

By a State and Revolution study group in Los Angeles—

The study of *State and Revolution* exposes that the modern centrists of the Guardian, like the centrists of Lenin's time, waver "in an unprincipled manner between Marxism and opportunism" (*State and Revolution*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 134) on the question of the state. While raising sham criticisms of the revisionists, the centrists, as Kautsky did, conciliate with the enemies of Marxism.

A good example is Irwin Silber of the Guardian. He violates Lenin's teachings on the inevitability of violent revolution in this way: "The important thing is not what path the working class may desire, but what path is most likely (I say 'most likely' rather than inevitable as a concession to take into account remote possibilities) the working class will have to travel. . . In fact, it is only by preparing the working class for armed struggle that the likelihood of that eventuality is at all reduced." ("Fan the Flames," Guardian, 5/19/76).

As Lenin said about the centrist Kautsky and his critique of Bernstein, "This is not a polemic against Bernstein, but in

# LENIN'S CRITICISM OF KAUTSKY APPLIES TO CENTRISTS TODAY

essence, a concession to him, a surrender to opportunism." (p. 128). Silber's polemic is not against the revisionists, but a hop over the fence into their camp.

In *State and Revolution*, Lenin proves unequivocally that violent revolution is inevitable in order to smash the bourgeois state and set up a new proletarian one. Marx did write about the possibility of a "peaceful transition" in America or Great Britain in 1871, but this was because neither yet had a large bureaucracy or military clique. Lenin comments on the point:

"Today, in 1917. . . this restriction made by Marx is no longer valid. Both Britain and America. . . have completely sunk into the all-European, filthy, bloody morass of bureaucratic military institutions. . ."

Under imperialism or monopoly capitalism, the development of the state has meant a strengthening and enlargement of the

bureaucratic and military apparatus for the express purpose of violently suppressing the struggling proletariat. As it has developed under imperialism, the state machinery has *not* weakened, nor has it led to an expansion of democracy, as the revisionist Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and Silber would have us believe.

Silber says that by "preparing for class war, the proletariat will open the possibility of seizing power peacefully. Like the CP's anti-monopoly program, he is implying that through "greater and greater democracy" the proletariat can take over larger and larger chunks of the state machinery in its anti-capitalist struggle. He believes that there is a possibility of not having to smash the bourgeois state, but of being able to simply lay hold of it and use it for the proletariat's own purposes.

The Guardian centrists' vacillation on

the question of the state also comes out sharply in their stand on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has "not fully restored capitalism," according to the Guardian. What class holds state power—the workers or the bourgeoisie? The Guardian says it is a little of both. The Guardian says that in some parts of the world, the Soviet Union acts like an imperialist power and "seeks hegemony." But elsewhere—for example, when the Soviet Union invades Angola—it is termed a socialist country by the Guardian, carrying out proletarian internationalism.

This is the same line that Kautsky advocated. As Lenin says in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, "Kautsky detaches the politics of imperialism from its economics, speaks of annexations as being a policy 'preferred' by finance capital, and opposes to it another bourgeois policy

which, he alleges, is possible on this very same basis of finance capital." (Peking edition, p. 110).

The Guardian's centrism, however, while it commits the same error as Kautsky on the relation between the state and the economic foundation, is even more backward than Kautsky's because Kautsky at least agreed that the countries in question were *capitalist* in their economic base. The Guardian denies this in the case of the USSR. For the Guardian, imperialism appears to be a "policy preferred" by leaders of what the Guardian thinks is a socialist country.

Either way, what Lenin says about Kautsky's sham critique applies here also: "It is a more subtle and more disguised (and therefore more dangerous) advocacy of conciliation with imperialism. . . Evasion of existing contradictions, forgetting the most important of them, instead of revealing their full depth—such is Kautsky's theory, which has nothing in common with Marxism. Naturally, such a 'theory' can only serve the purpose of advocating unity with the Cunows!" (*Imperialism*, p.111). (Today's Cunows are the modern revisionists.)