

# INTERNATIONAL

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# CAMBODIAN COUP

The recent coup in Cambodia demonstrates extremely clearly the truth of the permanent revolution which revolutionary Marxists have been proclaiming for many years. There is no "third camp" position, there is no such thing as "neutrality" in the context of the capitalist world market and the non-capitalist economies. Sihanouk has only himself to blame for not understanding and assimilating the lessons of Ghana, Algeria, Indonesia and the governments of many other states who thought that they could use an anti-imperialist rhetoric to try and mask from the people, and sometimes also themselves, that there existed at home a backward capitalist economy which was firmly tied to and part of the imperialist market. In the past United States imperialism has continually removed regimes which refused to completely incorporate their countries within the imperialist system, and it was only a matter of time before Sihanouk, the last of a dying species, would be overthrown. One of the factors which kept Sihanouk in power was the proximity of the Vietnamese Revolution. The United States was reluctant to get embroiled in a struggle in Cambodia. However, recent developments must have forced their hand. It was becoming increasingly clear with the social revolution spreading to Laos and Thailand that Cambodia could not carry on in the same old way. The right-wing demonstrations against the embassies of North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government were part of the plan to bring matters to a head inside Cambodia, and Sihanouk was overthrown while paying a visit to the Soviet bureaucracy in Moscow, and it is ironic that these theoreticians and proponents of peaceful coexistence received yet another slap in the face from imperialism.

It has become crystal clear even to those radicals who are not Marxists that the war in Vietnam and the successes of the Vietnamese cannot be isolated or restricted between national boundaries demarcated by imperialism. The forces of social revolution unleashed in Vietnam will not stop at Laos or Thailand or Cambodia—their effects and their influence will continue to increase in Pakistan, India, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, and the lesson which revolutionists in the colonial

and semi-colonial world will learn will be extremely clear: a) that armed struggle against imperialism is the only way forward, and b) that the national bourgeoisie, whether it is led by a Sukarno or a Sihanouk, can play no role whatsoever in this process.

The question we must ask is why the United States chose this particular moment to overthrow Sihanouk. The answer to that lies in what is happening elsewhere in South-East Asia. The magnificent successes of the Vietnamese revolutionaries which in their turn have inspired the revolutionary movement in Laos and Thailand to take the offensive, and have resulted in a severe defeat for the puppet armies in Laos, have obviously forced the Pentagon to strike back in return. It is extremely likely that the struggle between social revolution and the desire of the Asian masses for emancipation will now also be waged in Cambodia. The army of General Lon Nol is extremely weak, badly equipped and numerically insignificant. An NLF regiment relaxing in Cambodia could without much difficulty inflict a military defeat on it. The indigenous liberation forces in Cambodia which had previously not been much in evidence because of Sihanouk's friendship with Peking and Hanoi are now bound to increase their activities. The United States will then expand the war to Cambodia, trying to destroy some of the base areas of the liberation armies, and it is possible that they will also use Cambodia as an excuse to resume the bombing of "strategic targets" inside North Vietnam, and that in this initial phase this also might succeed in uniting the badly split ruling class in America.

For us in Britain it becomes crystal clear that far from being over, the war in South-East Asia is only just beginning, and the task of revolutionists in imperialist countries is to continue to increase the intensity of their struggles against the capitalist system in their own countries and at the same time build strong and solid anti-imperialist movements to express their solidarity with the struggle taking place in South-East Asia.

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N.B. We regret that we have been forced to reduce the size of this issue. This is due to technical difficulties beyond our control.



# BUREAUCRATIC MANAGEMENT

It is difficult to believe (one of the many) official Soviet claims that from 1928 to 1940 Soviet national income increased more than 500%, gross industrial output more than 600%, and gross agricultural production more than 50% (especially since the latter figure was later revised downwards to less than 15%). But behind the facade of fiction lies a firm support of reality: under the influence of the GOELRO (the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia) Plan and the Five-Year Plans, high rates of growth were undoubtedly maintained for many years; the level of capacity and output in the armaments industry were built up to such an extent that the Soviet Union was able to impose a decisive defeat upon the Nazi invader; and the USSR was transformed from a predominantly agrarian society into a powerful industrial state.

By the late 1950s it was becoming evident, however, that the high growth rates of the Soviet economy were beginning to decline, and they virtually ceased in agriculture even before the disastrous harvest of 1963. Between 1951-55 and 1961-64 the average annual rate of increase of national income fell by 44%, the annual rate of increase of industrial output fell by 35%, the annual rate of increase of agricultural production fell by 72% (1954-55 to 1961-64), and the marginal "capital"-output ratio rose considerably, that is, the efficiency of investment fell considerably. (N.B. Capital and means of production are not necessarily synonymous. Capital is that quantity of value advanced to gather surplus for private appropriation. Thus means of production in a workers' state does not constitute capital). After 1958, moreover, the slow-down in growth rates was accompanied by increasing evidence of a fundamental crisis of the entire system of planning.

The changes in the planning mechanism which Krushchev made failed to rationalise the system of planning as a whole. The most significant change in this field was the disbandment of the central planning ministries that had exercised absolute control from Moscow over all branches of the economy. But this did not work. What it produced was a purely administrative de-centralisation of industrial management. The framework of bureaucratic management of the economy and the state were not (of course) challenged. By 1964 it had become obvious that the new administrative regime had resulted in a further slowing down of industrial expansion and in a yet lower rate of growth of the national income.

In fact, the level of consumption not only slowed down but eventually actually stopped, under Krushchev. Real consumption per head of population increased by 66% between 1950 and 1958 (a year in which it reached a level nearly double that of 1937 and of 1928 and three times that of 1944). But, in the field of consumer goods, the sixth Five-Year Plan and the Seven-Year Plan which replaced it, were not fulfilled. The increase in the standard of living slowed down—to stop altogether for a time in 1962, when the rate of growth of the economy also fell.

Krushchev's de-centralisation was in fact a narrow, one-sided, bureaucratic reaction to Stalin's over-centralisation. Its effects were probably beneficial in some cases but harmful in others, and on balance inadequate. What Krushchev's successors, Brezhnev and Kosygin, have since been trying to do, is to substitute economic de-centralisation for the purely administrative one. This is the meaning of the September (1965) Plenum economic management reform, with its emphasis on the autonomy and profitability of the individual enterprise. The principal content of the reform lies in (1) the granting of much greater independence to enterprises and (2) the converting to

evaluation of the activity of enterprises in terms of profitability of production (N.B. It is important to distinguish here between profit as a guide to resource allocation, and profit as the very goal of production. Differences in the socio-economic nature of profit and in its role in capitalist and socialist—albeit degenerated—society are determined not by the profit category *per se*, but by the specific mode of production. Thus, although it is impossible to regard the introduction of measures which emphasise the role of profit as part of "the march to socialism and communism", profit in the Soviet Union, and the other workers' states, has not become the purpose and the motive force of economic growth, and the reform does not mean that capitalism is being re-introduced in the Soviet Union).

Despite the early official claims of the reform's success in attaining its objectives (see, for instance, the figures cited by the Chairman of Gosplan when presenting the 1968 Plan to the Supreme Soviet, quoted by Michael Ellman, "Lessons of the Soviet Economic Reform", *Socialist Register* 1968, p. 31), it seems that the improvements made in the first year or two of the reform were very much a temporary phenomenon. Soviet industrial output in July 1969 was running 7% above 1968's figures, and was roughly in line with the growth recorded over the first six months of the year. This is below the 7.3% target of the plan, however, and less than the rises of 8.3% in 1968 and 10% in 1967. In fact, the planned growth rate for industrial production was revised downwards in December; and is now said to have been met. The full figures for 1969, now published, show that 1969 was a generally disappointing year for the Soviet economy, with shortages and failures in important industries, transport and

agriculture. Seven ministries underfulfilled their plans, including those responsible for natural gas, iron and steel, chemicals, paper and building materials. Housing construction was below the estimate made in 1968. In the transport sector, neither railways nor ocean shipping met their planned targets. Production of protein foods such as milk and meat, and of fruit and vegetables, is not keeping pace with the growth of the population. The numbers of sheep and cattle have declined. Agriculture as a whole fell 3% below the 1968 level, and the growth rate for national income was the lowest since 1963. Productivity went up by 4.4%—less than planned and less than the rises of 5.7% in 1968 and 6.6% in 1967.

