.5% of America's . . . 70% of Mexico's trade is with its northern neighbour. Yet the Mexico economy is only one-twentieth the size. Hence the fears of being swallowed up." [35]

Secondly, the idea that capital flight signifies the absence of conflict between semi-colonial bourgeoisies and the imperialists is false. The *Financial Times'* regular country surveys contain, with monotonous regularity, page after page of complaints about the "unfair" practices of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie, its addiction to high taxes, its unwillingness to reform, its nepotism.

Capital flight, though a fact of life, does not negate either the relations of dependence of the semi-colonies, nor the conflicts between their rulers and the imperialists. It has even become the subject of such conflicts. According to Susan George:

"One of the major stated goals of the Brady Plan [for debt rescheduling] is to encourage flight capital to return home. A country cannot even be considered for Brady relief, such as it is, until it has signed on for the whole series of IMF type measures: deregulation of markets, fiscal austerity, currency depreciation, lower wages and higher interest rates. Since the advent of Brady, the IMF has added a further ten items to this list of requirements: its support for future debt relief will be made conditional on success in reversing capital flight".[36]

In summary, imperialist exploitation does exist today—albeit in the more sophisticated, semi-colonial form. It is mediated through the agency of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie as a local ruling class, which certainly takes its cut, but is also restricted to a subordinate role. The super-profits are extracted, directly or indirectly, from the rural and urban workers. The point at issue is not, and was not for Lenin, how decisive the mass of super-profits thus gained are for the imperialist economy as a whole. The system of colonial exploitation was decisive for the fate of the colonial and semi-colonial countries themselves.

Today, as in "classic" imperialism, the export of capital to the Third World in search of surplus profits—whether directly through investment, or indirectly through loan capital—is a key feature of the imperialist system.

It is what allows us to understand and intervene into struggles in the semi-colonies—both against the local bourgeoisie and against imperialist economic, political and military domination.

By way of a negative proof of this, let us see what happens when Callinicos attempts such an explanation without the concept of imperialist exploitation.

Marxism and "sub-imperialism"

"A key factor in the development of a more pluralistic and therefore more unstable world order has been the rise over the past two decades of the sub-imperialisms—that is, of Third World powers aspiring to the kind of political and military domination on a regional scale which the superpowers have enjoyed globally", Callinicos writes.

The criteria Callinicos lays down for characterising "sub-imperialisms" is, like his definition of the entire epoch, non-economic. Sub-imperialisms aspire to "political and military domination on a regional scale."[37]

For Callinicos the term sub-imperialism rests on the refutation of the possibility of "semi-colonial" existence, and thus, of any possibility of economic domination continuing beyond formal independence. This idea—formal independence masking economic subordination to imperialism—is described as the "orthodoxy among left nationalists and Third Worldists for a generation."[38]

Callinicos is confident enough of the validity of the term sub-imperialism, as defined by him, to make a list of "sub imperialisms". It includes "Israel, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Syria, Turkey . . . India, Vietnam, South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil and Argentina".

However, Callinicos cannot decide what makes a sub-imperialism. Focusing on Argentina, he cites the work of Dabat and Lorenzano, who characterise Argentina as:

"an emerging regional capitalist power, combining financial, commercial and technological dependence with the development of a capitalist monopolist economy with regional imperialist features".[39]

Although they clearly characterise Argentina as "dependent", Callinicos sees no problem using their arguments

to label Argentina a "sub-imperialism". His main purpose is to agree with their political conclusion, that the war between Britain and Argentina over the Malvinas in 1982 was reactionary on both sides:

"It was neither an anti-colonial struggle nor a struggle between oppressed and oppressor nations."[40]

Callinicos then continues:

"Generalising from this broadly correct analysis of the Falklands War we could then argue that the same process of capitalist development which gave rise to imperialism in the first place now produces sub-imperialism."

But he draws back from endorsing such a conclusion:

"While this analysis has a large measure of truth it is essential to qualify it. For the rise of the sub imperialism has not taken place in a vacuum. Nor has it created a world composed of capitalist states the differences between whose power are ones of degree rather than of kind."[41]

This is the nub of the question, and it is far from just a theoretical one. If the concept of sub-imperialism is to mean anything it has to allow us to identify the *differences in kind* between such countries and the big, established imperialists. It also has to be part of a theoretical system which allows us to understand countries like Bolivia and Rwanda, which are clearly not "sub-imperialisms".

But the term sub-imperialism cannot do this, because it is abstracted from economic relations.

It is certainly true that a number of developed semi-colonies have accumulated enough capital, and concentrated it in the hands of ambitious, national bourgeoisies, to attempt regional political domination independent of the wishes of imperialism, and economic development free of the constraints of economic dependence.

Iran and Iraq both fall into this category when we consider the Middle East. But what is the difference "in kind rather than degree" between these countries and the imperialist powers they have, from time to time, clashed with?

Kidron would have answered, none. Callinicos wants to refute that view but he cannot because from beginning to end his own definition of imperialism and imperialist relations remains stonily silent on economic questions.

We are never sure whether a sub-imperialism is a kind of imperialism or a kind of advanced semi-colony. This is bad enough when we are considering Iraq, Argentina etc, but how does Callinicos categorise countries like Bangladesh and Bolivia, countries which clearly fit the definition "semi-colony" as defined above?

Quite simply, he never considers the problem. The SWP's new theory of imperialism fails to characterise the majority of countries in the world at all, other than to say that they are "irrelevant" to the modern system of exploitation.

He rounds off his discussion of sub-imperialisms with the assertion that, with the war between the US-led alliance and Saddam's Iraq:

"the difference between an imperialist and a sub-imperialist power is being established beyond all serious dispute in the bombardment of Baghdad and the slaughter of fleeing Iraqi troops on the Basra highway."[42]

It is, once again, a proof reliant on military-political might rather than economic relations. Pointedly, it raises the question of the SWP's own position on the second Gulf War in 1991 and its relationship to the SWP's position during the Malvinas War of 1982.

Though the SWP did not once activate their position, they did—on paper—support Saddam's Iraq against the imperialist alliance. Citing Trotsky's support for Chiang Kai-Shek against Japan in the 1930s, Callinicos wrote:

"It is necessary therefore in a confrontation such as the second Gulf War, to advocate the defeat of the imperialist side while continuing the political struggle against the bourgeois regime leading the anti-imperialist side. Underlying this stance is Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution."[43]

This is correct. But how can Saddam's Iraq be both a sub-imperialism and lead the "anti-imperialist side"? Surely this makes the concept of sub-imperialism so flexible as to be meaningless? Only pages before this statement Callinicos writes, about the British domination of Iraq in the 1940s:

"Memories of such humiliating subordination to the imperialist powers survived long after the acquisition by these states of a much more effective degree of independence. They help to explain why anti-imperialist rhetoric continues to have a massive popular appeal in countries *which can no longer in any sense be regarded as semi-colonies*". [our emphasis][44]

Now if Iraq is not a semi-colony, and its anti-imperialism is rhetorical rather than real, why on earth support it in a war with imperialism?

And why did "sub-imperialist" Argentina not merit the same support against Britain in 1982? The SWP is left with nothing but a flat contradiction of "critical support" for Iraq against the US-led coalition in 1992, and "defeat on both sides" between Argentina and Britain in 1982.

A cynic might conclude that this had something to do with the fact that in 1982 Britain alone was at war with Argentina and there was a wave of chauvinist support for the war effort in Britain. Ten years later Britain played an auxiliary role in a war where the casualties were nearly all on the Iraqi side. But we are not cynics—we prefer to wait and see how the SWP itself explains this contradiction.

Cliff and "deflected permanent revolution"

In 1963 Tony Cliff decided that the experience of the post war colonial revolutions compelled Marxists to "reject a large part" of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.[45]

But Callinicos, as we have seen, explicitly bases his support for Iraq in 1991 on that theory.

This is how Cliff sums up Trotsky's position:

"1. A bourgeoisie which arrives late on the scene is fundamentally different from its ancestors of a century or two earlier. It is incapable of providing a consistent, democratic, revolutionary solution to the problem posed by feudalism and imperialist oppression. It is incapable of carrying out the thoroughgoing destruction of feudalism, the achievement of real national independence and political democracy. It has ceased to be revolutionary, whether in the advanced or backward countries. It is an absolutely conservative force.

2. The decisive revolutionary role falls to the proletariat, even though it may be very young and small in number.

3. Incapable of independent action, the peasantry will follow the towns and in view of the first five points must follow the leadership of the industrial proletariat.

4. A consistent solution of the agrarian question, of the national question, a break up of the social and imperial fetters preventing speedy economic advance, will necessitate moving beyond the bounds of bourgeois private property. 'The democratic revolution grows over immediately into the socialist and thereby becomes a permanent revolution.'

5. The completion of the socialist revolution 'within national limits is unthinkable . . . Thus the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet'. It is a reactionary dream to try to achieve socialism in one country.

6. As a result, revolution in backward countries would lead to convul-

The SWP is left with nothing but a flat contradiction of "critical support" for Iraq against the US-led coalition in 1991, and "defeat on both sides" between Argentina and Britain in 1982

sions in the advanced countries."[46]

It was Cliff's rejection of the Trotskyist theory of Stalinism in the late 1940s, in favour of his well known "state capitalist" analysis, that forced him to reject this second major cornerstone of Trotskyism. "State capitalism" in Russia had supposedly grown out of the degeneration and overthrow of a workers' revolution. But the new Stalinist regimes—first Mao's China, then Castro's Cuba—were created from scratch.

If these regimes were to be understood as bourgeois, the results of "state capitalist" revolutions by the national bourgeoisie against imperialist domination, then Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution had to be junked, at least for the post-war period. After all:

" . . . two events of world importance, Mao's rise to power in China and Castro's in Cuba, seem to challenge practically all the assumptions of the theory."[47]

Cliff cited the absence of a revolutionary proletariat in China and Cuba as the key factor undermining Trotsky's position:

"Once the constantly revolutionary nature of the working class, the central pillar of Trotsky's theory, becomes suspect, the whole structure falls to pieces. . . . But this does not mean that nothing happens. A concatenation of national and international circumstances makes it imperative for the productive forces to break the fetters of feudalism and imperialism."[48]

The needs of the productive forces, the rebelliousness of the peasantry, plus three contingent factors (the role of the state, the weakness of imperialism and the importance of the intelligentsia) actually bring about successful anti-imperialist, i.e. bourgeois revolutions in these countries. This variant Cliff describes "for lack of a better name" as "Deflected, state capitalist, permanent revolution".

