



INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

News and analysis from the Fourth International

IV381 - September 2006



Lebanon/Israel
Reproductive Rights
Brazil

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Lebanon

Against resolution 1701, against the sending of NATO troops

Gilbert Achcar

Lebanon has, in recent years, been a privileged terrain for the shift brought about by the ending of the very specific system of “balance of powers” mutually necessary for the two Cold War superpowers until 1990. Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004) on the subject of the Lebanon is both the most flagrant violation of the UN Charter and a monument to hypocrisy. Adopted without any submission to the SC from the Lebanese government, it proclaims its attachment to the sovereignty of Lebanon while interfering in its internal affairs in violation of article 2, point 7, of the Charter, which prohibits any intervention “in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state”.

It would, moreover, require an extraordinary dose of naivety to believe for a single instant in the attachment of the permanent members of the SC to the sovereignty of any state other than their own. Resolution 1559 - and the fact that it was adopted in 2004, and not before, amply demonstrates it - fits in an obvious fashion into the US action against Iran in the course of their occupation of Iraq, targeting both of Teheran’s allies: the Syrian regime and Lebanon’s Hezbollah.

Resolution 1701 of August 11, 2006 is every bit as flagrant in this respect. It was adopted after several weeks of stonewalling of the SC by Washington to allow Israel time to pursue its aggression. Its iniquity is blatant inasmuch as it fails to condemn Israel’s criminal aggression, mentioning only “Hezbollah’s attack on Israel” and the “hostilities in Lebanon and in Israel” (sic).

It shows a flagrant hypocrisy in demanding that Israel “cease its offensive military operations” without even demanding the immediate lifting of the blockade it is imposing on Lebanon - as if a blockade was not an eminently offensive military operation.

The iniquity is just as flagrant when the new UNIFIL - which, remarkably, is deployed only on the territory of the occupied country - is supposed to ensure that its zone of deployment is not used for “hostile activities of any kind”. Resolution 1701 does not say a word on the protection of Lebanese territory against the repeated aggression by Israel, occupying power in Lebanon for 18 years (without speaking of the portion of territory occupied since 1967).

To get an idea of the very biased character of the vision of UNIFIL upheld by the European states that will provide its backbone, read the interview given to the newspaper *Le Monde* (August 31, 2006) by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, head of the UN’s peacekeeping operations. It requires no commentary.

“Could you be brought to use force against Hezbollah? We could be brought to do it with respect to any element that would hinder our freedom of movement or would represent a threat to the population or to peace. [...]”

“What would UNIFIL do in the case of a raid by the Israeli army on the Lebanon?”

“Unhappily, since the cessation of hostilities, there have been more Israeli violations than violations by Lebanese armed elements. [...] Could it be brought to use force against Israel in this case? I think that Israel wants international law to be upheld, and given that responsibility and sovereignty hand in hand in Lebanon, would assume its responsibilities in respecting international law.”

Resolution 1701 is filled with deliberately ambiguous formulations that raise the prospect of a combat mission coming under Chapter VII of the Charter, which Washington and Paris invoked directly in their draft resolution distributed on August 5 and rejected by Hezbollah and the Lebanese government. Before these objections, Washington and Paris abandoned the idea of a new international force in Lebanon, contenting themselves with the UNIFIL force already in position.

Nonetheless, the mandate of this latter has been profoundly altered, not only in the sense indicated above, but also as to its zone of activity, with UNIFIL II authorised to deploy along the Lebanese-Syrian border and control Lebanon’s aerial and maritime access.

In sum, the spirit of this resolution is to treat Lebanon as if it was the aggressor! In this sense it represents an attempt to continue the Israeli war in the Lebanon in another fashion, which could imply war operations in the short or medium term. That is why it should be vigorously denounced and rejected by anybody who upholds the spirit of the UN Charter.

That does not mean rejecting the presence of UNIFIL along the Lebanese-Israeli frontier.



UNIFIL has been in place since 1978 and is accepted by all the Lebanese political forces. In spite of its obvious ineffectiveness as to the protection of Lebanon against Israeli encroachments on its sovereignty, and its inaction in the face of the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982 and its occupation of south Lebanon for 18 years, it is a precious witness to these violations of sovereignty.

What is important is 1) to reject the profound and dangerous change in the UNIFIL mandate represented by resolution 1701, and 2) to oppose the use of UNIFIL II and the UN cover in order to continue the war for the common objectives of Israel, Washington and Paris in Lebanon. What is developing is the rehearsal of a practice symptomatic of the new era: the use of the UN as fig leaf for military operations led by Washington with NATO and other allies, as is the case in Afghanistan since December 2001.

In good logic, an intervention force should be made up of troops from neutral countries. Yet Washington and Paris are in no way neutral in the Lebanese conflict. No force allied to the US will be considered as neutral in a conflict between one of Washington’s principal allies and another state. That is why all those who desire peace in the Middle East and are concerned by the US projects in this part of the world should energetically oppose the sending to and presence in Lebanon of troops from NATO member countries.

A protest movement in this sense has begun in the countries in question, from Germany to Turkey, via France, Italy and Spain. The task is all the more necessary in that Israel gives itself the “right of the strongest” to reject the participation in UNIFIL of troops from certain Muslim countries, on the pretext that they are not neutral in the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Gilbert Achcar grew up in Lebanon and teaches political science at the University of Paris-VIII. His best-selling book *The Clash of Barbarisms* just came out in a second expanded edition and a book of his dialogues with Noam Chomsky on the Middle East, *Perilous Power*, is forthcoming.

Israel

The Limits of Might

Michel Warschawski

This morning (13 Sept. - ed) the Israeli newspapers headlines announced that Israeli PM, Ehud Olmert, agreed to the formation of a fact-finding commission, headed by a senior judge, in order to evaluate all the aspects, political as well as military, of the Israeli war in Lebanon. This commission is replacing the various non-independent inquiry commissions previously established by the PM and the army.

It is not yet what a majority of Israelis, and more and more senior politicians are demanding - a national independent inquiry commission, having juridical power, like after the 1973 war or the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla, in 1982. Last week, 60,000 civilians, led by reserve soldiers and officers who have fought in Lebanon, made this demand loud and clear, and one can expect that such a commission may still be established.

If one had still doubts about the pathetic failure of the Israeli military offensive in Lebanon, the decision of the Prime Minister put the things straight: 33 days of colossal use of military force didn't bring any substantial result, except massive destruction and horrible massacres. Haaretz editorial is unambiguous on the failure of the Israeli offensive: "There is no room for mistake: despite the attempts of the Prime Minister and the IDF generals to count the IDF achievements, towards its coming end, the war is perceived in the area and in the world, but also in the eyes of the Israeli public, as a painful defeat, with negative far reaching implications..." [1]

Political as well as military initiatives are usually evaluated according to their initial objectives. A first problem we are confronted with, is the lack of clearly defined objectives, or, more precisely, the fact that the stated objectives of the war have changed many times. First, the declared aim was to release the Israeli prisoners of war captured by Hezbollah. Then, few days after the beginning of the Israeli offensive, PM Olmert announced that the objective was to eradicate Hezbollah, not less! The method suggested by the Israeli High command was characteristic of the narrow-mind of military senior personnel and their inability to learn anything from history, including their own one: massive terror operations against Lebanon, in order to "teach the Lebanese government and people" what is the price of letting Hezbollah act from Lebanese territory. The result of indiscriminating destructions and killings in Lebanon (including Beirut airport, more than hundred bridges, power stations etc) was to create a massive pro-Hezbollah sentiment among the Lebanese people, including large sectors of the Christian population.

Confronted with the growing sympathy towards Hezbollah and his sensational ability to hit the heart of Israel with hundreds of rockets, the declared objective was reduced to "destroy the ability of Hezbollah to send rockets on the Israeli territory." Two weeks after the colossal air strikes on Hezbollah, the number of rockets hitting Israel, and provoking serious damages to all the northern part of the country is even bigger than before! Another failure. Finally - for today - the objective has once again been enlarged: to restore the Israeli capacity of dissuasion and its image as a local military super-power.

The fact that after a month Hezbollah is still able to strike hundreds of rockets on Israel is perceived in Israel as a national tragedy.

This objective too has not been achieved, on the contrary. As Zvy Barel, Haaretz expert for the Arab world explains: "Why would someone in Lebanon be dissuaded, when he is witnessing its houses destroyed, the children of its neighbors and their parents killed by hundreds, and having almost no chance to start school-year on time? He is now convinced that the war is not anymore against Hezbollah only, but against Lebanon, against himself, whether he is Christian, Druze or Shiite." [2] In his article, Barel suggests to the Israeli leaders to try to learn something from the Palestinian experience: "Whoever doesn't understand the formula can ask

himself... why after more than 150 killed in the last three weeks, they are still trying one Qassam, one more rocket. Why the logic of the IDF, which calculates its strength by the quantity of steel at its disposal, why this logic doesn't work on them..."

The fact that the Israeli army has not been able to achieve even one objective, and that after a month Hezbollah is still able to strike hundreds of rockets on Israel is perceived in Israel as a national tragedy. "Does someone think we have won?" asks Yoel Marcus, "who believe that the promises of Ehud Olmert at the

beginning of the war to eradicate Hezbollah and to finish with the threat of rockets on Israel, was fulfilled?" [3]

But the conclusion drawn by the military high command, most of the Israeli leadership and many Israeli commentators was still to increase the offensive, to mobilize more reserve units, to try to invade and occupy parts of Lebanon. The same Yoel Marcus, signor commentator in Haaretz, concluded his article on the total failure of the Israeli offensive with the following appeal: "It is now clear that the fight is not on Lebanon. We are not confronted with a local organization, but the arm linked

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The Israeli army is still active in Lebanon, but it is definitely an army which has suffered a defeat.

and acting on behalf Iran and Syria., Al Qaeda and the followers of the path which started with the Twin Towers. Israel is not only defending Kiryat Shmoneh, Hedera and may be Tel Aviv; it became, against its own will, a partner in the war against Islam fundamentalism, what Bush names "the axis of evil", in this part of the world... The conclusion must be to take a big breath and to initiate a fight with all the might we have at our disposal, in the air and in the ground, until we are able to neutralize Hezbollah, as a military militia on our borders. We must reach a cease-fire when we are the winning side, to show them that even the small Satan has teeth..." [4]

Finally, after more destructions and killings - according to international organizations, more than 80% of the bombs were thrown in the last week of combat - and many more casualties in the Israeli army, Olmert has been obliged to accept the UN Security Council resolution calling not for a cease-fire, but for a "stop to hostilities". The Israeli army is still active in Lebanon, but it is definitely an army which has suffered a defeat.

Often, during demonstrations in the Palestinian occupied

territories, and witnessing the massive use of force and the brutality of the Israeli soldiers against civilians, we use to tell them: "Big heroes! Your war is against unarmed women and children, and you dare calling it "confrontation or even "a battle"! The kind of wars you are strong at is wars against helpless civilians! But when you will be confronted with real fighters, you will not know how to fight, and you will either die or run away like rabbits!" And indeed Israeli soldiers are experiencing a war with well trained and well motivated fighters, and proving to be completely un-efficient. The number of casualties is huge, compared to the relatively small quantity of Hizbollah fighters, and one should ask what it may be if Israel dare to attack Syria, not only from the air, where definitely Israel has tremendous superiority.

The Israeli experience is obviously reminding the US experience in Iraq: a powerful army, but too powerful, too self-confident, too arrogant and too spoiled to be able to fight with the efficiency that the huge means at its disposal may have led to expect they will demonstrate.

The Israeli political as well as military establishment is, right now divided; between those who



Peace demonstrators clash with police in Tel Aviv

want an immediate revenge, in order to show to the world, and to the US neo-conservative leadership, that it has still its capacity of deterrence, and can play the role allocated to the IDF in the global non-ending preemptive war, and those who believe that Israel needs first to re-organize its armed forces, in order to be able to win. The demand for a reaches and a new opportunity to how what the guys are "really able to do" is very strong; the demands to put order in the Israeli mess, is strong too.

In the next few months, we will know which of these currents will win, depending among other, on the conclusions of the various fact-finding and inquiry commissions. But in both cases,

there will be a second round, if only because it is part of the neo-conservative strategy of global non-ending preemptive war for the re-colonization of the world and the establishment of a "Great Middle East" under full US hegemony. And we too shall prepared for this next round.

Michel Warschawski is a journalist and writer and a founder of the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Israel. His books include *On the Border* (South End Press) and *Towards an Open Tomb - the Crisis of Israeli Society* (Monthly Review Press).

NOTES

- [1] Haaretz editorial, August 8
- [2] Haaretz, August 6, 2006
- [3] Haaretz editorial, August 8
- [4] idem

United States

Elections and Regime Crisis

Against the Current

WILL THE DEMOCRATS “regain control of Congress”? Will Joseph Lieberman change parties? Will Hillary Clinton be the Democratic frontrunner for 2008? How much does any of this matter?

The November election will highlight, as usual, two sets of questions - the sound-and-fury ones that generate most of the campaign rhetoric and media speculation; and the crucial issues that will be generally be ignored, except for the one that simply can't be skipped over: the war and American defeat in Iraq. Meanwhile, the new Middle East war - Israel's assault on Lebanon - has proven what the Democrats are: as rabid a war party, as cynical and careless (especially with other nations' lives) as anything the Republicans have to offer.

The superficial mudslinging debates will feature such topics as whether the Democrats are “soft on terror” or the Republicans “incompetent” in failing to find bin Laden or letting North Korea go nuclear; which is the party of “irresponsible spending” on social programs or tax cuts; who's best at “securing the border;” which politicians promote “traditional values” and who's most corrupt (between which there is, admittedly, a strong positive correlation), and various other rubbish.

The issues to be debated poorly-or-not-at-all involve the explosive health care crisis, the immediate prospect of a catastrophic wider war with Iran; the hemorrhaging of decent-paying jobs in the U.S. economy; catastrophic climate change, which proceeds apace as our rulers wage endless war for

the oil-fuelled empire; electoral rigging and the stripping away of voting rights; the step-by-step replacement of democratic rights by presidentialist decree with the assent of Congress and the courts - in short, most of the questions that shape real people's lives.

There's no doubt that mainstream national politics in America is polarized, bitterly divided and incredibly vicious. At the same time, it's almost devoid of substance, except for a few issues like preserving the badly shredded fabric of abortion rights, where the Democrats remain under pressure from the women's movement. Underlying the general triviality of the official debate is a dual reality: the collapse of public confidence in the Bush regime, accompanied by the extreme decay of the Democratic Party as a meaningful opposition party, i.e. a force that can seriously confront the political drive toward the far right (to the degree it even wants to do so).

Some historical perspective: The last time a Republican presidency was so discredited by a failed war, revelations of criminal conspiracy and global economic uncertainty was the crisis of the Richard Nixon regime in 1973-4 at the height of the Watergate scandal. The difference between then and now lies above all in the relative strength of social movements - antiwar, civil rights and above



Iraq war: 'bleeding the Bush regime to death'

all labor - in that period, compared to the present level of struggle, above all the incipient collapse of the U.S. labor movement after three decades of a corporate and government offensive against working class people in America.

Underlying the general triviality of the official debate is a dual reality: the collapse of public confidence in the Bush regime, accompanied by the extreme decay of the Democratic Party as a meaningful opposition party,

The Democrats retain an enormous electoral apparatus, but their social base is highly segmented. Organized labor, such as it is, remains predominantly in the Democratic fold although this support is somewhat eroded; African-American voters are overwhelmingly Democratic, which is why rightwing voter fraud and intimidation is directed principally against them; Republican inroads into the Latino vote are likely to be blunted by the sheer viciousness of the right wing's anti-immigrant crusade. But much of the Democrats' base is now in the white suburban “socially liberal, fiscally conservative” sector, whose loyalties are fickle and diluted.

Before 1968, to be sure, the Democrats' hegemony in Congress still rested on the most rotten of foundations, the racist Dixiecrat South. By the time of

Nixon's fall, however, that segment was moving into the Republican column where it has now become firmly planted. Despite this, Nixon's failures in war, domestic crimes and the onset of economic crisis appeared to be propelling the Democratic Party to the stature

of a hegemonic national party - an opportunity that came in with the 1974 midterm election and quickly passed after 1976 with the debacles of the Jimmy Carter administration. Above all, as a loyal party of American capitalism, the Democrats fully participated in the restructuring that attacked the working class and set in motion the destruction of the movement that was the party's main base.

The Democratic Party establishment today is fractured over the Iraq war - with John Kerry (“I opposed the war before I voted for it, before I voted against it”) having finally gotten around to opposing it, after a fashion, while Senators Hillary Clinton and Joseph Lieberman continue to be so committed to this failed imperial venture that they are being challenged from the party's base, which hates the war, and in Lieberman's case actually dumped by Democratic

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primary voters. In any case, unlike their voters, the Democrats do not want to stop the Iraq war - cynically, they want the Bush administration to absorb the blame for “bungling” it and for the ongoing carnage; and the congressional Democrats’ foaming-at-the-mouth performance during the destruction of Lebanon shows they hope to share the “credit” for lining up support for war with Syria and Iran.

If the Democrats aren’t opposing the war, what then are they arguing about? An important New York Times article by Robin Toner gives some of the answers (“Optimistic, Democrats Debate the Party’s Vision. Seeking Big Goals and a Clear Alternative to Conservatism,” May 9, 2006: A1, A18). The party’s “analysts, both liberals and moderates, are convinced that the Democrats face a moment of historic opportunity...But some of these analysts argue that the party needs something more than a pastiche of policy proposals. It needs a broader vision, a narrative, they say, to return to power and govern effectively - what some describe as an unapologetic appeal to the ‘common good,’ to big goals like expanding affordable health coverage and to occasional sacrifice for the sake of the nation as a whole.”

A variety of ideas are out there. Thomas Friedman, the Times’ designated apostle of globalization, proposes financing economic renovation and reviving national purpose by taxing gasoline up to \$4 a gallon. Others suggest a return to

muscular Cold War liberalism, represented by The New Republic, where Democrats would promote tough foreign and military (but multilateralist) policies while reviving social programs at home. On the right, The Third Way and its ideological cousin the Democratic Leadership Council promote a centrist “middle class” perspective in place of fighting for “special interests” like labor and people of color. On the liberal wing of the spectrum stands Michael Tomasky of The American Prospect, whose views are summarized by Robin Toner:

Mr. Tomasky argues that the Democratic Party needs to stand for more than diversity and rights; it needs to return to its New Deal, New Frontier and Great Society roots and run as the party of the common good - the philosophy, he says, that brought the nation Social Security, the Marshall Plan, the Peace Corps and civil rights legislation. After years of what he calls “rapacious social Darwinism” under Mr. Bush, Mr. Tomasky argues that the country is ready for the idea that “we’re all in this together - postindustrial America, the globalized world and especially the post-9/11 world in which free peoples have to unite to fight new threats - together.”

Tomasky’s liberal enthusiasm evades at least two fundamental questions. First: What is meant by the “new threats” that “free peoples” have to fight “together”? Is it the “threat” of Iran? Of immigrants? Something else from outside? Or is the main threat from inside: the assault on



Hillary Clinton with Joseph Lieberman (far right)

democracy, civil liberties and workers’ rights mounted by the Bush regime, the right wing and corporate America, the USA PATRIOT Act and domestic spying, to say nothing of Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and secret renditions, on which most Democrats have nothing to say?

Second: What about the war? Just because it may conveniently bleed the Bush administration to death doesn’t mean the question will go away for the Democrats. It’s not just that American voters will want to know, not only in 2006 but also 2008, what the Democrats actually think about these issues. The fact that the Democratic Party will not demand ending the war means that any promises it makes to fix a broken society are lies, which cannot be kept. A party that doesn’t oppose the current war, and the next one, has no claim to represent the antiwar movement - or to lead the country. The fact that the Democrats intend to inherit power as the Bush regime falls apart from its own imperial arrogance and incompetence doesn’t mean they can or will clean up the mess it leaves behind.

Our purpose here, in any case, is not to advise or salvage a pseudo-opposition party that has essentially given up on reform, ceded the ideological initiative to the Republican right wing, and pretty much allowed the Bush gang to get away with

anything. For our part, we’re looking for an escape from the quicksand of a rotten two-party system. At a time when organized labor is at its weakest since the 1920s, we look to the promise represented by the explosive new immigrant workers’ rights movement. The magnificent self-organization of this past spring’s immigrant rights mobilizations shows that the situation is rather precarious for both parties.

First and foremost, it’s social movements like this that represent a hopeful future - and second, initiatives that can give them an organized political expression. That’s the potential represented by Green party campaigns, some of which we cover in this issue, in states like California, Wisconsin and elsewhere. We need the kind of party these campaigns point toward - a party that will be genuinely independent of corporate power, with no commitment to America-as-world-ruler, loyal to the real needs of real people instead of the elites and the military machine.

It’s no longer about a lesser evil. It’s about the politics we need for human survival.

Against the Current is the magazine of Solidarity, a radical socialist regroupment in the United States.

Reproductive Rights USA

Jumping Through Hoops

Dianne Feeley

It's clear that women can make intelligent decisions for their lives when they are supported in their goals and encouraged to consider their full range of options. This begins with reproductive freedom, but needs to include access to education and health care, the right to a decent and meaningful job, the right to have a family and raise it in a safe environment. It includes quality day care for parents who need it, as most do. No matter how many obstacles the radical right attempts to put in front of women, women have an objective need to circumvent them.

Yet in 2006 opponents of reproductive rights have continued to move on several different fronts:

In March the South Dakota legislature passed a law, subsequently signed by Governor Mike Rounds, banning abortions in the state. In defiance of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, this law includes no provision to protect the health of a pregnant woman. Before the intervention of activists who opposed the ban the law was scheduled to take effect July 1.

This summer the Jackson Women's Health Organization, Mississippi's lone remaining abortion clinic, has faced two waves of anti-abortion protests.

By a lopsided 65 to 34 vote, the Senate recently passed a bill to make it a federal crime for any adult to take a pregnant minor across state lines for an abortion without her parents' consent. The House of Representatives passed an even stricter version last year so if the two houses can agree on a compromise bill, President Bush would gladly sign it into law.

On August 1 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced its plans to make the morning-after pill known as Plan B available over the counter for women 18 and older. This is the first time the FDA ever proposed a separate age status for a non-prescription drug. Plan B, which contains concentrated amounts of the hormone progesterin, is the most common form of emergency contraception. Available in some European countries for more than 20 years, Plan B can prevent a pregnancy within 72 hours of intercourse, but is most effective within the first 24. As an over-the-counter drug with an age restriction, chances are that it will only be available where pharmacists are present.

In each case supporters of reproductive freedom have organized to oppose these actions.

In the case of South Dakota, 38,000 people signed a petition to prevent the anti-abortion law from taking effect and demanded that the issue be placed on the ballot for a vote this November. Oglala Sioux Tribal President Cecelia Fire Thunder announced at the time "I will personally establish a Planned Parenthood clinic on my own land, which is within the boundaries of the Pine Ridge Reservation where the state of South Dakota has absolutely no jurisdiction." [1]

The Jackson clinic has gathered a network of supporters to defend the right of women to seek abortions.

Letters to the editor in hundreds of newspapers across the country have debated the issue of criminalizing adults who aid pregnant minors, with the vast majority pointing to the reality that most teenagers do tell at least their mothers. The handful of those who don't have good reason not to tell—they may have seen what their parents did to an older sister and want to shield themselves from abuse.

Both medical professionals and networks of reproductive rights supporters have opposed the FDA's age restriction on Plan B.

Years ago the right wing decided the best way to attack sex education was to demand that such programs teach abstinence as the only effective birth control method. They insist condoms lead to venereal disease while abortion raises one's risk of breast cancer and infertility. Despite the lack of any evidence for such claims, several states have legislated these sex "education" programs. For many young women, especially in conservative states like Mississippi, there are few alternative sources for birth control information.

Although U.S. educational policy is decentralized, the priority set by federal funds has a big impact on local school boards. Washington currently earmarks approximately \$80 million to promote abstinence-only education and states provide

"If you're old enough to get pregnant, you're old enough to decide that you don't want to be pregnant."

another \$38 million in matching funds. Fifty-one percent of sex education programs require abstinence to be portrayed as the preferred option for adolescents, although information about contraception is permitted, and 35%, including half of all the districts in the South, require an abstinence-only program.

Not only are these programs out of step with the effective evidence about how to teach sex education, but they are out of step with reality.

Restrictions on Abortion

Since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, the right wing has sought to prevent hospitals from performing the procedure, restricted clinics with a range of regulations and harassed medical personnel both at the clinics and at their homes. On the federal level, the government excludes abortion from medical coverage for women in the military, denies the procedure to most women receiving public assistance and, both at home and abroad, has defunded family planning programs that provide abortion services.

Given that abortions are not available in over 90% of all the counties throughout the United States (and never have been), women in rural areas are forced to travel several hours to a clinic. While 35% of women between 15-45 obtain an abortion at some point in their reproductive life, one third live in the counties where there are no clinics. Lack of access means a woman is unable to obtain the abortion as early as she would like in her pregnancy cycle. It can even mean a more expensive, second-semester abortion, raising the possibilities of medical complications.

In 1992 the Supreme Court placed significant restrictions on abortion rights. In *Planned Parenthood of Southeast Pennsylvania v. Casey* the court ruled that states had the right to pass laws that don't recreate an "undue burden." Both supporters of women's rights and their opponents saw the case as a setback—the right wing was hoping for overturning legal abortion while most supporters of women's reproductive freedom

Reproductive Rights USA

realized the battle over which restrictions would be considered “undue” had just begun.

Within the last year approximately 500 anti-abortion bills were introduced in state legislatures and a couple dozen were signed into law. More have been introduced this year. All this harassing legislation has an impact on clinics; there are now approximately 10% fewer clinics than a decade ago.

Today 32 states and the District of Columbia prohibit the use of state funds except when federal funds are available; 46 allow individual health care providers to refuse to participate in an abortion and 43 allow institutions to refuse to perform abortions. Twenty-two states require parental consent for a teenager seeking an abortion. Only two require the signature of both parents; most provide for an additional mechanism whereby the teenager can seek a bypass. Eleven states require parental notification; seven others have passed legislation but it is permanently enjoined. (95,000 women 18 or younger had an abortion in 2000.)

Twenty-eight states mandate a woman must be given “counseling” before an abortion that includes: the supposed link between abortion and breast cancer (3 states), the ability of a fetus to feel pain (4 states), long-term mental health consequences for a woman (3 states) or the availability of services and funding should the woman decide to carry the pregnancy to term (26 states). Twenty-four require a one-day waiting period. This is a particular problem for women traveling any distance—recent statistics indicate that 25% of the women obtaining abortions travel more than 50 miles; 8% travel more than 100 miles.

Clinic Blockades

These institutional strategies accompany the right wing’s in-your-face actions at clinics. Twenty years ago they were able to mobilize week-long protests of several thousand; supporters of women’s rights organized counter pickets. The radical right didn’t just picket. They attempted to “save” women from abortions, stalked medical personnel, traced the license plates of any cars going to the clinic, and put out wanted posters. In the end Congress was forced to enact legislation protecting the clinics, but not before the murders of doctors performing abortions—



Pro-choice activists on the march

Drs. George Tiller (Wichita, KS), Barnett Slepian (Buffalo, NY) and David Gunn (Pensacola, FL), and Gunn’s escort, John Britton.

This summer both Operation Save America (descendent of Operation Rescue) and Oh Saratoga picketed the Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which stayed open throughout. The protesters, ranging from 25-100, brought their signature blown-up fetus photos. Operation Save America protesters also targeted the neighborhood of the clinic’s gynecologist, Dr. Joseph Booker. They went door to door, telling his neighbors that Booker was “a baby killer.” Throughout the protests Dr. Booker, a 62-year old African American, had a police escort. But like other abortion providers, he took it all in stride.

A number of feminist organizations, most notably NOW and the Feminist Majority, organized to support the Jackson clinic, holding rallies in defense of women’s reproductive healthcare and fundraisers for the extra expenses the clinic faced.

Restricting the Emergency Pill

Like abortion, the right wing has made emergency contraception a battleground. The right opposes it because it represents a “slippery slope.” Some even claim it works the same way an abortion does and therefore is “taking a life.”

In December 2003 the FDA’s advisory panel voted 28-0 that Plan B was “safe for use in a nonprescription setting,” voting 23 to 4 in favor of granting it over-the-counter status. But following the 2003 vote, Dr. W. David Hager, a Christian conservative and Bush appointee to the panel, stated his fear that if Plan B were freely available, it would increase sexual promiscuity among teenagers.

In May 2004 the FDA denied the drug manufacturer’s application, citing some of Hager’s reasoning. Two months later the

manufacturer reapplied for permission to sell it to women ages 16 and up. When, in August 2005, the FDA announced it would delay making a decision, Dr. Susan F. Wood, director of the Office of Women’s Health at the FDA, resigned in protest.

In response to this foot dragging, the Morning-After Pill Conspiracy, a grassroots coalition of feminist groups, has been engaged in civil disobedience. Over 4,000 women have signed a pledge to distribute the pills to those who need them, period. Annie Tummino, lead plaintiff in a suit filed against the FDA stated, “If you’re old enough to get pregnant, you’re old enough to decide that you don’t want to be pregnant.”

According to a 2006 study by the Guttmacher Institute, there are 6.4 million pregnancies a year in the United States, 3.1 million of which are unintended and 1.3 million that end in abortion. In the seven years since the last such study, the overall unintended-pregnancy rate (about half of all pregnancies) has remained unchanged—but women below the poverty level were four times as likely to have an unplanned pregnancy and five times as likely to have an unplanned birth. The ultra right, however, has a one-size-fits-all solution: poor women who aren’t married should be encouraged to get married!

While most of the right-wing’s rhetoric against women’s bodies has revolved around restricting access to abortion and attacking lesbians and others regarded by the right as sexually deviant, their agenda is much larger. They seek to reestablish the “traditional family” as they imagine it so that “values” and “stability” will cover over the social and economic problems that confront Americans today. That ideology just isn’t in synch with reality.

NOTES

[1] Fire Thunder was subsequently impeached by the Tribal Council for allegedly soliciting donations on behalf of the tribe for a proposed clinic without the council’s approval. She is challenging her impeachment.

Femicide in Latin America

A Tale of Two Cities

Kathy Lowe

“Femicide” is the new word in Latin America. A new word for an old crisis. It refers to an epidemic of rapes and murders of women in the region that for years have gone unsolved and unpunished. Violence and sexual abuse against women remain rife across Latin America. But they have reached horrific extremes in Guatemala City and in Mexico’s bleak, free trade town of Ciudad Juarez across the border from the US. In these two notorious centres of femicide the abduction and brutal killings of women have become almost routine.

In Ciudad Juarez, according to human rights organizations, over 400 women have met violent deaths since 1993. Hardly a week goes by without another body being discovered dumped in the desert or on waste ground behind the town. The murdered women are nearly all young and poor - students, domestics, or factory workers from the local foreign-owned assembly plants known as maquiladoras. Most have been raped and tortured to death.

The picture is almost identical in Guatemala City. Guatemala’s femicide has claimed the lives of nearly 2,200 women and girls since 2001. In the lawless capital women live in constant fear of being snatched from the streets by gangs or forced off buses at gunpoint into empty lots.

A dawn police patrol regularly recovers from alleyways and rubbish dumps bodies often unrecognizable due to torture and sexual mutilation. In the killers’ methods there are strong echoes of ferocious attacks on women used by US-backed government troops and death squads in Guatemala’s long civil war that ended in 1996. Most of the perpetrators of those wartime crimes are still at large.

In both Guatemala City and Ciudad Juarez the dead women’s families and advocacy groups have themselves been threatened as they have tried to seek justice. Says Amnesty International: ‘Turning to the police is often not a safe option as so many officers have themselves been implicated in corruption and violent crimes.’

The Juarez outrages have provoked national and international protests, a stream of human rights reports, condemnation by the UN Human Rights Commission and delegations

to the Mexican President. Actors Jane Fonda and Sally Field are among the celebrities who have made solidarity visits. Hollywood, it seems, even plans a film starring Jennifer Lopez as a reporter investigating the murders.

NGOs and human rights activists have helped distraught relatives of the slain Guatemalan women to publicise their cases. The mother of Maria Isabel Véliz, murdered in 2001 at the age of 15, brought her case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in January 2005. And in March this year the Organization of American States heard testimonies from a number of families.

The Guatemalan government set up a National Commission on Femicide with senior officials and politicians. In Mexico too the chamber of deputies created a Special Commission on Femicide and the attorney general established a prosecutor’s office for violent crimes against women.

Yet there have been few arrests and even fewer convictions. The women go on dying.

The Mexican and Guatemalan governments blame gang violence, drug-trafficking and corruption. These problems of lawlessness affect everyone, they argue, not just women.

But while acknowledging that the number of men killed is much higher than women in Guatemala, the UN Special Rapporteur Yakin Erturk concluded after a 2004 investigation there that the female cases “have a different dimension”. This, she said, was due to the way in which women are being killed. “They are raped, mutilated, and this has a terrible impact on women and society in general.”



Some Mexican women’s groups argue that the sight of young single women migrants from the poor south of the country working in Juarez factories and living independently may have made them a particular target in a profoundly misogynist society.

Women’s lives come cheap suggests Yanette Bautista, Amnesty International’s investigator of violence against women. Last year, at a presentation of Amnesty’s investigation of the killings of women in Guatemala, she argued: ‘The atmosphere of tolerance by the (Guatemalan) state and societal indifference toward all forms of violence against women contribute to the femicide’.

Clearly in these neo-liberal metropolitan wastelands with their social disintegration and, in the case of Guatemala, a recent history of war, there are few brakes on the most ferocious expressions of machismo. By contrast in Venezuela, Bolivia, and parts of Brazil, where the left has not been defeated and class solidarity is strong, women are helping to lead inspiring struggles. Violence against them may not have been eliminated but where they are respected and valued as equals by men and able to organize themselves to articulate their demands, they are in a much stronger position to pursue their liberation.

Kathy Lowe is an author and journalist, and a supporter of Socialist Resistance in England and Wales.

Aids Crisis

Time to Deliver!

Julia Barnett

The 16th International AIDS Conference Time to Deliver held in Toronto Canada from August 13-18 has ended only to raise more questions, more political demands, and a whole new sense of urgency for those living and dying from AIDS on a global level.

AIDS activists who are entering the second decade of activism in North America are tired and those who are still alive continue to hold the banners and demands of those who have died. Unlike most social movements the AIDS movement has grown and expanded in many ways that has created a genuine global response.

Another crucial factor is the numbers of those becoming infected world wide at the rate of close to 40 million while thousands die everyday. If this conference did anything it gave a space for activists to make the global demands necessary to strategize, and fight back.

It has been gay men and lesbians for the most part who have been in the forefront of the movement in North America who created clear, and non compromising demands from the State for prevention materials, access to treatment and care, and human rights through comprehensive AIDS strategies from both governments and other institutions on an international basis and have won on many fronts.

Many of these leaders in the movement have for the most part died. However, new voices from developing countries and voices of women and youth that did not have a voice in the past are emerging, and as a result, we are learning and making links as never before.

Although the media hype was focused on “the two Bill’s (Bill Clinton and Bill and Melinda Gates) and celebrities, those of us working, living with and activists in the AIDS movement became even more convinced that the demand for comprehensive AIDS strategies that links this movement to a broader anti - globalization framework is crucial if we are to stop the spread of HIV in the decades to come.



One AIDS activist said it a long time ago “AIDS is like a lens of the world around us. AIDS reflects and manifests itself as it exists in the world.” It crosses societies through interconnecting and by multiple forms of oppressions based on racism, sexism/misogyny, class, the suppression of gender identities, the oppression of sexual practices/desires and various forms of drug use and draconian drug policies.

The contradictions spu out while capitalist hegemony by the pharmaceuticals and through government inaction that breeds neglect, stigma, red tape, and miss guided policies and practices increases on a daily basis.

The international AIDS Conference focused on the theme of Time to Deliver. While researchers debated and shared papers on new vaccines and new promising treatments and other scientific data, demonstrations were held on ARV’s (HIV treatment) access to developing nations immediately without pharmaceuticals or funders interference and at a cost for countries to develop their own generic medicine and dispensing rather than stay dependent on the corporations that hold the patents.

The largest demonstration was the Women’s and girls March and rally on the Monday morning of the opening day not only did speakers focus on the numbers of women testing positive around the world at disproportionate rates than men but on the fundamental need for women to have control over our own reproduction, access to general and reproductive health care at no cost, the right to education, job training (beyond bead making NGO initiatives) and viable economic independence from men and the end to both male violence against women and both State sanctioned and individual rape of women and girls.

“Women’s rights are human rights” as one of the major demands were chanted. Another significant demonstration organized during AIDS 2006 was by Sex Workers and their supporters from over 21 countries demanding their own place not only at the conference, but also within their own countries. They demanded that sex work be recognized as a form of work that should include health insurance, paid vacation, and job security. As with all women, Sex trade workers demanded human rights and workers rights, and to be treated with respect as they are key people in the fight for AIDS prevention strategies within all communities around the world.

Here, within the Canadian State The Harm Reduction Movement has grown from the early epidemic when we first began passing out clean sterile injecting equipment including syringes to injection drug users to a more current comprehensive strategy that includes safer crack use equipment and Narcan distribution to heroin users to prevent overdose and through advocating for drug policy reform. We have seen since the 1980s the drug policy reform and Harm Reduction movements growing not only through out the Canadian State but internationally except for in the U.S.

The most recent demonstration during the International AIDS Conference reflected this struggle on a Federal Level. From Quebec to Vancouver activists gathered to demand that the first North American safe injection site “Insite” remain open. It is under imminent threat of closure pending a decision by the Conservative government Health Minister to exempt the site from Federal legislation under The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act section 56 in order to remain open.

Over 600 injection drug users frequent the site on a daily basis. Hundreds of people have prevented overdose, HIV infection, Hepatitis

Sweden

Narrow victory for the Swedish right

A commentary on the Swedish election

Anders Svensson

C, and have obtain drug treatment, and health care services by accessing Insite. This was only one of many demands and political pressure the AIDS movement has placed on the conservative government led by Stephen Harper who didn't even show up to the conference.

As the disparity between developing countries and the West are more apparent day-by-day and where the most vulnerable members of most communities on both sides of the world are hardest hit by the AIDS Pandemic. The rising contradictions of globalization unmask itself within the AIDS pandemic.

It is no wonder that governments find millions of dollars and build their armies and spend it on war or occupation abroad rather than keeping essential services or resources such as health care and treatment or water public. It is also no surprise that we have to continue the struggle against the spread of HIV and the care of those living with, affected, and stigmatized by this disease with little or scarce resources, it is no surprise that trying to access funding and or having to contend with bureaucracy at disproportionate levels that the very lives of people living with HIV/AIDS are at stake.

As one woman AIDS activist put it "how can we care for the orphans of HIV/AIDS if we can't give support, treatment, and a voice for the women/the mothers of these children?" "How can we tell people to use a condom when there isn't any and when there isn't even clean or free water in the whole village?" For that matter it is no surprise that the future of humanity is at stake and as such the struggle continues.

Julia Barnett is an AIDS activist in Toronto for over a decade and has been a Sexual Health, AIDS and Harm Reduction Educator for over 16 years and a member of the New Socialist Group and supporter of the 4th International.

