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Isaac Deutscher

MARX, ENGELS AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

LENIN, TROTSKY AND THE PARTY

Norman Geras

Tim Jenkins

The New Philosophers

HISTORIC COMPROMISE IN THE NUS

Redmond O'Neill

review

THE BREAK-UP OF BRITAIN

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Roman Rosdolsky

The Workers and the Fatherland

INTERNATIONAL VOL. 4, NO. 2 Winter 1977

SUBSCRIPTIONS: See next page for details.

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Letter to our Readers

With this issue of **International** we have completed a year of publication under our new regular schedule. Given the erratic nature of our publication in the past, this represents a small but important step forward. Nonetheless it would be false to present a complacent or over-optimistic balance-sheet of what we have been able to achieve in this year.

It is clear that a number of articles have intervened directly in the debate which takes place on the British left (Blackburn/Roberts, Poulantzas/Weber, to give but two examples). We still have a long way to go, however, in terms of giving our journal an all-sided character. For we are not simply a magazine which debates or publishes interesting ideas. We have more ambitious tasks, namely to help develop a cadre which can contribute to the construction of the Fourth International. Thus the material which we publish cannot be restricted to history. We have to analyse the present, in Britain and elsewhere, if the journal is to take a big leap forward.

The development of 'Eurocommunism' has both made our task easier and at the same time given us added responsibilities. It has taken many of our analyses of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and projected them in a mass way. This means that we should no longer be restricted to defending orthodoxy, but need to concentrate also on developing our existing ideas on this particular question. The publication of Rudolf Bahro's new work **The Alternative** should be an added impetus on that front.

Secondly, it has now become clear that the universality of Lenin's central theses on revolution have been abandoned by the Communist Parties in the West. The only organisation which defends Leninism on an international basis is the Fourth International. But once again, we cannot be content with restating Lenin's ideas. We have to develop and concretise them in relation to Western Europe **today**. To 'Eurocommunism' we have to counterpose 'Euroleninism'. This means important discussions on strategy, the nature of the revolutionary party, the relationship between industrial and white-collar workers, etc.

It is on these tasks that we will be concentrating in the coming year. We are also discussing possible changes in the format of **International** to improve its quality and accessibility — the present reduction in number of pages (and therefore price) is one experiment in that direction. We would welcome readers' comments on these and other questions. Meanwhile the next issue of **International** will be devoted almost entirely to an assessment of May '68 ten years on.

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In **Socialist Register 1977** one of its editors, Ralph Miliband, repeats an allegation which Norman Geras correctly disputes in this issue of **International**. Miliband parodies the far left in Britain, which is depicted as monolithic and incapable of correcting its errors. He deliberately equates the Socialist Workers Party and the IMG, whereas he knows perfectly well the differences which exist on a technical and strategic level between the two organisations.

What is particularly galling is that he claims that the far left does not take electoral politics seriously. This was certainly true some years ago. Over the last two years, however, the IMG has corrected this error. Socialist Unity was launched precisely as an umbrella designed to catalyse a class-struggle opposition to Labour in the electoral arena. It has won some support from smaller revolutionary organisations and many individuals. Clearly if the SWP entered this coalition it would acquire an even broader dynamic, and that is precisely what is the aim of the operation. In any event, Socialist Unity will be standing candidates in numerous areas in the May local elections and in at least a dozen in the next General Election. All our readers in Britain interested in obtaining more information should write to: Socialist Unity, c/o Rising Free, PO Box 15, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

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One of the functions which Socialist Unity has begun to perform is in assisting moves towards regroupment of the far left in Britain. Regroupment of a slightly different kind has also been taking place on an international level, with fusions in a whole series of countries between groups claiming allegiance to Trotskyism and the Fourth International.

The divisions in the Fourth International arose after a decisive turn had been made in 1969 to link up with the new rise of the world revolution. For eight years the world movement was divided between two currents, which eventually became the International Majority Tendency and the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. This division was reflected in splits in F.I. groups in a number of countries, together with the emergence of new groups coming towards Trotskyism which declared for one side or the other.

Predictions were rife on the far left that these divisions could only lead to a split in the International itself. But far from making such an outcome inevitable, the right to form tendencies and factions actually served to guarantee the integrity of the Fourth International. A basis was laid for superseding political differences so that now the IMT and LTF have dissolved as convergences have developed on many important questions such as women's liberation, Eurocommunism, and perspectives in Spain and Portugal. Furthermore, these convergences have been accompanied by fusions between F.I. groups in Spain, Canada, Quebec, Mexico, Greece, Australia, and Colombia, with several others also in prospect.

This growth and consolidation of the Fourth International is symbolised by the fusion of **Intercontinental Press** and **Inprecor** to become a single, united weekly journal reflecting the views of the Fourth International. This promises to become an indispensable weapon of news and analysis, and all readers are urged to take advantage of the subscription offer to be found on page 8. In particular, the journal will feature a public discussion on the USFI theses on 'Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' (now available as a pamphlet, price 30p plus 10p p&p). Contributions have been invited from leading Marxists around the world to a discussion which should be unparalleled since the early days of the Comintern for its frank and open exchange of views.

LENIN, TROTSKY AND THE PARTY

By NORMAN GERAS

The following article is the text of an introduction given at the 'Marxist Symposium' organised by the IMG in September 1977.

To begin at the beginning. Seventy-five years ago, Lenin wrote *What is to be Done?* — that is, one year before the 1903 Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, in which the historic split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks took place. In connection with that split he wrote another work, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, and these two pamphlets embody the initial formulation of the Leninist theory of the Party and of organisation.

Now as everyone knows, two other outstanding revolutionaries of that epoch, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky, opposed Lenin and criticised his works in vigorous polemics: Rosa Luxemburg in a pamphlet called *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*, Trotsky in a book called *Our Political Tasks*. All the signs on the eve of Luxemburg's murder in 1918 were that the differences between her and Lenin, which have in any case been exaggerated, were getting smaller. In Trotsky's case, he opposed Lenin on the question of the Party for nearly a decade and a half. Then in 1917 he was won over and joined the Bolshevik Party, and until his death he defended and fought for the revolutionary substance of the Leninist theory of organisation. But in doing that, and in order to do it, he had now to oppose the 'cult' of Lenin that was part and parcel of the emergence and triumph of Stalinism.

Now in his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky the historian, speaking of Trotsky the political actor in the third person, wrote that Trotsky came to Lenin 'as to a teacher whose power and significance he understood later than many others, but perhaps more fully than they'. Now that's not, as no doubt many would immediately want to say, immodesty or arrogance on Trotsky's part. It's a sober appraisal of his own relationship to the political legacy of Lenin.

Consider. On the one hand there is the whole army of bourgeois ideologues, social democrats, libertarians and others for whom Lenin's work is equivalent to a kind of ruthless drive for power on the part of a totalitarian elite. On the other side you have Stalinists, Stalino-Maoists, and a variety of other would-be Leninists for whom Lenin is a kind of omniscient leader, almost a god, or maybe actually a god.

Trotsky's relationship was different. After 1917 he always acknowledged the lasting importance of Lenin's theory and practice of the Party for the Russian proletariat and for the international proletariat, and that has to remain central. But there are two points. First, Trotsky's own past, his own previous opposition to Lenin, meant that he had a certain perspective on some of the earlier mistakes and weaknesses of Bolshevism which no other Bolshevik leader had. And secondly there was the vigorous struggle waged by Trotsky against the cult of Lenin, realising that the usual function of gods is to reinforce some authority, and that the main function of the myth of the great leader is to put a halo of infallibility around existing so-called great leaders. Trotsky fought against that cult, and that again, as well as his own previous opposition to Lenin, gave him a certain critical distance within the overall continuity with Lenin.

Now, in order not to be misunderstood, I don't want in turn to suggest that Trotsky is now the great hero, leader, etc., who understood everything properly and never went wrong — that's obviously not on. In relation to the cult of Lenin, in particular, Trotsky made his own mistakes. But taken all in all, Trotsky's relationship to Lenin and the work of Lenin was neither one of blind hostility nor of deification. It was a relationship of critical continuity, critical respect, and therefore that imposes a special opportunity, and at the same time a special obligation, on all those belonging to the international movement which Trotsky founded, as well as others who are influenced by his work. It's an opportunity — and I stress *opportunity*, not guarantee, for nothing's guaranteed, it has to be fought for — an opportunity and an obligation to seize the real substance, the revolutionary essence of the Leninist theory of organisation, and at the same time to make a critical separation from this real substance of incidental errors, blemishes, excesses in the history of Bolshevism, and perhaps more important, the numerous one-sided caricatures and distortions which masquerade under the name of Leninism — whether these are of a bureaucratic, authoritarian, sectarian elitist, or propagandist opportunist kind. That's the central theme which I want to pursue.

I will begin by recalling briefly the general context and the

main themes of Lenin's initial formulation of the theory of the Party. Recall, then, that when Lenin wrote these words there was no revolutionary workers party in Russia, though a founding conference had taken place in March 1898 at Minsk at which there were some nine or ten delegates. (It had no effect since most of the participants were arrested immediately afterwards.) Recall that the socialist movement, such as it was, consisted of scattered groups, mainly of intellectuals beginning to make contact with the Russian working class; that there was a complete local fragmentation of these groups — no overall coordination between them — and that they had to operate in conditions of police repression, clandestinity, leaders constantly being arrested and sent to Siberia, and so forth. And recall, perhaps crucially, the important fact that *What is to be Done?* had a particular ideological target: that trend known as economism, which stressed the economic trade union struggle as against the need for political revolutionary perspectives; which stressed the day-to-day practical tasks — get on with the job, so speak — as against the need for broad revolutionary socialist propaganda and agitation; and which in order to reinforce these emphases made a kind of principle of the spontaneity of the working class — arguing, in other words, that this is what the workers in any case are doing, this is what we should support, and not get carried away with grand perspectives of revolutionary socialism, etc.

Against this trend, Lenin formulated the following well-known arguments: the importance of theory in the most famous formulations — without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement, or the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory — by which Lenin meant Marxism. Lenin referred to Engels' earlier formulations about the three sides of the class struggle — not only the political and economic sides of the class struggle, but also the theoretical. In a language that everyone can understand, Lenin in other words made the point which is now dignified with other names — the specificity of levels, relative autonomy of superstructures, and so on — that the workers movement *needs* knowledge, it *needs* science, to guide its political struggles, and this knowledge and science don't flow automatically from anything as if they were a gift of God, they have their own pre-conditions — theoretical production, study, ideological struggle, and the many-sided battle of ideas.

So any anti-intellectualism or philistinism in relation to ideas, theory, any getting-on with the job-ism and so forth, risks diverting the socialist movement by bringing it under the sway of false, bourgeois ideas. Bringing it under the sway of is not actually the right way of putting it; obviously the whole argument starts from the assumption, which goes back to Marx, that the dominant ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class. The workers movement *will* be under the sway more or less of those ideas, and thus the need for this theoretical struggle.

Second crucial theme — the distinction between trade union and socialist politics. Now this is formulated by Lenin in terms of a distinction between trade union versus socialist politics because of the economist emphasis on trade unionism; but of course, what Lenin says goes for any struggle for immediate day-to-day, partial demands, any struggle for reforms within capitalist society. Obviously trade unionism, struggle for reforms and so forth are a vital necessity, but the exclusive concentration on these doesn't represent an adequate socialist politics. It's equivalent to a self-limitation by the socialist movement within capitalism — it's equivalent to abandoning the field of battle to bourgeois ideas, because in practice it means that you accept that within the structure of capitalism an adequate amelioration of the condition of the working class can be achieved. So Lenin's essential thought here is: there is no automatic dynamic which leads from trade unionism, from immediate, everyday struggles, to revolutionary consciousness and hence to socialism. That, if you like, is the spontaneist illusion — the idea that by struggling very vigorously for higher wages, or better working conditions, this will somehow produce socialist consciousness. That's an illusion.

Now, to put the same thing perhaps a slightly different way from that which Lenin puts it, you cannot achieve what Lenin here refers to as socialist consciousness, revolutionary consciousness, from some partial, sectional perspective on society — whether this be the perspective of a group of employees in relation to a group of employers, or some other. Why? Because what that revolutionary consciousness is is a *global* understanding of *all* the class relationships, at every level of society — economic, political, cultural, but particularly at the level of the state — and that is why the indispensable precondition of revolutionary socialist consciousness is an all-round propaganda and agitation which relates to *every* manifestation of exploitation and oppression, whether it's economic, political, cultural or other. Thus Lenin's emphasis on the model of a revolutionary as not a trade union secretary but a tribune of the people — only in this way can socialist politics be carried out, and socialist consciousness be achieved.

Now that leads in a way to the very heart of Lenin's argument in *What is to be Done?* — to the whole question of spontaneity and consciousness — and here I want to say that Lenin's arguments concerning spontaneity and consciousness contain both the central proposition of Lenin's theory of the Party, on the one hand, and on the other, two unilateral arguments which, though they are explicable in terms of whom he was polemicising against, are nevertheless in need of correction.

To begin with the unilateral arguments, these are first, in my opinion, that the working class exclusively by its own effort is able to develop only trade union consciousness; or, as Lenin puts it even more strongly, the spontaneous working class movement is by itself able to create, and does create, only trade unionism. Now I say that's explicable in relation to the polemic that Lenin was waging, and it even has a validity, so to speak, for large periods of time in the history of capitalist societies; but it's in need of correction because, in what we call pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations, the spontaneous working class movement goes beyond trade unionism.

The second unilateral argument in my opinion is one of the meanings which Lenin gives to the well-known formula that socialist consciousness is brought to the working class from without. Now everyone's got their own idea of what this means, and there are very sophisticated ways of explaining it and somehow showing that it's all fine. I'm only interested in what Lenin actually says about that. The fact is that he uses this formula in two ways. One of them, and this I think is unilateral, is following Kautsky: Lenin says that socialist consciousness is introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without by the bourgeois intelligentsia. Outside and inside are formulated in these terms: the inside is the proletarian class struggle; the outside is the bourgeois intelligentsia, which introduces socialist consciousness.

Not to make too much of a meal of it, I just think that's wrong. It's obviously trying to state the importance of theory and so forth, but what it actually does is to fail to state what bourgeois intelligentsia this is that formulates this socialist consciousness — under what conditions, and as part of what movement. The whole idea of 'from without' in that sense is wrong, and needs correction. But there is another meaning — and this is the important meaning — of this idea of introducing proletarian socialist consciousness from without which contains what I would call the central proposition of the theory of the Party. I think the following quotation sums it up. 'The basic error', Lenin says, 'that all the economists commit is their conviction that it is possible to develop a class political consciousness of the workers from within, so to speak, from their economic struggle. Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the inter-relations between all

classes.'

'Outside' and 'inside' in that passage now refer not to sociological groupings, so to speak, or vehicles of consciousness. They refer to the partial versus the global, if you like. Socialist consciousness comes not from any particular struggle — no particular struggle has this dynamic of allowing you automatically to understand — it comes from that global understanding of the relations of all classes. And I say that contains Lenin's central proposition regarding the theory of the Party, because what that theory says, in a nutshell, is that the Party is necessary as an instrument of political centralisation. Without some such instrument, all the fragmentary struggles, sectional experiences and partial perspectives of different layers of the masses cannot be combined into a successful revolutionary assault on capitalist society, which has its *own* organ of centralisation, its own organ of combat in the bourgeois state. The Party is required as a political centraliser to combine these partial struggles, link them up, in confrontation ultimately with that institution. So such a Party is needed with a *global* theory and programme capable of centralising and unifying all these different struggles.

A last word on the themes of Lenin's work in this period — what he has to say about organisation in the narrowest sense, organisational matters in the narrowest sense. Here again I think there's a central point amidst some more circumstantial matters. The central point is contained in the difference Lenin had with Martov over the definition of the Party member, which foreshadowed the Bolshevik/Menshevik split. That is to say, in Lenin's conception the Party is not a loose, amorphous body of occasional sympathisers and so forth, it's a Party of activists, of cadres, which aims in other words to assemble a class conscious proletarian vanguard, and not simply dissolve itself in the level of consciousness of the class as it is. I won't say more about that.

There are other organisational arguments in these works concerning, for example, professional revolutionaries, strict secrecy, concerning limitations on democratic procedures which Lenin justified by the circumstance of having to operate in conditions of political repression, and I'm not going to say anything more about that except that there are some polemical exaggerations of Lenin's which I will return to.

Leaving aside incidentals, what was the basis of Luxemburg's and Trotsky's opposition to Lenin? It was the charge of Blanquism, as Rosa Luxemburg put it (substitutionism was Trotsky's term). In other words, like the Mensheviks, with whom they were aligned in this matter, and like many other people since, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky accused Lenin of wanting to replace the struggle of the proletarian masses, to replace the *self*-emancipation of the working class, by the actions of a self-appointed elite.

Was there any validity in that charge? No. In thinking to reject elitism, what Luxemburg and Trotsky were actually doing was rejecting the necessity for an organisation of the proletarian vanguard in favour of a model of organisation which we know today as social democratic — social democratic in the contemporary sense of that word, not the sense in which it was used in those debates. They were rejecting in other words the necessity of that type of organisation, and the October revolution proved positively, and a string of failed revolutions have proved negatively, that without that type of Party, the revolutionary situations which will recur periodically cannot be consummated in successful revolutions.

So, because I'm now going to make some more critical remarks and don't want to be misunderstood, I stress that *that* was Lenin's incomparable historical merit — that he conceived and fought for that type of organisation tooth and nail. Does this mean that Lenin's works in this period are a kind of compendium of pure truths — and Trotsky's opposition and criticism, and Luxemburg's opposition and criticism, should be thrown in the dustbin? It is unfortunate, for example, that the Trotskyist movement has never republished Trotsky's book, *Our Political Tasks*, though it's a very interesting book. So is that the conclusion one draws — Lenin represents the truth and these other works are not worth reading? No — because the dialectic of truth and error, if I can put in that way, is a bit more complicated.

First of all, there's one obvious reason why that should be so. It's possible to be right about some things, even about the main things, and wrong about other things. For example, take the whole problem of the bureaucratisation of workers organisations. No-one in this epoch had an adequate grasp of that problem, and the merit for formulating a theory which provides us with an understanding of it belongs to Trotsky in coming to grips with Stalinism in the Twenties and Thirties. But in Lenin's work before 1914, in his constant emphasis and drive towards the need for a centralised organisation, there's no understanding, no inkling of a grasp of this problem, of the danger of the autonomy of an organisational apparatus — the danger of it developing its own interests, inertia, conservatism. However, there *is* the beginning of an understanding of that problem in Trotsky's and Luxemburg's writings before the First World War, and as that's proved to be no small problem in the history of the workers movement, Trotsky and Luxemburg should be given their due as contributors towards what today we would count as an adequate, rounded out, Leninist theory of organisation.

There's a more tricky issue, however, in what I'm calling the dialectic of historical truth and error, which I will try to get at by coming back to the whole business of spontaneity of the masses. I repeat, Trotsky and Luxemburg were wrong in their opposition to Lenin's central political project, but in being wrong and in this opposition, they also criticised — Trotsky explicitly, Luxemburg implicitly — some of those formulations regarding spontaneity and consciousness which I identified earlier as being one-sided, i.e. spontaneity leads to pure trade unionism, consciousness is brought by the bourgeois intelligentsia. Now, in their incorrect opposition to Lenin's overall project, Trotsky and Luxemburg criticised some of these unilateral arguments. So were they wrong in *these* particular criticisms, and if they were wrong, was Lenin wrong when he too later acknowledged the polemical one-sidedness of *What is to be Done?* Was he wrong in 1905 when *he* spoke of the working class as *instinctively*, spontaneously social democratic, meaning socialist in that era? Or was he wrong in 1905 to speak like this: 'Any movement of the proletariat, however small, however modest it may be at the start, however slight its occasion, inevitably threatens to outgrow its immediate aims and to develop into a force irreconcilable to the entire old order and destructive of it. The movement of the proletariat, by reason of the essential peculiarities of the position of this class under capitalism, has a marked tendency to develop into a desperate, all-out struggle, a struggle for complete victory over all the dark forces of exploitation and oppression.' Which sounds like some crazed spontaneist.

Was he wrong in these things? No, he wasn't wrong, because what 1905 as it were crystallised in Lenin's thinking — though I don't say he had no idea of it before, but it brought it out in a very sharp way — is that beyond the the necessity (which is a crucial necessity) of assembling, training and preparing the proletarian vanguard, a successful revolution requires something else, of course: the winning of the masses, and that is impossible without mass explosions of *spontaneous* struggle, spontaneous from the point of view of the revolutionary organisation. Of course, from some point of view nothing is ever spontaneous. From the point of view of what the revolutionary organisation is capable of initiating, and what control it's capable of exercising, the mass struggles, during the course of which the masses can be won over to socialism — and of course institutions of dual power emerge and a revolution is completed, etc. — this is something which cannot be in any neat way planned and held in control. It requires massive spontaneous struggles — that's complementary to what Lenin says about spontaneity in other types of situations.

Now Luxemburg and Trotsky grasped some of this in their erroneous opposition to Lenin, so again they must be given their due, and they grasped it in some ways earlier than Lenin.

Now this leads me to the essential point I want to make here — it relates to what you could call the art of stick-bending. Some people will say, and indeed some have said — if you want a good example of what I'm talking about you can find it in Tony Cliff's book on Lenin (which in many ways is a useful book, I don't want to suggest I'm totally critical of it or anything like that) — that Lenin was never actually wrong about anything here, he was just bending the stick. You can find the origin of that in connection with the whole split in the party and the fierce debates that took place, when Lenin said, 'the economists had bent the stick one way — in order to straighten it out I had to bend it back'. In other words, he was admitting his own polemical exaggerations and so on. Lenin was stick-bending: when it's necessary to emphasise organisation, theory, etc., you bend the stick against spontaneity; when it's necessary to emphasise the importance of the spontaneous struggles of the masses, you bend the stick another way. And so they say that that's all he was doing really — there weren't any actual mistakes.

Now first of all let's concede a certain truth in this, and that's the following: there's a kind of dialectic of political struggle which is the same dialectic as this one of historical truth and error, which means that inevitably a political argument, pamphlet, discourse, is different from — fortunately, I suppose — an academic discourse. It won't contain all the necessary qualifications, etc. Precisely because the task at one moment is this, and the opposition is that, there will come in exaggerations and so forth, one-sidednesses of a certain kind. To stress that Lenin's work is going to be marked by all this is obviously right. But there are a number of points to be made here. First, even granting that without making any qualification, still my central point would remain valid. Precisely because of that, you need to read, say, the works of Lenin — who in the global sense got the thing right — in order to liberate what is right from certain exaggerations and plain mistakes which surround it. And conversely, you need to take a serious attitude to the work of those who got it wrong to see if it might not contain in its wrongness some incidental insights. So that already supports one of the main points I want to make.

But secondly, very often in this whole stick-bending, there's just the phenomenon of hindsight operating. So you have to read Lenin's *What is to be Done?* in conjunction with what he wrote in 1905, but of course in 1903 Lenin's opponents couldn't read what he wrote in 1905. They had to read what he was writing in 1902 and '03, and they reacted to some of those things which they saw as being wrong or exaggerated. You must take that into account. Thirdly, to admit that there's an inevitable phenomenon of stick-bending is not the same thing as to take an 'anything goes' kind of attitude towards it — that, right, in order to win this political fight anything goes in what you say.

What lurks behind this rather uncritical attitude is again the myth of the omniscient leader; all right, Lenin exaggerated in 1902, but he was there in 1905 to correct any mistakes his followers had made — basically, don't worry, Lenin saw it all right in the end. But of course this doesn't always work. For instance, Lenin, in *What is to be Done?*, tries to meet the criticism that his views on organisation are not in conformity with full democratic procedures. What does Lenin reply? He replies that full democratic procedures involve two things at least — full publicity, elections to all offices. He then has two arguments, a main argument and a subordinate one. In the main argument he asks: can we, in Tsarist conditions, operate full publicity and elections to all offices? His reply is no — it will simply facilitate the work of the police. In other words, Lenin's main argument is, so to speak, a circumstantial one — in Tsarist conditions it's not possible. This doesn't cast any doubt on the principle of internal democracy. But there's a subordinate argument, and that is: anyway, there will be something else operating — strict selection of members, strict confidence amongst comrades, the greatest of dedication — and Lenin then says, we will have something then even *more* than democracy. Now that's obviously bending the stick. Is that bending of the stick justified? No, because in a very small way it suggests that maybe the principle of internal democracy as such might under certain circumstances be substituted. I say that's a polemical exaggeration, it's not Lenin's main argument, etc., but it's an example of stick-bending which is not justified.

What might be the danger? Well, in 1905, when Lenin wanted to open up the party in the sense that there were now masses of workers in struggle who were candidates in his view for a much more open, bigger party, he met opposition amongst Bolshevik cadres, committee men, trained in the arguments of *What Is to be Done?*, who accused Lenin of wanting to play at democracy. Another example: you can take the sectarian response of many Bolshevik cadres to those spontaneous, non-party institutions, the soviets, and ask whether that sectarian response might not have had something to do with some of the one-sided formulations in the earlier period. And more tragically, and more importantly than that, take the Stalinist use of some of these formulas to justify the crimes and horrors which everybody knows about. I'm *not* saying, in any form or shape, that there is a germ of Stalinism contained in Lenin's work — what I am saying is that, in 1977, a kind of glorification of stick-bending requires a certain qualification: yes, there will be polemical exaggeration inevitably in any party/faction/tendency struggle, etc., but it has to be kept very carefully within bounds.

Now Trotsky senior — the mature Trotsky — central to his whole political life, his political work, was to build on, to continue to fight for the Leninist theory and practice of organisation, recognising what I've called Lenin's *incomparable* historical merit in founding this theory and practice. But despite Trotsky's recognition of his own central misjudgement in the years before the revolution, he still referred on the eve of his death to the erroneousness of some of Lenin's arguments in *What is to be Done?* That's not something you very often find reference to — that Trotsky, in admitting his own mistake, was not taking over lock, stock and barrel all the arguments of

What is to be Done? He still referred to the erroneousness of some of these formulas on spontaneity and consciousness. And he didn't totally disown his own book, *Our Political Tasks.* Though he said that in a central respect it was wrong, unjust and a misjudgement in relation to Lenin, he said it contained some insights into the mentality of some Bolshevik committee men in that period.

Secondly, and more importantly really, I believe that Trotsky's own role after 1923 is not unrelated to the fact that he was the one outstanding revolutionary of that generation who had the independence and courage to oppose Lenin in the pre-revolutionary period. Of course, it wasn't only over the Party, it was over other issues on which Trotsky was right. But I believe that that very courage and independence, which were used in many ways wrongly before, played a role after the death of Lenin in the fact that it was Trotsky who came finally to recognise the mistakes which had been made under Lenin's leadership and his own, by Lenin's party: the mistake of banning factions within the party, and the mistake of banning, at the end of the civil war, the legal soviet opposition — mistakes which played their part, albeit not the main part, in the demise of soviet democracy.

On the question of proletarian democracy, internal to a revolutionary organisation *and* within the workers movement as a whole, Trotsky was second to no-one, and what I've argued is that it's his own opposition to Bolshevism up to 1917, and then his opposition to the *cult* of Lenin after 1917, which played some role in this trajectory of Trotsky in laying the basis for a rounded out theory of democracy in the proletarian socialist movement.

I want to end with some reflections on this. So far I've stressed political unification — the Party as political unifier and centraliser of the different struggles — but a vital ingredient of the Leninist theory of organisation is the most vibrant *internal* democracy in the Party. Why? Well you can refer back to the whole discussion of what I have, perhaps rather pretentiously, called the dialectic of truth and error. It's because, outside Stalinist textbooks and Maoist fantasies, there's no great leader who knows all the answers of political struggle. There's only one way, and that is through a fierce, vigorous struggle of ideas, lines and so on, that the correct way can be found. I can quote from Lenin to show that this is not something just put about by Trotskyists: 'There can be no mass Party, no Party of the class, without full clarity of essential shading, without an open struggle betwen various tendencies, without informing the masses as to which leaders and which organisations of the Party are pursuing this or that line — without this, a Party worthy of the name cannot be built.'

Or look at the actual practice of the Bolshevik Party. Not in quiet periods or something, but over matters of *vital* importance, matters of life and death — Brest-Litovsk, etc, — and the vigorous battles then between different groupings and tendencies in the Party. It's not some demented militant of the Fourth International but a very sober historian, E.H. Carr, who speaks of the Bolshevik Party as manifesting a freedom and publicity of discussion rarely practised by any party on vital issues of public policy.

So, to conclude, the opportunity and the obligation which I say falls on those influenced by Trotsky's work is to fight for the substance of the Leninist theory of organisation as *vital* to the self-emancipation of the working class — to reject contemptuously all those ideas of Lenin as a kind of

unprincipled dictator who just wanted power, to reject them completely but without any apologetics, cultism, etc., in relation to Lenin.

Now, I've mentioned two phenomena of ideological and political life in the Twentieth Century related to Lenin: one is cultism, and the other is that Lenin equals a totalitarian dictator. There is a third approach today which I think one has to be very careful about, and which I will refrain from labelling: it consists of pretending — without explicitly repudiating Lenin or anything like that — to go beyond the Leninist theory of organisation. But what this going beyond actually consists of, what its actual details are, is rather mysterious or unspecified.

I will give three recent examples of this. First, Ralph Miliband, in an article in the *Socialist Register 1976* called 'Moving On', refers to the need for a new organisation of the left. I can't go into all the arguments, but importantly related to this theme, he deals with the Communist Party and the sham of its claims about internal democracy. Now here I'll read you the sign that something important is wrong, because he puts under the same heading the sacred cows of democratic centralism and the ban on factions, as if they were in the same field. Then he speaks of the revolutionary left organisations and he puts them all under the same blanket or umbrella, and he says that the internal regimes of these organisations make the CP's internal regime appear as a model of internal democracy.

Now first of all you don't need to be a genius to recognise that this refers to something; but it's not true of all the organisations of the revolutionary left, and what's more Miliband knows it, because I've heard him say it in public delivery of this same argument where his criticism was interestingly different: the CP's internal democracy was a sham, but the British section of the Fourth International was written off because of the large number of tendencies within it, all fighting. Whatever else Miliband may want to say about it, that is something different from rigidity and so forth. But in any case that's not the main point. The main point is that Miliband speaks of 'moving on', but having written everybody else off, suggests now the need for a new socialist formation. What would its programme be? What would its structure be? How would it be different from the 'out of date' Leninist vanguard, etc.? Silence. Not a word. Literally not one word. So that 'Moving On', this going beyond Leninism, is a complete mystery.

My second example is the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, in an interesting intervention in the recent debate in the French Communist Party over the dictatorship of the proletariat.* Now he has a lot of valid things to say about the need for real debate, but what's interesting is this. He says — differences, yes, this is what we must have. Organised tendencies, no. Though he does acknowledge, and this is worth noting, that they did exist in the Bolshevik Party; but no. Why? Because they're a threat to the unity of the organisation. Then he says, 'If recognised and organised tendencies are rejected, it is not so as to fall *behind* that political practice [of the Bolshevik Party] towards less freedom.... it is to go *beyond* it.' Not organised tendencies but what? 'Real discussions', 'new forms of expression', 'exchange of experiences'.