Cliff's "contribution" was to abandon the whole basis for the Leninist critique of Menshevism.

Cliff's logic suggests that, had the Russian working class not been subjectively revolutionary in 1917, the productive forces plus the peasantry and the contingent factors of imperialist breakdown *could* have led, nevertheless, to a successful bourgeois revolution.

In the first place, Cliff is wrong to suggest that Trotsky's theory relied on the "constantly revolutionary nature of the working class". The working class, in Trotsky's theory, was allocated an *objectively* revolutionary role, irrespective of its consciousness. Trotsky, like Lenin before him, was only concretising the axiom that, in backward countries in the imperialist epoch, to paraphrase Plekhanov, the bourgeois revolution could only triumph as a workers' revolution. Only the workers could carry out the bourgeois tasks progressively.

Did that mean, for Trotsky, that in the absence of proletarian leadership "nothing would happen"?

No. Trotsky was clear that, left to "national bourgeois" or "petit bourgeois" leadership the anti-imperialist struggle could only result in the reactionary solution of the bourgeois democratic tasks. The national bourgeoisie would turn against their allies in the working class and peasantry far earlier than their Russian counterparts in 1917. They would replace feudalism not by land redistribution but by capitalist agriculture under their control. They would compromise with the landlords. They would win national "independence" only at the price of real semi-colonial servitude and the oppression of their own national minorities.

When we look at every anti-imperialist revolution in the post war years *other* than the ones which resulted in Stalinist states, Trotsky's theory is confirmed.

The experience of Ghana, India, Egypt, Indonesia and Algeria confirms the above prediction to the letter. They did not solve the national question fully; they did not free their countries of the mechanisms of colonial exploitation; democracy was a sham; agrarian relations remained backward, with limited land redistribution serving the rich and the middle class.

Only the Stalinist-led anti-imperialist revolutions (and Cuba, where the petit-bourgeois Castroite movement embraced Stalinism) had a different outcome. Weak and compromised by imperialism, their bourgeoisies were liquidated. These degenerate workers' states were certainly no paradises, either in terms of workers' democracy or a democratically planned economy. But private property in the means of production, feudal agrarian relations, were all abolished and imperialism was deprived of the possibility of exploiting them.

How were these social gains, this independence from imperialism possible? Those who adhere to the "real Marxist tradition" on Stalinism can explain this fact: it was because Castro and Mao, Kim Il Sung and Ho Chi Minh *abolished capitalism*.[49]

Cliff thinks that he remains true to Trotsky's analysis of the 20th century bourgeoisie by reducing the theory of permanent revolution to its first point; namely:

"The conservative, cowardly nature of a late developing bourgeoisie (Trotsky's first point) is an *absolute law*."[50]

Trotsky's "first point" was not unique to his theory. Marx and Engels discovered only too well the "conservative, cowardly nature" of the German bourgeoisie of 1848. But the bourgeoisie which ran away from its own revolution did not remain forever in cowardly dependence on the large landowners. Germany was turned from a feudal patchwork into a unified state because Bismarck and a section of the landowning class carried out the bourgeois revolution "from above".

But Germany would never have become a powerful imperialism without the upward swing of the productive forces.

Thus, capitalism found a way past the cowardly liberal bourgeoisie and transformed it into an aggressive imperialist bourgeoisie. Trotsky's point was that the imperialist epoch had closed off this road in the colonial and semi-colonial world: that a Chiang Kai Shek in his day, or a Saddam in our own, cannot be Bismarck, no matter how brutal or decisive they may be.

Cliff's "deflected permanent revolution" miraculously opens this road up again. It says that the semi-colonial bourgeoisie and intelligentsia—whether in Stalinist guise like Mao, or nationalist guise like Nkrumah—can ride the progressive tide of the productive forces and bring about really independent capitalist states.

It is easy to see the relationship of this theory to Kidron's view of post-war capitalism. Kidron believed that the ending of imperialism had "rescued the national bourgeoisie". Not only could it make a national revolution, but it was pushing at an open door:

"national independence has come to it, in many cases without a struggle and therewith have come the levers of economic development and its own growth."[51]

Cliff's abandonment of Trotsky and Lenin's view of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie is at one with Kidron's abandonment of Trotsky and Lenin's view of the imperialist epoch.

So are his programmatic conclusions. Cliff writes:

"Marxists should cease to argue over the national identity of the future ruling classes of Asia, Africa and Latin America and instead investigate the class conflicts and future social structures of these continents. The slogan of class against class will become more of a reality."[52]

No matter how "abstractly" Callinicos wants to define imperialism, his mere use of the term, and of the term "anti-imperialist struggle", in relation to Saddam's war of 1992, and of the theory of permanent revolution to underpin his pro-Iraq stance, means he cannot avoid confronting and refuting Cliff's "contribution to the real Marxist tradition"—that is if there was an ounce of consistency in his method.

The SWP seems to operate on the principle that, if nobody notices the flagrant contradictions and implicit refutation of Cliff by other theoreticians [illegible]

time these will simply pass over into a new party "orthodoxy".

Conclusion

" . . . the theoretical level of the reviving revolutionary left reflects the decades of isolation when the attempt to maintain the basic tenets of Marxism in a hostile environment with few resources inevitably produced a certain primitivism."[53]

Nothing better reflects the truth of this comment, by SWP leader Duncan Hallas, than the twists and turns of his own organisation on the question of imperialism. In those early years of isolation Cliff rejected Trotsky's theory of Stalinism and replaced it with a theory of bureaucratic state capitalism based on the assertion that Russia's "militarised state capitalism" was only an extreme example of a global phenomenon in the transitional epoch.

Cliff and his followers were obliged to adopt Bukharin's theory of imperialism in preference to Lenin's. Bukharin, in the 1920s emphasised the relative absence of crisis within the state capitalist blocs and located imperialist crisis mainly at the level of its drive to war.

Once the post-war boom was underway, and with it the Cold War, Cliff and Kidron felt able to dump Lenin's theory of imperialism altogether in favour of the permanent arms economy.

But this schema fell apart in three stages. First, crisis gripped the imperialist world in the early 1970s, forcing Kidron to abandon the PAE as a global theory. A new generation of SWP theoreticians clung to the PAE, not as a global theory but as an "insight" into what had caused the long boom.

Next, the crisis forced imperialism to embrace the neo-liberal economic strategy, breaking up "state capitalism" in both the imperialist countries and the former colonies and undermining the Bukharin model of imperialism.

Finally, Stalinism collapsed, rendering nonsensical any attempt to comprehend the world according to Bukharin's "superior" theory. To understand the reality of "multinational capitalism" the SWP theorists were forced into a shamefaced and partial return to Lenin. But they could not openly attack Kidron and, above all, Cliff. Hence Callinicos' attempt to define imperialism so abstractly as to include Bukharin and Lenin, in one all-embracing "definition" which excluded any notion of an economic basis for imperialism.

The SWP today runs scared of the twin spectres of "Third Worldism", and its mirror image, the modern Menshevism of Nigel Harris, who now insists that 20th century capitalism could develop the Third World without dependency and economic domination. But the SWP has no coherent theory with which to reject either tendency.

Mike Kidron wrote in 1977:

"Without theory no organisation can do more than ride the tides of working class consciousness, which might be exhilarating as sport but is irrelevant as revolutionary politics."[54]

As long as the SWP has no coherent theory of imperialism, and no honest critique of the Cliff/Kidron tradition, it will be tossed about on the waves of war, revolution and counter-revolution. Its theory will never rise above the status of crude apologetics for past mistakes. It will continue to ride the surges in working class consciousness with a wild and arrogant optimism only to fall into deep depression at the "downturns" of militancy caused by severe defeats. But it will not build the revolutionary party we need to overthrow capitalism. It will neither defend the theoretical gains of the genuine Marxist tradition nor prove capable of making any of its own.■

1 John Molyneux, "What is the real Marxist tradition?", IS2:20, p47. In this article we will deal with the development of the SWP's positions as expressed in various issues of International Socialism (IS) and it's predecessor International Socialism Journal (ISJ) [these are designated as in the journal's own reference system as IS 1:XX or IS 2:XX]

2 See P Morris, "The Crisis of Stalinism and state capitalist theory" *Permanent Revolution* 9 (London 1991)

3 For a full critique of the method, theory and practice of the SWP see *The Politics of the SWP: a Trotskyist critique*, by Workers Power, London 1994.