After only a few years, therefore, there are already strong signs that the dynamism of the reform is failing; new dangerous signs of a slowing down in growth rates have begun to appear. Being a bureaucratic reform of bureaucrats, its positive results are limited, especially in time. A political movement whose object is to institute a real soviet socialist democracy in the Soviet Union and the other workers' states, that is, workers' self-management of the factories and society and the formulation of the plans through free debate by a congress of soviets, can and must completely overturn the present system of bureaucratic management of the economy and the state.

The centenary of Vladimir Lenin's birth, which will be celebrated throughout the "Communist" world (and also elsewhere!), therefore falls at a decidedly awkward time for the Soviet bureaucrats. As the bastard inheritors of the world's first Socialist state, they are confronted by a contradiction of potentially immense consequence: they would like to demonstrate that things are going very well for the country they rule; unfortunately, however, they will have great difficulty in doing this, since the unadulterated facts of life indicate only too clearly that things are not going at all well.

Nigel Brown



# SCOTTISH TEACHERS

Teachers in Scotland have traditionally been led to believe that they operated in an educational system far superior to that in the South. The higher proportion of graduates in Scottish schools, the supposedly more "liberal" course content of the Scottish Certificate of Education Higher Grade courses over English Advanced Levels, the wider curricula in the early years of University courses—all these arguments, which anyway relate only to the higher levels of the system and not the experience of the average pupil, have been used to perpetuate the myth of a superiority which was already on the way out 100 years ago.

More relevantly, in the recent past, this myth has masked a situation in which in a whole number of respects the Scottish system is the poorest in Europe:

Until the present pay awards the Scottish minimum salary for a primary teacher was £780 compared to £860 in England.

3.3% of Scottish primary classes were over 50 in number in December 1968 against 0.04% in England and Wales.

20.8% were over 40 against 10.7% in England and Wales.

Ironically enough, the Scottish National Party, usually so willing to turn any statistics against the British political parties, has almost completely ignored this question—perhaps because it tends to raise too many awkward questions about the Scottish "tradition" which they so opportunistically uphold. They might for instance have to confront the fact that the Scottish system is one of the most authoritarian in the world, where the use of the belt is widespread and "progressive" educational ideas often meet with a frosty response.

It is these myths whose swan-song has been so prolonged, that have also helped to strangle effective teacher unionism in Scotland for so long. There are three main organisations:

The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), 30,000 strong, which is leading the present salaries campaign, is in an even more dominant position in relation to the other unions than is the NUT in England. Its voice is decisive in the Teachers' Panel of the Scottish Teachers' Salaries Committee. But, like the NUT, though perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent, the composition of its leading bodies does not reflect that of its membership. 13 out of the 24 Executive members in 1969 were headmasters, as were 54 out of 121 members of the National Council. Its Glasgow section, which has more than 5,000 members, has tended always to be somewhat in advance of other areas and was responsible for the last significant strike action, the one-week stoppage in 1961.

The Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (2,500 members) is a reactionary organisation consisting mainly of Honours Graduates, with its base in the more conservative East and North-East of Scotland. Throughout the present negotiations it has opposed strike action.

The Scottish Schoolmasters' Association is a male-chauvinist outfit, with a history of opposition to equal pay. Its policy usually consists in doing exactly the opposite to the EIS in order to better differentiate itself in every situation and perhaps pick up a few of the latter's discontented members.

None of these unions has followed any consistently militant policy in the past. All of them cling to the notions of "professional status". Even during the recent strike campaign EIS leaders have been at pains to point out that the union upholds the right of its members to opt out of striking on grounds of "conscience".

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT SALARIES CAMPAIGN

The Scottish teachers' dispute should be distinguished from that of the English in so far as it represents an attempt to secure a full

restructuring and review of salaries. The English teachers on the other hand were pursuing an *interim* rise of £135, pending a similar thorough review.

At the time of writing, the EIS have rejected management proposals which would have lifted the minimum for 3-year college trained teachers to the £980 that the NUT have accepted. They have reaffirmed their demand for £1,070 around the slogan of "a minimum of £20 a week for every Scottish teacher". The strike campaign is continuing, and there is every chance that, if the management are not forthcoming with an increased offer for primary and further education teachers in the negotiations due March 20th, it will go on into the summer examination period.

But what is really significant is the tremendous change in consciousness which appears to have overtaken large numbers of Scottish teachers in the last few months. A situation where mass meetings in such places as Aberdeen and Dundee unanimously support strike action would have been unthinkable even a few years ago. It constitutes an object lesson to those who look at a section of the working class and write them off without understanding their past or examining the potential of their future—those who refuse to look at social processes and think *dialectically*. It is also a lesson in how rapidly consciousness can change through actual *experience of struggle*, even at the lowest level. Thus, almost overnight, hundreds of teachers have seen themselves, for the first time, as a part of the working population, of the working class. They have compared their own struggle to that of the dockers, dustmen and Ford workers, and learnt the lesson—*militancy pays*. Above all perhaps they have been influenced by the strikes of their colleagues south of the border.

The consequences of this change are potentially of tremendous importance to revolutionary socialists. The educational system constitutes one of the certain flash-points in the chronic crisis of the British economy and institutions which is liable to be a permanent feature of the coming years. The contradiction between the demands placed on this system by industry and by "consumers" and the capacity of the state to finance the system, are liable to be particularly acute at the "lower" levels of the system, i.e. in the schools, Colleges of Further Education, etc. The development of a militant movement amongst teachers will be a necessary counterpart to the SAU and other student movements. The experience of the teachers' disputes this year indicates that a modest start in this direction is now possible.

Already a group of socialists in the EIS have got together to produce the first issue of *Scottish Rank and File* (available, price 1/- p.p. from: Tony Southall, 97 Otago Street, Glasgow W.2). The journal is inspired by the example of the paper of the same name which has built up a considerable following in the NUT in the last couple of years. It is hoped a more permanent structure will emerge from this initiative. Such a paper, if it is to be useful, will have to avoid the danger of being oriented solely towards wage struggles. While it is correct to raise demands for the highest possible increase, it is far more important to begin to work out a real *transitional* programme for teachers which can develop consciousness beyond its present "economist" stage. In the first instance, this is likely to be achieved by beginning to pose questions about the control and financing of the schools. It will also be important to work out a programme for the Union, e.g. affiliation to STUC, majority of unpromoted staff on leading bodies, etc.

In the convulsions that will undoubtedly shake the schools and colleges in Scotland in the coming years, such a rank and file teachers' organisation could play a key role, both in radicalising members of the profession itself, and in exacerbating the crisis of one of the key institutions of advanced capitalism.

John Blair



# BOLIVIA: A REPLY TO HEALYITE SLANDERS

## Setting the record straight—Statement by the International Marxist Group, British Section of the Fourth International.

Beginning in mid-July 1969, the Bolivian revolutionary movement was subjected to a series of savage attacks at the hands of the Bolivian military dictatorship. The military clique focussed its blows on the ELN (the National Liberation Army, which was led by Che Guevara until his assassination in 1967) and the POR (Revolutionary Workers Party, the Bolivian section of the Fourth International). During 1969, the two revolutionary groups had been collaborating.