Well that's in some ways beyond belief. In our history of 60 years, everything we know today about the evolution of workers organisations, he says, yes differences, not organised tendencies, but what — real discussions. But how will you have these real discussions, how will you ensure them if they can't be organised; and if you are going to organise them, how do you get away from the absolute vital necessity of tendencies and so forth? There you have another suggestion of going beyond the Leninist theory and practice of the Party which is a sham.

My third example is in the booklet, which some of you may have seen, put out by the Communist University of London. Gerry Leversha has an article there on 'Beyond Spontaneity', where the Leninist type of organisation is said to be unrealistic in the West. He refers to it as an elite Party and then says this: 'Reared in conditions of clandestinity, it relied far more upon unquestioned obedience than on equal debate.' Now as far as I'm concerned that's simply derisory: Gerry Leversha diplomatically refrains from mentioning that the Party to which he belongs is actually *behind*, falls short of the Leninist norms of internal democracy in speaking about unquestioned obedience, etc. Anyway, what does Gerry Leversha argue for to transcend the limits of Jacobinism in favour of the fullest flowering of debate, inner party democracy, adequate channels of expression for dissenting viewpoints, etc? How are we going to ensure this full flowering of debate? What mechanisms, how will it relate to tendencies, factions? Silence. So again it's a 'going beyond' which leads nowhere.

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* See Louis Althusser, 'On the Twenty-Second Congress of the French Communist Party', in *New Left Review* 104, especially pp20-22.

Education:

A Political Challenge to Revolutionary Socialists

By WILLIAM THOMPSON

Recent issues of *International* have opened an overdue discussion[1] on educational issues, and the role of socialist teachers in the education process. If anyone doubted the importance of this discussion, then events such as the 'Great Debate' and the victimisation of Tyndale teachers have shown very starkly that we have neglected this terrain of discussion for too long. This article is intended as a systemisation and extension of the positions put forward in the previous articles, and not as a total counter-position.

The revolutionary left faces a serious problem in trying to come to grips with the issues raised in the education debate. It faces a problem (a) because its practice in the education sector has, as Clara Mulhern puts it, been marked by 'the limitations of the purely economist campaigns fought by Rank & File for the London allowance and Houghton Award'[2], (b) because the debate about educational objectives has been dominated by, on the one hand, Fabian professionalism, which sees the National Union of Teachers as a pressure group to achieve certain democratic advances in education (via an alliance with the state apparatus and by virtue of rational arguments), and on the other hand, by essentially libertarian forces, who have located the critical arena for struggle as the authority relations in the school and classroom. It is significant that these strategies involve an antipodean confusion about the relationship between state and education. And (c) there is a third problem in coming to terms with the debate about educational objectives: there is no simple pattern — the ruling class defending the status quo on one side, the working class, the revolutionary left and their programme on the other. For revolutionary teachers there is an inbuilt contradiction, an inherent dualism, in their role, which can be examined but not solved at this period. In other words there are no definitive answers to a range of questions, only the opening of a discussion.

1. We have to set out a Leninist analysis of the bourgeois educational institutions, so that we can avoid the political errors of social-democratic and libertarian forces. We will have many areas of agreement with these forces in practice, but first of all we must outline an overall theory.

What are the roots of the 'Great Debate' and what are the ideological issues at stake?

We can start by pointing out the central fact in any discussion on education: that the role of education is the reproduction of the existing social and economic system.[3] Secondly, that reproduction is guaranteed by the social structure itself, and only secondarily by the role of teachers and the ideological content of education. For capitalism, education is functional and necessary to the extent that it educates differing components of the future workforce to the requisite technical and cultural levels. All the major extensions in educational provision (the 1870 and 1944 Acts most obviously) have been engendered by material dictates of the mode of production. The post-war comprehensivisation has similar material roots in the expansion of the white-collar sector, and the corresponding need to draw in a substantial layer from working class backgrounds.

Of course, the bourgeoisie is not a grand puppet-master capable of pulling strings to ensure that every aspect of society corresponds directly to its economic interests. Far from it. Even on those occasions when the perceived economic interests of the bourgeoisie correspond to its long term economic interests *and* it is capable of articulating these in a collective fashion, the anarchic character of its mode of production, its inability ever to complete the democratic restructuring inherent in its economic needs and its 'democratic charter', generally prevents, distorts or retards 'rational' bourgeois solutions. Secondly, there is a considerable elasticity in the fabric of bourgeois society which enables the incorporation and perversion of democratic reforms won by the working class (e.g. the Welfare State, comprehensivisation of education). Demands of the working class are taken up by the ruling class and turned to their own ends.

We must bear such qualifications in mind, but it is necessary to assert unambiguously the role of education in capitalist society. The class structure of capitalist society, and from that its precise division of labour and occupational structure, have to be generated as precisely as possible by the education system. The ruling class has no interest in over-education, or in an excess of graduates. The capitalist education system, and very specifically the exam set-up and selection procedures, are designed to reproduce as exactly as possible the occupational structure.

We should also set out the alternative — a conception of education under socialism: that is, the sort of alternative which would be *made possible* by the economic and structural changes for which revolutionary socialists are fighting. In a socialist society, education would be genuinely for the individual, to open to the fullest extent possible the capacity of each individual to use and enjoy the greater leisure time and resources made possible by the socialist reorganisation of human and material resources. Marx (in the *German Ideology*[4]) somewhat over-estimated the extent to which drudgery can be taken out of productive labour

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1. Ken Jones: 'William Tyndale and the Crisis in Education', *International*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 7-12; Clara Mulhern: 'The Crisis in Education: A Reply to Ken Jones', Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 3-5.
2. Clara Mulhern, p. 3.
3. Education has this definition in all societies, that it is a long term investment of a portion of the social surplus product for the reproduction of the knowledge, technology and cadre of society. Although it will have an entirely different direction under socialism, it will still be playing this role fundamentally, and all its other features will flow from this.
4. '... to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the afternoon, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic' (Marx and Engels,

(this covers a range of jobs — a residue of repetitive mechanical jobs, the necessary features of administration, tasks involving high personal risk or extreme personal discomfort). Every effort would be made to eliminate or reduce to a minimum such jobs; but it is likely to be a matter of ensuring that such jobs are shared out as equitably as possible. The technological developments which will precede international communism could not have been foreseen by Marx and can only barely be seen today. Education (that is, the reproduction of the scientific, cultural, historical and social acquisitions of humanity for new generations) would be directed towards (a) greater and greater control over productive techniques and nature, (b) a greater understanding of society itself and its needs, (c) fuller modes of personal, artistic and cultural expression.

Of course, this is a long way from the classroom and the 'Great Debate'; but by setting out these two poles, education under capitalism and education under developing socialism, we establish a certain perspective.

Further, it sets a guiding principle: *these alternative modes of education are incompatible*. A socialist education system which makes selection based on different ultimate occupational goals is not yet socialist, because it implies a society which has not eliminated the division between mental and physical labour and which therefore perpetuates vestiges of a class structure. (This is distinct from specialisation, which deals with differing educational content rather than different education levels.) Similarly, under capitalism, no educational system can be developed which gives full reign to the development of individual capacities, both because the resources will never be there, and because capitalism only provides marginal opportunities for the exercise of such *human* potential. In education, as in society as a whole, it is socialism that ends pre-history and opens the era of human history.

2. Now we can look at the contradictions within the bourgeois educational system. The differences between Ken Jones and Clara Mulhern over the significance of comprehensivisation are more apparent than real. The extension of secondary education under the 1944 Act, and the subsequent developments from the 1950s towards comprehensivisation, were both in the interests of the ruling class. They satisfied a need. They also corresponded to, and absorbed, the limited demands of the working class organisations and their reformist spokespersons.

The educational demands of the trade union movement never went much beyond 'free access to secondary education for all', and in the post-war period it has supported demands for comprehensivisation.[5] As with most things, the trade union movement has seen educational reform coming through the election of a Labour Government; therefore there is little need for the trade unions to have detailed educational policies, these would be worked out and implemented by the Labour Party. This general tendency of British trade unions to see various questions as non-trade union questions was strengthened, in the case of education, by the non-participation of the bulk of teachers in the TUC, and by their jealous safeguarding of education as something to be discussed only by professionals.

So we can understand the paradoxical situation described by Clara Mulhern: the post-war developments in education were demanded by the organised working class, implemented in their own interests by the bourgeoisie, without these reforms ever being explained or demanded on a mass scale.

Now we come to the role of teachers and the teachers' organisations in putting these changes into practice, and the significance for socialists of these changes. Ken Jones outlines the existence of a 'democratic/humanist' ideology in education. It is important at this stage to separate three different strands which are often lumped together[6]:

(a) the 'humanist' element, essentially the classical notion of a 'liberal education', i.e. the education of children has as its aim certain rationalist 'standards', and does not take its instructions directly from society or the dictates of industry. This is the educational content of professionalism; and if it has a progressive content, as Ken Jones seems to imply, then that is only because of the particular nature of the present attack on education. Our long-term aim must be a struggle against the present curriculum, not justifications of it.

(b) progressive teaching methods — we will be examining these later, but it is very important to separate these from the structural changes in the education system which we examine now.

(c) the democratic tradition/egalitarianism/'equality of opportunity'. This has been the official platform of the teaching unions, and has been the basis for their alliance with part of the state apparatus around educational changes.

The abolition of the tripartite system, the abolition of the 11-plus, comprehensivisation, the weakening of streaming, are attempts to bring about this equality of opportunity. They find their highest official expression in the Plowden Report, which urges positive discrimination — that is, allocation of proportionately greater resources to schools in problem areas (mainly inner-city working class areas). This is motivated partly on general ideological grounds — 'fairness', etc. — partly as a means towards greater social mobility, and partly through seeing education as a direct element in the battle to keep control over the working class by trying to defuse the potentially explosive inner-city crisis.

Equality of opportunity under capitalism is fundamentally unachievable. The working class has suffered generations of economic, social and cultural deprivation; the ruling class has countless ways of handing its privileges and powers down to its children; and, in the educational context, the continuation of the private sector makes a mockery of any other proposals. Furthermore, even if the ruling class were somehow deprived of all its privileges of inheritance, equality of opportunity would not lead to any meaningful social equality. So, the platform of 'equality of educational opportunity' (which has been substantially achieved on paper[7]) produces all sorts of contradictions within the educational system, and conflicts with other aspects of the organisation of capitalist society. These contradictions on the one hand feed the views of those who have always opposed comprehensivisation and de-streaming; and on the

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German Ideology, in Selected Works, Progress Publishers, Vol 1, p. 36). There are a number of areas of discussion which flow out of this question of the specialisation of occupations under socialism, which are somewhat over-simplified in this classic quote. Thus socialism seeks to use the advance of technology not to eliminate human labour, but to de-alienate human labour. Similarly, the advances in technology which have already occurred, let alone those that occur in the future, dictate a considerable level of occupational specialisation; resolution of the potential antagonisms and divisions emerging from this will be a major problem.

5. This is a considerable over-simplification of the role of the trade union movement in the fight for educational reform. Ideally this question should be the subject of research and material in its own right. Quite apart from its obvious historical interest, (a) there was a very important link between the rise of the early socialist movement and the campaign for the education of the working masses, particularly in the context of child labour, (b) in later years it casts a very interesting light on the non-political character of British trade unions. A couple of historical notes might indicate the importance of such a study, which I hope some comrades might be encouraged to undertake. Firstly, in the traditional slogan 'Educate, Agitate, Organise', 'educate' here refers to schooling rather than the spread of specifically socialist ideas, although the early socialists saw (correctly) a very powerful link between education and political consciousness. Secondly, in the latter decades of the last century, when the fight for the eight-hour day began, a crucial component of the motivation for this demand was to give the working class the time and leisure to develop its culture and knowledge. The right of the working class to education is a fundamental gain which has been won, and which we must defend.

6. Clara Mulhern (p. 4) makes a similar separation. Ken Jones's use of a 'democratic/humanist' tradition seems to me misleading.

7. By this I mean that comprehensivisation is nearly complete (barring of course the private sector); this should not be taken to mean that equality of opportunity exists.

other hand lead to the attempts of radical educational sociologists like Midwinter, who try to carry the logic of these proposals through to their conclusions with ideas of community schools and so on.[8]

At this stage we can make clear the differences between the Black Paperites and the forces leading the present offensive against educational standards (i.e. the 'Great Debate'). The Black Paperites oppose, root and branch, this conception of equality of opportunity, *they oppose comprehensivisation* and so on. This is not the programme of Callaghan, Williams and the Labour Government. Ken Jones makes a mistake when he tries to equate Callaghan's speech with the views in the Black Papers.[9]

Socialists should see these as essentially democratic developments, defend them and seek to extend them. And, as with any democratic demands, we use our support for them to indicate that only socialism can complete the democratisation of society promised by capitalism. There is, as yet, no direct attack on these educational gains, although the picture would be different with Rhodes Boyson as Minister of 'Education'. In the context of a Tory Government trying to reintroduce selection and grammar schools, revolutionary socialists should yield to no-one as the strongest defenders of these structural gains. What is at stake from our standpoint is the right of the working class to the best education available, and seeking to extend that.

3. De-streaming and mixed ability teaching is a complex problem, because the conflict between 'equality of opportunity' and the dictates of the capitalist system is posed very sharply via the medium of exams and the prospects of individual children. And this feeds into the vexed questions of challenges to authoritarianism in the schools (and the obverse of that, our attitude to discipline), curriculum content, integrated studies, etc. Underlying these problems is the dilemma: to what extent is it possible for socialist or libertarian teachers to have *educational* goals which are contrary to the educational goals of capitalism.

This is where the 'Great Debate' and the Labour Government's plans for educational change come in. There is an undoubted dislocation between the output of schools and the human raw material which industry perceives as its needs. It would be totally false to see this as the result of thousands of progressive or Trotskyist teachers undermining the capitalist system from within the schools (would that it were so). Even more preposterous is the claim that the schools are populated with teachers who don't believe that children should learn how to read, write and add.

The roots of this dislocation are multi-fold: over-large classes; old buildings and equipment; the alienation of large numbers of working class children from an educational system they see as irrelevant, or even alien to them, their needs and their values; the inability of the capitalist system and its 'planners' to see beyond the end of last year; failure to cater for the particular needs of immigrant children and their communities. There is also an eternal contradiction between the continual need of the ruling class to assert collective interests ('the nation', 'industry') and a society and educational system geared to individual competition.

Where there have been genuine successes flowing from a non-authoritarian approach to education, either (a) these have, by and large, been with children who were 'uneducable' in regular schools, and/or in privileged arenas — free schools, Summerhill, etc; or (b) they have been ruthlessly victimised like Chris Searle and the Tyndale teachers. Other attempts to make education relevant to the real needs of working class children have been re-incorporated into the exam structure.

The 'Great Debate' is an attempt to resolve a series of crises in bourgeois education. It is an attempt to give an ideological basis for cuts in education spending. It is an attempt to restructure aspects of the curriculum, moving away from the 'liberal' tradition towards a more industry-oriented approach. It is an attempt to place blame for under-achievement (which is certainly present in schools, but is a different problem to the Black Paper smokescreen about falling standards) and discipline problems on the back of progressive teachers and progressive teaching methods. Finally, in a manner analogous to the use of institutional racism, it is an attempt to drive an ideological wedge into a weak flank of the working class. By posing 'industry' as the real yardstick by which to judge educational standards it both gears into a more general political offensive being waged by the Government and tries to create a national consensus between the working class and the ruling class.

On all of these fronts, the Government offensive has met with noticeable success.

The fightback against the cuts is a wider question than can be examined here; but to all intents and purposes, the teaching unions have accepted the cuts, and will accept more. There have been sporadic local struggles, most of which have been successful in their limited objectives; but the cuts have not been reversed and teaching conditions, resources, workloads, class sizes and consequently standards have deteriorated in most areas.

The restructuring of (or changing the emphasis of) the curriculum is an exceedingly difficult question from the point of view of the ruling class and nothing substantial is likely to be attempted for a while; but an example from personal experience indicates the direction things might take. In Coventry, in the teaching of maths, it has already been agreed that teaching of the aptly-called Imperial Units (feet, inches, rods, poles, perches, bushels, etc.) will be re-introduced, because British industry with its well-known far-sightedness has not, ten years after the beginning of metrication, seen fit to renovate its machinery. Furthermore, it is proposed to introduce a 14+ maths proficiency exam throughout the Coventry Local Education Authority. Passing such an exam would not guarantee a job; failing it, however, would be a perfect passport to the dole, a disqualification for almost any job in the area[10].

For the purpose of this article it is the other aspects of the 'Great Debate offensive' which are more important. The attack on progressive methods finds an echo, not just amongst those teachers who have never supported comprehensivisation, but also amongst those who are disillusioned because they believed that progressive methods could make schools more rewarding (for teachers and children), and could effect a noticeable change on the occupational prospects of individual working class children.

Our attitude to progressive methods cannot be determined by the fact that there is an apparent similarity between those methods and methods likely in a socialist education system: opposition to arbitrary discipline, corporal punishment, hierarchical structures, etc.; moves away from the exam orientation, emphasis on understanding rather than mimicry, learning through discovery, attempts to integrate school and community, etc.

Our conceptions of what should be taught and how it should be taught depend, in the end, on the extent to which any radical developments can be explained to, and supported by, the working class to whom we are responsible.

It is no coincidence that most radical, anti-authoritarian developments in schools have been isolated both from most other teachers and from the parents/community. At this stage, educational developments which pose *de facto* threats

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8. No-one should assume that being a consistent fighter for equality of educational opportunity is equivalent to being a revolutionary. The development of community schools is another whole area which needs detailed analysis by socialist teachers.
9. Ken Jones, p. 8.
10. As examples of what industry regards as mathematically essential (and which are not currently taught in most schools) we can cite: 7 figure logarithms, finding square roots without using tables. These examples are not essential for anything, the general point is that the mathematical standards appropriate to highly skilled engineering or tool-making apprenticeships are being taken as typical of industrial requirements.

to the rationale and functioning of the capitalist system are not likely to be supported by the establishment, by the bulk of teachers, and nor, in fact, by most working class parents who, whatever their overall political beliefs, are going to fear that the prospects of their children will be damaged by a short-term experiment.

Similarly, progressive methods in education (particularly since the professionalism of the teachers organisations hampers them from explaining widely the rationale of these methods) are going to be the obvious scapegoat for the failures of the education system.

It is necessary to paint a bleak picture before we can begin to salvage something from the situation.

Socialist teachers do have wider opportunities and responsibilities other than just doing their jobs well and being good trade unionists. In education, as in every other sphere, revolutionaries are concerned with long term aims as well as the immediate situation. The growth of the left in the NUT also means the existence of more socialist teachers in the classrooms, and that gives us opportunities.

That is, it must be possible to fuse the roles of revolutionary propagandist and bourgeois educator; the bourgeois education system can play a part in producing a revolutionary working class. Clara Mulhern outlines a reasonable starting point for this: 'The working class needs the confidence to take its own decisions, needs to suspect and resist all forms of authoritarianism, and to perceive the needs of society as a whole, and not just its own sectional interests'. She adds: 'Comprehensive education and progressive teaching methods approved by a capitalist system for its own needs may also be the best preparation for socialism.'[11] We have tried to cast some doubt on this latter point, and will return to it in more detail.

Clara Mulhern is trying to answer: what can the working class as a whole gain from its passage through the educational machine? As she recognises, this is related to the political goal of working class revolution; so this can only be posed meaningfully as a strategy for socialist teachers when we are in a situation in which the pursuance of revolutionary socialist goals becomes a conscious factor in working class politics and communities. As she says later on: 'The educational system will not become a significant arena of class conflict until the class struggle in society is much more intense [overt — WT] than it is now.'

Relating this to the points made earlier about the isolation of particular radical experiments in education, we can see that it is exactly this factor (that a working class which does not have consciously radical or revolutionary goals is not going to be automatically sympathetic to the work of revolutionary teachers) which explains that isolation.

Revolutionaries have to be prepared to tackle now the issue of 'who controls education?'[12] We oppose the professionalist elitism of teachers who say that only teachers are entitled to discuss the content and form of education. We oppose the attempts of the ruling class to tie education more directly to the needs of industry. We are for the working class organised through the community as parents and through its trade unions and political organisations having a voice in the determination of the policy of schools. Of course, this will cause us many difficulties today (as the Tyndale teachers are well aware), but we are trying to define a long term strategy in the medium term context of rises in working class struggle moving towards global confrontations with the ruling class and its state machine.

The education system can never be a socialist system, nor can it ever serve the needs of both classes. We want the education system to reflect the balance of class forces in society. We must be quite clear that we are trying to subvert the capitalist education system, just as we are trying to subvert every other institution of capitalist society. We fight at every level against the idea that the working class and ruling class have interests in common, so too in the education system. We should support and seek to extend proposals which bring greater community involvement in the school and determination of the school's policy. There is no pat formula to cover the various different contexts and forms of external influence over the school, but we should seek to involve in as many ways as possible working class representatives in areas of control and influence within the school.

The corollary of this is the need for socialist teachers to explain their conceptions of education (see ideas below) to parents, to bodies like trades councils, through the Council for Educational Advance, within the union, and so on. Developments in education are a function of developments in the class struggle, and at this stage we are laying the beginnings of a long term strategy.

Now we can make some concrete points about curriculum and teaching methods, having set the long term framework. Without this long term framework, and without this fundamental confidence in the working class as a whole, anything that is done in the classroom is essentially individual whim, and doomed to failure. This is not to underestimate the significance of the work of, say, Chris Searle, who was able for a period to make education a really vital and worthwhile experience, not only because he got through to working class children, but also because he was able through that poetry to bring out a working class vision of school and society. But it is no surprise that he was victimised. Activity with kids in the classroom is not dependent on the existence of prior political support before anything can be done, but without a conscious conception of future goals, it is difficult to break through the twin traps of individual (or in some cases collective) activities which have only a short lifespan, or rationalising one's acceptance of the authoritarian and hierarchical structure.

Our overall conception should be: (a) the right of the working class to the best education available, (b) within that, and with the intensification of the class struggle, for socialist teachers to fight for the education which is in the historic interests of the working class. Obviously this latter goal is only fractionally realisable at this stage, but every political development in the working class is an **opportunity** for socialist teachers, organised within the trade union movement, to get across long term educational goals.

On curriculum: already there are many ways in which teachers in departments and individually can begin to introduce elements of working class history and culture into lessons. The fight for non-racist and non-sexist materials has already begun, and is fertile ground for further development: 'multi-racial and multi-cultural education' is an accepted aim in some schools already. These are only beginnings, but surely they can be raised to a higher level. Teachers (even if they are isolated in their own schools) can get together in a town or district (and ultimately nationally)[13] and begin to prepare alternative curricula, at least in particular fields. These can then be explained and fought for in the schools and teaching unions, and on a wider scale (utilising trades councils, links with other unions, parents' meetings, etc.). Tactics like this have to be given serious consideration as part of the process (a) of the working class beginning to define conscious educational goals which go beyond the reformist utopia of 'real' equality of opportunity, and (b) of socialist teachers overcoming their isolation from the concerns of working class parents.

For example: a project for the study of the history of a town or region from the standpoint of the working class (not taught to the exclusion of standard courses on British history) would, firstly, have all the academic merits of any other history course; secondly, be of long term value to the children concerned; and thirdly, be a positive vehicle for the

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11. Clara Mulhern, p. 5.
12. There has not been time to assess the character and significance of the Taylor Report and its recommendations on governing bodies.
13. This is another arena in which the fight for united action of the left in the NUT, not just the Socialist Teachers Alliance and Rank & File, but also with teachers in and around the Communist Party, is a vital matter.

involvement of trade union and parents' organisations in the education of children.

Essentially there are three models of education and knowledge. First there is the mainstream capitalist approach — children should be taught what they need to know and not much else. Secondly there is the liberal approach, which regards education and knowledge as a sort of Aristotlean ideal — there is an existing corpus of knowledge, to which the privileged few are admitted. Knowledge is an absolute, valued in itself and for itself. To these approaches, revolutionaries counterpose a third: knowledge (and therefore education) should be geared (a) to understanding the world and (b) thereby to helping the working class in changing the world.

Programmes of 'work experience' have a two-edged character. Their tendency today is to reinforce the industrialisation of education. But at the same time we should not accept the ivory tower separation of education and society: as long as work experience schemes are carefully monitored by the relevant trade unions and not used to provide cheap labour, they are also an opportunity to examine and discuss the class nature of society, to reinforce ideas of trade unionism and so on.

Community schools have a similar character. On the one hand, they are an attempt to make more intensive use of existing resources, which we don't oppose, although NUT reps will obviously be vigilant against erosion of jobs or intensification of workload. On the other hand, the idea of seeing the community as an educational resource can be a valuable opportunity for a socialist teacher.

More generally on progressive methods: we should support positive discrimination in favour of the most exploited kids both institutionally and within the schools — e.g. maintenance of remedial departments, defence of unstreamed teaching (at least in the first two years), special language units for immigrant children to enable their integration into other schools, provision by the LEA of units to deal with truancy and other behavioural problems without denying the right of these kids to an education, option systems which are useful to non-examination children. We should seek to promote non-authoritarian teaching situations, even if in secondary schools this will be the exception rather than the rule. We should fight for the abolition of petty discipline, and hierarchical structures. We should fight for the rights of children (a) to a decent education, (b) to express themselves as individuals, and (c) to have a say in the running of schools. The 'Charter' below is a first attempt to present an overall programme of demands relating to education.

The situation facing, and amongst, socialist teachers is a promising one. There is a growing awareness that our fight within the union cannot be limited to questions of economic militancy. To reach the mass of teachers, we have to be able to take up all their concerns. The effect of comprehensivisation, the question of discipline[14], educational objectives: these are matters and debates which socialists have to enter into.

A DRAFT CHARTER

1. For the full equality of educational opportunity:
— total abolition of the private sector;
— full comprehensivisation, and an end to religious and single sex schools;
— extra resources in economically deprived areas;
— a stop to cuts, modernisation of all buildings, full provision of resources (for sports, crafts, libraries, etc.);
— reduction in class sizes (we have to specify goals based on the assessment of the birth rate and for an expansion of teacher employment);
— free access to further education for all who want it;
— proper staffing of remedial departments, special facilities for teaching English as a second language, etc.;
— full state resources and specialist teachers for adult literacy courses;
— the provision of day and block-release courses.

2. Social control of education:
— governing bodies to include representatives of pupils, academic and non-academic staff, parents, trade unions (inevitably even where this is achieved today they will be in a minority, but we are engaged in a long term struggle, and the precise proposals will depend on the local situation);
— governing bodies to have control over curriculum;
— support for, and extension of the principles of, community schools.

3. Recognition of the rights of children:
— end to corporal punishment;
— right of school students to organise and be represented in the decision-making processes;
— abolition of school uniform.

4. Curriculum:
— adequate resources to maintain basic standards of literacy and numeracy;
— abolition of compulsory witchcraft (assemblies, hymns, etc.) in schools; 'religious instruction' courses to cover all organised superstitions and secular ideologies, including Marxism;
— elimination of sexist and racist materials from schools;
— compulsory sex education;
— multi-cultural education in all schools;
— for the inclusion of the history, literature and culture of the working class in all courses.

5. Organisation and methods:
— we stand for the abolition of all exams and the maximum extension of educational opportunity;
— for the defence and extension of 'mixed ability' teaching; for the right of teachers to organise in the classroom according to personal choice.

This 'Charter' is open to, and hopefully will be the subject of, much discussion, and is in no sense a finished product. Five points must be stressed:

(a) These demands leave out the whole range of demands relating to salaries, conditions, and the cuts. This is because the revolutionary left has already taken these questions up and, whilst there is always room for clarification and development, they are not the subject of this article.

(b) This list of demands has (particularly if each demand is treated separately) a democratic/reformist slant. That is, they concern primarily issues which (in theory anyway) could be granted under a capitalist system. This may trouble some comrades, but the substantial point is that we have tried to examine the relationship between the present debate in education and the long term goal of revolutionaries, setting that in the context of an overall rise in working class struggle. The Fourth International has always stressed that the key strategic concerns of revolutionaries are: firstly, the promotion of the independent, democratic self-organisation

14. The question of discipline and disciplinary measures is not taken up here, but it is already a major problem which all teachers face. The NAS/UWT survey, although it is doubtless coloured by some of the reactionary-elitist positions of that union, does show the extent of concern amongst the mass of teachers.
15. These proposals have a certain similarity to proposals from extremely reactionary elements, but the point is that we base ourselves on the working class and its radicalisation, even if, in the short term, headteachers might be thought to be more progressive than working class parents. Progressive teachers who think they might have something to lose by fighting for greater involvement of the working class in the control of education (alongside explaining their ideas) are either outright elitists or else they fail to understand that changes in education are a product of changes in society (and qualitative change in education is a product of qualitative change in society). The educational system will always be a fundamentally conservative force, socialists will only make small chinks in it.

of the working class, leading to organs of dual power; and secondly, the capacity of the working class to begin to define a programme for all oppressed sectors of society. In applying these principles to education we are confronting an overwhelmingly conservative institution, and our demands at this stage are correspondingly limited. Of course, in reality, this sort of programme taken in its entirety represents an enormous challenge to the rule of the bourgeoisie; a fight for these goals will be a part of, and will go hand in hand with, a challenge to the present hegemony of the ruling class. If comrades can develop the analysis presented here, and raise demands which exploit more acutely the contradictions within bourgeois education, then that is excellent.

(c) A big political weakness of the two previous articles in *International* was their neglect of some of the basic democratic issues (e.g. abolition of the private sector, end to compulsory religion in schools); the 'Charter' as a whole concentrates on those questions.

(d) At the same time, it is necessary for Leninists to question some of the assumptions of the libertarian forces which have, so far, dominated the debate about educational goals on the left.

(e) The demands raised by Ken Jones at the end of his article attempt to take up in an abstract way the relationship between the state and education, by looking at what bodies may be described as part of the state apparatus and saying we want nothing to do with them. Demands about the Inspectorate are very pertinent to the Tyndale case but they are not the generalised basis for a line on education.

Today the opportunities are limited. Hopefully we have been able to explain why those limitations exist, but at the same time those limitations are partly self-imposed. Socialist teachers have been governed by an economistic bent, and have under-estimated the possibility of organisation to achieve educational goals in the schools. In the long run, of course, education will be changed through revolutionary change in society and not vice versa. But to abandon all these positions to the enemy without a fight would be criminal. These are matters which have to be pushed onto the agenda in all gatherings of the left in the NUT. A fight has to be made to get their *long term* importance recognised. The Green Paper and Tyndale sackings are just flak, much more is to come.

The fundamental basis for any success on this front is the ability of socialist teachers and the revolutionary movement as a whole to explain and win support for concrete educational objectives. And this goes hand in hand with the overall struggle of revolutionaries in the working class.

The Workers and the Fatherland

'A Note on a Passage in the Communist Manifesto', by ROMAN ROSDOLSKY (written in 1947, previously unpublished).

(Translated by J. Bunzl)

The passage in question discusses the attitude of the workers *to their country*. It reads:

'The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality.

'The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

'National differences and antagonisms between peoples are vanishing gradually from day to day, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.

'The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

'In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.''

And on a preceding page, the *Manifesto* says:

'Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.''

These passages have been cited innumerable times in socialist literature, usually in order to justify the negative attitude of the socialist labour movement towards bourgeois patriotism and chauvinism. Often, however, the attempt has been made to temper the stern language of these passages and to give them a contrary, nationalist meaning.