4 A Callinicos, "Marxism and Imperialism" IS2:50, London 1991

5 see VILenin, *Imperialism the highest stage of captialism* Collected Works (CW) Vol 22, Moscow 1964, p185-304

6 VI Lenin, ibid p 300

7 A. Callinicos, J. Rees, C Harman & M. Haynes, *Marxism and the New Imperialism* , London 1994

8 M Kidron, "International Capitalism" IS1:20, London 1965, p159

9 ibid p159

10 ibid p164

11 ibid p164

12 A Callinicos "Imperialism, Capitalism and the state today", IS2:35, London 1987 p82

13 ibid p 82

14 A Callinicos et al, op cit p16

15 ibid p16

16 A Callinicos op cit in IS:50, London 1991, p21

17 K Marx *Capital* Vol III London, 1968 p780

18 N Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, London 1987 p84

19 E Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, London 1975, p77

20 Berrick Saul, quoted in Callinicos "Marxism and Imperialism Today" op cit p14

21 E Mandel, op cit p78.

22 ibid p78

23 ibid p345

24 N Harris "Theories of unequal exchange", IS2:33 London 1987, p 119

25 VI Lenin *Imperialism*, op cit p284

26 VI Lenin *Imperialism*, op cit p263

27 E Mandel op cit p346

28 see A Johnson and M, Gallagher "The paradox of Irish economic development" in *Class Struggle* No 22, Dublin1994

29 W. Hutton *The Guardian*, 31 January 1994

30 A survey of Mexico,*The Economist*, 13 February 1993

31 W Andreff, "The international centralisation of capital and the reordering of world capitalism" *Capital and Class* No 22 London 1984 p74

32 S. George *The Debt Boomerang*, London 1992 pXV

33 Callinicos et al. op cit p

34 ibid

35 A survey of Mexico,*The Economist* op cit

36 S George op cit p90

37 Callinicos et al op cit p45

38 ibid

39 Dabat and Lorenzano *Argentina, The Malvinas and the end of military rule* (London 1984) quoted in Callinicos et al op cit p45

40 ibid

41 A Callinicos et al, op cit p45

42 ibid p52

43 ibid

44 ibid p49

45 T. Cliff "Permanent Revolution" reprinted IS1:61 London 1973 p18

46 ibid p19

47 ibid p20

48 ibid p27

49 For a full explantion of the process of Stalinist social overturns see Workers Power/Irish Workers Group, *The Degenerated Revolution*, London 1981

50 T Cliff, "Permanent Revolution", op cit p 27

51 M Kidron, "International Capitalism", reprinted IS1:61, London 1973 p16

52 T Cliff op cit p 29

53 D Hallas, Review of M Kidron's *Western Capitalism Since the War*, in IS1:44, 1974, p36

54 M. Kidron "Two insights don't make a theory" in IS1:100 London 1977, p9

"They could not be broken"

Chris Bryant reviews *Revolutionaries They Could Not Break: The Fight For The Fourth International In Indochina 1930-1945* by Ngo Van, Index Books, 1995 £11.95

April 1995 marked the twentieth anniversary of the fall of Saigon. Vietnam's long struggle for national liberation, first against the French and then against the USA, ended in triumph.

Yet today, a country that began as a super-exploited dominion of French imperialism, and went through thirty years of war to gain independence, has opened its doors to the heirs of the imperialist millionaires who did so much to ravage it with napalm and cluster bombs. The sons and daughters of the workers and peasants who gave their lives for liberation now get sold to the multinationals as the cheapest labour around.

While the wise men of the west cite these developments as yet more proof that communism doesn't work, this book tells a different story. It tells the truth. Communism was never given the chance to work.

The real communists, the revolutionary Trotskyists, were wiped out by the Stalinists years before the final triumph over imperialism. The Stalinists benefited from the sacrifices of the Vietnamese masses. And now they are rewarding those sacrifices by opening up the country to capitalist restoration.

Ngo Van charts both the creation of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) out of disparate nationalist groupings and the emergence of the Trotskyist opposition. The VCP was fiercely nationalistic, even bordering on racist.

Limits

The Stalinists were determined to keep the struggles of the working class within the limits set by the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists in their struggle for independence. Ho Chi Minh argued that this "patriotism" was necessary during the "first stage" of the revolution and grew naturally out of Stalin's policy of "socialism in one country".

Vietnam's economy was very backward, and the country's population comprised an overwhelming majority of peasants. However, during the 1920s and 1930s a small but powerful working class came into being. It repeatedly showed its militancy and capacity for organisation and struggle.

It was a force which, under revolutionary leadership, could have rallied the peasants in Vietnam to revolution, just as the Bolsheviks had done in Russia in 1917. Stalinism was the real obstacle to this happening, rather than the agrarian economy or imperialist domination. And Stalinism was willing to do just about anything, including massacre its Trotskyist rivals, to obstruct a workers' revolution.

Arrests and executions of Trotskyists were common in Vietnam in the 1930s. Despite this, they were able to take advantage of a growing crisis inside the Indochinese Communist Party (PCI, as the VCP was then called) PCI, within the nationalist organisations and in the French ruling authority itself.

This crisis hit Vietnam as a result of the sharpening class struggle in France after 1934. The election of Leon Blum's People's Front government in 1936—an alliance of bourgeois radicals, the Socialist party (SFIO) and the French Communist Party—opened up a period of liberalisation in Vietnam and led to a wave of strikes.

Colonies

The People's Front programme for the colonies amounted to no more than a proposal to establish a commission to review the situation. The Stalinists, in France and Indochina, sang the praises of Blum's imperialist government, and created a replica of the People's Front in Vietnam—the Indochinese Congress (IC)—an alliance of bourgeois constitutionalists and workers' parties.

One group of Trotskyists operated in an uncritical bloc with the Stalinists, producing a common paper—La Lutte. Ngo Van refers to the "truly paradoxical" situation of Stalinists and Trotskyists collaborating in Vietnam at the very same time that the Moscow trials were underway.

In fact, they were pursuing a centrist policy not a Trotskyist one. They entered the IC even though the bourgeois parties demanded an absolute majority and insisted that no more than one quarter of the delegates could be workers and peasants.

They even offered to suspend all criticism of Blum's government for three months to maintain their bloc with the Stalinists. Ngo Van does not criticise this policy though he refers to the criticism made of the La Lutte group by another Trotskyist, Ho huu Tuong. Their policy, he argued, "came near to class collaboration". Indeed!

La Lutte's centrist policy was rooted in a misunderstanding of the united front tactic when applied to the anti-imperialist struggle. It remained centrist, not reformist, because within the popular front La Lutte did propagandise for working class independence in the form of "action committees".

But its criticism of the whole strategy was inconsistent and compromised by the nature of the agreements struck with the Stalinists. It did not save them from persecution however. Two La Lutte leaders, Ngyuen van Linh and Ta thu Thau, suffered imprisonment because of their support for the strike wave.

Even after imprisonment, by an imperialist government supported by the Stalinists, Thau still sought to continue the bloc with the Communist Party. It was broken on the initiative of the PCI, after La Lutte criticised the Indochinese Congress for not keeping its promises. The Stalinists would brook no criticism of the popular front and abruptly began to stigmatise their allies of yesterday the "twin brothers of fascism".

La Lutte were not the only Trotskyists active in Vietnam at the time. Those critical of the entry into the popular front were organised in the October group. This group published Trotsky's criticisms of the People's Front and responded to the imposition of conscription in Indochina by saying:

"Comrade soldiers! In a few days you will be in uniform. As French subjects they will teach you the use of arms. This is what Lenin said on the subject: 'Accept the rifles and learn to use them! The proletariat must learn to bear arms, not in order to kill their foreign comrades, as the enemies of society command, but to turn them against the country's capitalists'. We are fighting for your right to read workers' papers and to form soldiers' committees. Rally under the red flag of the Fourth International, for the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Consistent

Despite Ngo Van's even-handed approach to both groups of Trotskyists, it is clear from this that there were forces, represented by the October group, capable of charting a consistently revolutionary approach.

The collapse of the People's Front government in June 1937 brought a new wave of repression. There was a clamp down on all dissenting organisations, including the new trade unions that the Trotskyists from both organisations had helped build. However, the working class had grown in confidence and experience.

Notwithstanding the centrist errors of the La Lutte group, fundamental elements of the Trotskyist programme had been widely popularised amongst the Indochinese working class. La Lutte swept the board in the 1939 Saigon municipal elections. But the La Lutte group had developed an ambivalent attitude to Stalinism that was ultimately to lead to its physical destruction in 1945.

After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the



TROTSKYIST CONTINGENT ON SAIGON DEMONSTRATION 1945

Japanese surrendered to the USA in August 1945. In the previous March, they had taken control of the Vietnamese administration which had been left intact during the war. Trotskyists who had been imprisoned or exiled in the war soon made their way back to a country where there was everything to win.

At the Potsdam conference of the Allied leaders in July, Stalin agreed that Indochina should be returned to French rule. However, in the month or so pending the return of the French, Stalin argued that Chinese nationalists should occupy the north while British troops oversee the south. During this interregnum, in August and September, the struggle of the working class for power was an immediate possibility.

Soviet

Stalinism in the South had been reduced to a tiny rump and the largest nationalist organisation was only able to sell 6,000 papers compared to a daily circulation of 15,000 for Tranh Dau, the Annamite language publication of the La Lutte group. In the Hoa Gay mining area in the North, the workers seized power and established a soviet that was only broken by persistent coercion and manoeuvres by the Stalinists.

The new popular front created by the Stalinists, the Vietminh, seized power in the North with relative ease. A famine which killed over one million attracted the peasantry to Vietminh slogans to open up the grain stores. In the South the Vietminh, with their patriotic appeals, won over the Vanguard Youth, the largest militant nationalist organisation, and used them to seize power in Saigon. On 24 August they took over some key administrative buildings, but avoided any direct confrontation with the Japanese or French forces.

Their plan was to establish order and present themselves to General Gracey's British Expeditionary Force as the *de facto* power in Vietnam. Gracey was later to boast, "I was welcomed on arrival by the Vietminh. I promptly kicked them out". On 1 September the Vietminh called for a demonstration to welcome the allies and 400,000 turned out.

La Lutte, together with the League of Communist Internationalists (LCI, successor to the October group) had consistently called for the arming of the people. Now they tried to use their 18,000 strong contingent to turn the 1 September march into an armed demonstration.

When colonialists opened fire on the demonstration, killing 40 and wounding 150, it was armed militants of La Lutte who captured those responsible. They were handed over to the Vietminh police, who promptly released them. This was symptomatic of La Lutte's continuing illusions in the Stalinists.

Although La Lutte responded to the imperialist invasion and Stalinist capitulation by calling for armed struggle, when two Stalinist police officers approached their base on 23 September, the leadership handed over their weapons without a fight—a move which cost them their lives.

Prior to the arrival of the British on 13 September, there was dual power in the south. On one side amassed hundreds of peoples' committees, which had adopted a thoroughly anti-capitalist programme and called for a workers' and peasants' government. Pitted against them were the Vietminh forces who demanded the disarming of all non-Vietminh organisations.

The arrival of the British caused the tensions in the south to explode into insurrection. Trotskyists, nationalists and rank and file Stalinists resisted the imperialist troops with improvised weapons and weapons captured from the enemy.