During this period, the military regime succeeded in arresting, jailing and torturing members of *both* organisations. On September 9th, 1969 "Inti" Peredo, the leader of the ELN, was reported killed in a battle with police in La Paz. Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso, was actively sought by the police but evaded them. The prisoners were held incommunicado and some, according to their families, were subjected to torture by suffocation, electric shock, and blows to the testicles.

At the time of the repressions, which took place throughout the major cities of Bolivia, reaction to the repression was widespread. The Bolivian Student Confederation (CUB) issued a statement on July 28th denouncing "before national public opinion the fact that a new repressive campaign is being unleashed, against the staffs and students of Bolivian universities. The revelations made by the Ministry of the Interior, regarding alleged subversive activities of the ELN do not justify this ministry's violating the constitutional rights and exceeding its authority to make arbitrary arrests on the pretext that persons arrested are implicated in guerrilla activities."

The student federation of San Simon accused the military dictatorship of using the guerrilla activities as a "pretext for blocking the reorganisation and reunification of the trade union movement by persecuting worker, peasant and student leaders" as well as attempting to create a witch-hunt atmosphere favourable to a coup d'etat that would "abolish the most elementary democratic freedoms" and "completely endorse" turning the country's resources over to foreign capital.

An even sharper denunciation of the repression came from fifty Bolivian and foreign priests who said in part: "We denounce the capitalist system in force in Bolivia which is the cause of the underdevelopment, of the poverty of the Bolivian people and of the poverty of the miners in particular. We repeat our denunciations of the violations of trade union rights in the mines. These violations systematically prevent the mine workers from achieving their just social demands. We denounce the permanent system of repressions imposed on the countries' big mines...which has transformed these mining centres into virtual concentration camps. All are responsible for injustice who do not work for justice by all means available."

In October 1969, General Alfredo Ovando Candia, the man most responsible for the murder of Che Guevara and the carrying out of the current repression seized power. The repression of the Bolivian revolutionists continued while Ovando attempted to provide himself with an anti-imperialist image to ease social tensions.

On October 17th, the La Paz Regional Committee of the POR released a statement to the Bolivian people welcoming the nationalisation of Gulf Oil by the Ovando regime as a victory for the Bolivian people, whilst thoroughly exposing the manoeuvres of the new regime. The statement reminded the Bolivian people that this "anti-imperialist triumph" was linked to the struggle of the Che Guevara guerrillas, and the struggle of the revolutionaries in Ovando's prisons. The statement demanded the unconditional release of all the political prisoners in Bolivia including Regis Debray. It ended:

"Together with the revolutionary people, we Trotskyists demand cessation of the furious persecution and the attacks on the liberty of the General Secretary of the POR, Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso and all our national leaders. The release of the revolutionary fighters will also be a victory over imperialism."

In Britain, the October 1969 issue of *International*, the journal of the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International, Moscoso's British comrades, reported on these developments along with an appeal for financial aid to the Bolivian revolutionaries in Ovando's jails or fleeing his police. The report gave a partial list of the names of the mine leaders, peasant leaders and youth and student leaders of the ELN and POR who had been killed, arrested and tortured. The appeal concluded:

"We appeal therefore to all supporters of Trotskyism, to all supporters of armed struggle, to all opponents of the reactionary oligarchies of Latin America to contribute to this fund."

Two months after the appeal by *International*, on December 5th, 1969, the *Workers Press*, daily organ of the Socialist Labour League, which claims to be Trotskyist, dealt with the Bolivian situation.

But there was no appeal for solidarity and aid. On the contrary! There appeared a statement under the name of Alberto Saenz, for a group calling itself the POR, led by Guillermo Lora. The statement, far from being a statement of solidarity, could only be construed as an attempt to knife the campaign for aid to the victims of the Bolivian military's repression.

The January 1970 issue of *International*, in an article on the "Workers Press Treachery on Bolivia", explained the origins of the Lora group:

"The Trotskyist movement in Bolivia had been divided into two tendencies for many years. Both of them had the same name. One of them was led by Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso and was affiliated to the Fourth International. The other was led by Guillermo Lora. These two organisations joined together on 17th February 1966 (cf. the agreement on the unification in *Quatrieme International* No. 28, June 1966). But Lora, who gave his agreement while he was outside Bolivia, refused when he came back to enter the unified organisation. He gathered a small clique around him and took the name of 'POR' again."

What did the *Workers Press* statement say? The statement denounced the defence campaign for the jailed revolutionists as:



"an operation with all the signs of a fraud."

And further, echoing the major themes of the Bolivian government propaganda:

"Today it is the political intervention and the writings of Castroism that this group of profiteers (the POR) is trying to exploit in order to carry on their shady dealings with the help of the revolutionists' money."

The letter made an even greater charge if that is possible:

"There exists today serious suspicions that Mr. Gonzales Moscoso himself (the leader of the POR) would work for the Bolivian government."

In the summer and fall of 1969, savage repression is unleashed against Bolivian revolutionists by the military dictatorship. "Inti" Peredo, the leader of the Guevara guerrilla organisation is murdered, and members of both the ELN and the POR are also killed, arrested, jailed and tortured. The leader of the POR, Moscoso, is forced to flee and is now hunted by Ovando's police. In October the engineer of the Guevara assassination seizes power and continues the repression. Despite all this the response to an appeal by Moscoso's British comrades for aid is met by the *Workers Press* not with a statement of solidarity, not with a demand for liberation of the Trotskyists jailed in Bolivia, but with a statement calling the defence campaign a fraud, and charges that Moscoso might be in the pay of the Ovando regime.

It would be reasonable to think that at this point the editors of the *Workers Press* might have taken a step back and considered the enormity of their crime against the Bolivian revolution by their violation of an elementary principle of the class struggle—solidarity with the working-class victims of capitalist repression.

But no!!!

The December 20th 1969 *Workers Press* continued deeper into the muck by publishing another letter, this time signed by Lora himself attempting to reply to the exposure of his treachery in *Rouge*, the paper of Moscoso's French comrades. In this letter, Lora calls the POR "a party of self-seeking adventurers" and states:

"I am in complete agreement with the communique issued by my party (published in *Workers Press*, December 5th) to unmask those adventurers (the jailed revolutionists) who have made participation in the revolutionary movement a means to further their own ends."

The editors of the *Workers Press* obviously believe that a slander to be effective must be published not once—but twice.

In response to these attacks on the victims of the Bolivian repression, the Political Committee of the International Marxist Group sent a letter dated January 5th 1970 to the leadership of the Socialist Labour League demanding that the SLL and the *Workers Press* retract the slanders of the Bolivian Trotskyists.

On January 10th 1970, the International Marxist Group issued a leaflet to a conference of Young Socialists—the youth organisation of the Socialist Labour League—appealing to the Young Socialists to support the Bolivian Trotskyists. The appeal described the repression, the slanders in the *Workers Press* and pointed out that the two statements in the *Workers Press* made no call for the release of the prisoners. The leaflet outlined the issues:

"...1) the refusal to support a campaign for the release of the victims of repression. 2) the direct accusation that a revolutionary who is being hunted by the police is a government agent."

The leaflet appealed to the Young Socialists to repudiate the slanders against the Bolivian Trotskyists, oppose the use of Stalinist smear methods, and to support the Bolivian Trotskyists against police repression.