The Swedish election resulted in change of power. For the first time in 30 years Sweden will have a right majority-government. But the election victory for the conservative alliance was a narrow one. They only got two percent more votes than the left-parties, 48% against 46%. The number of parliamentary seats ended 178 for the conservative alliance against 171 for the left wing bloc. Biggest party, despite the worst election result since 1928, is still the Social-democrats (Socialdemokratiska arbetarpartiet, SAP) with 130 seats. The Social-democrats lost 14 seats whereas the biggest party in the conservative alliance, the Conservative Party (Moderaterna) won 42 which makes it the next biggest party with 97 seats. This is the best election result for the Conservative Party since 1928. A marginal gain for the greens (2 seats) and a loss of 8 seats for the Left-party only confirm the bad election results for the left-bloc.

The neo-liberal policies of the Social-democratic government made it possible for the Conservative alliance to win the election with an even worse neo-liberal agenda.

One reason for the big success for the Conservative party is the Social-democrats themselves. For 12 years they have been in government and during this time they have been privatising, cost-cutting and generally have pursued a neo-liberal agenda, though carefully and slow. The unemployment rate in Sweden during these years has grown to be among the highest in Europe, much higher than in the other Nordic countries. Throughout the election campaign the Social-democrats denied this and put forward claims that everything in the country was all right. This gave the Conservative party and their alliance an opportunity to act as the more credible alternative for creating more jobs. The deprivation of resources to the public domain including hospitals etc by the Social-democrats together with the Greens and the Left-party created a paved road for the Conservative alliance to follow. Thus the neo-liberal policies of the Social-democratic government made it possible for the Conservative alliance to win the election with an even worse neo-liberal agenda.

In some local elections the Social-democrats has made a better result than in the national elections. This is especially noteworthy when

it comes to the second city of Sweden, Gothenburg (Göteborg) where the Social-democrats got 7% more votes locally than nationally. The local Social-democrats in Gothenburg has been criticizing the social-democratic government for some years and in the election campaign they criticised the focus on "everything is alright" and wanted the campaign to focus on how to create more jobs and take better care of immigrants and refugees. Due to this the local Social-democrats, with their popular local leader Göran Johansson, stayed in power in Gothenburg city.

The Left-party is another reason for the loss of power of the Social-democrats. Unable to create a left alternative to social-democracy and nearly always supporting the social-democratic government, even when it comes to privatisations they have been no alternative for the Swedish working class. Parts of the working class instead have supported the racist Sweden-democrats in this election.

Just as worrisome as the conservative victory is the success in the local elections for the Swedish far-right, the racist party Sweden-

Sweden

democrats. Due to the fact that the social-democrats have been unable to create more jobs and to do anything at all about the unemployment, the Sweden-democrats have been able to use racism as a way to success. It's easy to blame the high unemployment rates on the immigrants and refugees. They did not make it to the national parliament this time, but if nothing happens inside the left and segmented extreme left in Sweden the racist Sweden-democrats will probably make it to the national parliament next time. In the local elections however, they have won seats in many local councils. Especially they got very high results in South Sweden, in areas close to Denmark. In the national election in South Sweden they got around 10%, compared to only 3% nationally. In local elections in the same area they got up to more than 20%.

The third party that supported the social-democratic government was the Greens. Although they have never gained a strong support in the working class and are not seen as an alternative in these groups.

The second biggest party outside the parliament is the new party, Feminist Initiative, a feminist party led by an old chairman of the left-party, Gudrun Schyman. They got 1% in the national elections. Mainly votes from traditional left-wing voters despite the fact they claim to stand outside the left-right scale and also despite the fact they have no class oriented agenda at all. Their election result is definitely a disappointment for them. Just as the result for the main victor of the last European parliament elections in Sweden, Junilistan, is also a big disappointment for his EU-critic and bourgeoisie party. They got only 0,5% in the national election compared to 14% in the last election to the European parliament.

There have been a strong right wing turn in the Swedish elections. The Conservative

Swedish election results, national elections		
Conservative Alliance (Alliansen)		178 seats
<i>Conservative Party (Moderata Samlingspartiet)</i>	26.2%	97 seats
<i>Liberal Party (Folkpartiet liberalerna)</i>	7.5%	28 seats
<i>Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna)</i>	6.6%	24 seats
<i>Center Party (Centerpartiet)</i>	7.9%	29 seats
Left Bloc		171 seats
<i>Green Party (Miljöpartiet)</i>	5.2%	19 seats
<i>Social Democratic Workers Party (Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet)</i>	35.0%	130 seats
<i>Left Party (Vänsterpartiet)</i>	5.8%	22 seats
Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna)	2.9%	
Feminist Initiative (Feministiskt Initiativ)	0.7%	
Pirate Party (Piratpartiet)		
(a party formed around anti-copyright groups)	0.6%	
June List (Junilistan)	0.5%	

party seem to have won a lot of votes in the middle-class from the Social-democrats but also some working class votes. They now have stronger support in the working class than the Left-party. We have also seen a significant number of working-class votes going to the extreme right, especially in local elections.

The extreme left did not have good election results and probably gained nothing taken together. The two small stalinist groups lost 6 seats together whereas the two parties with trotskyist orientation gained 6 seats. The CWI-section (Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna) thus has most local councillors (totally 8, 3 new seats) of all Swedish extreme left groups. Socialist Party (Socialistiska Partiet), the Fourth International section probably gained 3 seats and now has 4 local council seats in 4 different cities. Compared to the number of local seats (more than 200) for the extreme-right this is really nothing.

With the victory for the right-wing bourgeoisie parties the Swedish working-

class probably will experience a harsh four-year period with big cuts in public spending, for example in the payment to the unemployed. There will also be more privatised schools. Most of the possibly profitable hospitals will be privatised as well as most of the state-owned corporations. The legislation to protect a worker from getting sacked will be weakened, especially for young people. The Conservative alliance will introduce legislation that will force women away from the job market and legislation that will make life more difficult for refugees. The bourgeoisie right wing government will also lower the property tax in such a way it will primarily benefit the very rich. The company taxation, already one of the lowest in Europe, will be even lower and the same goes for the tax on big fortunes. All this will probably lead to higher prices, lower wages and increased segregation.

Anders Svensson is a member of the EC of the Socialist Party in Sweden and also a member of the Fourth International's International Committee.

Brazil

For an alternative in Brazil

Against the bankers, imperialism and the corrupt!

Left Front

Neither Lula, nor Alckmin! Heloísa Helena President!

We reproduce here the Manifesto of the Left Front, founded at the appeal of the PSOL, PSTU and PCB.

We launch this appeal from Quilombo dos Palmares, inspired by the strength of the struggle of Zumbi [1], so as to build the Left Front and proclaim the candidacy of Heloísa Helena for the Presidency of the Republic. [2]



Just as the resistance of the slaves and a strong abolitionist movement were necessary to put an end to slavery in the past, today, in order to suppress modern slavery and create a just and sovereign country, workers, peasants, the middle classes, intellectuals, artists, Brazilian youth and poor people should also arise and mobilise.

The Brazilian people cannot condemn themselves to choose between Lula and Alckmin, two candidates who defend the same neoliberal programme and the same political practice of corruption which undermine the National Congress and the government. The candidacy of Heloísa Helena is a real alternative for the Brazilian people faced with these candidates supported by the bankers.

The Left Front wants to liberate the country from the clutches of finance capital and imperialism. Inside this front, workers, the unemployed, the millions of men and women who are in the informal economy, living with difficulty from their labour, workers' political and social organisation, independent activists, all have their place. As well as all the Brazilians revolted by corruption and submission in the face of big finance capital and the bankers.

We will struggle together in the streets and in the mass organisations to win the electoral support of the workers against the two blocs of the dominant class, PT and PSDB-PFL [3].

THE PT AND THE PSDB GOVERN FOR 20,000 FAMILIES

The electoral battle is part of the struggle of the people. In the elections, we will show that the bankers and the big bosses, represented by the politicians and the conservative parties, are in power and do not represent an alternative for Brazil. We will present a new alternative faced with the governmental bloc of the PT and the bourgeois "opposition" of the PSDB-PFL.

The Left Front wants to liberate the country from the clutches of finance capital and imperialism

These groups only oppose each other to occupy more political space, to see who will occupy the governmental machine, but they are agreed on the essentials; on the neoliberal economy and for the defence of institutions marked by corruption. It is only a struggle to see who will benefit from the privileges of power.

The PSDB and PFL have already shown with FHC [4] that it is the

bankers who govern really, that they daily make use of the corruption in the government. But the right is not only in the PSDB-PFL, it is also in the Lula government. The banks have obtained more profits with the PT government than at the time of FHC. It is not then by chance that they offered 7.9 million réis to the PT and 4.3 millions to the PSDB during the 2004 elections.

Lula will pay the bankers nearly 520 billion réis of interest on the public debt. But 70% of this mountain of money will go into the accounts of Brazil's 20,000 richest families. During this time, the government spent 5.5 billion réis per year for the Family Purse, a programme of social assistance used above all

as an instrument of electoral clientelism.

To fight the concentration of wealth, defend the people and change Brazil, the Left Front presents a series of proposals, makes an appeal to struggle and requests your vote.

TO CONQUER REAL SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL

INDEPENDENCE BY BREAKING WITH IMPERIALISM AND FINANCE CAPITAL

The economic policy of the government is oriented around the goal of satisfying the international markets, with low interest rates, free circulation of speculative capital and the repatriation of profits of foreign companies which make Brazil an exporter of capital to rich countries.

The foreign debt continues to bleed the national resources white. Nearly 40% of the national budget is consumed by the payment of interest on the public debt, leaving less than 5% for investment.

We support the demand of Jubilee South against the debt; suspend the payment of the foreign debt and carry out an audit. In relation to the internal debt, we support an audit conforming to what is laid down in the Constitution of 1988 as well as the analysis of its structure so as to identify the speculators and the big companies to whom we propose to no longer pay anything.

Foreign multinationals make use of strategic economic sectors from which they repatriate the profits to their countries of

Brazil

origin. These sectors - like oil, telecommunications, energy, steel - should be placed under the control of the Brazilian people.

The proposal of a new alternative economic and social project demands structural changes that Brazilian capitalism has never realised and which, in the framework of neoliberal globalisation, are more inaccessible than ever for it because they cannot be obtained without a rupture with imperialist domination.

The elimination of financial tyranny, speculation and the debt burden, the control of capital, the recuperation of the capacity of intervention and state regulation, the extension of public services as well as the redistribution of wealth, the creation of jobs, agrarian and urban reform, the preservation of the environment, are so many indispensable measures to finish with the poverty known by the majority of the Brazilian population and to satisfy the historic demands of the workers and of the people.

With 520 billion réis of debts that Lula has paid to the bankers during his term of office, it would have been possible to effect a great national change and resolve very serious social problems. We can build for example 16 million popular houses (which is the size of the housing deficit in the country) at a unit cost of 12,000 réis and thus offer jobs to the masses of unemployed in the country through the effort of construction.

This sum would allow also to finance a real agrarian reform

plan which would allow the 4.5 million landless families to settle at a cost of 17,000 réis each. We could also double the national education and health budget. All these initiatives, which are qualitative so as to resolve the social problems of the country, would cost 394.5 billion réis, or very much less than the absurd quantity of money that Lula has offered to the bankers.

FOR NEW GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS WHICH REPRESENT A NEW POWER UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE WORKERS AND OF THE PEOPLE

The Lula government is at the centre of a political crisis which, as none before, has shown to public opinion the real face of the regime of false democracy of economic power and of corruption. Scandals have brutally revealed the decomposition of its institutions. From the Presidency and the Executive to the judiciary via the National Congress and the political parties, the main institutions of the Republic are henceforth assimilated without appeal as instruments of the dominant classes in the service of corruption and the exploitation of the people.

Lula and Alckmin are representatives of this corruption which reigns in the country. It is not true that the public thinks that in some way "everyone is like that", because the majority of people do not. The corruption of the politicians and elites is the characteristic of the capitalist system.

The presentation of a proposal of radical democratisation of the regime and of political action should be done, always and systematically, by articulating the denunciation of the decadent democracy of money and of corruption with its opposite; the real democracy of the participation of the workers and of the people. The necessity of radically democratising the regime, by changing its class content, should be repeated forcefully as being a first condition for the application of an emergency programme capable of bringing the country out of crisis and resolving the problems of the majority of the people.

We want the voters to be able to revoke the mandates of those who have been elected and who do not fulfil their promises. We demand the imprisonment and the confiscation of the goods of the corrupt and the corruptors. We desire a radical transformation of popular representation and its mandates, through an exclusive public financing of the electoral campaigns, the democratisation of schedules for electoral propaganda in the media, the revocability of mandates and of the suppression of the barrier clause [5] which renders difficult the representation of parties and candidates without economic power.

These measures should radically attack corruption, decreeing also the end of privileged forums, of banking and fiscal secrecy, by establishing the wage of parliamentarians and those who govern through a referendum

public works to
reduce
unemployment

reduction of
working time
without loss of
wages

double the
minimum wage

profound agrarian
reform under
workers control

abrogation of
neoliberal reforms

no to reform of the
labour market and
trade union rights

the immediate
abrogation of
privatisations

immediate
withdrawal from the
negotiations on the
FTAA

creation of crèches
for children from 0
to 6 years

against all forms of
racial or sexual
discrimination

severe taxation of
the banks and big
companies

and with as basis of departure the minimum wage.

With the project of conquering real popular sovereignty in Brazil, the Left Front announces that, in the government of comrade Heloisa Helena, the Brazilian people will be called, through an intense day of mobilisations, to decide and to give the last word on: relations with imperialism (IMF, FTAA and so on); the foreign and internal debt and the necessity of a real national independence; agrarian and urban reform and a new statute on land ownership; the amount of the minimum wage and budget priorities; the criteria of preservation of the environment and so on.

A NEW ABOLITION IS NECESSARY TO PUT AN END TO THE MODERN SLAVERY

An immense sector of the Brazilian people still lives in a situation of semi-slavery. To begin with the slavery of poorly paid waged labour and dismantled social rights.

Twenty two million Brazilians live with a minimum wage which is one of the lowest in the world. Data from the IBGE show that 46.7% of families suffer from hunger, a rate which reaches nearly 70% in the Northeast. During this time, the 5,000 richest families in the country (0.01% of the total families) concentrate a wealth equivalent to 46% of all the wealth generated every year in the country (GDP).

If Lula or Alckmin are elected, the situation will only get still

worse. Lula is already committed to leading a labour reform which will represent a terrible blow for the historic conquests of the workers. The so-called "Super Simples" project, in discussion currently in the National Congress and which affects the rights of the workers in small and medium enterprises is an anticipation of this reform.

A RADICAL POLICY SO AS TO CONFRONT SUPEREXPLOITATION IN BRAZIL, SOURCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND OF THE INCREASING INSECURITY OF WORK

GUIDELINES OF THE LEFT FRONT'S PROGRAMME:

We want a plan of public works so as to reduce unemployment, at the same time as the reduction of working time, without loss of wages. We want to double the minimum wage immediately. For a profound agrarian reform under the control of the workers of the countryside. We demand the abrogation of neoliberal reforms, starting with the reform of social welfare. No to reform of the labour market and of trade union rights by the government and the IMF. No to the reform of privatisation of the university. We desire the immediate abrogation of the privatisations of public enterprises, starting with that of Vale do Rio Doce. Cancellation of the partial privatisation of Petrobras. For Brazil's immediate withdrawal from the negotiations concerning the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas).

In defence of the working woman, we demand the creation of crèches for children from 0 to 6 years. We fight against all forms of racial or sexual discrimination.

Moreover, we recommend severe taxation of the big fortunes and profits of the banks and big companies. The public control by workers and consumers of the production of essential goods is a necessity so that the redistribution of wealth is a reality and to put an end to the enormous inequalities which are the shame of our country.

From Quilombo de los Palmares, we call on the workers to revolt, once again, against slavery. The dignity of workers commences by their right to a job and a decent wage. Audacity, creativity and novelty are necessary. And the novelty is the Left Front.

Internet links

www.heloisahelena50.com.br/

<http://www.psol.org.br/>

<http://www.pstu.org.br/>

<http://www.pcb.org.br/>

Left Front was founded at the appeal of the three parties in Brazil: PSOL, PSTU and PCB. The PSOL (Party for Socialism and Liberty) was founded in 2004 after the expulsion from the Workers' Party (PT) in December 2003, of the senator Heloisa Helena and the deputies Babá, Luciana Genro and João Fontes for their opposition to the counter-reform of pensions carried out by the Lula government and more generally their demand for the respecting of the historic commitments of the PT by the Lula government. The PSTU (Socialist Party of United Workers) is a Trotskyist organisation of the so-called "Morenist" current LIT-CI, founded when this current decided to leave the

Workers Party in 1994. The "historic" PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), which was pro-Moscow, is today a small left party.

NOTES

[1] Zumbi Dos Palmares was one of the most significant warrior leaders of the autonomous kingdom of the Palmares, founded in the 17th century by insurgent slaves in the northeast of Brazil. He remains an icon of the anti-slavery and anti-colonialist movement, and a hero for the Afro-Brazilian community, Brazil and Latin America in general

[2] The Left Front supports the candidacy to the presidency of our comrade Heloisa Helena (member of the Fourth International's International Committee), senator and leader of the PSOL. Some recent polls indicate a possible electoral breakthrough for this candidacy. In some states she is in second position, behind the outgoing president Lula supported by the Workers Party, but ahead of Geraldo Alckmin, the candidate of the right opposition (PSDB-PFL). Thus in Bahia Lula is first with 55.9%, followed by Heloisa Helena with 15% and Alckmin with 9.7%. In the state of Alagoas, Heloisa is second with 18%, according to a poll carried out on August 18- 20. An IBOPE poll on August 18 in Rio de Janeiro shows Heloisa second with 18%, ahead of Alckmin with 12%. Finally in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, from July to August Heloisa increased her poll ratings from 9.9% to 16.8%, but she remains third behind Alckmin (30.5%) and Lula (28.8 %).

[3] PSDB-PFL: Currently the main right opposition force, a coalition between the party of Brazilian social democracy and the party of the Liberal Front

[4] Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a leader of the PSDB, was president of Brazil from 1995 to 1999 and from 1999 to 2003. He was behind the alignment of Brazilian economic policy on the ultra neoliberal model

[5] the 500,000 signatures required to obtain recognition as a party

Review

Liberation, Then What?

John Saul's recent book on post-apartheid South Africa reviewed

Jeffery R Webber

IN A LUCID contribution to our understanding of contemporary Africa, David Seddon and Leo Zeilig recently charted that continent's two waves of popular protest and class struggle over the last 40 years, as well as pointing to signs of a nascent third wave.

Figures in round brackets refer to book page numbers. Endnotes are in square brackets

The first wave - often referred to as the "IMF riots" - took off in the late 1970s with its characteristic "strikes, marches, demonstrations and riots." The protests, write Seddon and Zeilig, "usually involved a variety of social groups and categories and did not always take place under a working class or trade union banner or with working class leadership - if this term is used in its narrow sense."

The broad base of popular forces involved not only challenged the immediate austerity measures being introduced as part of more general neoliberal structural adjustment policies, "but also the legitimacy of the reforms themselves and even, sometimes, the governments that introduced them. They also frequently identified the international financial institutions and agencies that led this concerted effort to further enmesh 'the developing world' and the ordinary people who live there, into the uneven process of capitalist globalization in the interests of major transnational corporations and the states that gain most from their operations."

A second wave, from the late 1980s and into the 1990s, was characterized by greater political coherence and objective. In these new protests, "The charge that national governments had broken the implicit social contract to safeguard not only the material welfare of the people, but also their political rights, led to growing demands for democracy and political change."

Finally, a third wave, yet to have clearly emerged but breaking onto the horizon in the present day, is one with which Seddon and Zeilig urge activists to engage while drawing lessons from the past 40 years of struggle: "(T)he future success of social protest as the basis for far-reaching progressive social, economic, and political change will depend on serious re-engagement by activists and

political movements in Africa in both analysis and action at the grass roots. This will encompass both the practical and strategic needs of ordinary people and exploration with them/by them of new forms of active engagement in the determination of their own futures, as well as with the debates and discussions of the 'anti-capitalist movement' in its other manifestations [across the globe]. South Africa has demonstrated some of the ways that this dual engagement is possible." [1]

The Revolutionary Prospect

In *The Next Liberation Struggle*, John S. Saul makes such a re-engagement in ways that are provocative and stimulating, while also careful and analytical. In the best tradition of scholarly activism Saul seeks to draw historical lessons from past decades of liberation struggle to inform and foment a stronger third wave, or as he thinks of it, "the next liberation struggle."

"My central intellectual preoccupation," writes Saul, "remains now, as it was in the 1960s, the revolutionary prospect in Africa. Indeed, it continues to take as a starting point that a 'revolution' - both in post-apartheid Southern Africa and in the rest of Africa - is both necessary and possible on that continent." (7)

Saul has been studying and engaging with revolutionary activity in Africa since the mid-1960s. He spent seven years teaching university in Tanzania, as well as shorter stints teaching in post-liberation Mozambique and post-apartheid South Africa. While back in Canada Saul was an important member of the Toronto Committee for Southern Africa, as well as an editor and frequent contributor to the committee's journal, *Southern Africa Report*.

During forty years of such engagement Saul has published a large number of books, including classics such as *Essays on the*



Political Economy of Africa (1973), co-edited with Giovanni Arrighi, and *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa* (1979). Mid-career books include *The Crisis in South Africa* (1981), co-authored with Stephen Gelb, and *A Difficult Road: The Transition to Socialism in Mozambique* (1985).

Two of his most recent works are *Recolonization and Resistance: Southern Africa in the 1990s* (1994); and *Development after Globalization: Theory and Practice for the Embattled South in a New Imperial Age* (2005).

Growing out of this deep body of work, *The Next Liberation Struggle* is a collection of essays written over the last decade which seeks to understand the Thirty Years War for Southern African liberation, 1960-90, in an effort to contribute to a fuller, more meaningful liberation of Africa today.

That Thirty Years War, fought on many fronts and in different forms from country to country, was a war against colonial occupation and white minority rule. While much of the book is devoted to exposing the

limits of the victories which dismantled the twin prisons of colonial occupation and white minority rule, Saul is nonetheless too careful an observer to miss the indelible significance of those earlier popular efforts:

No amount of concern as to the deeply compromised nature of the outcome of the war for Southern African liberation should blind us to just what was achieved, both within the region and by Africa as a whole, in realizing the basic precondition - that is, the removal of white minority rule - of any meaningful freedom there. (5)

At the same time, to see clearly the way forward for popular struggle today, we need to return again to the parameters of that compromised outcome, and understand how black majority rule has not meant an end to capitalist exploitation and marginalization, nor to imperialist impositions on Africa within the world order. On this, it is useful to quote from Saul at some length:

In the end, then, the positive implications of the removal of white minority rule have been muted for most people in the region: extreme socio-economic inequality, desperate poverty, and disease (AIDS most notably) remain the lot of the vast majority of the population. Unfortunately, too, the broader goals that emerged in the course of the liberation struggles - defined around the proposed empowerment and projected transformation of the impoverished state of the mass of the population of the region - have proven extremely difficult to realize.... In now writing of the Thirty Years War for Southern African liberation I hope that a greater consciousness of the shared war will help to remind Southern Africans of its heroic dimensions and help rekindle some sense of their joint accomplishment - and that this will provide a positive point of reference from which they can work to once again fire the flames of joint resistance in the new millennium. (6)

That next wave of resistance, envisioned by Saul as the necessary and possible "next liberation struggle," consists of "a struggle against the savage terms of Africa's present

"the positive implications of the removal of white minority rule have been muted for most people in the region"

incorporation into the global economy and of the wounding domestic social and political patterns accompanying it..." (6).

Well aware of the tremendous obstacles - both global and local - to socialist transformation in Africa, Saul nevertheless maintains a "strong sense that a new stage of revolutionary activity is slowly but surely being born in post-apartheid South Africa itself as elsewhere on the continent..." (11)

Why African Socialism Failed

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, "Continental Considerations," first deals with Sub-Saharan Africa's position within the global capitalist system, in a chapter co-authored with Colin Leys [2] This part of the book also sketches some of the contours of "African socialism" as it played itself out in the Tanzania of Julius Nyerere's Tanzania African National Congress (TANU) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in Mozambique under the Frelimo movement, led first by Eduardo Mondlane and then by Samora Machel. Frelimo first commanded state power in 1975.

In a very different way, African Socialism is examined through the lens of South Africa's liberation struggle. In the latter case, the analysis is more of "what the situation seemed to promise." As Saul notes, "If there was ever a dog that did not bark in the night for latter-day Sherlocks to reflect upon, it is the absence of a socialist vocation on the part of both the South African liberation movement leadership and, perhaps more importantly, that country's apparently well-developed and assertive working class once apartheid had been defeated." (41)

The chapter on African Socialism is essentially geared towards learning how and why it failed in its various manifestations in

order to better forge a new future for socialism on the continent. Toward the same end, the last chapter of Part I juxtaposes really existing "liberal democracy" to Saul's preferred "popular democracy" in the context of Sub-Saharan African politics.

Part II, "Southern Africa: A Range of Variation," presents chapters on the causes and consequences of war and peace in Mozambique, and official "forgotten history" in contemporary Namibia, a situation in which the SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples Organization) government is pitted against the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement (BWS).

BWS is seeking to force investigations into allegations of human rights abuses by SWAPO leadership against innocent cadres while the movement was in exile, in particular at the SWAPO-run detention centre at Lubango, Angola during the 1980s.

This chapter is also co-authored by Colin Leys. Another, co-written with Richard Saunders, presents a Gramscian analysis of Mugabe's Zimbabwe and popular struggles emerging against that regime. [3] Finally, an entire chapter is devoted to Julius Nyerere's problematic socialism in Tanzania.

Part III, "South Africa: Debating the Transition," is devoted exclusively to an analysis of different stages of South Africa's transition from apartheid to post-apartheid neoliberal democracy. The essays, originally written between 1994 and 2004, grow increasingly cutting in their criticisms of the post-apartheid African National Congress (ANC) government, in correspondence with the ANC's deepening capitulation to the dictates of capital, both global and local.

The Hard Questions

Among the many positive things I could say about this excellent book, I think the most important is the simplest: Saul confronts the biggest and most difficult questions facing socialists within the African context, and he takes his answers seriously.

Review

The Next Liberation Struggle represents an attempt to be realistic without being passive or cynical, to be a revolutionary socialist perspective while avoiding the mere rhetorical flourishes of ultra-leftism, and to be cognizant of the dramatic obstacles in the way of socialism in Africa while always seeking to highlight the popular forces from below whose growth might help shift the balance of forces in ways more favourable to the realization of socialism.

While recognizing the difficulties for a socialist alternative, Saul convincingly demonstrates the irrationality of seeing in capitalism a future for meaningful and just development. He shows how the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) continue to follow a dogmatic market liberalism which they promote in Africa through aid conditionality; how these institutions have failed to respond in meaningful ways to demands for debt relief; and how the United States and other imperialist states - including his own, Canada - continue to make independent African initiatives vulnerable through a whole host of interventionist mechanisms.

From the perspective of capital, there is "optimism, even excitement," in the "oil, natural gas, and minerals industries" because Africa's resources remain "substantially untapped, with many existing discoveries yet to be developed and many new ones still to be made." (19-20) As Saul and Leys argue, however, "Africa's development, and the dynamics of global capitalism, are no longer congruent, if they ever were."

An economic profile of Africa drawn from this [global capitalist] perspective would pay relatively little attention to countries or states, except as regards the physical security of fixed investments and the availability of communications and transport facilities. Instead it would highlight a group of large transnational corporations, especially mining companies, and a pattern of mineral deposits, coded according to their estimated size and value and the costs of exploiting them (costs that technical advances are constantly

While recognizing the difficulties for a socialist alternative, Saul convincingly demonstrates the irrationality of seeing in capitalism a future for meaningful and just development

reducing) - and a few associated African stock exchanges worth gambling on. (20, 21).

Democracy is another theme that runs throughout The Next Liberation Struggle. On the one hand, Saul provides a searing critique of liberal democracy, and the essential impotence of normative claims about "democracy" in Africa so long as the continent and its people are both exploited and marginalized within global capitalism.

At the same time, Saul sees the lack of democratic practice and theory historically in the African socialist experiments as one of the roots of their failures. Among the failures of African socialist practices with regard to democracy, Saul underlines "the intellectual arrogance of newly ascendant elites; the cumulative precedents of nationalist movement practices elsewhere in the continent...; the inherited hierarchies deemed necessary to movements and liberation forces previously engaged in intense struggles, sometimes armed, against colonial masters; and the 'progressive' vanguardist discourses learned from overseas parties in the 'successful' Marxist-Leninist tradition."

For Saul, the cases of Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa illustrate "the pattern of smothering (however often 'with the best of intentions') the kinds of mass political activism that could have helped sustain the democratic and socialist charge repeated over and over again." (52).

After the Cold War

Conscious of the imperialist dynamics of the global order, Saul charts the effects on national liberation movements of Cold War

power-plays in Africa, and the obstacles and opportunities for the next liberation struggle in the post-Cold War international scene.

On the one hand, there are surely "long-term benefits of the passing of the Soviet bloc and the discrediting of its bankrupt legacy (both in theory and in practice) to the freeing up of space for the renewal of radicalism in Africa. Yet "the present world-wide context - of neo-liberal market mania and monolithic capitalist globalization - is at least as hostile (if in novel ways) to progressive aspirations in Africa as was the old Cold War world." [4]

While the international left lends its attention to the Middle East, with the ongoing occupation and to Latin America, with the proliferation of inspiring struggles against capitalism, I urge us to stay informed (or become informed) of struggles in Africa. For those of us based in North America, such knowledge will draw our attention to new areas to which we must add our anti-imperialist energies. Saul's latest book is an important tool for advancing this struggle.

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NOTES

[1] David Seddon and Leo Zeilig (2005), "Class and Protest in Africa: New Waves," *Review of African Political Economy* No. 103: 9-27.

[2] Colin Leys is another important long-time commentator on African affairs. He is author, perhaps most famously, of *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism* (1975). More contemporary works of Leys' include, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (1996) and *Market Driven Politics: Neoliberal Democracy and the Public Interest* (2003). Currently he is co-editor, along with Leo Panitch, of *Socialist Register*.

[3] Richard Saunders teaches at York University in Toronto. He is the author of *Dancing Out of Tune: A History of the Media in Zimbabwe* (1999).

[4] David Finkel takes up this question of the transition of Cold War to post-Cold War geopolitics in terms of its importance for progressive aspirations world-wide in an important recent article. David Finkel (2006), "The Legacies of National Liberation," *New Socialist* 55 (Feb-March): 12-17.

Cuba book review

The revival of a political tradition

Celia Hart's new book of writings reviewed

John Lister

The fact that Celia Hart can now write freely about Trotsky and Trotskyism, and discuss many of the historical crimes of Stalinism appears to reflect a much more relaxed attitude from the Cuban CP leadership which is now freed from any shackles of Moscow control.

When George Bush latched on to the illness of Fidel Castro, and the temporary handing of power in Cuba to Castro's brother Raul, as a pretext to urge regime change, on the island, he revived memories of a long and inglorious history of US intervention in the affairs of Latin American countries.

In no instance during more than a century of involvement has the USA sided with popular, democratic forces against a military dictatorship: instead, time and again, the US has dispatched troops or pulled strings to repress any movement that might unseat vicious, corrupt, but pro-US, regimes.

In the case of Cuba, the history of US intervention goes back to the end of the 19th century. In 1895 the US made a bid to buy the island. Three years later, after defeating Spain in war, the US took over Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. And American troops occupied Cuba for three years. In that time they took the opportunity to alter the constitution with the 1901 Platt amendment, giving the US perpetual rights to intervene in Cuban affairs, and limiting its independent action.

Only when Cubans elected a president to the liking of Washington was the US military presence scaled down in 1902, but US Marines were back for three years from 1906 to

suppress riots. The country was run by a succession of brutal and dictatorial regimes, culminating in a coup in 1934 led by former sergeant Fulgencio Batista, whose blend of authoritarianism, violence and brazen corruption established him as the military strongman and dominant figure in Cuban politics for 25 years.

Batista was shrewd enough to recognise the potential benefits to him of legalising the (Stalinist) Communist Party in 1938 (then embroiled in the collaborationist politics of building Popular Fronts with so-called democratic bourgeois formations) and trade unions in 1939, and was rewarded by CP endorsement of his election campaign in 1940.

In 1942 two leading Stalinists took office as ministers in Batista's government. But the other key prop to Batista's rule was the USA, and especially the financial groups which grabbed the chance for rich pickings from Cuban investment, and the US Mafia, which stepped up its operations on the island with the arrival of top mobsters including the Mafia's banker, Meyer Lansky, who lived in Cuba from 1937 to 1940, establishing a growing empire of casinos and hotels. When Batista handed over the presidency in 1944 to the corrupt leaders of the Autentico party, the Mafia was already well established in the top circles of power.



By 1948 the Presidential palace openly took a share of the huge profits from selling cocaine, skimming the National Lottery and milking the country's Customs revenues. While US banks and corporations had largely sewn up the profits from monopoly control of Cuba's sugar and extractive industries, transport, telephones, energy and infrastructure, the Mafia had by the early 1950s achieved a dominant role in tourism, casinos, nightclubs, prostitution, drug traffic, gambling, trade in precious stones, smuggling, money-laundering, import and export businesses, finance and banking, and had extensive influence in the Autentico party and with Batista and his circle of supporters.

The US government, and especially the CIA had worked closely with the Mafia during the War, and many links remained in place afterwards. Even the high profile expulsion of mob boss "Lucky" Luciano from Cuba in 1947 as a result of US pressure was in fact a means to divert attention from the booming Mafia business, involving top US-based mobsters, which had been set up before his arrival and continued to flourish on the island after his enforced departure.

For the US government, which had already sidelined the embarrassing revelations of the 1950 Kefauver report into mob activities in the USA, the Mafia's Cuban empire was seen, if anything, as an additional lever of control over the political regime. However the blatant corruption of Autentico

presidents led in 1952 to the real danger than the opposition Ortodoxo party (whose radicalising membership included Fidel Castro) could win the elections: twelve weeks before polling day, Batista staged a bloodless preemptive coup which had been widely predicted in advance, and with evident acquiescence from Washington.

It is worth recalling that this was a period at the height of the Cold War, with war still raging in Korea, and heightened US fears of popular movements which later brought CIA-backed military coups against radical nationalist leaderships in Iran (1953) and then Guatemala (1954). The Batista dictatorship deepened its alliance with the Mafia, while escalating its repression of popular movements. It sealed off any normal avenue of opposition.

The paralysis of bourgeois politics triggered Castro's now famous attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago on July 26 1953, backed by about 150 supporters, including two women. The raid itself was abortive and some of the rebels were killed: others were put on trial and jailed, but not before Castro, defending himself, had put forward the accusing statement-cum-manifesto "History will absolve me", which called for action to break up the holdings of the big landowners, nationalisation of electricity and telephone companies, and a variety of democratic and other reforms.

Review

Released from jail early under an amnesty in 1955, Castro went into exile in Mexico. He secured support and funding from a variety of oppositional and disgruntled forces, including sidelined former Autentico President Prio Socorras, whose donation purchased the Granma, the boat in which Castro's Rebel Army, with its ramshackle policies, sailed on November 24 1956 to fight a 3-year guerrilla war based in the Cuban countryside.

The eventual success of what at times seemed a tenuous battle by small numbers of rebels against an apparently large and ruthless army rested both on the popular support for any genuine opposition to Batista, and on the disintegration of the dictatorial regime itself, which by the middle of 1958 had lost the confidence and support of the USA.

We have waited over 40 years for a specifically Cuban critique of Stalinism.

The emergence of such writings by Celia Hart offers tremendous basis for optimism that there is a core of committed and critical Marxists within the Cuban CP willing to fight in defense of the gains that have been made

When Batista and his cronies ran for the planes and fled the country on New Year's Eve, Castro's forces were welcomed into Havana by a massive general strike. Revolutionary Cuba has since been a beacon for many revolutionaries of various political traditions: but for over 20 years from the late 1960s to the early 1990s its economic and military dependence upon the Soviet Union resulted in a visible avoidance by many of its supporters of any explicit discussion of the politics of Stalinism, and some highly questionable policy statements by Fidel Castro, such as backing the invasion of Czechoslovakia, endorsing the grisly Ethiopian dictatorship, and opposing the trade union movement in Poland.

However the same period also saw Cuba break ranks from the Kremlin's policy, to mount the

decisive military intervention in support of the Angolan liberation struggle, which in turn helped weaken and overturn apartheid in South Africa. After the heavy-handed repression and incarceration of the small body of Cuban Trotskyists in the immediate aftermath of the 1959 revolution, we have waited over 40 years for a specifically Cuban critique of the politics of Stalinism.

The emergence of such writings at this time, in a new volume by Celia Hart offers tremendous basis for optimism that as Castro's physical strength ebbs away there is a core of committed and critical Marxists within the Cuban CP willing to fight in defense of the gains that have been made and against a CIA orchestrated democratisation, by a vicious Miami-based expatriate restorationist mafia.

Celia first discovered the writings of Trotsky while studying in East Germany in the 1980s and the essays and articles in this volume show her increasing awareness of the corrosive effects of Stalin's theory that it was possible to build "socialism in a single country" and the Stalinist rejection of Trotsky's interpretation of the concept of "permanent revolution" (i.e. uninterrupted and international) first put forward by Karl Marx in the 1850s.

Celia argues that the core revolutionary concepts in Trotsky's approach were close to those of early Cuban revolutionary Julio Antonio Mella, and also embraced by Che in his quest to internationalise the revolution. She also poses the question which we might have expected more Trotskyists to have posed

over the many years in which they uncritically endorsed a Cuban regime which excluded their current from political debate: why was it forbidden for so many years to put Leon Trotsky in relation to the Cuban Revolution? (p21).

Celia insists that she has not managed to find out - but the answer is not too difficult to uncover. Castro's July 26 Movement, which had fought and defeated Batista in the teeth of opposition from the Stalinists of the Popular Socialist Party., was strong enough to oust the old regime, but was not based in the working class and did not have enough links or expertise in the trade unions to secure stable control over the whole economy.

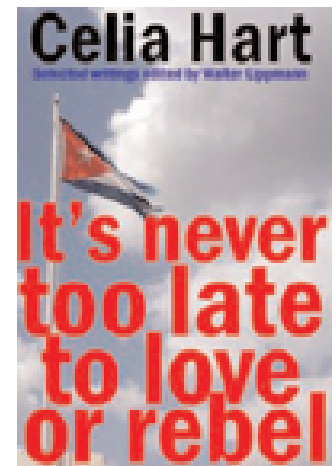
And Castro's new regime, immediately under pressure from the USA, felt that it needed international economic and military support. For its part the relatively new Soviet bureaucracy under Khrushchev was looking to strengthen its hand against the USA: deals were done in which the July 26 Movement merged with the Stalinist party, with the Castro brothers in overall control, but considerable political influence handed to the Stalinists.

In exchange the USSR extended military and economic support to Cuba. Moscow was prepared to allow Castro a degree of leeway in nationalising the Cuban economy, and for some years ignored Cuban efforts to export its model of revolutionary change by endorsing guerrilla struggles and left currents in Latin American countries.

But the new Kremlin regime under Brezhnev took a harder line, and from the late 1960s until the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s Castro's Cuba was required to operate within the boundaries of Soviet foreign policy. The fact that Celia can now write freely about Trotsky and Trotskyism, and discuss many of the historical crimes of Stalinism appears to reflect a much more relaxed attitude from the Cuban CP leadership which is now freed from the shackles of Moscow control. However there

are still constraints and it is not accurate to claim that the Cuban leadership was Trotskyists in practice.