But the Vietminh desperately tried to negotiate with the British, assuring them they could restore order. Meanwhile, workers on the barricades were desperate for the ammunition and weapons held by Vietminh forces.

On 1 October the Vietminh negotiated a truce which the French and British used to prepare for a general offensive 12 days later. The actions of the Vietminh had tipped the balance decisively in favour of the imperialists and even the most determined militants were forced to retreat.

Hunted

Among them were the workers of the Govap tramway workers' militia, a sixty strong unit under the leadership of Ngyuen Huong, a 14-year-old LCI militant. Huong was finally murdered by Stalinist police in July 1946. It was not an isolated incident. Hundreds of Trotskyists were hunted down and killed by the Stalinists and imperialists in 1945 and 1946.

Ho Chi Minh had warned, "all those who do not follow my line will be broken". He was as good as his word. He was determined to maintain his alliance with the imperialists in the hope of some measure of independence after the war. When a workers' and peasants' insurrection, in which the Trotskyists enjoyed considerable influence, threatened his plans, he set out to break it. The Trotskyists, as the vanguard of the militant working class, had to be destroyed.

As in Barcelona during the Spanish civil war, so in South Vietnam after the August rising, Stalinism drowned the revolution in blood. It handed the country back to imperialism, condemning it to another thirty years of oppression and war.

The eventual victory over US imperialism should not blind us to the fact that victory was there for the taking in 1945. And victory then could have opened the road to genuine working class power. The failure to establish that power since, despite the victory of 1975, is the source of Vietnam's current journey back to capitalism.

The revolutionaries of the Fourth International were the only people who, despite their errors, raised the fight for class independence and for permanent revolution in the face of Stalinist betrayal. They deserve the place in history that this book awards them and which Stalinism has long tried to deny them.■

Irrational socialism

Mark Abram reviews *Against the Market* by David McNally, Verso, 1994 £11.99

David McNally is a leading member of the Canadian International Socialist Organisation (ISO), the sister organisation of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain. While the politics of that tendency do weaken certain parts of this book, *Against The Market* is a valuable weapon in the armoury of revolutionary socialists. It refutes the arguments of all those who praise the virtues of the market, including those on the left.

It has become fashionable, in the wake of the collapse of the USSR, to decry any attempt to abolish market regulation of economic life. In particular, many on the left believe that the only possible form of a non-bureaucratic socialism is one in which the market regulates any attempts at planning to meet human need.

In contrast McNally's book sets out to prove that:

"A consistent socialism can only be unrelentingly hostile to the market as regulator of economic relations." (p169)

McNally shows how the free market which grew up in Britain during the rise of capitalism was not a "natural" development of economic life. It was forcibly created by class interests.

The "free market" in labour was created by depriving agricultural labourers of their ability to sustain themselves by any means other than selling their labour power. McNally's treatment of this process is a useful rebuff to liberal historians who claim that the transformation to capitalism in industry and agriculture was harmonious, gradual and "natural".

However, McNally's justified hatred of the brutality of the rising bourgeoisie leads him into confusion over its historic role. He believes that revolutionaries should simply identify with the poor and oppressed in the transition to capitalism against the mission of the rising bourgeoisie. McNally argues that the massive extension of the market in land and creation of wage labourers was not rational:

"What is 'rational' is not what provides the greatest degree of comfort and security to the labourers—as we have seen, access to commons greatly augmented both." (p21)

But this view has more in common with Thomas More's romantic critique of the development of capitalism than Marx's.

A Marxist must judge progress from the standpoint of whether this transformation raised the productivity of labour on the land (and in industry by lowering the costs of reproducing labour power). McNally's exposition implies that capitalism was not performing a progressive historical mission at this time, and that the bourgeoisie was not the revolutionary class. But market regulation and the generalisation of it to labour was progressive even if it now no longer is. McNally's confused attitude to the destruction of the English peasantry is a reflection of the economistic method of the International Socialists. With the toilers at all costs and against all exploiting classes is an anachronism when projected back into the period of the rising bourgeoisie. It demonstrates not a Marxist method but a populist one.

McNally correctly argues that it was the job of bourgeois political economy, from Smith to Malthus, to legitimate the creation of a market economy. Both in their own way sought to prove the system was natural, rather than a historical construct.

Spokesman

Adam Smith is seen as the spokesman for the stage of agrarian capitalism. McNally thinks that there was a tension between Smith's moral philosophy and his political economy. Smith's philosophy stressed the egalitarianism of the market. In this sense all those who were economically active had a place in the division of labour and the collective good would be maximised by all pursuing their individual self-interest.

By contrast, Smith's political economy stressed the supremacy and superiority of private property—which led not to the collective good but to the creation of distinct and competing classes with different interests.

For McNally, Smith is the highpoint of bourgeois economics which afterwards underwent a degeneration and vulgarisation. In the hands of Thomas Malthus economics became a simple justification for the inevitable poverty of the masses and the need for an unproductive class of consumers who were vital to purchase the goods that the impoverished masses produced.

McNally's view of Smith is, frankly, eccentric. He was not a theorist of agrarian capitalism but of *manufacture*. Smith's merit was not his social philosophy but his political economy.

Just as with his "populist" critique of the destruction of feudalism, McNally here shies away from open identification with the "narrow" interests of the rising bourgeoisie when a Marxist should give full recognition to its progressive historical mission.

It was Smith's break with the previous tradition of studying economy as a branch of natural philosophy which was progressive, making it a science based on developing the labour theory of value.

McNally locates the vulgarisation of political economy in Malthus' renunciation of Smith's ethical foundation. In reality it begins with the renunciation of the labour theory of value—a theory which only reached its fullest development with the work of David Ricardo, the champion of the industrial, free market bourgeoisie.

The real line from bourgeois to Marxist political economy runs via Ricardo. The utopian socialists tried to use Ricardo's labour theory of value to show that the workers have the right to the "full fruits of their labour".

McNally turns to his main subject when he deals with Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the French philosopher and economist whose ideas strongly influenced the infant labour movement in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. Proudhon was the first "market socialist". Contained within his work are all the elements of utopianism and confusion that have been repeated by market socialists right up to the present.

Proudhon's work makes a distinction between "possession" and "property". Labour is held to be the basis of all wealth and those who do it are entitled to possession of its products. But labour does not entitle anyone to own the means of production as private property or to appropriate objects produced by others.

Hence, for Proudhon "property is theft". Proudhon accepts that commodity exchange is an exchange of equivalents. But he argues that property violates this maxim. When money exchanges for labour and its products there is no exchange of equivalents, says Proudhon.

Thus, for Proudhon socialism means individual possession of things produced, mediated by free and equal trade. Proudhon tried to turn the premises of political economy (free exchange of equivalents) against its conclusions (profit and exploitation).

Abolish

In class terms this is the standpoint of the petty commodity producer who wants to "purify" commodity exchange. It is not the standpoint of the working class which must abolish wage labour and generalised commodity production if it is to be free.

All market socialists face a dilemma: should labour power be bought and sold? If the answer is yes then exploitation necessarily results and contradicts the search for social justice and equality. If no, then there can be no real market for any other product. As McNally writes:

"This, then, is the central flaw in all notions of market socialism: by accepting market relations (commodities,

prices and wage-labour), market socialists must logically accept the inevitable consequences of these relations—exploitation, class inequality and economic crises. But market socialists fail to see this because they do not understand that without the market in human labour-power there is no generalised commodity exchange. If labour-power is not bought and sold, it will not have a market-determined value. And if this crucial input into every production process is not marketized, then commodity exchange will not be general, and goods will not have true market values (since the labour in them will not have been priced by the market)."(p169)

The best part of McNally's book is the final chapter where he deals with some common objections to socialist planning.

It is often said that the freedom of the individual is negated by resorting to centralised planning. McNally correctly turns this charge back upon the accuser and rightly insists that only socialism aims at the free and full development of the individual. Yet this cannot happen in a market economy which consigns a majority to poverty and insecurity.

Concept

It is also argued that Marx's concept of the all-rounded development of the individual presupposes the unlimited availability of material goods and services, and that this just "conjures away" scarcity as the fundamental economic problem facing humanity. McNally answers by saying that for Marx "abundance" means labour which is not driven by external compulsion but also, and especially, time *away* from labour. Abundance is not synonymous with being saturated with consumer goods. Under communism working class democracy will negotiate a trade-off between the level of material consumption and time away from labour.

It is often alleged that planning necessitates omniscience on the part of the direct producers. Not so, McNally explains. Marx recognised that errors of forecasting will occur and for this very reason insisted that socialism would be a regime of planned overproduction to provide insurance against unforeseen shortages.

Without doubt there are many technical problems which surround the coordination and collection of information needed for planning. But they are not impossible to overcome given modern technologies.

Alec Nove, a market socialist hostile to centralised planning, argues that the attempt to be omniscient leads inevitably to the creation of an all-powerful bureaucracy (Stalinism). But the force of this argument relies purely on an unproved assumption; that all individuals are lazy, stupid and incapable of exercising control at the various levels of production and distribution.

In fact, McNally shows that this argument against planning and bureaucracy backfires since it is only in a market economy that the state machine is essential in order to control a political arena which is forcibly separated off from economic activity. Democratic, accountable planning fuses politics and economics. It overcomes the need for a separate state structure over the heads of the population.

Perhaps the most insistent charge levelled at the advocates of planning by its enemies is that, "rational economic decision-making is not possible without the price signals provided by genuinely competitive markets based on private ownership of the means of production and investment on the basis of profit-maximisation." (p197)

This has been dubbed the "calculation problem". Its premise is the necessity of a single common criterion by which to judge the efficiency of using economic resources. For the apologists of the market that common criterion is prices. They argue that if one does away with price signals then there is no way of judging economic efficiency.

But this is a simplified assumption. The market can provide information to people about a range of economic choices—but not meaningful information about the social effects of private economic transactions, such as social inefficiencies, disruption, duplication, atomisation of social life.

Secondly, market information cannot give rational criteria for investment in roads, schools or determine the productivity effect of placing a railway near a town.

