

Workers' Liberty

emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself

IRISH REPUBLICANISM

Where is
republicanism
going?

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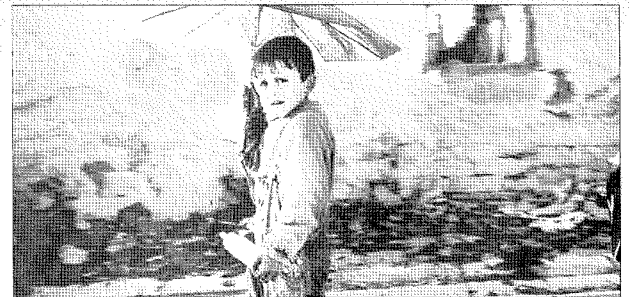
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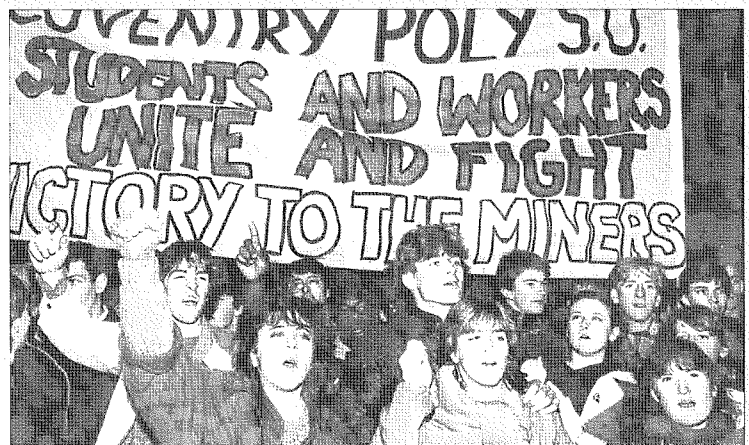
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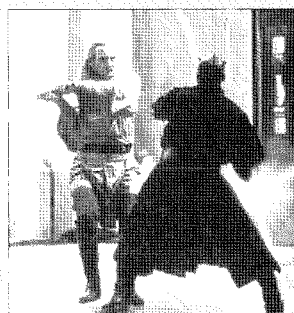
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Where is Republicanism going?

LET us stand back for a moment from the immediate crisis in Northern Ireland, the stalemate in which the Good Friday Agreement is — barring miracles — terminally stuck. We will look back to a terrible event.

In Derry city on Sunday 30 January 1972, 14 unarmed men, many in their teens, were shot dead by British paratroopers. Many more were wounded. They had taken part in a banned march to protest against internment in Northern Ireland. As the demonstrators dispersed, the paratroopers opened fire — and kept firing.

A contemporary left-wing paper commented: “The Civil Rights demonstration was seen as the ‘peaceful’ wing of the general Republican mobilisation. The butchering of the demonstrators is the measure of the desperate panic of both Army and Government in the face of the strength of the Republican movement.

“The extreme violence used on peaceful demonstrators against the newly-opened internment camp at Magilligan a week previously was only a foretaste. Somewhere along the line between Magilligan and Derry the death sentence, on a lottery basis, was imposed for breaches of the ban on demonstrations.

“That must have been a political decision. Any Army indiscipline or excess of zeal occurred within the confines of Government policy.”

Soon after this spectacular atrocity by servants of the British state, the Official IRA bombed the Officers’ Mess at Aldershot. Emergency legislation was rushed through Parliament by the Tory government. Amongst other things it made Bloody Sunday retrospectively legal.

When it came to the vote in the House of Commons, not one single Labour MP voted against the government — not a Labour liberal, not a Stalinoid, not an honest leftie, not one meagre Tony Benn of them! They let it through peacefully, without, so to speak, firing a shot. The paper quoted above (*Workers’ Fight*) commented:

“Only a party like Her Majesty’s loyal ‘Labour’ opposition... would help get the Tories off the hook over Derry... not one Labour MP supported Bernadette Devlin in opposing the emergency legislation which was rushed through the Commons to place the stamp of ‘legality’ on the British Army terror — including the Derry massacre — in Ulster! Not a single one declined to endorse the Army in Ulster, even though they had all made the expected noises of horror over Derry only three weeks ago.

“For these ladies and gentlemen of the Right and of the Left, everything revolves around the exchange of polite meaningless words, or equally meaningless ‘angry’ words, as they play musical chairs with the Tories in Parliament.”