Che may have been the one to free the imprisoned Cuban Trotskyists on his return from Africa, and may well have read Permanent Revolution and had Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution in his knapsack in Bolivia (p25), but his guerrilla exploits in Latin America, however heroically inspired, never set out to lead a process of permanent revolution in which the working class would take the lead. But as a treasure trove of ideas and neglected facts past and present, and a reminder of the historic legacy that helped give us the Cuban Revolution, Celia Hart's writings are very important. We also need to see how these ideas can be further developed in the context of the Cuban political situation in the closing years of Fidel's rule.



Selected writings by Celia Hart Edited by Walter Lippmann. Published by Socialist Resistance. £5.50 inc postage (cheques payable to Resistance) from PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU. International buyers can get the book from amazon.co.uk or the suppliers listed at resistancebooks.blogspot.com.

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Our History

Alain Krivine and Algeria

Alain Krivine

Alain Krivine, one of the best-known leaders of the Fourth International, is about to publish his political memoirs, covering 50 years of political activism. He began his political life as a young Communist militant. It was in that capacity that he was sent to the World Youth Conference in Moscow in 1957, where he met with representatives of the Algerian FLN. This meeting was to be the turning point in his political life.

When I returned to France, if I hadn't totally broken with the Party, I was at least scandalized by its attitude. From that point on I took the decision to aid the FLN and to talk about it with those around me, considering that it was absolutely necessary to "do something." But I didn't know how to make contact.

And it was here that family relations intervened: I had brothers who had been aiding the FLN for a long time. They weren't Stalinists and they had hidden their activities from me since I was a [little] "Stalinist leader." But seeing how unhappy I was to not be able to do anything for Algeria they intervened, telling me that perhaps we could help the Algerians.

So they put me in contact with the group *Jeune Résistance* (Young Resistance), through which I began my support activities. Within the framework of the Communist Youth (JC) I had begun to carry on a fight for the Algerians, notably demanding that Mme Audin [1] be invited to a meeting of the JC. They answered me: "You're nuts. We're not going to invite her to a meeting."

Just to finish off these stories, which show pretty clearly the mind set of the party, the JC had distributed a tract that invited people, on the occasion of a student congress, to a dance "For peace in Algeria." The words: "We'll dance and we'll..." were added to it. I was a delegate to the National Congress. Still naïve I went up to the tribune to declare that we didn't seem to be aware of the situation, that there were people who were dying there and that I thought it disgusting that we would allow these kinds of festivities on the subject



French troops confront rioters, Algiers 1960

of Algeria. Everyone started to chant: "Virgin, Virgin..."

So I found myself in a network that was led by Trotskyists. My brothers were Trotskyists and of course they hadn't told me this, since as a good Stalinist I hated the Trotskyists. The first question I asked one of them was: "I agree to join into your *Jeune Résistance* network, but only on condition that there not be any Trots there!" He asked me why I said this and I answered: "Because they're cops, and I know that in this kind of thing there are Trotskyists." He assured me that there weren't any and asked me what I had against Trotsky. "Nothing! All I know is that he was a cop and a fascist!"

So I worked with *Jeune Résistance*, which above all worked at stopping the trains of draftees. Then I went into the *Union des étudiants communistes* (UEC), where I was a member of the leadership, while clandestinely being a member of *Jeune Résistance*. During demonstrations we tried to start up chants for independence and to wave FLN flags, while the rest shouted "Peace in Algeria!" There was also activity within the army; this is what most interested

During most of the war the (Communist) Party had as its slogan "Peace in Algeria," and its instructions were not to have relations with the Algerians. When the hierarchy found members supporting the FLN they were expelled.

me. So there was the stoppage of trains of soldiers who were leaving. Signals were sabotaged. In this way we stopped dozens of trains, and this made a lot of noise.

During most of the war the Party had as its slogan "Peace in Algeria," and its instructions were not to have relations with the Algerians, which would have been too dangerous for the Party. When the hierarchy found members supporting the FLN they were expelled. A comrade from Billancourt who aided the FLN, who we called "Benoit," was immediately chased out of the Party (in fact, he was a clandestine Trotskyist).

The Party was also equally opposed to desertion and insubordination. It explained that a young Communist should go into the army, but following Lenin's schema, in order to introduce revolutionary ideas there. Nevertheless, the PCF didn't organize the draftees at all, and none of the young Communists who went had any instructions. Unfortunately, many of them became racists, since there was no counterweight to the ideological pressures of military life.

So the PCF opposed all initiatives. It was completely against the stopping of trains, the sabotage against "our comrade railroad workers." The movement had considerably developed, since we were as many as 900 in *Jeune Résistance*, which is a lot for a clandestine organization (in a way it was the beginning of the extreme Left). Young Communists refused to be insubordinate for fear of going to prison... There were some sons of members of the Central Committee who carried out courageous actions, but it was too late. The leadership of the PC had its few martyrs in order to later say to the

Our History

Algerians and public opinion “Our Party, too, had its martyrs.”

So in the last two years of the war about 20 young Communist soldiers refused to be sent to Algeria. But when you look at their names it was often the sons of leaders, like the son of Léandre Letocard, or of members of the Central Committee who did refuse to go to Algeria and were sent to prison. But this was at the end. In 1956 Alban Liechti was the first to refuse to go to Algeria, but the Party didn't support him: he was absolutely alone [2].

My two brothers were directly involved in the support networks, in liaison with the Federation de France of the FLN. They handled the transporting of money. From time to time I gave them some help. For the most part I took care of transports in Paris: when cars full of cops closed off certain neighborhoods you had to put people at the intersections to be sure there weren't any checkpoints set up. Our friends sent us signals permitting cars transporting FLN militants to cross Paris without hindrance. I did this many times.

And then we took “initiatives” concerning prisons. Notably, I participated in an attempt to liberate some women. This was at Fresnes. A group of comrades had flown over the prison with a small plane, which was prohibited, and had taken some pictures. By the way, they were sick as dogs in the plane, which had had to perform aerial acrobatics. We kept track of the changing of the guard among the police and the CRS around the prison in order to learn their itinerary, how many they were, and when the guard was changed.

We were right up against the walls. Little hills permitted us to hide. We were a few couples who relieved each other, each couple remaining there four and a half hours.

We transmitted the information to people who had pseudonyms, and whose identity I don't know. They were at “a higher level.” It

was pretty well organized. The networks were a good school. Some participated for “humanist” reasons, because they were scandalized by the torture of Algerians. This is both good and normal. But for others these networks were a good political school. They became true internationalists. They acquired a form of political practice, which is always useful.

Afterwards, in political organizations, we realized that a good part of the nucleus of the future extreme Left had its origins in the aid to the Algerian revolution. It was a matter of “practical” internationalism, and not one of discourse. It could concretely be seen how a revolution inspires sympathy, politicizes young people, and makes militants of them. This was truly a school of practical labor.

The attitude of the leadership and the Communist students in relation to the war in Algeria was to be one of the reasons for the opposition that was born and exploded among them. Algeria, along with Hungary, are the two elements of the crisis; the betrayal of the Algerian people by the PCF and the support given by the latter during the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which was also considered a betrayal - of the Hungarian people.

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The “clandestine” militants in solidarity with Algeria, who were members of the UEC, were to play a very important role in the birth of a “Left Opposition” to Stalinism. This opposition was to be born beginning in 1960-61 and would end with the expulsion of all of them in 1965. The transition was nevertheless to take five years. Before the war in Algeria ended, the OAS affair was to be a supplementary element in nourishing,



Alain Krivine (second right) with Rudi Dutschke (third right) with the JCR contingent, Berlin Vietnam demo, February 1968

feeding and radicalizing a portion of the Young Communists, including in “practical labour.”

All of these elements were to contribute to our radicalization, but in contradictory ways. So when it came to the army, in principle I was attached to the Leninist tradition, i.e., that it was necessary to go into the army and fight there by denouncing colonialism. I admired those few soldiers who went over to the other side, lock, stock and barrel. For me, as I was beginning to de-Stalinize myself, the hero was officer cadet Maillot. What he did was like the “mutineers of the Black Sea” with André Marty [3]: “We are in solidarity with the revolution on the other side. We join them with our arms, we're joining the other side.” The enemy was French colonialism. Maillot and Iveton [4] were truly heroes: the act of solidarity was capital.

Knowing that the PCF was doing nothing, in the army we completely supported insubordination and desertion. This allowed the carrying out of political provocation, a political gesture to shake up the French. It was better than doing nothing. Since those who left for Algeria couldn't be educated, many became racists.

You know what a colonial war is: “our buddies are being killed”, the young soldiers are completely caught up in the machine. It was better that they not leave at all. Though Leninists on the army question, we were thus in support of insubordination: it was the most effective way to lead people to obtain consciousness and to participate, in however slight a way, in a small sabotage of the French military apparatus.

Torture, too, was an important element in our choice. There were newspapers that specialized in the distribution of forbidden

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works (like *La Question* by Henri Alleg). This was the case with *Temoignages* et documents, which denounced all the dirty work of the French in Algeria. I worked a lot for this last publication.

The denunciation of torture played a large role. For example, when the general secretary of the Algiers Prefecture in 1957, Paul Teitgen, said: "Torture is our way of governing," he didn't go much further, but this was already more than mere "humanism." We managed thus to be "forced to respond," as we say today, on the very nature of the combat that the French carried out in Algeria. This had an important political meaning.

After this, the OAS was also an important cause of political turmoil, because there it was a matter of fascism. For a whole period Algeria was very far away for people, so people didn't really give a damn, and anyway it had to do with the "Arabs." The mass of the population began to get interested in Algeria when tens of thousands of their sons had been there and then told about their war when they got back. Besides this, there were thousands who didn't come back, or were wounded; the French population then began to ask questions.

At the beginning of the war, aside from intellectuals, the Left slept. But with the OAS, that is, with fascism, the people of the Left began to wake up, there were anti-fascist reactions. It became a "French phenomenon," with the skinheads, the strong-arm men of the right...people began to be afraid. Then there were the attacks, Delphine Renard... As for me, my flat was firebombed by the fascists.

The third "interesting" experience: at the time when the OAS was carrying out these attacks, we felt that among young people there was something bigger than just the war in Algeria itself that was happening, and the Front universitaire antifasciste (University Anti-fascist Front- FUA) was created. We managed to create a true mass combat

organization that brought together thousands of students in Paris and the provinces. The PCF was against us and we, Communists, were at the head of the FUA.

In opposition to the Stalinists, we managed to demonstrate that it was possible to have a unitary, non-sectarian combative reaction, since it was the organization that had decided to chase the fascists from the Latin Quarter. Every day there were hundreds of students who, at the call of the FUA, gathered in the Latin Quarter with flying squads. As soon as there was a distribution of fascist leaflets we went out and broke it up. We know that people like Duprat, [5] who was pro OAS and has since died, were never able to penetrate the Institut de Geographie... Recently there was still an inscription on the walls of that Institute: "Duprat will not enter." We really cleaned up the Latin Quarter, not in an ultra-Left way, but with the mass of students who'd been mobilized. There were Christians, PSU (United Socialist Party, a left centrist group - ed) members, the unorganized and us, the Communist "opposition."

The Party leadership called me in, along with some others, to tell us to stop, that we were behaving like "ultra-Leftists." This was to be a good experience, for we were quickly given a kind of "democratic cushion" to protect us: 150 intellectuals, with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir at the head of the group, signed a text that was more or less the same as that of the FUA. This was the creation of the FACUIRA [Front d'action et de coordination des universitaires et intellectuels pour un rassemblement antiraciste]. So we now had this anti-OAS structure guided by intellectuals, and the organization of high school and college students, the FUA.

This was a very rich experience. We had our own spy service: it was in this way that we acquired credibility. We were able to arrest those who bombed *Le Figaro*, a kind of operation that the cops never handled. We

nabbed them and interrogated them (without beating them) for a whole night in an apartment until they confessed.

We found on them a list of 50 officers and dozens of keys. Afterwards we didn't know what to do with these people. We turned them over to the cops, with the maps of the *Figaro* that they had. The cops were furious that it was "Leftists" who gave them these bombers. Three of these OAS members were placed in an internment camp.

The next day the *Figaro*, very much put out, had to talk about this. This was really an event. But the newspaper still said that it was "perhaps" a question of the bombers of the *Figaro*. The OAS people did about two or three years in an internment camp (there were very few of these camps for fascists, but many for Algerians.)

And then there was October 17, 1961, when hundreds of Algerians were killed...

The OAS alienated a good part of public opinion, especially after the attack aimed at the apartment of André Malraux, which cost little Delphine Renard her eye. This was a turning point in the war in Algeria. People said: "It's a total mess here. If there's a danger of attacks on the streets, well, let's put an end to this..."

And then there was the Paris demonstration of October 17, 1961, when hundreds of Algerians were killed their bodies thrown into the Seine. Public reaction was miserable; what happened had never before been seen. But there was so much racism among the public that everyone contented themselves with finding the repression shameful. Information about it came out little by little.

Today we know what happened, but at the time not much was known; we were constantly lied to. For many people it was only a that "there was an enormous demo of filthy Arabs that the cops attacked." The

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public reacted to this benign version of the facts, and racism had free rein here. It wasn't French people who were attacked and, by definition, the Algerians were frightening. We like the neighborhood Arab grocer, the one who's open all night, but when they're together on the street they're scary. So there was, on the one hand, fear of that mass of Algerians and a little regret because there was talk that there had been a lot of deaths. This explains the paralysis of opinion.

I saw the horrible scene on the Grands Boulevards. I was warned of it, and it was absolutely horrible: it's a memory I'll never forget. What's more, it was raining, which gave it an even more gloomy aspect. There were no cars on the Grands Boulevards, traffic was blocked. It was 11:00 at night and the massacre had already taken place.

...The worst was in front of the offices of L'Humanité, its iron shutter down and in front of it a mass of Algerians, wounded or dead: an image like this one is unforgettable.

The Boulevard was flooded, gloomy, black; no cars, not a sound: total silence. And the mounds of Algerians - and there's no other words for it - every 50 meters before the doorways. You didn't know who was dead. There was blood. They didn't move, they didn't cry out, they didn't say anything. Mounds of Algerians in the darkness, and companies of CRS, clubs in hand, who weren't hitting anyone anymore, who walked back and forth.

The worst was in front of the offices of L'Humanité, on the boulevard Poissonnière, its iron shutter down and in front of it a mass of Algerians, wounded or dead, who were bleeding and were there, in front of the closed shutter: an image like this one is unforgettable.

There's finally today a rehabilitation of the truth, but we had to wait for it almost till the end of the century. All kinds of committees have tried to do something. In many interviews it was asked of Communists if it's true that the curtain of L'Humanité had remained closed before of the demonstrators. They answered that this was the case, but that they couldn't do otherwise, that they had to ensure the security of the newspaper, etc. Always the same arguments, it's terrible.

All of this represents the beginning of the break between the world of labour and the PCF, the beginning of the latter's decline. From a certain point of view, the formation of the "cadres" of 1968 and the "new extreme Left" with the Trotskyists, the Maoists and some of the ecologists - everything that goes beyond the traditional parties, in short, a good part of the militants today in their fifties, were politicized, radicalized, revolutionized and de-Stalinized by their support for the Algerian Revolution.

In 1962 the independence of Algeria was a great joy; we had worked for years to this end. There were no manifestations of joy in France. It was difficult...But it was extraordinary for all the solidarity militants. You could look yourself in the mirror after having contributed if not a stone, at least a grain to that Algerian independence. The combat was victorious and we were absolutely happy.

Afterwards there were debates: what is this going to lead to? Some were more confident than others, more optimistic. But we said to ourselves: "At least this is it. The country is independent, the cause for which people were massacred. Torture has stopped. Whatever the regime, the primary objective has been achieved, the Algerians have their own home."

In conclusion, I'd like to say that you have to try to understand that an entire generation maintains particularly close ties with the Algerian people since that time. If I go to



With Daniel Bensaïd (left) and Oliver Besancenot in 2002.

Tunisia, to Morocco or Albania it's not the same as when I go to Algeria. There's something there that remains. This is why we're very demanding if something's not right in Algeria. "They don't deserve this," we think.

Source: Jacques Charby, Les Porteurs d'Espoir. La Découverte, Paris, 2004; Translated: for marxists.org by Mitch Abidor. Alain Krivine's new book Ca te passera avec l'âge (You'll Grow Out of It) is published at the beginning of October by Flammarion.

Alain Krivine is one of the main spokespersons of the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire

NOTES

[1] Josette Audin, widow of Maurice Audin, an Algerian Communist professor who was arrested by French paratroopers, tortured and executed in secret.

[2] He was sentenced to two years in prison for insubordination.

[3] André Marty led a mutiny in an attempt to stop the French Navy intervening against the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Tried and imprisoned, Marty was eventually released in 1923. Marty immediately joined the Communist Party and eventually became a member of its Central Committee. He was also appointed to the executive of the Comintern and was involved in establishing the International Brigades that took part in the Spanish Civil War. Marty was in the Soviet Union on the outbreak of the Second World War. He later moved to Algiers where he attempted to direct the activities of the Front National and the Frances-Tireurs Partisans, the military wing on the Communist Party. After the D-day landings took place Marty wanted the Communists to take power. However, under instructions from Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union, Maurice Thorez and other leaders refused to cooperate. In 1952 Marty and Charles Tillon were both expelled from the Communist Party. André Marty died in 1956.

[4] Maillot was an Algerian Communist who was killed while transporting arms stolen from the French army. Iveton, too, was a Communist, guillotined after a failed act of sabotage.

[5] Extreme Right-wing militant, later co-founder of the Front National. He was killed under mysterious circumstances in 1978.

FI Youth Camp 2006

Pasta, politics and parties

Thomas Eisler , Penelope Duggan

More than 550 young participants met at the youth camp this year near the Umbrian town of Perugia in the largest FI youth camp since 1995. This was thanks to an impressive mobilisation by the youth of Sinistra Critica in Italy who brought 230 Italians to the camp. The 130- strong delegation from France and 70 from the Spanish State made it a camp with a strong Latin language dominance. It was of course a pleasant internationalist atmosphere that made the smaller delegations from Belgium, Britain, Scotland, Denmark, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the Philippines feel “at home”.

The presence of the comrades from Mindanao in the Philippines brought home to the participants the reality of a constant struggle against military occupation by the Philippines government, backed by the US. “We were saddened, yet inspired, after speaking with the Filipino comrades, who shared their experiences of state repression, armed resistance movements and comrades being brutally murdered by Maoist guerrillas,” wrote James Nesbitt in *Scottish Socialist Voice* in his account of the camp.

The participation of 12 Scottish youth was also a big step forward in relations with the Scottish Socialist Youth even though they are facing a crisis in the SSP. The Greeks were also much more numerous than in any previous camps due to the geographic proximity as well as a growth in youth membership in the OKDE-Spartakos. They found the experience very positive and will put mobilising for the camp as a high priority on their agenda for next year. The Portuguese delegation was back after having giving priority to the Left Bloc youth camp in the last couple of years.

Under the shadow of war

The question of war became a more central theme than predicted in the planning because the camp took place while Israel was in the midst of its attack on Lebanon. The camp was a chance to enhance the

understanding of the Middle East and discuss how to improve solidarity work with the peoples of Lebanon and Palestine. A “permanent workshop” to exchange experiences and coordinate the activities throughout the week was added to the programme. The planned central forum on international resistance to imperialism and war was strengthened by the participation of a young Palestinian comrade as well as a young woman from the Spanish State arriving directly from solidarity work in Gaza.

“A new generation for a new Europe - building the anti-capitalist left” The experiences of building radical anti-capitalist parties in Europe was another central point on the agenda of the camp. The exchange of experiences between the comrades involved in such projects were a central theme both of forums and workshops and of the bilateral inter-delegation meetings where comrades could discuss face to face their experiences, successes and failures whether they had already a relative long experience such as in the Left Bloc of Portugal, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the Scottish Socialist party or within the party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) in Italy or newer experiences such as the WASG-Linkspartei in Germany or Respect in Britain.



Crucial moment for anti-capitalists in Italy

The camp was an important occasion for the young people of the FI and the left current Sinistra Critica inside Rifondazione. Several of the dissident Rifondazione parliamentarians had a chance to explain the situation. The Rifondazione majority had decided to be in favour of the Italian troops in Afghanistan in contradiction with its earlier position. They wanted to influence the military presence to make it less harmful. “But how do you make war and kill people in a less harmful way”, asked Franco Turigliatto, one of the dissident senators. The two senators from the Fourth International section could have the decisive vote in toppling the government and bringing back Berlusconi because it was made a vote of confidence. In the end the dissident senators voted in favour of a motion that prolonged the Italian troops in Afghanistan. But they also presented an ultimatum backed by 16 senators which made it clear that at the next time in six months they will not save the Prodi government if it insists on maintaining the troops in Afghanistan.

From the movements to the camp

The camp was full of enthusiasm and there was a rich exchange in experiences due to the recent movements in various countries.

In several countries the students have mobilised against austerity and commodification of education. The withdrawal of the CPE (first job contracts) in France after a broad mobilisation was an inspiration for others. “After the mobilisation against the CPE an enormous student movement started in Greece. ... The students, to state that they were going to win, said they would “talk French” to the government. We discussed the lessons we had learnt from our different mobilisations, knowing that in Greece they won the postponement of their reform.” (Rouge-France)

Revolution in the 21st century

Another constant thread was the need for a new generation of political activists to look at the world as it is today and build the political instruments necessary for the fight to change it without forgetting to learn from past experiences. The camp is an important moment forming that new generation to take forward the revolutionary struggle in the 21st century.

Thomas Eisler is a member of the national leadership of the Red-Green Alliance as well as the leadership of SAP - Danish Section of the Fourth International.

Penelope Duggan is a member of the executive bureau of the Fourth International.



“Learned a lot, had fun”

The Fourth International seems to have worked to recognise the crucial nature of class issues such as LGBT liberation, internationalism, women’s liberation and Marxist ecology. In particular, they make no bones about their commitment to feminism, something which would undoubtedly be contentious in the SSP. Our delegation came home satisfied, having learned a lot, had fun and made important new contacts. The FI is not the only show in town on the international far-left, but SSY were glad to have been involved and grateful to the organisers and delegations for their friendliness, hospitality and solidarity. I would strongly recommend young members attend next year and to learn more about the FI, their history and their current perspectives.

(Scottish Socialist Voice)

“A mini dream world”

The experiences of the camp have had a profound effect on those that went. Tamir Nasrallah from London says “The camp was like a mini dream world, it was a platform for the young to express themselves politically and allowed us to break the barriers of the capitalist system and question things in a highly critical way.”

Run by the youth, the camp is able to instil knowledge and confidence in a socialist structure. “The Fourth International youth camp samples a utopian society and creates a microcosm of a socialist civilization where the class war is won, gender is indifferent and equality is absolute” comments Jamie Smith (Sheffield, South Bank University).

(Socialist Resistance, England & Wales)

The red thread...

It was interesting to meet historical fighters like the French philosopher Daniel Bensaid sitting down with a group from a younger generation exchanging impressions, taking the temperature of the new rebellious youth, and, undoubtedly, remembering his own and never renounced fights as a “sixty-eighter” . Because not all the rebel students from that era have been integrated into the system as the mass media would like us to believe in an irreversible logic that one is radical left at 20 but inevitably rightwing at 40 (...) The educationals and the informal conversations in the camp are a necessary transmission of militant experience, they tie the knot firmly in the red thread that links the different generations.

(Espacio Alternativo, Spanish state)

European Anti-Capitalist Left

Call for Anti-G8 mobilisation in Rostok

European Anti-Capitalist Left



The next G8 summit will take place in June 2007 in the Baltic coastal resort of Heiligendamm, near Rostock, after summits in Edinburgh and St Petersburg. Poverty, debt, environmental destruction, war, social cuts and attacks on our democratic rights - this is the catastrophic balance-sheet of the neo-liberal policies of the leaders of the eight most powerful countries that meet up every year.

The G8 symbolises more than any other international institution the economic and political order of capitalism. A group of industrial states which govern only 13% of the world’s population sets the agenda for the other international institutions in secret meetings and assumes it can just dominate the rest of the world. These are precisely the countries where the biggest financial centres are concentrated, where most transnational companies are based, the most billionaires live and insatiable greed for natural resources dominates.

A broad European counter-movement to this summit is necessary to protest against the cruel policies of this self-appointed elite and develop social alternatives to the dictates of capital. The Assembly of Social Movements decided at the European Social Forum in

Athens to turn the G8 summit into a huge European demonstration of social opposition.

The parties and groups organised in the European Anti-Capitalist Left are part of a broad social alliance at European level to protest against the G8 and their policies as effectively and visibly as possible. But our aim is not just to oppose these attacks on our rights, living conditions and future, but to develop an alternative society based on peace and not war, on solidarity not competition, on equality, not discrimination.

WE CALL ON THE WHOLE EUROPEAN LEFT AND PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS TO JOIN US IN THE ACTIVITIES AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN ROSTOCK IN JUNE 2007!

EACL Secretariat

European Anticapitalist Left declaration

One year after saying NO to the European Constitutional Treaty

1 One year after, the European Union faces challenges

The French and Dutch “No” ended up being a fatal blow to the project of the militarist, antidemocratic and neo-liberal constitution for the European Union (EU). This victory is first of all a defeat for neo-liberalism. Workers and youth don’t accept capitalism as the end of history for humanity any more. In a context of globalization, of delocalization and privatization, the values of the market and competition are definitely not ours.

The rejection of the constitution is a sanction against the autocratic power of the ruling elite. They cannot indefinitely ridicule universal suffrage and all our democratic gains, the fruits of two centuries of struggle.

Finally, the results of the French and Dutch referendums express a deep aversion to war and imperialism, at the time of the Iraqi mire and the militarization of Europe through its subordination to NATO. We oppose any imperialist war against Iran.

2 From the No of the ballot to the No on the streets

The French and Dutch “No” have been a tremendous lever for all the social struggles in Europe those past few months. The rejection of neo-liberalism in the ballot has been translated into powerful European social movements on the streets. The Lisbon and Barcelona strategies, with their antisocial effects have been massively rejected. In January 2006, thanks to their European mobilization and the pressure they put on the European Parliament, dockers have defeated the directive which liberalizes port services for the second time.

With their European demonstrations, social movements and unions have pushed back the Eurocrats on the country of origin principle in the Bolkestein directive. The struggle goes on for its total rejection and for the improvement of working conditions in all the countries of Europe and legislation offering workers the highest degree of

protection. Being challenged in Strasbourg and Brussels, the strategies of Lisbon and Barcelona have been challenged with a new dimension in many European countries, after several decades.

Germany’s biggest strike in 20 years happened while the government wanted to increase working time from 38.5 to 42 hours in regional public services. In Great Britain too the biggest strike since 1926 took place in transport and municipal services, with more than 1.5 million workers on strike for 24 hours. In Denmark over 100,000 demonstrated on 17th May against the right-wing government’s plan to attack the welfare system. Finally, in France, after the movement of the poor suburbs in autumn 2005, a long, massive and powerful social movement took place among youth and the working class against the CPE (“First Job Contract”), which legalized contingent work for youth under the age of 26. On 8th March and 4th April, more than 3 million people demonstrated against the French government’s policy.

Across Europe with more or less intensity, new generations of demonstrators realise the need for an alternative to neo-liberalism.

3 Preparing political alternatives

As participants of the European Anti-Capitalist Left, we have participated in those social and union movements with all our strength. We favour the unity of all progressive forces against neo-liberal projects, be they launched by conservative, social-democrat or neo-liberal labour governments.

Our goal is not only to resist the attacks on our rights, living conditions and our future, but also to help develop an alternative society founded on peace not war, on solidarity not competition, on equality not discrimination, on environment not pollution. It’s based on this programme of political, democratic and social breakthrough that we stand in elections. We reject racism, sexism, homophobia and all kinds of discrimination. We reject

any compromises which would lead to capitalism being stabilised on the back of workers, youth, women and immigrants.

4 Against the role of Multinationals in Europe and in Latin America

The legitimate nationalization of the oil and gas industry by the Bolivian government has met with an angry response from right-wing European governments and multinational corporations. It forces us, the parties and movements involved in the EACL, to support campaigns in defence of the rights of the Bolivian people and other oppressed peoples of Latin America to use their own natural resources as they want. This, we believe is, the main task of the anticapitalist left in Europe in the struggle against the transnationals in our own countries.

5 Against War and discrimination of immigrants

Social struggles and the anti-war campaign are very closely linked. A new stage of imperialist war is on the horizon. The US government has declared its new aim of overthrowing the mullahs’ regime in Teheran. That means the dispute about nuclear power in Iran is central and the EU, in particular the British, French and German governments, are playing the role of a useful idiot in a murderous strategy which is no longer under their control.

Anti-war mobilisation must return to the streets. Solidarity with the Palestinian people and the rejection of cynical European cessation of aid is an urgent necessity.

The renewed peace movement is confronted with a brutal anti-immigrant and islamophobic campaign aimed at those sections of society which are most susceptible to racism and xenophobia. The European governments are directly responsible for creating this atmosphere. All across Europe they are proposing new discriminatory measures. On the borders of Fortress Europe they are pursuing a shameful policy which is turning immigration into a national security issue and the

immigrants themselves into criminals. This hatred and fear is coming from above. That’s why we, the parties of the EACL are taking up a two-pronged battle for hearts and minds: for peace and equal rights for immigrants.

6 Towards a new social and political force across Europe

The rejection of the European Constitution made the 450 million citizens aware that the fight against this Europe is a common fight. The Social Forum of Athens, which has just come to an end, leads the way towards this new Europe, thereby following on from the previous social forums. Enhanced by these new struggles, new experiences and new generations, it is up to us in the European Anti-Capitalist Left to deepen our cooperation and our links, beyond our different histories and cultures. We support the effort to build a new social, political and pluralist force across Europe able to overthrow neo-liberalism. This is the commitment we are making.

Saint-Denis, the 19th of May 2006

Bloco de Esquerda (Portugal),

Esquerra Unida i Alternativa, (Catalunya)

Espacio Alternativo (Spain)

Deutsche Kommunistische Partei (Germany)

Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (France),

Özgürlük Dayanisma Partisi (Turkey),

Red/Green Alliance (Denmark),

Respect (Great Britain),

Scottish Socialist Party (Scotland),

SolidaritéS (Switzerland)

The European Anti-Capitalist Left brings together a range of broad parties from across Europe to coordinate policy discussions and practical actions.

Debate: On working class consciousness

The Labor Aristocracy Myth

Charlie Post

THE PERSISTENCE OF reformism and outright conservatism among workers, especially in the imperialist centers of North America, Western Europe and Japan, has long confounded revolutionary socialists. The broadest outlines of Marxist theory tell us that capitalism creates its own “gravediggers” - a class of collective producers with no interest in the maintenance of private ownership of the means of production. The capitalist system’s drive to maximize profits should force workers to struggle against their employers, progressively broaden their struggle and eventually overthrow the system and replace it with their democratic self-rule.

The reality of the last century seems to challenge these basic Marxist ideas. Despite occasional mass militancy and even proto-revolutionary struggles, the majority of the working class in the developed capitalist countries have remained tied to reformist politics - a politics premised on the possibility of improving the condition of workers without the overthrow of capitalism.

While living and working conditions for workers in the “global North” have deteriorated sharply since the late 1960s, the result has not been, for the most part, the growth of revolutionary consciousness. Instead we have seen reactionary ideas - racism, sexism, homophobia, nativism, militarism - strengthened in a significant sector of workers in the advanced capitalist countries. Since the late 1970s, nearly one-third of U.S. voters in union households have voted for right-wing Republicans. [1]

This paradox poses a crucial challenge for revolutionary Marxists. However, we need to avoid “mythological” explanations, imagined explanations for real phenomena, whether to interpret natural events or to explain the nature of society. Unfortunately, one of the most influential explanations within the left for working class reformism and conservatism - the theory of the “labor aristocracy” - is such a myth.

Theory of the “Labor Aristocracy”

Frederick Engels first introduced the notion of the “labor aristocracy” in a number of letters to Marx stretching from the late 1850s through the late 1880s. [2] Engels was grappling with the growing conservatism of the organized sectors of the British working

class. He argued that those British workers who had been able to establish unions and secure stable employment - skilled workers in the iron, steel and machine making industries and most workers in the cotton textile mills - constituted a privileged and “bourgeoisified” layer of the working class, a “labor aristocracy.”

British capital’s dominance of the world economy - its industrial and financial “monopoly” - allowed key employers to provide a minority of workers with relatively higher wages and employment security. Engels saw the resulting relative privilege, especially when compared with the mass of poorly paid workers in unstable jobs, as the material basis of the growing conservatism of the British labor movement.

The contemporary theory of the labor aristocracy is rooted in the work of V.I. Lenin on imperialism and the rise of “monopoly capitalism.” Lenin was shocked when the leaders of the European socialist parties supported “their” capitalist governments in the First World War. The victory of what he called “opportunism” (his term for reformism) confounded Lenin, who had dismissed the development of “revisionism” (Edward Bernstein’s challenge to classical Marxism in 1899) as the ideology of socially isolated, middle-class intellectuals. Lenin believed the “orthodox Marxist” leadership of the socialist parties and unions had long ago vanquished the revisionist challenge.

Lenin had therefore expected that the European socialist leaders would fulfill their pledge, ratified at numerous congresses of the Socialist International, to oppose their ruling classes’ war drive with strikes and



Well paid Boeing workers listen respectfully to Democrat Senator Barbara Boxer

social disruption. By 1915, Lenin had begun to develop his explanation for the victory of opportunism in the socialist and labor movements. In his article “The Collapse of the Second International,” Lenin argued:

“The period of imperialism is the period in which the distribution of the world among the ‘great’ and privileged nations, by whom all other nations are oppressed, is completed. Scraps of the booty enjoyed by the privileged as a result of this oppression undoubtedly fall to the lot of certain sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and bureaucracy of the working class.” [3]

This segment “represents an infinitesimal minority of the proletariat and the working masses” whose “adherence... with the bourgeoisie against the mass of the proletariat” was the social basis of reformism.

Lenin located the economic foundation of the labor aristocracy in the “super-profits” generated through imperialist investment in what we would today call the “third world” or “global South.” According to his 1920 preface to *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*:

“Obviously, out of such enormous super profits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their “own” country) it is possible to bribe their labor leaders and an upper stratum of the labor aristocracy. And the capitalists of the “advanced” countries do bribe them: they bribe them in a thousand



Boeing workers on strike

different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert.”

“This stratum of bourgeoisified workers or “labor aristocracy,” who have become completely petty-bourgeois in their mode of life, in the amount of their earnings, and in their point of view, serve as the main support of the Second International [the reformist socialists - CP] and, in our day, the principal social (not military) support of the bourgeoisie. They are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement, the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, the real carriers of reformism and chauvinism.” [4]

The theory of the labor aristocracy remains an important explanation of working-class reformism and conservatism for important segments of the far left in the industrialized countries. While the mainstream Communist Parties generally distanced themselves from the notion of the labor aristocracy as they moved toward reformist politics in the late 1930s, [5] certain left-wing opponents of the Communist Parties continue to defend the theory.

Thus, in the “New Communist Movement” of the 1970s and 1980s, various currents defended the notion that a layer of U.S. workers shared in the “super profits” of imperialism and monopoly capitalism. Max Elbaum (the author of the influential *Revolution in the Air* [6] and Robert Seltzer, then leaders of the prominent “new communist” group Line of March, published a three part explication and defense of the theory of the labor aristocracy in the early 1980s. [7]

More recently, Jonathan Strauss of the Australian Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), one of the larger revolutionary organizations in the English-speaking world whose origins

lie in Trotskyism, has published a series of articles in the DSP sponsored journal *Links* [8] that elaborates upon Elbaum and Seltzer’s defense of the theory of the labor aristocracy.

Important groups of activists, in particular those working with low-wage workers, are also drawn to the theory of the labor aristocracy. Four members of the People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER), a workers’ center organizing mostly “low-wage/no-wage” workers of color in the San Francisco area, argued that:

“Another feature of imperialism that distinguishes it from earlier eras of capitalism is the imperialist powers’ creation of a “labor aristocracy.” The dominant position of the imperialist nations allows these nations to extract super-profits. The ruling elite of imperialist nations use some of the super-profits to make significant economic and political concessions to certain sectors of that nation’s working class. Through higher wages, greater access to consumer goods and services and expanded social wage such as public education and cultural institutions, the imperialist elite are able to essentially bribe those sections of the working class...

“For a contemporary example of this, all we have to do is look at the 2004 presidential elections. Statistics show that working class whites in the United States voted overwhelmingly for George W. Bush in an election that could be read as a referendum of the empire’s war on the Iraqi people. An analysis that solely focuses on class would suggest that working class whites had and have an interest in opposing a war that, if nothing else, is costing them billions in dollars. But clearly that ain’t what happened. Working class whites voted overwhelmingly in support of the war on the Iraqi people. The majority of working class whites, despite their own exploitation, tie their own interests

to white supremacy and the dominance of “America” in the world.” [9]

Most current versions of the labor aristocracy thesis recognize some of the grave empirical problems (see below) with Lenin’s claims that higher wages for a significant minority of workers in the imperialist countries comes from the super profits earned from the exploitation of lower paid workers in Africa, Asia and Latin America. [10] Instead, they tend to emphasize how the emergence of “monopoly capitalism” allows large corporations that dominate key branches of industry to earn super profits, which they share with their workers in the form of secure employment, higher wages and benefits.

Contemporary defenders of the labor aristocracy thesis argue that prior to the rise of large corporations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, capitalism was in its “competitive” stage. Under competitive capitalism most branches of industry saw a large number of relatively small firms competing with one another through price cutting.

If any particular firm or industry began to experience higher than average profits because of the introduction of new machinery, it was relatively easy for its competitors to either adopt the new technology or shift investment from industries with lower profits to industries with higher profits. Through this process of competition within and between branches of production, new technology was rapidly diffused and capital easily moved between different sectors of the economy, resulting in uniform technical conditions within an industry and equal profit rates within and between industries.

According to Elbaum and Seltzer, Marx’s analysis of the equalization of the rate of profit [11] applied to the “competitive” phase of capitalism:

“In the era of competitive capitalism, profits above the average rate, i.e. surplus profits, were generally spasmodic and temporary. They were usually derived as a result of technological advances that enabled a capitalist to reduce costs below the industry average, or entrepreneurial skills that opened new markets. However, an abnormally high rate of profit by an individual firm, or in a particular branch of industry, was soon undermined by an inflow of capital seeking the higher rate of profit or by the relatively rapid adoption of cost-cutting innovations by competitors.” [12]

The rise of large scale corporations in the 20th century create “institutional or structural restrictions of this process” which “result in monopoly super profits.” [13] “Monopoly” or “oligopoly” - where a small number of

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firms dominate a given industry - replaced competition. Specifically, the enormous cost of new capital's entering these industries (auto, steel, etc.) - the barriers to entry — allow these firms to limit competition and sustain above average profits in several ways.