Individual entrepreneurs cannot know what they need to know simply via the market and the prices thrown up by it. We have to distinguish between "price" as an exchange ratio of commodities on the market and *social* costs which enter directly into the "price" calculation. One has to adjust prices for the parameters outside the scope of a single firm and adjust for the effect of long terms plans. Capitalism and the market cannot do this.

McNally argues, therefore, that there is no one common enumerator by which the desirability or efficiency of using economic resources can be judged.

So how will socialist economic regulation occur? In a mature industrial economy most economic transactions can, and will, be taken out of the sphere of immediate market exchange. Basic housing, subsistence needs, can be allocated to the mass of the people as a right without the need for homes to be traded as commodities.

Fluctuations in demand for other products can be adjusted, not through price movements but by inventory movements and stock control. Large numbers of speciality goods and services could still be regulated by supply and demand for as long as they could not be produced in abundance. But even here tax could be used to channel funds to better social uses and make the price of certain goods unresponsive to a fall in demand for them.

Finally, whereas competition to maximise profits is the mainspring for efficiency under capitalism, in the transition to socialism efficiency is produced by "the impetus to maximise free, disposable time." (p206)

McNally's defence of planning is in general excellent. But the book is ultimately flawed by its attempt to graft on the International Socialists' state capitalist theory.

McNally's central thesis is that capitalism is essentially a free market in the commodity labour power. Hence he has to prove that wage labour acted as a commodity in the Eastern Bloc under Stalinist "state capitalism". Curiously then he pays tribute to Cliff's "classic work" on state capitalism (p225) but fails to mention that Cliff explicitly *rejected* the idea that labour power was a commodity in the USSR!

Writing of Yugoslavia in the 1960s to 1980s he says:

"If the market is to price the bulk of goods and services in order to provide signals guiding production and consumption, then labour-power will have to be commodified, i.e. its price (wages) will have to be determined competitively through the market. And the wages which the market determines will have to be held to a level adequate to the drive to accumulate as an end in itself . . . "(p183)

Impeccable logic, confounded only by historical fact.

Demand

Wages were *not* determined competitively through the market in Yugoslavia. For example, wages were not allowed to rise ever higher, as would be expected in a "market economy" with full and even over-employment and an excess demand for labour.

McNally's dogmatic attachment to state capitalist theory leaves him unable to follow the logic of his own analysis in the rest of the book. Attempts to marketise Yugoslavia's economy and thereby dynamise bureaucratic planning broke down because the rulers *refused* to introduce a free market in labour power. The system broke down in incoherence.

Despite its weaknesses, McNally's book is a timely riposte to the market fetishists. The last chapter could usefully be read alone since it marshalls all the key arguments.■

Making sense of Sophie's world

Gil Hyle reviews *Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy* by Jostein Gaarder. Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1994 £15.95

Go into any bookshop and you will see shelf upon shelf of "popular science". From the chemistry of life to theoretical physics, authors are weaving brilliant simplifications of scientific theory into "made easy" guides. Too often, their concluding purpose is to create a reassuring sense of wonder at a more profound world for us beyond the limitations of science. Such books lead readers to a useful, though passive, understanding of science only to lead them subsequently into empty speculation and religious sensation.

They need a collective health warning. They pander to the yearning of the petit bourgeoisie for the religion they have become too well educated to accept, but too poorly educated to have lost the desire for. They take the history of philosophy full circle back to the same speculative natural philosophy with which Western philosophy began in the works of Thales, Anaximander and Anaximines.

Gaarder's novel (which has sold over 800,000 copies in Europe alone) is not a popular science book—but it tries a similar trick with philosophy. It can be seen as a response to such science writing, an attempt to replace the arbitrary speculative use of science with a more systematic form of speculation.

Pornography

In a key passage the main characters are in a bookshop:

"The books had intriguing titles such as Life after Death?, The Secrets of Spiritism, Tarot, The UFO Phenomenon, Healing, The Return of the Gods, You Have Been Here Before and What is Astrology? . . . Much of it is humbug. But it sells as well as pornography. A lot of it is a kind of pornography. Young people come here and purchase the ideas that fascinate them most. But the difference between real philosophy and these books is more or less the same as the difference between real love and pornography." (p357)

The author wants his religious speculation built on the solid rock of logical analysis rather than the sand of misinterpreted or partially reported empirical fact.

He argues this through a novel with the form of a morality tale for young people—in a style somewhere between Enid Blyton and Joanna Trollope. It has much of the condescending sincerity which has thankfully gone out of fashion recently in fiction for youth.

The "story" is about a 14 year-old girl who starts to get anonymous letters. An unknown man draws her into studying a course in the history of philosophy and she becomes a better person.

It uses the tired device of the supposedly immeasurable depths and potential of adolescent female sexuality. Think of Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan, The Exorcist . . .

The real plot is the history of philosophy. You end up skimming over the embarrassing story to get back to it—and it must be said that as a first introduction to philosophy it is quite good. It has that same didactic quality which marks the popular science books.

Promotion

Its basic structure has been endlessly repeated since the modern university developed in the 18th century and philosophers first started publishing their lecture notes as books to get promotion. We start with the pre-Socratics, explain the difference between Plato and Aristotle, glide quickly over the other schools of Greek philosophy and the whole of medieval theology, skip to the 17th century, go in detail through the major rationalists and empiricists of the 17th and 18th century, skip over to Germany for Kant and Hegel and then skip again to the late 19th and early 20th century.

Generally, Gaarder is about as accurate as you can get when trying to summarise a major philosopher in 700 words. This is the book's strongest feature. The most obvious weakness is the lack of any explanation of the pattern of the history of philosophy. Philosophy appears instead as a series of bizarre theories developed at the whim of individuals throughout history.

Plotinus, an important but often ignored neo-Platonist, is mentioned. Renaissance humanism, also often ignored, gets a similarly welcome short text. Usefully, the Enlightenment is well dealt with, showing its relationship to the basic issues of 17th and 18th century philosophy.

Strangely, the normal sequence of Locke, Berkeley, Hume is changed to Locke, Hume, Berkeley with the effect of protecting Berkeley from Hume's devastating criticisms. Schelling gets briefly explained, which is another welcome addition to the normal short history of philosophy.

The passages on Marx could be far worse, even if his theory of revolution and the state is merely mentioned in one sentence. Also, he turns out to be the only thinker in the book the author feels the need to assure us has since been proven wrong (supposedly in relation to his theory of crisis, which is inaccurately described).

Strangest of all, the last 150 years of philosophy is then skipped. Instead we get a broader cultural portrait centred on Darwin and Freud. But the author does include one modern philosopher—the normally much maligned Sartre. This is an unusual choice. But he spoils it by dealing only with Sartre's early thought and leaving out his engagement with politics and Marxism.

Overall it is a book which tries to tell the reader that philosophy is humanity's sense of wonder at reality, a sort of secular version of prayer and contemplation. It is not the answers you come up with that count, it's the sensation of profundity you get from thinking about them.

The fact that it is written for adolescents should not tempt us to dilute our standards in assessing the book—quite the contrary.

Philosophy has always been a chameleon. It can reflect the best in society and the most progressive trends in politics and culture. It can also bolster reaction and justify superstition and illusion. For that reason it stands one step above the blind faith on which religions are built. But only one step.

Where the reactionary character of religions is immanent in them and virtually universal, falsehood and illusion have had a constant battle in the history of philosophy to sustain themselves. Philosophy's dependence on reason alone constantly undermines religious faith, even though the avowed purpose of most major philosophical figures has been to provide solid foundations for religious outlooks. This book stands fully in that ambiguous tradition.

Progressive

The author succeeds, along the way, in reviewing some of the progressive trends in the history of ideas—Democritus' materialism, Aristotle's metaphysics, the Cynics' critique of religion, Spinoza's subversive monism, Hume's rigorous empiricism. In their own ways each of these still has lessons to teach us about spiking arguments for religious faith, for ideological illusion and political conformism.

The way this book constructs its history of philosophy, you never ask "Why?"—the basic question of historical analysis. It remains a mere listing of what Hegel once called "the gallery of the heroes of reason's thinking" who raised abstract questions about change,

stasis, the nature of existence, morality, logic and language.

What a young person coming to philosophy needs to grasp is the integral relationship between philosophy, science, religion and the changes in social structure which make up the wider pattern of history. Then it becomes possible to see how speculative "philosophical" thinking initially facilitated the development of science, the expansion of the forces of production, political development and how philosophy then became reactionary and superfluous.

Greek philosophy at first helped develop organised medical, biological, physical and political sciences—against resistance from religious superstition. The revival of Aristotle by Aquinas was needed to begin delineating church and state in the expansion of European feudalism. Descartes protected post-Copernican science from reaction during the counter-reformation. Locke provided an ideological framework for the transition to capitalism based on Newtonian physics, empirical psychology and social-contract democratic theory.

Overcome

By the time of Hegel the religious obstacles to the natural sciences had been overcome because natural science had proven its worth in the economy. As science has matured the scope for philosophical speculation has contracted and the potentially progressive social role for speculative thinking has been eroded. So, for all Hegel's erudition and integrity, his philosophy amounted in the end to a mere defence of idealism, of faith in a non-material realm—and in the Prussian state.

Plato's relationship to the anti-democratic aristocracy and elitist sects of Athens revealed a trend in philosophy which has sought to defend religious faiths and established social order. It has intensified since Plato, but especially over the last 150 years which this author has mostly chosen to ignore. Philosophy has become concerned with the preoccupations of the vast layers of the educated, but shipwrecked, petit bourgeoisie thrown up by capitalism—with the isolation of the individual, with the supposed absence of values and with the mysterious appearance, for the individual, of human communication.

As against such a real history of philosophy, the book holds that there really is what Bertrand Russell called a "No Man's Land" of philosophy—a set of fundamental questions which stand above politics, science, society and history.

Only a version of history which is intellectually corrupt can support this view. If astronomy were taught like this, students would spend a lot of time learning Ptolemaic theory. They don't, because everyone knows it's wrong. Yet philosophy students and academic philosophers spend a lot of their time on philosophers whose arguments, everyone now accepts, have failed. It doesn't bother them that they were wrong. This book draws adolescents into that web.