It was one measure of the horror which the IRA and anything linked to militarist Irish Republicanism inspired in the British labour

movement then.

The interest of these reminiscences lies in the stark contrast with what is happening now. In the negotiations at the end of June and early July, the New Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, turned himself into an auxiliary of Sinn Féin/IRA, twisting Unionist arms for them, publicly lying that he had got assurances from Sinn Féin/IRA that they would disarm, trying to persuade the Unionist leaders to do a deal with them — one which the Unionist leaders could not possibly have sold to their own supporters. It would probably have meant the end for the left liberal Unionist leader David Trimble, and the collapse of the Good Friday Agreement for lack of enough Protestant support in the Assembly.

The Good Friday Agreement was, despite the widespread yearning for peace in Northern Ireland, an unsubstantial thing. Unless the issues like disarmament that have so far stopped the Agreement becoming political reality had been evaded, there would have been no Good Friday Agreement. In order to secure a majority for the Good Friday Agreement in the referendum, Blair gave a public assurance in writing that prisoners would not be released without the surrender of guns. A few months ago he had to admit it publicly: if the release of prisoners were to be stopped, the “peace process” would abort. He now has little credibility with Unionists.

In late August, Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, after reviewing all the options, pronounced that, yes, the IRA had killed, and (like its Protestant counterparts) rules “its own” people with terror and murder. But the ceasefire still holds.

The distinction between bombing cities and killing police and soldiers on one side, and on the other the “house-cleaning” within their own ranks and in the IRA-controlled Catholic ghettos, is central to Government attitudes. Fear of the resumption of the IRA war in British cities dominates the British Government.

ON Wednesday 21 July, the Provisional IRA declared publicly that it will not disarm. That this is their position has long been clear. The 1994-6 ceasefire broke down, says the IRA statement, “on the demand by the Conservative government for an IRA surrender [in fact for decommissioning of arms]. Those who demand the decommissioning of IRA weapons lend themselves in the current political context... to the failed agenda which seeks the defeat of the IRA. The British Government have the power to change that context and should do so.”

The immediate consequence of the IRA statement must be to rule out the possibility that, so long as the Sinn Féin/IRA maintains its “position”, there can now be sufficient Protestant-Unionist support for a power-sharing Belfast government that includes Sinn Féin, the political side of the IRA/Sinn Féin coin.

The first IRA ceasefire had been prepared over a long period of secret talks involving a number of governments — the Irish, British, the US — and political parties. A “Pan-Nationalist Alliance” had come into existence. This consisted of Fianna Fail in the South; the Northern Irish constitutional Nationalists, the SDLP, led by John Hume; Sinn Féin/IRA; and the powerful American Irish political lobby. The idea was that the Pan-Nationalist Alliance, taking account of the likelihood of a Six Counties Catholic majority in a decade or so, and using US and EU influence, was strong enough to get much of what Irish nationalists want, but “peacefully”.

Sinn Féin/IRA were disappointed by John Major. Once the ceasefire was in being, the British government took up the Unionist demand that the IRA must disarm before all-inclusive political negotiations could start. Otherwise, there would have been a Unionist boycott. The demand that Britain “become persuaders” of the

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Unionists, reiterated again and again in Gerry Adams' speeches, fell on deaf ears. The ceasefire broke down.

WITH the second IRA ceasefire in 1997, the Blair Government did become "persuaders". In 1998 and recently, the British have thrown their whole weight into "persuading" the Unionists. That failed.

Now? Read: "The Unionist political leadership remains at this time opposed to a democratic peace settlement... the primary responsibility for the developing political crisis remains squarely with the British Government. They have once again demonstrated a lack of political will to confront the Unionist veto." The IRA statement after the June-July talks is a gross misrepresentation: the stumbling block was Sinn Fein/IRA's unwillingness to do even token decommissioning. Leave that aside. What exactly is there left for Britain to do? In fact, under the Good Friday Agreement, if enough Protestants (or Catholics) refuse to work the Agreement, there is no way Britain and Dublin can compel them. With their eye on the future, the Provos are upping the ante: Britain, they believe, will eventually have to coerce the Protestants into a united Ireland. If bombs go off again that will be the Provisional IRA's political objective.

It is an objective that socialists and democrats should not support. It cannot bring a solution.