As an example we may cite H. Cunow, the well-known German Social Democratic theoretician. He discusses the above passages in his book on *Marx's Theories of History, Society and State*. According to Cunow, all that Marx and Engels wanted to say was:

'Today (1848) the worker has no country, he does not take part in the life of the nation, has no share in its material and spiritual wealth. But one of these days the workers will win political power and take a dominant position in state and nation and then, when so to speak [?] they will have *constituted themselves the nation*, they will also be national and feel national, even though their nationalism [!] will be of a different kind than that of the bourgeoisie.''

This interpretation by Cunow[4] stumbles over a little phrase, the phrase 'so far' ('Since the proletariat.... must constitute itself the nation, it is, *so far*, itself national'), which indicates that Marx and Engels did not expect the proletariat to remain 'national' for ever...

Cunow's interpretation became the standard one in the reformist literature; but after World War II, it found acceptance in the Communist camp as well. Thus, we read in the 'Introduction' of the edition of the *Manifesto* published by the Stern-Verlag in Vienna in 1946:

'When Marx says in the *Communist Manifesto:* ''Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national'', we must understand that it is precisely in our time that the working class acts as a national class, as the backbone of the nation in the struggle against fascism and for democracy. The working class of Austria is fighting today to win its Austrian fatherland by creating an independent, free and democratic Austria.''

This evidently is not only equivalent to Cunow's interpretation, but even goes beyond it.

In complete contrast to these nationalistic interpretations is what *Lenin* wrote in his famous essay 'Karl Marx':

'The nation is a necessary product, and inevitable form, in the bourgeois epoch of social development. The working class cannot grow strong, cannot mature, cannot consolidate its forces, except by ''constituting itself the

1. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (International Publishers, 1948), p. 28.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
3. *Die Marxsche Geschichts-, Gesellschafts- und Staatstheorie*, Vol. II, p. 30.
4. Cunow was not the first to interpret the *Manifesto* in this sense. Like many other reformist innovations, this too originates with the founder of revisionism, E. Bernstein. He says, in an article on 'The German Social Democracy and the Turkish Tangle' (*Neue Zeit*, 1896-7, Nr. 4, pp. 111 ff.): 'The statement that the proletarian has no country is amended where, when and to the extent that he can participate as a full citizen in the government and legislation of his country, and is able to change its institutions according to his wishes.'
5. The idea that the Austrian workers might have wanted to fight for socialism in their country apparently did not even occur to the writer of the 'Introduction'...

nation", without being "national" ("though not in the bourgeois sense of the word"). But the development of capitalism tends to break down national boundaries, does away with national isolation, substitutes class antagonisms for national antagonisms. In the more developed capitalist countries it is perfectly true that "the workers have no fatherland" and that "united action" of the workers, in the civilised countries at least, "is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat".[6]

Yet even Lenin's interpretation is not satisfactory either. While, according to the *Manifesto*, the proletariat, even after winning political supremacy, will be 'so far, itself national', Lenin restricts this 'being national' *only to the beginnings of the working class movement*, before the working class 'comes of age'. In a *fully developed* capitalist society, says Lenin, the workers more than ever will have *no fatherland!* ....

That much about various interpretations of the quoted passages of the *Manifesto*. It may not appear strange that a number of socialist authors attempted to find their real meaning. It is much stranger that, in the course of time, these passages became a sort of credo, that far reaching programmatic slogans were derived from them, even if the words of the *Manifesto* were not fully understood.... This applies in particular to the statement that the workers have 'no country'. It was much easier to repeat it constantly than to *explain* this apparently simple sentence and bring it into agreement with the everyday *practice* of the Socialist (and later the Communist) parties. And, unfortunately, this practice seemed more and more to give the lie to the authors of the *Manifesto*....

II

What then is the actual meaning of the statements of the *Manifesto?* In what sense do the workers have 'no country', and how is it that, nonetheless, even after acquiring supremacy, they will still remain 'so far, national'? To answer this question, it would seem, we must first examine the terminology of the *Manifesto*.

It is well known that the terms of 'nation' and 'nationality' are not always and everywhere used in the same sense. In English and in French, for example, a 'nation' is usually taken to mean the population of a *sovereign state*, and the word 'nationality' is taken to be *either* a synonym of citizenship *or* to designate a mere *community of descent and language* (a 'people' — German 'Volk') — whereas in Germany and in Eastern Europe *both* terms refer primarily to communities of descent and language.[7]

Marx and Engels, especially in their early writings, almost always followed the English and French usage. They used the word 'nation' primarily to designate the population of a sovereign state (by way of exception, they also applied this term to 'historical' peoples, such as the Poles, who had been — temporarily — deprived of a state of their own). 'Nationality', on the other hand, meant to them: (1) either belonging to a state, that is, a people having a state[8]; or (2) a mere ethnic community. Accordingly, this is almost the only term they used in relation to the so-called 'peoples without history', such as the Austrian Slavs (Czechs, Croats, etc.) and Roumanians, or to 'remnants of peoples', such as Gaels, Bretons and Basques. And just this concept of 'nationality' — in sharp contrast to that of 'nation' (by which they understood a people which had a state of its own and therefore its own political history) — was most characteristic of the terminology of Marx and Engels! We cite some examples:

'The Highland Gaels and the Welsh [said Engels in the journal *The Commonwealth* in 1866] are undoubtedly of different *nationalities* to what the English are, although nobody will give to these remnants of peoples long gone by the title of *nations*, any more than to the Celtic inhabitants of Brittany in France....'[9]

And in the article 'Germany and Panslavism' (1855) he says of the Austrian Slavs:

'We can distinguish two groups of Austrian Slavs. One group consists of remnants of *nationalities*, whose own history belongs to the past and whose present historical development is tied up with that of *nations* of different race and speech.... Consequently, these *nationalities*, although living exclusively on Austrian soil, are in no way constituted as different *nations*.'[10]

In another place Engels says:

'Neither Bohemia nor Croatia possessed the power to exist as *nations* by themselves. Their *nationalities*, gradually undermined by historical factors which cause their absorption by more vigorous races, can expect to win back some sort of independence only if they link themselves with other Slavic nations' (Engels refers here to Russia).[11]

How much importance Engels attached to the terminological differentiation of the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationality' can be seen from the article cited from *The Commonwealth*, in which he makes a sharp distinction *between the 'national' and the 'nationality' questions, between the 'national' and the 'nationality' principles.* He approved only the first principle, vigorously *rejecting* the second. (As is well known, Marx and Engels mistakenly denied a political future to the 'peoples without history' — Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Ukrainians, Roumanians, etc.[12])

III

The *Communist Manifesto* too provides a number of instances of this use of terminology. When it speaks, for example, of the 'national industries' being undermined by the development of capitalism[13], it evidently refers to industries confined to the territory of a given state. The 'Nationalfabriken' (in the English version, 'factories owned by the State') referred to at the end of the second section are, of course, to be understood in the same sense. And in the sentence: 'Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one *nation*, with one government, one code of laws, one *national* class interest, one frontier and one customs tariff'[14], the words 'nation' and 'national' refer evidently to the state, the people having a state, and not to the nationality in the sense of descent and language. Finally, when in the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels speak of a *'national' struggle of the proletariat*, this means something quite different from the reformist and

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6. V.I. Lenin, *The Teachings of Karl Marx* (International Publishers, 1930), p. 31.
7. K. Kautsky says on this subject: 'The concept of the nation is likewise hard to delimit. The difficulty is not decreased by the fact that two different social formations are denoted by the same word, and the same formation by two different words. In Western Europe, with its old capitalist culture, the people of each state feel closely tied to it. There, the population of a state is designated as the nation. In this sense, for example, we speak of a Belgian nation. The further east we go in Europe, the more numerous are the portions of the population in a state that do not wish to belong to it, that constitute national communities of their own within it. They too are called "nations" or "nationalities". It would be advisable to use only the latter term for them' (*Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung*, Vol. II, p. 441).
8. Compare Marx's speech on Poland dated 22 February 1848: 'The three powers [viz. Prussia, Austria and Russia] marched along with history. In 1846, when incorporating Cracow into Austria, they confiscated the last ruins of the Polish *nationality*...' (*MEGA*, VI, p. 408; see also *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I, p. 247). Here too, as in many other passages in Marx and Engels, 'nationality' refers to nothing but government.
9. *Grünbergs Archiv*, VI, p. 215 ff.
10. *Gesammelte Schriften*, I, p. 229.
11. *Revolution und Kontrerevolution in Deutschland*, pp. 62 ff.
12. See my monograph: 'Fr. Engels und das Problem der "geschichtslosen" Völker', in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, IV, pp. 87-282.
13. *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 12.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

neo-reformist interpretations. This is clear from the following passage, which portrays the origin of the proletarian class struggle:

'At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the work-people of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them.... It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one *national* struggle between classes.'[15]

Here the 'national' struggle of the proletariat, i.e. the struggle waged on the scale of the entire state, is equated directly with the class struggle, since only such a centralisation of the struggles of the workers on the scale of the state could oppose the workers as a *class* to the *class* of the bourgeoisie and give these struggles the stamp of *political* struggles.[16] To return to the passage cited at the outset, when Marx and Engels speak of the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie as one that is *'at first national'*, they evidently have in mind a struggle waged at first within the framework *of a single state*, as is clear from the reason given, that 'the proletariat of each country must, of couse, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie'. But from this point of view the statement of the rise of the proletariat *'to be the leading class of the nation'*, its constituting itself *'the nation'*, likewise takes on a very definite meaning. It says that the proletariat must at first be guided by existing state borders, must rise to be the leading class *within the existing states*! That is *why* it will at first be *'so far, national'* — 'though not in the bourgeois sense of the word' — for the bourgeoisie sees its goal as political detachment of the peoples from each other and exploitation of foreign nations by its own. On the other hand, the victorious working class will from the beginning work towards the elimination of national hostilities and antagonisms of peoples. By its hegemony it will create conditions under which 'the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end'. From this, and only from this standpoint, it is possible to understand what the young Engels meant when he wrote of the 'abolition' or 'annihilation' of nationality: certainly not the 'abolition' of the existing ethnic and linguistic communities (this would have been absurd!), but of the *political* delimitations of peoples.[17] In a society in which (in the words of the *Manifesto*) 'the public power will lose its political character' and *the state as such will wither away*, there can be no room for separate 'national states'!....

IV

We feel that our analysis of the terminology of the *Manifesto* is more than a mere philological 'hair-splitting'. It has shown that the passages in question relate primarily to 'nation' and 'nationality' in the *political* sense and are therefore inconsistent with earlier interpretations. This applies especially to the thoroughly arbitrary and sophistical explanation by Cunow, who tried to derive a specific 'proletarian nationalism' from the *Manifesto* and reduced the internationalism of the working class movement to the desire for international cooperation among peoples[18]. But neither did the *Manifesto* preach that the proletariat should be indifferent with respect to national movements, should display a sort of 'nihilism' in questions of nationality! When the *Manifesto* says that the workers 'have no country', this refers to the bourgeois national *state*, not to nationality in the ethnical sense. The workers 'have no country' because, according to Marx and Engels, they must regard the bourgeois national state as a machinery for their oppression[19] — and after they have achieved power they will likewise have 'no country' in the political sense, inasmuch as the separate socialist national states *will be only a transitional stage on the way to the classless and stateless society of the future,* since the construction of such a society *is possibly only on the international scale!* Thus, the 'indifferentist' interpretation of the *Manifesto* that was customary in 'orthodox' Marxist circles has no justification. The fact that by and large this interpretation did little harm to the socialist movement, and in some sense even furthered it, is due to the circumstance that — although in a distorted way — it reflected the *inherent cosmopolitan tendency of the workers movement*[20], its effort to overcome national narrow-mindedness and the 'national separations and antagonisms between peoples'. In this sense, however, it was much *closer* to the spirit of Marxism and of the *Manifesto* than the nationalistic interpretation of Bernstein, Cunow and others.

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15. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

16. Compare *Die deutsche Ideologie*: 'Precisely because the bourgeoisie is no longer an estate, but a class, it is compelled to organise itself *nationally*, no longer locally, and to give its average interests a general form' (*MEGA*, V, p. 52).

17. Along these lines, Engels wrote in 1846: 'Only the proletarians can abolish nationality; only the awakening proletariat can allow various nations to fraternise' (*MEGA*, IV, p. 460). Similarly, in the *German Ideology*, the proletariat is referred to as a class that is 'already the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities, etc. within present-day society.... in which nationality is already abolished' (*Ibid.*, V, pp. 60 and 50; and cf. *Ibid.*, V, p. 454).

18. The high point of Cunow's misreading of the *Manifesto* is perhaps the following passage in his book: 'And it is just as unreasonable to conclude from the call "Workers of all countries unite!"... that Marx intended to say that the worker is outside the national community. No more than the call, "Journalists, physicians, philologists, etc., get together in international unions to carry out your tasks!" means that the members of these professional associations should not feel linked to their nationality....' (*Op. cit.*, II, p. 29).

Cf. Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875, whose point 5 reads:

'The working class strives for its emancipation first of all within the framework of the present-day national state, conscious that the necessary result of its efforts, which are common to the workers of all civilised countries, will be the international brotherhood of peoples.'

On this Marx said: 'Lassalle, in opposition to the *Communist Manifesto* and to all earlier socialism, conceived the workers' movement from the narrowest national standpoint. He is being followed in this — and that after the work of the International! It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organise itself at home *as a class* and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. In so far its class struggle is national, not in substance, but, as the *Communist Manifesto* says, "in form". But the "framework of the present-day national state", for instance, the German Empire, is itself in its turn economically "within the framework" of the world market, politically "within the framework" of the system of states. Every businessman knows that German trade is at the same time foreign trade, and the greatness of Herr Bismarck consists, to be sure, precisely in his pursuing a kind of *international* policy. And to what does the German workers' party reduce its internationalism? To the consciousness that the result of its efforts will be "international brotherhood of peoples" — a phrase borrowed from the bourgeois League of Peace, which is intended to pass as equivalent to the international brotherhood of the working classes in the joint struggle against the ruling classes and their governments. Not a word, therefore, about the international functions of the German working class!' (*Selected Works*, II, p. 25 f).

19. In one of his notebooks Marx excerpted the following from Brissot de Warville: 'There is one insight that only those suspect who draw up plans of education for the people — that there can be no virtue since three-quarters of the people have no property; for without property the people *have no country*, without a country everything is against them, and for their part they must be armed against all... Since this is the luxury of three-quarters of bourgeois society, it follows that these three-quarters can have neither religion nor morality nor attachment to the Government...' (*MEGA*, VI, p. 617).

20 In his letter to Sorge of 12-17 September 1874, Engels wrote of the 'common *cosmopolitan* interests of the proletariat'. This is an interesting contrast to the derogatory connotation which the word 'cosmopolitanism' has assumed in the political vocabulary of the Soviet Union.

MARX, ENGELS AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

A radio script by ISAAC DEUTSCHER for the BBC Third Programme (1949)

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels are the recognised forerunners of the Russian revolution and the Soviet State. What did they themselves think about revolution in Russia? Did they have any premonition of it? How did they view the relationship between Russia and the West? We shall let Marx, Engels and their Russian friends speak for themselves. Over nearly half a century Marx and, after his death, Engels kept up a regular correspondence with Russian revolutionaries. Much of that correspondence has been published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow. It is from this material that we have reconstructed the exchange of views between the founders of Marxism and their Russian contemporaries. The words attributed to them here are literal quotations from their letters.

The story starts in the middle Forties of the 19th Century. In those years already we see several Russians among the admirers of the young Marx. These first contacts with Russians were not particularly happy. One of Marx's 'admirers' was a certain Count Yakov Tolstoy, a former friend of Pushkin. In the circles of radicals in Paris Count Tolstoy posed as a revolutionary, but in fact he was one of the Tsar's chief political agents in Europe. Another Russian admirer of the young Marx was Annenkov, a radical nobleman, who expressed his enthusiasm for Marx in exalted lyrical epistles, and to whom Marx wrote a few long letters, in which he explained the main points of his controversy with Proudhon. There were a few more early Russian 'Marxists'; but, on the whole, these first contacts with the Russians did not inspire Marx with much respect for Russian radicalism. No revolutionary movement inside Russia existed as yet. The Tsar acted as the 'gendarme of European reaction', helping to suppress liberal and radical movements outside his own Empire. As young leaders of the most radical wing of German liberalism, Marx and Engels saw the greatest hope for Europe in a European war against Russia. They feared Slavophilism, and in the course of many years they repeatedly pilloried the governments of Western Europe, who were reluctant to start a crusade against Russia, as the accomplices or the agents of the Russian Tsar. This is how D. Ryazanov, the Russian biographer of Marx and one-time Director of the Institute of Marx and Engels in Moscow, characterises the young Marx's attitude towards Russia:

'Marx was bitterly hostile to official Russia. But for a very long time, till the close of the Sixties, he also remained highly sceptical if not hostile vis-à-vis the opposition elements inside Russia. Undoubtedly Marx was not quite free then from something like an anti-Slavonic prejudice, just as Herzen, the great Russian revolutionary, was not free of an anti-Germanic prejudice. But altogether apart from this he saw that in Russia society was completely dominated by the State. No political protest against Tsardom came from inside Russia and this accounted for the fact that in Marx's current revolutionary calculations Russia as yet played no role at all.'

Ryazanov is undoubtedly right. And this fact that Marx saw no hint of any revolutionary movement inside Russia accounted for his warm sympathy for the Polish struggle for independence from Russia, even though the leaders of that struggle were most often conservative Polish noblemen. The Poles dealt blows on the gendarme of European reaction and this to Marx was more important than anything else, especially in the period of the 1848 revolution. It was in that period, too, that Marx was in fairly close touch with Bakunin, the future founder of anarchism. But after the defeat of the revolution, Bakunin's meteor-like activity in Western Europe was interrupted for many years. Arrested by the Prussians for his part in the Dresden fighting in 1848, Bakunin was extradited to Russia. There, in his cell in the Peter-Paul fortress, he wrote in 1851 his pathetic confession to Tsar Nicholas I. That confession, in some ways the prototype of many puzzling political confessions to be heard from Russia later, was unknown to the world. It was to be discovered in the Tsar's archives and published only after the Bolshevik revolution. Many years after he had written that confession, Bakunin was to reappear in Europe, to get in touch with Marx once again, first as his friend and then as his rival and opponent. Bakunin, like Marx, sympathised with the Poles fighting for their independence from Russia, and this was one of the political links between the two. Engels, on the other hand, did not quite share Marx's enthusiasm for the Polish cause, and saw, perhaps earlier than Marx, the auguries that foreshadowed revolution in Russia. On 23 May 1851 he wrote from Manchester to Marx, already settled in London:

'...The more I think over the business, the clearer it becomes to me that the Poles as a nation are done for and can only be made use of as an instrument until Russia herself is swept into the agrarian revolution. From that moment onwards Poland will have absolutely no more reason for existence. The Poles have never done anything in history, except play at brave, quarrelsome stupidity. And one cannot point to a single instance in which Poland represented progress successfully, even if only in relation to Russia, or did anything at all of historic importance. Russia, on the other hand, is really progressive in relation to the East. For all its baseness and Slavonic dirt, Russian domination is a civilising element on the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia and among the Bashkirs and Tartars, and Russia has absorbed far more civilising and especially industrial elements than the Poles, whose whole nature is that of the idle cavalier. The mere fact that the Russian aristocracy — from the Tsar and Prince Demidov down to the lousiest fourteenth class boyar who is only *blahorodno* (well-born) — manufactures, bargains, cheats, allows itself to be corrupted and carries on every possible kind of Christian and Jewish business, is in itself an advantage. Poland has never been able to assimilate foreign elements. The Germans there in the towns are and remain Germans. Every German-Russian of the second generation is a telling example of Russia's faculty for Russianising Germans and Jews. Even the Jews develop Slavonic cheekbones there... Fortunately, in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* we never undertook any positive obligations towards the Poles, except the unavoidable one of their restoration with suitable frontiers — and that, too, only on the condition that they accomplish an agrarian revolution. I am certain that this revolution will come about completely in Russia before it does in Poland, owing to the national character and to Russia's more developed bourgeois elements. What are Warsaw and Cracow in comparison with Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa and so on?'

We shall see later that after many years, when the Russian revolution was much more clearly casting its shadow ahead, Engels took a more charitable view of Poland. But in 1851 he probably deliberately overstated his argument in order to damp down Marx's enthusiasm for the Poles and contempt for the Russians. A few years later, in 1859, Marx seemed to accept Engels' prognostication. In a letter to Engels, dated London, 13 December, he wrote:

'In Russia the movement is advancing faster than in all the rest of Europe. You see there the struggle for a Constitution, the struggle of the nobles against the Tsar and of the peasants against the nobles. Tsar Alexander has also at last discovered that the Poles will not allow themselves to be assimilated into a Slav-Russian nationality... All this more than offsets the extraordinary successes of Russian diplomacy during the last fifteen years, and especially since 1849. When the next revolution comes, Russia will be so kind as to revolutionise herself as well.'

A month later, on 11 January 1860, Marx added the following remark also in a letter to Engels:

'In my opinion the biggest events that are taking place in the world today are, on the one hand, the movement of the slaves in America, started by the death of John Brown, and on the other, the movement of the serfs in Russia. You will have seen that the Russian aristocracy have thrown themselves into direct propaganda for a Constitution, and that two or three members of the most prominent families have already found their way to Siberia...'

This was on the eve of the civil war in the United States and of the emancipation of the serfs in Russia. Yet, even now, no revolutionary party had formed itself in Russia, and so when a new Polish rising against Russia broke out in January 1863, Marx welcomed it. In a letter to Engels of 13 February 1863 he wrote:

'What do you think of the Polish affair? This much is certain — the era of revolution has now opened again in Europe. The general situation is good. But the comfortable delusions and the almost childish enthusiasm with which we hailed the era of revolution before February 1848 have all gone to hell. Old comrades have gone, others have dropped out or become demoralised, and we have gained no fresh blood, at any rate as yet. We know now in addition the role that stupidity plays in revolutions, and how revolutions are exploited by scoundrels... Let us hope that this time the lava will flow from East to West and not the other way round, so that we may be spared the "honour" of French initiative.'

Thus fifteen years after the revolution of 1848 Marx expressed his disappointment with its result, for its result was the Empire of Louis Bonaparte, and so he now hoped that the European revolution would gain by spreading from East to West. But the eruption of European revolution which Marx, once again somewhat more sanguine than his friend Engels, expected in connection with the Polish rising did not come. The one notable event in Western Europe to which the Polish rising gave the stimulus was the foundation of the First International in London. In a letter to Engels of 4 November 1864, Marx left us a highly informal account of this historic event which began with a public meeting convened to St. Martin's Hall in London by the Chairman of the London Trade Union Council with the purpose of expressing sympathy with the Polish insurrection. In the same letter, Marx recorded his meeting with Bakunin, who had reappeared in Europe:

'Bakunin sends you his greetings... Yesterday I saw him again for the first time after sixteen years. I must say I liked him very much and better than formerly. About the Polish movement he says that the Russian government has used the movement to keep Russia itself quiet, but never reckoned that the struggle would go on for eighteen months... Poland came to grief for two reasons... One of them is the hesitation of the Polish aristocracy in proclaiming *peasant socialism* openly and unambiguously from the very beginning. In future, after this failure of the Polish insurrection, Bakunin will take part in the socialist movement only. On the whole he is one of the few people whom after sixteen years I find to have gone forward rather than backward.'

Note the phrase about peasant socialism underlined by Marx in the original letter. We shall soon hear more about that. Suffice it to say here that Marx apparently quotes sympathetically Bakunin's phrase about peasant socialism, although for Western Europe he, Marx, expounded a strictly proletarian brand of socialism. Incidentally, Bakunin did not yet join the First International. This was to happen only several years later. Meanwhile both Engels and Marx repeatedly remark in their letters, not without a sense of unpleasant surprise, on the absence of any symptoms of revolutionary activity inside Russia.

A curious turn in the story of Marx's relations with the Russians occurs in the late Sixties. In 1867 he at last published the first volume of *Das Kapital*. The great work made almost no impression on the Western public. Authoritative economists and respectable reviewers in Britain, France and Germany hardly noticed it. It is therefore easy to imagine Marx's astonishment when one autumn day of 1868 he received a most deferential letter from Petersburg signed N. Danielson in which the writer 'most humbly' asked Marx's permission to translate into Russian and to publish in Russia *Das Kapital*. A well-known Russian publisher, a Polyakov, was very eager to bring out the book and was enquiring through Danielson whether he would be able to bring out the second volume of the work simultaneously with the first. At the same time Marx learned that his previous books and pamphlets had aroused an intense interest among the intelligentsia of St. Petersburg. He would not have been human if he had not felt somewhat flattered by all that. Here is his own reaction expressed in a letter to his German friend Dr. Kugelmann:

'A few days ago I was surprised by a Petersburg

bookseller who let me know that a Russian translation of *Das Kapital* is to be published... It is the irony of fate that the Russians whom I have for 25 years ceaselessly attacked, and not only in German but in French and English as well, that they have always been my "benefactors". In 1843-44 in Paris the Russian aristocrats there overflowed with admiration for me. My writings... have nowhere been in greater demand than in Russia. And the Russians are the first foreign nation to translate *Das Kapital*. No great significance should, of course, be attached to this. Russian aristocrats in their young years study at German universities and in Paris. They throw themselves avidly at the most extreme things that the West can supply. With them this is pure gourmandise similar to that which the French aristocracy displayed in the 18th Century. *Ce n'est pas pour les tailleurs et les bottiers*, Voltaire then said about his own work of enlightenment. All this does not prevent these same Russians from becoming scoundrels when they enter governmental service.'

Marx's disparaging remark was in part justified, especially when we remember Count Yakov Tolstoy, his supposed friend in Paris and Russian arch-spy. Nevertheless, the sociologist Marx seemed to miss here the sociological implications of the response which his work had evoked in Russia. This was certainly more than sheer intellectual gourmandise on the part of a few aristocrats. Two years later, in March 1870, Marx received the following significant letter from a group of Russian revolutionary emigrés in Geneva. The letter was signed by a man called N. Utin and two others.

Dear and Highly Esteemed Citizen, On behalf of a group of Russians we address to you the request that you should do us the honour and represent us on the General Council of the International Association in London. This group of Russians has just formed a section of the International. The great idea of the international movement of the proletariat is penetrating into Russia also...Our first objective is to assist most energetically in spreading the principles of the International among Russian working men... But we have set ourselves another task as well: we wish to unmask pan-Slavism. We wish to draw the youth of the Slav countries into the struggle against those old ideas which have served only the Tsarist Empire, an Empire which must collapse and give place to a free federation of rural and industrial associations, united with the workers of the whole world by common interests and identical views. Our persistent desire to have you as our representative is due to the fact that your name is deservedly honoured by Russian student youth... That youth... does not have and does not wish to have anything in common with the drones of the privileged classes... Brought up in the spirit of the ideals of our teacher Chernyshevsky, who in 1864 was for his writings condemned to forced labour in Siberia, we have welcomed with joy your exposition of socialist principles and your critique of the system of industrial feudalism... You have ceaselessly unmasked the false Russian patriotism and the sly lies of our Demostheneses who prophesy the glorious mission which the Slav peoples are allegedly predestined to perform, when in actual fact it has been their lot to be crushed by Tsarist barbarity and to serve as tools for the subjection of neighbouring peoples... We consider it also our duty to tell you in advance that we have absolutely nothing in common with Mr. Bakunin and his few supporters.'

By this time the struggle between Marx and Bakunin had flared up. The main issues at stake were anarchism versus socialism, federalism versus centralism. Slavophilism was a subsidiary point. Marx's hostility towards Slavophilism in all its varieties, official and revolutionary, was relentless. Note also that Marx's new Russian adherents described themselves as Chernyshevsky's pupils. Marx had already learned enough Russian to acquaint himself with the works of that great Russian writer, revolutionary and martyr, and his admiration for Chernyshevsky was very warm indeed. On 24 March 1870 Marx wrote to th Russians in Geneva:

'Citizens... It is with great pleasure that I accept the honourable duty... to act as your representative on the General Council of the International...'

On the same day Marx made the following less solemn comment in a letter to Engels:

'I enclose a letter from the Russian group in Geneva... I have accepted their commission to be their representative on the General Council. I have also sent them a short official reply and a private letter which I have permitted them to publish in their paper. A funny position for me to be functioning as the representative of young Russia! A man never knows what he may come to, or what strange fellowship he may have to submit to. In the official reply I... emphasised the fact that the chief task of the Russian section is to work in favour of Poland and thereby to free Europe from the Russian neighbourhood. I thought it safer to say nothing about Bakunin, either in the official or in the private letter. But what I will never forgive these fellows is that they turn me into a "venerable". They obviously think I am between 80 and 100 years old.'

Marx was then 52. The Russians indeed did treat him as a *'venerable'*. They usually addressed him as 'Esteemed Teacher' or 'Dear and Deeply Respected Teacher'. This tone of a peculiarly Russian exalted veneration strikes one as one follows this correspondence over half a century. It was equally characteristic of Annenkov's letters to Marx in the Forties as of Plekhanov's letters to Engels in the Nineties. Every now and then Marx or Engels vented a mild irritation at this until on one occasion Engels frankly wrote to Plekhanov:

'Dear Plekhanov, Please do stop calling me your "teacher" in this exalted manner. I am simply called Engels.'

However, behind these outward and somewhat comic signs of adulation, there was the fact of Marx's profound impact on the Russian mind freshly evidenced by the great success of *Das Kapital* in Russia. One might have thought that a camel would have passed easier through the eye of a needle than *Das Kapital* through the severe Russian censorship of those days. Yet by some freak the censorship did pass Marx's work and this is how its Russian translator Danielson reported the event to Marx in March 1872:

'The printing of the Russian translation is at last at an end... We wanted to publish the author's portrait in the book... but the censorship has not allowed us to do this.'

What a silly censor! Allowing Marx's ideas to reach the public he was afraid of the subversive effect which his photograph might have. And here is Marx's reply to Danielson:

'First of all many thanks for the extremely well bound volume. The translation is masterly. I would very much like to receive one unbound copy more for the British Museum.'

On 4 June Danielson was able to report:

'You are surely interested to know what has happened to the Russian translation of *Das Kapital*: Well, according to the law we submitted this book at the office of the censor for three days. Two censors went through it and put their conclusion about the book before a committee of censors. Even before the book was looked through, it had been decided as a matter of principle that the author's name was not a sufficient reason for confiscating it. It was decided to scrutinise the book in the most meticulous manner and to find out whether it did not contain passages which might threaten the foundations of the economic order.'

Danielson then quotes the following verdict of the committee of censors:

'Although the author is by his convictions a complete socialist and his whole work bears a very definite socialist character, as is evidenced by the following pages... nevertheless, in view of the fact that his argument cannot be regarded as being accessible to the general public, and since on the other hand his method of exposition is everywhere

couched in a strictly mathematical, scientific form, the committee does not find it possible to open legal proceedings against this book, and it has decided to allow the book to appear.'

Danielson continues in his letter to Marx:

'One might have thought that the committee of censors was so satisfied with your evidence that it has altogether become converted into a socialist club. Allowing this book to appear, the committee reckoned that nobody would read it. But here are the figures: the book appeared on 27 March. Up to 15 May 900 copies have been sold — altogether 3,000 have been printed. Most journals and newspapers have published reviews. All, without any exception, have praised it very highly.'