Within six days of this public exposure of the *Workers Press* slanders, the January 17, 1970 edition glibly informed its British readers that there hadn't been any slanders after all and that the whole thing was due to an error in the translation of the original statement by Lora's group. The article, a reply by the SLL to the IMG letter, points out that in translating the Lora group's slanderous statement from the French, *Intercontinental Press*, an international weekly news service of the Fourth International, translated Lora's charge to read that Moscoso *is working* for the Bolivian government when an accurate translation should read *would work* for the Bolivian government.\* And we are further startled to read that not only has there been an unfortunate misunderstanding due to errors in translation, but that the SLL and the *Workers Press* editors:

"are completely opposed to the political repression of Ovando's regime and for this reason support the right of Moscoso and his group to full political and civil liberty as well as the amnesty of Regis Debray."

"...as you can see (!), we have no slanders to retract."

To this what can be said except—who's kidding who?!

Having published statements calling the defence campaign for Moscoso and his comrades a "fraud"; having accused the jailed revolutionists of being self-seeking "profiteers", accusing the persecuted leader of the victims of being under suspicion that he "is in the pay of", "might be in the pay of", or "would work" for the Bolivian military, which has the blood of Che Guevara, "Inti" Peredo and his own comrades on its hands, all boils down to the same monstrous and unproved slander against this anti-imperialist fighter!

The complete bankruptcy of Banda's "reply" is further demonstrated by the fact that he had to drag innumerable red herrings across the trail about Ceylon, Algeria, etc., repeating slanders which we have completely answered on numerous occasions.\*\* Anything to draw attention away from the *Workers Press*'s disgraceful lies about the POR.

The editors of the *Workers Press* and the leaders of the Socialist Labour League can wish they had no slanders to retract if they choose. They can ponder over their responsibility for the publishing of the Lora group's slanders on December 5th and December 20th and their switch on January 17th, without publishing a line in support of the political and civil liberties of Moscoso and his comrades.

With a shameful cowardice, Banda tries to retreat from the Stalinist slander he spread against comrade Moscoso by pretending it is after all only a question of translation: but it is clear that the Socialist Labour League and the *Workers Press* now have the responsibility to publicly demand the unconditional release of all Bolivian political prisoners. They must call for the dropping of all charges against the victims and an immediate end to the harassment and victimisation of Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso. They must immediately declare their willingness to join in the world-wide campaign to defend the victims of the Bolivian repression! Finally, they must repudiate completely the smears and slanders of the Lora clique and make a full self-criticism on their participation in these slanders.

\*For information, here is the French original:

"Il existe aujourd'hui de sérieux soupçons sur le fait que le sieur GONZALEZ MOSCOSO en personne travaillerait pour le compte du gouvernement bolivien."

\*\*See, in particular, Ernest Germain's *Marxism versus Ultra-leftism*, available from Pioneer Book Service, 8 Toynbee Street, London E.1.



# ALTHUSSER CORRECTS MARX

BY ERNEST MANDEL

The publication of the first volume of Marx's *Capital* in paperback (in-French)<sup>(1)</sup> is an important event. It is evidence of the growing popularity of Marxist ideas, or more precisely, evidence of the fact that bourgeois publishing houses are conscious of the massive demand that they can satisfy in this sphere, conscious of their capacity to transform *Capital* into a mass of commodities whose exchange value (and the surplus value which it contains) is easily realisable on the market.

Marcuse grieves when he discovers in this phenomenon the diabolical ability of bourgeois society in our epoch to integrate all the writers of the left and even leftists (of which Marx remains the prototype). We believe that he is wrong.

The fact that 699 pages of closely-typed paper are sold in some tens of thousands of copies and gain profit for capitalist publishers confirms of course the tendency of bourgeois society to transform into commodities everything which it can lay its hands on; the promotion of the sale of *Capital* as a financial undertaking is only possible, however, because this book satisfies a social demand, because in fact it has a use value. This use value of *Capital* is not of course the consolidation of the socio-economic system based on generalised commodity production, that is the capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, the use value of *Capital* is the demystification of that mode of production; contributing then in this fashion to its destruction and overthrow.

In this sense the publication of *Capital* in paperback is a witness not to the strength but to the growing contradictions of bourgeois society, just as Lenin's famous witticism according to which the capitalist before last will sell the rope to hang the last is not a proof of the ability of the bourgeoisie to integrate everything, even weapons to fight itself with. And it does not just evidence this in a general abstract meaning of the term but in a far more exact sense.

The growing response to Marxist publications in France is a product of May '68, a product that is of the revolutionary crisis which shook French capitalist society and which has considerably increased scepticism about the chances of survival of this society. If a section of the capitalist class sees in it a way of rapidly accumulating capital before the flood sweeps it away with the rest of its brothers, fellow thieves and collaborators, so much the better for them! There's no reason to complain, in fact exactly the opposite.

The paperback does not gain very much, however, from "The Warning" with which Louis Althusser introduces it. Of course, not everything is bad about this introduction. There are some useful and learned pieces of advice in it, although they should be treated cautiously. The object of *Capital* is precisely delimited; that is the analysis of the capitalist mode of production, of a particular and specific mode of production, and not the analysis of any "general laws" which regulate the economic life of humanity in every epoch. The nature of surplus value—one of the essential economic discoveries of Marx—is summarised in a succinct correct manner. The link between *Capital* and Lenin's analysis of the world imperialist system is sketched, although incompletely.<sup>(2)</sup> The importance and reality of social global capital are correctly put into focus. Althusser knows his Marx and of course it's preferable to see *Capital* prefaced by someone who at least knows what it's about, rather than by a writer who would see in *Capital* merely the corrected continuation of Adam Smith's

*The Wealth of Nations*, or an essay on the necessity of reorganising society on the basis of aprioristic moral principles.

Having said this, we must add that this foreword suffers from a series of fundamental faults which the reading of Marx by Althusser contains. And it offers us the opportunity to expose some of its weaknesses in the shape of a warning as much for the readers of *Capital* as for the works of Louis Althusser.

## THE "SHORTCOMINGS" OF THE FIRST VOLUME OF *CAPITAL*

Louis Althusser expresses a mitigated judgment for the book he prefaces. Of course, Volume One of *Capital* is a work of genius, a revolutionary work of historical import. But it also does not go far enough. Our severe critic summarises in this way his opinion on these insufficiencies:-

"Volume One contains yet other theoretical difficulties linked to the preceding ones or to other problems.

"For example the theory of the distinction to be made between value and the form of value; for example, the theory of the quantity of work socially necessary; for example, the theory of simple work and complex work; for example, the theory of social needs, etc. For example, the theory of the organic composition of Capital. For example, the famous theory of commodity fetishism and its subsequent generalisation.

"All these questions—and many others besides—constitute real objective difficulties, to which Volume One gives either temporary [sic] or partial solutions. Why these inadequacies?" (P. 20)

Althusser gives two reasons; first because Marx had the whole of *Capital* in mind when he wrote Volume One and he could not put all four volumes in the first; hence the anticipatory character of the analysis (Althusser carefully avoids mentioning that an exposition of all the economic discoveries of Marx in one volume is in the *Grundrisse* which he does not like much because it is too much marked by Hegelianism). Finally, because *Capital* itself bears "traces of Hegelian thought in the language and even in the thought of Marx." (P. 21)

Here then is *Capital* and poor Marx himself is in the dock; must we burn these heretics or not? Is our Grand Inquisitor already preparing the stake from which only the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and *Marginal Notes on Wagner* escape? Doubtless the reduction of "pure Marxism" to these two occasional and polemical works of Marx has so very incongruous a character that even a man like Althusser, in general bereft of a sense of humour, recoils before the enormous burst of laughter that he risks provoking. We won't burn *Capital* then; we'll simply declare Volume One inadequate (but not just Volume One, as we'll see in a moment).