These barriers to entry prevent the rapid diffusion of new methods of production across industries, creating what Ernest Mandel called “technological rents” or super-profits [14] for these monopoly corporations. These barriers also prevent capital from moving from low profitability to high profitability industries, blocking the equalization of profit rates. Finally, barriers to entry and restricted competition allow corporations to raise prices above their prices of production, securing super profits for the largest firms in the economy. [15]

In this view competition does not disappear under monopoly capitalism, but tends to operate primarily in those sectors of the economy where large numbers of relatively small firms continue to predominate. Cut-throat competition and the rapid depression of above average profits to the average rate persist in the “competitive” sectors (garment, electronics, etc.) of the economy. There the small scale of investment necessary to start a competitive firm lowers barriers to entry and allows a large number of small firms to survive.

The result is a “dual economy,” with two distinct profit rates:

“In the monopoly stage of capitalism, the tendency to form an average rate of profit still exists, since monopoly doesn't obliterate competition in the system as a whole. But it is modified by monopoly power. Therefore, the surplus value of society is distributed both according to size of capital through inter-industry competition (which yields equal profit on equal capital as in competitive capitalism); and according to the level of monopolization (which yields monopoly super profits). Monopolies receive both the average profit and monopoly super profit. Consequently, there arise the phenomena of a relatively permanent hierarchy of profit rates ranging from the highest in the strategic industries with large-scale production and the strongest monopolies, to the lowest in weaker industries with small-scale production, intense competition and market instability.” [16]

According to Strauss, Elbaum and Seltzer, monopoly super profits become the primary source of the “bribe” for the contemporary labor aristocracy. The monopoly industries' higher than average profit rates allow these firms to provide higher than average wages and benefits and secure employment to their workers. By contrast, competitive industries earn average (or below average) profit rates

and doom workers in these industries to below average wages and benefits and insecure employment.

From this perspective, effective unions are only possible in the monopoly sector of the economy, where the absence of competition creates super profits and allows corporations to “bribe” workers with higher wages and more secure employment. Given the realities of racism and national oppression, “white” workers tend to be overrepresented in the higher paid sectors of the economy, while workers of color tend to be overrepresented in the lower paid sectors of the economy.

The labor aristocracy, as today's theorists see it, is no longer made up primarily of skilled machinists and other industrial workers, as was the case in the early 20th century. Today, the more highly paid workers in the unionized monopoly and public sector constitute a labor aristocracy whose higher wages derive from the super-exploitation of workers in the competitive sectors of the advanced capitalist economies. [17]

Despite its intellectual pedigree and longevity, the labor aristocracy thesis is not a theoretically rigorous or factually realistic explanation of working-class reformism or conservatism. This essay undertakes an examination of the theoretical and empirical economic claims of the labor aristocracy thesis.

We will first evaluate the claim that super profits pumped out of workers in the global South underwrite a “bribe” in the form of higher wages for a minority of the working class in the global North. The essay then evaluates the claim that limits on competition flowing from industrial concentration in key sectors of the economy produces differential profit rates and wages. We will conclude our critique of the theory of the labor aristocracy with an analysis of the actual history of radical and revolutionary working-class activism in the 20th century.

Finally, I will present an alternative explanation of the persistence of working class reformism and conservatism - one rooted in the necessarily episodic character of working-class self-organization and activity, the emergence of an officialdom (bureaucracy) in the unions and pro-working class political parties, and the inability of reformist politics to effectively win or defend working-class gains under capitalism. [18]

Investment, Wages and Profits

Imperialist investment, particularly in the global South, represents a tiny portion of global capitalist investment. [19] Foreign direct investment makes up only 5% of total world investment - that is to say, 95% of total

capitalist investment takes place within the boundaries of each industrialized country.

Of that five percent of total global investment that is foreign direct investment, nearly three-quarters flow from one industrialized country - one part of the global North - to another. Thus only 1.25% of total world investment flows from the global North to the global South. It is not surprising that the global South accounts for only 20% of global manufacturing output, mostly in labor-intensive industries such as clothing, shoes, auto parts and simple electronics.

Data for profits earned by U.S. companies overseas do not distinguish between investments in the global North and global South. For purposes of approximation, we will assume that the 25% of U.S. foreign direct investment in labor-intensive manufacturing in Africa, Asia and Latin America produces profits above those earned on the 75% of U.S. foreign direct investment in more capital-intensive production in western Europe, Canada and Japan. It is unlikely, however, that more than half of the profits earned abroad by US companies are earned in the global South.

Thus, assigning 50% of foreign profits of U.S. companies to their investments in the global South probably biases the data in favor of claims that these profits constitute a significant source of total U.S. wages. Yet even accepting such a biased estimate, the data for the period 1948-2003 supports Ernest Mandel's assertion that U.S. profits from investment in the global South “constitute a negligible sum compared to the total wage bill of the American working class.” [20]

Prior to 1995 total profits earned by U.S. companies abroad exceeded 4% of total U.S. wages only once, in 1979. Foreign profits as a percentage of total U.S. wages rose above 5% only in 1997, 2000 and 2002, and rose slightly over 6% in 2003. If we hold to our estimate that half of total foreign profits are earned from investment in the global South, only 1-2% of total U.S. wages for most of the nearly 50 years prior to 1995 - and only 2-3% of total U.S. wages in the 1990s - could have come from profits earned in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Such proportions are hardly sufficient to explain the 37% wage differentials between secretaries in advertising agencies and “labor aristocracy” machinists working on oil pipelines, or the 64% wage differentials between janitors in restaurants and bars and automobile workers. [21]

Does this analysis mean that imperialism - rooted in the export of capital (and capitalist class relations) across the globe - has no impact on profits and wages in the global



Nike factory, Ho Chi Minh City

North? No - but the impact is quite different from what the labor aristocracy thesis predicts.

In *Capital*, Volume III, [22] Marx recognized that foreign investment was one of a number of “countervailing” tendencies to the decline of the rate of profit. Put simply, the export of capital from the global North to the global South, especially when invested in production processes that are more labor intensive than those found in the advanced capitalist countries, tends to raise the mass and rate of profit in the North. There is indeed some evidence that foreign profits - from investments in both the global North and global South - constitute an important counter tendency to declining profits in the United States.

Profits earned abroad by U.S. companies as a percentage of total U.S. profits (Table I and Graph I) have risen fairly steadily since 1948, rising from a low of 5.19% in 1950 to a high of 30.56% in 2000. [23] The proportion of U.S. profits earned abroad jumped sharply after the onset of the long-wave of stagnation in 1966, jumping from 6.43% in 1966 to 18.36% in 1986.

Even more indicative is the relationship between annual percentage changes in domestic and foreign U.S. profits (Table II). In a number of years (1967-1970, 1972-1974, 1978-1980, 1986-1990, 1994-1995, 1997-2001, 2003), the annual percentage change for foreign profits was higher than the annual percentage change for domestic profits. In some of these years (1967, 1969-1970, 1974, 1979-1980, 1989, 1998, 2000-2001), total profits earned in the U.S. declined while total profits earned abroad increased.

Higher profits result in more investment across the board in the industrialized countries. More investment eventually brings a growing demand for labor (within limits set by investment in newer, more capital intensive technology), falling unemployment and rising wages for all workers in the industrialized capitalist countries.

Put simply, this means that imperialist investment in the global South benefits all workers in the global North - both highly paid and poorly paid workers. Higher profits and increased investment mean not only

more employment and rising wages for “aristocratic” steel, automobile, machine-making, trucking and construction workers, but also for lowly paid clerical, janitorial, garment and food processing workers. As Ernest Mandel put it, “the real ‘labor aristocracy’ is no longer constituted inside the proletariat of an imperialist country but rather by the proletariat of the imperialist countries as a whole.” [24] That “real ‘labor aristocracy’” includes poorly paid immigrant janitors and garment workers, African-American and Latino poultry workers, as well as the multi-racial workforce in auto and trucking. [25]

Clearly, these “benefits” accruing to the entire working class of the industrialized countries from imperialist investment are neither automatic nor evenly distributed. Rising profits and increased investment do not necessarily lead to higher wages for workers in the absence of effective working-class organization and struggle.

During the post-World War II long wave of expansion, the industrial unions that had arisen during the mass strike wave of 1934-37 were able to secure rising real wages both for their own members and the bulk of the unorganized working classes. However, since 1973, the labor movement in the United States and the rest of the industrial countries has been in retreat.

Real wages for U.S. workers, both union and nonunion, have fallen to about 11% below their 1973 level, despite strong growth beginning in the late 1980s. [26] Higher than average profits have accrued, first and foremost, to capital, allowing increased investment; and to the professional-managerial middle class in the form of higher salaries.

Nor are the “benefits” of increased profitability and growth due to imperialist investment distributed equally to all portions of the working class. As we will see below, the racial-national and gender structuring of the labor market result in women and workers of color being concentrated in the labor-intensive and low-wage sectors of the economy.

Whatever benefits all workers in the global North reap from imperialist investment in the global South are clearly outweighed by the deleterious effects of the expansion of capitalist production on a world scale. This is especially clear today, in the era of neoliberal “globalization.”

Although industry is clearly not “footloose and fancy free” as some theorists of globalization claim - moving from one country to another in search for the cheapest labor [27] - the removal of various legal and judicial obstacles to the free movement of

capital has sharpened competition among workers internationally, to the detriment of workers in both the global North and South.

The mere threat of moving production “off-shore,” even if the vast majority of industrial investment remains within the advanced capitalist societies, is often sufficient to force cuts in wages and benefits, the dismantling of work rules and the creation of multi-tiered workforces in the United States and other industrialized countries. Neoliberalism’s deepening of the process of primitive accumulation of capital - the forcible expropriation of peasants from the land in Africa, Asia and Latin America - has created a growing global reserve army of labor competing for dwindling numbers of fulltime, secure and relatively well paid jobs across the world.

Put simply, the sharpening competition among workers internationally more than offsets the “benefits” of imperialism for workers in the global North. [28]

Monopoly, Super-Profits and Wage Differentials

The claim that monopoly super-profits, resulting from industrial concentration and the limitation of competition in key sectors of the economy, produce higher than average wages - and a labor aristocracy of unionized workers - is also open to empirical challenge. During the long boom of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, certain branches of production did seem to enjoy stable higher than average profits and wages flowing from the rise of oligopolies.

However, as that boom turned into the long stagnation beginning in the late 1960s, these industries began to face persistently lower than average profits and sharpened competition both at home and abroad. By 1980, the impact on wages and working conditions are apparent. According to Howard Botwinick:

“(T)he ‘eternal’ core [“monopoly” industries - CP] was beginning to show more and more evidence of peripheral [‘competitive’ industries - CP] behavior. Industries like steel and auto were experiencing serious profitability crunches and were becoming more and more interested in lowering the wages and working conditions of their primary work force. In addition to relocating to low-wage areas, core firms were successfully extracting serious concessions in wages and working conditions from their work forces. Even more distressing, a ‘secondary’ labor market was developing within the factory gates of these core firms as two-tiered wage packages were increasingly introduced on a wide scale.” [29]

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As early as the mid-1970s, statistical studies of the relationship between industrial concentration and profit and wage differentials began to challenge the central factual claims of the monopoly capitalism thesis.

In his 1984 study, Willi Semmler [30] reviewed the existing literature on industrial concentration and profit rate differentials and carried out his own statistical analysis for the United States and West German economies since the second world war. He found, first, that while there was evidence of a correlation between industrial concentration (monopoly) and profit rate differentials before 1970, he also found that marked profit rate differentials existed between and within concentrated industries in this period.

In other words, profit rate differentials had multiple causes before 1970. Semmler also found that when profit rate differentials were examined through the 1970s and early 1980s, the correlation between industrial concentration and higher than average profit rates all but disappeared. Instead, "differentials of profit rates are significantly related to the productivity, capital/output ratios, and unit wage costs of each industry." [31]

Howard Botwinick's 1993 study of wage and profit differentials reviewed the literature published since Semmler's work was completed, and found similar patterns. [32] Industrial concentration, again, could not explain profit and wage rate differentials. In fact, not only were factors like labor productivity, capital-intensity of production, and the like more important in accounting for profit and wage differentials; but many of the highly concentrated industries that had experienced higher than average profits prior to 1970 were experiencing lower than average profits in the 1970s and 1980s.

More recent studies have confirmed the absence of a strong correlation between industrial concentration and higher than average profits and wages. Instead, profit and wage differentials were rooted in differences in labor-productivity and capital-intensity of production. [33]

The empirical problems with the monopoly super profits argument - so central to contemporary theories of the labor aristocracy - are rooted in the very notions of "monopoly" and "oligopoly." [34] The notion that the existence of a small number of large firms in an industry limits competition, allowing higher than average profits and wages, is derived from neo-classical (non-Marxian) economics' vision of "perfect competition."

For neoclassical economists, perfect competition - which allows instantaneous

mobility of capital between branches of production, uniform technology, equal profit rates and wages - exists only when a large number of small firms exist in a market. Any deviation from this is "oligopoly" - a form of "imperfect competition" that creates obstacles to capital mobility, different techniques, and higher than average profits and wages.

The notions of perfect competition and oligopoly/monopoly are both conceptually and empirically flawed. Perfect competition is an ideological construction - an idealization of capitalist competition that makes the existing economic order appear efficient and just.

Real capitalist competition - from the birth of capitalism in English agriculture in the 16th century, through the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th century to the emergence of the transnational corporations in the 20th century - has never corresponded to the dream world of "perfect competition." Capitalist competition is fought through what Marx called the "heavy artillery of fixed capital" - constant technological innovation, taking the form of the increasing mechanization of production.

Older investments in fixed capital, even if they no longer allow a particular firm to reduce unit costs and raise its profit margins and rates, cannot be abandoned immediately in favor of new and more efficient machinery. According to Botwinick:

"Given the presence of fixed capital investment, however, new techniques cannot be immediately adopted by all firms in the industry. Because fixed capital generally requires prolonged turnover periods, new techniques will be adopted primarily by those capitals that are in the best position to do so. Thus, although new capitals will enter the industry with 'state of the art' equipment and other existing capitals will gradually begin to replenish and expand their productive facilities with the latest techniques, older, less efficient capitals will also tend to live on for many years. This is particularly true within prolonged periods of rapid growth... Rather than creating identical firms, competition therefore creates a continual redifferentiation of the conditions of production." [35]

Put simply, competition - not its absence - explains the diversity of technical conditions of production and the resulting differentiations of profit and wage rates within and between industries throughout the history of capitalism. The higher wages that workers in unionized capital-intensive industries enjoy are not gained at the expense of lower paid workers, either at home or abroad. Instead, the lower unit costs of these industries make it possible for these capitals to pay higher than average wages. As we

have seen over the last thirty years, however, only effective worker organization can secure and defend these higher than average wages.

Racial and gender inequalities can be best understood in relationship to the profit and wage differentials created through capitalist accumulation and competition. As race, nationality and gender structure the "employment queue" in capitalist societies, women and workers of color are over-represented in different segments of the "active" and "reserve" armies of labor.

Different industries, with diverse technical conditions of production, profit rates and wages, thus recruit workers from these racially and gender defined sectors of the working class. In general, women and workers of color tend to be over represented in labor-intensive, low-wage sectors; while white and male workers tend to be over represented in the more capital-intensive, higher-wage sectors.

Thus race, nationality and gender do generate a stratified working class as workers are distributed into branches of production that competition and accumulation - rather than monopoly or imperialist super profits - continually differentiate in terms of technique, profitability and wages.

PART 2

The "Labor Aristocracy" and Working-Class Struggles Consciousness in Flux

WHATEVER THE THEORETICAL and empirical problems with the economics of the labor aristocracy thesis, its defenders still claim that well paid workers have generally been more reformist and conservative in their politics than lower paid workers. They point to the example of mostly white New York City construction workers ("hardhats") attacking antiwar demonstrators in the Spring of 1970; and contrast them with the militancy and progressive politics of some of the recent "Justice for Janitors" campaigns.

A more systematic examination of the history of workers' struggles in the global North in the past century, however, does not bear out the claim that well paid workers are generally reformist or conservative, while poorly paid workers are more revolutionary or radical.

The most important counter-example is the Russian working class in the early 20th century. The backbone of Lenin's Bolsheviks (something he was most definitely aware of) were the best paid industrial workers in the Russian cities - skilled machinists in the largest factories. Lower paid workers, such as the predominantly female textile workers, were generally either unorganized or apolitical (until the beginnings of the

revolution) or supported the reformist Mensheviks. [36]

In fact the mass base of the left, antiwar wing of the pre-First World War socialist parties and of the postwar revolutionary Communist parties were relatively well paid workers in the large metalworking industries. These workers led militant struggles against speedup and deskilling that became political struggles against conscription and the war.

German Communism became a mass movement when tens of thousands of well paid metal workers left the Independent Socialists and joined the Communists in 1921. The French and Italian Communists also became mass parties through the recruitment of thousands of machinists who led the mass strikes of the postwar period. These highly paid workers were also overrepresented in the smaller Communist parties of the United States and Britain. [37]

Well paid, although generally deskilled, workers in large scale industry continued to play a leading role in mass upsurges throughout the 20th century. During the CIO upsurge during the 1930s, relatively well paid workers in the U.S. auto, steel, rubber and other mass production industries, often with skilled industrial workers in the lead, spearheaded the creation of industrial unions that united skilled and unskilled, highly paid and poorly paid. Well paid and skilled workers were, again, over represented in radical and revolutionary organizations in the United States during the 1930s. [38]

Well paid workers were also in the vanguard of proto-revolutionary mass struggles in France (1968), Italy (1968-69), Britain (1967-75), and Portugal (1974-75). Relatively "aristocratic" workers in trucking, auto, telecommunications, public education and the postal service were at the center of the unofficial, wildcat strikes that shook U.S. industry between 1965 and 1975.

In France in 1995, well paid workers in telecommunications, public transport, postal, health care and education led the public sector strikes that mounted the first successful workers' struggles against neoliberalism. In the Fall of 2004, auto workers, some of the best paid in Germany, stood up to layoffs, defying their own union leaders in an unofficial strike.

In the U.S. working class during the past decade, relatively poorly paid workers (janitors, hotel workers, and grocery clerks) have engaged in strike actions much more frequently than relatively well paid workers. However, better paid workers - from UPS workers in 1997 to New York City transit workers in 2005 — have not been absent from militant workplace struggles.

Nor is this pattern of militancy and radicalism among relatively well paid workers limited to the global North. In Chile between 1970 and 1973, and Argentina between 1971 and 1974, copper miners and metal workers engaged in industrial struggles and took the lead in mass mobilizations against the military and the right. In Brazil, it was the well paid metal workers in the "ABC" suburbs of San Paolo who led mass strikes in the 1970s that created the CUT (United Workers Confederation) and eventually the PT (Workers Party) in the early 1980s.

Similarly, it was the highest paid Black workers in South Africa - in mining, auto, steel - whose struggles in the 1970s created the radical and militant FOSATU trade union confederation. FOSATU and its successor COSATU were able to build on workplace organization and power in the political struggle against apartheid in the 1980s and 1990s.

It is not surprising that relatively well paid workers have been at the center of the most militant and radical workers' struggles of the last century. These workers tend to be concentrated in large, capital intensive workplaces that are often central to the capitalist economy. These workers have considerable social power when they act collectively. Strikes in these industries have a much greater impact on the economy than workers in smaller, less capital intensive workplaces (garment, office cleaning, etc.) Workers in capital intensive industries are also often the first targets of capitalist restructuring in periods of falling profits and sharpened competition.

Explaining Working-Class Reformism [39]

How do we explain the fact that most workers, most of the time, do not act on their potential power? Why do workers embrace reformist politics - support for bureaucratic unionism (reliance on the grievance procedure, routine collective bargaining) and Democratic party electoral politics - or worse, reactionary politics in the forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, nativism, militarism?

The key to understanding working-class reformism (and conservatism) is the necessarily episodic nature of working-class struggle and organization. The necessary condition for the development of class consciousness is the self-activity and self-organization of the workers themselves. The experience of mass, collective and successful struggles against capital and its state in the workplace and the community is what opens layers of workers to radical and revolutionary political ideas. [40]

The working class cannot be, as a whole, permanently active in the class struggle. The entire working class cannot consistently engage in strikes, demonstrations and other forms of political activity because this class is separated from effective possession of the means of production, and its members compelled to sell their labor power to capital in order to survive. They have to go to work!

Put simply, most workers, most of the time are engaged in the individual struggle to sell their capacity to work and secure the reproduction of themselves and their families - not the collective struggle against the employers and the state. The "actually existing" working class can only engage in mass struggles as a class in extraordinary, revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situations. Because of the structural position of wage labor under capitalism, these must be of short duration. Most often, different segments of the working class become active in the struggle against capital at different times.

In the wake of successful mass struggles, only a minority of the workers remain consistently active. Most of this workers' vanguard - those who "even during a lull in the struggle...do[es] not abandon the front lines of the class struggle but continues the war, so to speak, 'by other means'" [41] - attempts to preserve and transmit the traditions of mass struggle in the workplace or the community. However, a sector within this active minority, together with intellectuals who have access to cultural skills from which the bulk of the working class is excluded, must take on responsibility for administering the unions or political parties created by periodic upsurges of mass activity.

This layer of fulltime officials - the bureaucracy of the labor movement - is the social foundation for "unconditional" reformist practice and ideology in the labor movement. Those workers who become officials of the unions and political parties begin to experience conditions of life very different from those who remain in the workplace.

The new officials find themselves freed from the daily humiliations of the capitalist labor process. They are no longer subject to either deskilled and alienated labor or the petty despotism of supervisors. Able to set their own hours, plan and direct their own activities, and devote the bulk of their waking hours to "fighting for the workers," the officials seek to consolidate these privileges.

As the unions gain a place in capitalist society, the union officials strengthen their role as negotiators of the workers' subordination to capital in the labor-process. In defense of their social position, the labor bureaucracy excludes rank and file activists

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in the unions and parties from any real decision-making power. [42]

The consolidation of the labor bureaucracy as a social layer, distinct from the rest of the working class under capitalism, gives rise to its distinctive political practice and world-view. The preservation of the apparatus of the mass union or party, as an end itself, becomes the main objective of the labor bureaucracy. The labor bureaucrats seek to contain working-class militancy within boundaries that do not threaten the continued existence of the institutions which are the basis of the officials' unique life-style.

Thus what Ernest Mandel called the "dialectic of partial conquests," the possibility that new struggles may be defeated and the mass organizations of the working class weakened, buttress the labor bureaucracy's reliance on electoral campaigns and parliamentary pressure tactics (lobbying) to win political reforms, and on strictly regimented collective bargaining to increase wages and improve working conditions.

The labor bureaucracy's stake in stable bargaining relationships with the employers and their credibility in the eyes of the capitalists as negotiators further reinforce their conservative ideology and practice. From the bureaucracy's point of view, any attempt to promote the militant self-activity and organization among workers must be quashed. At this point, the bureaucracy's organizational fetishism (giving priority to the survival of the apparatus over new advances in the struggle) produces a world-view that demands the workers' unquestioning obedience to leaders who claim they know "what is best for the workers."

While the unconditional ideological commitment to reformism grows organically from the privileged social position of the labor officialdom, how do we explain the conditional reformism of most workers? Why do most workers, most of the time accept reformism? Put bluntly, why is this conditional reformism the normal state of working class consciousness under capitalism?

In "normal times" - of working class quiescence and passivity - the majority of workers come to accept the "rules of the game" of capitalist competition and profitability. They seek a "fair share" of the products of capitalist accumulation, but do not feel capable of challenging capitalist power in the workplace, the streets or society. For most workers during "normal times," mass, militant struggle seems unrealistic; they tend to embrace the labor officialdom's substitution of liberal and reformist electoral

politics, institutionalized collective bargaining and grievance handling.

However, the continued hold of reformism over the majority of workers requires that labor officials "deliver the goods" in the form of improved wages, hours and working conditions. As Bob Brenner points out:

"(G)iven even a minimum of working-class organization, reformism tends to be widely attractive in periods of prosperity precisely because in such periods the threat of limited working-class resistance - symbolized by the resolution to strike or a victory at the polls - actually can yield concessions from capital. Since filling orders and expanding production are their top priorities in the boom, capitalists will tend to find it in their interests to maintain and increase production, even if this means concessions to the workers, if the alternative is to endure a strike or other forms of social dislocation." [43]

When capitalism enters one of its unavoidable periods of crisis and restructuring - like the one that began in the late 1960s through most of the capitalist world - the paradox of reformism becomes manifest. In a world of declining profits and sharpened competition, capitalists throughout the world went on the offensive at the workplace and at the level of the capitalist state. The restructuring of the capitalist production along the lines of lean production, and the neoliberal deregulation of capital and labor markets, [44] required all-out war against workers and their organizations across the capitalist world.

At this point, reformism becomes ineffective. Workers can and have made gains against their employers in the past fifteen years - the success of the UPS strike and the "Justice for Janitors" campaigns in various cities cannot be ignored. However, these victories often required substantive rank-and-file organization and mobilization - including independent organizations, like Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

In fact, the reformist officialdom of the unions and social-democratic parties embraced realpolitik - adapting to the new "reality" of declining living and working conditions. As Mandel pointed out:

"(T)he underlying assumption of present-day social-democratic gradualism is precisely this: let the capitalists produce the goods, so that governments can redistribute them in a just way. But what if capitalist production demands more unequal, more unjust distribution of the 'fruits of growth'? What if there is no economic growth at all as a result of capitalist crisis? The gradualists can then only repeat mechanically: there is no alternative; there is no way out." [45]

Eschewing militancy and direct action by workers and other oppressed people, the labor bureaucracy and reformist politicians in the West have no choice but to make concessions to the employers' offensive and to administer capitalist state austerity. The spectacle of reformist bureaucrats shunning the struggle for reforms has been repeated across the capitalist world in the last three decades, with tragic results.

Again and again, the reformist bureaucrats have surrendered to the requirements of capitalist profitability. The Italian Communist party embraced austerity in the 1970s. The U.S. AFL-CIO officials have accepted concession bargaining since 1979, usually without even the pretense of struggle. Social-democratic regimes across Europe (Mitterand and Jospin in France, Blair in Britain, Schroeder in Germany) embraced neoliberal realism - cutting social services, privatizing public enterprises, and deregulating capital and labor markets.

Nor has the reformist retreat been limited to the imperialist countries. In the early 1990s, the ANC-COSATU-led government in post-apartheid South Africa has embraced what some have called the "sado-monetarism" of the IMF and World Bank. The debacle of the Lula regime in Brazil - attacking workers' rights, opening the agricultural economy to transnational investment and systematically retreating from its promise of popular reform - fits the pattern all too well. Today, even the most moderate forms of social-democratic gradualism have become utopian, as the labor bureaucracy across the world has been unable to defend the workers' past gains much less win significant new reforms in an era of crisis and restructuring.

Why Working-Class Conservatism? [46]

The inability of reformism to "deliver the goods" for most working people also helps us make sense of the appeal of right-wing politics - racist, sexist, homophobic, nativist and militarist - for a segment of workers. The objective, structural position of workers under capitalism provides the basis for collective, class radicalism and individualist, sectoralist and reactionary politics.

Bob Brenner and Johanna Brenner point out, "workers are not only collective producers with a common interest in taking collective control over social production. They are also individual sellers of labor power in conflict with each other over jobs, promotions, etc." As Kim Moody put it, capitalism "pushes together and pulls apart" the working class. As competing sellers of labor power, workers are open to the appeal of politics that pit them against other workers - especially workers in a weaker social position:

Debate

It appears possible for the stronger sections of the working class to defend their positions by organizing on the basis of already existing ties against weaker, less-organized sections. They can take advantage of their positions as Americans over and against foreigners, as whites over and against blacks, as men over and against women, as employed over and against unemployed, etc. In so doing, working people may act initially only out of what they perceive to be their most immediate self-interest. But over time they inevitably feel the pressure to make sense of these actions and they adopt ideas which can make their actions reasonable and coherent. These ideas are, of course, the ideas of the right. [47]

Bruce Nelson's recent study of steelworkers details how relatively white workers in the steel industry struggled to defend their privileged access to better paying and relatively more skilled work after the establishment of industrial unionism. The rise of the CIO opened the possibility of classwide organization that began to reduce the racial/national segmentation of the working class.

As the CIO offensive ground to passed its peak by the late 1930s, and the industrial unions became bureaucratized during the second world war, white workers increasingly moved to defend their privileged access to employment (and with it housing, education for their children, etc.) against workers of color. In the steel industries, white workers militantly defended departmental seniority in promotion and layoffs against demands of Black and Latino workers for plant wide seniority and affirmative action in promotions in the 1960s and 1970s. [48]

As Marxists, we understand that such strategies are counter-productive in the medium to long term. Divisions among workers and reliance on different segments of the capitalist class only undermine the ability of workers to defend or improve their conditions of life under capitalism. [49] However, when reformism proves incapable of realistically defending workers' interests - as it has since the early 1970s - workers embrace individualist and sectoralist perspectives as the only realistic strategy.

This is particularly the case in the absence of a substantial and influential militant minority in the working class that can organize collective resistance to capital independently of, and often in opposition to the reformist labor officials. [50]

Conclusion

Kim Moody has pointed out that everyday working class "common sense" is not "some consistent capitalist ideology" but instead:

a clashing collection of old ideas handed down, others learned through daily experience, and still others generated by the capitalist media, education system, religion, etc. It is not simply the popular idea of a nation tranquilized by TV and weekends in the mall. "Common sense" is both deeper and more contradictory because it also embodies experiences that go against the grain of capitalist ideology. [51]

Only through the experience of collective, class activity against the employers, starting at but not limited to the workplace, can workers begin to think of themselves as a class with interests in common with other workers and opposed to the capitalists. Workers who experience their collective, class power on the job are much more open to class - and anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-militarist, anti-nativist - ways of thinking.

As Marx pointed out, it is through the workplace and union struggles that the working class "becomes fit to rule" - develops the organization and consciousness capable of confronting capital. Such organization will require a struggle not only against "backward ideas" among workers, but against the officialdom of the unions and other popular mass organizations that are committed to reformist strategies, no matter how blatantly ineffective.

Workers' self-organization and self-activity in the workplace struggles is the starting point for creating the material and ideological conditions for an effective challenge to working class reformism and conservatism. Clearly, militant workplace struggle is not a sufficient condition for the development of radical and revolutionary consciousness among workers. Struggles in working-class communities around housing, social welfare, transport and other issues; and political struggles against racism and war are crucial elements in the political self-transformation of the working class.

Successful workplace struggles, however, are the necessary condition for the development of class consciousness. Without the experience of such struggles, workers will continue to passively accept reformist politics or, worse, embrace reactionary politics.

This does not mean that workers of color, women and other oppressed groups in the working class should "wait" to fight until white and male workers are ready to act. White and male workers, because of the temporary but real advantages they gain in the labor market - preferential access to better jobs - are not likely to initiate struggles against racism, sexism or homophobia in the workplace or anywhere else. Self-organization and self-activity of racially oppressed groups are crucial to the

development of anti-racist struggles and anti-racist consciousness.

However, a mass working-class audience for anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-militarist ideas will most likely be created in the context of mass, class struggles against capital. Today, the main audience for the idea that workers need to stand up to right-wing ideas and practices are the small layer of rank and file activists who are trying to promote solidarity, militancy and democracy in the labor movement.

Only if these activists, with the help of socialists in the labor movement, can succeed in building effective collective fight back will these ideas - the politics of class radicalism - achieve mass resonance.

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NOTES

[1] New York Times' compilation of exit polls for the years 1972-2004 http://www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20041107_px_ELECTORATE.xls

[2] Jonathan Strauss, in "Engels and the theory of the Labor Aristocracy", *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, 25 (January-June 2004) www.desp.org.au/links/bank/issue25/Strauss.htm, presents a useful summary of Engel's writings.

[3] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/jun/x01.htm>

[4] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/pref02.htm>

[5] See C. Post, "The Popular Front: Rethinking the History of the CPUSA," *Against the Current* 63 (July-August 1996) on the Communist Parties' evolution into reformist organizations.

[6] *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso Books, 2002).

[7] "The Labor Aristocracy: The Material Basis for Opportunism in the Labor Movement, Part I: The Theory of the Labor Aristocracy," *Line of March* 11 (May-June 1982) [home.conexus.net.au/benj/LOM.htm]; "Part II: The U.S. Labor Movement Since World War II," *Line of March* 12 (September-October 1982); "Part III: The Polemic Within the Communist Movement," *Line of March* 13/14 (March-April 1983).

[8] Strauss, "Engels and the Labor Aristocracy" 2004; "Monopoly Capitalism and the Bribery of the Labor Aristocracy," *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal* 26 (July-December 2004).

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- [9] J. Browne, M. Franco, J. Negron-Gonzales & S. Williams, *Towards Land, Work & Power* (San Francisco: POWER: United to Fight, 2005), 46.
- [10] Elbaum and Seltzer, "The Labor Aristocracy," Part I, 16-17; Strauss, "Monopoly Capitalism," 49.
- [11] *Capital*, Volume III (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1981), Part Two.
- [12] Elbaum and Seltzer, "The Labor Aristocracy, Part I," 41 (note iv).
- [13] Strauss, "Monopoly Capitalism," 50.
- [14] *Late Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1975), Chapter 3. This is the main economic argument of Strauss, "Monopoly Capitalism," 50.
- [15] Elbaum and Seltzer, "Theory of the Labor Aristocracy, Part I," 41 (note iv).
- [16] Elbaum and Seltzer, "Theory of the Labor Aristocracy, Part I" 41 (note iv). Strauss relies heavily on the work of Ernest Mandel, which does attempt to reconcile notions of "monopoly" with a classical Marxist concept of competition. Elbaum and Seltzer do not cite other Marxist and radical economists as the source of their theory of "monopoly capitalism." However, both arguments bear a close relationship to the theories of Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran, *Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966); and especially the work of David Gordon, Richard Edwards and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers* (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- [17] Elbaum and Seltzer, "The Labor Aristocracy, Part II" presents a fairly detailed discussion of the composition of the "labor aristocracy" in the US since the second world war, which is very similar to Gordon, Edwards and Reich's discussion of the "primary labor market" under "monopoly capitalism" in *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*.
- [18] My arguments against the "labor aristocracy" argument owe much to Tony Cliff, "Economic Roots of Reformism," *Socialist Review* (Old Series) 6,9 (June 1957); Ernest Mandel, "What is the Bureaucracy?" in T. Ali (ed.), *The Stalinist Legacy: Its Impact on 20th Century World Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984); and Sam Friedman, "The Theory of the Labor Aristocracy," *Against the Current* (Old Series) 2,3 (Fall 1983).
- [19] These statistics are drawn from Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (London: Verso, 1997), Part I; and personal correspondence May 15, 2002 and October 23, 2004.
- [20] Mandel, "What is the Bureaucracy?" 19.
- [21] Jane Osburn, "Interindustry Wage Differentials: Patterns and Possible Sources," *Monthly Labor Review* (February 2000), Table I ("Mean Hourly Wages of Selected Occupations in Selected Industries, 1998), 36.
- [22] Chapter 14, Section 5.
- [23] Clearly, US corporations earn above average or "super"-profits on these investments-the result of the combination of low wages and labor intensive techniques common in the global South, rather than the transnationals' "monopolistic" position in the world market.
- [24] Mandel, "What is the Bureaucracy?" 19.
- [25] Some exponents of the labor aristocracy thesis have argued that "unequal exchange"-the ability of firms in the global North to obtain raw materials, components, consumer goods (clothing, electronics, etc.) and foodstuffs from the global South below their value-is the basis of the "imperialist bribe" to the "labor aristocracy" of the advanced capitalist countries. Specifically, they argue that "unequal exchange" lowers the cost of inputs (raw materials, components), elevates profit rates in the North by lowering the cost of inputs (raw materials, components); and reduces the cost of food and consumer goods, increasing the living standard of some workers. (See Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972)
- The question of "unequal exchange" in the capitalist world economy involves a variety of theoretical and technical measurement questions which are beyond the scope of this essay. (See Anwar Shaikh, "Foreign Trade and the Law of Value, Parts I-II," *Science & Society* (Fall 1979 and Spring 1980) Granting the reality of "unequal exchange," the notion that it produces benefits only for a minority of workers in the global North is not tenable. Again, all workers in the global North-from the most poorly to the best paid-would benefit from "unequal exchange." They would benefit from elevated profit rates and the resulting increase in accumulation and demand for all labor-power. Similarly, lower cost consumer goods and food "affects the standard of living not only of a minority 'aristocracy of labor' but the whole of the working class of the industrial countries." (Cliff, "Economic Roots of Reformism," 4)
- [26] Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein and Sylvia Allegretto, *The State of Working America, 2004/2005* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), Chapter 2.
- [27] For instance, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's influential *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), which I reviewed in *Against the Current* 99 (July-August 2002).
- [28] See Kate Bronfenbrenner and Stephanie Luce, "The Changing Nature of Corporate Global Restructuring: The Impact of Production Shifts on Jobs in the US, China, and Around the Globe," Submitted to the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (October 14, 2004) www.uscc.gov/researchpapers/2004/cornell_u_massreport.pdf.
- [29] *Persistent Inequalities: Wage Disparity Under Capitalist Competition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 45.
- [30] *Competition, Monopoly and Differential Profit Rates* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984)
- [31] Semmler, *Competition*, 127.
- [32] Botwinick, *Persistent Inequalities*, 155-170.
- [33] David G. Blanchflower, Andrew J. Oswald and Peter Sanfey, "Wages, Profits and Rent-Sharing," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 111, 1 (February 1996); Kenneth R. Troske, "Evidence on the Employer- Size Wage Premium from Worker-Establishment Data," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 81, 1 (February 1999); Osburn, "Interindustry Wage Differentials;" (2000); Julia I. Lane, Laurie A. Solomon and James R. Speltzer, "Establishment Wage Differentials" <http://http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/20410505.pdf> Urban Institute Working Paper, 2001 all come to similar conclusions on the determinants of profit and wage differentials.
- [34] Our critique of the theory of "monopoly capitalism" is indebted to Steve Zelluck, "On the Theory of the Monopoly Stage of Capitalism," *Against the Current* (Old Series), 1,1, (Fall 1980); Botwinick, *Persistent Inequalities*; Semmler, *Competition*; and Anwar Shaikh, "Marxian Competition versus Perfect Competition: Further Comments on the So-Called Choice of Technique," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 4 (1980).
- [35] Botwinick, *Persistent Inequalities*, 131.
- [36] David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers*, Volumes I and II (London: Macmillan, 1985).
- [37] Chris Harman, *The Lost Revolution, Germany 1918 to 1923* (London: Bookmarks, 1982); Mark Hudson, "Rank-and-File Metalworker Militancy in France and Britain, 1890-1918," *New Politics* 9, 3 (New Series) (Summer 2003) <http://www.wpunj.edu/~20newpol/issue35/Hudson35.htm>
- [38] Mike Davis, "The Barren Marriage of Labor and the Democratic Party" in *Prisoners of the American Dream* (London: Verso Books, 1986), Chapter 2.
- [39] My alternative theory of working class reformism and conservatism is drawn from Mandel, "What is the Bureaucracy?" and Robert Brenner, "The Paradox of Reformism: The American Case," in M. Davis, F. Pfeil, M. Sprinker (eds.) *The Year Left: An American Socialist Yearbook* (London: Verso, 1985); Robert Brenner, "The Problem of Reformism," *Against the Current* (New Series) 43 (March-April 1993).
- [40] Clearly, successful economic and political struggles under capitalism can also encourage the development of a "militant reformist" consciousness among many workers. Some combination of successful self-activity and organization, which allows workers to experience their collective power; and the experience of the limits of struggles that accept capitalist economic and political rule are necessary for the development of revolutionary consciousness among a minority of workers.
- [41] Ernest Mandel, "The Leninist Theory of Organization: Its Relevance for Today" in S. Bloom (ed.), *Revolutionary Marxist and Social Reality in the 20th Century: Collected Essays of Ernest Mandel* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc. 1994), 85.
- [42] The process of bureaucratization of trade unions and working class political parties, and the resulting development of reformism, goes on in all capitalist societies where the labor movement achieves legal recognition and institutional stability. Put simply, reformism is not limited to the working classes of the global North. Thus, it is not surprising that in periods of declining mass struggle, the mass industrial unions and political parties of the Brazilian (CUT and PT) and South African (COSATU) working classes have become bureaucratized and their leaderships embraced reformist-and ultimately neo-liberal-politics.
- [43] Brenner, "The Paradox of Social Democracy," 42.
- [44] C. Post and J. Slaughter, *Lean Production: Why Work Is Worse Than Ever, And What's The Alternative?* (Solidarity Working Paper, 2000) [<http://solidarity.igc.org/LeanProduction.html>]; C. Post, "The Economic Impact of the War and Occupation of Iraq," *ATC* (New Series) 104 (May-June 2003) <http://solidarity.igc.org/index.ATC.html>
- [45] Mandel, *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy* (London: Verso, 1992), 236.
- [46] I want to acknowledge my debt to the seminal essay by Johanna Brenner and Robert Brenner, "Reagan, the Right and the Working Class," *Against the Current* (Old Series) 1, 2 (Winter 1981).
- [47] Brenner and Brenner, "Reagan, the Right and the Working Class, 30.
- [48] B. Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), Part Two.
- [49] Michael Reich's *Racial Inequality: A Political-Economic Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) presents substantial evidence that a divided working class is less capable of defending itself against capital. He finds that those areas in the US that had the greatest racial inequality in wages (an index of working class racial division), also had the lowest average wages (an index of working class weakness in relation to capital).
- [50] C. Post and K.A. Wainer, *Socialist Organization Today* (Solidarity Pamphlet, 1996) <http://solidarity.igc.org/sot.html>.
- [51] *The Rank And File Strategy: Building A Socialist Movement In The US* (Solidarity Working Paper, 2000) <http://solidarity.igc.org/TheRankAndFileStrategy.html>

Debate : Marxism and Religion

Eleven Theses on the Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism

Gilbert Achcar

Given the renewed discussion, we are producing this 1981 document, which stands the test of time. The “theses” were circulated widely and have been translated into many languages. Their success was due to the fact that they gave a Marxist analysis of a phenomenon that was then still relatively new. The current resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism dates from the 1970s, and reached its first crescendo, after years of underground activity, with the Iranian revolution of 1979.