The Catholics, of course, have been the main victims of partition. Their revolt against it was a just revolt. But the conflict between the two peoples on the island must be resolved democratically. Forcing about a million Protestant-Unionists into a united Ireland against their will would be no improvement on forcing the Northern Ireland Catholics against their will to be part of the Six Counties, once-Protestant Unionist state.

If the British and Irish governments were to do what Sinn Fein/IRA want, it would be to substitute for the old injustice against the Catholics a new one against the Protestants — and lead to new instabilities.

Blair has a massive personal-political motive now to salvage what he can. But will the SDLP and the Irish government allow him to, if it requires excluding Sinn Fein/IRA from government? That would be a shift from an all-inclusive approach to reliance on a coalition of the "centre", the SDLP and Trimble Unionists.

In the recent negotiations, the so-called "Pan-Nationalist Alliance" showed just how strong it is. At the end, the Trimble Unionists indicated a willingness to "take a risk for peace". They let it be known that they would "risk" forming an executive with Sinn Fein on a mere promise to disarm, but on one other condition: that if the IRA then defaulted, Sinn Fein would be expelled from the government, which would continue without them.

No, said Blair and Ahern: if the IRA defaults on disarming, the whole Belfast government will be wound up. The Unionists said it was unfair to penalise every party for Sinn Fein/IRA's default. Blair then changed tack: the Northern Irish government would, he said, be dissolved if Sinn Fein/IRA defaulted, but the others in the Assembly might then form a new government without Sinn Fein. Immediately, Taoiseach Ahern publicly objected: there could be no Northern Irish government without Sinn Fein!

Ahern's veto held and Blair quickly distanced himself from the compromise that would perhaps have got Trimble to risk coalition without a prior beginning to IRA disarmament. The constitutional nationalist SDLP refused to commit to a government partnership with Trimble if Sinn Fein were excluded for default on decommissioning.

FUNDAMENTALLY, Sinn Fein/IRA is, like Ahern and some, perhaps, in the SDLP, committed to a British solution — a British solution acceptable to the nationalists and if necessary imposed on the Protestants, not to a solution based on free democratic agreement between the two peoples on the island. In the negotiations we have seen a variant of the British Government trying to twist Unionist arms for nationalist advantage... That experience will not make Sinn Fein/IRA less, but more, inclined to favour continued British direct rule over the Protestant-Unionists, as a transitional stage

to a united Ireland. If only Britain will "stand up to the Unionist veto" — that is decide their fate, whatever they feel about it!

The Good Friday Agreement allows for a united Ireland when a bare majority in Northern Ireland wants it. The idea that the conflict of Unionist-Nationalist political identity in the Six Counties can eventually be resolved by a head-count is simply foolish: Northern Ireland does not work like that. Seventy-one per cent voted for the Good Friday Agreement; shortly afterwards pro-Good Friday Agreement politicians in the Unionist camp got only the narrowest of majorities.

Neither the British nor the Dublin governments, nor Sinn Fein/IRA, offer an acceptable democratic solution. Neither do Unionists determined to maintain partition.

THE Protestant-Unionists are entitled to self-rule where they are the majority (in north-east Ulster). The Catholics are entitled not to be held against their will in the Six Counties. The only democratic solution is Protestant autonomy in a united Ireland that has close links with Britain, which the Unionists regard as their state. The 26 County government already has such close links with Britain that since 1985 they have shared joint political rule in Northern Ireland.

On the basis of a common advocacy of such a constitutional solution, Irish workers, Protestant and Catholic, could begin to unite and begin to understand the necessity of a socialist Ireland. Everything else is tinkering.

The only real answer to the needs of the people of the Six Counties is the creation of a party of labour which unites Protestant and Catholic workers around a common pledge to respect and protect each other's collective rights. On that basis, Ireland's workers, Protestant and Catholic, could fight for a socialist programme to reconstruct Irish society.

Those who a year ago speculated that, if the Adams wing of Sinn Fein/IRA went fully political in the "peace process", that would mean big scale splits in the IRA, got it wrong. Since the hunger strikes of 1981, Sinn Fein/IRA have pursued an integrated strategy of combining guns and politics — "the armalite and the ballot box". The emphasis now is on politics: but the old strategy is still in place.

SINN FEIN/IRA is something new in the long history of Republicanism. In the past, the militarists have been rigid, oath-bound "sectarians" with no time for "politics". Not so now. In the last 20 years the Provos have forged a movement in which the two wings — militarism and politics — have become fused together in a new way.