The Inquisitor, however, if he has a heavy hand, has also a clumsy one. The example that Althusser chooses to unmask the Hegelian influence on *Capital* reveals his own inadequate assimilation of Marxism. It is the beginning of *Capital* that he considers Hegelian:

"Trapped in a Hegelian conception of science (for Hegel there is no science, only philosophy, therefore all real science must found its own beginning), Marx thought then [sic] that 'in all science



the beginning is arduous'. In fact Section One of Book One is presented in an order of explanation whose difficulty lies for a good part in this Hegelian prejudice. Moreover, Marx rewrote this beginning a dozen times, before giving it its definitive form—as if he stumbled there on a difficulty, which was not just one of simple explanation—and for a good reason."

Now, what's this all about? It concerns the fact that Marx began the analysis of *Capital* by an analysis of the commodity. Is this a concession to the Hegelian conception of science? Certainly not. It is the expression of a conception of history founded on dialectical materialism. The point is not that a science should found its own beginning (the idealist dialectic) but to search for the secrets of a mode of production in its historical, material and social origins (materialist dialectic). The fundamental weakness of Althusser resides in his refusal to distinguish the two methods, which is because of his suspicions about the materialist dialectic as being Hegelian, and in his *de facto* rejection of the dialectic for these reasons.

Why did Marx begin *Capital* by an analysis of commodities, not as a Hegelian, but precisely as a Marxist? Because contrary to Althusser he did not want to analyse the capitalist mode of production as something static, as an immobile structure, separated from the past and the future. What he sought to do has been summarised with "much accuracy" by Marx himself in the following formula: "to illuminate the laws which regulate the birth, life, growing and death of a given social organism and its replacement by another superior order".<sup>(3)</sup> And as soon as one understands this scientific plan of Marx, the beginning of *Capital* ceases to be a simple Hegelian flirt, or worse, just a concession to an idealist conception of science which "finds in itself its own beginning", but becomes a reply to the question: Where does capitalism come from? What are its essential contradictions?

Capitalism is the generalised production of commodities. It is the mode of production in which for the first time in the history of society, the labour force and all means of production become commodities. To discover the secrets of the commodity in the relations of production which create it, is to unveil the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist mode of production itself, for these contradictions are all contained in embryo in the commodity itself.

Althusser quotes and requotes Lenin complacently as the pure and true interpreter of Marxist thought (freed from its Hegelian fetters). Now what is Lenin's opinion on the very subject that concerns us? Here is what he said about it in his works on the Logic of Hegel:

"To stand it on its head: Marx has applied the Hegelian dialectic in its developed form to political economy ...

"Just as the simple form of value, the single act of exchange of a given commodity with another commodity, already contains within itself all the contradictions of capitalism in an undeveloped form, so does the simplest generalisation, the first most simple formation of concepts (judgments, conclusions, etc.) show already ever increasing comprehension by man of the deep objective relationships of the world. That is where you must look for the true meaning, the real significance and the role of Hegel's logic."<sup>(4)</sup>

And again in the same meaning:

"If Marx has not passed on any Logic (capital L) he has all the same passed on the logic of *Capital*, which must be fully utilised for the question which concerns us. In *Capital* Marx applies to a subject the logic, dialectic and epistemology of materialism (one doesn't need three terms, for all those amount to one and the same thing), which has used all that was valuable in Hegel and has developed it further.

"Commodity-money-Capital-production of absolute surplus value-production of relative surplus value.

"The history of capitalism and the analysis of the concepts which summarise it

"The beginning, the simplest element, the most common, the most immediate of the 'being': the particular commodity. Its analysis as analysis of a social relationship. A bilateral analysis, deductive and inductive—both logical and historical (the forms of value).

"Checking by facts, that is to say by practice, is done here at each step of the analysis.

"With reference to the subject of the question 'Essence' (*Wesen*) and 'appearance': price and value—demand and supply versus 'value' (=crystallised labour)—wages and price of the labour force."<sup>(5)</sup>

One can see quite clearly that Lenin approves of and highly appreciates the method that Marx used in the writing of Chapter One of *Capital*. He even sees there the specific characteristic of the materialist dialectic applied by Marx to the study of the capitalist relations of production. He does not define like Althusser this Marxist method simply as a research for abstract concepts permitting an analysis of an abstract reality (the capitalist mode of production in general). He defines it as the unity of two opposites, deduction and induction, as the synthesis of two opposites: "The history of capitalism and the analysis of the concepts which summarise it", that is at one and the same time both abstract and general capitalism (without this work of abstraction, one gets lost in a thousand insignificant and meaningless details, one is incapable of grasping the trends of historical development, one loses the prey for its shadow) and concrete historically developed capitalism (without this return to the concrete and to history, without this checking through practice, one gets lost in unreal abstractions, bearing no reference to social reality, which must be understood before it can be consciously changed).

We would be interested to hear what Althusser thinks of those passages full of the wisdom and profundity of Lenin on Marx's method. Has Lenin himself also mistaken Hegelianism and Marxism? Is he also suspect of heresy? Must we burn him along with the first chapter of *Capital*?

### THE LABOUR THEORY OF VALUE, THE ORGANIC COMPOSITION OF CAPITAL AND THE LAWS OF MOTION OF CAPITALISM

The lack of understanding that Louis Althusser shows with respect to the first chapter of Volume One of *Capital*, and his rejection of the materialist dialectic, integrating abstract deductive analysis and genetical-historical analysis, leads him moreover to several serious theoretical errors. Two of these errors appear in his introduction to the Garnier-Flammarion pocket-book edition of *Capital*.

When he is accounting for "the great theoretical difficulties of Book One, above all those which are concentrated in the terrible Section One, on the subject of the famous labour theory of value he states:

"I give in a word the principle of the solution.

"Marxist labour theory of value which all 'economists' and bourgeois ideologues have reproached him for with laughable 'refutations' is comprehensible, but only as a particular case of a theory which Marx and Engels call the Law of Value or Law of Distribution of the total disposable quantity of labour, according to the various branches of production, a distribution indispensable to the reproduction of the conditions of production" (P. 19)

The "solution" which Althusser gives is particularly unfortunate. It is contrary to the letter and to the spirit of the writings of Marx and Engels on this question. *Nowhere* does Marx talk about a "law of value" as a general theory applying to every society. What Marx explains is that every human society must effect a certain economy of labour time, a more or less proportional distribution of this quantity between different branches of social and economic activity. But this general law—it is indeed one—



must precisely *not* be confused with the law of value, which is only one particular application of this law to a specific type of socio-economic organisation, *a society based on the production of commodities*.

Althusser refers\* to the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* as Marx's most mature economic text. If he had wished to pay attention to the question of the Law of Value, he would have noticed that Marx wrote there:

"In the framework of a cooperative society (*genossenschaftlich*) based on the collective appropriation of the means of production, the producers don't exchange their products; no longer does the work spent in making these products appear as the value of these products, since now in contrast to capitalist society individual labour becomes part of social labour directly and no longer by a detour." (6)

In the first chapter of *Capital*, Marx states explicitly that commodity production and the production of value exist only because this global social labour is fragmented into private labours executed independently of each other. (P. 69 of the Flammarion edition of *Capital*). And here is the whole sense of the famous "law of value": it fulfils the function of establishing spontaneously that proportional division of the labour force between different economic activities which, in a non-market society, is consciously realised by the collectivity, whether this be by means of habit, customs and ritual in primitive society or by the socialist plan (based on the associated producers) to take up Marx's formula again.

It's not permissible then to confuse the general law with its particular form of application under the reign of commodity production. Far from being a particular application of a more general law called the "law of value", the labour theory of value explains precisely why and how this law of value succeeds the direct economy of labour time, which is the rule of pre-market societies. But to be able to admit that, Althusser would have to reintroduce history into *Capital* which he obstinately refuses to do. Most of all, he would have to admit that Chapter One of Volume One (where all that is explained in a profound manner, albeit in a language which makes understanding difficult sometimes) is more than a simple flirt with Hegelian terminology.