1. The extent and diversity of the forms taken by the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, which has marked the beginning of the last quarter of the twentieth century, preclude any hasty, generalized conjectures about it. It would be totally mistaken to equate the Catholicism of the Polish workers with that of Franco’s reaction, though this should not make us overlook the common features of the agrarian histories of Spain and Poland or the political and ideological content that their respective forms of Catholicism share.

Similarly, elementary analytical caution forbids putting such diverse phenomena as the resurgence of Muslim clerical and/or political movements in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, or Senegal, Zia Ul-Haq’s military dictatorship in Pakistan or Gaddafi’s in Libya, the seizure of power by Iranian Shi’ite clergy or by Afghan guerrillas, etc., all into the same category. Even phenomena that on the surface appear clearly identical, such as the progress made by the same movement, the “Muslim Brotherhood,” in Egypt and Syria, have different underlying political content and functions, determined by their different immediate objectives.

Beneath their agreement on otherworldly matters, beyond their agreement on problems of everyday life, when they do agree on such issues, and notwithstanding their similar, even identical, denominations and organizational forms, Muslim movements remain essentially political movements. They are thus the expression of specific socio-political interests that are very much of this world.



2. There has been no eruption of Islam into politics. Islam and politics have always been inseparable, as Islam is a political religion in the etymological sense of the word. Thus, the demand for the separation of religion and state in Muslim countries is more than . secularist: it is openly anti-religious. This helps explain why none of the major currents of bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalism on Islamic soil, with the exception of Kemalism in Turkey, have called for secularism. What is an elementary democratic task elsewhere-separation of religion and state-is so radical in Muslim countries, especially the Middle East, that even the “dictatorship of the proletariat” will find it a difficult task to complete. It is beyond the scope of other classes. Furthermore, the democratic classes of Muslim societies have on the whole shown no interest, or almost none, in challenging their own religion. In fact Islam has not been perceived in the twentieth century as the ideological cement of an outmoded feudal or semi-feudal class structure in these societies. It has been seen instead as a basic element of national identity jeered at by the foreign Christian (or even atheist) oppressor. It is no accident that Turkey is the only Muslim society not to have been subjected to direct foreign domination in the twentieth century. Mustafa Kemal too was exceptional among his peers. He waged his main battle not against colonialism or imperialism but against the Sultanate, a combination of temporal and spiritual power (the Caliphate). On the other hand Nasser, however radical a bourgeois nationalist, had every interest in identifying with Islam in his main combat against imperialism; all the more so because

this was a cheap way for him to protect his left and right flanks.

3. The following theses do not deal with Islam as one element among others, albeit a fundamental element, in the ideology of nationalist currents. That kind of Islam’s time is up, as with the currents that identify with it. More generally, we shall distinguish between Islam used as one means among others of shaping and asserting a national, or communal, or even sectarian identity, on the one hand, and Islam considered as an end in itself, a total, general objective, a unique, exclusive program, on the other. “The Koran is our constitution,” declared Hassan Al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. The Islam that interests us here is Islam elevated to an absolute principle, to which every demand, struggle and reform is subordinated-the Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood, of the “Jamaat-i-Islami,” of the different ulemas’ associations and of the movement of Iranian ayatollahs whose organized expression is the Islamic Republican Party.

The common denominator of these different movements is Islamic fundamentalism, that is, the wish to return to Islam, the aspiration to an Islamic utopia, which incidentally cannot be limited to a single nation but must encompass all Muslim peoples if not the whole world. In this spirit, Bani-Sadr declared to the Beirut daily An-Nahar in 1979 that “Ayatollah Khomeini is an internationalist; he is opposed to Islamic Stalinists who want to build Islam in one country” (sic!). This “internationalism” is also visible in the way that all these

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movements go beyond the borders of their countries of origin and/or maintain more or less close relations with each other. They all reject nationalism in the narrow sense, and consider nationalist currents—even those that claim to be Islamic—rivals if not adversaries. They oppose foreign oppression or the national enemy in the name of Islam, not in defense of the “nation.” The United States is thus not so much “imperialism” for Khomeini as the “Great Satan”; Saddam Hussein is above all an “atheist,” an “infidel.” For all the movements in question, Israel is not so much a Zionist usurper of Palestinian land as “the Jewish usurper of an Islamic holy land.”

4. However progressive, national and/or democratic the objective significance of certain struggles carried on by various Islamic fundamentalist currents, it cannot mask the fact that their ideology and their program are essentially, by definition, reactionary. What sort of program aims to construct an Islamic state, faithfully modeled on the seventh century of the Christian era, if not a reactionary utopia? What sort of ideology aims to restore a thirteen-century-old order, if not an eminently reactionary ideology? Thus it is wrong and even absurd to define Islamic fundamentalist movements as bourgeois, whatever the extent to which some struggles they wage align them with all or part of their countries’ bourgeoisies, just as wrong as to define them as revolutionary when they happen to come into conflict with these same bourgeoisies.

In terms of the nature of their program and ideology, their social composition, and even the social origins of their founders, Islamic fundamentalist movements are petty bourgeois. They do not hide their hatred of representatives of big capital any more than of representatives of the working class, or their hatred of imperialist countries any more than of “communist” countries. They are hostile to the two poles of industrial society that threaten them: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. They correspond to those layers of the petty bourgeoisie described in the Communist Manifesto:

The lower middle class, the manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. Petty bourgeois Islamic reaction finds its ideologues and leading elements among the “traditional intellectuals” of Muslim societies, ulemas and the like, as well as among the lower echelons of the bourgeoisie’s “organic

intellectuals,” those coming from the petty bourgeoisie and condemned to stay there: teachers and office workers in particular. In a period of ascendancy Islamic fundamentalism recruits widely at universities and other institutions that produce “intellectuals,” where they are still more conditioned by their social origins than by a hypothetical and often doubtful future.

5. In countries where Islamic fundamentalist reaction has been able to become a mass movement and where it now has the wind in its sails, the labor force includes a relatively high proportion of middle classes, according to the Communist Manifesto definition: manufacturers, shopkeepers, artisans and peasants. Nevertheless, any outbreak of Islamic fundamentalism mobilizes not only a larger or smaller layer of these middle classes, but also layers of other classes newly spawned by the middle classes under the impact of capitalist primitive accumulation and impoverishment. Thus parts of the proletariat whose proletarianization is very recent, and above all parts of the sub-proletariat that capitalism has dragged down from their former petty bourgeois level, are particularly receptive to fundamentalist agitation and susceptible to being caught up in it. This is Islamic fundamentalism’s social base, its mass base. But this base is not the natural preserve of religious reaction, the way that the bourgeoisie relates to its own program. Whatever the strength of religious feeling among the masses, even if the religion in question is Islam, there is a qualitative leap from sharing this feeling to seeing religion as an earthly utopia. In order for the opiate of the masses to become an effective stimulant once more in this age of automation, the peoples must truly have no other choice left but to throw themselves on God’s mercy. The least one can say about Islam is that its immediate relevance is not obvious!

In fact, Islamic fundamentalism poses more problems than it solves. Although Islamic law is several centuries younger than Roman law, it was produced by a society considerably more backward than ancient Rome. (The Koran was largely inspired by the Torah, just as the Arabs’ way of life was fairly similar to the Hebrews’.) And besides the problem of updating a thirteen-century-old civil code, there is also the question of completing it. In other words, the most orthodox Muslim fundamentalist is incapable of responding to the problems posed by modern society with exegetical contortions alone, unless the contortions become totally arbitrary and therefore a source of endless disagreements among the exegetes. There are thus as many interpretations of Islam as there

are interpreters. The core of the Islamic religion, which all Muslims agree on, in no way satisfies the pressing material needs of the petty bourgeois, quite apart from whether it can satisfy their spiritual needs. Islamic fundamentalism in itself is in no way the most appropriate program for satisfying the aspirations of the social layers that it appeals to.

6. The social base described above is notable for its political versatility. The quotation from the Communist Manifesto above does not describe a fixed attitude of the middle classes, but only the real content of their fight against the bourgeoisie when there is a fight, when they turn against the bourgeoisie. Before fighting against the bourgeoisie, the middle classes were its allies in the fight against feudalism; before seeking to reverse the course of history they contributed to advancing it.

The middle classes are first and foremost the social base of the democratic revolution and the national struggle. In backward, dependent societies such as Muslim societies the middle classes still play this role as long as the tasks of the national and democratic revolution are still more or less uncompleted and on the agenda. They are the most ardent fans of any bourgeois leadership (and even more of any petty bourgeois leadership) that champions these tasks. The middle classes are the social base par excellence of the Bonapartism of the ascendant bourgeoisie; they are in fact the social base of all bourgeois Bonapartism. So the only time when large sections of the middle classes strike off on their own and seek other paths is when bourgeois or petty bourgeois leaderships that have taken on national and democratic tasks run up against their own limits and lose their credibility.

Of course, as long as capitalism on the rise seems to open up prospects of upward social mobility for the middle classes, as long as their conditions of existence are improving, they do not question the established order. Even when depoliticized or unenthused, they normally play the role of “silent majority” in the bourgeois order. But if ever the capitalist evolution of society weighs on them with all its force—the weight of national and/or international competition, inflation and debt—then the middle classes become a formidable reservoir of opposition to the powers that be. Then they are free of any bourgeois control, and all the more formidable because the violence and rage of the petty bourgeois in distress are unparalleled.

7. Even then the reactionary option is not unavoidable for the petty bourgeoisie, downtrodden though it is by capitalist society and disillusioned with bourgeois and petty

bourgeois democratic-nationalist leaderships. There is always another option, at least in theory. The middle classes are faced with the choice between reaction and revolution. They can join the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie, as the Communist Manifesto foresaw:

If by chance [the middle classes] are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat, they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat.

In the backward and dependent societies that the Communist Manifesto did not take into account, however, the middle classes have absolutely no need to abandon their own viewpoint in order to place themselves under proletarian leadership. Quite the contrary, by taking up the middle classes' aspirations, notably national and democratic tasks, the proletariat can manage to win them over them to its side.

But for the proletariat to win the middle classes' confidence, it must first of all have a credible leadership itself, a leadership that has proved itself politically and practically. If on the other hand a leadership with a majority in the working class has discredited itself on the level of national democratic political struggles (while maintaining its majority position because of its trade union positions or simply the lack of an alternative), if it proves politically flabby in face of the established order, or if even worse it supports the established order, then the middle classes will really have no choice but to lend their ears to petty bourgeois reaction—even if it is as inscrutable as Islamic reaction—and possibly respond to its calls.

8. In all the countries where Islamic fundamentalism has gained considerable ground, particularly in Egypt, Syria, Iran and Pakistan, all the conditions described above exist. In all these countries middle class living standards have manifestly deteriorated over the last few years. Although some of these countries are even oil exporters themselves, the only effect the massive oil price increases have had on most of their middle classes has been unbridled inflation. In addition, bourgeois and petty bourgeois democratic-nationalist leaderships are generally discredited in these countries. In all four countries, democratic-nationalist leaderships have undergone the test of state power.

All of these leaderships had had virtually unanimous middle class support at certain moments in their history as they were trying

to implement their national democratic programs. Some went a long way in this direction, notably in Egypt and countries under Egyptian influence, where Nasser towered over the political landscape. Nationalists were able to stay in power for a long time, or are still in power—in the latter cases because they owe their power to the army. In Iran and Pakistan, where the nationalists formed civilian governments, the army soon swept them away; Mossadegh and Bhutto came to sad ends. In all four countries, in any case, the progress made so far in carrying out the national democratic program, even within the framework and limits of a bourgeois state, ranges from very little to almost none. Even in Iran where the Mossadegh experience was a very short one, the Shah took it on himself (on his US tutors' advice) to bring about with his own pseudo-Bismarckian methods what the combined efforts of Robespierres and Bonapartes accomplished elsewhere. On the other hand, the only noteworthy working class political organizations in the whole region are Stalinist parties.

These, when they amount to anything, have totally discredited themselves with a long history of selling out popular struggles and making deals with the powers that be. So when middle class discontent began to surface these past few years in the four countries mentioned, no working class or bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalist organization was able to capitalize on it. The way was wide open for petty bourgeois Islamic fundamentalist reaction.

By contrast, in Algeria, Libya and Iraq, where the enlightened despotism of a bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalist bureaucracy allowed broad middle class layers to benefit from the oil manna, Islamic fundamentalism could be contained.

9. While Islamic fundamentalism has made notable gains in Egypt and Syria as well as Iran and Pakistan, the forms and extent of its gains differ greatly from one country to another, as do its political content and function. In Syria, the fundamentalist movement is the main opposition to the declining Bonapartism of the Ba'athist bourgeois bureaucracy, and engaged in a life-and-death struggle against it. Syrian fundamentalists have profited from the fact that the Ba'athist ruling elite belongs to a minority faith (Alawi).

The outrageously, purely reactionary nature of the Syrian fundamentalist movement's program reduces its possibilities of seizing power on its own to almost nothing. It cannot on its own, on the basis of such a program, mobilize the forces needed to overthrow the

Ba'athist dictatorship. Still less can it run, alone, a country whose economic and political problems are as thorny as Syria's. The Syrian fundamentalist movement is thus condemned to co-operate with the Syrian propertied classes (bourgeois and landowners). It is not, and cannot be, any more than their spearhead. In Egypt too, for the same reasons, the possibility of an independent seizure of power by the fundamentalist movement is very limited, all the more so because it has less influence there than in Syria. In both these countries a long struggle against progressive regimes has hardened the fundamentalist movement, thus highlighting its reactionary character. Moreover, the very scope of Egypt's economic problems makes the fundamentalists' bid for power even less credible.

The Egyptian bourgeoisie is perfectly aware of this fact and is thus very obliging toward the fundamentalist movement. The fundamentalists constitute in its eyes an ideal "fifth column" inside the mass movement—a particularly effective "antibody" to the left. That is why it is not at all worried about Egyptian fundamentalist movement's trying to outbid the left on the left's two favorite issues: the national question and the social question; any gains made by Islamic reaction on these two issues mean equivalent losses for the left. The Egyptian bourgeoisie's attitude toward the fundamentalist movement resembles that of any bourgeoisie faced with a deep social crisis toward the far right and fascism. Pakistan is different from Egypt in that the Pakistani fundamentalist movement has consolidated itself mainly under reactionary regimes. It has therefore been able to reclaim some elements of the national democratic program for long periods of time and thus form a credible opposition to the established order. But during these same long periods, bourgeois democratic-nationalist tendencies were themselves in opposition, and more credible and thus more influential than the fundamentalists were.

Only when Bhutto, skipping the stages of a Nasser-type evolution in an impressive historical shortcut, rapidly alienated the masses by getting entangled in his own contradictions was the way opened up for the extreme right dominated by the fundamentalist movement (given that the Pakistani far left was insignificant). Bhutto's bankruptcy was so glaring that the fundamentalists managed to mobilize a huge mass movement against him.

The army's coup d'état was meant to forestall the "anarchy" that could have resulted had this mobilization led to Bhutto's overthrow (as in Iran!). To win the fundamentalists'

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sympathy, Zia Ul-Haq's reactionary bourgeois military dictatorship took over their projects for Islamic reforms and used them to its own advantage. Today it is counting on the fundamentalist movement to neutralize any "progressive" opposition to its regime, including the late Bhutto's party. In the three cases analyzed above, the fundamentalist movement has proved itself to be nothing but an auxiliary for the reactionary bourgeoisie. But Iran is different. 10. In Iran the fundamentalist movement, represented mainly by the fundamentalists among the Shi'ite clergy, was forged in a long and bitter struggle against the Shah's eminently reactionary imperialist-backed regime. The sad historical bankruptcy of Iranian bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism is too well known to describe here. Because of this exceptional combination of historical circumstances, the Iranian fundamentalist movement managed to become the sole spearhead of the two immediate tasks of the national democratic revolution in Iran: overthrowing the Shah and severing the ties with US imperialism.

This situation was all the more possible because the two tasks in question were in perfect harmony with the generally reactionary program of Islamic fundamentalism. So as the social crisis matured in Iran to the point of creating the preconditions for a revolutionary overthrow of the Shah, as the middle classes' resentment of him reached fever pitch, the fundamentalist movement personified by Khomeini managed to harness the immense power of the embattled middle classes and sub-proletariat and deal the regime a series of body blows.

The fundamentalists were almost suicidal in their determination to remain unarmed, a feat that only a mystical movement is capable of. The Iranian fundamentalist movement managed to carry out the first stage of a national democratic revolution in Iran. But its fundamentalist character very quickly got the upper hand. In a sense, the Iranian revolution is a permanent revolution in reverse. Starting with the national democratic revolution, it could under proletarian leadership have "grown over" into a socialist transformation. Its fundamentalist petty bourgeois leadership prevented that, pushing it on the contrary in the direction of a reactionary regression. The February 1979 revolution was astonishingly similar to February 1917—two identical points of departure ushering in diametrically opposite processes. While October 1917 enabled the Russian democratic revolution to go to its logical conclusion, in Iran the fundamentalist leadership betrayed the revolution's democratic content.

The Russian Bolsheviks replaced the Constituent Assembly, after having struggled to have it elected, with the eminently democratic power of the soviets; the ayatollahs replaced the Constituent Assembly, which they too had placed at the head of their demands but never allowed to see the light of day, with a reactionary caricature: the Muslim "Assembly of Experts." The fate of this demand common to the two revolutions eloquently sums up the counterposed natures of the leaderships, and thus the opposite directions they took.

As for the democratic forms of organization that arose in the course of the Iranian February, the Islamic leadership co-opted them. The shoras were a far cry from the soviets! On the national question, while the Bolsheviks' proletarian internationalism made possible the emancipation of the Russian empire's oppressed nationalities, the ayatollahs' Islamic "internationalism" turned out to be a pious pretext for bloody repression of the Persian empire's oppressed nationalities. The fate of women in the two revolutions is just as well known. The fundamentalist Iranian leadership only remained faithful to the national democratic program on one point: the struggle against US imperialism. But it stayed true to this struggle in its own peculiar way. Describing the enemy not as imperialism but as the "West" if not the "Great Satan," Khomeini called for throwing out the baby with the bathwater, or rather the baby before the bathwater. He attributed all the political and social gains of the bourgeois revolution, including democracy and even Marxism, which he considered (correctly) a product of (supposedly "Western") industrial civilization, to the hated "West."

He called on Iranians to rid their society of these plagues, while neglecting the main links between Iran and imperialism: the economic links. The US embassy affair, the way it was managed, gained Iran nothing. In the final analysis it proved very expensive, profitable in the last analysis to US banks. However the fundamentalist dictatorship evolves in Iran from now on, it has already proved to be a major obstacle to the development of the Iranian revolution.

Moreover, its evolution is very problematic. Beyond the exceptional combination of circumstances described above, there is a fundamental difference between Iran and the three other countries mentioned earlier: Iran can afford the "luxury" of an experiment with an autonomous, petty bourgeois, fundamentalist regime. Its oil wealth is the guarantee of a positive balance of payments and budget. But at what price and for how long? The economic balance sheet of two

years of fundamentalism in power is already very negative compared with earlier years. On the other hand, the inconsistency of the fundamentalist "program" and the great variety of social layers who identify with it and interpret it according to their own lights are manifest in a plurality of rival and antagonistic centers of powers. Only Khomeini's authority has made it possible so far for them to keep up a façade of unity. 11. Islamic fundamentalism is one of the most dangerous enemies of the revolutionary proletariat. It is absolutely and under all circumstances necessary to fight against its "reactionary and medieval influence," as the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question" adopted at the Second Congress of the Communist International said many years ago. Even in cases such as Iran, where the fundamentalist movement takes on national democratic tasks for a time, the duty of revolutionary socialists is to fight intransigently against the spell it casts on the struggling masses.

If not, if they do not free themselves in time, the masses will surely pay the price. While striking together at the common enemy, revolutionary socialists must warn working people against any attempt to divert their struggle in a reactionary direction. Any failure in these elementary tasks is not only a fundamental weakness, but can also lead to opportunist wrong turns. On the other hand, even in cases where Islamic fundamentalism takes purely reactionary forms, revolutionary socialists must use tactical caution in their fight against it. In particular they must avoid falling into the fundamentalists' trap of fighting about religious issues. They should stick firmly to the national, democratic, and social issues. They must not lose sight of the fact that a part, often a big part, of the masses under Islamic fundamentalist influence can and must be pulled out of its orbit and won to the workers' cause.

At the same time revolutionary socialists must nevertheless declare themselves unequivocally for a secular society, which is a basic element of the democratic program. They can play down their atheism, but never their secularism, unless they wish to replace Marx outright with Mohammed!

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Debate: Revolutionary Strategy

Twelve comments plus one more, to continue the debate with John Holloway

Daniel Bensaïd

1. 'Spit on history', John Holloway answers us. Why not? But on which history? For him apparently there is only one history, a one-way history, the history of oppression that even contaminates the struggle of the oppressed. As if history and memory were not themselves battlefields. As if a history of the oppressed - often an oral history (history of the exploited, women's history, gay history, the history of colonised peoples) - does not also exist, just as we can conceive of a theatre of the oppressed or a politics of the oppressed.

2. For Holloway [1] history is 'the great excuse for not thinking'. Does he mean that it is impossible to think historically? And then what do we mean by 'thinking'? - an old question that, always getting in the way.

3. Spit 'also on the concept of Stalinism', which absolves us of the 'need to blame ourselves' and constitutes a convenient 'fig-leaf, protecting our innocence'. No one today imagines that the revolution of the 1920s, luminous and immaculate, can be counterposed to the dark 1930s on which we can dump every sin. No one has emerged unscathed from the 'century of extremes'. Everyone needs to methodically examine his or her conscience, including us. But is this sufficient reason to erase the discontinuities that Michel Foucault was so fond of?

To establish a strict genealogical continuity between the revolutionary event and the bureaucratic counter-revolution? To pronounce an evenly balanced verdict of 'guilty' on both victors and vanquished, both the executioners and their victims? This is not a moral question but rather a political one. It determines whether it is possible to 'continue' or 'begin anew'.

The darkness of non-history, in which all cats are grey (without for all that catching the tiniest mouse) is the preferred landscape for neoliberals and repentant Stalinists to hold their reunions, hurriedly wiping out the traces of their past without thinking about this past that makes it so hard for them to pass.

4. 'Spit on history because there is nothing so reactionary as the cult of the past.' So be it. But who is talking about a cult? Does tradition weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living? Definitely. But what tradition? Where does this singular tradition come from, in the singular, in which so many contrary traditions vanish away? Walter Benjamin by contrast, whom Holloway cites so eagerly (appositely or not), demands that we rescue tradition from the conformism that always threatens it. This distinction is essential.

5. 'Break history. Du passé faisons table rase.' The song rings out proudly. But the politics of the blank page (which Chairman Mao was so fond of) and the blank slate evokes some rather disquieting precedents. Its most consistent advocate was none other than a certain Pol Pot. Gilles Deleuze speaks more wisely when he says, 'We always begin in the middle.' ("we always restart from the middle")?

6. 'Spit on history'? Nietzsche himself, certainly the most virulent critic of historical reason and the myth of progress, was subtler. He did admittedly recommend learning to forget in order to be able to act. He took exception to any history that would be 'a kind of conclusion to living and a final reckoning for humanity'. But while he implacably denounced 'monumental history', 'antiquarian history', 'excess of historical culture' and the 'supersaturation of an age in history', and history as such as 'a disguised



John Holloway

theology', he maintained nonetheless that 'living requires the services of history': 'To be sure, we need history. But we need it in a manner different from the way in which the spoiled idler in the garden of knowledge uses it ... for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action....' Nietzsche thus defended the necessity of a 'critical history'. At least he claimed to counter 'the effects of history' not with a politics of emancipation but rather with an aesthetic: the 'powers of art', or the "'super-historical" ... powers which divert the gaze from what is developing back ... to art and religion'. Myth against history?

7. 'We live in a world of Monsters of our own creation'. While commodities, money, capital and the state are fetishes, they are not 'mere illusions, they are real illusions'. Exactly. What follows from this, in practical terms? That abolishing these illusions requires abolishing the social relations that make them necessary and fabricate them? Or, as Holloway suggests, that we must be content with a fetish strike: 'Capital exists because we create it.... If we do not create it tomorrow, it will cease to exist'?

In the aftermath of 1968 there were Maoists who claimed that 'driving out the cop' in our

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minds would be enough to get rid of the real cops too. Yet the real cops are still with us (more than ever), and the tyranny of the ego is still secure even in the best regulated minds. So would refusing to create capital suffice to lift its spells? Magical behaviour (conjuring away in our imaginations an imaginary despot) would only bring about a liberation just as imaginary. Abolishing the conditions of fetishism in reality means overthrowing the despotism of the market and the power of private property and breaking the state that ensures the conditions of social reproduction.

8. No doubt this is all an old story. But where are the new stories? The new must always be made (at least in part) with the bricks of the old. Holloway defines the revolution as 'the breaking of tradition, the discarding of history..., the smashing of the clock and the concentration of time into a moment of unbearable intensity.' Here he is recycling the imagery that Benjamin used in describing the rebels in 1830 who fired on the faces of public clocks. The symbolic destruction of the image of time still confuses the fetish of temporality with the social relationship on which it rests: the 'wretched' measurement of abstract labour time.

9. Holloway blots out with his spit the criticisms that Atilio Boron, Alex Callinicos, Guillermo Almeyra and I have made of his work. He reproaches us with envisaging history as 'something unproblematic', instead of opening it up to theoretical questions. This is a gratuitous accusation, backed up neither with arguments nor with serious evidence. All of us have on the contrary devoted much of our work to interrogating, revising, deconstructing and reconstructing our historical worldview. History is like power; you cannot ignore it. You can refuse to take power, but then it will take you. You can throw history out the door,

but it will kick over the traces and come back in through the window.

10. There is 'something fundamentally wrong with the power-centred concept of revolution'. But what? Foucault passed this way a long time ago. More than 25 years ago I wrote a book entitled *La Révolution et le Pouvoir* ('The Revolution and Power'), around the idea that the state can be broken but the 'relations of power' must still be undone (or deconstructed). This is not a new issue. It reached us by way of libertarian traditions and May '68, among other ways. Why, if not out of ignorance, does Holloway make a show of radically innovating (still making a clean sweep) instead of situating himself in discussions that have - a (long) history!

11. 'The accumulation of struggle is an incremental view of revolution', says Holloway. It is a positive movement, whereas the anti-capitalist movement 'must be a negative movement'. Criticising illusions of progress, the stockbroking spirit, Penelope's weaving their electoral skeins (stitch by stitch, link by link), interest piled on interest, and the ineluctable march of history as it triumphs over regrettable skids, detours and delays - all this criticism is itself an old tradition (represented in France by Georges Sorel and Charles Péguy, who had so much influence on Benjamin).

But just the same, is the absolute interruption of a scream without a past or a sequel enough to outweigh the continuities of historical time? Benjamin takes exception to the homogenous, empty time of the mechanics of progress, and with it to the notion of an evanescent present, a simple, evanescent hyphen, absolutely determined by the past and irresistibly aspiring to a predestined future. In Benjamin's work by contrast the present becomes the central category of a

strategic temporality: each present is thus invested with a feeble messianic power of reshuffling the cards of past and future, giving the vanquished of yesterday and forever their chance, and rescuing tradition from conformism. Yet for all that this present is not detached from historical time. As in Blanqui's work it maintains relations with past events, not relations of causality, but rather relations of astral attraction and constellation. It is in this sense that, to use Benjamin's definitive formulation, from now on politics trumps history.

12. 'Using History as a pretext', Holloway says, we want to 'pour new struggles into old methods': 'Let the new forms of struggle flourish.' Just because we are constantly welcoming a portion of newness, history (!) exists rather than some divine or mercantile eternity. But the historical dialectic of old and new is subtler than any binary or Manichean opposition between old and new, including methodologically. Yes, let the new flourish; do not give in to routine and habit; stay open to surprise and astonishment. This is all useful advice. But how, by what standard, can we evaluate the new if we lose all memory of the old? Novelty, like antiquity, is always a relative notion.

Screaming and spitting do not amount to thinking. Still less to doing politics.

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NOTES

[1] This article replies to John Holloway's "Drive your cart and plough over the bones of the dead"

The persistence of revolution

The Mole and the Locomotive

Daniel Bensaïd

Translation of Daniel Bensaïd's introduction to his book: "Résistances. Essai de taupologie générale", Fayard, Paris 2001.

'Well said, old mole. Canst work l'th'earth so fast? A worthy pioner.' (Shakespeare, Hamlet I:5).

Our old friend is short-sighted. He is a haemophiliac as well. Doubly infirm and doubly fragile. And yet, patiently, obstinately, from tunnel to passage, he cheerfully continues his mole's progress towards his next invasion.

The nineteenth century experienced history as an arrow pointing in the direction of progress. The Destiny of the ancients and divine Providence bowed down before the prosaic activity of a modern human species, which produced and reproduced the conditions of its own improbable existence.

This sharpened sense of historical development was born of a long, slow movement of secularisation. Heavenly miracles were lost among earthly contingencies. Rather than illuminated by the past, the future now offered justification for the present. Events no longer seemed miraculous. Where before they had been sacred, now they were profane.

The railway, the steamship, the telegraph all contributed to a feeling that history was speeding up and that distances were getting shorter, as if humanity had built up enough speed to break free. It was the era of revolutions.

There was the revolution in transport and travel: in scarcely a quarter of a century, between 1850 and 1875, the great railway companies, the Reuter's agency and the Cook agency all emerged. The rotary press multiplied circulation figures. From now on it would be possible to travel around the world in eighty days. That hero of modernity, the explorer, heralded the air-conditioned exoticism of the tour operators.

There was the revolution in materials: with the triumph of the railway came the reign of coal, of glass and of steel, of crystal palaces and metallic cathedrals. High-speed transport, architectural transformations, the

engineering of public health, altered the face of the city and transformed its relation to the suburbs.

There was a revolution in knowledge: the theory of evolution and developments in geology changed the place of man in natural history. The first murmurings of ecology explored the subtle metabolic interaction between society and its environment. Thermodynamics opened up new perspectives in energy control. The blossoming of statistics furnished calculating reason with an instrument for quantification and measurement.

There was a revolution in production: the "age of capital" saw the furious circulation of investments and commodities, their accelerated turnover, the great universal exhibitions, mass production, and the beginnings of mass consumption with the opening of the first department stores.

It was also a time of frenzy on the stock exchange, of speculation in real estate, of fortunes quickly made and equally quickly lost, of scandals, of affairs, of crashing bankruptcies, the time of the Pereires, the Saccards, the Rothschilds and the Boucicauts. And it was the era of empires and colonial divisions, when armies carved up territories and continents.

There was a revolution in working practices and social relations: mechanised industry usurped the workshop. The modern proletariat of the factories and the cities took over from the artisan class of tailors, joiners, cobblers, weavers. From 1851 to 1873, this growth in capitalist globalisation gave birth



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to a new workers' movement, which gained notoriety in 1864 with the creation of the International Working Men's Association.

This prodigious quarter of a century also saw the industrialisation of the arms trade, foreshadowing the "slaughter industry" and total war. It was the era of the social crime, "which does not seem like murder, because there is no murderer to be seen, because the victim's death appears natural, but which is no less a murder." [1] Between Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle, the appearance of detective fiction, the development of rational modes of enquiry, and the scientific refinement of detection methods sum up the mindset of this period with its urban "mysteries": the loot passes from one hand to another, and all trace of the guilty party is lost in the anonymity of the crowd.

The railway was the perfect symbol and emblem of this rush towards technology and profit. Launched into a conquest of the future along the tracks of progress, these revolutions appeared to be the roaring locomotives of history!

The last quarter of the twentieth century offers a number of analogies with the third quarter of the nineteenth century, albeit on a completely different scale. Telecommunications, satellites and the internet are the contemporary equivalents of the telegraph and the railway. New sources of energy, biotechnologies and transformations in working practices are revolutionising production in their turn. Industrial

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manufacturing techniques increasingly make consumption a mass phenomenon. The development of credit and of mass marketing lubricates the circulation of capital. The result is a new gold rush (in the field of computers), a fusion of the upper echelons of the state with the financial elites, and relentless speculation with all its attendant Mafia scandals and spectacular bankruptcies.

The new era of capitalist globalisation is seeing the commodification of the world and a generalised fetishism. The time has come for a seismic overturning of national and international boundaries, for new forces of imperial domination which are armed right up to the stars. Yet the dream of this twilight era has already ceased to be one of infinite progress and great historical promises. Condemned to go round in circles on the wheel of fortune, our social imagination withdraws from history and, from Kubrick to Spielberg, escapes into space. The weight of defeats and disasters reduces every event to a dusty powder of minor news items, of sound bites which are skipped over just as soon as they are received, of ephemeral fashions and of faddish anecdotes.

This world in decline, prey to the insoluble desolation of a faithless religiosity, of a commercialised spirituality, of an individualism without individuality, prey to the standardisation of differences and to the formatting of opinions, no longer enjoys either "magnificent sunrises" or triumphant dawns. It's as if the catastrophes and disappointments of the past century have exhausted all sense of history and destroyed any experience of the event, leaving only the mirages of a pulverised present.

This eclipse of the future imperils tradition, which is now seized by the conformism of remembrance commemorations. The past, notes Paul Ricoeur in *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, is no longer recounted so as to set us a task, but rather so as to institute a "piety of memory," a devout remembrance and a conventional notion of right-thinking. [2] This fetishism of memory claims to steer away from collective amnesia an era condemned to the snapshots of an eternal present.

Detached from any creative perspective, critical recollection turns to tired-out ritual. It loses the "unfailing consciousness of everything which has not come to pass." [3]

The postmodern labyrinth is thus unaware of "the dark crossroads" where "the dead return, bringing new announcements." History, which is no longer "pushed towards the status of legend," no longer appears to be "illuminated by an internal light," contained "in the wealth of witnesses who look forward to the Revolution and the Apocalypse." [4] It crumbles into a dust of images or into the scattered pieces of a puzzle which no longer fits together.

The train of progress has been derailed. In the saga of the railway, sinister cattle trucks have eclipsed the iron horse. Already for Walter Benjamin, revolution was no longer comparable to a race won by an invincible machine, but rather to an alarm signal, fired so as to interrupt its mad race towards catastrophe.

That said, just as the reed outlives the oak, so the mole prevails over the locomotive. Though he looks tired, our old friend is still digging away. The eclipse of the event has not put an end to the hidden work of resistance which discreetly, when everything seems asleep, prepares the way for new rebellions. Just as the Victorian era's "growth without development" gave rise to the First International, just as the muted social war exploded in the uprising of the Communards, so too are new contradictions brewing in the great transformations of the present time.

However limited they might seem, the marginal conspiracies and plots active at any given moment are also fermenting the great rages of days to come. They herald new outpourings. They are the place of that "hard-fought advance" Ernst Bloch speaks of, "a peregrination, a ramble, full of tragic disturbances, seething, blistered with fissures, explosions, isolated engagements." [5] It is a stubborn advance made up of irreconcilable resistances, well-directed ramblings along tunnels which seem to lead nowhere and yet which open up into daylight, into an astonishing, blinding light.

Thus the underground heresies of the Flagellants, the Dolcinians and other Beguines paved the way for the likes of Thomas Münzer (1490-1525) to appear with his "apocalyptic propaganda calling for action," before his execution sealed the lasting alliance between the reformed priest and the country squire. After the egalitarian revolt of the Levellers, the great fear of the

propertied classes cemented the puritan holy alliance between the bourgeoisie and aristocracy of England. After the creative upheaval of the French Revolution came Thermidor's period of restoration. After the great hope of the October Revolution followed the time of bureaucratic reaction, with all its trials and purges, its falsifications and forgeries, its disconcerting lies.

This recurrence of Thermidor has always bolted the door of possibility whenever it has been opened just a fraction. However, its "dull peace with the world" has never quite made its way to the obstinate mole, who is forever born anew from his own failures. It took no more than thirty years for the flames of 1830 or 1848 to rekindle the embers kept glowing by various hidden groups. It took only a few years for Jacobin radicalism to resurface, laden with new concerns, with the Luddites, and then with the Chartist movement of the English working class. [6] Less than twenty years after the bloody suppression of the Commune and the exile of its survivors, the socialist movement was already being born again, as if a timeless message had spread from generation to generation down a long line of conspiratorial whispers.

Whether they be failed or betrayed, revolutions are not easily wiped from the memory of the oppressed. They are prolonged within latent forms of dissidence, spectral presences, invasive absences, in the molecular constitution of a plebeian public space, with its networks and passwords, its nocturnal assignations and its thundering explosions. "One might imagine," warned an astute observer after the collapse of Chartism, "that all is peaceful, that all is motionless; but it is when all is calm that the seed comes up, that republicans and socialists advance their ideas in people's minds." [7]

When resignation and melancholy follow the ecstasy of the event, as when love's excitement dulls under the force of habit, it becomes absolutely essential "not to adjust yourself to the moments of fatigue." We should never underestimate the power, not of that daily fatigue which leads to the sleep of the just, but of the great historical weariness at having spent too long "rubbing history against the grain." Such was the weariness of Moses when he stopped on the threshold of Canaan to "sleep the sleep of the earth." The weariness of Saint-Just, walled up in the

silence of his last night alive. Or the weariness of Blanqui, flirting with madness in his dungeon at Taureau.