Plainly, it is a two-front movement with a great tensile strength and, to a large extent, the same key activists. It is a movement that has shown itself capable of switching to a massive tactical emphasis on either "the ballot box" or "the Armalite" without pulling itself apart, though a decision by the combined leadership to disarm might lead to a serious hiving off of militarists. The Good Friday Agreement has not led to serious splits because both wings of the movement are agreed on "the ballot box and the Armalite" combination and see this phase as one variant of that policy.

Sinn Fein/IRA don't need a Northern Irish government. They agreed to it only as a "concession". They aim to retain their movement intact, working towards the time when there will be a majority in the Six Counties for a united Ireland, a decade or so from now. That there will still be Protestant-Unionist resistance to incorporation in a united Ireland is part of their long term calculation.

Where is Republicanism going? Deeper and deeper into the blind alley of seeking a British solution imposed on the Northern Ireland Unionists. They follow in the footsteps of John Redmond's Home Rule Party, which for decades sought a "British solution" favourable to nationalism and imposed on the other side. They therefore made no efforts to reach a democratic accommodation with the Irish Protestant-Unionist majority.

The British settlement, when it came, turned out to be partition.

Heroine of the Indonesian labour movement:

A conversation with Dita Sari

ONE of the great figures of the world labour movement, Dita Sari, visited Australia in August this year. In July an international campaign had finally won her release from jail in Indonesia. She had been imprisoned since July 1996 on charges of "disturbing public order and security" because of her activities as president of the illegal independent trade union centre PPBI and a leader of Indonesia's main socialist opposition group, the People's Democratic Party.

When jailed, Dita was only 23 years old. She had been politically active for a bit over three years, abandoning the comfortable future which had been open to her as a 19 year old law student in order to champion the cause of the working class.

What sustained her through the years in jail, during which at one point she suffered severe typhoid? Her commitment, she told a socialist gathering in Brisbane, came "not from friends or books, but from the passion I had for the working class, and the feeling that I did the right thing. Many other issues are important, but the most important thing is to stop capitalism exploiting the people and taking the profits from the working class".

After her long spell in jail, and a speaking tour across Australia, Dita was in poor health by the time she reached Brisbane, and too tired to debate politics at length. However, I was able to exchange some ideas with her.

What progress was being made, I asked, after the fall of the Suharto dictatorship, in the Indonesian workers organising and gaining sufficient self-confidence to pose a workers' and farmers' government as the only way out from Indonesia's terrible mass poverty, unemployment and social inequality? There are now 19 trade union organisations in Indonesia, Dita replied, and maybe more. The workers have begun to develop a



Dita Sari

consciousness about the need to organise themselves in unions and to campaign for workers' rights.

But there are big illusions about the next government – big illusions among working people that Megawati Sukarnoputri [the leading bourgeois democratic opposition figure in the last days of the Suharto regime] will get them out of these hard times. In fact, Megawati speaks a lot about macro-political issues but mentions nothing for the working class, nothing about freedom of association for workers. Her party, the PDI-P, has never said anything about a policy to overcome the problems facing the working class.

But the illusions are an obstacle. Another obstacle is that lots of unions think it is only important to develop economic issues. They don't mention the role of the military. But if the military are still there, in and around the workplaces, then the workers cannot organise freely at ground level or negotiate fairly with the employers. Unions should demand not only better wages, but the end of the dual role of the military [as an army, and also as a policing agency in every part of civilian society and as a guaranteed part

of government].

Dita said that she and her comrades believe they must develop a consciousness among workers that they can play a big role in changing society. They want workers to have a strong position in government policy. They try to educate workers in the need to take action not only against the employers, but also against the government – to make workers understand that they cannot improve their conditions unless they can influence government policy.

I asked Dita why she put the issue in terms of workers influencing government policy – the official PRD slogan is for "a democratic coalition government" which would include both Megawati and radical left forces like the PRD – rather than the workers and the farmers defeating the wealthy classes to form their own government. The masses have great illusions in Megawati, she replied. We can't go against them. We would be isolated. In Trotsky's pamphlet on the trade unions, he says that revolutionaries never leave the unions. The revolutionaries are always for unity, for a broad movement. It's always the reformists who split.