Let us add that the grave theoretical error committed by Althusser over the question of the Law of Value is not without relationship with his Stalinist ideological origins, with his ambivalent and ambiguous relationship with respect to Stalinism. We know that it was Stalin who brought an appearance of orthodoxy to this fundamental revision of Marxism, which consists in affirming that the law of value applies just the same in the Soviet economy (and even in all socialist economy). Althusser promises us an analysis "of what one calls with a term which owes nothing to Marxism the period of the personality cult". We kindly advise him to begin rather from this question—and from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*—to understand the roots of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state. To try to explain them by the particular crime of Stalin, which consisted presumably in making Marx's Preface to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* his main text of reference, would surely lead him into a theoretical dead end.

Althusser's second theoretical error concerns the question of the organic composition of capital. He discovers "a very serious misunderstanding which...stems from the necessity to read Marx's text closely." According to Althusser, the vast majority of readers of *Capital* would have seen in the organic composition of capital (the relationship between constant capital and variable capital) a theory of the firm, or to employ Marxist terms, a theory of the unity of production. Yet Marx said very clearly the contrary: he always talks of the composition of total social capital, but in the context of a concrete example.

It's possible that certain bourgeois economists see in the question of the organic composition of capital before everything else, or even exclusively, a theory of the firm. Althusser is right to recall them to order (we mention to him, however, that almost all Marxist commentators or pretenders to the name of Marxism

have avoided this mistake, which seems elementary). But Althusser is wrong when he concludes from it that Marx always talks about the social organic composition of capital, that is to say of capital in its entirety and only of this social capital.

The whole Marxist theory of the equalisation of the rate of profit, that is the whole Marxist theory of capitalist competition, is founded on the existence of an organic composition of capital different in different branches of production. One discovers the concept again all through Part Two of Volume Three of *Capital* (Chapters 8 to 11). It plays equally a principal role in the Marxist theory of land rent. In order not to tire the reader with numerous quotations, we will limit ourselves to one only:

"But if capitals in different sectors of production...capitals of an equal value in different sectors of production, produce unequal profits because of their different organic composition of capital, it follows that profits from unequal capitals in different spheres of production can have another relationship than the proportional relationship to their respective dimensions." (7)

We mention this error of Althusser's not through pedantry, but because it relates to the author's methodological weakness. We have already said that Althusser's Introduction does not mention the aspect of the object of *Capital*, which is the chief aspect for Marx himself: the laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production. Now these laws of motion follow from competition (that is, private ownership of the means of production and generalised commodity production). But the word "competition" is scarcely mentioned in the Introduction. It does not appear for example in Pages 14 and 15 to explain the reasons why capital develops the machine system more and more. Althusser is correct to give great importance to the idea of social capital created by Marx. But he is wrong to lose sight of the fact that for Marx capitalism is a social capital which can appear only in the form of different capitals, that is to say which always presupposes competition. (8)

#### ALTHUSSER AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

This same methodological error is not without relation to the most astonishing passage that the Introduction contains: a full-scale attack on Marx's Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

"Last trace of the Hegelian influence and this time flagrant and full of consequence (almost all the theoreticians of reification and alienation have found in it the means to base their idealist interpretations of Marx's thought): the theory of fetishism ("The fetish character of the commodity and its mystery", IVth part of Chapter One of Section One).

"One will understand that I cannot talk at length here on these different points, which would require a whole demonstration of their own. I just mention them, however, for together with the very ambiguous and (alas) celebrated Preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) the Hegelianism and evolutionism with which they are saturated (evolutionism being the poor man's Hegelianism) have caused havoc in the history of the Marxist working-class movement. I mention that not for one moment did Lenin succumb to the influence of those Hegelian-evolutionary pages, otherwise he wouldn't have been able to fight the betrayal of the Second International, to build the Bolshevik Party, to conquer state power at the head of the Russian masses, to instal the dictatorship of the proletariat and to begin the construction of socialism." (P. 22)

Althusser is not lucky with his *bete noires*. Yesterday it was the Marxist theory of alienation. The assertion of Althusser according to which alienation is a pre-Marxist concept which practically no longer appears in the works after the *1844 Manuscripts* (*Pour Marx...*) shows itself to be untenable; we have shown this in *La formation de la pensee economique de Karl Marx*. (10) Althusser acknowledges this now in his Introduction. (11) But he does so only to pass over to a new untenable *bete noire*: "that not for one moment would Lenin have succumbed to the influence of these evolutionary Hegelian pages" that the Preface to the



*Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* constitutes.

Now without looking for all the passages of Lenin's work where these Hegelian evolutionary passages are quoted with approval, it is sufficient to mention one revealing text. Written during the second half of 1914, in a biography of Marx which summarises the whole Marxist doctrine, Lenin wrote as follows: "In the Preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx gives an integral formulation of the fundamental principles of materialism as extended to human society and its history in the following words..." (12)

A long quotation of the most striking passages of this Preface follows, indeed the longest quotation from Marx contained in this whole text of Lenin which mentions, however, all the principle works of Marx known at this time. The least that one can say is that "these Hegelian evolutionary pages", far from not having influenced Lenin "for a single moment", were considered by him (as they were indeed by most Marxists) as a complete formulation of the fundamental theses of historical materialism.

But Althusser's mishaps don't stop there. Since he considers this "complete formulation of the fundamental theses" of historical materialism as "Hegelian-evolutionary", it's useful to quote a passage of the same text of Lenin on the subject of Marxism, which throws quite an interesting light on the manner in which the idealist Lenin (or should one say the "leftist" Lenin?) conceptualised the links between evolutionism and Hegelianism:

"Nowadays the idea of development, of evolution, has penetrated the social consciousness almost in its entirety, but by different ways not by way of the Hegelian philosophy. But as formulated by Marx and Engels on the basis of Hegel, this idea is far more comprehensive, far richer in content than the current idea of evolution. A development that seemingly repeats the stages already passed but repeats them otherwise on a higher basis ('negation of the negation'), a development, so to speak, in spirals, not in a straight line;—a development by leaps, catastrophes; revolution; 'breaks in continuity',—the transformation of quantity into quality;—the inner impulse to development imparted by the contradiction and conflict of the various forces and tendencies acting on a given body, or within a given phenomenon, or within a given society;—the interdependence and the closest indissoluble connection of all sides of every phenomenon (while history constantly discloses ever new sides), a connection that provides a uniform, law-governed, universal process of motion—such are some of the features of dialectics as a richer (than the ordinary) doctrine of development." (13)

Let's note in passing that in contrast to Althusser, Lenin imitates "Marx's folly" and integrates in his turn the "negation of the negation" into the laws of the dialectic. Althusser, following in Stalin's footsteps, believes that this wretched "negation of the negation" has not stopped creating havoc—but really how can one be astonished with the Marxist folly of Lenin? (14) Surely the passage that we've just quoted shows that Lenin, in contrast to Althusser, claims evolutionism for his own (this "poor man's Hegelianism" according to Althusser). And does not this same Lenin indulge in sin to the extent of preferring a particular type of evolutionism, which is precisely evolutionism as corrected by Hegel, namely a conception of evolution, of universal change, which sees in it not just a "succession of gradual changes but also sharp changes by leaps, that is to say, a conception of evolution which integrates in it the concept of revolution, which conceives change as the union of continuity and discontinuity? It was Lenin's opinion that this brilliant content of Hegel's dialectic had been preserved by Marx and Engels ("rescued" as the founders of Marxism said themselves) in putting it back on its feet, that is in considering that the fundamental movement from which theoretical work must begin is that of the material and objective reality of matter, nature and human society and not that of the Absolute Idea. Althusser has the right to express a different opinion, of course; but he has no right to present it under the guise of Marxism-Leninism, for Marx and Lenin have many times expressed the contrary opinion.