Such too was the heavy fatigue which fell, in August 1917, upon the shoulders of the young Peruvian publicist José Carlos Mariategui: “We wake up ill from monotony and ennui. And we experience the immense desolation of not hearing the echo of the least event that might liven up our minds and make our typewriters rattle. Languor slips into things and into souls. Nothing remains but yawning, despondency and weariness. We are living through a time of clandestine murmurings and furtive jokes.” [8] A few months later, this avid chronicler of resurrectional events came to find them at first hand in the old world of Europe, then in the throes of war and revolutions.

In reactionary times, obstinate progress becomes “a long, slow movement, itself patient, of impatience,” a slow, intractable impatience, stubbornly at odds with the order that then reigned in Berlin, and that was soon to swoop down upon Barcelona, Djakarta or Santiago: “Order reigns in Berlin, proclaim the triumphal bourgeois press, those officers of the victorious troops, in whose honour Berlin’s petty bourgeoisie waves its handkerchiefs and shouts hurrah. Who here is not reminded of the hounds of order in Paris, and of the bourgeoisie’s bacchanalian feast on the corpses of the Communards? ‘Order reigns in Warsaw! Order reigns in Paris! Order reigns in Berlin!’ So it is that the proclamations made by the guardians of order spread from one centre to another of the global historic struggle.” [9]



Rosa Luxemburg

Then there begins the time, not for a passing reduction of speed, but for “inevitable revolutionary slowness,” for maturation and ripening, for an urgent patience, which is the opposite of fatigue and habit: the effort to persevere and continue without growing accustomed or getting used to things, without settling into habit or routine, by continually astonishing oneself, in pursuit of “this desirable unknown” [10] which always slips away.

“At what moment in time could truth return to life? And why should it return to life?,” wondered Benjamin Fondane in the very heart of darkness. [11] When? Nobody knows. The only certainty is that truth remains “in the rift between the real and the legal.”

For whom? There are no designated heirs, no natural descendents, just a legacy in search of authors, waiting for those who will be able to carry it further. This legacy is promised to those who, as E. P. Thompson puts it, will manage to save the vanquished from “the enormous condescension of posterity.” For “heritage is not a possession, something valuable that you receive and then put in the bank.” It is “an active, selective affirmation, which can sometimes be reanimated and reaffirmed, more often by illegitimate heirs than by legitimate ones.”

The event is “always on the move,” but “there must be some days of thunder and lightning” if the vicious circle of fetishism and domination is to be broken. The morning after a defeat can easily lead to an overwhelming feeling that things must forever begin again from scratch, or that everything is suspended in an “eternalised present.” When the universe seems to repeat itself without end, to keep on marking time, nevertheless the “chapter of changes” remains open to hope. Even when we are on the point of believing that nothing more is possible, even when we despair of escaping from the relentless order of things, we never cease to set the possibility of what might be against the poverty of what actually is. For “nobody can easily accept the shame of no longer wanting to be free.” [12]

After twenty years of liberal counter-reform and restoration, the market-based order now seems inescapable. The eternal present no longer appears to have any future, and absolute capitalism no longer any outside.

We are confined to the prosaic management of a fatalistic order, reduced to an infinite fragmentation of identities and communities, condemned to renounce all programmes and plans. An insidious rhetoric of resignation is used left, right and centre to justify spectacular U-turns and shameful defections, regrets and repentances [13]

And yet! A radical critique of the existing order braces itself against the tide, inspired by new ways of thinking resistance and events. In the vicious spiral of defeats, those engaged in defensive resistance sometimes harbour doubts about the counter-attack which is so long in coming; the hope of a liberating event then falls away from everyday acts of resistance, retreats from the profane to the sacred, and ossifies in the expectation of an improbable miracle. When the present drifts without past or future, and when “the spirit withdraws from a given era, it leaves a collective frenzy and a spiritually charged madness in the world.” [14]

When it loses the thread of earthly resistance against the order of things, the desire to change the world risks turning into an act of faith and the will of the heavens. Then comes the tedious procession of smooth-talking potion sellers and charlatans, fire-eaters and tooth-pullers, pickpockets and cut-throats, relic-sellers and fortune-tellers, New Age visionaries and half-believers.

This is what happened after 1848, when the quarante-huitards of A Sentimental Education turned to commerce or looked to their careers. This is what happened after 1905, when disappointed militants became “seekers after God.” This is what happened after May 1968, when certain faint-hearted prophets took it into their heads to play at angels, having played too much at monsters. In such situations, religious revivals and kitsch mythology are supposed to fill the gap left by the disappointment of great hopes.

Against renunciation and its endless justifications, those involved in the politics of resistance and events never give up looking for the reasons behind each loss of reason. But the disjunction of a fidelity to events with no historical determination from a resistance with no horizon of expectation is doubly burdened with impotence.

In a sense, resistance can take on an infinite variety of forms, from a concrete critique of

The persistence of revoultion

existing reality to an abstract utopia with no historical roots, from an active messianism to a contemplative expectation of a Messiah who never comes, from an ethical politics to a depoliticised ethics, from prophecies seeking to avert danger to predictions claiming to penetrate the secrets of the future.

As for events whose political conditions seem evasive and compromised, it is all too tempting to treat them as moments of pure contingency with no relation to necessity, or as the miraculous invasion of repressed possibilities.

Thermidorian times, as everyone knows, see a hardening of hearts and a weakening of stomachs. In such circumstances, many people find nothing to oppose to the assumption that everything is likely to turn out for the worst, other than their willingness to settle for the lesser of the evils on offer; when this happens, the “flabby fiends” [15] congratulate each other, share a wink and pat each other on the back. Then the outgoing Tartuffe, “the old Tartuffe, the classical Tartuffe, the clerical Tartuffe,” takes the “second Tartuffe, the Tartuffe of the modern world, the second-hand Tartuffe, the humanitarian Tartuffe, at any rate the other Tartuffe” [16] by the hand. This alliance of “two Tartuffe cousins” can last for a very long time, with “the one carrying the other, one fighting the other, one supporting the other, one feeding the other.”

The veneration of victors and victories goes hand in hand with compassion towards the victims, so long as the latter stick to their role as suffering victims, so long as they are not seduced by the idea of becoming actors in their own version of history.

However, even in the worst droughts and most arid places there is always a stream - perhaps barely a trickle - which heralds surprising resurgences. Again, we must always distinguish between the rebellious messianism which will not give in, and the humiliated millennialism which looks instead towards the great beyond. We must always distinguish between the vanquished and the broken, between “victorious defeats” and unalleviated collapse. We must avoid confusing the consolations of utopia with forms of resistance that perpetuate an “illegal tradition” and pass on a “secret conviction.”

There are always new beginnings, moments of revival or renewal. In the dark times of change and transition, worldly and spiritual ambitions, reasons and passions, combine to form an explosive mixture. Attempts to safeguard the old are mixed up with the first stammerings of the new. Even in the most sombre moments, the tradition on the rise is never far behind the tradition in decline. There is never any end to the secret composition of the uninterrupted poem of “probable impossibilities.”

This obstinate hope is not to be confused with the smug confidence of the believer, or with the “sad passion” driven out by Spinoza. On the contrary, it endures as the virtue of “surmounted despair.” For “to be ready to place hope in whatever does not deceive,” you must first have despaired of your own illusions. Disillusioned, disabused, hope then becomes “the essential and diametrical opposite of habit and softening.” Such hope is obliged constantly to “break with habit,” constantly to dismantle “the mechanisms of habit,” and to launch new beginnings everywhere, “just as habit everywhere introduces endings and deaths.” [17]

To break with habit is to retain the ability to astonish yourself. It is to allow yourself to be surprised.

These untimely invasions, during which the contingency of events cuts a path through insufficient yet necessary historical conditions, make a breach in the unchanging order of structures and of things.

Crisis? What crisis is there today? There is a historical crisis, a crisis in civilisation, a stretched and prolonged crisis which drags on and on. Our ill-fitting world is bursting at the seams. As H.G. Wells predicted, the rift between our culture and our inventions has not stopped growing, opening up at the very heart of technology and knowledge a disturbing gap between fragmented rationalities and a global irrationality, between political reason and technical madness.

Does this crisis contain the seeds of a new civilisation? It is just as pregnant with unseen barbarities. Which will prevail? Barbarity has taken the lead by a good few lengths. It is becoming more difficult than ever to separate destruction and construction, the death throes of the old and the birth pangs of the new, “for

barbarity has never before had such powerful means at its disposal to exploit the disappointments and hopes of a humanity which has doubts about itself and about its future.” [18] We fumble our way through this unsettled twilight, somewhere between dusk and dawn.

Is it a simple crisis of development? Or indeed, rather than a sort of discontent within civilisation, is it a sorrow that gives rise to “myths which make the earth shake with their enormous feet”? If a new civilisation is to prevail, the old one must not be entirely lost, abandoned or scorned. Not only must it be defended, but it must also be ceaselessly reinvented.

The stubborn old mole will survive the dashing locomotive. His furry, round form prevails over the metallic coldness of the machine, his diligent good nature over the rhythmic clanking of the wheels, his patient smile over the sniggering steel. He comes and goes, between tunnels and craters, between burrows and breakouts, between the darkness of the underground and the light of the sun, between politics and history. He makes his hole. He erodes and he undermines. He prepares the coming crisis.

The mole is a profane Messiah.

The Messiah is a mole, short-sighted and obstinate.

The crisis is a molehill which suddenly opens out.

* * * * *

“People turn to soothsayers when they no longer have prophets” (Chateaubriand).

François Furet concludes *The Passing of an Illusion* with a melancholy verdict. “The democratic individual, living at the end of the twentieth century, can only watch as the divinely sanctioned order of history trembles to the core.” To a vague anticipation of danger is added “the scandal of a closed future,” and “we find ourselves condemned to live in the world in which we live.” [19] Capital seems to have become the permanent horizon for the rest of time.

There will no more afterwards, no more elsewhere.

Death of the event.

End of story.

End of history.

Unhappily ever after.

But in fact there is always conflict and contradiction, there is always discontent in the midst of civilisation and crisis in the midst of culture. There are always those refuse servitude and resist injustice.

From Seattle to Nice, from Millau to Porto Alegre, from Bangkok to Prague, from the organisation of the unemployed to the mobilisation of women, a strange geopolitics is taking shape, and we don't yet which events will follow in its wake.

The old mole burrows on.

Hegel draws our attention to that "silent and secret" revolution which always precedes the development of a new way of thinking. Through the unreasonable detours of history, the cunning claws of the mole dig their own path of Reason. The mole is in no rush. He has "no need to hurry." He needs "long periods of time," and he has "all the time he needs." [Note missing in text] If the mole takes a backward step, it's not in order to hibernate but to bore through another opening. His twistings and turnings allow him to find the place where he can break out. The mole never disappears, he only heads underground.

Negri and Hardt say that the metaphor of the mole is a figure of modernity, they say that he has been surpassed by postmodernity. "We've come to suspect that the old mole is dead": his digging gives way to the "infinite undulations of the snake" and other reptilian struggles. [20] But such a verdict smacks of that chronological illusion whereby postmodernity is supposed follow on after a modernity that has since been consigned to the museum of ancient history. For the mole is ambivalent. He is both modern and postmodern. He bustles discreetly about in his "subterranean rhizomes," only to burst thunderously forth from the craters he makes.

On the pretext of giving up on history's metanarratives, the philosophical discourse of postmodernity lends itself to mystics and mystagogues: when a society runs out of prophets it turns to soothsayers instead. This is the way it goes, in periods of reaction and restoration. After the massacres of June 1848 and the 18th Brumaire of the younger

Napoleon, the socialist movement was likewise seized by "Christolatry." "Look at these offspring of Voltaire," wrote one former Communist, "these former scourges of the church, now huddled together around a table, hands clasped in pious union, waiting hour upon hour for it to rise up and lift one of its legs. Religion in all its forms is once again the order of the day, and has become so very 'distinguished.' France has gone mad!" [21]

Pierre Bourdieu was right to distinguish mystical affirmation or divination from the conditional, preventive and performative stance of prophecy. "Just as the priest is part and parcel of the ordinary order of things, so too is the prophet the man of crisis, of situations in which the established order crumbles and the future as a whole is thrown into question." [22]

The prophet is not a priest. Or a saint.

Still less a soothsayer.

To ward off disaster, it's not enough to resist for the sake of resistance, it's not enough to wager on the possibility of a redemptive event. We must seek both to understand the logic of history and to be ready for the surprise of the event. We must remain open to the contingency of the latter without losing the thread of the former. Such is precisely the challenge of political action. For history doesn't proceed in a vacuum, and when things take a turn for the better this never happens in an empty stretch of time, but always "in time that is infinitely full, filled with struggles." [23]

And with events.

The mole prepares the way of their coming. With a measured impatience. With an urgent patience.

For the mole is a prophetic animal.

Daniel Bensaïd is one of France's most prominent Marxist philosophers and has written extensively. He is a leading member of the LCR (French section of the Fourth International).

NOTES

[1] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Moscow and London, Progress Publishers/Lawrence & Wishart: 1973) 121 (translation modified).

[2] Paul Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

[3] Paul Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *ibid.*

[6] See Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* [1963] (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1980).

[7] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*, 4 vols. [1861-1862] (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1967).

[8] José Carlos Mariategui, in *El Tiempo* (Lima) 16 August 1917.

[9] Rosa Luxemburg, "Order reigns in Berlin" (written on 14 January 1919, several days before her murder by the Freikorps despatched by a social democrat Minister of the Interior).

[10] Dionys Mascolo, *Le Communisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953).

[11] Benjamin Fondane, *L'Écrivain devant la révolution* (Paris: Paris-Méditerranée, 1997).

[12] Jacques Derrida with Marc Guillaume and Jean-Pierre Vincent, *Marx en jeu* (Paris: Descartes et Cie, 1997).

[13] Michel Surya, *Portrait de l'intellectuel en animal de compagnie* (Tours: Farrago, 2000) 11; see also Surya, *De l'argent* (Paris: Payot, 2000) 122.

[14] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* [1936] (London: Routledge, 1960) 192-196, quoted in E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* 419.

[15] "les monstres mous"

[16] Charles Péguy, *Clio* (Paris: Gallimard, 1931) 99.

[17] Charles Péguy, *Note conjointe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942) 123.

[18] Georges Bernanos, *La Liberté pour quoi faire?* [1953] (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).

[19] François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion. The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[20] Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000) 57.

[21] Gustave Lefrançais, *Souvenirs d'un révolutionnaire* (Paris: La Tête de feuille, 1971) 191.

[22] Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux," *Revue française de sociologie* 12 (1971) 331.

[23] Hegel, *Leçons sur l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Folio Essais, 1990).



Permanent Revolution

The Marxism of Trotsky's "Results and Prospects"

A decisive break with the mechanical Marxism of the 2nd International

Michael Löwy

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, as sketched for the first time in his essay *Results and Prospects* (1906), was one of the most astonishing political breakthroughs in Marxist thinking at the beginning of the XXth century.



Kamenev (left) with Lenin and Trotsky

By rejecting the idea of separate historical stages - the first one being a «bourgeois democratic» one - in the future Russian Revolution, and raising the possibility of transforming the democratic into a proletarian/socialist revolution in a «permanent» (i.e. uninterrupted) process, it not only predicted the general strategy of the October revolution, but also provided key insights into the other revolutionary processes which would take place later on, in China, Indochina, Cuba, etc. Of course, it is not without its problems and shortcomings, but it was incomparably more relevant to the real revolutionary processes in the periphery of the capitalist system than anything produced by «orthodox Marxism» from the death of Engels until 1917.

In fact, the idea of permanent revolution appeared already in Marx and Engels, notably in their Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League, from March 1850, while the German Revolution of 1848-50 - in an absolutist and backward country - still seemed to unfold. Against the unholy alliance of the liberal bourgeoisie and absolutism, they championed the common action of the workers with the democratic parties of the petty bourgeoisie.

But they insisted on the need of an independent proletarian perspective : “while the democratic petty bourgeoisie want to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as

possible...it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far - not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world - that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers”. [1]

This striking passage contains three of the fundamental themes that Trotsky would later develop in *Results and Prospects* : 1) the uninterrupted development of the revolution in a semi-feudal country, leading to the conquest of power by the working class ; 2) the need for the proletarian forces in power to take anti-capitalist and socialist measures ; 3) the necessarily international character of the revolutionary process and of the new socialist society, without classes or private property.

The idea of a socialist revolution in the backward periphery of capitalism - although not the terms “permanent revolution”- is also present in late Marx writings on Russia : the letter to Vera Zassoulitsch (1881) and, together with Engels, the preface to the 1882 Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto* : “If the Russian revolution sounds the signal of a proletarian revolution in the West so that each complements the other, the prevailing

form of communal ownership of land in Russia may form the starting point for a communist course of development”. [2]

With the exception of Trotsky, these ideas seem to have been lost to Russian Marxism in the years between the end of the XIXth century and 1917. If we leave aside the semi-Marxists in the populist camp, such as Nicolaïon, or the “legal marxists” such as Piotr Struve, there remain four clearly delimited positions inside Russian social-democracy :

I) The Menshevik view , which considered the future Russian revolution as bourgeois by its nature and its driving force would be an alliance of the proletariat with the liberal bourgeoisie. Plekhanov and his friends believed that Russia was a backward, “Asiatic” and barbarous country requiring a long stage of industrialism and “Europeanization” before the proletariat could aspire to power. Only after Russia has developed its productive forces, and passed into the historical stage of advanced capitalism and parliamentary democracy would the requisite material and political conditions be available for a socialist transformation.

II) The Bolshevik conception also recognized the inevitably bourgeois-democratic character of the revolution, but it excluded the bourgeoisie from the revolutionary bloc.

According to Lenin, only the proletariat and the peasantry were authentically revolutionary forces, bound to establish through their alliance a common democratic revolutionary dictatorship. Of course, as we know, Lenin changed radically his approach, after the April Theses of 1917.

III) Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg, while acknowledging the bourgeois character of the revolution in the last instance, insisted on the hegemonic revolutionary role of the proletariat supported by the peasantry. The destruction of Czarist absolutism could not be achieved short of the establishment of a workers' power led by social-democracy. However, such a proletarian government could not yet transcend in its programmatic aims the fixed limits of bourgeois democracy.

IV) Finally, Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution, which envisaged not only the hegemonic role of the proletariat and the necessity of its seizure of power, but also the possibility of a growing over of the democratic into the socialist revolution.

Curiously enough, Trotsky does not mention, in *Results and Prospects*, any of the above mentioned pieces by Marx and Engels. He probably ignored the Address of March 1850 : the re-edition of 1885 in Zurich, in German, was not well known in Russia. His immediate source for the term "permanent revolution" in 1905 seems to have been an article by Franz Mehring on the events in Russia, "Die Revolution in Permanenz", published in the *Neue Zeit*, the theoretical organ of German Social-Democracy. Mehring's article was immediately translated in 1905 in Trotsky's paper *Nachalo* in Petrograd and in the same issue appeared also the first article in which Lev Davidovitch used the term "permanent revolution": "Between the immediate goal and the final goal there should be a permanent revolutionary chain".

However, a close reading of Mehring's piece shows that the German Marxist used the words, but was not really a partisan of permanent revolution in the same sense as Trotsky in 1905-1906. The vital kernel of the theory, its concept of the uninterrupted going-over of the democratic towards the socialist revolution, was denied by Mehring. This was well understood by Martov, the great Menshevik leader, who, in a work written many years later, recalled Trotsky's piece as a disturbing "deviation from the theoretical foundations of the Programm of Russian Social-Democracy". He clearly distinguished between Mehring's article, which he considered acceptable, and Trotsky's essay, which he repudiated as "utopian", since it transcended "the historical task which flows

from the existent level of productive forces".[3]

The ideas suggested in various of Trotsky's articles in 1905 - particularly in his preface for the Russian translation of Marx's writings on the Paris Commune - were then developed, in a more systematic and coherent way, in *Results and Prospects* (1906). However, this bold piece of writing remained for a long time a forgotten book. It seems that Lenin did not read it - at least before 1917 - and its influence over contemporary Russian Marxism was desultory at best. Like all forerunners, Trotsky was in advance of his time, and his ideas were too novel and heterodox to be accepted, or even studied, by his party comrades.

How was it possible for Trotsky to cut the gordian knot of Second International Marxism - the economicist definition of the nature of a future revolution by "the level of productive forces"- and to grasp the revolutionary possibilities that lay beyond the dogmatic construction of a bourgeois democratic Russian revolution which was the unquestioned problematic of all other Marxist propositions ?

There seems to exist an intimate link between the dialectical method and revolutionary theory : not by chance, the high period of revolutionary thinking in the XXth century, the years 1905-1925, are also those of some of the most interesting attempts to use the Hegel-Marxist dialectics as an instrument of knowledge and action. Let me try to illustrate the connexion between dialectics and revolution in Trotsky's early work.

A careful study of the roots of Trotsky's political boldness and of the whole theory of permanent revolution, reveals that his views were informed by a specific understanding of Marxism, an interpretation of the dialectical materialist method, distinct from the dominant orthodoxy of the Second International, and of Russian Marxism.

The young Trotsky did not read Hegel, but his understanding of Marxist theory owes much to his first lectures in historical materialism, namely, the works of Antonio Labriola. In his autobiography he recalled the "delight" with which he first devoured Labriola's essays during his imprisonment in Odessa in 1893. [4] His initiation into dialectics thus took place through an encounter with perhaps the least orthodox of the major figures of the Second International.

Formed in the Hegelian school, Labriola fought relentlessly against the neo-positivist and vulgar-materialist trends that proliferated in Italian Marxism (Turati !). He was one of

the first to reject the economicist interpretations of Marxism by attempting to restore the dialectical concepts of totality and historical process. Labriola defended historical materialism as a self-sufficient and independent theoretical system, irreducible to other currents ; he also rejected scholastic dogmatism and the cult of the textbook, insisting on the need of a critical development of Marxism. [5]

Trotsky's starting-point, therefore, was this critical, dialectical and anti-dogmatical understanding that Labriola had inspired. "Marxism", he wrote in 1906, "is above all a method of analysis - not analysis of texts, but analysis of social relations". Let us focus on five of the most important and distinctive features of the methodology that underlies the Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, in his distinction from the other Russian Marxists, from Plekhanov to Lenin and from the Mencheviks to the Bolcheviks (before 1917).

1. From the vantage point of the dialectical comprehension of the unity of the opposites, Trotsky criticized the Bolsheviks' rigid division between the socialist power of the proletariat and the "democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants", as a "logical, purely formal operation". This abstract logic is even more sharply attacked in his polemic against Plekhanov, whose whole reasoning can be reduced to an "empty syllogism": our revolution is bourgeois, therefore we should support the Kadets, the constitutionalist bourgeois party. Moreover, in an astonishing passage from a critique against the Menchevik Tcherevanin, he explicitly condemned the analytical - i.e. abstract-formal, pre-dialectical - character of Menchevik politics : "Tcherevanin constructs his tactics as Spinoza did his ethics, that is to say, geometrically". [6] Of course, Trotsky was not a philosopher and almost never wrote specific philosophical texts, but this makes his clear-sighted grasp of the methodological dimension of his controversy with stagist conceptions all the more remarkable.

2. In *History and Class consciousness* (1923), Lukacs insisted that the dialectical category of totality was the essence of Marx's method, indeed the very principle of revolution within the domain of knowledge. [7] Trotsky's theory, written twenty years earlier, is an exceptionally significant illustration of this Lukacsian thesis. Indeed, one of the essential sources of the superiority of Trotsky's revolutionary thought is the fact that he adopted the viewpoint of totality, perceiving capitalism and the class struggle as a world process. In the Preface to a Russian edition (1905) of Lassalle's articles about the revolution of 1848, he argues : "Binding all

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countries together with its mode of production and its commerce, capitalism has converted the whole world into a single economic and political organism (...) This immediately gives the events now unfolding and international character, and opens up a wide horizon. The political emancipation of Russia led by the working class (...) will make it the initiator of the liquidation of world capitalism, for which history has created the objective condition". [8] Only by posing the problem in these terms - at the level of "maturity" of the capitalist system in its totality - was it possible to transcend the traditional perspective of the Russian Marxists, who defined the socialist-revolutionary "unripeness" of Russia exclusively in terms of a national economic determinism.

3. Trotsky explicitly rejected the un-dialectical economicism - the tendency to reduce, in a non-mediated and one-sided way, all social, political and ideological contradictions to the economic infrastructure - which was one of the hallmarks of Plekhanov's vulgar materialist interpretation of Marxism. Indeed, Trotsky break with economicism was one of the decisive steps towards the theory of permanent revolution. A key paragraph in Results and Prospects defined with precision the political stakes implied in this rupture : "To imagine that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country is a prejudice of 'economic' materialism simplified to absurdity. This point of view has nothing in common with Marxism". [9]

4. Trotsky's method refused the un-dialectical conception of history as a pre-determined evolution, typical of Menchevik arguments. He had a rich and dialectical understanding of historical development as a contradictory process, where at every moment alternatives are posed. The task of Marxism, he wrote, was precisely to "discover the 'possibilities' of the developing revolution". [10] In Results and Prospects, as well as in later essays - for instance, his polemic against the Mencheviks, "The proletariat and the Russian revolution"(1908), he analyzes the process of permanent revolution towards socialist transformation through the dialectical concept of objective possibility, whose outcome depended on innumerable subjective factors as well as unforeseeable events - and not as an inevitable necessity whose triumph (or defeat) was already assured. It was this recognition of the open character of social historicity that gave revolutionary praxis its decisive place in the

architecture of Trotsky's theoretical-political ideas from 1905 on.

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It was the combination of all these methodological innovations that made Results and Prospects so unique in the landscape of Russian Marxism before 1917 ; dialectics was at the heart of the theory of permanent revolution. As Isaac Deutscher wrote in his biography, if one reads again this pamphlet from 1906, "one cannot but be impressed by the sweep and boldness of this vision. He reconnoitred the future as one who surveys from a towering mountain top a new and immense horizon and point to vast, uncharted landmarks in the distance". [12]

A similar link between dialectics and revolutionary politics can be found in Lenin's evolution. Vladimir Illitch remained faithful to the orthodox views of Russian Marxism till 1914, when the beginning of the war led him to discover dialectics : the study of Hegelian logic was the instrument by means of which he cleared the theoretical road leading to the Finland Station of Petrograd, where he first announced "All the power to the soviets". In March-April 1917, liberated from the obstacle represented by predialectical Marxism, Lenin could, under the pressure of events, rid himself in good time of its political corollary: the abstract and rigid principle according to which "The Russian revolution could only be bourgeois,



May Day 1976. DRV tank crew welcomed into Saigon.

since Russia was not economically ripe for a socialist revolution."

Once he crossed the Rubicon, he applied himself to studying the problem from a practical, concrete, and realistic angle and came to conclusions very similar to those announced by Trotsky in 1906 : what are the measures, constituting in fact the transition towards socialism, that could be made acceptable to the majority of the people, that is, the masses of the workers and peasants ? This is the road which led to the October Revolution...

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NOTES

[1] In Marx, Engels, *The Revolutions of 1848*, Penguin, 1973, p. 323-4.

[2] Marx, Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe*, London, 1953, p. 217.

[3] Martov, *Geschichte der Russischen Sozialdemokratie*, Berlin, 196, pp. 164-165.

[4] Trotsky, *My Life*, New York, 1960, p. 119

[5] See A.Labriola, *La concepcion materialista de la historia* (1897), La Habana, 1970, p. 115, 243.

[6] Trotsky, "The proletariat and the Russian revolution", and "Our Differences" in 1905, London, 1971, p. 289, 306-312.

[7] G.Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London, 1971, ch. 1.

[8] Quoted in Results and Prospects, London, 1962, p. 240.

[9] Results and Prospects, p. 195.

[10] Ibid p. 168.

[11] Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, London, 1965, vol. I, p. 427.

[12] I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, London, 1954, p. 161

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Dialectics and Revolution

Michael Löwy

There seems to exist an intimate link between the dialectical method and revolutionary theory: not by chance, the high period of revolutionary thinking in the XXth century, the years 1905-1925, are also those of some of the most interesting attempts to use the hegel-marxist dialectics as an instrument of knowledge and action. Let me try to illustrate the connexion between dialectics and revolution in the thought of three distinct Marxist figures : Leon D. Trotsky, Vladimir I. Lenin and György Lukacs.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, as sketched for the first time in his essay *Results and Prospects* (1906), was one of the most astonishing political breakthroughs in Marxist thinking at the beginning of the XXth century. By rejecting the idea of separate historical stages - the first one being a "bourgeois democratic" one - in the future Russian Revolution, and raising the possibility of transforming the democratic into a proletarian/socialist revolution in a "permanent" (i.e. uninterrupted) process, it not only predicted the general strategy of the October revolution, but also provided key insights into the other revolutionary processes which would take place later on, in China, Indochina, Cuba, etc.

Of course, it is not without its problems and shortcomings, but it was incomparably more relevant to the real revolutionary processes in the periphery of the capitalist system than anything produced by "orthodox Marxism" from the death of Engels until 1917. Now, a careful study of the roots of Trotsky's political boldness and of the whole theory of permanent revolution, reveals that his views were informed by a specific understanding of Marxism, an interpretation of the dialectical materialist method, distinct from the dominant orthodoxy of the Second International, and of Russian Marxism. The young Trotsky did not read Hegel, but his understanding of Marxist theory owes much to his first lectures in historical materialism, namely, the works of Antonio Labriola. In his autobiography he recalled the "delight" with which he first devoured Labriola's essays during his imprisonment in Odessa in 1893. [1]

His initiation into dialectics thus took place through an encounter with perhaps the least orthodox of the major figures of the Second International. Formed in the Hegelian school, Labriola fought relentlessly against the neo-positivist and vulgar-materialist trends that proliferated in Italian Marxism (Turati!). He was one of the first to reject the economic interpretations of Marxism by attempting to restore the dialectical concepts of totality and historical process. Labriola defended historical materialism as a self-sufficient and independent theoretical system, irreducible to other currents; he also rejected scholastic dogmatism and the cult of the textbook, insisting on the need of a critical development of Marxism [2].

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Moreover, in an astonishing passage from a critique against the Menshevik Tcherevanin, he explicitly condemned the analytical - i.e. abstract-formal, pre-dialectical - character of Menshevik politics : "Tcherevanin constructs his tactics as Spinoza did his ethics, that is to say, geometrically" [3]. Of course, Trotsky was not a philosopher and almost never wrote specific philosophical texts , but this makes his clear-sighted grasp of the methodological dimension of his controversy with stagist conceptions all the more remarkable.

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Until 1914, Lenin used to consider himself, on the theoretical and philosophical level, as a faithful follower of the orthodox Marxism of the Second International, as represented by figures such as Karl Kautsky and G. V. Plekhanov. His main philosophical work from the early years, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, is much influenced by the kind of Marxism represented by the leader of the Menshevik faction. His philosophical thinking began to change radically after 1914, when he saw - and at first could not believe - that German Social-Democracy (including Kautsky) voted the war credits for the Kaiser's government in August 4, 1914 - a choice reproduced in Russia by Plekhanov and several of his comrades.

The catastrophe of the Second International at the outbreak of World War I was, for Lenin, striking evidence that something was rotten in the state of Denmark of official "orthodox" Marxism. The political bankruptcy of that orthodoxy led him, therefore, to a profound revision of the philosophical premises of the Kautsky-Plekhanov sort of historical materialism. It will be necessary one day to retrace the precise track that led Lenin from the trauma of August 1914 to the Logic of Hegel scarcely a month after. The simple desire to return to the sources of Marxist thinking? Or a clear intuition that the methodological Achilles' heel of Second International Marxism was the absence of dialectics?

Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that his vision of Marxist philosophy was profoundly changed by it. Evidence of this is the text itself of the *Philosophical Notebooks*, but also the letter he sent on January 4, 1915, shortly after having finished reading Hegel's *The Science of Logic* (December 17, 1914) to the editorial secretary of Granat Publishers to ask if "there was still time to make some corrections [to his Karl Marx entry] in the section of dialectics." [10]

And it was by no means a "passing enthusiasm": seven years later, in one of his last writings, *On the Significance of Militant Marxism* (1922), he called on "the editors and contributors" of the party's theoretical journal (*Under the Banner of Marxism*) to "be a kind of Society of Materialist Friends of

Hegelian Dialectics." He insists on the need for a "systematic study of Hegelian Dialectics from a materialist standpoint," and proposes even to "print in the journal excerpts from Hegel's principal works, interpret them materialistically and comment on them with the help of examples of the way Marx applied dialectics." [11]

What were the tendencies of Second International Marxism which gave it a predialectical character?

1. Primarily, the tendency to ignore the distinction between Marx's dialectical materialism and the "ancient," "vulgar," "metaphysical" materialism of Helvetius, Feuerbach, etc. Plekhanov, for instance, could write these astonishing lines: "In Marx's Theses on Feuerbach . . . none of the fundamental ideas of Feuerbach's philosophy are refuted; they are merely amended . . . Marx and Engels' materialist views were elaborated in the direction indicated by the inner logic of Feuerbach's philosophy" ! [12]

2. The tendency, that flows from the first, to reduce historical materialism to mechanical economic determinism in which the "objective" is always the cause of the "subjective." For example, Kautsky untiringly insists on the idea that "the domination of the proletariat and the social revolution cannot come about before the preliminary conditions, as much economic as psychological, of a socialist society are sufficiently realised." What are these "psychological conditions"? According to Kautsky, "intelligence, discipline and an organisational talent." How will these conditions be created? "It is the historical task of capitalism" to realize them. The moral of history: "It is only where the capitalist system of production has attained a high degree of development that economic conditions permit the transformation, by the power of the people, of capitalist property in the means of production into social ownership." [13]

3. The attempt to reduce the dialectic to Darwinian evolutionism, where the different stages of human history (slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism) follow a sequence rigorously determined by the "laws of

history." Kautsky, for example, defines Marxism as "the scientific study of the evolution of the social organism." Kautsky had, in fact, been a Darwinian before becoming a Marxist, and it is not without reason that his disciple Brill defined his method as "bio-historical materialism"...

4. An abstract and naturalistic conception of the "laws of history," strikingly illustrated by the marvelous pronouncement of Plekhanov when he heard the news of the October Revolution: "But it's a violation of all the laws of history!".

5. A tendency to relapse into the analytical method, grasping only "distinct and separate" objects, fixed in their differences: Russia-Germany; bourgeois revolution-socialist revolution; party-masses; minimum program-maximum program, etc. There is no doubt that Kautsky and Plekhanov had carefully read and studied Hegel; but they had not, so to speak, "absorbed" and "digested" him into their theoretical systems, grounded on evolutionism and historical determinism.

How far did Lenin's notes on (or about) Hegel's Logic constitute a challenge to predialectical Marxism?

1. First, Lenin insists on the philosophical abyss separating "stupid," that is, "metaphysical, undeveloped, dead, crude" materialism from Marxist materialism, which, on the contrary, is nearer to "intelligent," that is, dialectical, idealism. Consequently, he criticizes Plekhanov severely for having written nothing on Hegel's Great Logic, "that is to say, basically on the dialectic as philosophical knowledge," and for having criticized Kant from the standpoint of vulgar materialism rather than in the manner of Hegel [14].

2. He fully grasps the dialectical conception of causality : "Cause and effect, ergo, are merely moments of universal reciprocal dependence, of (universal) connection, of the reciprocal connection of events. ..." At the same time, he praises the dialectical process by which Hegel dissolves the "opposition of solid and abstract", of subjective and

objective, by destroying their one-sidedness [15].

3. He emphasizes the major difference between the vulgar evolutionist conception of development and the dialectical one : "the first, [development as decrease and increase, as repetition] is lifeless, pale and dry; the second [development as a unity of opposites] alone furnishes the key to the 'leaps,' to the 'break in continuity,' to the 'transformation into the opposite,' to the destruction of the old and emergence of the new." [16]

4. With Hegel, he struggles "against making the concept of law absolute, against simplifying it, against making a fetish of it" (and adds: "NB for modern physics!!!"). He writes likewise that "laws, all laws, are narrow, incomplete, approximate." [17] 5. He sees in the category of totality, in the development of the entire ensemble of the moments of reality, the essence of dialectical cognition [18]. We can see the use Lenin made immediately of this methodological principle in the pamphlet he wrote at the time, *The Collapse of the Second International* (1915) : he submits to severe criticism the apologists of "national defence"-who attempt to deny the imperialist character of the Great War because of the "national factor" of the war of the Serbs against Austria-by underlining that Marx's dialectic "correctly excludes any isolated examination of an object, i.e., one that is one-sided and monstrously distorted." [19]

Against the isolation, fixation, separation, and abstract opposition of different moments of reality, Lenin insists in dissolving them through the category of totality, arguing also that "the dialectic is the theory which shows . . . why human understanding should not take contraries as dead and petrified but as living, conditioned, mobile, interpenetrating each other." [20]

What interests us here most is less the discussion of the philosophical content of Lenin's Notebooks of 1914-15 "in itself" than that of its political consequences : the socialist-revolutionary conception developed by the Bolshevik leader in his "April Thesis" from 1917. It is not difficult to find the red thread leading from the category of totality to

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the theory of the weakest link in the imperialist chain; from the inter-penetration of opposites to the transformation of the democratic into the socialist revolution; from the dialectical conception of causality to the refusal to define the character of the Russian Revolution solely by Russia's "economically backward base"; from the critique of vulgar evolutionism to the "break in continuity" in 1917; and so on.

But the most important is quite simply that the critical reading, the materialist reading of Hegel had freed Lenin from the straitjacket of the pseudo-orthodox Marxism of the Second International, from the theoretical limitation it imposed on his thinking. The study of Hegelian logic was the instrument by means of which Lenin cleared the theoretical road leading to the Finland Station of Petrograd, where he first announced "All the power to the soviets".

In March-April 1917, liberated from the obstacle represented by predialectical Marxism, Lenin could, under the pressure of events, rid himself in good time of its political corollary: the abstract and rigid principle according to which "The Russian revolution could only be bourgeois, since Russia was not economically ripe for a socialist revolution." Once he crossed the Rubicon, he applied himself to studying the problem from a practical, concrete, and realistic angle: what are the measures, constituting in fact the transition towards socialism, that could be made acceptable to the majority of the people, that is, the masses of the workers and peasants? This is the road which led to the October Revolution...

The philosophical work that best gave expression to the dialectics of revolution after October 1917 was probably György Lukacs' *History and Class consciousness* (1923). By dissolving the reified moments in the contradictory process of the historical totality, and by emphasizing the unity between the subjective and the objective in the revolutionary praxis, Lukacs was able to dialectically supersede (*Aufhebung*) the traditional oppositions between "ought" and «being», values and reality, ethics and politics, final goal and immediate circumstances, human will and material

conditions. Since this opus magnum of Marxist dialectics in the XXth century is well known, I would like to add a few comments on another piece by Lukacs, only recently discovered, *Chvostismus und Dialektik*.