Whether or not Trotsky was quite that dogmatic about trade union unity, to my mind workers' unity is quite a different matter from unity with a bourgeois politician like Megawati. I talked about historical examples, from our South African comrades, in WOSA, running the Workers' List against the ANC in the first post-apartheid elections, back to Lenin's successful struggle in 1917 to break the Bolsheviks from supporting the "democratic coalition" Provisional Government in Russia. Refusing a "democratic coalition" with Megawati would not necessarily mean shrill self-isolating denunciations or delusions of rapid socialist victory. Socialists could still say they would stand with Megawati in any real steps she took against the military, while at the same time advocating a workers' and farmers'

government as the only proper way forward.

Dita was not convinced. In Russia, she said, Lenin talked about dual power. The PRD works on two levels. As well as working for a democratic coalition government, it works for working class power at the base, like the workers' councils in Russia in 1917. To make a socialist revolution, Dita said, you cannot work with the bourgeoisie, the capitalists. But you can and must work with the progressive middle class. For the PRD, Megawati represents a middle force. Whether she goes to the right or to the left depends on the pressure of the mass movement. Dita was emphatic that the PRD does not support Megawati. In strict interpretation that is true, though whether to the Indonesian workers hearing its message the PRD line really sounds any different from critical support is another question.

I moved on to another question. To the English-language *Jakarta Post*, for example, the PRD says it is definitely not communist but instead "social-democratic" — plainly using "social-democratic" in a very different meaning from Europe or Australia. Dita had explained that the PRD is reorganising its trade union work round a new body — the FNPBI, created by bringing together several local groups — in place of the old PPBI. In 1996, Suharto not only jailed many PRD members but organised a fierce "anti-communist" campaign against the PPBI. After that, Dita said, the PRD found it could no longer approach the masses with the old banner of the PPBI.

Why does anti-communism grip so strongly in Indonesia, I asked, even after Suharto has been discredited and chased from power? To the average not-very-political worker, what does "communist" mean? Cruel, violent, godless, replied Dita. Because of what they know about China or the USSR? Not really. Most of the workers don't read newspapers or watch TV. It's more a result of Suharto's propaganda campaigns against the old Indonesian Communist Party.

What does "socialist" mean, I asked? Dita replied: to most workers, it means wanting everyone to be exactly the same, with the same wages, the same clothing, the same everything. That's entirely wrong, she said, but it's what most workers think.

Dita also explained that the FNPBI had recently formed an alliance, the FSU, with the SBSI (the strongest, so Dita told me, of the independent unions, but with "no politics"), the SPSI-Reform (a split-off from the old government-controlled union organisation), and some Islamic unions. Was the PRD's aim to unite the unions into a single strong organisation, with democratic rights for minorities? Yes, said Dita, but at this stage the FNPBI is only working with five or six other union organisations out of the 19 in the field. There's a long way to go.

What about other workers' parties? There are four workers' parties in Indonesia, Dita replied, all very small — the Indonesian Workers' Party, the Workers' Solidarity Party, the All-Indonesian Workers' Solidarity Party, and the National Labour Party (linked to the SBSI).

Who launched them? Some worker activists, some progressive-minded middle class people. What are their politics? They advocate improvement of workers' conditions, but have little broader politics. What scope does the PRD see for working with them? Dita thought there were better possibilities for working with the other unions than with the parties as such.

Dita's comrade Budiman Sudjatmiko, chair of the PRD, has told the *Jakarta Post* that: "Che Guevara was my idol when I was in high school. I had his poster and books all over my room. What I learned from him was his consistency. He was faithful to his struggle..." Courage, the basic quality that all revolutionaries have always needed, is indeed the common thread between Guevara and Budiman, Dita Sari, and their PRD comrades.

Yet I came away from Dita's speeches, and my conversations with her, thinking that maybe she exemplifies a paradigm-shift in revolutionary politics. Che Guevara called on revolutionaries to "create two, three, many Vietnams" immediately, though the groups he was appealing to were usually weaker than the 25,000 strong PRD. Plainly he felt that the existence of North Vietnam, China, the USSR and so on — whatever his criticisms of them — created and exemplified a great historical wave that he could "surf" on. Dita has no such easy optimism. Asked how soon the "dual role" of the army could be ended in Indone-

sia, Dita replied that Megawati has estimated six years but she herself doubted it would be that soon. And however soon or late Dita can reach her goal, it is not the creation of another "communist" state on the model of Vietnam.

For Guevara, workers, wages, trade unions, and the civil rights associated with parliamentary democracy were all very secondary and disposable in his vision of socialism. For Dita, they are central. (When I told her that our group is called Workers' Liberty, she was pleased with the name.)