About this time, in 1873, begins the famous Narodnik movement 'Into the People'. Men and women of the Russian radical intelligentsia give up their social standing, and go to live among peasants in the hope that they would thus arouse the peasantry to revolt against Tsardom. This was the heyday of that peasant socialism which Bakunin had mentioned to Marx. The Narodniks, or Populists, as these socialists called themselves, had a highly original programme which was to become the object of a passionate controversy lasting nearly three decades, a controversy into which Marx and Engels were soon to be drawn and which was to be concluded after their death by Lenin. The Narodniks argued that Russia had no need to go through capitalist industrialisation and then to develop from capitalism to socialism. This, they thought, was the fate of Western Europe. But Russia, and perhaps other Slavonic nations as well, had their own peculiar road to socialism. Russia could, so the Narodniks argued, pass to socialism straight from feudalism. The Narodniks pointed to one feature in Russia's social structure which really was peculiarly her own and unknown to other European nations. Alongside with feudalism there had existed in the Russian countryside the *obshchina*, the primeval rural commune, in a sense the forerunner of the modern *kolkhoz*. In 1861, we remember, Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom. But the *obshchina*, the rural commune, still existed. The Narodniks argued that this rural commune was the basis of the Russian peasant socialism. All that was needed to turn Russia into a free socialist society was the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy.

Marx and Engels sympathised with this Narodnik trend, though not without reservation. Many of the Narodniks were Slavophiles and we already know how abhorrent Slavophilism was to Marx. One of the Narodniks' spokesmen in Western European exile was Lavrov, a close friend of Marx and Engels. Connected with the Narodniks was also another close friend of Marx, Lopatin, in many ways perhaps the most remarkable Russian personality in Marx's entourage.

Lopatin's story was most remarkable. It was he who mainly helped Marx to learn the Russian language and acquaint himself with Russian problems. He was nearly 30 years younger than Marx, for he was in his early twenties when he met Marx in 1868 or thereabouts. This young Russian was one of Marx's very few friends who felt confident enough to criticise various passages in *Das Kapital* while the work was still in manuscript. Moreover Marx himself acknowledged the validity of Lopatin's criticism and was persuaded by him to re-write some parts of his work. As a rule Marx was not easily impressed by much older and much more authoritative critics. But for the intellectual faculties of this young Russian he had a genuine respect. But Lopatin was primarily a man of action, not an intellectual. When urged to take to the pen Lopatin said of himself:

'No, I shall never be a writer. Just as there are grafomaniacs in the world, so there must also be a few grafophobes, people who abhor writing. I, at any rate, am a grafophobe.'

Lopatin was a very frequent guest at Marx's home at Maitland Park Road, near Chalk Farm in London. He was one of those political exiles who used to accompany Marx's family on their famous Sunday ramblings on Hampstead Heath during which Marx expounded his economic ideas, argued about philosophy, recited Shakespeare or Goethe, and enlightened himself from his companions about the affairs of their countries. During one of Lopatin's visits, Marx once again spoke about the fate of Chernyshevsky whom, as we know, he valued so highly. This time he remarked with some bitterness that it was a shame that Russia allowed her greatest thinker to perish in slavery. The words sank into Lopatin's mind. The young man conceived a plan: he would go to Russia to organise Chernyshevsky's escape from his Siberian forced labour camp. He said nothing about his plan to Marx or any member of his family. Towards the end of 1870 Marx received a letter from St. Petersburg. It was Lopatin who wrote:

'From the poststamp on this letter you will see that in spite of all your friendly warnings I have gone to Russia. But if you knew what impelled me to make this journey, I am sure you would find my motives to be important enough... Although, as you can easily imagine, the job I am to perform does not threaten the peace of Europe or the existence of our national government, it nevertheless seemed to me to be attractive enough... and so I made up my mind not to shrink from it... My task compels me to leave Petersburg soon and to travel into the interior of the country, where I shall spend three or four months. That is why I cannot avail myself of Mrs. Marx's kind invitation and I cannot come to your birthday dinner... The other day I sent you a communication to the effect that the Archive of Forensic Medicine and Hygiene has published an article on the conditions of the working class in Western Europe. The material for the essay was drawn mainly from your book, and the essay had the misfortune of arousing the wrath of the government. It was confiscated and an order was issued that it should be burnt. As the journal is up to a point an official organ, its editor has been dismissed. The second volume of Lassalle's works in a Russian translation has also been confiscated... A fortnight ago the editors of the leading Russian papers were summoned by the chief censor and were strictly and severely warned to publish no word against Prussia. One of the editors, Zagulyayev, published this order in the *Golos*. He was immediately arrested and deported into one of the remotest provinces. Even his wife does not know his whereabouts. Generally speaking, new arrests occur here every day... and the situation at large is such that I am beginning sincerely to share your view and the view of the General Staff about the necessity of war against the Russian government.'

The 'General Staff' to which Lopatin referred was, of course, the General Council of the First International. Marx, uneasy about the fate of his young friend, tried to make him return to London. On 13 June 1871 Marx wrote to Danielson:

'Our friend must return to London from his commercial journey. The correspondents of the firm for which he has been travelling have written to me from Switzerland and other places. The whole business will tumble down if he postpones his return; and he himself may forever lose the opportunity of rendering further services to his firm. The firm's competitors are informed about him, they look out for him everywhere and they may yet trap him.'

This was the all too transparent code style in which Marx couched his letters, which he, incidentally, signed not as Karl Marx, but as an English businessman, A. William, Esq., of 1 Maitland Park Road, London NW. Lopatin's 'firm' stood, of course, for the First International. Its 'competitors' were the Tsarist police. But Marx's urgings came too late. Lopatin, as Marx feared, had already been trapped in the Siberian town of Irkutsk. At the Irkutsk prison he wrote the following statement on the purpose of his journey:

'At the time of my stay in London I met there a certain Karl Marx, one of the most remarkable writers on political

economy and one of the best educated men in the whole of Europe. Five years ago that man decided to learn the Russian language. Having learned it he by chance came across Chernyshevky's commentaries on the work of John Stuart Mill and other essays by Chernyshevsky. Marx acquired a profound respect for Chernyshevsky. More than once he told me that among all the contemporary economists, Chernyshevsky was the only truly original thinker... He said that Chernyshevsky's writings... represented the only contemporary works in that field which deserve to be read and studied; that the Russians should be ashamed that none of them had so far taken the trouble to acquaint Europe with so outstanding a thinker; that the political death of Chernyshevsky was a loss not only to Russia but to all European science... I did not confide my plan (to rescue Chernyshevksy) even to Marx, in spite of my love and respect for him. I was sure that Marx would have considered it crazy and would have tried to dissuade me from it, and I did not like giving up a task I had set myself.'

Lopatin's surprising frankness is explained by the fact that he addressed this statement to a liberal Governor Sinelnikov, who was doing his utmost to help Lopatin. Eventually Lopatin managed to escape from Russia, but then followed a whole series of heroic secret escapades into and out of Russia, a series which ended with his imprisonment for twenty years in the dreaded fortress of Schlusselburg. Meanwhile Marx himself intended to do something to mitigate Chernyshevsky's lot. He thought of organising a campaign in Western Europe and asked his Russian friends for biographical material about the Russian writer. In reply to this Danielson wrote:

'The trustee of Chernyshevsky's children who wanted to publish Chernyshevsky's critical, bibliographical and literary essays was warned that if only one of these essays appeared in print, the publisher would at once be deported from Petersburg... The other day I received a letter from Lopatin saying that it was rumoured that Chernyshevsky had become insane. This is quite possible. Chernyshevsky has recently been deprived of all the necessities of life, food, linen, and so on, and all this in a sub-polar climate... In order to receive information about Chernyshevsky I have approached his friends. One of them who was closely connected with Chernyshevsky from early youth and knew him intimately is now afraid of uttering his name. In 1866 Chernyshevsky sent him the manuscript of a new novel in which he treated his hero in exactly the same way in which Thackeray treated Pendennis, a novel describing the social movement of the Forties, the impression that the Crimean war made on society, the emancipation of the peasants, and so on. And this friend of Chernyshevsky's found nothing better to do than to burn the manuscript... Another friend of Chernyshevsky's has promised me to collect all the desired information.'

Some time later Danielson wrote again to Marx:

'I am sorry that I have not yet been able to send you the promised biographical materials on Chernyshevsky. Although I myself would think it useful to publish a possibly complete biography, those who are in possession of the necessary materials hold a different view. They are definitely convinced that such a publication could only do harm to Chernyshevsky.'

Such was the oppressive atmosphere in the Russia of the Seventies. The Narodniks failed to achieve their objective. The peasants did not revolt against the Tsar. Peasant socialism was in the throes of a crisis. This was aggravated by the repercussions of the Russo-Turkish war of 1878 when it seemed that Britain, too, would go to war against Russia. In November 1878 Lopatin wrote to Engels:

'Socialist propaganda among the peasants has almost ceased. The most vigorous among the revolutionaries have instinctively passed over to a purely political struggle... That struggle is still of an extremely narrow character. They are content with acts of revenge on some official personalities and with attempts to free individual comrades. Society as a whole is losing the last remnants of any respect for the government and often watches with sympathy the activities of the extreme party. But, since peace has not yet been concluded, our society cannot yet look after its own affairs. The remainder of patriotism, or if you like, of chauvinism prevents our people from staging "internal trouble" to the "joy of our enemies". Many even think that the intrigues of perfidious Albion are the real cause of our misfortunes.'

During this same crisis Marx was anxious to see 'perfidious Albion' moving against Russia. Thus he wrote to Lavrov:

'An Irish MP intends to put a question in the House of Commons next week with the object that the English government should ask the Russian government to carry out in Russia those reforms which the Russian government considers to be necessary in Turkey. He wants to use the opportunity in order to say something about atrocities committed in Russia. I have told him a few details about the measures taken by the Russian government against... Poles. Could you not prepare a short memorandum in French about... repressive measures introduced in Russia in the last few years... I think this would bring some benefit to your unfortunate compatriots.'

Shortly after the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish war in 1879 a significant split occurred in the ranks of the Russian Narodniks. Some of the Narodniks, losing their hope in a peasant revolt that would overthrow Tsardom, concentrated their energy on terroristic attempts. They began to prepare an attempt on the life of the Tsar himself. Others dissociated themselves from the terroristic wing of the party. Among those opposed to revolutionary terrorism were two men and one woman, Plekhanov, Axelrod and Vera Zasulich, who were to become the founders of a strictly Marxist, Social Democratic movement in Russia. Vera Zasulich herself had carried out an attempt on the life of the Governor of St. Petersburg, General Trepov; but she now became convinced of the futility of such attempts. Most of the orthodox Narodniks still believed in Russia's mission to achieve a peasant socialism. They still set their hopes on the rural commune and were oppsed to the infiltration of industrial capitalism into Russia. Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich gradually came to the conclusion that the rural commune was disintegrating, that peasant socialism was unreal, that Russia must go through the phase of industrial capitalism and democratic self-government before she could approach socialism. This was eventually to become the attitude of all Russian Marxists.

Marx and Engels were drawn into the dispute. But, curiously enough, they did not lend their support to the Russian Marxists, who preached proletarian socialism for Russia. They continued to sympathise with the peasant socialism of the Narodniks and also with their terroristic attempts. On 6 November 1880, Marx received the following message signed by the Executive Committee of the Social Revolutionary Party in Russia:

'Citizen, the class of the advanced intelligentsia of Russia, always attentively watching the spiritual development of Europe and sensitively reacting to it, has met with enthusiasm the publication of your scientific works. The best trends of Russian life have found a scientific justification in these works. *Das Kapital* has become the inseparable companion of educated people. But in this empire of Byzantine darkness and Asiatic despotism any progress of social ideas is branded as a revolutionary movement. Your name could not but become inseparably connected with the internal struggle in Russia, arousing profound respect and lively sympathy on the part of some people, and serving as the object of baiting by others... As to us, Esteemed Citizen, knowing with what interest you have followed the struggle of Russian revolutionaries in all its phases, we are happy to be able to tell you that the worst time in that struggle is over. The revolutionary attempts, having

hardened the fighters, have led not only to the elaboration of the principles of revolutionary theory. They have also directed the practical business of the revolution to the right road towards realisation. The revolutionary groups... progressively come together, merge and make the common attempt to join in the popular protest which is as old with us as slavery itself. All these circumstances bring the moment of victory nearer. Our task would be much easier if the firm sympathies of the free peoples were on our side... We send our comrade, Lev Hartman, abroad in order that he should acquaint England and America with the current events in our social life. And we beg you, Esteemed Citizen, to help Hartman in this... We firmly believe that the hour is not far when our unfortunate country will take the place in Europe which is due to a free nation. We are happy to express to you, Esteemed Citizen, the feeling of profound respect on behalf of the whole Social Revolutionary Party in Russia.'

The emphasis with which the authors of this message spoke about the nearness of Russia's liberation was due to the fact that their preparations for the assassination of the Tsar were in the final stage, a circumstance of which Marx did not know. Four months later, on 13 March 1881, Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by the revolutionaries. A few days after the event Marx and Engels sent the following message to a meeting of Slav revolutionaries which was convened to mark the tenth anniversary of the Commune of Paris:

'We greatly regret that we cannot attend your meeting personally... When the Commune of Paris fell, after a savage slaughter organised by the defenders of "order", the victors in no way anticipated that before ten years an event would occur in the remote Petersburg which in the end must lead to the creation of the Commune of Russia...'

Marx and Engels regarded such terroristic attempts as a peculiarly Russian method of revolutionary action, justified by peculiar Russian conditions. They had no use for such methods in Western Europe. In a letter to his daughter Jenny, Marx wrote shortly afterwards:

'Have you been following the trial of the (Tsar's) assassins in Petersburg? They are sterling people through and through, *sans pose melodramatique*, simple, business-like, heroic. Loud words and deeds are irreconcilable opposites. The Petersburg Executive Committee, which acts so energetically, issues manifestoes of refined "moderation". It is far removed from the schoolboy manner in which... other childish whimperers preach tyrannicide as a "theory" and "panacea" (that was done by such innocent Englishmen as Disraeli, Savage Landor, Macaulay and Stanfield, the friend of Mazzini). The Russians, on the contrary, try to teach Europe that their *modus operandi* is a specifically Russian and historically inevitable method about which there is no more reason to moralise — for or against — than there is about the earthquake in Chios.'

... 'specifically Russian...' Well, this was precisely what the Marxists in Russia, Plekhanov and his friends, objected to. They did not want any specifically Russian socialism based on a rural commune, or any specifically Russian terrorism. They were Westerners, in this case more Western than Marx himself, who was so proud of the heritage of German philosophy, English political economy, and French socialism, all united in his own theory. In February 1881 Vera Zasulich wrote to Marx:

'Esteemed Citizen, it will be known to you that your *Kapital* enjoys the greatest popularity in Russia... But what is probably unknown to you is the role which *Das Kapital* plays in our controversies over the land problem in Russia and over our rural commune. You know better than anybody else how topical this problem is in Russia. You know what Chernyshevsky thought of it. Our progressive literature... continues to develop his ideas... This is an issue of life and death, especially for our socialist party. Even the personal fate of our revolutionary socialists depends on the view they take about this matter.

'Either or. Either this rural commune, freed from excessive taxation and feudal dues and from arbitrary police rule, is capable of developing in a socialist direction... In this case it is the duty of the revolutionary socialist to devote all his energy to the liberation and development of the rural commune.

'Or else, the rural commune is doomed, and then the socialist can only try and find out after how many decades the land of the Russian peasants is likely to pass into the hands of the bourgeoisie, after how many centuries perhaps capitalism in Russia can attain the level it has attained in Western Europe. In this case the socialist should make propaganda only among the urban workers...

'Recently we have often heard the view that the rural commune is an archaic institution, doomed by history and scientific socialism... People who expound this view call themselves your genuine pupiils, Marxists. Their strongest argument is often: "This is what Marx has said"...

'You, Citizen, will understand to what an extent we are interested to know your view, what a great service you would render us by expressing your opinion on the possible fortunes of our rural commune and on the theory that all countries of the world must inevitably go through all the phases of capitalist production. Citizen, on behalf of my comrades, I take it upon myself to ask you to render us this service...'

Marx answered:

'Chère Citoyenne, a nervous ailment recurring periodically in the last ten years has prevented me from answering your letter... earlier. I regret that I cannot give you a short answer to the question addressed to me that would be fit for publication. A few months ago I already promised to give an essay on this subject to the Petersburg Committee. But I hope that a few lines will be enough to dispel any of your doubts about the misunderstanding connected with my so-called theory.

'Analysing the origin of capitalist production I said (in *Das Kapital*): "At the basis of the capitalist system there is the complete dissociation of the producer from the means of production"...'

What Marx means here is that the modern industrial worker, unlike the artisan, does not own the tools with which he works.

' "The expropriation of the rural producer forms the essence of the whole process. Radically this has so far been accomplished only in England"...'

Marx refers here to the 'enclosures', by which the English yeomanry was deprived of the land and then largely transformed into an urban working class.

' "But all other countries of Western Europe proceed along the same path." Consequently "the historic inevitability" of this process is here precisely limited to the countries of Western Europe. I have given the reason for this in the following passage in *Das Kapital*: "Private property based on personal labour is eliminated by private capitalist property based on the exploitation of the labour of other men, on wage labour." In this process taking place in the West we are thus concerned with the transformation of one form of private property into another form of private property. With Russian peasants, however, it would be, on the contrary, a question of transforming their common property into private property.

'The analysis contained in *Das Kapital* does not provide any argument for or against the viability of the Russian rural commune. But special research which I have been carrying out on the basis of first hand materials has convinced me that this rural commune forms the base for Russia's social renaissance. However, in order that it should be able to function as such, it is necessary to remove first of all the destructive influences to which that commune is now being subjected from all sides, and then to secure normal conditions for its free development.'

Thus, the Russian Marxists who argued that the rural commune must be destroyed by capitalism, and that only after that can Russia begin to move towards socialism, were

cold-shouldered by Marx himself. But this controversy had only begun when on 15 March 1883 Marx died. Two days later Lavrov, the Narodnik, wrote to Marx's daughter:

'Chère Mademoiselle Eleanor, Thank you for having remembered me in your great sorrow. Yes, you have been right, quite right in counting on my sympathy. Altogether apart from my friendship for your father, so exceptionally outstanding a personality, and for yourself, I have known from experience what it means to feel lonely in a crowd of more or less pleasant acquaintances and in the hurly-burly of everyday work and struggle, which absorb your thoughts and weary your nerves but do not fill the emptiness of your private life. You work, you do your duty, but the place by your side is empty. All that used to make the work pleasant and the duty easy.... all that is no more and never will be. Only one consolation remains.... the awareness that there are so many people even more unfortunate, people who have never known what it means to be surrounded by loved and respected beings... Very few have been so happy as to have had a family like yours and as to be able to retain in their memories the picture of people so worthy.... as were those whom you have just lost. This, of course, is no consolation, but, Chère Mademoiselle Eleanor, I do not believe in consolation. I think it is silly to try and console anybody in a great misfortune. Only time, indifferent to all grief.... closes the living wound, leaving a scar for ever. Having learned about the heavy loss suffered by science and the socialist party of the whole world, I succeeded before Lafargue's departure only to jot down hurriedly a few words on behalf of my socialist compatriots to be read at the grave of the great deceased....'

After Marx's death, Engels continued the correspondence with the Russian revolutionaries. In some ways his exchange of views with the Russians was perhaps more interesting than Marx's, in part because Engels was a more regular letter writer than his deceased friend, and in part because it was only now that the Russian revolution more distinctly cast its shadow ahead. In the year of Marx's death Engels expounded to Lopatin his view on Russia's future, and Lopatin recorded this in a letter to the Executive of the Narodnik Party in Petersburg:

'Everything, so Engels says, depends now on what happens in Petersburg, for it is on Petersburg that the eyes of more thoughtful and farsighted men in Europe are now turned. Russia is the France of this age. To her belongs legitimately the revolutionary initiative of a new social transformation... With the doom of Tsardom the last rampart of continental monarchism will be destroyed. Russia's "aggressiveness" will be eliminated. So will Poland's hatred of Russia and many other things besides. This will lead to a new combination of powers and result in the destruction of the Austrian Empire. Many other countries will receive from the downfall of Tsardom a powerful impulse towards their own internal transformation.'

Engels apparently held that the downfall of Tsardom was very near and that it might be brought about by terrorist attempts in the Narodnik style. In this he was wrong; and the Russian Marxists very tactfully tried to disillusion him. Three years after the assassination of Alexander II, Zasulich wrote to Engels:

'You say in your letter that the political situation in Russia is so tense that one could await the beginning of a crisis any day. You must have been thinking about the financial situation only? For in other respects the situation, so it seems to me, is now less tense than it was two or three years ago.'

Zasulich was voicing here the common belief of the Russian Marxists that the terroristic attempts were weakening the revolutionaries much more than Tsardom, and that the overthrow of Tsarist autocracy could not be achieved by the killing of one autocrat. They set all their hopes on the growth of a labour movement which would act *en masse* against the Tsarist regime. But Engels still disagreed with Zasulich and her friends:

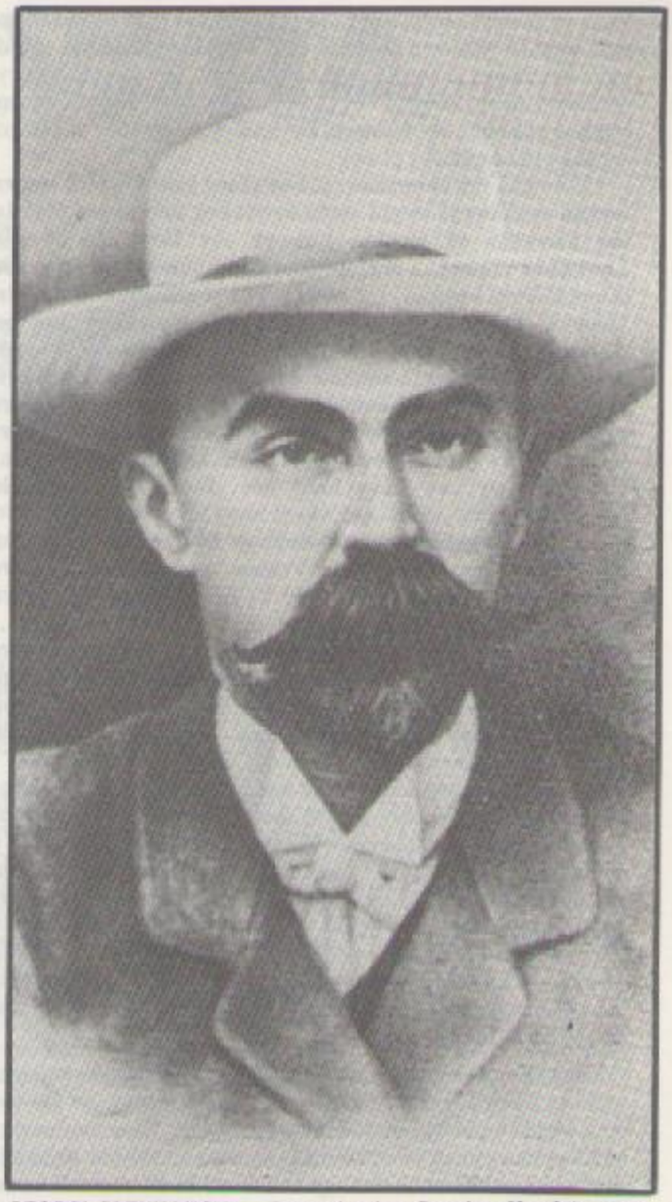
'Speaking about the situation in Russia I had, of course, in mind the financial situation in particular, but not only this. The general situation of a government which, like the St. Petersburg administration, is at the end of its tether..... cannot but become more and more critical. The nobles and the peasants are ruined. The army is hurt in its chauvinistic feelings and disturbed by the conduct of an Emperor who constantly hides himself. The government is impelled to wage war in order to provide an outlet for the "silly passions" and the general discontent: at the same time it cannot undertake anything because of the lack of money and of the unfavourable political circumstances. There is a strong national intelligentsia, burning with the desire to break the chains that fetter it. On top of all this, the complete lack of money.... It seems to me that every month now ought to accentuate the difficulties.... If a constitutionally minded and courageous Grand Duke were now to step forward, even Russian society would realise that a palace revolution would be the best way out of this impasse.'

It is easy to imagine with what embarrassed or perhaps ironical comment the Russian Marxists must have received Engels' prognostication. It was in the same year, 1884, that Plekhanov published his epoch-making book *Our Disagreements*, which was entirely devoted to the repudiation of the Narodnik hopes and illusions and which established the case for a Russian proletarian socialism. Engels read or at least scanned Plekhanov's book soon after its appearance and commented on it:

'I repeat that I am proud that there exists among young Russian people a party which has sincerely and without reservation adopted the great economic and historic theories of Marx, and has definitely broken with anarchist and Slavophile traditions.... Marx himself would have been proud of this had he lived to see it. But as far as I am concerned I know too little the present situation in Russia to presume myself competent to judge on the specific tactical problems.... The inner and intimate story of the Russian revolutionary party.... is almost completely unknown to me.... What I know, or what I think I know about the situation in Russia makes me inclined to take the view that the Russians approach their 1789. The revolution *should* break out within some definite time, but it may break out any day. The country is like a charged mine which only needs a fuse to be laid to it. This has been so especially since the assassination of Alexander II. This is one of those exceptional cases in which a handful of people can *make* a revolution. They can by a small push make the whole system crumble.... and release.... such explosive forces as it will be impossible to subdue.

'If Blanqui's fantasy, that it is possible to shake the whole society by means of a small conspiracy, has ever had any foundation then this has been in Petersburg. Once a spark has been put to the powder, once the explosive forces have been released and popular energy transformed from potential into kinetic (to use Plekhanov's favourite and very good metaphor), the people who have fired the fuse will be carried away by the explosion.... Suppose that those people imagine that they can seize and hold the power — well, what does it matter? Provided they make the breach which destroys the dyke, the flood itself will soon put an end to their illusions. But if it so happens that these illusions magnify their will to action — is it worth while to complain about this? People who boast that they have made a revolution always find on the next day that they knew not what they did, that the accomplished revolution is not at all similar to that which they had wished to accomplish. This is what Hegel calls the irony of history.... Whether this faction or that gives the signal, whether this is done under this or that flag matters little to me. Let it be a palace conspiracy for the beginning, it will be swept away the next day.... And now good-bye, chère citoyenne, it is half past two after midnight, and I shall not manage to add anything before tomorrow's mail. If this is more convenient to you, write to me in Russian. But do not forget, I beg you, that I do not read

NICOLAI CHERNYSHEVSKY, for whom Marx hoped to organise a campaign in Western Europe. He told Lopatin that Chernyshevsky's political death 'was a loss not only to Russia but to all European science'.



GEORGI PLEKHANOV — he and other Russian Marxists were embarrassed by Marx and Engels' apparent endorsement of the Narodniks' terroristic methods in Russia.

Russian handwriting every day.'

It was only in the Nineties, towards the end of his life, that Engels admitted that the Russian Marxists were right against the Narodniks, although even then he himself refused to engage in any public polemics against his old Narodnik friends. But even in the Nineties Engels still viewed Tsarist Russia, as he and Marx had done in 1848, as the chief gendarme of European reaction, whose overthrow in one way or another, by Marxists or non-Marxist method, was the most important thing. When his Russian friends objected to some of his pro-Polish and anti-Russian remarks, Engels wrote to Zasulich:

'I admit that the dismemberment of Poland looks quite differently from the Russian viewpoint than from the Polish one, which has become the viewpoint of the West. But, after all, I must bear in mind the Polish case as well. If the Poles wish to obtain territories which the Russians at large think that they have acquired for ever, which are ethnically Russian, then it is not for me to solve this problem.... In my view the interested peoples themselves should determine their own fate, in the same way in which the Alsatians themselves should choose between Germany and France.... I hope that my article (on Russian diplomacy) will make some impression when it is published in English. The faith of the English liberals in the Tsar's zeal for freedom is now strongly shaken by the news from Siberia, by Kennan's book (on Russian slave labour camps), and by the recent unrest in the Russian universities. That is why I have hurried to publish this article. It is necessary to strike the iron while it is hot. The diplomacy of Petersburg hoped that they would be helped in their new drive in the East by the fact that the Tsarophile Gladstone... is back in office... In view of France's servility towards the Tsar and England's benevolent connivance, it might be possible for the Tsar to risk a new step forward and even to conquer Constantinople.... That is why the present renewal of the anti-Tsarist movement among the English liberals seems to me to be so extraordinarily important for our cause.... From the time that a revolutionary movement emerged inside Russia, the once invincible Russian diplomacy succeeds in nothing any longer. And it is very good that this should be so, because this diplomacy is your as well as our most dangerous enemy.'

Incidentally, 45 years after Engels wrote these words, he was criticised by Stalin, who pointed out that Engels one-sidedly emphasised the reactionary role of the Tsarist diplomacy, overlooking the reactionary features of the diplomacy of the Western powers. But let us now return to Engels' final conclusions on the controversy between peasant and proletarian socialism in Russia. These he set out in a

letter to Danielson in 1893. He now argued that if socialism had won in Western Europe, the Russian socialism could have developed from the rural commune. But as the victory of socialism in Western Europe was delayed, as capitalism reigned supreme in Western Europe, Russia, too, must go through the capitalist phase:

'No doubt, the commune.... contained germs which under certain conditions might have developed and saved Russia the necessity of passing through the torments of the capitalistic regime.... But the first condition for this was the impulse from without, the change of the economic system in Western Europe, the destruction of capitalism in the countries where it had originated.... If we in the West had been quicker in our economic development, if we had been able to upset the capitalistic regime some ten or twenty years ago, there might have been time yet for Russia to cut short the tendency of her own evolution towards capitalism. Unfortunately, we have been too slow. The economic consequences of capitalism which must drive capitalism into a crisis are only just now developing: England is fast losing her industrial monopoly, France and Germany are approaching the industrial level of England, and America bids fair to drive them all out of the world markets.... The introduction of a... free trade policy in America is sure to complete the ruin of England's industrial monopoly, and to destroy the industrial export trade of Germany and France. Then the crisis must come.... But in the meantime your Russian rural commune fades away.... For the rest I grant you that Russia being the last country invaded by large scale capitalist industry and at the same time possessing the largest peasant population will experience this upheaval in a more acute and painful form than any other country.... But history is the most cruel of all goddesses and she drives her triumphal chariot over heaps of corpses... And we, men and women, are unfortunately so stupid that we never can pluck up courage for a real advance unless we are compelled to do so by sufferings that seem almost out of proportion (to the objective desired).'

Mark the date at which Engels wrote these meaningful words: 1893. It is the year in which Lenin, now twenty-two years old, enters the political stage. Mark also the tone of disillusionment in which Engels speaks about the delays in the advance of revolutionary socialism in Western Europe. This tone creeps more and more frequently into his letters. In 1894 he writes to Plekhanov about the condition of socialism in Great Britain:

'Here things move ahead, but they do so only slowly and in zig-zags.... One can really be driven to despair by such people as these English trade unionists with their sense of their imaginary national superiority, with their highly bourgeois ideas and opinions, with their "practical" narrow-mindedness, with their chieftains thoroughly infected with the disease of parliamentary corruption. And yet things do move forward. Only that the "practical" Englishmen will be the last to come (to us), but when they come they will throw a very solid weight on to the scales.'