For many years scholars and readers wondered why Lukacs never answered to the intense fire of criticism directed against *History and Class Consciousness* (HCC) soon after its publication, particularly from Communist quarters. The recent discovery of *Chvostismus und Dialektik* - probably written around 1925 - in the former archives of the Lenin Institute shows that this "missing link" existed: Lukacs did reply, in a most explicit and vigorous way, to these attacks, and defended the main ideas of his hegel-marxist masterpiece from 1923. One may consider this answer as the last revolutionary/marxist writing of the Hungarian philosopher, just before a major turn in his theoretical and political orientation - the philosophical "reconciliation with reality" proposed by his essay on Moses Hess from 1926 [21].

Chvostismus und Dialektik - English translation: *Tailism and Dialectics* - may be considered as a powerful exercise in revolutionary dialectics, against the crypto-positivist brand of "Marxism" that was soon to become the official ideology of the Soviet bureaucracy. The key element in this polemical battle is Lukacs' emphasis on the decisive revolutionary importance of the subjective moment in the subject/object historical dialectics.

If one had to summarize the value and the significance of *Tailism and dialectics*, I would argue that it is a powerful hegelian/marxist apology of revolutionary subjectivity. This motive runs like a red thread throughout the whole piece, particularly in its first part, but even, to some extent, in the second one too. Let us try to bring into evidence the main moments of this argument. One could begin with the mysterious term *Chvostismus* of the book's title - Lukacs never bothered to explain it, supposing that its - German? Russian? - readers were familiar with it. The word was used by Lenin in his polemics - for instance in *What is to be done?* - against those



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"economistic Marxists" who "tail-end" the spontaneous labour movement. Lukacs, however, uses it in a much broader historiosophical sense: *Chvostismus* means passively following - "tailing" - the "objective" course of events, while ignoring the subjective/revolutionary moments of the historical process.

Lukacs denounces the attempt by Rudas and Deborin to transform Marxism into a "science" in the positivist, bourgeois sense. Deborin - an ex-Menshevik - tries, in a regressive move, to bring back historical materialism "into the fold of Comte or Herbert Spencer" (*auf Comte oder Herbert Spencer zurückrevidiert*), a sort of bourgeois sociology studying transhistorical laws that exclude all human activity. And Rudas places himself as a "scientific" observer of the objective, law-bound course of history, whereby he can "anticipate" revolutionary developments. Both regard as worthy of scientific investigation only what is free of any participation on the part of the historical subject, and both reject, in the name of this "Marxist" (in fact, positivist) science any attempt to accord "an active and positive role to a subjective moment in history". [22] The war against subjectivism, argues Lukacs, is the banner under which opportunism justifies its rejection of revolutionary dialectics: it was used by Bernstein against Marx and by Kautsky against Lenin. In the name of anti-subjectivism, Rudas develops a fatalist conception of history, which includes only "the objective conditions", but leaves no room for the decision of the historical agents. In an article in *Inprekor* against Trotsky - criticised by Lukacs in *T&D* - Rudas claims

that the defeat of the Hungarian revolution of 1919 was due only to “objective conditions” and not to any mistakes of the Communist leadership; he mentions both Trotsky and Lukacs as examples of a one-sided conception of politics which overemphasizes the importance of proletarian class consciousness [23]. While rejecting the accusation of “subjective idealism”, Lukacs does not retract from his voluntarist viewpoint : in the decisive moments of the struggle “everything depends on class consciousness , on the conscious will of the proletariat” - the subjective component. Of course, there is a dialectical interaction between subject and object in the historical process, but in the crucial moment (Augenblick) of crisis, it gives the direction of the events, in the form of revolutionary consciousness and praxis. By his fatalist attitude, Rudas ignores praxis and develops a theory of passive “tail-ending”, considering that history is a process that “takes place independently of human consciousness”.

What is Leninism, argues Lukacs, if not the permanent insistence on the “active and conscious rôle of the subjective moment” ? How could one imagine, “without this function of the subjective moment”, Lenin’s conception of insurrection as an art? Insurrection is precisely the Augenblick, the instant of the revolutionary process where “the subjective moment has a decisive predominance (ein entscheidendes Übergewicht)”.

In that instant, the fate of the revolution, and therefore of humanity “depends on the subjective moment”. This does not mean that revolutionaries should “wait” for the arrival of this Augenblick : there is no moment in the historical process where the possibility of an active rôle of the subjective moments is completely lacking [24]. In this context, Lukacs turns his critical weapons against one of the main expressions of this positivist, “sociological”, contemplative, fatalist - chvostistich in his terminology - and objectivist conception of history : the ideology of progress. Rudas and Deborin believe that the historical process is an evolution mechanistically and fatally leading to the next stage. History is conceived, according to the dogmas of evolutionism, as

permanent advance, endless progress : the temporally later stage is necessarily the higher one in every respect.

From a dialectical viewpoint, however, the historical process is “not an evolutionary nor an organic one”, but contradictory, jerkily unfolding in advances and retreats [25]. Unfortunately Lukacs does not develop this insights, that point towards a radical break with the ideology of inevitable progress common to Second and - after 1924 - Third International Marxism. Another important aspect related to this battle against the positivist degradation of Marxism is Lukacs critique, in the second part of the essay, against the views expressed by Rudas on technology and industry as an “objective” and neutral system of “exchange between humans and nature”. This would mean, objects Lukacs, that there is an essential identity between the capitalist and the socialist society !

In his viewpoint, revolution has to change not only the relations of production but also revolutionize to a large extent the concrete forms of technology and industry existing in capitalism, since they are intimately linked to the capitalist division of labour. In this issue too Lukacs was well ahead of his time, but the suggestion remains undeveloped in his essay [26].

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[2] See A.Labriola, *La concepción materialista de la historia* (1897), La Habana, 1970, p. 115, 243

[3] See A.Labriola, *La concepción materialista de la historia* (1897), La Habana, 1970, p. 115, 243

[4] G.Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London, 1971, ch. 1.

[5] G.Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London, 1971, ch. 1.

[6] *Results and Prospects*, p. 195.

[7] *Ibid* p. 168.

[8] Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, London, 1965, vol. I, p. 427.

[9] I.Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, London, 1954, p. 161

[10] Quoted in R.Garaudy, *Lenine*, Paris, PUF, 1969, p. 40

[11] Lenin, *Selected Works*, vol. 3 p. 672, 667-668.

[12] George V. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism* (London, Martin Lawrence, n.d.) pp. 30-31. Cf. also pp. 21-22 : « Marx’s theory of cognition is directly derived from Feuerbach’s. If you like, we can even say that, strictly speaking, it is Feuerbach’s theory...given a profounder meaning in a general way by Marx ».

[13] Karl Kautsky, *The social revolution*, Chicago, Charles Kerr, 1903, pp. 185-187 (translation modified)..

[14] Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*, pp. 179, 276, 277

[15] *Ibid*, pp. 159, 187, 260.

[16] *Ibid* p. 360.

[17] *Ibid* p. 151

[18] *Ibid* pp. 157-158. See also pp. 171, 196, 218.

[19] Lenin, *The Collapse of the Second International in Collected Works*, vol. 21, p. 235.

[20] Lenin, *Karl Marx*, in *CW*, vol. 21, p.33.

[21] On the meaning of this work in Lukacs’s intellectual evolution, I refer to the last chapter of my book *George Lukacs. From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, London, New Left Books, 1980.

[22] G.Lukacs, *Tailism and the dialectics*, London, Verso, 2000, pp. 50, 135, 137. Cf. the German original, *Chvostismus und Dialektik*, Budapest, Aron Verlag, 1996, p.9

[23] As John Ree very aptly comments, Rudas and Deborin stand in direct continuity with Second International positivist/determinist Marxism : “In Rudas’ mind, Trotsky and Lukacs are linked because they both stress the importance of the subjective factor in the revolution. Rudas steps forth as a defender of the ‘objective conditions’ which guaranteed that the revolution was bound to fail. The striking similarity with Karl Kautsky’s review of Korsch’s *Marxism and Philosophy*, in which he attributes the failure of the German revolution to just such objective conditions, is striking testimony to the persistence of vulgar Marxism among the emerging Stalinist bureaucracy”. (“Introduction” to T&D pp. 24-25)

[24] G.Lukacs, T&D pp. 48, 54-58, 62. Cf. *Chvostismus und Dialektik* p. 16. Emphasis in the original. Of course, this argument is mainly developed in the first chapter of the first part of the essay, which has the explicit title “Subjectivism”; but one can find it also in other parts of the document.

[25] T&D pp.55, 78, 105.

[26] T&D pp. 134-135.

Theory

The Challenge of Revolutionary Democracy in the Life and Thought of Rosa Luxemburg

Paul Le Blanc

Rosa Luxemburg's life and intelligence have illuminated the human experience and inspired many people who have reached for a better world. Many of her insights and inclinations seem to place her in advance, on certain essential matters, of certain co-thinkers or partial co-thinkers who, like her, are also central to the Marxist tradition - whether Kautsky, or Lenin, or Trotsky. This comes through, I think, in the way she talks about the natural world, in her sense of kinship with other creatures of this planet, in her open and penetrating engagement with human dignity and human suffering, in her often luminously sensual formulations and turns of phrase, and also in her wonderful humor. Her writings are incredibly alive. [1]

Bertolt Brecht once wrote a poem about Luxemburg after she had been dealt with by right-wing death squads in 1919:

Red Rosa now has vanished too.

Where she lies is hid from view.

She told the poor what life is about.

And so now the rich have rubbed her out. [2]

And yet, again and again since her death, the spirit and ideas of Red Rosa have returned. In our own time, however, especially with the 20th century's final decade, there have been renewed and incredibly powerful efforts to rub out Rosa Luxemburg altogether, as part of a well-orchestrated effort to see that Marxism itself be made to vanish as a force that can be used for understanding and changing the world.

The only way to bring this wonderful comrade to life is to refuse to be content with simply "honoring her memory" or with detailing her ideas as if we were placing the corpses of butterflies in a glass case. Rather, we must embrace - as critically and honestly as we can - the challenge of her ideas for our own time. This challenge (and especially the challenge of revolutionary democracy) is poignantly relevant to all countries, from Russia to Poland, from Germany to the United States, from Japan to China to India, from South Africa to Cuba to Brazil. Rosa Luxemburg and revolutionary Marxism live

to the extent that they are absorbed into our own thoughts and actions as we struggle against oppressive realities of our own time.

Luxemburg stands as a powerful challenge to a number of false conceptions very prevalent today regarding both Marxism and democracy. Among the most powerful and influential ideologists in the world today are those who tell us that the market economy and democracy (that is, capitalism and rule by the people) historically and naturally develop hand-in-hand, and that it is not possible, for any length of time, to have one without the other. If Rosa Luxemburg were here today, she would argue incisively and persuasively - as she did in her own time - that this is a lie. There is also the myth, propagated by pro-capitalist propagandists as well as all too many would-be Communists, that socialism is something to be brought about through authoritarian measures.

We should deal with these two myths one at a time.

The natural development of the market economy, of capitalism (regardless of whether one views it as in some ways positive or "progressive") is certainly authoritarian. It is based upon, and it further enhances, inequality of economic power, which naturally generates an inequality of political power. There is nothing so authoritarian as a capitalist workplace, whose function is to manage the exploitation of large numbers of workers, and this is so



Rosa Luxemburg at SPD rally, 1900

regardless of whether that authoritarianism assumes either brutal or benign postures. And the capitalist marketplace functions, primarily, not to meet the needs of the great majority of the people (the consumers) but rather to maximize the profits of the small minority that owns and controls the economy.[3]

If she were here, Luxemburg would also focus our attention on the actual dynamics of capitalist development in Central and Eastern Europe - the Germany, Poland, and Russia with which she was so familiar. There, for the most part, the capitalist class, sensing a greater kinship with the elites above them than with the masses below them, deferred to and intertwined with the traditional elites that were inclined to maintain authoritarianism as the political framework within which the market economy and industrial modernization would be allowed to flourish.[4]

Red Rosa would point out to us - as she did in her own day - that democracy can be advanced only through the struggles of the growing working-class majority, only through the self-organization of working people through mass movements for social and political reform, through strong, independent, democratic trade unions, through democratic mass working-class parties. Historically, it was not the normal functioning of the capitalist market, but rather the mass pressure and mass struggle of

the working class movement and its allies that paved the way, step-by-step, for the expansion of democratic rights, democratic reforms, and democratic political structures.[5]

At the same time, Luxemburg was insistent that capitalism and democracy are incompatible, that in multiple ways the natural functioning of the capitalist marketplace and of the capitalist class result in proliferating restrictions, manipulations, corruptions, erosions that undermine the gains of the working-class and prevent (and must always prevent) the blossoming of a fully democratic society. And she was critical (and would be critical now) of currents in the labor and socialist movements which deny or forget that capitalism and democracy are incompatible.

Luxemburg also observed - and brilliantly analyzed - the powerful expansionist tendencies of capitalism. These resulted in the invasion of more and more portions of the globe, violating the cultures, the quality of life, and the self-determination of innumerable peoples for the benefit of capitalist enterprises that were compelled to reach for ever-expanding markets, raw materials, and investment opportunities. This authoritarian process of global capital accumulation, defined as imperialism, was also dependent on the expansion of exceptionally authoritarian military machines. The aggressive expansionism and growing militarism would, as Luxemburg so correctly predicted, result in violent catastrophes (colonial wars, world wars, and more) in which the masses of people would pay the price, for the benefit of wealthy and powerful elites. She warned that such developments might also whirl out of control and threaten the future of civilization itself.[6]

Against this triumph of authoritarianism, violence, and death, Luxemburg passionately struggled for the socialist alternative. In her view, the socialist movement had proved to be the most consistent force for democracy in the world - a view which has received considerable support from knowledgeable and serious historians in recent years. More than this, she viewed socialism quite simply as an expanded, deepened, authentic democracy - genuine rule by the people in both the political and economic life of society. Her notion of a workers' state (what has sometimes been called "dictatorship of the proletariat") had nothing to do with a one-party dictatorship ruling in the name of the

people. Rather it meant what Marx and Engels said in the Communist Manifesto when they spoke of the working class winning the battle of democracy, what Lenin meant in *The State and Revolution*, when he spoke of a thorough-going political rule by the working class. This was in contrast to the authoritarian political forms that began to develop all-too-soon in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution. [7]

Luxemburg was an early critic of this development, challenging Lenin and the Bolsheviks - whom she held in high esteem - to pull back from their dangerously expansive justifications for the undemocratic emergency measures that were adopted in the face of both internal counter-revolutionary assaults and a global capitalist counter-offensive. "Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party - however numerous they may be - is no freedom at all," she insisted. "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently." In her prophetic warning she elaborated:

Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously - at bottom, then, a clique affair - a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians ... [8]

Luxemburg was also profoundly critical of authoritarian developments of a different sort inside her own Social-Democratic Party of Germany. An increasingly powerful tendency inside the party and trade union leadership was arguing that the gradual accumulation of reforms - to painlessly erase capitalism's worst features - would be a better path for achieving socialist goals. Luxemburg responded that it was not possible to choose different paths to socialism in the same way that one might choose either spicy sausages or mild sausages in the market. The reformist path, she prophetically insisted, would not lead gradually to socialism at all, but to the

gradual accommodation and subjugation of the socialist movement to the authoritarian proclivities, the brutal realities, and the violent dynamics of the capitalist system. Even though vital gains could be won for the working class through struggles for reforms, this would be like the labor of Sisyphus - the strong man in the ancient Greek myth who time after time would roll a heavy boulder up a steep hill, only to have the gods roll it back down again. So would the natural dynamics of capitalism time after time outflank and erode the reforms won by the labor movement. [9]

Luxemburg taught that in order to remain true to its democratic and socialist principles, and in order to defend the material interests of the workers and the oppressed, the socialist workers' movement - even while fighting for necessary and life-giving partial reforms - would sometimes find itself in uncompromising confrontation with the capitalist power structure. What she and her revolutionary-minded comrades found, however, is that the increasingly bureaucratized structure of their own socialist workers' movement was becoming an obstacle to the internal democracy of the movement. The increasingly bureaucratic-conservative leadership of the trade unions and party more and more sought to contain radicalizing impulses of the working-class membership, to limit the ability of people such as Luxemburg to present a revolutionary socialist perspective, to deflect upsurges in the class struggle into safely moderate channels. They sought to maintain the reformist strategy that they sincerely believed was more "practical," but which was, in fact, entwining the labor movement into the authoritarian structures and disastrous directions of the capitalist status quo. [10]

Rosa Luxemburg was quite clear that the majority of the people - and the working class as such - were by no means uniformly or consistently inclined to go in a revolutionary or socialist direction. She saw political and social consciousness among the masses of people as incredibly deep and diverse, contradictory, shifting and changing, tending to go in one direction at one point and then in a very different direction soon after. The oppressive and sometimes horrific nature of capitalist development, however, when combined with the clear and capable articulation of perspectives of class-struggle and socialism, could sometimes cause dramatic upsurges - what she called mass strikes, or mass actions, that would often take

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place outside of existing structures of the labor movement. She saw this, in part, as essential in the creation of militant new trade unions and other organizations of the workers and oppressed, although its implications went further. Luxemburg had no desire to deny the importance of the day-to-day work of the existing trade unions and of the votes cast by the socialist representatives elected to Germany's parliament. But a movement capable of actually attaining socialism must go beyond this. It was essential, she believed, that a proliferation of possibilities be found to engage more and more people in action, in experience that would deepen their own understanding and commitment and skills, that would enhance their own confidence and creativity, as well as their ability to inspire and win ever more workers to the revolutionary cause. [11]

And this understanding was central for her as a revolutionary strategist, distinguishing her from the dominant leadership of the German Social-Democratic Party. Luxemburg gave great weight to so-called "extra-parliamentary" social struggles, and to a dynamic interplay between existing organizations and spontaneous mass action. This frightened her less revolutionary comrades. She put it this way:

As bred-in-the-bone disciples of parliamentary cretinism, these German social democrats have sought to apply to revolutions the homemade wisdom of the parliamentary nursery: in order to carry anything, you must first have a majority. The same, they say, applies to the revolution: first let's become a "majority." The true dialectic of revolutions, however, stands this wisdom on its head: not through a majority to revolutionary tactics, but through revolutionary tactics to a majority - that is the way the road runs. Only a party which knows how to lead, that is, to advance things, wins support in stormy times. [12]

For Luxemburg there was a remarkable consistency between this revolutionary-democratic strategic perspective and her revolutionary-democratic vision of socialism. Here is how she put it:

Bourgeois class rule has no need of the political training and education of the entire mass of the people, at least not beyond certain narrow limits. But for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life element, the very air without which it is not able to exist. ... Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed,

effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts. ... The whole mass of the people must take part. ... Socialism in life demands a complete spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of class rule. Social instincts in place of egotistical ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which conquers all suffering. ... The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion. [13]

It is obvious that such genuine democracy as Rosa Luxemburg believed in cannot be bestowed on a people through charismatic leaders, through well-meaning revolutionary elites, through single-party dictatorships, through labor bureaucracies, through glitzy election campaigns financed by big-business interests, and certainly not through military invasions from powerful outsiders. It must be won through the accumulation of experience and struggles, also the proliferation of seasoned activists and democratic organizations, and the consequent rise of consciousness and revolutionary-democratic commitment among the masses of the people themselves, especially the immense majority of those who labor. [14]

And people such as ourselves, of course, must face the difficult question of whether we want to help advance such a process, and if so, how.

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NOTES

[1] An exploration of the Marxist tradition, and in part of Luxemburg's place within it, is offered in Paul Le Blanc, *From Marx to Gramsci, A Reader in the Revolutionary Marxist Politics* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), with further elaboration in Paul Le Blanc, *Rosa Luxemburg, Reflections and Writings* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999). Key texts on this and related matters are Paul Frolich, *Rosa Luxemburg, Her Life and Work* (New York: Monthly Review, 1972) and Norman Geras, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg* (London: Verso, 1983). The most recent English-language anthology of Luxemburg's writings is also well worth consulting - *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, ed. by Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004).

[2] Quoted in Wendy Forrest, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), 61.

[3] See, for example, Rosa Luxemburg, "What Is Economics?" in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, ed. by Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 220-249.

[4] Relevant here are Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), and Peter Nettle, *Rosa Luxemburg, Abridged Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 72-74, 304-305.

[5] The centrality of democracy in Marxism has been well-established for some time - see, for example, Michael Lowy, *The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005), Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 2 vols. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974, 1984), and August H. Nimtz, Jr., *Marx and Engels, Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (Albany: New York State University Press, 2000). On the centrality of Marxist-influenced political movements for the advance of democracy, see Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[6] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), and "The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis and the German Social Democracy," in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, 261-331.

[7] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *Le Blanc, From Marx to Gramsci*, 143; Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 343-345.

[8] "The Russian Revolution," in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, 389, 391.

[9] The points on sausages and Sisyphus can be found in Luxemburg's "Reform or Revolution" in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, 71, 77. Her growing critique of the orientation of the Social-Democratic leadership can be seen in "The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions" in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, 155-218, in the excerpt of "Theory and Practice" in *Le Blanc, Rosa Luxemburg*, 139-174 (a slightly different excerpt is in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, 208-231), and correspondence to be found in Stephen Eric Bronner, ed., *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg, Second Edition* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), 129, 149, 179, 294-295.

[10] See Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (New York: Wiley, 1955).

[11] These perspectives are elaborated in sources cited in footnote 9 above, as well as in Luxemburg's "Speech to the Founding Convention of the German Communist Party" in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, 405-427.

[12] "The Russian Revolution" in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, 374.

[13] *Ibid.*, 389-391. Also see "The Socialization of Society," in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, 346-348.

[14] One recent effort pushing in this direction is the late Daniel Singer's final work, *Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours?* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999). Another can be found in materials by Eveline Wittich, Paul Le Blanc, Ottakar Luban, Thomas Deve, and Lindsey Collen in a conference of scholars and activists organized by South Africa's Anti-War Movement and the Johannesburg office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation - *Militarism and War: Rosa Luxemburg Political Education Seminar 2004* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Khanya College Publishing, 2005).

Theory

Uneven and Combined Development and the Sweep of History: Focus on Europe

Paul Le Blanc

It is often rationalized that a European bias in the study of world history makes sense because in modern times that history can best be comprehended as a process of “Westernization” - the growing dominance of capitalism in the global economies of our planet, the gradual and accelerating crystallization of a unified global economy, with accompanying spread of Western (i.e., European) cultural, social, and political models and norms. While there is a strong element of validity to this, it also can introduce substantial distortions of the historical process.

Before the “rise of the West” driven by the emergence of capitalism and particularly the incredible engine of the Industrial Revolution, the more dominant aspect of world history seems to have involved a process of “Southernization” - involving the extensive diffusion of cultural, economic, social, and political influences from portions of southern Asia and the Middle East (including throughout Europe). In addition, even after the beginning of the “Westernization” process, the dynamics of historical development in the various countries and cultures of the global South are marked both by a some-time relative autonomy that challenges Western conceptualizations. But more, there is an obvious, ongoing, and accelerating impact, influence, and interpenetration of the cultures of the global South with those of “the West” (or North), a global transformative process.

An important conceptual tool for responding to such dynamics is the theory of uneven and combined development formulated by Leon Trotsky as a contribution to the rich body of Marxist analysis. Trotsky’s theory will be elaborated and utilized in this essay, and while a European focus is adopted here, consistent with the “Westernization” model, it is seen simply as an initial and incomplete effort to suggest the general applicability of Trotsky’s theorization, a theorization most consistent with a more rounded account of global history than is proved here.

From the 15th through the mid-19th centuries, a fundamental transformation took place in Europe - a transformation based on the shift from one economic system to another, from one mode of production to another, a shift from feudalism to capitalism. The manner in which this shift took place, and the consequences of the shift, set into motion a number of historical dynamics which shaped the modern world and which - among other things - resulted in calamities of the 20th century: the collision of imperialisms, two world wars that sandwiched the Great Depression, the rise and fall of fascism, the haunting specter of Communism, momentous struggles and death camps and labor camps and shattered dreams, with the Cold War threat of nuclear overkill fading into a new global order. This particular presentation will trace in broad strokes a general interpretative framework in which, hopefully, we can make better sense of the welter of experiences and the swirl of events that constitute the history of modern Europe.

1. The Uneven Transition to Capitalism

The concept of the mode of production consists of two interlinked elements - the forces of production and the relations of production. The forces of production include such things as raw materials, tools, and sources of energy (taken together, these things - raw materials, tools, energy sources -

are known as the means of production) plus human labor-power, that can combine these means of production in such a way that create the products which make it possible for individuals and society as a whole to survive and develop. Those are the productive forces: the means of production (raw materials and technology) plus labor. The relations of production are constituted by the economic ownership of the means of production, and control over the labor force - and this can be referred to as the class relations in society.

The old feudal mode of production was primarily agricultural, in which the two principal classes were the powerful warrior stratum, the so-called nobility, and the laboring peasants, who worked the land but were compelled to surrender to the nobles either portions of their labor or the product of their labor over and above what was needed for peasant family subsistence. In return, the nobility was expected to provide protection and assistance to the peasantry. The traditionalist ideology that dominated feudal society involved a vision of divinely-created social orders, divided between those who prayed (the clergy), those who fought (the nobility, or feudal lords), and those who worked (the peasants, who were often transformed into serfs - that is, forced to stay on the land under the control of the lords). In this organic view of society, the three social orders (or estates) were mutually supportive and had defined roles - outside of which no one born or appointed to a particular order



Diego Rivera’s vision of Tenochtitlan, Mayan city of canals on the site of today’s Mexico City, destroyed by the conquistadors

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must step. To do so would be a violation of social stability, of the way things were supposed to be, and of God's will.

A transitional period of several centuries saw the erosion of this system, as international trade created a growing market for products coming from one or another area. More and more, goods were produced not simply for immediate consumption by lords and priests and peasants, but for the purpose of exchange at the market place. To facilitate such exchange, a money economy became increasingly important, and the feudal ruling classes became increasingly caught up in it. The notion of property and property rights transformed feudal relations, with the nobles transforming themselves into a landowning aristocracy who came to consider their own private property the lands traditionally occupied by the peasantry.

There was a growing tendency for this aristocracy to exploit their peasants more severely, through feudal dues and rents, in order to accumulate greater wealth and luxuries. This generated peasant rebellions in some cases. In other cases, peasants fled the land. Sometimes peasants were driven out by landowners who sought more profitable uses of the land, such as raising sheep to provide wool for the growing textile trade.

New classes began to emerge, particularly in growing urban areas (or burghs). The burghers - or bourgeois - were largely what came to be known as businessmen, or capitalists. There were those who invested money in trade (or commerce, the activity of the merchants) in order to make a profit, buying products plentiful in one area to sell for a higher price to those in need of them in another area. Some of these merchants were able to accumulate enough money in this way to become financiers - financing various projects undertaken by merchants and aristocrats, making loans at interest. Other merchants of more modest means established small shops, taverns, and inns. Along with these commercial and financial capitalists, these arose a growing stratum of producers - artisans and craftsmen, stratified into apprentices, journeymen, and master-craftsmen, and originally organized into guilds representing various skilled trades.

Less fortunate but increasing in number were unpropertied and unskilled laborers, blurring into the destitute mass of the urban poor. With the passage of time, some capitalists increasingly shifted from a focus in commerce and finance to manufacturing - hiring craftsmen and laborers to produce commodities that would be appropriated by the capitalist and sold at a profit. More and more things became commodities - products

to be sold at the marketplace - including human labor-power.

All of this subverted the feudal order. So did the new ideas that began to develop. Individualistic, experimental, scientific and rationalist orientations came to compete with the traditionalist faith-based and supernatural ideologies. This helped to generate, and was in turn further stimulated by, new developments in knowledge and technology. This trend has been identified with "the Age of Reason" and "the Enlightenment," reflecting a different way of thinking connected with a different way of life. A new mode of production, and new ideological perspectives, were gaining power.

The feudal order evolved under the impact of all this. Previously, limited communications and transportation systems and the localized nature of the feudal economic units had meant that effective rule could only be exercised over a relatively small area. But remarkable changes in technology and the connection of more and more areas by the capitalistic marketplace changed this. Not only had it become possible to rule over increasingly large areas, but the needs of capitalist economic development created strong pressures to do so. Certain powerful sections (or factions) of the feudal nobility sought to take advantage of the new possibilities by establishing centralized monarchies, consolidating nation-states under absolutist rule.

In those sections of Europe where such monarchist nation-states took shape, a considerable amount of power was concentrated into the hands of absolutist monarchs.

In those sections of Europe where such monarchist nation-states took shape, a considerable amount of power was concentrated into the hands of absolutist rulers. But the result was fraught with tensions between different modes of production, between widely differing social classes, between different factions within those classes, and between divergent ideological orientations. All of this was heightened by dramatic complications resulting from the development of the market economy - significant fluctuations in prices, economic rivalry between nations (which generated costly military expenditures and wars), and monetary policies by absolutist rulers that generated debts and taxes at levels that would have been unimaginable in earlier centuries.

Increasingly, rival factions within the aristocracy and within the bourgeoisie sought to enhance their power against each other and

against monarchist absolutism by appealing to and mobilizing the lower middle classes (artisans and shopkeepers) as well as the urban and even rural poor. This greatly contributed to the ideological ferment - even more so when, in some cases, the newly-politicized masses began to slip away from upper-class influence and develop even more radical notions of their own. What's more, the growth of towns and cities, with dynamic urban populations, was to create centers of social, intellectual and revolutionary ferment that would provide leadership for future transformations.

A series of revolutionary upheavals resulted from this profoundly unstable situation. Revolutions in the Netherlands and England in the 1600s resulted in a new political and social synthesis in those countries. This culminated in non-absolutist - limited - monarchies and the triumph of the capitalist mode of production.

In France, however, the revolutionary explosion of 1789-93 was dramatically more violent and far-reaching. The monarchy sought the implementation of modest reforms that would ease social tensions in a manner that would help preserve the power of the monarchy. In contrast, an alliance of aristocrats and moderate bourgeois elements, with support from the peasantry and the urban masses, sought to introduce political and social reforms that would ease social tensions in France while bringing an end to monarchist absolutism. But the contradictions in French society were too great, and the resulting social crisis too severe, to be solved by mild reforms and half-way measures. In the face of rising expectations and deepening radicalization of the masses, not only was the authority of the crown overwhelmed, but the new aristocrat/bourgeois alliance was swept away. The power of the king was smashed, and a succession of moderately revolutionary leaderships were violently cast aside in the face of the increasingly revolutionary momentum of the masses. The most radicalized and politically conscious sections of the masses wanted a thoroughgoing political democracy and a social order in which freedom, equality and brotherhood would be a living reality.

Although the revolutionary masses of France - covered by the catch-all term "the people" - were uncompromisingly anti-feudal, however, they were composed of contradictory class elements, and this made it impossible for a similar consensus to form around a clear program that would bring about a realization of the most radical of their stated goals. "The people" (that is, peasants, artisans, shopkeepers, laborers, some

capitalist manufacturers, and more) may have been united in their dissatisfaction with the old order, but they had different conceptions of precisely what would be the virtues of the new order. This, combined with economic dislocations, civil war, and foreign invasions, paved the way for confusion and murderous in-fighting among the revolutionary leaders. In this context, the radicalizing momentum of the French Revolution was cut short, giving way, from 1794 through 1799, to a succession of rightward-moving and corrupt dictatorships, and finally the military coup of Napoleon Bonaparte.

2. Uneven and Combined Development to 1850

The French Revolution is often seen as the high-point of bourgeois-democratic revolution. This is defined as a revolution that sweeps away the vestiges of the feudal mode of production, clearing the way for the full development of capitalism, replacing monarchist-absolutism with a popular and representative form of government.

In the course of the 19th century, the capitalist mode of production triumphed throughout Europe. Yet the transformation took place in a manner that was qualitatively different from the form it took in France - and if we understand why that was the case, we'll also be able to grasp one of the central keys for explaining the subsequent history of Europe.

There is an obvious and simple law of history that has profoundly important consequences. This is the law of uneven development: different areas and different countries are just that - different. While all of Europe had been dominated by some variety of feudalism, and while all of Europe was affected by the development of the capitalist market, the different regions had their own particular characteristics. For various reasons, technological and cultural and ideological innovations arose first in one area and then had an impact on other areas at different times - leading to uneven development in the history of Europe as a whole.

This leads to another historical law which was expressed most clearly by Russian revolutionary theorist Leon Trotsky in this way: "Unevenness, the most general law of the historic process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which, for the lack of a better name, we may call the law of combined development - by which we mean a drawing together of the

different stages of the journey, a combining of separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms."

This law of uneven and combined development guaranteed that the dynamics of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and the transition to a capitalist social order, would be quite different in other parts of Europe and in later periods than had been the case in France at the end of the 18th century.

The traditional, aristocratic ruling classes of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe very much felt what Trotsky called "the whip of external necessity." This took several forms. One was the dangerous example of the French Revolution that could potentially become a model for their own discontented classes. Some traditionalists undoubtedly wanted to deal with this through increased repression, pure and simple - favoring reactionary policies that would prevent any changes in the forms and norms of the old social order. There were, however, three other "whips of external necessity" which thwarted such an easy "solution."

Most important was the Industrial Revolution that was unleashed by the capitalist economic development of Western Europe. Such a mighty generator of material wealth and power could hardly be shrugged off. Related to this was the fact that the traditional ruling classes - despite their feudal origins and inclinations - had themselves, for well over a century, been inescapably seduced by and entangled in the world capitalist economy. These two interrelated "whips" (the progress of the Industrial Revolution and the traditional ruling classes' own involvement in the world capitalist economy) made it impossible to return to an earlier feudal "golden age." The traditionalists were, instead, compelled to adapt to a profoundly changing social order. A third "whip of external necessity" was provided by the French invasions during the Napoleonic wars that spanned the first 15 years of the 19th century.

France's capitalist economy was more efficient and dynamic, unencumbered by semi-feudal restrictions and forged into a cohesive national unit. This was also reflected in the superior military capabilities of Napoleon's armies - in which the inertia of aristocratic privilege had been replaced with sweeping organizational, technological and tactical innovations combined with performance-based incentives offered to all regardless of social station. This had two effects. First, Napoleon's forces overran most of Europe and instituted social, economic, and political reforms in those areas, reforms that were designed to facilitate their

absorption into a French-dominated social order - Napoleon's French Empire. Secondly, the traditionalists came to realize that if they were to cope successfully in the modern world with a challenge such as that posed by Napoleon, then - at least for military reasons - they themselves would have to initiate some "modernization" reforms in their own societies.

An additional impulse for instituting such reforms (or for maintaining some of the Napoleonic reforms even after the ultimate defeat of Bonaparte in 1815) was provided by a desire to de-fuse the kinds of middle-class and lower-class discontents that had generated the earlier revolutionary explosions in France.

Even with the old ruling classes' grudging adaptation to some aspects of capitalist "modernization," however, their determination to maintain as much monarchist power and aristocratic privilege as possible was destined to generate a wave of revolutionary explosions throughout Europe in 1848. But the law of uneven and combined development ensured that these explosions would assume different forms and have different consequences than had been the case during the French Revolution. To understand this, we must grasp the new sociological and ideological realities of the 1840s.

The further development of capitalism - and especially of industrial capitalism - resulted in a growing divergence among the new social classes throughout Europe's cities and towns. What had been simply "the people" in revolutionary France became increasingly the sharply defined, self-conscious and often openly antagonistic classes of capitalist employers on the one hand and proletarian wage-workers on the other. In-between was a middle stratum of independent artisans and small shopkeepers, impelled by the dynamics of the capitalist marketplace but also on the verge of being ruined by larger capitalist enterprises. This three-layered class structure in the urban areas - bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie, and proletariat - did not form a cohesive revolutionary mass such as had existed in Paris of 1789, but rather an uneasy alliance in the struggle against semi-feudal absolutism. In the rural areas there were large landowners and various peasant strata - the former more often than not constituting a backward-looking aristocracy, while the peasant masses (who were a majority of Europeans) were often inclined toward traditionalist values and hostile to urban-capitalist pressures, but also inclined to be revolutionary if this could satisfy their deep hunger for land and dignity.

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Three fundamental ideological currents took shape in the first half of the 19th century: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism.

Liberalism favored the new capitalist order and sought to eliminate old feudal restrictions and hierarchies, seeking instead to facilitate equal opportunity for all. In its classical form, and throughout most of the 19th century, liberalism favored economic policies of laissez-faire, convinced that wealth and progress would be guaranteed if the state put no restrictions on the decisions of the capitalists on how to run the economy. (By the 20th century the liberal mainstream would come to favor a more active intervention of the state in the economy, presumably to reform and regulate capitalism for its own good.) Committed to freedom of thought and expression, and the separation of church and state, liberalism was inclined toward Enlightenment rationalism as a guide to political reform, favoring the creation of constitutional republics. Throughout much of the 19th century, however, a majority of liberals did not favor a democratic republic - fearing that giving propertyless masses the right to vote would create a "tyranny of the majority" that would overturn capitalist property rights. At first, it was only the most radical fringe of this political current that favored moving forward to democracy.

Conservatism accepted the new capitalist order but resisted impulses toward equal opportunity and the upsetting of traditional hierarchies. Often counterposing traditional values and cultural norms to the intellectual innovations of the Enlightenment, it challenged optimistic notions about the possibilities of progress and human betterment - yet its adherents were most concerned about conserving the traditional power relations associated with prevailing monarchs and aristocratic elites. Essentially anti-democratic, it often favored freedom of thought and expression only for the elite, and was inclined to keep the masses in their places through a combination of restrictive and benevolent policies by a more or less authoritarian central government. As parliamentary systems and the right to vote spread through Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, of course, forms of conservatism evolved that more or less accepted and adapted to these changes.

Socialism challenged the new capitalist order, wanting to eliminate both the old feudal restrictions and hierarchies and the new capitalist restrictions and hierarchies. It held that equal opportunity would be possible only through the collective ownership of the economy, and that freedom of thought and expression could only be guaranteed by a radical democracy that encompassed not only

the politics but also the economic life of society. Some of the earliest theorists of socialism imagined a utopian future whose blueprints they wished to somehow impose on humanity for its own good. By the mid-19th century, however, it became increasingly identified as a goal to be achieved and shaped by society's laboring majority. (At various times, conceptions of communism and anarchism tended to be identified with this broad current.)

Elements from various classes could be found in each political camp, and not surprisingly, many people of various class backgrounds - particularly among the hard-pressed lower classes - identified with no political current at all. The fact remains that, roughly speaking, in 19th century Europe liberalism found its most consistent base among the rising bourgeoisie, conservatism found its most consistent base among the sections of the aristocracy that were adapting to capitalism, and socialism found its most consistent base among the working class. At different times and in different places, elements of the peasantry were drawn to one or another of these basic currents.

Given this sociological and ideological lineup, it may be easier to understand the differences between the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1789 and that of 1848. In the case of the latter, I will focus on one major example - that of Germany.

If we examine the events of 1789-93 in France, we see - amid an admittedly complex swirl of events - that elements of the rising bourgeoisie helped lead a mass-based movement of the urban and rural poor in smashing the remnants of the old feudal order. Results of the revolutionary triumph included: the replacement of monarchy with a constitutional republic; the achievement of national unity, with a form of nationalism strongly tinged with radical-democratic content; and a sweeping land reform which broke the power of the aristocracy, clearing the way for a thoroughgoing development of capitalism.