In 1989 the Chinese students built a Statue of Liberty in Tienanmen Square. After a whole era in which the Statue of Liberty was only an advertising emblem for a great power which ruthlessly backed up and imposed client dictatorships across the world, it suddenly became a symbol of revolution. At the same time, the hammer and sickle, long the icon of revolution, has been perceived by more and more millions of people as a trade mark for police states, bureaucratic privilege, and economic clumsiness or stagnation. (Even if many get the message only filtered through several voices from the minority who do watch TV or read newspapers, I can't believe that Dita's right about mass "anti-communism" in Indonesia having nothing to do with China or the USSR.)

Budiman in jail, defiantly rejecting a government offer of conditional clemency, quoted the title of the John Lennon song, "Life begins at forty" (his age on release if he serves his full 13 year sentence). Dita finished her main speech in Brisbane by singing a song from Bob Marley. Not Ho Chi Minh, but John Lennon and Bob Marley! Revolutionaries always have to take our language, images and rhetoric from a culture shaped by others. For decades we had no choice but to use concepts whose dominant meanings had been reshaped by Stalinism — revolution, socialism, communism — and then to try to explain to those whose ears we caught that we meant something different. Dita, Budiman, and their comrades are, I think, trying to establish a new language for revolutionary politics, based on the non-Stalinist traditions of radical democracy.

There is a paradox here, or a contradiction, I don't know which. The PRD's closest links are with Australia's Democratic Socialist Party.

The DSP are not Stalinist, but for them the “democratic coalition government” is the centrepiece of an elaborate theory of revolution in less-industrialised countries based on Stalinist or Stalinist-inflected models. “Democratic coalition governments” describe the first post-revolutionary governments, fronted up with captive bourgeois politicians, formed by Tito in Yugoslavia, Castro in Cuba, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and so on. Revolution in less-industrialised countries has to be a “two-stage”

process, with “democratic coalition government” as the goal of the first stage. This theory makes democracy an important theme in revolutionary politics – but only as a disposable expedient on the way to creating “socialism” on the model of Cuba, where all real democracy is stifled under a one-party state with no independent trade unions.

How much the PRD buys into this theory, I don’t know. I asked Dita if she saw any historical models for the “democratic coalition” gov-

ernment she advocates – if she thought any such “democratic coalition” governments had ever existed, anywhere – and instead of citing Nicaragua or Cuba or Yugoslavia, she said, “I don’t know”. My hope is that she and her comrades will see that democracy is indeed central to revolution, but that it can be made thoroughgoing only by a government of the worker and peasant majority, not by a coalition with sections of the wealthy classes.

Martin Thomas

The continuing crisis in Russia

ON 9 August Russia’s President Boris Yeltsin sacked his Prime Minister — Sergei Stepashin — and his entire government. Former KGB operative Vladimir Putin was named by Yeltsin as Stepashin’s successor.

Stepashin was the fourth Russian Prime Minister to be sacked in 17 months. Viktor Chernomyrdin was sacked in March 1998. Five months later his successor, Sergei Kiryenko, was sacked. Yevgeny Primakov then lasted until May of this year. Stepashin survived just three months in the post.

On one level the latest sacking — and the preceding ones — could be seen as the idiosyncratic act of an ageing and ailing politician with a drink problem. There might be an element of truth in this.

But on a more fundamental level the sacking of Stepashin and the appointment of Putin are rooted in nature of the political and economic structures which have emerged in Russia in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism.

Stalinism industrialised the Russian economy (and the economies of other Soviet republics). It did so at a tremendous price in human suffering, and in an irrational and wasteful manner. This industrialisation had nothing to do with building socialism. In fact, it was closer to primitive slavery than it was to socialism.

The collapse of Stalinism was followed by the proclamation of a “free market economy”, to be achieved through a rapid process of privatisation. In practice, such privatisation was often simply an opportunity for Communist Party bureaucrats to transform themselves into capitalist entrepreneurs and financiers.

Factory directors bought up their factories on the cheap. They then set up their own daughter companies and joint ventures, to which they transferred their factories’ equipment at an even lower price. Factory output was smuggled abroad in order to accumulate

foreign currency, immediately invested in private Swiss bank accounts.

CP officials syphoned off vast amounts of CP funds and transferred them to the control of commercial trading houses and banks. Sections of the intelligence services invested millions from their budgets in new commercial structures and banks. Military commanders, especially in the Western Group of Forces, enriched themselves by embezzling money from the military budget and selling off military equipment.