The more remote the prospects of revolution in Western Europe appeared to Engels, the clearer did they become in Russia. On his death-bed in 1895 Engels still watched the first moves made by the new and the last Tsar Nicholas II. In a letter to Plekhanov, Engels made the following almost prophetic remark:

'If the devil of revolution has taken anybody by the scruff of his neck then it is Tsar Nicholas II.'

To this Plekhanov, referring to a rather maladroit speech by the young Tsar, replied:

'The young idiot from the Winter Palace has by his speech rendered a great service to the party of the revolution.'

In 1895 Engels died. In an obituary on this founding father of the Marxist school the young Lenin wrote:

'Marx and Engels.... sympathetically followed the Russian revolutionary movement.... They both became socialists from democrats, and the democratic hatred of political arbitrariness was extremely strong in them. This directly political feeling and their profound theoretical understanding of the connection between arbitrary political rule and economic oppression.... made Marx and Engels uncommonly responsive *politically*.

'... Apart from this Marx and Engels clearly saw that a political revolution in Russia would be of the greatest importance also for the Western European labour movement. An autocratic Russia has always been the stronghold of all European reaction. The unusually comfortable international situation in which Russia has found herself since the 1870 war, which had for long turned France and Germany against each other, has, of course, also increased the importance of autocratic Russia as a reactionary force. Only a free Russia, having no need to oppress Poles, Finns, Germans, Armenians, and other small nations, nor to incite France and Germany against one other, will allow contemporary Europe to recover freely from the burdens of war, weaken all reactionary elements in Europe and strengthen the European working class. That is why Engels desired the establishment of political freedom in Russia, among others in the interest of the labour movement in the West.'

CHE GUEVARA

1967-77: On the tenth anniversary of his death

By MICHEL LEVY

On 8 October 1967, a troop of Bolivian Rangers, trained and 'advised' by US officers, trapped Che Guevara in the Nancahuazu River region. Several hours later, on direct instructions from headquarters and the dictator-President Barrientos, he was murdered by firing squad.

American journalist Daniel James, who was in close contact with certain CIA circles, was later to write cynically: 'The Armed Forces' decision to execute Che had been made well in advance and was not the outcome of a last minute decision. It was a matter of policy...'[1] (It should be added that Che had always respected the lives of his own prisoners: Major Sanchez, an officer in the Bolivian army who had been imprisoned by the guerrillas, was freed several days later and the memory of this episode impressed him deeply. In 1971 he became the only officer to resist General Banzer's fascist coup.) The Bolivian army and their US 'advisers' had learned their lesson from the 'error' committed by Batista in 1953 when he had failed to kill Fidel Castro immediately upon his capture.

Isolated in a harsh and sparsely populated region with no tradition of struggle or peasant organisation, and cut off from any possible urban support by the betrayal of the Bolivian Communist Party, the rural guerrillas under Che's leadership were doomed to failure and it was only the courage and the outstanding endurance of his fighters which enabled him to hold out for eight months.

The death of Che was the beginning of the end of the rural guerrillas' period of breakthrough. Little by little they were to be crushed throughout Latin America (Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, etc.) with the exception of Colombia. In the years to follow, a second wave of guerrilla warfare emerged, this time in the great urban centres of the southern section of the continent. This too met with annihilation in Brazil, Uruguay, etc., although not in Argentina. Faced with such a list of failures, the Latin American revolutionaries of today have been forced to redefine their concept of armed struggle to include the forging of stronger links with the activities of the masses in workers' and peasants' union organisations, the *political* mobilisation of large sections of the population under the leadership of a vanguard party — in a word, to return to a certain extent to the 'classic' Leninist problematic of dual power, of the revolutionary crisis and the arming of the proletariat.

Is this to say that the ideas of Che have been superseded and that his work belongs to the history books alone? It would be easy — perhaps too easy — to list after the event the errors he made in Bolivia[2]: illusions on the possibility of the Bolivian CP playing a revolutionary role; an underestimation of the necessity of building a political revolutionary organisation among the workers and peasants and particularly among the miners, the vanguard of the Bolivian proletariat; a concept of armed struggle concentrating too heavily on geographico-military aspects and lacking any organised links with the mass movement, etc.

However, nothing would be more superficial and *false* than to dismiss entirely the work of Che and his contribution to revolutionary strategy in Latin America (and elsewhere). Not only because rural guerrilla activities might still prove to be a decisive means of struggle in agrarian based countries, but also because Che was no mere theoretician of guerrilla warfare. At the core of his military and political writings, there is a fundamental idea which has lost none of its relevance: 'If one admits that the enemy will fight to remain in power, then one must envisage the destruction of the oppressing army; it must therefore be opposed by a people's army.'[3] The rational kernel of his thoughts on strategy (which recurs constantly in his writings), more profound and important than the technical instructions for the *foco* of guerrilla warfare, is the conviction that 'the overthrow and total destruction of the army by the forces of the people' is 'the indispensable condition for any true revolution'.[4]

Was Che a utopian, an adventurist? Let us read again the passage written in 1961, thinking meanwhile of Santiago, September 1973: 'When people speak to us of gaining power by an electoral process, our question is always the same: if a popular movement is put into power by a large popular vote and decides to begin the great social transformations which make up its programme, would it not immediately find itself in conflict with the reactionary sectors of the country? Hasn't the army always been the tool of these classes? If this is true, then it would be logical to assume that the army would be on the side of its own class and would take part in the struggle against the new government. By means of a coup d'etat, more or less violent, the government would be overturned and the whole game would start again *ad infinitum*. Of course, it could also happen that the oppressing army would be defeated by an armed popular response defending the government. What seems unlikely to us is that the armed forces would accept profound social

1. Daniel James, *The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Che Guevara and Other Captured Documents*, Allen & Unwin, London, p. 58.

2. Let us not forget that our own movement, the Fourth International, at its Ninth World Congress in 1969, defended a concept of armed struggle in Latin America which was not without similarities to that put forward by Che.

3. Ernesto Che Guevara, 'Tactics and Strategies of the Latin American Revolution', 1962 in *Textes politiques*, Maspero, 1968, p. 83.

4. 'Cuba: An Isolated Case or the Vanguard of the Struggle Against Imperialism?', 1961, in *Textes politiques*, p. 67.

reforms and resign themselves calmly to being liquidated as a caste."[5]

It is sufficient to compare this astonishing prophecy with something written by Luis Corvalan, secretary of the Chilean CP, in 1970, in order to see where lies lucid realism and where tragically irresponsible utopianism: 'Amongst our armed forces a spirit of professionalism and a respect for the government established according to the Constitution reign supreme. Moreover, the Army and the Navy were born in the struggle for independence."[6]

Today three quarters of the population of Latin America are under military rule. The Latin American people are experiencing the 'Iron Heel' as described by Jack London: brutal oppression by an officer class in the pay of an oligarchy of big capitalism and imperialism. ITT and the IMF have replaced the United Fruit Company and the Wall Street banks of the Thirties, but it is still the imperialist monopolists, via the military, who make and break governments and regimes in many of the countries of the continent.

Both in heavily industralised countries (Brazil, Argentina) and in traditional agrarian based countries (Paraguay), both in countries with a long parliamentary and constitutional tradition (Chile, Uruguay) and those which have always been crushed by the power of the military (Nicaragua) — in almost every corner of the continent the dominant classes have been eager to replace Liberty, Equality and Fraternity by Infantry, Artillery and Cavalry. The militarisation of the state is not the result of the specific historic or economic character of this or that country, but of a general merging of the class struggle in the continent, characterised by a sharpening of social contradictions, a crisis in the politico-ideological apparatuses responsible for controlling the people (the Church, the political parties, education, the press) and consequently by a shifting of the axis of power towards the repressive apparatuses (the army, the police, armed para-police organisations, etc.). As regards the Peruvian military regime, a temporary exception presented by the Communist Parties as an exemplary model of 'revolutionary' nationalism, its shift further and further towards the right is evident: a clear return in force of the imperialist monopolies (copper, petroleum, etc.), an economic policy dictated by the IMF, a massive repression of the trade unions, etc.

The Havana resolution of the Latin American Communist Parties (June 1975) spoke of the Latin American armed forces as an institution which could become an 'element of progress and even of revolutionary potential'. The recent history of the continent proves a thousand times over that Che was right when he insisted: 'What can draw the military to true democracy? What loyalty can be expected from those who have always been the instrument of domination of the reactionary classes and imperialist monopolies, from a caste which only exists thanks to the arms it possesses, and which thinks only of the preservation of its own rights?"[7]

We can recognise that Che did not give sufficient importance to political work within the armed forces of the bourgeois state, work which would not bring about the 'reform' of this institution but its disintegration from within by the clandestine and/or semi-legal organisation of the ranks, NCOs and even officers sympathetic towards the proletariat. However, to believe that for such work one can do without a policy of arming the workers, or avoid a violent confrontation between revolution and counter-revolution, indicates a most dangerous lack of realism. As Trotsky wrote in connection with the 1905 rising, the majority of soldiers 'is capable of laying down its arms or, eventually, of pointing its bayonets at the reaction only if it begins to believe in the possibility of a people's victory. Such a belief is not created by political agitation alone. Only when the soldiers become convinced that the people have come out into the streets for a life-and-death struggle...'[8]

The method proposed by Che for establishing a popular

army opposed to the capitalist army — rural guerrilla warfare — has been proved to be inadequate for the majority of countries in the continent; but the *question* which he posed is fundamental and is far from being satisfactorily solved by the Latin American revolutionary left today. Urban guerrilla warfare, not envisaged by Che, which was developed with a great deal of courage and imagination by revolutionary groups such as the Tupamaros or the Brazilian LAN, has also failed (the question still remains open in Argentina), due to, amongst other reasons, the use of torture by the military regimes; torture thereby becoming a decisive institutional factor in the carrying out of the politico-military domination of the Latin American bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, it is on the political and social level that we must seek the roots of the failures of the continent's revolutionaries since the death of Che: the inability to organise/mobilise the great mass of the workers and peasants. In conclusion, Che the *guerrillero* of Bolivia is a heroic character belonging to history and to the legend of the Latin American and world revolution; Che the intransigent defender of the armed road as the only guarantee of real triumph retains on the other hand a burning significance.

In fact, his thesis on the inevitability of armed confrontation is only the logical consequence of his analysis of the social nature of the revolution in Latin America. Through two experiences which he had lived through personally — the negative experience of Guatemala in 1953-54 and the positive one of Cuba in 1959-61 — he understood the indissoluble dialectical unity between the

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
6. Luis Corvalan, *Camino de Victoria*, Santiago, 1971, p. 425.
7. 'Guerrilla Warfare: A Method', 1963, in *Textes militaires*, p. 156.
8. Leon Trotsky, *1905*, Penguin, pp. 283-4.

anti-imperialist and socialist tasks in the Latin American revolution. In fact, from *April 1959* Che was envisaging, with remarkable foresight, 'the uninterrupted development of the revolution' in Cuba, to the extent of the abolition of the existing 'social system' and its 'economic foundations' — in other words, of capitalism.[9] In an article in 1963, he extended the lessons of the Cuban revolution to the entire continent: 'When the armed vanguard of the people takes power, they will have destroyed at the same time both the imperialists and the local exploiters in their country. They will have crystallised the first stage of the socialist revolution; they will be able to start building socialism.'[10] Thus Guevara was breaking with more than thirty years of Stalinist tradition in Latin America, and adopting one of the central themes of the theory of permanent revolution; this was the product of his own revolutionary experience, and not of the writings of Trotsky, whose works he was probably not familiar with at this time (it was not until 1967 in Bolivia that he was to read *The History of the Russian Revolution*, a copy of which was found by the Bolivian army in the guerrilla hide-out).

It is only by starting off from this basic understanding of the *combined* socialist and anti-imperialist character of the revolution that one can explain Che's insistence on the destruction of the repressive bourgeois machinery. In the neo-Menshevik perspective put forward by the traditional Communist Parties of a national-democratic revolution in alliance with the 'progressive' bourgeoisie, the problem of breaking the established military institution has no place within their political horizon; since the national bourgeoisie is predominant in the revolutionary bloc, a considerable section, if not the majority, of the top military hierarchy is considered as a potental ally. The last resolution of the Latin American Communist Parties (including, alas, the Cuban CP), at Havana in 1975, states that sectors of the Latin American bourgeoisie 'hold positions which converge with those held by the proletariat, the peasants and other non-capitalist layers of the population in the struggle against imperialism... Consequently, these bourgeois sectors can participate in democratic and anti-imperialist unity of action with the popular forces'. The affirmations in this same document of the 'revolutionary potential' of the armed forces and the 'steady evolution of patriotic consciousness' amongst them evidently spring from this socio-political hypothesis.

The evolution of Latin America in the course of the past few years (and especially the overt turn towards imperialism taken by the military junta in Peru) rather confirm, however, the theories developed by Che in his political testament, *Letter to the Tricontinental* (1967). In a memorable passage, destined to become the political banner of the revolutionary left throughout the continent, he proclaimed: 'The national bourgeoisies are no longer in any way capable of opposing imperialism — if indeed they ever were — and they now make up its rearguard. There are no further possibilities: either socialist revolution or a mockery of revolution.'[11]

If the similarity between Che's concepts and the strategic orientation put forward by the theory of permanent revolution is undeniable, it is nonetheless clear that Guevara attributed a far greater revolutionary role to the peasantry than did Trotsky. Having said this, we should note, paradoxically, that the Latin American Trotskyists have on several occasions played an important role in the mobilisation of the peasant masses: the POR in Bolivia in 1952-54, Hugo Blanco in Peru in 1961-63, and in Mexico today, the formation (with the close collaboration of the PRT, the Mexican section of the Fourth International) of the Independent Revolutionary Peasant Coordination. Also, Trotsky himself stressed, in one of his last works, that 'Marxism has never invested its estimation of the peasantry as a non-socialist class with an absolute and static character'[12]. The Cuban revolution (after the revolutions in Asia) showed the decisive role which might have been played by the peasantry in an uninterrupted revolutionary process, culminating in a fusion of the democratic and socialist revolution.

Was Guevara wrong in his desire to generalise the lessons of the Cuban 'peasant war' to the whole of Latin America? One can conclude that he was mistaken in expecting a repetition of the Cuban experience in the greater part of the continent and in his under-estimation of the social and political weight of the urban and mining proletariat, particularly in the countries of the southern part of the continent, where the working class is clearly *the direct historic subject of all possible revolutionary transformation*. Moreover, the urbanisation and industrialisation (limited and deformed, but nonetheless real) which has taken place over the last 20 years in Latin America today gives the proletariat and the urban masses an increasing importance, far greater than at the time of the Cuban guerrillas in the Fifties. But this is not to deny that half, or nearly half, of the population of the continent is still composed of peasants; and one of the great merits of Che's work was to draw attention rightly to the huge revolutionary potental of this class, including within a socialist perspective.

What will the respective roles of the proletariat and the peasantry be in the Latin American revolution? Clearly, the answer will not be the same for both Colombia and Argentina, for Uruguay and Mexico. In reality, the revolutionary left in the continent, torn between a dogmatic workerism of European origin and a populist cult of the peasantry imported from Asia, is far from reaching a clear and rigorous answer to this question. The writings of Che, as long as they are approached with an open, critical mind, can be a significant contribution to this debate.

The other dimension of the thought and political practice of Che which brings him close to revolutionary Marxism and the theory of permanent revolution is his *resulting internationalism*. From 1959 his constant preoccupation was to extend the Cuban revolution to the entire Latin American continent. This preoccupation was based on an intuitive belief that the fate of the revolutionary Cuban state and its autonomy in the face of the Soviet bureaucracy were linked to the fate of the Latin American revolution, and also on an understanding of the close ties between the revolutionary processes in various countries on a continental scale. But Che's internationalism did not stop at Latin America; he was one of those rare revolutionary leaders of our time to comprehend the organic unity of the world capitalist system, the dialectical relationship between the various sectors of the class struggle within this system, and the need for a unified revolutionary strategy on an international scale. When he put forward the slogan 'one, two, three, many Vietnams' in 1967, Guevara was outlining (for the first time in many years in the history of the workers movement, apart from the revolutionary Marxist minority) an orientation towards world revolution which would be answerable not to the national interests of any particular state or any particular 'socialist' power, but to the international proletariat in its entirety. But he did not confine himself to launching slogans; he practised what he preached by trying to open up within Latin America a 'second front' which could assist Vietnam.

For Che, internationalism was simultaneously a moral imperative — an ethical demand of revolutionary humanism, going beyond narrow national limits in a powerful movement of fraternal solidarity — and a practical, concrete and *material* requirement of the revolutionary struggle against the common enemy: 'There are no frontiers in this struggle to the death... The practice of proletarian internationalism is not simply a duty for the people who are struggling for a better future; it is also an unavoidable

9. *Selected Works of Che Guevara*, MIT Press, 1969, p. 372.
10. 'Guerrilla Warfare: A Method', *op. cit.*, p. 163.
11. 'Message to the People of the World via the Tricontinental', 1967, in *Obras 1957-67*, Casa de las Americas-Maspero, II, p. 589.
12. Leon Trotsky, 'Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution', 1939, in *Writings 1939-40*, Pathfinder Press, 1973, p. 65.

necessity.'[13] Of course, he can be accused of paying too much attention to the Third World at the expense of Europe in his vision of the class struggle on the planet, and of not having conceived of the need for an anti-bureaucratic revolution in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Still, it remains true that since the death of Trotsky we have not seen a revolutionary leader of world wide historic stature who, like Che, has placed internationalism at the heart of his political perspective and his militant activity; who has conducted himself not as a 'statesman' but as a combatant in the world revolution, paying with his life for the working out of his internationalist strategy. It is through revolutionaries such as Che and his partisans in the world, such as Miguel Enriquez who fell in combat in Chile, or Rohan Wijeweera, imprisoned until recently in Sri Lanka, that a Communist International of the masses will be constructed in the future which will take on the heritage of the Leninist Third International (1919-1923) and the Fourth International of today.

As to the question of the Stalinist bureaucracy: it is true that Che did not have a clear view of the problem, but his profound anti-bureaucratic sensibility was undeniable. It showed itself in a particularly interesting way in the discussions which took place at the Cuban Ministry of Industry in 1964 (published in 1970 by *Il Manifesto* and *Tricontinentale* — French edition). Che explicitly criticised the material privileges of the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe: 'It is the leaders who gain each time. Look at the latest plan of the German Democratic Republic; the importance assumed by the leadership, or rather, the retribution of the leadership.'[14] Also, while recounting his discussions in the USSR to his Cuban comrades, he mentioned the fact that his Soviet interlocutors had accused him of 'Trotskyism'. While rejecting this label, Che replied by clearly affirming: 'On this point, I believe that either we have the capacity to destroy contrary opinions by argument or else we must allow them to be expressed [...] It is not possible to destroy opinions by force, as that blocks all free development of intelligence.'[15] Thus he was proclaiming one of the fundamental ideas of socialist democracy, at the same time manifesting his basic incompatibility with Stalinist procedure and methods.

Guevara was not a Trotskyist, of course. But it is not by chance that many Guevarist militants (even entire organisations, such as the recent example of the Comandos Camilistas in Colombia) have joined the ranks of the Fourth International, considering that it represents the continuation and deepening of the authentically revolutionary and internationalist dimension of Guevarism.

For all of these reasons, we Trotskyists salute his memory on the 10th anniversary of his death as a brother in combat; for us, as for many other militants of the new vanguard which has developed since the Sixties, Che Guevara, through his ideas, his actions and his example, is a huge revolutionary banner, a red flame, pure and ardent, which the dictators, the generals and their Pentagon 'advisers' will never be able to extinguish.

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13. 'Algerian Discourse', 1965, in *Textes politiques*, p. 266.
14. *Oeuvres VI*, Maspero, p. 90.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

The New Philosophers

By TIM JENKINS

The 'new philosophers' have recently enjoyed an intense vogue in France, and have even provoked interest in the English speaking press — I have read articles on them in the *Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, *Encounter* and *Time* magazine. On examination they appear to be saying very little, so it is interesting to ask what their value is for the foreign press. It will be seen that I too treat them in a 'journalistic' rather than a serious academic fashion, and that this is in fact unavoidable.

Nevertheless, whilst of little intrinsic interest, the new philosophers are illustrative of two separate problems, both of which have a considerable interest. The first is that in French political and cultural thought all problems and debates exist within a framework marked by two reference points — the legislative elections in March 1978, and May 1968. These points are not symmetrical; however, they do mark the beginning and the end of the present 'epoch'. The new philosophers are only possible within this framework.

The second problem is of a different order, and concerns the relations of intellectuals to journalism, and the changes that these relations have been undergoing. I shall return to these problems at the end, but first shall give an outline description of the phenomenon.

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I. The new philosophy consists primarily of publicity. The publicity has been ferocious — in magazines, journals, newspapers, public discussions, on radio and television. The publicity has been centred on personalities, and so on the new philosophers rather than the new philosophy; and in the articles, interviews and so on, the original books published seem of little importance. We will see that this is not by chance. The effect has been somewhat frenzied. To describe the phenomenon I shall have to mention names repeatedly.

Is it right to group these writers together? Labelling is an old and dishonourable polemical tactic, lumping together a disparate group of intellectuals for the purpose of disparaging them better.

The publicity campaign could, however, look like a conspiracy to those who think in such terms. To start with, almost all the books have been published by a single publisher, Grasset, in one or other of three series — 'Figures', 'Theoriciens' or 'Enjeux', which are all edited by the same man, B.H.Levy. Then, the label is self-given. Levy launched the label in an article entitled 'Les nouveaux philosophes' in *Les Nouvelles Litteraires* (10 June 1976), and an advertisement appeared in *Le Magazine Litteraire* (October 1976) which read: 'The new philosophers publish in the collections "Figures" and "Theoriciens" directed by Bernard-Henri Levy.' Levy has since said that he does not accept the label 'new philosophers'.

Then again, there has been a very detailed back-up campaign, not only with 'new philosophers' interviewing each other, but also from the weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, for whom Levy has done a lot of work and for whom Maurice Clavel, who associates himself with the new philosophers, writes a weekly column. In July 1976, *NO* published an article entitled 'The New Gurus' (Gerald Petitjean, *NO* 611, 12 July 1976), and then in May of this year a series of reviews: Foucault on Glucksmann, Desanti on Clavel, Enthoven on Levy. This was followed by some twelve or so articles on the new philosophy from June to August, launched under the title of 'Objectif '78', with the following rubric from editor Jean Daniel to the first article: 'Conceiving our role as a permanent link between institution and opposition, organisation and spontaneity, politics and culture, we have naturally welcomed and defended in *NO* the representatives of the "New Philosophy", who have undertaken a revision of Marxism after the discovery of the "Gulag". We think that the left has the greatest interest in allowing itself to be questioned by this rich movement, including its excesses' (*NO* 655, 30 May 1977, p.41, introduction to Poulantzas).

However, *NO* is not the new philosophers' only friend. The journal *Tel Quel*, formerly of a Maoist tendency, allows various new philosophers to review each other's books in its columns. Furthermore, its founder, Philippe Sollers, published a very favourable review of Levy's book *La barbarie a visage humaine* in *Le Monde* (13 May 1977). *Le Monde* devoted two full pages of *Le Monde des livres* to the new philosophers at the end of May (27 May) and one full page a week for the two following weeks (3 and 10 June) — in all, twelve articles.

Other magazines took up the story — *Playboy*, *Elle* and *Le Point*. There were a number of radio interviews (on the programme 'La generation perdue', France-Culture), and a debate on the television programme 'Apostrophes'. Also a book entitled *Contre la nouvelle philosophie* by Aubral and Delcourt appeared, and a pamphlet by G. Deleuze, to which we shall come back. This list is not exhaustive.

The intellectual world in Paris is very small, and practically everyone has something to say. Nevertheless, the noise was remarkable. From a dead start in June 1976, the whole business took off in Spring this year, and appears to have burnt out by August.

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Who are the new philosophers, and what do they say? As already pointed out, the articles, reviews, interviews, etc. are of much greater importance than the books themselves. The article in *Le Point* illustrates this, where the 'key' books are classified under two headings — 'easy' and 'difficult'. The books I have read, *L'Ange* by Lardreau and Jambet, and *La*

barbarie a visage humaine by Levy, are not argued in any sense, and to suggest that this is a failing would be to miss the point. This is not an 'academic' argument.

So what characteristics do we look for? As the individuals are important, so are their biographies. Guerin, Jambet, Lardreau, Levy, Nemo and others were Althusser's students between 1966-68. There, to varying extents, they came into contact with the psychoanalyst Lacan, whom Althusser introduced to the rue d'Ulm, and the Maoism of the 'Jeunesses marxistes-léninistes', founded in the rue d'Ulm. A number of them wrote for the journals of the period — *J'Accuse, L'idiot international* and the Maoist *La Cause du Peuple*; there, for example, Jambet and Lardreau met Dollé and later Glucksmann (see R.P. Droit, *Le Monde*, 27 May 1977).

From a common radicalism — Dollé and Glucksmann had both been Communist Party militants before becoming Maoists; those Althusserians who were not activists were rigorous theoreticians — they have derived a common disillusion and reaction against Marxism, where they are joined by Benoist, author of *Marx is Dead* (1970).

A third characteristic derived from this period which Droit notes is a reverence of Lacan, or, more particularly, of Lacan's reading of Hegel. From Lacan the image of the 'Master' is borrowed, which allows the getting-rid of Marx, or even the emptying of history. 'In his name (Lacan's) the hopes of a "sexual liberation" are condemned as lures and the left wing lampooned, as well as Deleuze and Lyotard, the "philosophers of desire". In short, everything happens almost as if Lacanism has gone a fair way to becoming the "unsurpassable philosophy" — of all time, this time, since the truths he enunciates would be eternal.' (Droit, *art.cit.*).

Around these young philosophers have gathered a variety of 'fellow-travellers' (Benoist's term in *Le Monde*, 3-4 July 1977): Clavel, Dollé, Benoist, Glucksmann, Sollers. It is worth noting that Glucksmann's work, at least, merits serious attention. However, he deserves inclusion on the original criterion of 'publicity': indeed, much of it starts with him.

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The real starting point is Solzhenitsyn. The whole spectrum of the French left's intelligentsia took to him. Pierre Daix, then a Communist and editor of *Les Lettres francaises*; Jean Daniel, editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur*; Clavel; Claude Lefort, editor (with Castoriadis) of *Socialisme ou barbarie*, who wrote 'Un homme fort', reflections on the *Gulag Archipelago; in Esprit*, the Catholic journal, Marcel Gauchat wrote 'The Totalitarian Experience and Political Thought' (July-August 1976).

The new philosophers too were enthused by reading Solzhenitsyn, and by the tales of the Gulag. 'The Dante of our time', Levy calls him, and Clavel wrote: 'I will not hide that I breathe better to know that he still exists...' (*NO* 479, 14 January 1974). Sollers too claims to be one 'of those whom a reading of Solzhenitsyn has slowly, deeply changed' (*Le Monde*, 13 May 1977). But they make a very special use of their reading, a rejection of Marxism, from this central idea: 'Solzhenitsyn's Gulag is no "accident" but the proper consequence of Marxist premisses' (Droit, *art.cit.*). This idea is first developed by Glucksmann in *La Cuisinière et le mangeur d'homme* (The Cook and the Man-eater), subtitled 'An essay on the State, Marxism and the Concentration Camps', and more recently in *Les Maîtres Penseurs*. The idea is taken up by Lardreau and Jambet, and reappears in Levy. The Gulag Archipelago serves as a demonstration of this truth — Marx equals the Gulag. For Clavel, this is the Marx 'to whom Proudhon wrote, in 1844: "Your thought makes me fear for the freedom of men"...' (*art.cit.*).

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Marxism is taken as the ultimate form of rationality, of 'discourse'. Listen to Levy, for example: 'The problem of our time...is that of this strange cultural object, this political tradition which the modern age has invented and baptised *socialism*. Why blame socialism? Because, like all optimism, it lies when it promises, and terrorises when it happens; because, starting from a radical critique of the "reactionary idea of progress", I think we can see its most crass incarnation in socialism; finally, because I fear that its recent "Marxisation" makes it the ultimate thought of order, the most fearful police of minds that the West has produced. Stalin was not only Marxist, he was truly *socialist*. Solzhenitsyn does not only speak of the Gulag, but again of *socialism*. Here is an enigma it is useless to avoid ' (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977).

Marxism has become rationality, and socialism rationality incarnated in the State. The Gulag is the logical consequence of Marxist premisses. Yet didn't the Young Hegelians expect Reason to take the throne, and were disappointed? The major step in this reduction is the notion 'all is only discourse'. 'As Jambet and Lardreau say in *L'Ange*, in the end, there is no world, but only discourse ' (Clavel, interviewed in *La Croix*, 11 June 1976). The real and history are only discourse.

The consequences of this step extend further than simply to Marxism. 'Desire, history and language are always already the nets of control for the subject who expresses himself therein' (Enthoven's review of Levy, *NO* 663, 16 May 1977). Politics in any form, then, can only lead back to the same slavery. 'To the extent that a project of revolt passes via discourse, it is the Master's discourse which will necessarily prolong it...To the extent that a project of revolt will touch on what is called power, the power it installs will lead back to the forms of mastery. That is, to the extent that revolutionaries project their dreams in the forms of this world, they will only ever produce imitations of revolution' (Lévy, 'La folie-Maurice Clavel', *NO* 598, 29 April 1976).

In this world, right is left. 'Fascism did not come out of obscurity, but out of the light...', Lévy explains. 'Reason is totalitarianism' (*Le Matin*, 27 May 1977). Hence, 'for us it's not a matter of defeating the right, because it's not certain we want a master from the left' (Jambet and Lardreau, interview in *Le Magazine Littéraire* 112, May 1976). However, the left (or their former selves) bears the brunt of the attack: 'Socialists? Impostors', Lévy declares ('La folie-Maurice Clavel'), and Jambet and Lardreau explain: 'The left is no longer precisely political, it is enlisted in technocracy. And the ultimate form of all that, the truth of the left is, as Glucksmann has seen, the Gulag Archipelago' (interview *cit.*).

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There is no way out, not in this world. 'Clavel simply says it is necessary to despair of this world, effectively we must try to gamble on another world; that if the Prince rules this world without division, we must escape it to thwart the Prince's schemes; that if there is no rebellion other than illusory in the order of the possible, then we must bet on the impossible to go beyond this illusion' (Lévy, 'La folie-Maurice Clavel'). Clavel concludes: 'The authors of *L'Ange* reckon, after their experience and thought — both profound — that nothing in this world can change the order of the world, that subversion needs a point of attachment absolutely outside this world' (*NO* 594, 29 March 1976). A pessimistic point of view, indeed.

Not surprisingly, given this despair, the new philosophers turn to a series of personal solutions, becoming, as Lévy puts it, 'Metaphysician, artist, moralist' (*La barbarie à visage humaine*). They represent a renewal of metaphysics. 'For the first time in a long while, simple questions are being asked again, the questions of traditional metaphysics' (Lévy, radio interview, 'La génération perdue'). Lardreau states in *L'Ange:* 'I speak here as a metaphysician' (p.17).