It's difficult to understand what elements of vulgar "evolutionism" (that is to say what there is opposed to the idea of transformation by jumps, leaps and revolutions) are present in the famous Preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. On the contrary, we find ourselves confronted with a succinct account of the theory of social revolution, the universal form of passage from one mode of production to another. Is Althusser's criticism limited then to the fact that the formula "dictatorship of the proletariat" does not appear in it? If this was the case, however, he would be able to level the same criticism at *Capital* itself where one would search in vain for these words. Only people of bad faith could demand that the represent representatives of so complex and rich a theory as revolutionary Marxism should reproduce all the basic concepts of this theory in every one of their writings, independently of the object and specific function of them.

#### ALTHUSSER'S MOTIVES

Doubtless it will always remain a mystery to everyone (unless Althusser decides to enlighten us on the subject) to know why the influence that the Preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* could have exercised on Lenin would have hindered him from combatting the betrayal of the Second International or to struggle successfully for the conquest of power in Russia, not to mention the obstacle that this Preface would have constituted in the way of the Leninist theory of the Party and in that of the construction of the Bolshevik Party. The real situation is that the scholastic ideas which Althusser opposes to the materialist dialectic of Marx and Lenin are very close to the mechanical evolutionism of a Kautsky or a Guesde and the other leaders of the Second International, which led them directly to the shameful capitulation of August 1914.

The Preface bases the possibility of social revolutions on the materialist statement of structural crises of the mode of production (conflicts between the development of the productive forces and the social relationships of production). That is the same fundamental approach which all revolutionary Marxists before and after 1914 have followed, in revealing the nature of imperialism as that of a regime leading to a structural crisis of the world capitalist system. It's by opposing all sorts of mechanical and partial sophisms to this fundamental approach, forgetting this lesson of Hegel taken up by Marx and Lenin that one must consider imperialist war as "in interdependence and close indissoluble connection" with all sides of one and the same phenomenon, the world crisis of the imperialist system, i.e. in the context of that social totality, that the social democrats could allege in turn that imperialism was only "one aspect among others" of monopoly capitalism; that imperialist wars contain "elements" of national defence; that the Party should not cut itself off from the masses "drunken with chauvinism"; to justify their shameful refusal to fight against the imperialist war, contrary to what they had solemnly promised to do.

By starting from the same dialectical conception of the crisis of the imperialist system (of the capitalist mode of production functioning as a contradictory but unified totality on the world scale), Lenin was able in April 1917 to agree with the brilliant prediction of Trotsky, that it was precisely because of the backward state of Russia that the revolution could lead there in an uninterrupted manner to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. For in the era of fully developed imperialism, the domination of the imperialist monopolies on the world market and on the economy of the underdeveloped countries (where they find themselves allied with the native possessor classes) blocks in a definite manner the possibility of a capitalist growth of the productive forces and prevents a solution of the agrarian problem in the framework of capitalism (through a development of agriculture "in the American style", as Lenin still thought till the eve of the first world war) and leaves these countries only the choice between stagnation in underdeveloped structures or the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Althusser's introduction does not mention these fundamental options at all, which were at the base of Leninist action in 1914 and 1917. He likewise shows himself as objectively opposed to



the fundamental orientation of Lenin, which was at the base of *What is to be Done?* and of the creation of the Bolshevik Party.<sup>(15)</sup> When he approaches concrete problems of working class and revolutionary strategy, it's only to do in a sterile scholastic fashion: "A class struggle deliberately confined to the economic struggle alone remains and will always remain defensive and, therefore, without hope of ever overthrowing capitalist rule... Only a political struggle can reverse the trend and pass beyond these limits to become offensive instead of defensive... That's the no. 1 question of the international working class movement since it fused with Marxist theory." Or worse still: "Marx thus shows in an irrefutable manner...that from now until the capture of revolutionary power...the working class can have no other aim, and therefore no other possibility, except to struggle against the effects of exploitation produced by the development of productivity, to limit these effects..."

Had Lenin been limited to this scholasticism he would surely have produced neither *What is to be Done?* nor *Imperialism* nor *The State and Revolution!* As it is, *The Communist Manifesto* teaches us already that all the proletariat's economic struggle becomes a political struggle, once it acquires a certain size. On the other hand, any social democrat from Guy Mollet to Willy Brandt, not to mention Wilson and Spaak, will heartily applaud the idea that only a political struggle can "reverse the trend". The no. 1 question of the international working class movement since the first world war is not to get lost in byzantine distinctions between economic struggles and political struggles, between the defensive and the offensive, but to recognise the fact that the epoch of capitalism's decline makes objectively possible the transformation of the struggles of great amplitude that the proletariat periodically launches (whether they are economic or political) into struggles oriented towards the bringing into question of the whole of the capitalist relations of production and towards the overthrow of bourgeois state power.

That's what Lenin and the founders of International Communism taught. That's the Hegelian spirit—the dialectic, that is—of the famous "Preface". That is also—may it be said in passing—the main lesson to be drawn from May 1968 in France. Perhaps it is to avoid an open confrontation with this problem that Althusser is brought to correct Marx and Lenin? <sup>(16)</sup> The future will soon tell us.

Here the scholastic metaphysic results almost openly in apologetics. It's not general strike in the abstract that he's concerned with; it's the general strike of May '68 that's being alluded to. The "Marxist theoretician" Althusser goes to the help of the reformist practicians Waldeck Rochet and Seguy, who would have been right not "to follow the leftists", since it is necessary to know how to distinguish an "economic class struggle" from a "political class struggle".

One can imagine the rebukes with which Lenin would have berated our philosopher who loses himself in politics after having wandered for a long time in the desert of political economy. Offer us a little line then, ten words only of Marx and Lenin, O dear master, to prove to us that those revolutionaries follow you in your metaphysical ramblings and conceive themselves as well of "defensive economic general strikes" without "political" i.e. revolutionary implications, especially when the workers throw in a little occupation of factories to "confuse" the specialists of "fine distinctions".

Althusser's impudence is truly limitless when one knows that Lenin has analysed the manner in which the 1905 Russian revolution developed the combination of economic strikes into mass strikes, and wrote, "It would be an irreparable mistake if the workers did not understand the whole originality of significance, necessity, importance of the principle of such a mixture (of economic and political strikes)" (Lenin: *Oeuvres*, Tome 18, pp. 86-87. See also pp. 104-105. Paris Editions sociales, 1969). It is true that on the basis of this Leninist conception of mass strikes, it's impossible to justify the politics of the PCF in May 1968....