Subsequent surveys underlined the overlap between the old nomenklatura and the new capitalists. According to Olga Kryshchanovskaya of the Moscow Institute of Applied Politics, 7% of the new Russian capitalists had been CP secretaries, and another 60% had had direct or indirect links with the old CP nomenklatura.

A 1996 report by the Harvard University Russian Research Centre came up



with the same figure: 60% of the newly privatised enterprises were owned by former CP officials or factory managers (who would also have been CP members).

Closely intermeshed with the Communists-turned-capitalists was organised crime.

Even before the collapse of Stalinism there had already developed an extensive criminal network in Russia, the Vorovskoi Mir (Thieves Community). By 1991, when Russia declared its independence, the business dealings of Vorovskoi Mir were worth over a billion dollars a year, some 15% of the volume of goods and services in the country.

Privatisation of the economy was an unmissable opportunity for organised crime. The previously accumulated wealth of the Vorovskoi Mir gave it the resources to buy into privatised industries and joint ventures. The new banking system was an opportunity for

money-laundering. And the emergence of new enterprises allowed protection rackets to flourish.

According to the *Economist*, by 1994 some 40,000 businesses were owned or controlled by criminal organisations, including most of the country's 1,800 banks, and three-quarters of private enterprises paid up to 20% of their earnings as protection money.

A report published by the Moscow Academy of Sciences the following year concluded that 40% of all entrepreneurs and 66% of all commercial structures maintained criminal relations, and that organised crime had established control over 35,000 economic entities, including 400 banks, 47 currency exchanges, and 1,500 enterprises still in the state sector.

The national and local government authorities also played a central role in the process of privatisation. It was, after all, they who had responsibility for carrying out the process of privatisation.

The "new" breed of "democratic" politician which supposedly emerged in Russia after the collapse of Stalinism was nothing of the sort. The "democrats" were very often just the old CP nomenklatura in a different guise: in the mid-'90s, 75% of the government, 60% of parliamentarians and 83% of regional governors had been linked in one way or another to the old nomenklatura.

Just as the individual factory director used privatisation as a way of buying out their factory on the cheap, so too local and national politicians recognised privatisation as an opportunity to enrich themselves from what had formerly been state property.

They bought out local enterprises themselves, or they entered into joint ventures to buy them out. They used their positions to award contracts to their own business associates. And they used their power and influence to ensure that their business partners and members of their own family were nominated to the boards of directors of privatised companies.

In return, businessmen and industrialists bankrolled the election campaigns of the politicians who had created such profitable openings for them. In the 1996 presidential elections, for example, estimates of the money paid by businessmen into Yeltsin's campaign varied from 100 to 500 million dollars. (The official limit on election expenditure was three million dollars.)

What has emerged in Russia over the last decade is not simply a form of "crony capitalism" in which a few corrupt politicians take backhanders from bent businessmen and outright crooks. What

now exists is a set of political and economic structures in which there is simply no clear dividing line between businessmen, criminals and politicians. Business, crime and politics are not even a continuum. They are essentially one and the same activity, or at least different aspects of the same activity: making money.

However, there is one difference between politicians, on the one hand, and businessmen and criminals on the other. The former stand for election, the latter don't.

Elections for the Russian parliament are due to be held in December of this year, and presidential elections have to be held by July of next year. Yeltsin himself will not be standing for re-election. Whatever his personal inclinations, he must be aware that the business "community", unlike in 1996, no longer sees him as a safe pair of hands.

But Yeltsin wants to stitch up the outcome of both elections. He and his "family" have grown wealthy from the process of privatisation and its inherently corrupt nature. (And "family" here does not mean the biological one. It includes his political allies, business friends, and overall retinue of hangers-on who have amassed personal fortunes in recent years.)

Yeltsin's fear is that the election of a hostile Duma or the election of a hostile President could lead to the Yeltsin "family" being stripped of its power and wealth, and possibly even facing criminal charges.

This is not an irrational fear. Precisely because of the intermeshing of politics and business in Russia — "the business of government is business" — the loss of political office is tantamount to the loss of a personal business empire, with the attendant danger that whoever wins the take-over battle might start to enquire into corrupt practices.

Yeltsin dismissed Stepashin because he had lost confidence in his commitment to ensuring the "right" results in the parliamentary and presidential election. A week before his dismissal Stepashin had failed to prevent a swathe of regional governors from coming out in favour of Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov as a candidate in next year's presidential election.