Dollé, speaking as a 'contemporary to genocides, death-camps and torture raised into a system of government', turns to poetry. He concludes: 'So! I will take the

"Holzwege", the mountain paths which snake across the forests to the clearing. These are not "paths that lead nowhere". These are the "pathways" of becoming. We are the ones to take them' (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977). Nêmo turns to the spiritual values of the 'God of Job'; Lardreau and Jambet to those of the 'Angel'; Lévy to pessimism. 'The only tenable position for a pessimist philosophy is probably that of anarchism' (Lévy, *Le Monde*, 27 May 1977).

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These themes are not new. The questions raised and authors turned to recall, for instance, Camus, Popper and Guy Debord among others, as critics have pointed out. Nor is their handling of the themes particularly noteworthy or subtle. So the new philosophy is not new. But is it particularly philosophy, either, despite the appeal to a variety of 'classical' authors?

These 'metaphysicians, artists, moralists' draw their authority from a common disillusionment with May 1968, as former militants who have learnt a valuable lesson. It is from the failure of militancy that they derive the authority to reject the CP, the Maoists, the masses, the revolution and science. 'It's necessary to have contemplated the Master sufficiently long to be able to begin to think' (Lardreau and Jambet, interview *cit.*). So despite their rejection of this world the new philosophers speak, more than anything else, about what will happen if the Union of the Left wins in March 1978, and the Communist Party (PCF) comes to power.

The terms under discussion slide, as did those we considered above. For example, Jambet and Lardreau: 'What is the PCF? A part of the State's apparatus, which may become the whole State apparatus. Whether the same "class" domination is to continue through it, or whether it "represents" another, is of little importance...What is important, on the other hand, is that the PCF carries within itself the possibility of a more constraining State apparatus than any known up till now in France: the very ideal of the modern State, in a sense. Marxism precisely allows the removal of the contradictions to which the bourgeois State is subject, since the State is not owner of the means of production. These contradictions allow interstices which, however small, let the people breathe sometimes' (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977). The PCF becomes a potential Gulag. There is no discussion of the conditions specific to Russia, or to France. They are, strictly speaking, irrelevant. Benoist states that it is the duty of philosophy to prevent 'a formerly critical thought, Marxism, from becoming a monopoly and State religion, barbarous and more bloody than the Christianity of the Inquisition' (*Le Monde*, 3-4 July 1977). This is not argued, indeed it would be hard to do so. Glucksmann plays the same game in a recent interview, proclaiming the need for open discussion between the leaders of the left; 'if not, it's the Kremlin, the wall of silence, hidden disagreements, palace intrigues, the mysteries of Brezhnev's illness and of his succession' (*Le Matin*, 30 September 1977). 'Communism' becomes a catch-all, a scare-word in a new cold war, which matches the return to an 'end of ideology' very well.

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The authority of the individual to speak is matched by an individual vanity, which not unexpectedly takes form in the new philosophers themselves becoming dissidents. Sollers writes: 'It is the dissidence of our times, and it is both old and new, like all resistance to the Prince, who claims, thanks to our resignation, to reign forever in this world' (*Le Monde*, 13 May 1977). Lévy takes up the theme: 'You speak of "elections": is it necessary to keep quiet because the hour of power approaches? You speak of "rallying": I believe that the dignity of the intellectual is precisely in never rallying' (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977). Jambet and Lardreau become rather distasteful: 'Does it take the left being sure of being master of our minds and bodies tomorrow for it to consider that to defend people against the authorities is right-wing! We claim the right to laugh at the illusory theatre where the left and the right share out the roles themselves... But, an old right-wing trick, they say! We must be of the right, for then, not only does no-one have to listen to us any longer, but they will know how to make us shut up. The Gulag — not material certainly, not yet, but spiritual — is already here' (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977). It is from this spiritual Gulag that Lévy wrote his reply to his critics — 'Réponse aux maîtres censeurs' (*NO* 659, 27 June 1977) — but how is it possible to reply to a censor? With the amount Lévy publishes, the irony is striking.

The new philosophers play a double game with their critics, which corresponds to their two roles of metaphysician and dissident. Lévy's article (Réponse...') illustrates it well, as does Benoist's defence of Lévy (*Le Monde*, 3-4 July 1977). On the one hand, Lévy suggests that no one has developed a critique of the new philosophers' work, that all that is opposed to them is polemic; on the other hand, he dismisses the claims of scholarship, pleading the urgency of the case.

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II. When we turn to the political positions these metaphysicians, artists and moralists occupy, we find a complete spectrum. 'Glucksmann is encouraged by signs of a growing archipelago of dissidents in France and elsewhere — protestors against nuclear plants, operators of pirate radios, resurgent minorities claiming more autonomy — all acting without the need for an all-encompassing ideology' (*Time*, 5 September 1977, p.10). Lévy too speaks of the 'new resisters' — feminists, ecologists and minority groups — 'people who depend not on ideology but on personal, moral power'. For *Time* magazine Lévy chooses capitalism rather than socialism, but in France votes Socialist (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977). Lardreau and Jambet align themselves with 'the simple people, those without knowledge and without power, the humiliated and the injured...' (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977), whilst Benoist places himself firmly in a Gaullist tradition: 'It remains to be said that it will be in the country's interest that one day a collection of men from both [political] camps will govern, that they are made to link up — because their attachment to liberties, their vow to construct a France and Europe independent of hegemonies, joins them beyond the nightmare of mutual excommunication' (*Le Monde*, 27 May 1977).

If the new philosophers' thought is empty of content (if not of vanity), and they fill a conventional political spectrum from ecologist to Chirac-style Gaullism via the Socialist Party, what are we left with, other than the publicity we started with? The new philosophers are of no importance in the political sphere, although Castoriadis (*NO* 658, 20 June 1977) points out their function as a 'decoy', distracting from the real problems that this election period holds. Certainly they may stop a number of questions which are important from being talked about simply by the way they have posed them. Julliard (*NO* 656, 6 June 1977) suggests that whilst the left is successful electorally, it is increasingly in a state of crisis intellectually. The new philosophers, indeed, might be seen as a symptom of the end of the ambiguous relation between the intellectuals and a left in opposition — a relation based on being morally right but politically powerless. But a crisis in bad faith is scarcely a sufficient explanation.

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Let us return to our first impression, that the phenomenon is one of publicity, and seek an explanation in the context of publicity and writing, rather than politics. The new philosophy is the introduction of a new process, that of 'intellectual marketing', to use Deleuze's term (G. Deleuze, supplement to *Minuit*, 24 May 1977; partly republished in *Le Monde*, 19-20 June 1977. What follows owes a lot to Deleuze's argument). Marketing, according to Deleuze, has

Recoiling in horror from the supposed spectre of Marx in the Communist and Socialist parties are (left to right) 'new philosophers' Philippe Sollers (emperor of the weathercocks), André Glucksmann (friend of the people), and Maurice Clavel (reincarnation of St. Teresa of Avila)

two principles. First, rather than a book having anything to say, one must speak of it, and make it spoken about. At the limit, the multitude of articles, interviews, broadcasts, etc. could replace the book altogether. This is why the books written by the new philosophers are, in the end, unimportant. This is a striking change for the academic world. It is an activity, Deleuze observes, which seems to be outside philosophy, even to exclude it.

Second, from the point of view of marketing, the same book or product must have several versions, to suit everyone. So we have pious, atheistic, Heideggerian, leftist, centrist, and Chiraquian versions. Whence also the distribution of roles according to taste — metaphysician, artist, moralist, dissident. Here variety is no guarantee of difference; it is the label 'new philosophers' that is all-important.

The success now of this marketing is due to two factors, which we mentioned at the start. The historical epoch 1968-78 we will come to in a moment. The other factor is a certain reversal in the relations between journalists and intellectuals, or between the press and the book.

(a) We are in a period when journalism, together with the radio and TV, has become increasingly aware of its ability to create the 'event' — for example, by enquiries, polls, 'investigative journalism', controlled leaks, discussions — and so has become less dependent on analyses outside journalism, and has less need of people like intellectuals and writers. Journalism, indeed, has discovered an autonomous and self-sufficient thought within itself. That is why, at the extreme, a book is worth less than the article in a journal written about it, or the interview it gives rise to. Consequently, intellectuals and writers are having to conform to this new kind of 'short duration' thought, based on interviews, discussions and so on.

The relation of forces between journalists and intellectuals has then completely changed. One could imagine a book which bears on an article in a journal, and not the inverse. The new philosophy is very close to this. The magazine no longer has any need of the book. Interestingly, the central function of 'author', of 'personality', has moved to the journalist, and writers who still want to be 'authors' have to go through journalists, or, better, become their own journalists. It is this change that has made the enterprise of intellectual marketing possible.

(b) The second factor is that France is in a long electoral period, and this acts as a grill, a value-giving system, that affects ways of understanding and even of perceiving. All events and problems are hammered onto this grill. It is on this grill that the whole project of the new philosophers has been inscribed from the beginning, and it explains why their project has succeeded now. Some of the new philosophers are against the Union of the Left, others hope to provide a brains trust for Mitterrand, as we have seen. What they all have to sell, which produces a homogenisation of the two tendencies, is a hatred of '68. Whatever their attitude to the election, they declare that the Revolution is impossible, uniformly and for all time. That is why all the concepts which began by functioning in a very differentiated fashion (powers, resistances, desires, even the 'pleb') are made global, reunited in a series of empty unities — Power, the Law, the State, the Master, the Prince, etc.

That is also why the thinking subject, or vain subject, can reappear on the scene, the correlate of the meaninglessness of the concepts, for the only possibility of Revolution for the new philosophers is in the pure act of the thinker who thinks the impossible. Along with this function of author returns the function of witness: hence the martyrology of the Gulag and the victims of history.

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The new philosophers, by recreating the 'author' function, the creative subject, are thoroughly reactionary in a wide rather than a political sense: the negation both of any politics and of any experimentation. New, certainly, but utterly conformist. Their work represents the submission of any thought to the media, and to the worst side of the media at that, so that it loses any intellectual caution, and the media defines all criteria.

The English-speaking reactionary press has taken to the new philosophers, then, for they are extremely modern. It is this that makes them so acceptable to America, rather than simply their anti-Marxism. *Time* magazine states: 'These young intellectuals are on the same wavelength as many people in the US, Jimmy Carter, Jerry Brown, Carlos Castaneda and a host of anti-war and civil rights activists' (p.6). American publishers are reported to be fighting over translation rights (*NO* 669, 5 September 1977). It is scarcely surprising.

HISTORIC COMPROMISE IN THE NUS

By REDMOND O'NEILL (IMG Student Organiser)

Over the past few months the student movement has once again been in the news. Only with a difference — this time the heroine of recent press reports has been NUS President and Communist Party Executive Committee member Sue Slipman.

Many on the left have, however, been more than a little surprised at the statements attributed with such glee to a leading member of the Communist Party. More particularly, many CP and Labour Party members will have been taken aback, to say the least, by her widely reported attacks on the anti-fascist movement following Lewisham, and the news of an explicit alliance at December's NUS Conference between the Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) and the Broad Left (an alliance of CP and Labour Party students).

It is therefore especially timely that the November issue of the CP's theoretical journal, *Marxism Today*, should carry a major piece on the role of the student movement today by the CPGB's student organiser, Ken Spours.[1]

At present the NUS is one of the few national mass organisations led by the Communist Party, so that their policies and strategy amongst students are of no small interest in assessing the future direction of the Party, in particular since the adoption of the new version of *The British Road to Socialism*.

The apparent turn by the Communist Party's student leaders has involved the introduction of a whole new terminology into the student movement: 'corporate politics', 'institutional harmony' and 'public accountability', to name but a few. In attempting to clarify the relationship between the Communist Party's theory and practice, I shall try to demonstrate the content of this new terminology in the student movement today.

The Present Crisis in the NUS

The National Union of Students is today approaching its biggest test since the left won the leadership of the union at the end of the 1960s. Within the NUS, the Tories have succeeded in mopping up the motley collection of minor groups previously vying for the allegiance of the right wing. With the help of funds estimated to be of the order of £25,000 per annum from Conservative Central Office, they have managed to grow from virtually nothing three years ago to a level where today they are the single largest political tendency within the NUS, with a claimed individual membership of 20,000 students. The Federation of Conservative Students today stands poised to make an effective challenge for the leadership of the national union.

From without, the major threat to the national union comes from the government and Local Education Authorities (LEAs), in the form of plans to reduce drastically the control by student unions over their funds. The authorities and the courts have been able to base their offensive on the widespread feeling of disillusion with the NUS felt by thousands of students who have been through four years of virtually uninterrupted defeats in their struggles to defend the value of their grant, to hold back the cuts, and to fight for jobs when they leave college.

The aim of the right wing inside NUS, and the government and education authorities outside, is to turn the clock back to the days of the 'welfare student unionism' of the 1950s and '60s. As the Broad Left aptly put it in one of their pamphlets two years ago: 'The right basically believes that students' unions should concern themselves solely with "student problems" which they define as separate from the problems of society as a whole.'[2]

Under attack is the very capacity of the NUS to campaign on behalf of its membership and to link up with other sections of society. What is at stake is whether the Tories will take over the NUS, and therefore with which class the majority of students will line up in the major social, economic and political struggles taking shape in British society.

The Student Movement and the 'Government of the Left'

The starting point for Spours' argument is the crisis on the student left and its failure to respond adequately to the new conditions prevailing in post-school education as a result of the Government's material, ideological and 'anti-democratic' assault on further and higher education. This failure is, according to Spours, best encapsulated in the phrase 'the crisis of corporate politics'. He denotes by this the impasse of traditional militant student unionism, with all its concomitant short-sightedness and economism. The roots of this impasse are the objective impossibility, in this period, of defending students' material interests. As Spours puts it: 'At present it would require a government of the left to reverse the cutbacks in education on the basis of an alternative economic strategy'.[3] Furthermore, in its traditional role (since the early '70s) of attempting to defend students' 'sectoral' 'self interests', the NUS has proved to be incapable of uniting students.

The way out of this impasse for Spours is the development of a new basis for the unity of *all* students, whether they be scientists or artists, sporting or cultural enthusiasts, politicos or non-politicals. The one factor which all students do have in common is not so much their material interests as their future functions in society as intellectuals of one sort or another. It is their character as 'trainee intellectuals' which determines that the crucial issues around which students can be united are what Spours speaks of as the ideological questions of democracy and control.

According to Spours, such an approach, far from being a step backwards from the fight around material questions, can

1. Ken Spours, 'Students, Education and the State', in *Marxism Today*, November 1977.
2. 'The Broad Left — Left Unity in the Student Movement'.
3. Spours, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

both tackle the problem of unity at a time when students' material interests cannot be effectively defended, *and* mark a new step forward in developing a strategy for the transformation of the process of which all students are part. It thus has the advantage of creating a new basis for unity amongst different sections of students around the theme of a 'diverse and critical education', and at the same time organising the defence of 'the democratic fabric of our institutions' in order to prepare the process of their socialist transformation in the future (presumably in the context of the 'government of the left' referred to above).

Where does such an approach leave our student unions? Well, it is, for Spours, the essential step in breaking them from the impasse of 'corporate politics'. For the first time student unions can take on a new and wider role within the education system, reintegrating themselves into the colleges locally and the deliberations of the educational establishment at a national level. The NUS can begin to play the role of a responsible partner within the institutions of further and higher education, thereby exerting an influence for change in a progressive direction. The main hallmarks of the NUS's phase of 'corporate politics' — the concept of the mass campaigning union and the defence of autonomy — can thus be transcended in the direction of 'hegemonic politics'.

Thus the new phrases about 'institutional consensus' and 'public accountability' take on flesh and blood as part of a strategy of democratisation of post-school education. Student unions, reintegrated into the institutions of further and higher education, can wage a struggle within these institutions around points of ideology. The establishment of such an ideological consensus is made all the more easy by the bourgeoisie's abandonment of the ethic of the liberal education system. Such a consensus will then be crucial at a later date in winning these institutions, *as a whole*, to the propositions of a government of the left, which will thus be able to set about tackling the problems at present beyond the NUS's sphere of influence, viz. those of economic decision-making with respect to post-school education.

Corporate Politics and the Unity of the Student Movement

In examining Spour's arguments, it would be totally unserious to deny that there has been a crisis of strategy on the student left in recent years. Those like the student comrades of the Socialist Workers Party, whose prescription for all of the ills of the NUS is a new and bigger dose of militancy, close their eyes to the real changes which the student movement has undergone over the past couple of years.

In fact, Spours is correct to point to the failure of the left to deal adequately with the Government's offensive and the new situation in the student movement. Nevertheless, what he does not even attempt to analyse is why this situation has come about, what changes have taken place in the outlook of students, and why the Tories have been able to reconsolidate a significant base within the NUS. Insofar as he does touch upon these questions, all ills are put at the door of the left, and, incredibly during the period of the Tories' fastest ever growth, the FCS doesn't even merit a mention. Sue Slipman summed up this approach to the problems of the student movement most succinctly in a recent edition of the *Broad Left Journal*: 'Students, abused by the Left, turned to the Right'[4].

A less superficial analysis of the crisis of the student movement has to start from the fact that students have experienced a serious decline in their standards of living and education (in terms of books per student, student-staff ratios, etc.) in recent years. The results of the Government's policies of holding back income, cutting social expenditure, and allowing unemployment to rocket to levels unprecedented since the '30s have hit students as hard as any other section of society. Not only that, but they have hit students themselves in an uneven way, accentuating the divisions institutionalised in the binary system and the inequalities of the grants system, so that those worst hit in both their pockets and facilities have been those in the 'poor relation' sectors of post-school education — the further education and teacher training sectors. It is students from these sectors who also face the highest levels of unemployment if they do manage to get through college.

More generally it is clearly the case that both the increased competition for places at college and the increased competition for jobs have profound effects on the consciousness and activities of the majority of students.

Furthermore, the repeated defeats the student movement has suffered on grants, on jobs (especially for trainee teachers), on the cuts, and on tuition fee levels have lent credence to the idea that the student movement is incapable of defending its members. (Spours' answer to this problem seems to be to say: 'Yes, that's true, let's all unite around something different and forget our grants and future jobs till better times'!) In society as a whole, students have witnessed those same trade union leaders who led the struggle against similar policies from a Tory Government now knuckling under without very much more than a whimper to Wilson and Callaghan.

Given this situation of labour movement passivity in the face of right-wing government policies and repeated defeats of the student movement, a polarisation around different class solutions to the crisis is virtually inevitable. As students become disillusioned with collective action and begin to seek individual solutions to their problems, the ideological basis is rapidly being laid for a resurgence of the right. Not only does academic competition between individuals hot up in these circumstances, but racist and sexist solutions also gain new credibility — the idea that women and overseas students have less right to post-school education than white, middle-class males. Thus it should be no surprise that in many colleges strip shows have resurfaced — and with them, riding on the broad shoulders of the men of the rugby club, come the new student ideologues of the Tory right.

The polarisation which we have seen amongst students over the past year itself takes place in an uneven way, with the universities being the main centres of Tory growth whilst the FCS has negligible influence in the further education sector. In other words, the most proletarianised sections of students, who will lose most if the NUS loses its campaigning character, and who in the main are or will be members of trade unions, are proving the most resistant to the growth of the right wing.

Thus the resurgence of the Tories in NUS is *not* an independent factor which can be combatted simply at an ideological level. On the contrary, it feeds off the defeats of recent years and has to be dealt with as part of a global strategy for reversing them.

The major distinctive feature of the NUS which emerged out of the youth radicalisation of the '60s was its independent character and its capacity to mobilise its membership in mass action campaigns around such themes as grants, cutbacks and autonomy. For the first time the student movement could organise its members independently of the institutions of post-school education, and for that reason could link the student movement with the tremendous social struggles of the early '70s. This was shown in no uncertain fashion in the support given by students to the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974. It was this national campaigning character of NUS which also made it possible for the least well-organised sectors of students to be integrated into the national union for the first time. This was above all the case with the further education sector, where the sorts of concessions won by students in the big universities on a college by college basis were inconceivable outside a framework of united *national* campaigns, where the full force of the entire student movement could be focused around specific objectives.

4. Sue Slipman in *Broad Left Journal*, October 1977.

The Barber budget of December 1973 marked the beginning of the end of the ability of such purely *student* activity to win major gains for the student movement. The initial response to this situation from the leadership of the NUS was to seek out alliances with the 'left' leaders in the trade unions, through joint protest action locally and nationally against the cuts. But following the massive cuts lobby of Parliament in November 1976, these lefts took fright lest such movements spill over into an overall struggle against the central pillar of the Labour Government's policies — the Social Contract, to which these 'leaders' were and remain firmly wedded.

It was the development of this situation, characterised by increasingly sharp government attacks and inaction on the part of the trade union lefts, which posed the left in the NUS with its current crisis of strategy. The options are very clear. On the one hand, to develop a strategy which aims to mobilise students against the Government's policies through *both* systematically seeking out alliances with all sections of the labour movement *and* confronting those labour leaders who sacrifice on the altar of the Social Contract not only their own members but also the gains of the working class in the spheres of education, jobs and the whole of the social services since the Second World War. Or, alternatively, to turn the student movement back into the educational institutions, integrating student unions, locally and nationally, into the decision-making bodies of these institutions, with a view to gaining what concessions are possible within the framework of consensus with the local and national education authorities.

'Broad Left Policies — Tory Tunes'

If we now turn to the practice of the Communist Party in the student movement, I believe it is remarkably simple to demonstrate that the activities of Sue Slipman — so lauded in the press—are not temporary individual aberrations, but rather a brutally coherent application of the theoretical and strategic conceptions of the CPGB, as outlined in Spours' article and sanctioned by the new *British Road*.

The Government's attacks on post-school education have taken the form not simply of cuts, but also a whole ideological offensive aimed at pinning the blame for youth unemployment on the inadequacies of the education system itself, thereby providing an alibi for recent moves to give private industry a much greater say in the goals and content of education. Ther hardest hit by this project of restructuring higher and further education have been those sectors most clearly orientated towards vocational training, and not having the same lobbying power as the big universities in the corridors of power within the educational establishment. Thus, for example, within the teacher training sector it is planned to cut teacher supply from 114,000 places in 1974 to 46,670 places in 1981, involving the closure of 39 education departments and colleges of education by 1981.

At the same time the Government has sought to divide students along racist lines through differential fees and quotas for overseas students, and, *de facto*, along sexist lines by cutting those sectors of further and higher education containing the highest proportion of women students (teacher training, social studies, arts courses, etc.).

Clearly a socialist response to these attacks would have to put a premium on the unity of the student movement by uniting all students behind those facing the most vicious attacks and, at the same time, seek to direct student action towards explaining the anti-working class nature of the Government's projects to the labour movement. Thus the cornerstone of a strategy in post-school education would have to be the eradication of its present inequalities in terms of access, qualification and content, and its socialist transformation. Any other approach would fail to win labour movement backing as it would imply support for an institution which fundamentally discriminates against working class people in the first place.

The CP's strategy in the student field has, however, been remarkable in that it has involved no attempt to develop such an alliance and, in the recent past, has accepted each major step in the Government's project. That this has been the case is best demonstrated by a few examples.

On the question of college closures, the position advocated by Slipman was for the 'retention of colleges due for closure within the education sector'. In other words, the massive cut in teacher supply was accepted; and following the abandonment of the wave of occupations in summer 1976 by the NUS executive, there were no further attempts to mobilise students against it. Given the fact that it would actually require an *additional* 58,000 teachers to meet the objective of maximum class sizes of 30 put forward in the Labour Party's manifesto, the basis for labour movement sympathy and support for such a campaign was obviously there. Nevertheless, because such a mass campaign would have run slap-bang up against the National Union of Teachers' leadership, who were themselves in the process of disciplining union members taking unofficial action on class sizes, no activity was organised beyond tea parties with Shirley Williams.[5]

A further example is the fee increases of up to 300 per cent proposed by the Government last year and now being implemented. Students' initial response to this blatantly racist attack (they had to alter the Race Relations Act to make it legal!) was a wave of occupations. The official NUS response was to *accept* the fee increases and to advise unions to cooperate with college authorities in lobbying for hardship funds. It was around this issue that the term 'institutional harmony' first made its appearance. The idea was that NUS should make a long term bloc with college authorities who opposed fee increases (for their own reasons) in order to lobby for the long-term abolition of fees. It was therefore out of the question for unions to organise mass action aimed at forcing these authorities not to implement fee increases. The result was that no national action was organised against the increases and unions found themselves isolated from one another and college workers, arguing a 'special case' to their college authorities. The real losers were, once again, the least well-organised sectors who found, not unsurprisingly, that their authorities were not particularly interested in institutional consensus.

Finally, at last December's NUS Conference, the CP leadership sponsored a series of policies together with the Tories which began to turn the clock back to the days of welfare unionism:

Racism: 'The objective of the campaign must be to pledge all educational institutions and all the forces within them to opposing the growth of racist ideas...'[6] But in order to achieve institutional harmony on this question all efforts to develop independent mobilisations against fascists had to be dropped and no efforts spared to avoid confrontation with these same authorities implementing racist measures against overseas students.

Workers' Struggles: 'We cannot avoid the conclusion that payments for coaches to support industrial disputes are "ultra vires" and where the student body wishes to express its support for such a dispute (such as the Grunwick workers' strike) this is properly expressed through individual contributions from the students' own pockets."[7]

Autonomy: This was undoubtedly the main issue debated by conference and traditionally the touchstone of the right/left divide within the NUS. Here a bloc of Broad Left and Tory leaders fought for, and won (by 13 votes), the principle of 'public accountability' whereby student union funds and activities can be vetted by college authorities, LEAs and the Government to ensure that unions only engage in properly student activities.[8] Such a position is a far cry from that advocated by the Broad Left just two years ago: 'The fight

5. See NUS Strategy Paper: 'Teacher Supply, College Closures and Educational Expansion', September 1977.
6. 'Racism and Fascism — NUS Strategy Paper'.
7. 'Ultra-Vires and Student Unions'.
8. See Conference Document 10, November 1977: 'The Payment of Student Union Fees — NUS Strategy Paper'.

for the left (to take over the union in 1969) was to transform what had been debating and sports clubs, set up by the colleges with the intention of controlling students, into active democratic self-governing bodies answerable only to their members.'[9]

Spours' theoretical framework provides the coherence which these practical positions seem to lack. The central point is that no further progress can be made in defending students' material interests until the arrival of a government of the left. In this situation, unions have to reorientate their activities away from the narrow 'corporate' framework of economic struggles and begin to take on 'universal functions' of waging an ideological battle within the educational institutions. The principal allies of the student movement around questions of ideology and democracy will be sections of the educational establishment and the college authorities themselves. Therefore any independent student action which might tend to polarise these institutions has to be discouraged.

The contradictions in these positions stand out clearly in their practical application. The college authorities are precisely the people implementing material, racist and sexist attacks, not only on students but also on the workers within the colleges. They are the people who most vigorously defend the elitist *status quo* within post-school education. To privilege a system of alliances with such people inevitably involves refusing to fight in any effective way the current attacks on students and workers within post-school education, and *de facto* divides students from their potential allies in the trade unions.

At the level of politics in the national union, the CPGB's positions on institutional consensus and 'public accountability' result in *programmatic convergence* with the Tories. The FCS have been advocating the positions quoted above on racism, autonomy and the role of the national union for years. The shift in the strategy of the CPGB, strictly in line with the *British Road*, makes an alliance between the two unavoidable — where programmatic agreement exists it would be sectarian to do otherwise!

The Alternative

An article such as this can do little more than touch on some of the themes of a socialist strategy within the student movement. I shall therefore limit myself to simply dealing with what I see as the central theoretical and political problems raised by the orientation of the CPGB in NUS.

The most important questions for socialists in the NUS to get right are those of politics and strategy within the national union. Today the number one threat to an independent student movement is posed by the growth of the FCS. If you like, they are the main enemy and the key task of revolutionary socialists in the union is to unify the left around a programmatic alternative to the Tory/Broad Left bloc. That also means systematically campaigning for the Broad Left to break with the Tories. The Broad Left itself is rent with contradictions; in particular, the last conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students voted to campaign for left unity against the Tories and to stand separately from the Broad Left in the coming elections for the NUS National Executive.

In fact *all* the political tendencies within the student movement are being forced to define their attitude to the Tories and the sort of programme they represent for students. What would be a real disaster for the left in this situation would be for the potential for unity on a principled political basis to be broken up by organisations putting their own sectarian interests above the urgent necessity of building a socialist tendency capable of winning the majority of students to class struggle politics and a rejection of all that the FCS stands for. The programmatic questions are crystal clear today in the student movement: for or against student union autonomy; for or against 'institutional harmony'; for or against no platform for fascists; for or against a systematic fight against all aspects of racism and sexism in the student movement; for or against practical support for workers' struggles; for or against a fighting student union allied in action to all sections of the labour movement opposing government policy.

The Socialist Students Alliance stands for building such a political tendency amongst students, and its success at recent NUS conferences (winning the crucial votes at many of the sector conferences and gaining up to 45 per cent at December's NUS Conference) is a clear indication of the feasibility of such a project. The divisions within NOLS further confirm this perspective. The IMG is confident that a firm orientation for united action with those sections of NOLS breaking with the Broad Left/Tory alliance could result in the emergence of a new organised left wing in the student movement. But the orientation of the student supporters of the Socialist Workers Party, organised in the National Organisation of IS Societies (NOISS), is highly unfortunate in this respect. Whilst these comrades agree on all of the major programmatic questions in NUS, and have played an important role in many student struggles over the past three years, they continue to adopt an extremely sectarian attitude to the rest of the student left, declaring themselves to be the 'only alternative' to the Broad Left. The absurdity of this self-proclamation has been amply demonstrated by their declining support within NUS conferences. Nevertheless their sectarian stand at a national level and their refusal to enter into a debate aimed at developing *serious* alternatives to the Broad Left leaders' policies is an important factor in repelling many genuine student militants from the far left as a whole.

Secondly, there is the question of our response to the Government's attacks on post-school education. There is a kernel of truth in the CPGB's assertion that we have reached the limits of 'corporate politics' within NUS. However, the conclusions we draw from this are exactly opposite to those of Slipman and Spours. For us the central question raised by the defeats of recent years is that of building an effective alliance between students and the labour movement.

It is because students cannot *independently* defend either post-school education or their own living standards that such an alliance is all the more urgent. The problem the left has to tackle is that such an alliance can only be based on a fundamental critique of the role of educational institutions in capitalist society and the objective of their socialist transformation. Any other approach involves the impossible task of trying to persuade workers to defend a system of education designed to discriminate against themselves and their children. It is in this direction, and that of overcoming the racist and sexist divisions within its own ranks, that the left has to develop its positions. Furthermore, in that framework the key objective must be to break the organisations of the labour movement from their corporate economist outlook and to win them to struggle around far broader solutions to the problems of society as a whole.

Far from implying the impotence of specifically student struggles around the material attacks on education, such an approach gives student action a clear strategic objective: to take the issues into the organisations of the working class and there force debate and action both around immediate questions and to begin to lay the basis for a genuine socialist transformation of the education system. Thus the framework for formulating demands and tactics becomes not so much what can be agreed with the authorities as what will cut across sectoral, racist and sexist divisions within the student movement and win the active support of the labour movement. Finally, such an approach implies having no qualms at all about taking on those trade union and Labour Party leaders who themselves refuse to organise or support any effective action in defence of the social services.