This supposedly fixed realm of philosophy is an ever-declining field. Only the continuing limitations of the sciences of linguistics and psychology and the kidnapping of logic by philosophers leave it any space at all. Once its surviving concerns with human understanding and language are scientifically answered, philosophy will collapse into theology definitively and it will die as it lived—hand in hand with religion.

Speculation

Nevertheless, the death of philosophy has still not been reached. The material and social motivation for philosophical speculation remains—witness this book's popularity.

The position of Marxism in relation to philosophy has been much debated. It rejects the proposal that God exists, but not because it has a logical proof that God cannot exist, nor even that the existence of God is an unreasonable proposal. It rejects it because the proposition has no necessary place in human science and is used for reactionary purposes.

Marxism takes the same view of most philosophical proposals. It judges them on their political role in society. This is not to reject a theory because it is politically undesirable. Marxism rejects philosophical theories when they are both speculative and reactionary. Because they are speculative such theories will invariably be accepted or rejected precisely because of their social and political implications. They are not capable of inclusion in scientific theory. It is, therefore, quite legitimate to reject them on the same basis as they are accepted—on the basis of their social implications.

Reactionary

At the same time Marxism accepts that people still sometimes understand themselves and their lives through philosophical-style reflection which can have a progressive content. But, it recognises that the promotion of such speculative modes of thought can only have, on balance, reactionary consequences.

We are meant to see Sophie's philosophical education as a beautiful process of growth. But if we once see the conventional history of philosophy as a distorting construction for generating intellectual confusion and recreating religious modes of thought wherever they are naturally falling away, the book is transformed, against the author's intent, into an almost Sadeian narrative of intensifying intellectual perversion. It all depends on what you think philosophy is.

To Marxists a book like this appears, all too clearly, to be a tale of a young woman's decline into obfuscation and mendacity.■

Bolshevik writings

Mark Harrison reviews *In Defence of the Russian Revolution: A Selection of Bolshevik Writings, 1917-1923,* edited by Al Richardson
Porcupine Press
1995
£12.99

Porcupine Press, the publishing company associated with Revolutionary History and Socialist Platform, have performed a valuable service to the left in bringing together this selection of articles and documents. The works of the leaders of the Russian revolution, published in the heat of that revolution itself, shed light on debates that remain profoundly relevant today.

The exact nature of the transition from capitalism to socialism, the form and function of working class democracy in a workers' state, the nature of a workers' state machine, as well as the strategy for spreading a revolution internationally—these all remain key concerns for those working for a root and branch eradication of capitalism.

This selection of writings has, for the most part, been unavailable in English before now.

This collection remedies that and allows for a scientific evaluation of controversial questions posed by the world's first successful workers' revolution.

The writings are always illuminating but sometimes tarnish, rather than enhance the reputation of their authors. Great revolutionaries can both make history and mistakes. And that goes for Trotsky on the militarisation of the trade unions in 1919, as much as for Radek's leadership cult writings on Lenin.

Buy the book. But, a word of warning—discard the pretentious introduction from the editor. Al Richardson's introduction combines cap-doffing praise to the journal *Critique* with a denunciation of the entire Trotskyist left for being caught by surprise by the collapse of the Stalinism and for being disoriented by this collapse ever since.

Readers of this journal will know that, far from being "caught napping" by Stalinism's collapse and muddled ever since it happened, we coherently explained both the dynamics of the restoration process and the tasks of the working class in some detail.

Never mind. Skip the introduction. The book itself is well worth reading.■

Revolution derailed

Lesley Day reviews *The Revolution Deferred; the painful birth of post-apartheid South Africa* by Martin Murray Verso 1994 £11.95

Martin Murray has performed a useful service with this overview of the events leading to the accession of the Government of National Unity in South Africa. *The Revolution Deferred* examines, in turn, different elements in the political settlement. Well researched and annotated, it will undoubtedly stand for some time as a key work of reference.

Murray brings together summaries of the pressures on the contending forces as well as descriptions of the debates that raged in the left and the workers' movement—not only on the political role of the trade unions but also the debate on the role and the future of the "civics" as the township action committees are commonly known.

He also provides a detailed account of the various elements which gave rise to the idea of the mysterious "third force", and follows this with a graphic description of the violence in the last few months before the election. He reveals the factors that finally allowed Buthelezi into the settlement process.

In his central aim, Murray is less successful. He sets out to examine the "riddle of continuity and change" in the process of apartheid's end, of how a diluted version of bourgeois democracy was conceded, while economic power remained in the hands of the "white oligarchy"—and of how the revolution was thus "deferred". Yet the reader is left without a satisfactory explanation.

The reasons lie in Murray's theoretical premise, derived from 1970s French "structuralist Marxism". He insists on treating politics as an "autonomous sphere of action". In his anxiety to avoid "reductionism", Murray fails to give us a clear understanding of the political forces at work. While he recognises that "class issues" remain at the end of the settlement period, he is unable to show how class forces manifest themselves in political organisations and their programmes. In particular, he is hazy about the class nature of the African National Congress (ANC) itself.

While the sections on the Great Economic Debate during 1990-93 chart the shifts in ANC policy, we are left wondering exactly why the ANC was:

"Unable to project an all-embracing programme for socio-economic restructuring independent of the existing world wide capitalist consensus".

Later, Murray outlines the ANC's "amorphous ideology" and its function as a "clearing house for different points of view", united around the central task of removing apartheid. The ANC's ability to be all things to all people is seen as both a strength and a weakness.

But what were the roots of this apparent amorphousness? The ANC grew as a petit-bourgeois nationalist movement, one whose programme was limited to the tasks of achieving key democratic demands. The whole experience of such movements shows that they end up representing the interests of the dominant class, the capitalist class. Petit-bourgeois forces cannot chart an independent class path.

Programme

The programme of such movements, while it may contain proposals for social and economic reform, will always stop short of an assault on capitalism itself. The "amorphous ideology" that Murray refers to, reflects the different pressures on the ANC and the need for the leadership to build support amongst the masses.

The ANC's Freedom Charter perfectly illustrated this. The ANC was unable to fight for an anti-capitalist programme because its whole nature and leadership militated against any such development.

At times, this was disguised. The importance of the South African working class, its social weight, its level of organisation and politicisation produced particular left pressures on the ANC, especially during the revolutionary period of the 1980s.

This pressure constantly threatened to break free from the constraints of petit-bourgeois nationalism. This was where the South African Communist Party (SACP) played such a vital role in preserving the cross-class alliance. In the second half of the 1980s, it was able to put itself at the head of the working class movement. Its two stage programme insisted that the first task facing the working class was the achievement of the national democratic revolution. On this basis the SACP was able to draw the militant leadership of the working class into a bloc with the ANC's petit bourgeois forces—an alliance in which the working class ceded leadership and lost the opportunity to take control of its own destiny.

Murray describes the events and debates in this process, such as the debates between workerists and populists, but his lack of overall analysis leaves the reader rudderless. In the same way that he fails to come clean on the class forces represented by the ANC, so he is vague about the political nature of the SACP. For instance, he takes as good coin the SACP's presentation of the Freedom Charter as being a programme for extensive nationalisation and the first step on the two-stage road to socialism.

He argues, "it must seem bitterly ironic . . . that these social democratic objectives still appeared as elusive as ever", and he cannot give us a satisfactory explanation of why the SACP leaders, "acquiesced in the abandonment of what had long been seen as inviolable principles".

It is difficult to make sense of these developments without a proper understanding of the nature of the SACP. The insistence of the SACP on the "stages" theory is rooted in a specific programme, that of Stalinism, which set out to limit national liberation movements in advance, and on an international scale. This was a crucial aspect of Stalinism's accommodation to bourgeois forces throughout the world.

Stalinism's limited programme was a suitable vehicle for petit-bourgois leaders who needed mass support. For decades, the SACP promoted the Freedom Charter and in the aftermath of the revolutionary upsurge of 1984-86, it embarked on a campaign to win the militant unions to supporting the Charter.

Presented as a campaign to win the unions to support the political struggle against apartheid, it was actually a campaign to undermine policies and leaderships which had begun to argue for the working class movement to fight for socialist goals.

Crisis

As Stalinism went into an ever deeper crisis, and shifted rightwards around the globe, so the SACP, too, moved further to the right. Once the ANC and SACP had been legalised, and negotiations were underway, the Freedom Charter was gradually abandoned, itself now too radical.

The consequence of this weakness in political analysis is that Murray ends up pulling punches in his criticisms of the ANC and SACP leadership. For instance, the sectarian attacks on the left within the trade unions are seen as simply a hangover from a Stalinist past rather than an essential weapon in the struggle by the SACP to hegemonise and subordinate the most militant sec-



MANDELA AND DE KLERK CELEBRATE THE SELL OUT

tions of the working class.

The real lesson from this period is precisely the one Murray misses—the centrality of the question of leadership within the working class. The South African working class had the power and social weight to put itself at the head of the revolutionary movement and to link the questions of democracy and economic power together in a socialist programme for the overthrow of capitalism as well as apartheid. But it needed an alternative leadership to that of the SACP/ANC. The revolution was not simply deferred, it was betrayed.

The end of white minority rule, the euphoria surrounding the ANC's massive victory in 1994, all helped to disguise the extent of this betrayal. The ANC, and the ANC-led government, have become the main vehicle for the restructuring and maintenance of bourgeois rule. It is clear that not only has white-owned monopoly capital held on to its power, but that a section of the new black elite is joining it. New faces have appeared on company executives while others get on board the "gravy train" of central and local government.

Furthermore, Mandela's Government of National Unity, while still under pressure to deliver reforms, has shown itself as assiduous as any other bourgeois government in its defence of capitalist property and its determination to act on behalf of the employers.

From attacks on squatters to the strengthening of anti-union laws, the Government of National Unity will act in defence of the capitalist state.