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) Marx, *Capital*, Book One. Paris 1969, Garnier Flammarion, pp. 699. Louis Althusser's introduction takes up pp. 7-30.
- (2) Althusser is correct to say that "capitalist exploitation in capitalist enterprises exists only as a simple part of a generalised system of exploitation" (p. 24). But he could have referred to passages in *Capital* which allow a theory of unequal exchange to be based on this subject, and not only to those which refer to primitive accumulation.
- (3) See the postscript to the 2nd German edition of Volume One of *Capital*, reproduced in part in the same paperback, p. 583.
- (4) V. I. Lenin: *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen "Wissenschaft der Logik in Aus dem Philosophischen Nachlass*. Dietz-Verlag, Berlin 1949, pp. 97-98.
- (5) *Ibidem*, pp. 249-250 (*Zur Kritik der Vorlesungen Hegels über die Geschichte der Philosophie*).
- (6) In Marx-Engels: *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Volume Two, p. 15. Moscow 1950, Verlag für Fremdsprachige Literatur (Foreign Languages Publishing House).
- (7) *Capital*, III, p. 128. Hamburg, Otto Meissners Verlag, 1921.
- (8) *Capital*, II, p. 328. Hamburg, Otto Meissners Verlag, 1921.
- (9) Let us point out another error of Althusser's here. Talking of overtime, he writes: "Apparently, overtime seems to cost the capitalist 'very dear' since they pay 25, 50, even 100% over the normal rate. But actually it is to their advantage since it allows machinery, whose working life becomes shorter and shorter through the rapid advance of technology, to be used twenty-four hours a day. In other words, overtime allows the capitalists to draw the maximum profit from their productivity." Continuous production allows a more rapid depreciation (reproduction) of fixed capital, that's agreed. Marx explained that the total quantity of annual surplus value did not depend alone on the mass of variable capital and the rate of surplus value, but also on the length of the cycle of circulating capital. Althusser should have mentioned this factor to make his argument intelligible. For "to allow machinery to be used 24 hours a day" does not increase surplus value by a penny by itself. Surplus value is produced only by living labour and not by machines. For overtime to increase capitalist profits, the rate of surplus value must be such that, in spite of overtime rates, the worker continues to produce surplus value. If an overtime hour is paid at double the rate for a normal hour, only a rate of surplus value in excess of 100% will make the introduction of overtime profitable to the employers under normal conditions.
- (10) Ernest Mandel: *La formation de la pensée économique de Karl Marx*. Paris, Maspero, 1967, pp. 172-177. An English edition is about to appear at Monthly Review Press, New York, soon.
- (11) P. 21 where he coldly remarks that the *Grundrisse* is deeply marked by Hegel's thought.
- (12) Lenin: *Marx Engels-Maxism*. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1951, p. 26.
- (13) *Ibidem*, p. 24-25.
- (14) "The same Hegelian influence makes itself shown in the unfortunate formula of Chapter 23 or Section VIII of Book One where Marx, talking about 'the expropriation of the expropriators', declares 'this is the negation of the negation'. Unfortunate: for it has not stopped creating havoc, though Stalin has been for his part right to suppress 'the negation of the negation' from the dialectic, it's true to the benefit of other still graver errors." (Introduction, p. 22)
- (15) By the absurd thesis according to which the workers have no difficulty in understanding the theory of surplus value, while the petty bourgeois intellectuals who "have no direct experience of capitalist exploitation but who, on the other hand, are dominated in their practice and their consciousness by the ideology of the dominant class, the bourgeoisie" cannot understand this theory (p. 9). Or further on: "What these intellectuals conceive of as Marxist theory is 90% false ideas then." We have always thought that "the ruling ideology of every society is the ideology of the ruling class". For Althusser



*this first truth of historical materialism becomes "the ruling ideology of the ruling class is the ideology of the ruling class", in other words a senseless tautology. If the workers were liberated from the ideology of the ruling class by the simple fact of being workers, why would it be necessary to organise a vanguard party, a bolshevik party, a communist party? It would be sufficient then to gather together all the workers so that they express spontaneously the fact that they have the experience of exploitation, and there you would have Marxist theory! Is it not from the opposite hypothesis, namely the predominant influence of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology on the workers as well, that Lenin explains in *What is to be Done?* the necessity for the vanguard party?*

Appropriately enough, who is this Althusser who comes out with these strange statements? He doesn't look like a worker from Renault, after all. Could it be that he is one of these sinister "academics" of whom he says that 90% of the

*ideas that they have about Marxism are false? Would Althusser have wished to revel in a bold self-criticism in this roundabout way?*

- (16) We read this in the Introduction: "The wages question is an issue of class struggle. It does not regulate itself independently but by the struggle of the class; before everything else by the different forms of strikes, leading one day or another to the general strike.

"Whether this general strike remains purely economic [sic] and therefore defensive (defence of the material and moral interests of the workers, struggle against the dual capitalist tendency to increase the amount of work and decrease wages) or whether it takes a political and therefore offensive form (struggle for the conquest of state power, socialist revolution and the construction of socialism), all those who know the distinctions of Marx; Engels and Lenin know what differences separate the economic from the political struggle of the class."

# DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

(*Education for Democracy* edited by Rubinstein and Stoneman. Penguin, 6/-.)

*Education for Democracy* states that it is not a reply to the Black Papers. However, most of the contributors do directly address themselves to arguments raised in these pamphlets. The book fulfils a need by presenting simply-written summaries of "progressive" educational research. Brian Simon contributes an essay on streaming which gets down most of the evidence in eight pages, while Stoneman and Owen present a very useful piece that attacks the simplistic views of Burt and Jensen on the relatively static nature of IQ. One striking point made is that in a research project carried out in eleven countries it was found that the difference in mathematical ability among the social classes are on average twice as great in England as in the other countries concerned in the study.

Some of the more interesting material, however, focusses on problems outside the horizons of the Black Paper writers. Such an area is that of compensatory education for the underprivileged child. Nicholas Tucker extends the Plowden concept of Educational Priority Areas to a general discussion of massive aid to the twilight areas. Coates and Silburn take up this theme but argue that there are no purely educational problems: "Education in such an environment, if it is to succeed in encouraging people's full capabilities, must start out as training for community action, for self-help and mutual defence." A very telling point is made against equating school catchment areas with EPAs. The St. Ann's study (a survey of poverty in a Nottingham slum area) found that only 1.5% of the St. Ann's children went to grammar school. The Nottingham Director of Education made great play, using figures based on school catchment areas which included parts of a middle-class district, of the fact that 6% of the children in St. Ann's schools achieved a grammar school place.

Basil Bernstein attempts a critique of compensatory education. He starts from the work of Rosenthal and Jacobson. These workers arbitrarily designate children as "spurters" and told their teachers that these children had undertaken tests that indicated that they would increase their IQ in the next year. An average increase of IQ of between 10 and 12 points occurred. Obviously the low expectations held by the middle-class teacher of the working-class child play a crucial role in the under-achievement of deprived children. Bernstein argues that it is important to

focus on deficiencies in the school and that compensatory education distracts from this by concentrating upon the failures of the community, family and child.

One of the most closely-argued essays is by Dennis Marsden on "How Comprehensives Missed the Tide". He finds two components in the pro-comprehensive case: the egalitarian which called for unstreaming, a common curriculum and flexible methods; and the meritocratic which wanted to allow a larger proportion to be given a grammar school education and thus rationalise the use of scarce specialised staff and produce more of the highly skilled technicians required by neo-capitalism. Marsden charts the increasingly feeble intervention of the Wilson government and the victory of the meritocratic cause. A new tripartite system has been fashioned: independent/direct grant, grammar/unskimmed comprehensive, and skimmed comprehensive/secondary modern. Marsden ends by quoting Tawney: "Onions can be eaten leaf by leaf, but you cannot skin a live tiger paw by paw."

There is always a severe problem that arises with leftist educational writing. That is the persistence of reformist illusions, gross idealist deviations, an extreme over-estimation of the possibility of social change via education and a confusion of enhanced social mobility with the millenium. All these tendencies exist in this book but a new note is being struck. The heavy determination of the educational system by a matrix of economic and political pressures is being recognised. More importantly, the real agencies of social change are being identified, however hesitantly, when the editors write: "Another characteristic of the recent situation has been that most progressive educationists in research and teaching have believed that right and reason must surely prevail. Seeing for themselves progressive methods and organisation working better and more fairly than the old methods, they could hardly believe that they would not prevail over the

entire system. They underestimated the power that was being welded behind the scenes and the success that various indirect defences of the status quo were beginning to enjoy... From now on it may be necessary for the demands of the underprivileged themselves to play as great a part in educational advance as the findings of educational research." Two cheers for the editors.

Julian Atkinson