In terms of our overall strategy, I think we must first of all take our distance from the CPGB in relation to their attitude to the bourgeois state in general and institutions like education in particular. For the CP the state is to be democratised, and a crucial factor in this *gradual* process will be the winning of

9. 'The Broad Left .....', *op. cit.*

hegemony within such potentially 'neutral' institutions as the education system. For revolutionary socialists the state is, as Marx put it, 'the executive committee of the bourgeoisie', and is to be destroyed — all other paths have resulted in the destruction of the workers movement by the core of that same state, i.e. the army and police. For us the role of institutions like education is not simply a technical one, potentially neutral, but rather that they play a central role in organising capitalist society and ensuring the fragmentation and atomisation of all sections of the oppressed within it. Thus the education system gives ideological cover for and masks the *class* basis of the social division of labour in capitalist society, because it perpetuates the myth that all start off equal and are assigned their respective places in the social hierarchy according to the 'neutral' criterion of 'academic merit'. The real, class divisions in society are obscured and given ideological sanction. Our approach to such an institution has to recognise both that it cannot simply be destroyed, because in the absence of alternatives children still have to learn to read and write, but that at the same time it cannot be won in its entirety to serve the interests of working people. As with health or the family, our orientation is rather to recognise that it can only be democratic insofar as its functions are taken back into the community and the work-place and are socialised so that the institution itself begins to wither away, within a democratically planned socialist society.

That implies a transitional orientation of opening up such institutions to the local community and their democratic running under workers control exercised by all sections of users and workers in the institutions according to the needs of the community.

Such an orientation corresponds far more closely to the real development of the class struggle within such institutions than the schemas of the CP. Every social revolution, and Portugal most recently, has demonstrated *not* the winning over of the entire health or educational apparatus to the side of the working class but rather a social polarisation of these institutions, with the workers and sections of the users developing their own self-organisation, independently of *and against* the institutional hierarchy, and opening up the facilities for health-care or education to local working people. With the greater development of the 'welfare state' in Western Europe, we can expect such a pattern of social struggles to penetrate that much more deeply into the institutions, and we can expect to be able to win the vast majority of students to the perspectives of workers control and the socialist transformation of society.

In an embryonic way we can see the seeds of these types of struggles, moving in the direction of dual power within the institutions themselves, in every major conflict over the past few years — from the anti-war university in the United States to the opening up of occupations as centres for teach-ins, alternative seminars, etc., in the recent struggles in Britain and France. In every case the pattern has not been one of 'institutional harmony' but rather 'institutional polarisation', with the majority of students and workers on one side and the college administration, higher grades of staff and the most right-wing section of students on the other. The tragedy has all too often been that students have given insufficient attention to patiently explaining the issues and building up mutual respect so as to win the college workers to support them.

Nevertheless, what *has* been unequivocally demonstrated is that every major struggle blows apart any 'harmony' or 'consensus' which might exist in the college. It is for this reason that the keynotes of our strategy, vis-a-vis that of the CP, are the self-organisation and total independence of the student movement from the educational institutions, and the systematic promotion of a fighting alliance between the student movement and the organisations of the working class. General ideological questions have to be dealt with in that framework and not separated off from the real material attacks on the education system.

The CP's strategy, as outlined by Spours, denies that independence to the student movement and ties it hand and foot to the institutions of the capitalist state. The artificial separation of ideology and material interests, the long wait for the 'government of the left', and their opposition to the development of students' self-organisation all have their roots in a strategy based on *class collaboration* as opposed to class struggle. The CP's current agreement with the FCS is based on the same immediate programme for students, and in that sense they stand on the *wrong side* of the class divide amongst students. The kind of alternative the Socialist Students Alliance is trying to build in NUS will seek to unite *all* of those breaking with the main themes of this programme in the direction of class struggle politics, in a united democratic socialist tendency fighting for the leadership of NUS.

Finally, it needs to be said that while the CPGB's students may be at present the only section of the party involved in an explicit alliance with the Tories, their evolution from the more traditional CP 'left alliance' to their current system of alliances is a serious warning to CP militants outside NUS that the politics of class collaboration have their own logic — up to and including collaboration with the main party of the bourgeoisie *against the left*.

Of course, the IMG does not claim to have a monopoly of the truth in dealing with many of the new problems being raised in the student movement today. We are, however, confident that the problems of the student left can only be resolved in the framework of a constructive debate around *class struggle* solutions to students' problems and a non-sectarian approach to all those breaking from the new stage to which the Broad Left leaders' policies of class collaboration have taken them in NUS.

The State and the Transition to Socialism

Our interview with Nicos Poulantzas on 'The State and the Transition to Socialism' in the last issue of *International* has aroused considerable interest. Below, CARL GARDNER reflects on some of the points raised in that interview, while PHIL HEARSE reviews Poulantzas' book, *The Crisis of the Dictatorships — Portugal, Spain, Greece* (New Left Books, 1976).

A Pandora's Box

International is to be congratulated on publishing Henri Weber's interview with Nicos Poulantzas (Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 3-12). It is certainly one of the most interesting and accessible contributions to the contemporary debate about the nature of the state and socialist strategy to have appeared in English. However several points need to be taken up.

The first thing to be said is that Poulantzas' positions constitute one of the most sophisticated attempts to 'bridge' the position of the mainstream of 'Eurocommunism' and that of 'orthodox' or semi-orthodox revolutionary Marxism (despite Poulantzas' avowed differences with both). One ought to be aware that the theoretical elaboration of the 'left' intelligentsia of the European Communist Parties has not ceased — there is some creative life within them yet. It is a pity that such creative thought as does emerge revolves consciously or unconsciously around the 'internal' needs of an intelligentsia which fears both being outflanked to the left by revolutionaries and making a decisive break with the official CPs.

It is necessary to state in advance that I have undertaken this critique not merely to defend 'orthodoxy' blindly against heretical 'deviations' — an orthodoxy for orthodoxy's sake. It is absolutely necessary to develop new conceptions — theoretical 'leaps' — to deal with a complex and changing reality. Trotskyism, as a political current, has much to learn from theories which have originated outside its orbit. However, on balance, I find what is substantially a Trotskyist orthodoxy far preferable in this case, far more consistent and ultimately far more applicable to the tasks which confront us than Poulantzas' iconoclastic theorisations.

It is necessary to look at Poulantzas' positions more closely. In doing so one is continually amazed (one could say that Weber was dazzled) by the subtle sleight of hand which enables him to try to ride two different horses at once. Unfortunately, because of the extreme difficulty of this acrobatic feat, he consistently falls off one or the other. But Weber allows him to swiftly remount, by shifting the terrain of the debate or allowing him to shift it. (It is only fair to add that an examination of the inconsistencies of Poulantzas' 'quicksilver' politics must be easier in retrospect than in the heat of a verbal debate.)

The first thing to note — and a point on which Weber does not touch — is the extent to which his positions are developed from his study in *The Crisis of the Dictatorships* of the rapid liberalisation/democratisation processes in the last four years in Greece, Spain and Portugal. Such conclusions as are drawn in that work — about the undoubtedly important role played by the splits within the state apparatus, corresponding in turn to splits within the national bourgeoisie and their differential links with American imperialism — are now applied willy-nilly to the situation in France; that is, to a country not faced with the task of emerging from dictatorship to liberal democracy, but of going from that latter condition towards socialism.

Of course, sections of the state apparatus and the bourgeoisie in Greece and Portugal can contemplate and encourage moves towards a liberal democratic regime, which does not immediately threaten their interests (indeed facilitates the process of exploitation). But this is not the case in France, or any other of the Northern European capitalist states. So that analogy, drawn from 'concrete, historical' experience, is somewhat wide of the mark. That is not to say that we have nothing to learn from those experiences, but that *that* specific feature of the Southern European situations is not something which can be usefully generalised to the liberal democratic states. Indeed, it would be misleading to do so.

To demonstrate the essential continuity between *The Crisis of the Dictatorships* and these latest formulations on France, one need only note this lengthy passage from the last chapter of that work, where all the ambiguous themes to which this essay addresses itself find full expression:

'On the one hand, if the popular masses wish to win the leadership of the process for themselves, and therefore their own bases of political power, they must organise without fail forms of popular power at the base... outside and parallel to

the state apparatuses proper... On the other hand, however, and particularly in so far as there is no immediate transition to socialism, these forms of popular power cannot be organised in a central coordinating instance of a dual power type (the soviet model)... to the extent that these forms of power, while they are indispensable if the leadership of the process is to devolve on the popular masses, cannot assume at this stage a centralised organisational structure, and develop the framework of a parallel state, they must of necessity depend on the existing state apparatus itself... Not only can there be no question of "smashing" it at this stage, but its "democratisation" must not involve its dismantling' (pp. 151-2).

It is with an unravelling of this veritable Pandora's Box that the rest of this essay aims to concern itself.

Another point not taken up by Weber is the relation between Poulantzas' previous theorisations of the nature of the bourgeois state and his present more concretised positions. If one adopts the principal conceptions of, say, his early debate with Miliband[1] — that of the state as an over-elaborated, expansive set of social relations encompassing areas of social/cultural life not previously located within the state, such as education, the media, the family (!) and the trade unions (!) — then his present views become more comprehensible. The split within such 'ideological apparatuses' of the state — and this is not to accept Poulantzas' categories — becomes much more credible. Within these areas of his 'expanded' state (indeed one could say of some of his formulations, his *endless* state) that split becomes a serious perspective, as part of a process of civil polarisation. In fact, within this framework, 'split' becomes a simple shorthand for such a necessary and unavoidable process of polarisation. But the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state — counterposed in Poulantzas' earlier writings to the expanded 'ideological apparatuses' of the state — is a totally different prospect. It is through confusion and 'slippage' between these previous categories that Poulantzas is able to make his present concretisations of previously abstract formulæ, in the specific case of France, more tenable.

But what then is Poulantzas' general position? The essence of it is founded in an essentially correct critique of the monolithic, instrumentalist conception of the state held by large sections of the revolutionary left. This has been elaborated in previous debates. But he then goes on from this observation — that we should take careful note of and act on the contradictions within the state apparatus — to the illegitimate conclusion that it is within the locus of these internal contradictions that we must situate the most decisive socialist interventions.

It is here that the skilful ambiguity of Poulantzas' positions finds fullest expression. This ambiguity is disguised by a magical sleight of hand, which enables him to equate and intermingle two essentially opposed positions — the traditional revolutionary and reformist. Such 'magic' can be spotted at two critical points in the discussion. On the one hand he says: 'I think that nowadays the perspective of the state remains valid as a perspective for *a deep-seated transformation of the state structure*' (p.6). On the other hand he talks of '... a struggle [within the state apparatus] which is, if you like, a struggle of resistance, a struggle designed to sharpen the internal contradictions of the state, to carry out *a deep-seated transformation of the state*' (p.4). (My emphasis in both cases.)

In these examples, 'transformation of the state' takes on two totally opposed meanings. In the first case it refers to a neutralisation and subsequent breaking up of the coherent forces of the state (and presumably its replacement by something else — a 'smashed' state is useful to neither class). In the other case he clearly implies the *reformation* of the present state for working class ends.

This ambiguity (supposedly evolved as an advancement in revolutionary theory, in response to modern conditions, to avoid the pitfalls of the traditional reformist/revolutionary dichotomy) re-occurs. Poulantzas continually vacillates between two clearly definable interpretations of the significance of the 'internal contradictions' within the bourgeois state. What are the practical implications for revolutionaries of these very real 'contradictions' within the state? Do we work on these contradictions in order to paralyse and render the bourgeoisie's 'executive arm' less effective (in other words a process of 'neutralisation' or even 'sabotage')? Or do we see the possibility of splitting off — of winning significant sections of the state apparatus to the proletarian camp? The first is absolutely essential — a vital tactic within the whole revolutionary 'war'. The second is notoriously fraught with danger and constitutes a dangerous concession to gradualism and the reliance on a peaceful transition to socialism. Weber makes this second point very forcefully, but is not directly answered.

There is one situation in which it is possible that a significant section of the state apparatus may defect to the proletarian camp — that is under conditions of an overt threat of a military coup. However, a precondition of such a defection would be precisely the erection of an alternative armed proletarian power, necessarily embodied in dual power organs, which could oppose such a coup and protect the defectors from reprisal by the military. This is a point discussed later. As well as precluding dual power, Poulantzas gets this process the wrong way round — on his model, as we shall see, it is the split *itself* which is supposed to obviate such an overt repressive reaction by the bourgeoisie.

Of course, Poulantzas wriggles out of this problem by an admitted recognition of the necessary dual nature of revolutionary struggle — both within the state (to reform, split or neutralise?) and '... a parallel struggle, a struggle outside the institutions and apparatuses, giving rise to a whole series of instruments, means of coordination, organs of popular power at the base, structures of direct democracy at the base. This form of struggle would not aim to centralise a dual power type of counter-state, but *would have to be linked* with the first struggle' (my emphasis).

The exact nature of this 'linking' is never, of course, specified. The possibility of conflict between the two struggles is never considered.

We can further elaborate the weaknesses in Poulantzas' positions by reference to two concrete examples of 'contradictions' within the bourgeois state — one British, one Italian. The British state is probably the most fully articulated and widest in social scope in the whole of the capitalist world. This is due in part to the relatively undimmed power of the working class after the Second World War and the subsequent acquisition within the orbit of the state of extensive social service/welfare provisions and large-scale nationalisations of industry. It is also undoubtedly riddled with contradictions. In particular, more work needs to be done on the whole question of the conflict within the state of individual or sectional interests or needs, and the internal disruption/inefficiency this causes.

For example, it is a fact that the Price Commission — a recent addition to the British bourgeois state's armoury, which helps to mediate faction-fights within the bourgeoisie — defends with frantic jealousy its wide-ranging statistical knowledge/information, even from other sections of the state apparatus such as the Inland Revenue or the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection. Such knowledge could be vital in the effective working of other sectors of the state, for the good of the bourgeois social order as a whole.

The principal reasons for this 'blockage' within and between these sections of the bourgeois state are two-fold. First, there is a very real fear within individual capitalist concerns involved in the Price Commission's statistics that such information will reach, in particular, the Inland

1. Poulantzas, 'The Problem of the Capitalist State', in *New Left Review* 58; Miliband, 'The Capitalist State — Reply to Nicos Poulantzas', in *NLR* 59.

Revenue. What precisely capitalist companies which supposedly operate according to bourgeois legality have to hide is not clear! Nevertheless, they have the power via such bodies as the CBI to exercise pressure on the Price Commission to maintain secrecy. Secondly, such secrecy is motivated by a more general suspicion of the circulation of information in an indiscriminate manner. Sections of the state fear that such a process could create invasions of their 'sphere of influence', and individual capitalists fear that such information could in turn reach their competitors.

This is, incidentally, one reason why the 1984ish nightmare of total computerisation of state knowledge/information, concerning individuals or groups, is an unlikely scenario in the short or medium term. It would imply the total socialisation and accessibility of knowledge within the bourgeois state, which for the above reasons is precluded. Contradictions of this kind are structural, not peripheral.

But it is one thing to recognise such weaknesses and exploit them, from within and without, to render the bourgeois state less effective in its pro-capitalist functions, thus facilitating in the long term the proletarian seizure of power. It is altogether another to rely on the possibility of significant splits within or between the Price Commission and the Inland Revenue, with resultant defections to the proletarian camp. The contradictions, although incidentally and unconsciously disruptive of the bourgeois state, are firmly located within the framework of the hegemony and maintenance of capitalist rule as a whole.

Of course, Poulantzas may say that this is not the sort of 'contradiction' he has in mind. In that case he should be more specific — he is notably reticent about the exact nature of these crucial, 'internal' state contradictions.

The other example concerns a section of the directly repressive state apparatus in Italy — perhaps more relevant to the Weber/Poulantzas debate about the 'final confrontation'. It seems that it is within a consideration of the role of the 'armed bodies of men' that the debate becomes most polarised 'in the last analysis'. Because of the late unification of Italy as a bourgeois state and its subsequent inability to centralise and 'rationalise' its repressive forces adequately, there exist (apart from the regular army) about a dozen distinct sections (or layers) of police/militia. Some of these are semi-privately run, some are linked with and controlled by the state to a greater or lesser extent. Each of these forces has a distinct 'self-interest' and sphere of operation or influence. One does not need much imagination to see how such fragmentation in certain situations of mass confrontation *could* be potentially dangerous and self-defeating for the Italian bourgeoisie as a whole. In such circumstances, centralisation and coherence of the repressive forces is a must for a bourgeoisie bent on retaining power.

But here again it is one thing to recognise these very fundamental internal contradictions within the bourgeois repressive apparatus, and to exacerbate and take advantage of them from within and without. Again a process of neutralisation and 'sabotage' is involved. It is totally another to rely on the defection of some significant section of those forces to the side of the working class, as part of a strategy. Some sections may indeed defect, under the pressure of an alternative proletarian power. But to rely on that process as an essential part of a revolutionary strategy would be to put a fatal reliance on the potentially progressive nature of at least some sections of the armed forces of the state.

Besides, as noted earlier, it is clear that any such significant 'split' or defection would be conditional on the erection and counterposition of an alternative source of potent, armed force organs of proletarian power constituting a dual power situation. This Poulantzas explicitly rejects as a possibility.

This brings us on to a consideration of what precisely Poulantzas does stand for, as opposed to his internally inconsistent and ambiguous formulations, which admit of a wide range of interpretation. As already indicated, he explicitly rejects the possibility of dual power situations, the centralisation of organs of working class control and democracy at the base into a coherent and oppositional whole *principally outside the bourgeois state.* Secondly, talking about France, he is adamantly committed to the implementation of the Common Programme of the Union of the Left — but in his case implemented by the pressure of the mass mobilisations of the working class.

Yet the contrast between his treatment of the two 'strategies' is very instructive. His rejection of 'dual power' as an option, when the ambiguities are pushed to one side, rests principally on the contention that the bourgeoisie would not permit such a counter-state to be erected:

'You surely don't think that in the present situation they will let you centralise parallel powers to the state aiming to create a counter-power. Things would be settled before there were even the beginnings of a shadow of a suspicion of such an organisation' (p.10).

In other words, he uses one of the traditional arguments of reformism against revolutionary socialism — going 'too far, too fast', will only lead to repression, so we have to be reasonable, moderate and unalarming to the bourgeoisie, to avoid such a response. The corollary of this is that, if tackled slowly, the power of the bourgeoisie can be taken away by a series of gradual reforms, backed by a democratic majority. The Chilean Communist Party would have endorsed such sentiments every time! And this is precisely what he has to say about the road to socialism as (hypothetically) realised by the implementation of the Common Programme:

'I no longer think that there is a real anti-capitalist alternative outside or alongside the road of the Common Programme. There is *currently no other way possible*' (Poulantzas' emphasis).

This is justified by a brief elaboration of what a left government committed to the Common Programme in France could do to break the power of the bourgeois state democratically:

'Even on the simple basis *of ensuring the dominance of its own political elite,* the left government will be forced to make changes in the institutional forms as well as the people. In the judiciary, for instance, if they don't want to end up very quickly in an Allende-type situation, they will be forced — I repeat, *even from the viewpoint of continuing the elite system* — to break the power of the Council of Magistrates, to change the normal rotation of judges, etc.' (p.10, my emphasis).

This would seem to imply something rather paradoxical — that the bureaucratisation of the Communist and Socialist Parties isn't such a bad thing after all. Indeed, it seems it can be fitted into a strategic schema that means that these parties will be forced, by the need of their own bureaucracies to perpetuate themselves, to make decisive inroads into, for example, the bourgeoisie's control of the state judiciary. This even applies to other sections of the state too: '... we can justifiably suppose that a left government will have no alternative but to take significant measures to democratise the police...' (p. 10).

One could ask, of course, why this 'safe course' didn't occur in Chile. If one was cynical and consistent, following Poulantzas' line, one could conclude that the Chilean CP and SP weren't bureaucratised enough to force them to take the necessary steps, driving them unintentionally in a revolutionary direction.

To be fair, one must add that Poulantzas characteristically wriggles out of this dilemma by his ritualistic, but face-saving, reference to the working class: 'And then that, *linked to* the mass movements at the base, will allow you to weigh up the possibilities of a split' (p. 10, my emphasis).

This formula, however, again plunges him right back into the problem of the 'split perspective' previously examined. Again, too, there is no significant explanation of the exact nature of this 'linking' (i.e. through what forms and organs?). Such links are not abstract, spontaneous entities — they must be institutionalised and embodied in distinct forms. Such forms continually tend to go outside the framework of the bourgeois state and to develop in a dual power direction.

Poulantzas, although granting some autonomy to the mass movement, would have us continually re-insert such mobilisations back within the Common Programme framework — for their own good!

However, the most worrying aspect of the whole strategy is that nowhere does he explain why the bourgeoisie and its state will *not* allow the formation of 'dual power' organs outside the state, but *will* allow a radical process of reform, of democratisation and replacement of pro-bourgeois personnel within the state. After all, these measures are, according to Poulantzas, precisely the kinds of initiatives which will enable the working class to move towards socialism most effectively and irretrievably.

Unfortunately for Poulantzas' cosy picture, the bourgeoisie tend to have a rather low tolerance of substantial, potentially fatal (to them) changes within the state or the economy. They are also not particularly fussy whether such changes are brought about through parliament or in an extra-parliamentary manner. The main danger on Poulantzas' model is that the working class would have no alternative self-confident, centralised organs on which to rely, either to oppose and thwart purely economic measures — sabotage or investment strikes — or more repressive, military ones. (All this of course possibly occurring before the hypothetical split in the bourgeois state, which for Poulantzas represents *the* way out of the dilemma.)

A course of even temporary reliance on the bourgeois state/parliament to achieve basic, preliminary objectives would almost certainly leave the working class disarmed in the face of a massive 'change in the rules' by the bourgeoisie.

Poulantzas' commitment to the road of the Common Programme in France, supposedly still linked to a revolutionary perspective, is further illuminated by consideration of the following statement:

'The left will be in power with a programme much more radical than has ever been the case in Italy; committed to implementing it, which will really upset some of its components; already embarked on a process of democratisation of the state, faced with an enormous popular mobilisation giving rise to forms of direct democracy at the base.... but at the same time limiting itself to the project of the Common Programme.

'So the real problem is to know how we can intervene in this process *in order to deepen it*' (p. 9, my emphasis).

OK, there is, as usual, something for everyone there, but it is important to note specifically his terminology. It is the job of revolutionaries — amongst which he numbers himself — to 'deepen' the strategy of the Common Programme. This is not just an accidental use of words — it occurs again: 'The question is to *extend* and *deepen* the road of the Common Programme and to prevent social-democratic stagnation, which is not necessarily written into it like original sin' (p. 12, my emphasis).

The first illegitimate assumption, underlying the whole way he poses the comparison between Weber's position and his own, is that the revolutionary left outside the CP does not regard the Common Programme as a necessary stage in the ripening of a revolutionary situation in France. That is not the point at issue. The revolutionary left acknowledges that the establishment of a CP/SP government is a necessary experience through which the French working class will have to pass on the road to a revolutionary transformation of society (though the recent divisive dispute between the CP, SP and the Left Radicals has once more thrown this into question!).

However, we see it as vital to *break with* the politics of the Common Programme as soon as possible if the pitfalls of such a policy are to be avoided. That must be the thrust of a revolutionary strategy, rooted within the context of mass mobilisations — not the relegation of such mobilisations to the role of sources of 'pressure' on a CP/SP administration to carry out reforms leading to the problem-solving 'split' in the state apparatus. Such a policy would amount to the subordination of the explosive and wide-ranging energies of the mass movement to the bureaucratic and parliamentary (legal) manoeuvres of unashamedly reformist parties.

But this is not the language which Poulantzas uses. He speaks unambiguously of 'extending' and 'deepening' the Common Programme, not 'breaking with' it or 'going beyond' it. It is in such nuances of language, given the contradictory and ambiguous clues offered elsewhere, that we must seek Poulantzas' real politics.

Yet he does say enough about the mass movement — the activities of the working class outside of parliament — to credit him with some realisation of the viability of revolutionary action. This is clear despite the fully articulated confusion which Poulantzas offers as a dialectical breakthrough solution to modern problems. It is for this reason that we have to categorise Poulantzas as a fully-formed, theoretically sophisticated *centrist* in the classical sense. Here we see a new centrism very painstakingly and carefully expressed. Poulantzas does vacillate precisely between reform and revolution, merging and submerging the two. He then goes on to theorise this very ambiguity, within the framework of the scenario of the 'split' in the state apparatus.

We can use the term 'centrism' in relation to Poulantzas in an uncontrived manner — unlike its application to, say, the Socialist Workers Party in Britain, or Lotta Continua in Italy, for whom it is an insulting and unwarranted epithet. He alone has been able to make a virtue of this ambiguity between reform (as represented by the Common Programme) and revolution, maintaining that the two can co-exist and aid each other on the road to socialism.

POSTSCRIPT: On finishing this article I re-read the debate between Miliband and Poulantzas (*New Left Review* 58, 59, 82 and 95) and came across a cryptic but very prophetic thesis in Miliband's reply to Poulantzas (*NLR* 59):

'... if the state elite is as totally imprisoned in objective structures as is suggested, it follows that there is *really* no difference between a state ruled by, say, bourgeois constitutionalists, whether conservative or social-democrat, and one ruled by, say, Fascists... This is an ultra-left deviation... and it is the obverse of a right deviation which assumes that changes in government, for instance the election of a social-democratic government, accompanied by some changes in the personnel of the state system, are sufficient to impart an entirely new character to the nature and role of the state.'

We can see how both these 'deviations' are contained in an embryonic, developing form in Poulantzas' latest positions. His false analogy between the developments in the state structures of the former dictatorships in Southern Europe and the likely developments in the advanced Northern European liberal-democratic states, remarked on earlier, clearly tends in the direction of what Miliband calls the 'ultra-left deviation'. This is combined with a much more recognisable rightward shift in his explanation of a strategy rooted in the CP/SP Common Programme in France, where the replacement of state personnel is given a central emphasis.

CARL GARDNER

review

The Crisis of the Dictatorships—Portugal, Spain, Greece (New Left Books, £5.25)

Nicos Poulantzas has established himself as one of the most influential of contemporary Marxist theoreticians. Although he is, as one observer has recently noted, a member of a generation which has established 'a certain shift towards economic and political theory, beyond the philosophical perimeter of their elders'[1], the precise political consequences of Poulantzas' work have not been clear. The publication of his text on the dictatorships, therefore, gives us an opportunity to begin to locate Poulantzas politically.[2] This is not an activity of pedantic sectarianism; Poulantzas sets out a definite strategic line of march in these countries, which given its international publication and his reputation will not be without influence. Poulantzas is, as *Marxism Today* was so keen to tell its readers, a member of the Greek 'interior' Communist Party. This in itself tells us little, given the 'interior' CP's catholic attitude to membership.[3] In fact Poulantzas' text turns out to be an extended dialogue with the CPs. Despite many partial qualifications and hesitations, Poulantzas' solution to the problem of socialist strategy in these countries turns out to be a 'left' variant of the line of the CPs themselves.

Fractions of the Bourgeoisie and the Overthrow of the Dictatorships

For Poulantzas these countries are 'dependent' countries vis-a-vis the metropolitan European countries and the United States. They are characterised by a 'dependent form of state', the domination of foreign capital, and the lack of any real national independence. In each case the bourgeoisie is divided between a comprador bourgeoisie, representing the interests of foreign (mainly American) capital, and a 'domestic' bourgeoisie, based on developing industrialisation, partly representing native capital and partly administering foreign capital. But neither represents a genuine 'national' bourgeoisie (pp. 41-43).

This conception must be challenged at the outset, both from the point of view of the dependence characteristic of these states (and hence the existence of 'national independence') and the divisions which Poulantzas alleges within the bourgeoisie (and hence the existence or otherwise of a 'national bourgeoisie'). The root of both Poulantzas' errors is his failure to grasp the significance of the international interpenetration of capital in the post-war era. In fact the bourgeoisies of all three countries encouraged foreign investment, as a means of developing industrialisation, without yielding national independence or overall domination of the economy to foreign capital. In Spain, despite all the contradictions, the different sectors of the bourgeoisie (latifundia, industry, finance) were fused in the post-war period into a relatively homogeneous bloc including the Catalan and Basque bourgeoisies.[4] This was the real 'oligarchy', not a fraction based purely on foreign capital as Poulantzas alleges. In Portugal all sections of big capital welcomed the liberalisation of foreign investment as a motor of economic development.[5] No section of the bourgeoisie based purely on foreign capital existed. In Greece, due to the exceptional strength of finance capital, the industrial monopolies are tied firmly to the banks. The section of the Greek bourgeoisie most firmly tied to outside interests is that based on merchant capital (in the first place shipping). This hardly amounts, however, to a comprador bourgeoisie based on foreign capital.[6] Poulantzas' categories of the 'domestic' and 'comprador' bourgeoisies explain nothing of the reality of these countries. In each case we discover a relatively homogeneous national bourgeoisie.

Now Poulantzas evidently wants to establish the existence of these categories — the theoretical foundation of the whole text — in order to demonstrate the existence of 'progressive' and 'reactionary' sectors of the bourgeoisie, one based on foreign capital, the other on indigenous capital. Once this theoretical manoeuvre has been carried out, Poulantzas can then proceed to present the struggle for the destruction of the dictatorships as a struggle for 'national liberation', and further proceed to interrogate himself endlessly about the advantages and disadvantages of an alliance with the 'domestic' bourgeoisie.

Poulantzas' position on national independence and national liberation is bound up with his own version of the Maoist 'two superpowers' theory, and most importantly with his rejection of the notion of the post-war decline of US hegemony.[7] Thus his position on US hegemony leads him, without the slightest trace of embarrassment, to look forward to the 'transition to socialism and genuine national independence' in France and Italy (p.133). Evidently he regards the EEC countries as having the same relations of dependence vis-a-vis the USA as do Greece, Spain and Portugal vis-a-vis the USA and the EEC. This approach, which abandons analysis of inter-imperialist contradictions in favour of a sophisticated version of 'ultra-imperialism', provides the theoretical prelude to a justification of all kinds of working class alliances with the bourgeoisie in favour of 'national independence' — in countries *which are themselves imperialist*. It is this kind of theory which has led sections of the French far left (the PSU and OCT) to launch a campaign in favour of national independence, against 'an American-Germanic Europe'.

Despite these errors, Poulantzas gets one essential point correct. Given the need to advance the process of industrialisation (which goes hand in hand with integration in the EEC), and given the strengthening of the material weight and combativity of the working class, important sectors of the bourgeoisie (for Poulantzas the 'domestic' bourgeoisie) understood the necessity for democratising the regimes. This immediately poses the central question of working class strategy which is the core of Poulantzas' thesis.

The Strategic Problem

For Poulantzas the grave danger is that the democratisation process will take place under the hegemony of the 'domestic bourgeoisie', with the result that the democratic stage will not lead towards socialism but towards the stabilisation of bourgeois democracy (pp. 66-67). How, therefore, can the democratisation stage be gone through without ceding hegemony to the domestic bourgeoisie? Before answering this Poulantzas stops to ask himself, 'whether the main resistance organisations of the popular masses were correct to accept, as they all did do, an alliance with the domestic bourgeoisie....the answer to this is an incontestable "yes"' (p. 59).