While Murray concludes by advocating a strong central state to deliver necessary reforms, socialists ought to oppose the further strengthening of the power of the regime. The task instead is to ensure that the working class not only places demands on the ANC government but mobilises independently to fight for its own interests. An alternative revolutionary leadership is a prerequisite for future success.■

Decline and despair?

G.R.McColl reviews *Trade Unions in Britain today* by John McIlroy, MUP, 1995 £10.99

Trade union organisation in Britain has suffered a serious decline in size and strength since 1979. This was no "blip" in union fortunes caused by the normal ups and downs of the economic cycle. Two periods of economic recovery failed to reverse the downward trend. What caused this decline? How can it be arrested? These are vital questions to which every trade unionist needs answers.

In a considerably expanded and revised edition of a book originally published in 1988, left-wing academic John McIlroy charts the fall in union density within the workforce as a whole 49.7% in 1979 to 30% in 1992. He examines some of the explanations of what has happened to one of the world's oldest trade union movements in the wake of the Thatcherite assault on it in the 1980s.

Though McIlroy's book is generally accessible and contains useful information, those seeking an understanding of the current crisis of the unions, and a way forward, will be disappointed.

While McIlroy refers to the crucial importance of "the activity of working people, their struggle to control capital and the market and create a new collective solidarity", such fine phrases fail to mask his despair at the workers' capacity to bring about a socialist transformation. His concluding chapter, "The state of the unions", is especially infected with this despair.

This leads him to write speculatively of, "an alternative constructive scenario [after the next General Election which] would see a successful period of party-union co-operation" between a Labour government and the TUC.

This perspective seems all the more desperate, if not absurd, given that the chapter was written *after* Tony Blair's accession to the Labour leadership. Blair himself is less optimistic about such co-operation, commenting recently:

"There are times when the interests of a Labour Government and the unions diverge. We are not going to be pushed around."

This is hardly the language of co-operation. But it is a more accurate picture of Blair's likely relationship with the unions than the one projected by McIlroy.

McIlroy's despair cannot be dismissed as the naive musings of an academic, demoralised by the defeats inflicted on the unions by the Tories and bosses. The author is a long-standing contributor to the pages of *Socialist Organiser*, the former paper of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. To that extent, at least, he is a participant in the labour movement, not just an observer of it—and a self-proclaimed left winger at that.

Illuminating

Despite this major flaw the book has some good points. It contains an illuminating analysis and history of the Tories' anti-union laws and their ideological genesis in the writings of the reactionary bourgeois economist, F. A. Hayek. McIlroy documents the arsenal of legislation the Tories have put in place, as well as the ever more impotent response of the TUC leadership to the erosion of the legal standing of their organisations.

That such "legislation has made an undoubted contribution to weakening the unions" is not the stuff of controversy. What is controversial, is the impact the legislation had on the relationship between union leaders and members. The debate in the trade union movement is about whether this has been a positive or negative impact. Most of the bureaucrats, and all of the Labour leadership, think it has been positive—which is why they are not in favour of repealing the bulk of the laws.

Despite the general weakening of the social and political role of the upper echelons of trade union officialdom, the anti-union laws have given the union bureaucrats a powerful weapon for suppressing the influence of more militant elements among the rank and file.

Sequestration

Officials, with a stake in preserving their inflated salaries and privileged lifestyles, will time and again urge restraint on their members by raising the threat of sequestration of union assets. Likewise, they will use the laws on balloting for action to dampen down spontaneous militancy. Ballots that say "yes" to action very often mean that no action takes place. The bureaucrats merely use such results as bargaining weapons in negotiations.

In the dispute triggered by the Tories' abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989, Ron Todd, the supposedly left-wing General Secretary of the TGWU, isolated militants pushing for a strike by using the laws as an excuse not to act.

He made it plain to dockers—facing the loss of thousands of jobs and the death of union organisation in some ports—that the union would not defy the law for fear of losing control of its substantial coffers.

Bill Morris, Todd's successor as head of the TGWU, has recently deployed similar arguments against sacked bus workers in Essex, who wanted to escalate their battle with a ruthless private sector boss with bus routes scattered around Britain.

It has been left to the rank and file members, most recently the postal workers' union in Edinburgh, Liverpool and London, to show how to deal with these laws. They have defied the laws and their own union officials, in order to defend their fellow workers and their

basic terms and conditions.

McIlroy is unwilling to contemplate the need to build on such examples and organise the successful defiance of the anti-unions laws.

Above all this means organising unofficial action where necessary. Instead, his book absolves the union bureaucrats of responsibility for the success of the Tories' new legal framework.

Furthermore, the author has no Marxist understanding of the trade union bureaucracy itself. He prefers an analysis derived from the early 20th century radical German sociologist, Robert Michels.

Classic

The author does not engage in any discussion of the classic Marxist tradition on the question, wilfully ignoring a crucial link between the development of Britain's labour movement and the country's role as a major imperialist power with the capacity to create its own "labour lieutenants of capital".

In the absence of any coherent theory of the union bureaucracy, McIlroy's failure to call for an organisational challenge to its stifling control over the unions in the form of a rank and file movement becomes explicable, if not excusable.

His position is bound up with his accommodation to the ideology of Labourism which still dominates virtually all strands of trade union thinking in Britain today.

That thinking portrays the decline of the unions as a product of their own mistakes. They launched too many strikes. They acted too big for their boots. They must now build a partnership with the bosses and not engage in conflict with them. New unionism must moderate itself in the way that New Labour has.

Challenge

McIlroy does not challenge the thinking behind such conclusions. He does not recognise the real history of the 1980s (for a revolutionary analysis of that history, see "Fighting the enemy within", Permanent Revolution No.10). The decline in the unions was a direct consequence of the defeats inflicted on them by the Tories and the bosses.

The union leaders who sabotaged or sold short heroic struggles by their members in steel mills, print shops, docks, hospitals and mines were guilty of contributing to the decline of the unions.

Not because they were too powerful or too militant, but because they were too cowardly, too moderate and too treacherous.

Learning from that experience is the key to renewal. Placing one's hopes in Blair is a recipe for further decline.■

Mandel's alternative to Trotsky

Richard Brenner reviews *Trotsky as Alternative* by Ernest Mandel Verso, 1995. £12.99

With the events of 1989-91 in Eastern Europe and the USSR still fresh in our minds, a good account of Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism should be welcomed. Unfortunately this book is not it.

Anyone seeking a guide to Trotsky's life, or a comprehensive appraisal of his principal theoretical contributions to Marxism, will have to look elsewhere. Instead, in a loose series of essays, Mandel aims to make Trotsky's politics palatable to the layers of disillusioned Eastern European Stalinists, at present scrambling to distance themselves from Stalinism and fuse with social democratic reformism.

In the section entitled "Trotsky's Alternative Economic Strategy" Mandel transforms Trotsky into a figure attractive to just this market. For example, he approvingly cites the Soviet writer Leonid Radzikhovsky who has:

"admitted that Trotsky, in his fight against the NEP men and the kulaks on the one hand, and the bureaucracy on the other, had developed a programme for the reorganisation of the Soviet Union based on the twin pillars of democratic self-management and the market".

This travesty of Trotsky's position can only be corroborated by sleight of hand. Trotsky's fellow oppositionist, Preobrazhensky, is quoted as speaking, in January 1924, for greater planning. Preobrazhensky even warns of the dangers to follow if the turn to planning were inadequate.

Despite this, Mandel feels obliged to reassure his readers– entirely without justification – that this stress on planning "was a general historical tendency and did not imply any particular conclusions about day-to-day economic policies."

With centralised state planning thus disposed of, Mandel is free to imply that Trotsky's opposition to Stalin's adventurist attempt to totally suppress the operation of the market was in some way an early form of market socialism. This is a view that sees the market as a "pillar" of the economy of the workers' state rather than a temporary necessity in the first years of transition to socialism.

Similarly, democratic workers' control of the plan, exercised through the soviets and factory committees, is dressed up as "self-management". By this Mandel hopes to make it look similar to the utopian plans of certain social-democratic groupings in Eastern Europe for independent worker-run enterprises competing in the market.

Pandering to his selected audience, Mandel blurs rather than clarifies the distinction between what are, in fact, *opposed* proletarian and petit-bourgeois strategies.

Trotsky's fight against the dictatorship of the Stalinist bureaucracy gets similar treatment. Mandel only cites Trotsky's early position on this question, suggesting that for Trotsky political revolution "would not require armed insurrection".

It is true that when Trotsky first abandoned the possibility of reforming the USSR peacefully after 1933, he made an assessment of how the political revolution would be likely to develop under the concrete circumstances of the day. He believed that the bureaucracy would be deeply split if and when the masses of the Soviet workers rallied to a new party set on the seizure of power.

He judged that a section of the bureaucracy and the party would rally to the side of the working class. For this reason, he thought it would be possible to suppress the resistance of the Stalinist apparatus, by applying "not the measures of a civil war but rather the measures of a police character."

But in 1936-38 Stalin's mass purges wiped out nearly all the 'Old Bolsheviks' who had gone along with Stalin in the 1920s and during the Five Year Plans.

Millions perished in these convulsions. The dictatorship of the party bureaucracy was replaced by one of the



TROTSKY

secret police headed by Stalin and a tiny clique. Trotsky was obliged to alter his position. Writing in May 1939, he concluded:

"To believe that this state is capable of peacefully "withering away" is to live in a world of theoretical delirium. The Bonapartist caste must be smashed, the Soviet state must be regenerated."

Today, after direct experience of anti-Stalinist revolutionary upheavals, from Hungary 1956 to Tiananmen Square in 1989, this conclusion does not need to be revised in the direction of Trotsky's earlier position. Quite the opposite.

But Mandel prefers Trotsky's earlier assessment, resolutely ignoring both his later position and indeed the lessons of subsequent history.

All this is designed not to frighten his reformist target audience with talk of armed insurrection.

Having painted Trotsky as a social marketeer and "velvet" revolutionary, Mandel turns his attention to the Third World.

No rounded explanation is given of the development or essence of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution—the key to understanding how to resolve remaining bourgeois-democratic and national tasks today in the semi-colonial world.