If we examine the events of 1848-49 in Germany, we see that the dominant elements of the already-existing bourgeoisie, frightened by working-class radicalism, drew back from revolution and sought an alliance with potent remnants of the old feudal order. The results of the defeated revolution included: the preservation of a powerful monarchy; the failure to achieve national unity for over two decades; the combined thwarting of democratic political currents and development of a conservative-tinged nationalism; maintenance of power by a

landowning aristocracy; and capitalism becoming entwined with traditional elites.

The bourgeois-aristocratic, or liberal-conservative, compromise impacted throughout Europe after 1848, and this profoundly affected the economic, political, and cultural history of that entire area. In the face of this hostile alliance, the first upsurge of self-conscious working-class radicalism (reflected in Karl Marx's small Communist League, for example, and more massively in England's Chartist movement) was smashed and didn't fully recover for about fifteen years. At the same time, the relative political and social stability that resulted facilitated the dramatic economic expansion of industrial capitalism that would set the stage for an even more dramatic working-class upsurge in the future.

3. Swirling Toward 1914

After 1848, the law of uneven and combined development continued to assert pressure on the triumphant conservatives. They felt compelled to carry out "modernizing" reforms which corresponded to the liberal and radical demands - but in a highly distorted form that preserved much of the aristocracy's status and power.

A prime example can be found in the career of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Prussia, who initiated policies over more than two decades after the defeat of the 1848 revolution that finally unified different parts of Germany into a powerfully capitalist nation, but as part of a distinctively conservative synthesis. In Prussia - which he guaranteed was Germany's dominant province - the parliament consisted of elected representatives, but the election laws divided the electorate into three groups: the landowning aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the laboring population. The votes of the first two sectors were given greater weight than the third, ensuring that the upper classes would get more representatives than the lower classes.

At the same time, the Prussian monarch - the Kaiser - exercised far-reaching executive powers over all of Germany. Social reforms beneficial to the working class were adopted, but at the same time there were repressive laws against working class organizations. Although land reforms were promulgated to relieve peasant discontent, the domination by the big landowners of the countryside remained intact. In other words, capitalist development blended with aristocratic privilege, social reforms blended with upper-class paternalism, concessions to the principle of representative government blended with continued authoritarianism,

“modernization” blended with the policies of repressive bureaucracies committed to maintaining the relationships of power and privilege associated with the old status quo.

This was the pattern throughout much of Europe, although it unfolded with different variations in different countries. In Russia, for example, there had been no bourgeois-democratic upsurge because the indigenous capitalist class and working class did not exist as a significant force until the last years of the 19th century; therefore, the conservatism and authoritarianism of the monarchist system - Tsarism - were much stronger, and the various “modernizing” reforms comparatively weaker in Russia.

The fact remains that the triumph of the capitalist mode of production in Europe was an accomplished fact by the middle of the 19th century, and the stage was now set for technological and industrial developments so rapid and so profound that they are sometimes said to constitute a “Second Industrial Revolution.” Communication and transportation systems, levels of industrial production and productivity, the size and proportional increase of urban populations, the level of knowledge and general education, the relative and absolute size of the urban working class, the amount of wealth produced by society - such things increased spectacularly, qualitatively transforming the life-rhythms of European culture.

This naturally increased tensions within European society as a whole, including tensions between different factions of the ruling classes on how to respond to new problems and possibilities. Divergences between conservatives and liberals once again became more pronounced. Both appealed to the masses for support - offering, in return, reforms extending the right to vote and also increasing numbers of social reforms (which were easier to grant thanks to economic growth).

The consequent resurgence of mass politics in European life, combined with the growing size and productive power of the working class, led to the regeneration of the European labor movement. Mass socialist parties, and mass trade union movements under left-wing leadership, arose and became powerful forces in the political and economic life of Europe. They were able to force important economic, social, and political reforms from the upper classes - combating authoritarianism and injustice in society’s political life and in capitalism’s factories.

At the same time, they inspired millions of working people with a vision of a socialist

future, in which the power of the capitalists and landowners would be replaced by the power of the working-class majority. Despite the fact that a majority of these parties gradually embraced the theoretical orientation advanced by Karl Marx and combined into unified international associations (first the International Workingmen’s Association, later the Socialist International), divisions opened up among the socialists over how much the revolutionary vision should be compromised for the sake of immediate reforms, and over strategies for attaining socialism. These divisions, and the compromises that spawned them, created a fatal indecisiveness that was to paralyze the socialist movement at the decisive moment in 1914. The fact remains that, up to the First World War, this movement was seen as a powerful challenge to the status quo.

One of the most effective ideological tools utilized by conservatives was nationalism. Nationalism had first been a central component of revolutionary and liberal ideology - linking the ideas of popular sovereignty and national self-determination, celebrating the culture and sense of community of the popular masses.

Conservatives developed forms of nationalism which were designed to blur class differences, accentuating traditionalist cultural elements, glorifying authoritarian symbols, blending patriotism with anti-foreign prejudices and with militarism. They were able to tap into non-rational longings and fears that had been intensified by the dramatic transformations, disruptions, and tensions introduced by the new industrial capitalist order. Liberals and even socialists were affected in some ways by this variation of nationalist ideology that the conservatives developed so skillfully.

If anything, however, this form of intense nationalism was not a source of social stability and cohesion, but rather a reflection of the deep tensions and instability that had become part of the core of modern European life. This instability had at least three fundamental sources:

1. The uncompleted nature of the bourgeois-democratic revolution - resulting from the aristocratic/capitalist compromise - creating an ongoing antagonism between traditionalist values, expectations and cultural norms on the one hand, and the newer bourgeois values, practices and culture on the other. This deep cultural conflict was felt consciously and unconsciously, not only among the upper classes, but within broad sectors of the population.

2. Within the capitalist mode of production, there was a growing contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production. As we have noted, the awesome development of the forces of production encompassed all of society, bringing about profound and rapid changes in the culture and everyday life of all people in society - but none of this was under their control, because the relations of production involved the private ownership of those productive forces by a small self-interested minority of capitalists - and even this minority was driven by impersonal market dynamics which were not really under anyone’s control. The immense changes in society were experienced by large masses as arbitrary, alienating, and threatening.

3. The actual dynamics of the economy contained an additional irrational element. The competition between capitalist firms periodically resulted in overproduction, which would glut the markets, bringing about a collapse in prices and a decline in production and employment - that is, periodic economic depressions. Such problems naturally generated greater tensions and instability.

The development of imperialism provided an economic, political and even psychological outlet for all of these tensions. The obvious economic outlet was, of course, essential: the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (and even North America and vulnerable portions of Europe) offered vital sources of raw materials, important markets for manufactured goods, and virgin territories for profitable investments. The traditionalist ethos of military glory and authoritarian grandeur also found an outlet, as did popular impulses toward a super-patriotic national-chauvinism.

At the same time, imperialism - in addition to being a brutal and oppressive assault on the peoples targeted for exploitation - failed to resolve the contradictions of European society, but simply led to heightened rivalries between different companies and countries over who would control what areas. Such rivalry, combined with the rising tide of nationalism and militarism, created a framework that generated the eruption of the First World War in August 1914.

4. Permanent Revolution

The incredible destructiveness of what one Asian scholar once referred to as “the European civil war” resulted not only in the slaughter of millions of people, but also in a dramatic political and cultural transformation on the European continent. A period combining revolutionary upheaval and

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counter-revolutionary backlash defined the rest of the 20th century. One of the focal-points of this dialectic was Russia, where the theory of uneven and combined development first came to be articulated. The patterns already discussed were dramatically evident there.

At the summit of Russian society was the tyrannical ruler, the Tsar, an absolute monarch. Any opposition to him or to the system over which he ruled could mean arrest, and prison or Siberian exile - or death. Only just below him was a powerful layer of hereditary nobles whose wealth and power was secured through the control of Russia's land and the exploitation of the great majority of the Russian people, who were peasants. The condition of even the fairly well-to-do peasants was impoverished, and the great masses of peasants were deprived of adequate land (monopolized by the rich elite of nobles) and lived in terrible and brutalizing destitution. All of this was justified by the religious hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church, which glorified the Tsar as "our little Father" - a god on earth - and persecuted all who did not accept the doctrines of Russian Orthodoxy. The oppressive second-class status of women received absolute religious justification, as did all policies of the tsarist regime.

The Tsars of Russia had conquered many different peoples, and the tsarist empire was known as the prison-house of nations." At the same time - and most important for Russian development - the tsarist regime felt compelled, under the pressure of competition with other major powers in the world, to modernize aspects of their society - to develop technology and compete in the dynamically growing world market economy. Because of this, it was especially important for the Tsars to develop capitalist industry in Russia.

This gave rise to a small but growing capitalist class of industrialists and financiers, a layer of professionals. It also resulted in a rapidly expanding class of wage-workers and their families - the proletariat. The labor of this working class created the great wealth that flowed from Russian industrialization, and workers in the factories were exploited intensively - laboring long hours, often in unhealthy and unsafe conditions, pushed hard by factory managers, and paid low wages. It was illegal for workers to organize trade unions to press for improved pay and conditions. In the growing cities workers and their families lived in crowded and impoverished circumstances.

Such realities as these gave rise to a growing revolutionary movement, in which Leon

Trotsky became involved. He would become a theorist and leader of the revolutionary movement second in stature only to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. In the context of intense struggles, Trotsky developed an analysis of the peculiarities of Russian history that defined it as "uneven and combined development," and flowing from this he crafted a strategic orientation known as the theory of permanent revolution.

Trotsky's theory linked the struggle for democracy - freedom of expression, equal rights for all, and rule by the people - with the struggle for socialism, a society in which the great majority of people would own and control the economic resources of society to allow for the free development of all. It also linked the struggle for revolution in Russia with the cause of socialist revolution throughout the world. The theory contained three basic points. One held that the revolutionary struggle for democracy in Russia could only be won under the leadership of the working class with the support of the peasant majority. The second point held that this democratic revolution would begin in Russia a transitional period in which all political, social, cultural and economic relations would continue to be in flux, leading in the direction of socialism. The third point held that this transition would be part of, and would help to advance, and would also be furthered by an international revolutionary process.

The first aspect of Trotsky's theory was related to his understanding that the relatively weak capitalist class of Russian businessmen was dependent on the tsarist system, and that the capitalists would be too frightened of the revolutionary masses to lead in the overthrow of tsarist tyranny. The struggle for democracy and human rights could only be advanced consistently and finally won under the leadership of the working class, which was capable of organizing labor unions and political organizations in Russia's cities and towns. Allied with the workers would be the vast peasantry hungry for land, as well as other oppressed social layers - women, oppressed ethnic and national groups, religious minorities, and dissident intellectuals. A victorious worker-led revolution would bring the working class to political power. In other words, democratic revolutions in so-called "backward" countries such as tsarist Russia must spill over into working-class revolutions.

The second aspect of Trotsky's theory was related to the understanding that the victorious revolutionary working class would not be willing to turn political power over to their capitalist bosses. Instead, they would - with the support of the peasants - consolidate

their own rule through democratic councils (known in Russia as "soviets") and their own people's army. Under working-class rule there would be dramatic efforts

- ❖ to spread education,
- ❖ to create universal literacy,
- ❖ to make the benefits of culture available to all,
- ❖ to provide universal health care to all as a matter of right,
- ❖ to ensure that decent housing would be available for all,
- ❖ to secure full and equal rights for women and all others oppressed in the old society,
- ❖ and to include all people in building and developing an economy that would sustain the free development of all.

Increasingly, the development of society in this transitional period would move beyond the framework of capitalism and in the direction of socialism.

The third aspect of Trotsky's theory was related to his understanding that capitalism is a global system that can only be replaced by socialism on a global scale. It was his conviction that it would not be possible to create a socialist democracy in an economically underdeveloped country such as Russia surrounded by a hostile capitalist world. In fact, a working-class revolution in one country would inevitably generate counter-revolutionary responses in surrounding countries - with efforts to repress the revolution. At the same time, it would inspire the workers and oppressed of countries throughout the world.

The Russian revolution would be one of a series of revolutions in country after country throughout the world. This would come about not only because of the example of revolutionary Russia, but especially because of the desire of more and more workers and oppressed people in all countries to end the exploitation and hardship that - Trotsky believed - are the inevitable result of capitalism. The process of socialist revolution can begin within a single country, but socialism can only be created on a global scale.

This orientation, was reflected in the orientation not only of Trotsky but - by the spring of 1917 - also of the Russian socialist movement's most revolutionary wing, the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin. An immense upsurge of the working-class and the peasantry, after sweeping away the tsarist

regime, came under Bolshevik sway, culminating in the establishment of a revolutionary workers' government supported by the peasantry.

The combination of the First World War and the Russian Revolution helped to generate revolutionary upheavals on a global scale. The devastating impact of the war not only had disastrous consequences for the populations of Europe (particularly for the continent's working classes), but they also undermined the ability of Europe's "great powers" to maintain their colonial empires. The example of Russia's insurgent workers and peasants inspired masses of people on every continent to struggle more militantly against oppressive realities. The Russian revolutionaries led by Lenin and Trotsky sought to connect with revolutionaries of all countries, establishing the Communist International to aid in the spread of revolutions.

As it turned out, however, the global revolutionary ferment was not able to overcome the resistance of the ruling classes of most countries. Throughout Europe, the ruling powers joined to establish a cordon sanitaire to protect their populations from Bolshevik contagion, and to give massive aid to counter-revolutionary elements in Russia waging a bloody civil war against the Bolsheviks. In some countries revolutionary uprisings and movements were brutally suppressed, in others dramatic concessions were made to more moderate (and absolutely anti-revolutionary) sectors of the social-democratic labor movement to divert the working-class away from the overthrow of capitalism. In some countries, such as Germany, both things happened. The Russian Communists found themselves isolated in a hostile capitalist world. The Russian revolution's isolation led to bureaucratic, authoritarian, and murderous distortions of Communism in the Soviet Union and (due to the influence of the Stalin regime that arose after Lenin's death) throughout the Communist movements of other countries.

5. Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Inter-War Europe

Those who led their countries into the devastation of the First World War utilized an unbridled and murderous "patriotism" that placed militarism into the center of the national ethos. Among the masses of people who were swept into intense political life in the wake of the war, not all were drawn to the banner of Communism or to the more moderate appeals of social-democracy. Interpenetrating elements - ultra-patriotic and militarist forms of nationalism; a glorification of violence, racism, and

"benign" tyranny rooted in the maintenance of colonial empires; the searing and brutalizing experience of the world war; long-standing ethnic tensions; deeply-rooted patriarchal and authoritarian mores; uneven combinations of horror and fascination and attraction over the challenge of rapid industrialization and "modernization" to traditional values and ways of life - all fed into a political culture that culminated in the crystallization of a new mass political movement that replaced monarchist-absolutism at the extreme right of the political spectrum: fascism.

Fascism involved a strident and militaristic nationalism, employing radical or populist rhetoric, which sought to overcome class conflict (and the threat of left-wing revolution) through a combination of extreme political authoritarianism, a "corporate state" enforcing cooperation between labor and capital, in practice preserving and reinforcing large capitalist corporations while providing at least modest social welfare programs for the masses. Arising first in Italy under the leadership of Benito Mussolini, it assumed various forms, with its German version - the Nazi movement of Adolf Hitler - making the most thoroughgoing racism a centerpiece of ideology and policy. It is noteworthy that this extreme right-wing nationalism evolved in two countries where, on the one hand, the crystallization of nation-states had been delayed until late in the 19th century, involving far-reaching compromises and admixtures between modern (capitalist) and traditional (pre-capitalist) upper classes; on the other hand, where the working-class Left was particularly strong.

An essential element in the coming of fascism in both Italy and Germany was the fact that there were mass upsurges in both countries, arising out of profound political and economic crises. It appeared that triumphant revolutions could have resulted, but weaknesses in revolutionary leadership blocked such possibilities. Disappointed hopes among masses of people combined with extreme fears generated among the upper classes and deepening anxieties among sectors of the intermediate "middle classes." This dynamic generated for the rising wave of fascism burgeoning recruits and supporters from sectors of the middle and lower classes and, from sectors of the upper classes, an inclination toward both official and informal encouragement, as well as generous material resources.

The relative isolation of Soviet Russia - transformed into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), whose boundaries corresponded to the old Russian empire - contributed decisively to the

transformation of Communism into a grotesque blend of dogmatized Marxism and "modernized" tsarist absolutism. Under Josef Stalin, a conception of creating "socialism in one country" (an industrially-backward USSR) both reflected and further contributed to three profound developments:

1. a distancing of the Soviet regime from a commitment to spreading the world socialist revolution, now deemed unnecessary for the triumph of socialism in the USSR (leading to the eventual dissolution of the Communist International);
2. an institutionalization of bureaucratic dictatorship as representing "working-class rule" and as the initiator of a brutalizing "revolution-from-above" designed to overcome economic backwardness through forced collectivization of the land and rapid industrialization;
3. the de-linking of democracy and equality from the meaning of socialism (now redefined narrowly as state ownership and planning-oriented control of the economy).

"Socialism in one country" helped to transform Communist parties of various countries from revolutionary working-class organizations to vehicles meant to advance or resist revolutionary struggles depending on the narrow, nationalistically-defined foreign policy needs of the USSR. The "revolution from above" required the concentration of political, economic, social, and cultural power in a few hands, at the expense of the majority of workers and peasants. This concentration of power, advanced by new technologies (and labeled by some as "totalitarianism"), had much in common with developments in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy - with the key difference that capitalism's market economy was replaced by a collectivized "planned economy," and that lip-service continued to be paid to democratic, humanistic, and egalitarian ideals repugnant to the likes of Hitler and Mussolini.

The brutality associated with Stalinism was justified by its partisans as a necessary element in dragging "backward Russia" into a modernized existence that would be beneficial to the majority of its laboring population (who were already being offered certain benefits - the right to education, health care and other social services, employment, etc. - previously unavailable). This would, it was argued, eventually become increasingly democratic, and would increasingly prove to be a powerful example for peoples around the world. And to many it seemed to represent a practical, compelling

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alternative to the capitalist status quo and to the fascist "new order."

The dramatic economic downturn in the global capitalist economy represented by the Great Depression (1929-1939), with massive business failures and unemployment, generated a sharpening polarization between Left and Right throughout Europe, and also an intensified competition between various capitalist nations seeking markets, raw materials, and investment opportunities on a global scale. Related to this, there was a growing militarism requiring large-scale state expenditures which - in the fascist-dominated nation's first - revived the economy of one capitalist country after another.

The explosion of the Second World War (1939-1945) resulted, far more than the First, in an incredible trauma, in which different portions of the global, and different global realities, came together in lethal and profoundly transformative combinations. In a sense, this was several different wars combined. One involved a murderous confrontation between several contending capitalist empires, while another involved a no less murderous confrontation between Nazism and Communism. There was also an ideological confrontation between democratic and egalitarian ideals on one side and idealized dictatorship and racial purity on the other. For many, the war was a defense of their homeland against a ruthless foreign invader. Among the Allies, there were partisans of imperialism and anti-colonial revolutionaries, those reaching for a socialist future and those determined to save a capitalist status quo.

The consequences of the war were, of course, devastating for the losers - Germany, Italy, and Japan - and brought extreme discredit to fascism in all its varieties, and brought discredit also to much of the tangled ideological sources of fascism (national and ethnic chauvinism, anti-democratic thought, racism, militarism). Among the victors, the war ushered in disintegration and danger, and a new global power struggle that one perceptive partisan foretold would culminate in "the American Century."

6. Complexities of the 20th Century's Last Half

Here it is useful to remind ourselves that what is presented here corresponds to a "Westernization" conceptual model, which needs to be modified by a more complex employment of the "Southernization" conceptualization. Nonetheless, the process and importance of Westernization is undeniable.

Throughout the 19th and 20th century, we find - through a brutal colonialist imperialism as well as an "open door" and "good neighbor" imperialism - the spread and growing predominance of the market economy, with its subordination of more and more aspects of life to the accumulation process and cash nexus, and also with its crystallization of a very specific socio-economic class structure throughout Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other capitalistically "underdeveloped" areas (although often intertwined with earlier socio-economic formations and stratifications). To deal with what were often profoundly invasive, violent, and oppressive realities associated with this economic expansionism, growing sectors of the native population utilized various tools for conceptualization and resistance drawn from Western experience - notions of nationalism, race and ethnicity, democracy, socialism, etc. (although generally, again, dynamically combined with earlier cultural patterns).

Beginning in the wake of World War II (and in large measure due to its destructive impact on European power), a wave of radical anti-colonial and nationalist revolutions challenged and dissolved the European empires through the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. This revolutionary wave coincided and in some areas intersected with a powerful surge of Communist expansion.

This Communist expansion in some cases took place through the efforts of indigenous parties that had played central roles in resistance struggles during World War II (China, Yugoslavia, partially in Vietnam and Korea, almost in Greece). To a large extent it came about due to the central role of the USSR in defeating Nazi Germany and rolling back Hitler's legions throughout Eastern Europe - and then placing pro-Soviet regimes in power throughout the region. This was carried out, initially, with the reluctant agreement of its capitalist allies (especially the U.S. and Britain) in 1943-45 thanks to Stalin's sincere promise to reign in Communist parties in other portions of Europe (particularly in Italy and France, where they had played central roles in the resistance movements and might have moved to take power). Soon the acquiescence turned into Cold War hostility, particularly as Western European regimes sought to check leftist-influenced anti-colonial insurgencies and dominant forces in the United States sought to realize the "American Century."

The Cold War of 1946-89 involved a global confrontation - short of total war, but marked by multiple smaller wars, diplomatic maneuvering, economic rivalries, coups and counter-coups, insurgencies, counter-

insurgencies, massive two-way propaganda barrages, espionage, and an arms race involving weapons that could destroy the entire population of the planet several times over. The diminished power of Europe's capitalist democracies forced them to accept U.S. leadership in a "free world" coalition.

It was not necessary for a nation to be free or democratic to be part of the "free world" (some were, in fact, ruled by vicious and unpopular dictatorships) - it was necessary only to be pro-capitalist, anti-Communist, and accepting of U.S. leadership in the Cold War. Within the advanced capitalist democracies of Western Europe, however, the capitalist economic and political forces (fearing potentially revolutionary working-class militancy and the threat of Communism) established far-reaching agreements with the moderate, social-democratic labor movements (both political parties and trade unions) for extensive "welfare state" programs providing substantial benefits in increased incomes, education, health care, housing, social security, unemployment insurance, etc. These countries enjoyed a long wave of prosperity that significantly improved working-class living standards (as was the case, along with an increasingly robust consumerism, throughout the advanced-industrial capitalist world). In exchange for these benefits, the leaderships of these labor movements agreed to help preserve capitalism, and in some case also to support efforts to maintain colonialism.

Such "welfare state" benefits (minus the robust consumerism) were provided also by the regimes of the Communist Bloc, along with the elimination of capitalist enterprises and the establishment of state ownership and control over the economy. While this was done in the name of the working class and "the people," however, it was the Communist parties in each of these countries that had a monopoly on political power, maintained according to the bureaucratic-authoritarian Stalinist model. While the new Communist regimes were expected to follow the leadership of the USSR in the Cold War and in other matters, in those countries where Communist parties had taken power with popular support (instead of being placed in power by the USSR), a powerful pull toward independence began to assert itself - first with Yugoslavia, later with China.

A significant number of the newly-independent nations emerging from colonialism, particularly those under left-leaning but non-Communist leaders, chose to align themselves neither with the Communist Bloc nor with the "free world" of their old colonial oppressors. Both of the Cold War's

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contending power blocs sought to increase their influence in this sphere, offering economic aid and various alliances designed to bring them closer to one camp or the other. Throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America, however, there was a powerful desire to find paths of economic development that would nurture at least relative independence and "modernization."

An influential model for economic, social, and political development - "modernization theory" - utilized an interpretation of the historical experience of Western Europe and North America to propose a path for the "less developed" countries. The development of capitalism generated industrialization, which generated greater wealth and new variations of social differentiation, in turn breaking down stagnant customs and traditional hierarchies, generating political pluralism, democracy, prosperity - and all the benefits of modernization. Therefore, the solution for Asia, Africa, and Latin America would be for Western capitalist governments to offer economic aid, and especially for Western business corporations to make investments in these regions, leading to greater capitalist economic development, with the consequent modernization pay-offs in the social, cultural and political realms.

Obviously, "modernization theory" was consistent with the open door/good neighbor variants of economic expansionism advanced by U.S. foreign policy, and also increasingly the foreign policies of the post-colonialist Western European powers. In fact, it was an ideological and policy-making tool in the Cold War struggle. Another aspect of that struggle was a tendency of the United States and other Western capitalist nations to oppose de-stabilizing nationalist, anti-imperialist struggles - especially if in any way tainted with left-wing and especially Communist influences. Often U.S. and Western European policy-makers preferred to support unpopular and anti-democratic regimes when they were challenged by popular insurgencies.

An analysis counterposed to "modernization theory" (and consistent with the theory of uneven and combined development) took the form of what has become known as dependency theory. According to this analysis, the path of economic development followed by such countries as Britain and the United States in an earlier historical period is no longer open. The advanced capitalist nations are now determined to maintain their dominance in the global economy. Any economic aid they give to an "underdeveloped" country will not be allowed to make their economies competitive with those of advanced capitalist countries, but rather to make them develop in a manner

that is in harmony with the needs of the advanced capitalist countries - which means, in a sense, to keep them under-developed. The investments of business corporations from advanced capitalist countries, similarly, are not designed to facilitate genuine "modernization," but rather to maximize profits for the businesses of the advanced countries. They wish to pump wealth out of the less developed countries, not to contribute to progress or rising living standards for the populations of the underdeveloped regions. Nor would the policies of governments or corporations from the advanced capitalist countries be designed to promote democracy in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Genuine democracy could result in "instability" in the form of popular protests against and powerful challenges to the profit-hungry outsiders. This explained why U.S. political and economic interests preferred repressive regimes that would guarantee "stability" and higher profit margins.

Influenced by such perspectives in the late 1950s and 1960s, rebels throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America initiated revolutionary struggles, challenging traditional elites and also the ostensible "modernizers" whose policies actually led to imperialist entanglements. In many cases becoming principled opponents of capitalism, they gravitated to variants of Marxist programs and Communist organization. They often tended to view political realities from a prism similar to that of permanent revolution: the democratic struggle (against imperialism, against dictatorship, for human rights and equal rights for all, for land reform, for a decent life for all) could only be secured through the struggles of the laboring masses, whose revolutionary struggle must culminate in their own political power, which would result in socialist-oriented economic development.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, however, posited an increasingly successful wave of working-class revolutions, particularly in advance industrial countries, which would give aid to each other as they collectively moved forward to create a world socialist economy. An attempt to create socialism in one country, or even in a scattering of economically undeveloped countries, could not be successful with such a global revolutionary socialist expansion. In the advanced industrial countries of Western Europe, however, the largely socialist-oriented workers who identified with labor parties and social-democratic parties, and even the many workers who were members of Communist parties, were economically relatively well-off and not inclined to make a revolution. In this situation, the USSR and

Communist Bloc stood as a substitute for international socialist revolution as the force that could provide for the survival and assistance required for an "underdeveloped" country to embark on a non-capitalist path of development. One dramatic example of this beginning in 1959 was the Cuban revolution.

This was problematical in more than one way. The USSR and Communist Bloc were prepared to lend support not from principle but from pragmatic and often manipulative considerations in the Cold War power struggle. This meant that under certain circumstances they would be fully prepared to withhold, reduce, or withdraw support. They might also be inclined to impose restrictions or conditions consistent with their own narrow foreign policy needs. They were also inclined to influence revolutionaries of other lands to adopt attitudes, structures, and policies consistent with their own Stalinist traditions.

In the Communist countries, lip-service might be paid to democracy, human rights, and control over the economy by the laboring masses, but this was far from the reality. The bureaucratic regimes were increasingly losing whatever genuine confidence, respect and support they may have once enjoyed among their own populations. Uprisings of workers, students, and others were violently repressed in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), Poland (1981) - and gradually many dissidents who might have argued for "socialism with a human face" saw no human possibilities at all in this system called "socialism." The centrally and bureaucratically controlled economy - the so-called "command economy" - proved increasingly vulnerable to mismanagement, not to mention the endemic inequalities and corruptions that had been manifest from almost the beginning. Some Communist Bloc countries, seeking to avoid economic stagnation and impasse, dabbled with "market reforms" (which introduced elements of incoherence into their economic reality) and secured substantial loans from Western capitalist banks (which had fatal consequences when a downturn in the global economy made it impossible for them to overcome the accumulation of debts).

The 1960s and 1970s saw ferment, radicalization, and insurgency on a global scale, most dramatically in Asia, Africa, and Latin America - but also taking the form of a youth radicalization embracing not only students but also sections of the working class of the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe, and also in Eastern Europe. In many cases, the ferment swept past the existing Communist and social-democratic

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organizations and found expression in a proliferation and expansion of “far left” groups (although ultimately the traditional organizations were able to attract much of this youthful ferment). In the West, there was mobilization around anti-imperialism, opposition to bureaucratic and alienating structures, anti-racism, feminism, anti-militarism, environmentalism, free speech and more. And sections of the trade union movement were impacted as well.

In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, however, there were organizations that developed both the capacity and the will to take political power through revolutionary struggle. In Western Europe those organizations having the capacity to take power (as opposed simply to winning elections in order to run the capitalist state) did not have the will to try. There were many activists, especially among the young, who may have had the will - but they did not have adequate organizations or sufficient mass support. And within the Communist Bloc, with the remarkable exception of Poland at certain moments, the repressiveness of the state apparatus seemed too thoroughgoing to allow for more than seemingly ineffectual dissent.

In reflecting on the developments as they stood in the 1980s, one is tempted to play with the formulation “uneven and combined development” by noting that the three very unevenly developed sectors of the world revolution - the advanced capitalist countries, the Communist Bloc, and the exploited regions of the global South - while influencing and altering each other in important ways, ultimately failed to combine into a coherent and triumphant challenge to the status quo.

7. Problems of Permanent Revolution

If treated as a dogma rather than an analytical tool, the theory of permanent revolution stands challenged and discredited by developments of the late 20th century. A bloc of nations on many continents - for example, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Mexico, Brazil, India, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Turkey, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria - appeared to be following the path from “backwardness” to “modernization” (and, more or less, to realization of “democratic tasks”) without a worker-peasant revolution culminating in a workers’ state moving toward socialism.

The fact is that Trotsky explicitly denied that the theory of permanent revolution was a schema or practical recipe applicable equally everywhere from Paris to Honolulu. It is, above all, an analytical tool that can inform

political strategies, but that cannot be valid if it is utilized as an excuse for not actually studying the specifics and peculiarities of each national and cultural reality. As Trotsky developed it, the theory - far from seeking to establish a closed theoretical-strategic orientation - was part of an “open” and critical-minded approach to revolutionary analysis and strategy. To make sense of the various “exceptions,” it is necessary to determine to what extent they are incomplete exceptions, and to what extent they may be either exceptions that prove or overturn the “rule” of permanent revolution - a task which goes beyond the present paper.

One could argue, however, that, to the extent that the theory is utilized to provide a strategic orientation, it is consistent with the traditional revolutionary Marxist orientation arguing that the full human needs and rights of the working class, of other exploited toilers, and of all oppressed sectors of the population can only be realized through a thoroughgoing democracy that can only be achieved by the laboring majority taking political power and establishing planful control over the economy. The struggle for democratic demands, if followed all the way, necessary spills over into the struggle for socialism. (This makes the theory relevant not only to “underdeveloped” regions, but also to advanced capitalist nations.)

In the 1980s, another challenge to the theory seemed to be posed by revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean, particularly the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. In this situation, a popular revolution of the partially proletarianized “laboring masses” - led by Marxist-oriented revolutionaries - was mobilized largely as a democratic revolution, culminating in a regime based solidly on mass support, but that instead of moving forward to socialism (taking “the Cuban road”), the Sandinistas doggedly sought to maintain a “mixed economy” with state, cooperative, and private sectors. While some dogmatists accused the Sandinistas of “betraying” the revolution, more realistic analysts noted that - given the dramatic erosion and increasing disintegration of the power of the USSR and Communist Bloc in that period - the “Cuban road” (moving toward the replacement of capitalism with a nationalized planned economy) was not an option for a small nation hoping to survive within the global capitalist economy. This was seen by some as a demonstration that Trotsky’s theory had proved to be invalid.

A careful examination of Trotsky’s theory, however, indicates that this particular critique is based on a serious misunderstanding. A central component of the theory of permanent revolution asserts that when a workers’ state

comes to power, a transitional period opens up that includes the development of precisely such a “mixed economy” as came into being in revolutionary Nicaragua. The theory’s crowning assertion is that such a development can find completion in socialism only as the revolution expands on the international stage, with workers’ states coming to power in more and more countries, including industrial advanced countries. Only on a global scale can a socialist economy come into being. The eventual defeat of the Sandinistas (as a force for socialist revolution) was inevitable given the stalemate and defeat of the revolutionary upsurge in Central America, the collapse of the Communist Bloc, and the failure of working-class revolutions to triumph in other countries (such as Iran, South Africa, Brazil, etc.).

Setting aside such a specific misunderstanding, and setting aside the elevation of Trotsky’s theory into a messianic expression of revolutionary triumphalism, there is an additional argument that could be made in the theory’s defense. To the extent that political strategies consistent with the theory of permanent revolution have failed:

- ❖ to that extent have the movements and struggles of the working class been compromised, eroded, dismantled;
- ❖ to that extent has the promise of “the democratic revolution” been compromised, hollowed out, tragically incomplete - despite real gains made in one or another realm of society;
- ❖ to that extent have terrible inequalities persisted, deepened, and contributed to the erosion of the integrity and viability of the specific society (and of the world).

This relates to recent discussions regarding the possibility of eliminating global poverty. In 2000 the United Nations initiated a Millennium Development Goals campaign. This projected the realization of the following eight goals: 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability; and 8) develop a global partnership for development.

These goals, supported by 190 governments around the world, are to be realized by 2015, as an initial step to assuring a decent life for the world’s peoples, involving very specific sub-goals and practical policy projections. For example, of the world’s six billion

people, half live on less than \$2 per day, but 1.3 billion live on less than \$1 per day - and the goal by 2015 is to cut this number of the "most impoverished" in half.

If these goals can be achieved within the framework of global capitalism, and then progressively advanced upon, a case can be made for the final obsolescence of the theory of permanent revolution. But to the extent that the goals - which, given existing resources, have been shown to be perfectly realizable - prove to be unrealized under the present structures of wealth and power, considerable validity must be credited to at least some variant of Trotsky's theory.

On the other hand, to the extent that there is a decomposition of the political organizations and capacities for class consciousness and struggle on the part of the working class and other sectors of the toiling masses, without an accompanying recomposition of the actual or potential power of the laboring majorities of the various countries and cultures of our planet, to that extent the theory of permanent revolution will cease to have practical relevance.

Regardless of any problems related to the theory of permanent revolution, the fact remains that the overarching theory of uneven and combined development can be shown to be valid (that is, to be a useful and illuminating analytical tool) for historians, anthropologists and other social scientists seeking to understand the developments and complexities of human existence in Europe and beyond.

8. The Past Flows Into the Future

In the past two decades (1985-2005), uneven and combined development has continued to shape the world in which we live.

One of the most dramatic instances has been the decline and collapse of the Communist Bloc. With the failure of working-class revolution to spread to advanced industrial countries, the relative isolation of the USSR (and then the bloc of countries under its tutelage) contributed to a fateful combination of progressive Marxist ideology and goals with reactionary and repressive traditions from the pre-revolutionary period. Bureaucratic elites were increasingly prone to increasingly prone to compromise revolutionary principles and goals internationally and internally, becoming in many ways indistinguishable from other privileged and oppressive elites.

The glowing promise of human liberation was increasingly turned into hypocritical propaganda and bombast. Popular hopes and expectations were increasingly transformed

into bitter disappointment, disillusionment, and passive hostility. The increasingly unstoppable interpenetration of the cultures of Eastern and Western Europe contributed mightily to the collapse of popular support or acquiescence, particularly given the growing inability of the so-called "command economy" - after initial successes in establishing heavy industry and basic social programs - to compete with or resist the incursions of the dynamics of global capitalism.

The corrosive impact of Stalinist traditions and the inadequacies of the "command economy" had a profound impact beyond the collapsing USSR and Communist Bloc. Particularly as the collapse occurred, rebel regimes of Asia, Africa and Latin America that had been dependent on the Soviet model and on trade and aid from the Communist Bloc found themselves increasingly isolated, vulnerable, and in many cases unviable. There was a powerful tendency toward rapid degeneration into some of the worst forms of tyranny, compromise and corruption. Some joined the ranks of the so-called "failed states" fragmented by internal divisions, often exacerbated by contending outside economic interests. To a growing extent, multi-national corporations from the "developed" North, while distressed over consequent instabilities, no longer faced dilemmas posed by the threat of left-wing insurgencies.

Communism's collapse obviously meant an end, for the most part, of Western Europe's large Communist movement, which increasingly evolved (or collapsed) into the capitalist-friendly reformism long associated with traditional social-democratic orientations. At the same time, Western Europe (and other parts of the globe) saw a conservative free market assault on the welfare state and social compact that had been secured in the wake of the Great Depression and World War II: a seemingly unstoppable "neo-liberal" wave of privatization, dismantling social programs, breaking unions, driving down working-class living standards - accompanied by soaring corporate profits, the breaking of unions, and the dramatic decline of social-democracy and the collapse of labor reformism.

Triumphant capitalism unleashed similar dynamics throughout the world, accelerated by new technologies and divisions of labor that - under the banner of "Globalization" - has drawn the diverse cultures and unevenly developed regions of the world into an increasingly intimate if unstable mix.

This has brought an incredibly violent reaction from some sectors of the world,

exacerbated by increasingly desperate impoverishment, indignation over violations national sovereignty, and rage over the pollution of cultural traditions - with a backward-looking religious fundamentalism combining with technologies and other cultural influences from the "advanced" West. It is unlikely that the consequent dialectic of terrorism and counter-terrorism will play itself out in the near future.

In opposition to this lethal dialectic, and to the overarching reality of corporate-capitalist globalization, there have been stirrings of a so-called "globalization from below." A variety of oppositional forces - fragments of the traditional Left from various regions of different continents blending with vibrant representatives from a variety of new social movements and political formations, also from various regions of different continents - have come together in massive and worldwide global justice mobilizations, in the World Social Forums, and in international campaigns around a number of issues.

In the present historical moment of 2005, we see the continuing dynamic of uneven and combined development. On the one hand, European elites seek to a more sweepingly pan-national European Union that might facilitate a sharper contestation with U.S. hegemony - even as their economies and cultures entwine ever more intimately with those of the American Empire. On the other hand, masses of "ordinary" Europeans influence each other across borders with their various struggles to maintain national-cultural identities and decent living standards - saying "NO" to a Europe-wide constitution that would undermine national sovereignty and facilitate the further advance of neo-liberal policies.

The past flows into the future in a never-ending swirl and collision of uneven and combined developments.

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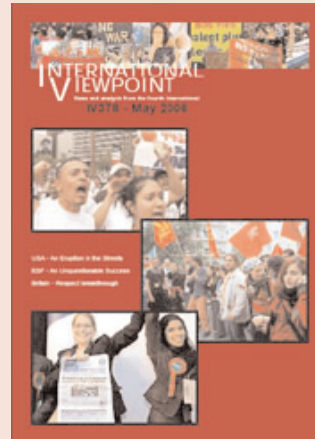
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Chris Brooks is part of the IV editorial team. Chris is a member of the International Socialist Group, the British section of the Fourth International.