Although giving this unequivocal answer, he argued that this strategy has in fact led to the domination of the domestic bourgeoisie over the democratisation process. Thus this strategic choice 'bears heavily on the workers movement' but was the only way in which the dictatorships could have been overthrown. But apart from anything else, this latter allegation — that only by the working class vanguard allying itself to a fraction of the bourgeoisie could the dictatorships be dismantled — flies in the face of what has actually happened in Portugal, Spain and Greece. Poulantzas has a romantic-mythical vision of a 'popular resistance' overthrowing the oligarchy.

The strategic choice of the CPs was of course made in accordance with the dogma of the necessity of a democratic stage, with its objective dynamic of tying the working class to the democratic turn of the bourgeoisie itself. For Poulantzas the only way forward from this situation is a 'long march' through the democratisation stage. What precisely this means is revealed when Poulantzas outlines his strategy: 'If the popular masses wish to win the leadership of the process for themselves, and therefore their own bases of political power, they must organise without fail their own forms of popular power at the base (workers control, community and factory councils, peasant committees etc) outside and parallel to the state apparatuses proper' (p. 152).

So far so good, but.... 'insofar as there is no immediate transition to socialism, these forms of popular power cannot be organised in a central co-ordinating instance of a dual power type (the soviet model)...The state apparatuses within which the masses are to win themselves bastions must be profoundly transformed in structure, this being already a precondition for the democratisation process under the hegemony of the popular masses....these state apparatuses besieged by the popular masses must be able to continue to function as an operational unity. Not only can there be no question of "smashing" them at this stage, but their democratisation must not involve their dismantling ...to dismantle, disarticulate or split this apparatus...is the best way to enable the bourgeoisie to reconquer those positions that the masses have won in the state' (p. 152).

Now here we are dealing with centrism. Poulantzas wants eclectically to combine a strategy of the fight for popular power with a

1. P. Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, NLB, p. 102.
2. This is not to say that there is necessarily a direct junction between his theoretical and political positions. In a future text we shall attempt a more extensive appreciation of Poulantzas' work, especially *Political Power and Social Classes*. An excellent first step towards a critique of Poulantzas is the article by Simon Clarke in the CSE bulletin, *Capital and Class*, No. 2.
3. At least one openly Trotskyist group works inside the 'interior' CP.
4. See R. Soler, 'The New Spain', *NLR* 58.
5. See R. Blackburn, *NLR* 87-88, pp7-8.
6. See the article by Nicos Mouzelis in *NLR* 95. This includes a polemic against Poulantzas' treatment of Greece.
7. N. Poulantzas, *Classes and Contemporary Capitalism*, Chapter 1. For the revolutionary Marxist view see E. Mandel, *Europe vs America*, NLB 1970. For a theoretical and factual refutation of Poulantzas' view see 'Independance nationale et internationalisme', by J-M Freyssat and D. Bensaid in *Critique Communiste* 14/15, March-April 1977.

strategy of winning bases *within* the existing capitalist state apparatus, as a precondition to establishing popular hegemony. What are we to make of the extraordinary phrase 'insofar as there is no immediate transition to socialism'? It goes without saying that there can be no 'immediate transition to socialism' without the construction, generalisation and co-ordination of organisations of popular power. But the building of such organisations relies precisely on their *progressive appropriation* of the functions of the state and hence their *counterposition* to the existing state apparatus. Again it goes without saying that at the *beginning* of the emergence of organisations of proletarian power there can be no question of 'smashing' the existing state. However, the function of the period of the emergence and consolidation of organisations of popular power is precisely to 'dismantle, disarticulate and split' the existing state apparatus. Poulantzas eclectically combines the strategy of the CPs (winning bases inside the existing state apparatus) with the construction of organisations of popular power, conceived only as a means of putting pressure on the state apparatus.

Behind the rhetoric, this thoroughly confused and centrist position is merely a variant of the 'democratic stage' theory. While insisting that the masses must 'without fail' construct organisations of popular power, Poulantzas takes the Portuguese CP to task for confusing the democratic and socialist stages, thus having a dangerously 'leftist' policy. His theoretical backing for all this is his notion of an 'uninterrupted transition to socialism by stages' which he somewhat oddly counterposes to 'any kind of stages theory' (p. 101). This formulation is obviously an attempt to appropriate Lenin's conception of 'uninterrupted revolution' in Russia. But he takes over the position of Lenin before the April Theses — that the revolution must be under the hegemony of the proletariat but limit itself in the first instance to democratic tasks. This position, proved wrong in Russia, is doubly inappropriate in any modern imperialist country. But the fact that it is after all a stages theory is demonstrated when Poulantzas deals with Portugal up to and including the defeat of 25 November 1975: 'We did not see a defeat of a transition to socialism that was under way. At no point in the period in question did the Portuguese situation really break through the limits of the democratisation stage' (p. 135).

The socialist and democratic tasks of the Portuguese revolution are not intertwined but part of separate stages. Poulantzas' stages are uninterrupted...because they follow one another! Any serious and upright Stalinist would take Poulantzas to task for dabbling with organisations of 'popular power' in the democratisation stage. However they are theorised, they have an objective dynamic towards the 'disarticulation' of the existing state apparatus — something understood by Eanes and Soares in Portugal, but not understood by Poulantzas.

Poulantzas and the State

The real junction of this text with Poulantzas' more general theoretical positions is the theory of the state. In guise of a polemic against the supposed 'neutrality' of the state, he argues that 'the state is not a thing or a structure' which can be captured 'but a relation'. The mechanical separation of the state and civil society is 'characteristically Hegelian'. The interpenetration of the state and civil society (which in reverse, as it were, justifies the notion of 'ideological state apparatuses') means that the state is 'riven with class contradictions' and is a 'condensation of a balance of forces' (p. 92).

This is not the Marxist theory of the state. However mediated the relations between the state apparatus and the ruling class, the state remains a structure expressing the domination of a particular class. For Marxists, the state is by definition a class state. Class contradictions are not taken into the heart of the state apparatus. In arguing that the state is 'riven by class contradictions' and 'expresses the balance of forces', Poulantzas comes close to conceding what he is polemicising against — the neutrality of the state. Certainly, in view of this conception it is easy to understand how establishing proletarian bases inside the existing state apparatuses can be seen as part of establishing popular hegemony. Marxist theory has always stressed the relative autonomy of the state from civil society, which makes it impenetrable to the establishment of 'proletarian bases'. This is the very foundation of the Marxist theory of the political as the linchpin of all social relations. Any other theory reduces the capitalist state to the expression or the arbiter of social conflicts. In this case the struggle for proletarian power can take place right across civil society, eventually being expressed in the state apparatuses. This allegedly 'Gramscian' notion turns the whole Marxist theory of politics and the state on its head. Eventually Poulantzas reaches the characteristically ambiguous conclusion that the 'smashing' of the state apparatuses requires not just a change in personnel but 'a radical change in their actual organisational structure'.

Eurocommunism

As we have seen, Poulantzas' politics are of a chronic centrist rather than simply reformist character. Whilst opening up the possibility of an alliance with sections of the bourgeoisie — indeed, the inevitability of doing so — he is at pains to stress the dangers involved. He argues that an 'historic compromise' can only be a last resort against fascism, 'contrary to the illusions of certain people', and thus in a thinly disguised way rips the Italian CP over the knuckles. But the French Common Programme is 'genuinely anti-monopoly'. Carrillo and the Spanish CP, being more slavish followers of the democratic stage than their Portuguese counterparts, get Poulantzas' approval (bizarrely he laments the lack of a 'genuine revolutionary party', presumably of the Carrillo variety, in Portugal). And the Greek 'interior' CP is quoted without a hint of contradiction, despite being amongst the most right-wing in Europe. If this pot-pourri of confusion has any influence whatever, it can only be regretted. It is precisely the kind of 'clarification' that is not needed.

PHIL HEARSE

review

TOM NAIRN

THE BREAK-UP OF BRITAIN

As the rate of inflation on its way up meets the rate of exchange for the pound on the way down, an ideal climate is created for books about 'the crisis'. Given the fixation with Britain's decline shared by bourgeois and socialists alike, it is amazing how vacuous and tepid most of these studies have been. Tom Nairn's book *The Break-up of Britain** is a welcome exception. For once we have a study which goes beyond a ritual listing of symptoms, and starts to examine the specificities of Britain as an imperialist state in the late 20th Century.

It will be easier to understand Nairn's book if his argument is discussed in two parts. First, the survey he makes of British imperialism, its rise and present demise; then secondly, the more theoretical conclusions he draws about nationalism and its place in European and world history. Although this order may seem back to front, it relates to the order of the book itself and also corresponds to a much firmer and confident first section which will allow us to make more sense of the author's more speculative and tentative conclusions.

* * *

Nairn starts off by describing what he calls the 'transition state'[1] of 18th century Britain, which combined in its ruling caste elements from both the agrarian aristocracy and the modern constitutional bourgeoisie. Neither part of the 'old world' of Absolutism, nor the 'modern world' of representative bourgeois democracy, the result was a social formation with a remarkably 'low profile' state and an extremely cohesive, if deferential, civil society.

The basis for the remarkable stability and class quiescence of this society was of course its phenomenal success as an overseas Empire builder and ruler. Unlike the aspiring German or Italian capitalisms, there was literally no necessity in Britain for the restless dynamism so typical of her competitors in the 19th century. It was thus the 'external' relations of Britain to world development which moulded and dictated her 'internal' social structure.

One of the most crucial features of the complacent rule of Britain's patrician elite was the wholesale incorporation of the English intelligentsia into the service of the state and its rulers. The civil service and the Oxbridge-public school network were the social cords which bound the loyalty of the British upper middle classes to the 'ancien regime' with its monarchy, Lords and assorted paraphernalia which was to disappear elsewhere over Europe by 1920. But there was to be no 'second revolution' in Britain, no dramatic rupture with the dynasties of tradition as seen in the Romanov, Ottoman, Habsburg or Hohenzollern territories. The very success of British society (in world terms) was the basis for the social pact between the ruling class and Britain's 'hard-headed' urban middle class. A potentially much more serious threat was of course the developing labour movement. But according to Nairn this threat never materialised. The energy of working class politics was channelled into the Labour Party, probably the most humble and deferential political animal in British politics.

In Scotland a distinct sub-plot was unwinding. Despite its impressive pedigree of national life (its own Church, financial system, etc) the partnership in colonial and imperialist plunder removed the necessity for the middle class of taking the road of forced march to modern development under the banner of nationalism. The result was a withered and pathetic apology for nationalism with Orr Wullie and Dr. Finlay as Scotland's national symbols. Likewise the intelligentsia of 19th century Scotland found themselves functionless in 'their own' society. Some moved south or overseas, where their talents were put to the natural use of ruling the masses. Others stayed in Scotland and, cut off from the metropolis, their parochialism and dourness was only compensated for by the secure living to be made as captains of industry in the Clyde or Tay valleys.

The spiralling economic collapse of British imperialism, the world of IMF loans and 'one more year of austerity', has undermined the basis of that old stability. Today it is no longer the virtues of talented and successful amateurism which stand out. Instead it is the vices of a creaky and arthritic political rule which personify Britain.

Again according to Nairn, the labour movement has been totally unable to mount any effective challenge to the British state and its 'consensus'. Even the most self-active struggles have not gone beyond the bounds of loyalty to Labour's parliamentarism. In fact it is bourgeois radicalism which is most dangerous to the prospects of the British Constitution, a bourgeois radicalism in the shape of nationalist movements. Based on oil and the prospects of social-economic renovation which can be derived from its ownership, a mass movement has developed which threatens to go beyond piecemeal reform and political repairing of the 'normal' party system. Independence, argues the author, would in fact shatter the old political order for ever. The 'ancien regime' is in no position to absorb and incorporate such a radical restructuring of its operations. In fact, the very inflexibility of the British political order (no federalism, no TV in Parliament, obssesive secrecy, etc.) means that even a mere 'political' break in the Constitution entails a considerable social revolution, regardless of the wishes of the participants.

* * *

Although this is only the barest sketch of Nairn's argument, it describes fairly accurately his central thesis. In all its detail it is an impressive, often brilliant, analysis, a panoramic survey of British imperialism's place in world history. It is not necessary to agree with the entirety of his writing to say that the chapter on the 'stunted' nature of Scottish nationality, its 'schizophrenia' (a nation but not a state), and its reactionary culture, is the most perceptive survey ever written on the subject. Likewise his designation of the nationalist movement as bourgeois radicalism correctly defines the social and class nature of a phenomenon which so mystifies much of the left. But perhaps the most impressive feature of the early section of the book lies in its method.

The book is above all a study of the *political* nature of the 'crisis', in contrast to the predominant economic bias of other doomsday scenarios. As the author explains, this concentration on locating the economy as the source of the British malaise is itself a partial product of the dazzling weight of civil society (e.g. economics) over state life (politics).

But the very ambition of his project is partly responsible for some of the worst defects of the book, for it constantly forces Nairn into a dubious style of argument, constantly vacillating between the extremes of astute political sensitivity on one hand and crass impressionism on the other. Two examples can be used to illustrate lack of concern for political detail.

First there is the decision (presumably the author's) to reprint almost unaltered an analysis of 'English' nationalism written seven years ago. But these seven years have seen the face of 'English' nationalism change dramatically with the growth of the National Front/Party into the largest far-right movement in Europe outside Italy. Inside the very heartlands of working class communities, organised fascism is growing where the far left has only the slimmest of toe-holds. But, according to Nairn, this is '... largely a distraction. The genuine right — and the genuine threat it represents — is of a quite different character.' As this chapter spells out, that character is no less than J. Enoch Powell. Now it is quite true that Powell's literary and political ramblings sum up quite nicely many of the ideological threads of English reaction — the Midlands self-made man, nostalgic for the village church. But seriously to suggest that this 'English' dreamland is in the same political league as the strident 'British' nationalism of the National Front — explicitly imperialist, racist and self-organised — is a dangerous mistake for a socialist to make.

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* *The Break-up of Britain — Crisis and Neo-nationalism*, by Tom Nairn (New Left Books, £7.50p).

1. As the author acknowledges, this argument is largely derived from the influential essay by Perry Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', in *New Left Review* No. 23, January 1964. However also ever-present, but never recognised, is the important study of class structure by Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966).

The same flippancy towards political detail is shown in his view of the efficacy of bourgeois radical nationalism in bringing down Britain's political house of cards. The Scottish Nationalist Party is no longer a party of cranks and eccentrics, and their own perspective is a real and crucial factor in the dynamic of events. As their last conference demonstrated, not only is the central leadership of the party acutely aware of the clapped out condition of British bourgeois democracy, it is also completely dedicated to preserving it.

Many members[2] of the party are in favour of a formal training period of devolution to prevent any sudden radicalism, most[3] are in favour of some jointly administered use of oil resources, and all[4] are in favour of retaining Elizabeth of Windsor, the Commonwealth and the Christmas message as essential features of our new independent Alba. Of course they may not succeed in channelling the aspirations of Scottish working people into such neat constitutional packages (in fact, if anything, it is unlikely), but at least their conscious desire to do so, when combined with their prestigious role at the head of the SNP, should have been given a passing note.

* * *

The greatest strength of Nairn's book is its understanding of the unique continuity of the British state, for its class lineage and powers of incorporation are described in a clear and exemplary way. But paradoxically the author's (justified) concentration on the strengths of the system lead him to a pessimism about the potential of the forces arrayed against it. We shall return to this in discussing Nairn's views on nationalism, but an amazing problem emerges in his narrative of British imperialism. For here is a book written to assess the nature of the present 'crisis' which has nothing to say about the only other period when such a term was really justified — that of 1910 to 1914.

These years are unique in Britain's history for a simple reason. It was only then (as opposed to 1919 or 1926) that the working class experienced a dramatic rise in class confidence and combativity *at the same time* as the ruling class was increasingly split and demoralised.

The story of the 'industrial explosion' of these years is well known. The 1910 miners' strike, the 1911 transport strike, the 1912 dock strike, and the 1913 lock-out in Dublin were more than isolated economic disputes. Entire communities were involved in often serious confrontations (involving deaths at Tonypandy) with the naked might of state repression. Solidarity strikes were common, and a new leadership was thrown up deeply influenced by the anti-capitalism of syndicalism and vehemently hostile to the reformism of the trade union and Labour leaders. The real dynamic of these events was seen in the support given to the 1913 lock-out, led by Jim Larkin. With his tour of Britain and in the massive support given to the Dublin workers, a political basis was laid for the political link-up, an 'ideological regroupment', to use a phrase, between the secular Republicanism of Connolly and Larkin and the proletarian syndicalism of the pits, docks and engineering works of the British mainland.

This was the working class who found a ruling class deeply divided as the complacency and inertia of the British 19th Century state came under increasingly vehement attack. Opposition to the passivity and general stupor of the Liberal Government had led the Tory Party under Bonar Law to step outside the framework of parliamentary consensus in an explicit support for armed rebellion from Ulster. That Sunday afternoon in March 1914 when General Gough, commmander of the Third Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh, fresh from a point blank refusal to obey the lawful government of the day, sat down to discuss with the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition was an ominous day indeed for the British Constitution.

With syndicalism and Irish Republicanism on one flank, and Tory-army sedition at the head of Ulster's rebellion on the other, this must surely be a crucial episode in the history of British imperialism — a vital one to discuss in any survey of a coming 'breakdown' of the Whitehall-Westminster state. Yet in Nairn's book the entire chapter is dismissed in some four lines. 'It is true', he explains, 'that neither the Tory right [?] nor the more militant and syndicalist elements of the working class were really reconciled to the solution up to 1914. The clear threat of both revolution and counter-revolution persisted until then, and the old order was by no means so secure as its later apologists have pretended.' And that, it would appear, is that.

This is no academic quibble over historical opinion. There are important reasons why Nairn is forced to dismiss such a central crisis in British imperialism, for his estimation of the forces involved leaves him no choice. Without misconstruing Tom Nairn's views, his assessment of the social forces involved in the pre-1914 crisis can be summed up as follows: *Syndicalism* — a sub-branch of Labourism, no more than the militant wing of a movement almost ready made for incorporation and assimilation into the very pores of British constitutionalism. *Republicanism* — a theocratic, backward-looking ideology, full of morbid ghosts and superstitious ritual. *Ulster Protestantism* — a superstitious creed, but nonetheless a legitimate movement for self-determination.

Through such tinted spectacles it is little wonder that Nairn can see little of importance in the pre-1914 period. It means that his survey of imperialism is totally lopsided, unable to discern the real and crucial weaknesses of bourgeois power which lurk beneath the all-powerful exterior. A bad mistake to make in historical analysis, it can be a fatal one to make in contemporary practice.

* * *

The exact reasoning behind this view of Britain's last political crisis is found in the last chapter of the book, where Nairn spells out a general thesis on nationalism and its relation to socialism. Correctly he starts from the premise that nationalism itself has unduly influenced attempts to theorise nationalism. Too often arbitrary appeals to the 'national community' or to 'historical continuity' have substituted for a materialist and rigorous approach to nationalism. However, for the author, this inability to understand the phenomenon is not restricted to bourgeois thought, for nationalism is, in his opinion, Marxism's great failure.'

In its theorising on the subject Marxism has failed to go beyond the 'great universalising tradition', a tradition which stretches from Kant through German philosophy, English political economy, and French socialism to the proletarian internationalism of Lenin and the Comintern. It is this tradition, Nairn claims, which can only see nationalism as some 'exception' to the general internationalist rule, an irrationalism which human progress and world development will overcome. In fact, he claims, the opposite is true. Nationalism has an eminently rational and materialist basis in the very structure of world development. The uneven development of capitalist modernisation has meant that 'progress' for the peripheral areas of the world (everywhere outside Britain in the early 19th Century) could not be a linear or even one. Consciously led, *forced* social development was the only way to avoid being left on the margins of historical development. Nationalism was rarely democratic, but always populist, drawing on the symbols and slogans of the ethnic masses. For the first time the masses were invited into the making of history, if only as genuinely enthusiastic footsoldiers of the new 'national' elites fighting for their political lives against stronger and more modern neighbours.

* * *

For that reason any neat division between 'progressive' nationalism of the Vietnams in modern history and that of the reactionary variety in Germany or Italy is not helpful. All nationalisms, by definition, have to contain *both* forward looking and reactionary aspects. Nairn describes the egoism and irrationality of all nationalisms with the following metaphor: 'In mobilising its past in order to leap forward across this threshold (of development) a society is like a man who has to call on all his inherited and unconscious powers to confront some inescapable challenge. He sums up such latent energies assuming that once the challenge is met they will subside again into a tolerable and settled pattern of personal existence.' It is thus from the 'inherited and unconscious powers' that the myths and symbols shared by all nationalisms, no matter what their nature, are drawn. It is the very progress of humanity, the 'tidal wave of capitalist modernisation' lurching forward in drastically uneven ways, which makes nationalism an inevitable phase of human history. Since 1914 Marxism has therefore been on the defensive, its only gains seen in the Third World, where it has contributed to the perspectives of the anti-imperialist revolution. Outside of that unlikely theatre of proletarian revolt, Marxism has been swamped by nationalism, betrayed to its own bourgeoisie.

To this picture Nairn adds a footnote on a new species of nationalism, those of the 'overdeveloped' national communities,

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2. See assorted speeches of Neil McCormick, son of the party's founder and Professor of International Law at Edinburgh University.
3. See the article by David Simpson (Economics Dept., Strathclyde University), published in *Radical Approach*, edited by Kennedy (1976). For a fascinating look at the British ruling class's outlook, see Peter Jay's article in support in *The Times*, 13 May 1976.
4. This was the position adopted by the 1977 conference in Dundee with the unanimous backing of the party's leadership.
5. Again, as the author states, this argument is heavily influenced by Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (1964), and its chapter seven on nationalism.

surrounded by more historically backward nationalities. Israel, the Basque country, and Ulster[6] are cited as examples of the intractable nature of the national question in these areas. He derives from the 'development gap' between north and south Ireland that only an independent Stormont — independent, that is, of Britain and Dublin — could lay the basis for a 'rational' solution. Ulster nationalism (as opposed to British loyalism) therefore has to be supported as strenuously as an all Irish republic has to be opposed.

From that brief summary everything discussed in the preceding section falls into place. The impotence of 'internationalist' socialist and labourist movements, the progressive nature of some very unlikely candidates for social progress such as Ulster 'nationalism', the remarkable absence of any tradition in Britain of social populism from left or right — all are seen by Nairn as being derived from the inexorable march of nationalism. Essentially there has been a fundamental flaw in socialism, its internationalism turning out on closer inspection to be a naive cosmopolitanism.

* * *

Before challenging his thesis it is necessary to point out some of the more perceptive points that he makes in his argument. To start with, he is correct in his concentration on the uneven development of capitalist modernisation as the central dynamic behind nationalism. Nairn goes beyond this not exactly original thesis to draw out the necessity of rejecting any view of nationalism as some *internally* generated political process (i.e. the need for a national market, a national tariff barrier, etc.), a view which has prevailed on the left since the days of Stalin. One of the merits of the book is that hopefully it kills forever the dogmatism and static sociology behind Stalin's famous definition.[7] It is correct to dismiss arbitrary lists of what is, or is not, a nation. 'Dialects', for instance, have a habit of becoming a 'language' when they get an army mobilised behind them, regardless of their literary merits. As Nairn points out, nationalism does not awaken nations to self-consciousness, it invents them where they do not exist. His survey of nationalism and uneven development, regardless of the conclusions he himself draws, actually makes it easier to locate nationalism historically with its rise as a system of social thought and its role in class society over the last century and a half.

However, it is very strange that other aspects of advanced bourgeois nationalism were not examined in this book. For instance, it is obvious that the participation of the masses in bourgeois democracy, and the visions of self-rule and popular sovereignty which go with it (regardless of their form), is deeply connected with a belief in one's 'own' nation, one's 'own' state. To a large extent such a view more or less sums up belief in parliamentary democracy — that it is actually possible to win anything the majority of the population desire inside a given geographical boundary. This myth reflects of course a certain capitalist reality, for within the 'normal limits' of the system the majority of electors actually do decide who their government should be. As an entire lineage of social democrats from Karl Kautsky to Tony Benn have shown, once you actually believe that one day the state may be yours through electoral victory (bourgeois democracy) then it becomes increasingly necessary to defend it against intruders (bourgeois nationalism). This remains a crucial theme for later studies on the nature of modern nationalism to take up.

* * *

Despite certain insights by the author, its fundamental argument remains flawed. His conclusion on socialism is summed up thus: 'Exceptions to the rule (of socialism's predominance over nationalism) demanded explanations — conspiracy theories about the rulers, and rotten minorities speculation about the ruled. Finally these exceptions blotted out the sun in August 1914.'

Such a strange summary, for three years after that dance of reaction and nationalist hysteria came another momentous historical event — the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. To examine the last fifty years through the prism of August 1914 without any acknowledgement of 1917 obviously produces a gross pessimism towards socialism and bestows on the defeats and setbacks of the last three generations a permanency and depth they do not have.

Instead of some historically inevitable process (which is in essence Nairn's view of nationalism) the experiences of 1914 and 1917 form, in microcosm, a view of world history which has real self-active agents conscious and able to change the course of that development. The choice between *defeat*, with its bourgeois hysteria, its irrationality and its nationalist frenzy, and *victory*, with its internationalism and a genuinely new social order, was not decided by some 'law' of history, no matter how materialist it appears.

These two dates are of course only symbolic, for in fact in the decade after the Russian revolution, despite the defeats, a class confidence and (for the want of a better word) socialist culture flourished all over Europe. One has only to think of the response by millions of working people to the first Russian revolution, to the first German soviets in 1919, to the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, to the civil war in Spain, to understand that there was a 'universalist' consciousness which extended far outside the ranks of intellectuals or party cadre. That consciousness, partly gained from the experience of the mass parties of the Second International, partly developed from the lessons of the Russian revolution, was a tangible and viable building block in the construction of a socialist society.

The most crucial element in the last forty odd years of European (and in that sense world) history is unseen by Nairn. What took place was a dramatic *regression* of class consciousness inside the European working class. Again it has to be stressed: this was fought out by self-conscious agents, for there was nothing 'inevitable' about fascism's victory in Germany or Franco's march into Barcelona.

Some idea of the extent of that regression may be gained by looking at a place like Scotland and its contrast with today's corrupt Labour Party and ageing Communist Party. MacLean's role is best known, but there are many more examples of a socialist internationalism among working people which today is not even a memory. When Countess Markievicz, heroine of the Easter Rising, spoke at the Glasgow May Day parade in 1919 there were about 150,000 workers there to listen to her, but this level of popular mobilisation was only reflective of a genuine political sophistication incredible by today's standards. Discussions around constituent assemblies, principled support for self-determination, opposition to imperialist war and militarism were actually commonplace inside the broad labour movement in the immediate post-war period.[8]

It was this proletarian consciousness which fascism, the slump and the post-war Cold War were responsible for destroying. The hysteria of nationalism was a logical, if not inevitable, result.[9] It is the possibility of working class people regaining that type of elemental consciousness which today gives the material precondition for socialism — something which Nairn, regardless of his personal view, cannot fit into his theoretical universe.

Tom Nairn has written an important book, but one whose weaknesses are often those of over-ambition and consequent impressionism. As a study of imperialism in its death agony it should be read, sceptically perhaps, but read. Its faults only serve to remind us just how far the Marxist left is from producing its own 'concrete analysis' of world capital and its British component.

NEIL WILLIAMSON — June 1977

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6. This section of Nairn's argument is, frankly, total rubbish. His 'over-developed' category of nations is totally arbitrary; what does the Basque country, today the most class conscious and combative part of the population in Spain, have in common with Ulster Presbyterian sectarianism? Why is South Africa not on Nairn's list, surely an 'over-developed' country if ever there was one? Perhaps because the contortions necessary for any socialist to support self-determination for white South Africa were more than the author could manage. On Ulster only a comment is possible in this review. Why is there no indication of Ulster nationalism, despite they way it has been kicked about by the British Government since the Troubles began?

The Protestant population can only define themselves in terms of the British connection, and it was this stark fact of political life which led to the eventual demise of the Peace Movement — an inability to take a simple 'yes or no' position on the security forces, and thus on the whole arsenal of imperialist repression in the Six Counties.

7. *Marxism and the National Question* by J. Stalin, where he states his famous definition listing historical continuity, common language, common territory, and common economic and cultural life as defining features of a nation.

8. See, for instance, STUC annual conferences, 1919-23; Labour Party Scottish Advisory conferences 1917, 1918, and 1921, for excellent insights into the debates at the very heart of the labour movement. We can note for instance that the Scottish Council of the Labour Party reported to its 1921 conference on the nine large meetings it had held to demand self-determination for Ireland, all over Scotland.

9. This is not to say that the support behind the spectacular rise of the SNP (or the party *quid et qua* for that matter) in the post-war world is some linear continuation of fascism. There is little in the content of these movements which corresponds to the demoralisation and political decay of 'traditional nationalism'. Unfortunately, a vigorous analysis has yet to be constructed of the features of this new (nationalist) bourgeois radicalism, with its aspirations of social reform and yet its profoundly electoralist and atomised practice.

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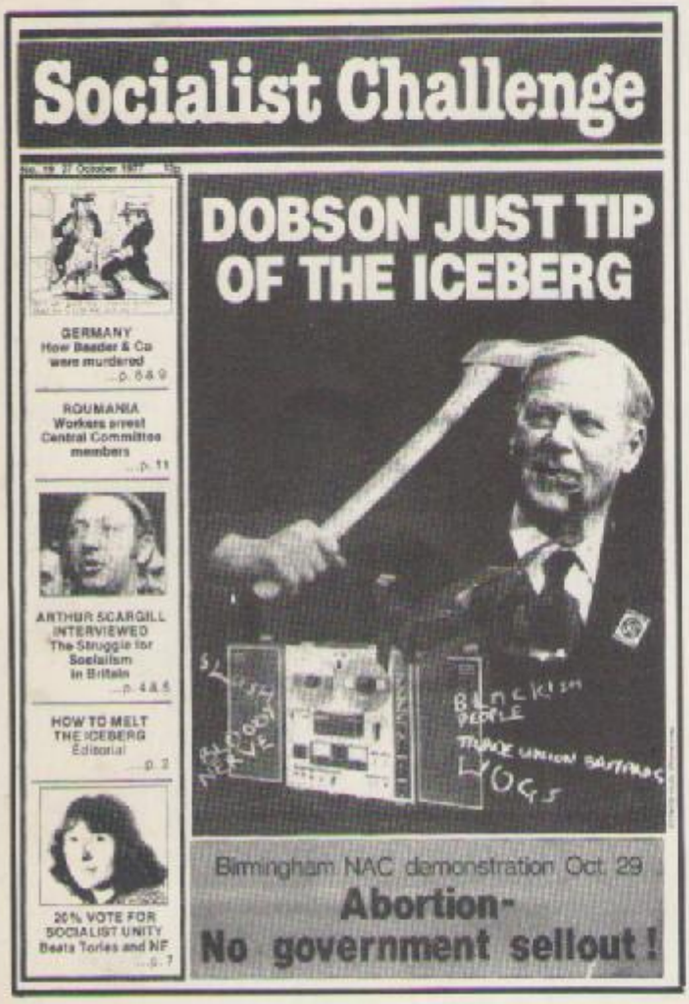

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