A truly dreadful section on China criticises the Chinese Trotskyists for not realising that Mao was establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat in 1949. In fact, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) went out of its way for three years to pursue its popular front policy and preserve the alliance with private capital until it was forced to expropriate it as a defensive measure against the US blockade and military offensive in Korea.

Mandel, who always held the positon that under Mao's leadership the CCP had "broken from Stalinism", proceeds to analyse the Cultural Revolution. Predictably, he sees it not as the inter-bureaucratic Stalinist faction fight that it was, but as Mao's struggle against bureaucratic degeneration!

There is much more that is bad about this book. In an entire chapter on Trotsky's struggle against fascism, Mandel fails completely to explain the core of Trotsky's position.

For Trotsky, though Mandel dare not say it, the only guarantee of defeating the fascist threat lay in the workers fighting for power themselves. Thus in Germany the tactic of the united front was to be used not merely to secure united *defence* of the labour movement against fascism but also *offensively*, in order to strengthen the Communists at the expense of reformist Social Democracy and prepare to solve the question of power in Germany.

Even more glaringly, Mandel does not mention *once* Trotsky's persistent and impassioned campaign for a workers' militia against fascism in those countries where the workers lacked armed organisation.

This stress on organised military self-defence — a key theme of the French Trotskyists' agitation in 1933-4 and a call written into the Transitional Programme—is something so central to Trotsky's political struggle against fascism that Mandel cannot openly disavow it. But it is so embarrassing, given his present adaptation to social-democracy and Stalinism, that he simply opts not to mention it.

On the issue of the relationship of the vanguard party to the working class, we have the usual centrist syndrome of refusing to endorse Lenin's *What is to be Done?*, together with a suggestion that, as a work, it was of only conjunctural significance. As a result Mandel blithely refuses to be bound by Leninist or Trotskyist orthodoxy on this point.

He treats us to a "summary" of Trotsky's final conclusions after 1937 concerning "the relationship between class, mass trade unions, councils and workers' parties".

This contains not a word about Trotsky's acceptance of Lenin's position on the relationship between spontaneity and consciousness.

It says nothing about the spontaneous tendency for the ideology of trade unions to be reformist. It says nothing on the experience and lessons of entrism or the concrete application of the tactic of the united front; nothing on the hostile relationship between the Trotskyists and the centrist London Bureau in the 1930s, indeed *nothing at all on Trotsky's uncompromising struggle against centrism.*

Unsurprisingly, given what we have already noted about the aim of this book, there is no mention of democratic centralism, party discipline and organisation.

Trotskyism is thus gutted of everything and anything that might give offence to post-Stalinist social democrats.

Indeed, with what can only be described as breathtaking cynicism Mandel attributes to Trotsky the post-war revisionist concept developed by Michel Pablo and Mandel himself that mass social-democratic and Stalinist parties are "potential instruments of emancipation" for the working class.

An honest account of what Trotsky stood for and why, together with a critical assessment of how his ideas can be applied in the struggle today, remains to be written.

In that way the lessons of Trotsky's struggle can be brought to a new generation of revolutionaries. But, as this shoddy book makes clear, to do so requires an author with a revolutionary perspective, something Ernest Mandel lost many decades ago.■

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Bolivia

A general strike in Bolivia has been met with vicious repression from the government of President Sanchez de Lozada. Union leaders have been jailed and a state of siege declared.

On 14 March over 70,000 state employed schoolteachers went on strike throughout Bolivia. They were fighting against a government offensive which simultaneously attacks wages, state funding of education, nationalised industries and union rights.

The government's pay offer to the teachers this year was derisory. It was accompanied by a proposal to abolish compulsory trade union membership and to offload responsibility for schools onto local government. The teachers' union condemned this as putting "education at the service of neo-liberalism".

A week later the teachers marched on the capital La Paz. They were confronted by the army who stopped them entering the city. Over 80 were arrested and many injured. The government followed this up by banning mass meetings and further marches.

In response, the COB (the trade union federation) broke off wage negotiations with the government. The President proposed a minimum wage of less than $50 a month, but it is generally accepted that around $400 a month is needed for basic subsistence.

The peasants' union (CSUTCB) also prepared to march on La Paz against the government's USA-inspired coca eradication programme which would impoverish thousands of peasants. On 23 March the state's privatisation plans for the electric power company (Ende) and telecommunications (Entel) were announced, threatening thousands more job losses.

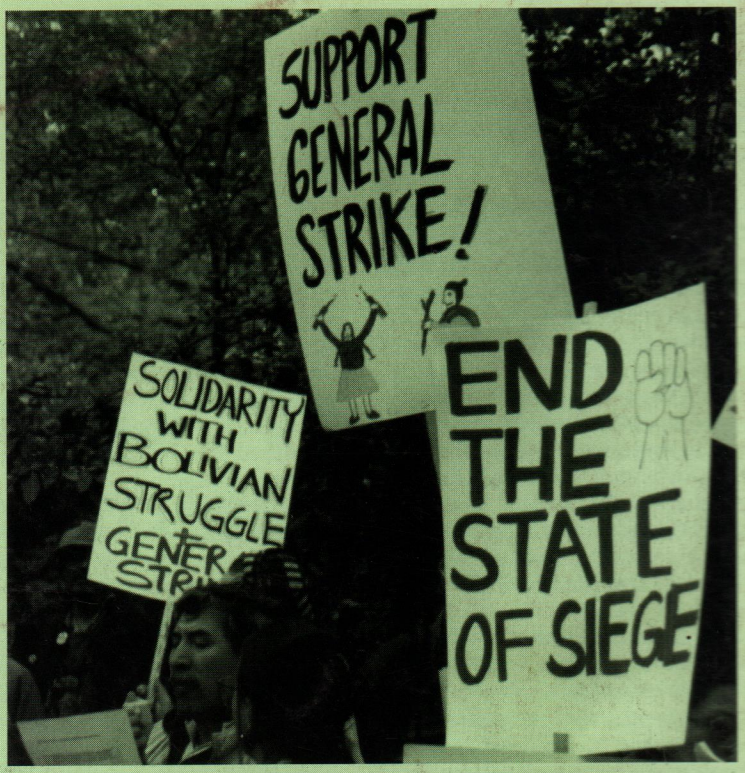
The COB declared a general strike for 27 March in solidarity with the teachers and to unify the various protests.

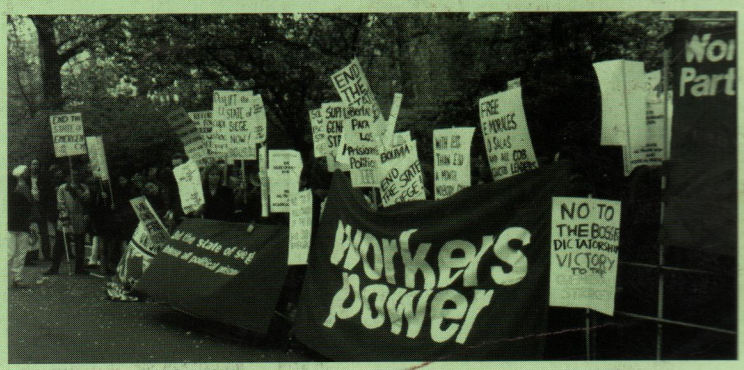
Over the following three weeks a mass strike wave gathered pace as different sectors joined, although it remained weak in the factories and the increasingly important oil sector. During these weeks a new dimension to the struggle appeared—a fight by the provincial departments and cities for increased budgets and against privatisation of basic services. A 15,000 strong assembly in Tarija (on the southern border with Argentina) refused to recognise the authority of the national government. On 7 April a civic strike shook La Paz itself as shops and businesses joined the protests of the labour movement.

Faced with this the government declared a state of siege on 19 April. Meetings of more than three people were banned, a curfew was imposed, and travel permits were required for journeys between cities. Around a thousand activists and trade union leaders were arrested, including nearly the whole leadership of the COB, meeting at that time to decide its next steps.

Over three hundred and fifty of those arrested were sent to detention camps. The government's ploy worked. Ten days later the majority of the COB leadership capitulated and was released in return for signing an agreement to call off the strikes. This betrayal caused great confusion. Only the teachers refused initially to back down and carried on their strike. They demanded the payment of lost wages and the release of four of their leaders, jailed even before the state of siege and still threatened with long sentences.

By the end of the first week in May, even the teachers were forced back to work by the betrayal of the COB leaders and the resulting lack of solidarity. Meanwhile, their leaders remained in prison while all other detainees were released.■





Within hours of the news of the state of emergency reaching Europe, the LRCI initiated a call for solidarity action. On 20 April the LRCI launched, with others, the Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee (BUSC) in London. It organised a successful demonstration on 26 April of 150 trade unionists, Latin American refugees and British leftists outside the Bolivian Embassy. A petition with hundreds of signatures, gathered in a few days, was handed in protesting against the state of siege and demanding the release of the prisoners and the lifting of the repressive measures. Amnesty International added its voice of protest on 4 May, alarmed by the treatment of prisoners in detention.

On various 1 May demonstrations the BUSC spoke at rallies in London and organised a rally for 18 May with Tony Benn MP. Trade unions and Labour leaders added their support and contacted the embassy or sent messages of protest to the government in La Paz—UNISON, the Welsh TUC, CWU, NUM, GMB, CPSA and NATFHE among them.

In Paris, Stockholm, Auckland and Berlin the LRCI initiated similar appeals for solidarity on May Day demonstrations.

Despite the end of the strikes and the capitulation of the trade union officials, the state of siege is scheduled to remain in force until mid-July. On 10 May two teachers' union leaders started a hunger strike to secure the release of detained leaders Vilma Plata, Gonzalo Sorucco and José Luis Alvarez. Immediately, over 50 armed police raided the human rights office and confiscated documents.

The BUSC and the LRCI remains committed to campaigning for the unconditional release of the teachers' leaders and the end of the state of siege. We urge all our readers to add their voice to that protest.

- Send donations and affiliations to: Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee, c/o BCM 7750 London WC1N 3XX.
- Send letters of protest to: Presidencia de la Republica, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Murillo, La Paz, Bolivia.