And only three days before his dismissal Stepashin had declared himself to be neutral as regards the outcome of the Duma and presidential elections. Stepashin may simply have been biding his time, waiting to see who emerged as the frontrunner so that he could then back the winner. Or he may have been preparing his own bid for election as President.

Whatever the exact circumstances, as far as Yeltsin was concerned Stepashin was no longer capable of doing his job properly, i.e., safeguarding the position of the Yeltsin "family". So Stepashin had to go.

His replacement, Vladimir Putin, worked for the KGB for 17 years. After spells as an advisor to Anatoly Sobchak and Anatoly Chubais — both of them former Yeltsin allies — Putin was appointed head of the KGB's successor organisation, the Federal Security Service (FSS), in July of last year.

Putin, a member of the Yeltsin "family", owes his appointment not to his political experience of serving Sobchak and Chubais, but to his past in the KGB and his present in the FSS. This too says something about the nature of the Russian political system.

Even by the limited standards of bourgeois democracy, Russia can hardly be considered a "democratic" country, notwithstanding the existence of a multi-party electoral system. In the absence of the usual bourgeois-democratic checks and controls on public office holders, dirt becomes the means to undermine the position of those who have fallen out of favour with the dominant "family".

When Yeltsin's bodyguard Alexander Korzhakov was dismissed by his boss in 1996, for example, he was suddenly exposed for running a multi-million dollar racket in importing duty-free alcohol and cigarettes. The expose coincided with Korzhakov's attempt to win a Duma by-election in Tula.

Similarly, when the Russian prosecutor-general Yuri Skuratov rejected Yeltsin's demands last summer that he resign, national television showed footage of him in a sauna with three prostitutes. Yeltsin had demanded Skuratov's resignation to prevent him pressing ahead with an enquiry into money-laundering by Yeltsin's son-in-law.

The greatest digger of dirt in Russia is Putin's FSS. Putin's approach to winning back support from the regional governors and other powerbrokers who now back Luzhkov will not be through the kind of political trade-offs practised in a bourgeois "democracy". His approach will be to threaten to dish the dirt on them.

The sacking of Stepashin and the appointment of Putin are a reflection of the undemocratic and corrupt nature of the social system which has evolved in Russia since the collapse of Stalinism. Stalinism proved to be an historical dead-end. The same will prove true of Russia's mafia-capitalism.

Stan Crooke

Kosova and the legacy of Stalinism

By Chris Reynolds

MARXIST socialists can be a factor in world politics only to the extent that we can rouse the working class in their own country to be a force in opposition to the ruling class. We can help vanquish despotism abroad only by combatting our own despots.

So should not socialists in NATO countries, especially Britain and the USA, have made it their first duty during the recent Balkans war to agitate to "Stop the Bombing"? However much Milosevic's genocidal drive against the Kosovars was the greater evil, we could do nothing directly to stop that evil. Only if we effectively combatted the lesser evil which was within our reach to combat, the NATO bombing, could we put ourselves in a good position to aid Serb and Kosovar socialists and democrats who might stop Milosevic.

Workers' Liberty described what NATO was doing: "They throw bombs at the Serbs, most of whom don't know the scale of Serbia's slaughter and ethnic cleansing in Kosova. They do not... ally or seek to ally with either the Serbs or the Kosovar people... They deploy a crude and savage weapon, bombing, for the wrong political goals, at best the Balkan status quo... NATO went to war to force the Rambouillet "agreement" on the Serbian regime... Rambouillet was not primarily pro-Albanian. Rambouillet aimed to curb, stifle and frustrate Albanian nationalism... NATO remained fundamentally concerned with securing stable conditions in the Balkans for the 'imperialism of free trade' and with asserting US power, not with the rights and interests of the Kosovars... We could not, did not, and do not positively support NATO" (WL55 and 56 editorials).

Why then leave it as a negative ("not support NATO")? Why not go for it full-throated? Down with NATO! Stop the bombing! The short answer is that such a focus on the "lesser evil" would not just leave the "greater evil" to be tackled later, but positively aid and consolidate that "greater evil". We had to support the Albanian Kosovars in their war against Serbia, and we could not let our hostility to the Albanian Kosovars' imperialist semi-allies overshadow that duty.

The basic conflict in the Balkans was between Serbian imperialism and Kosovar national rights. The conflict has existed for over a century. It intensified when Milosevic started his Serb-chauvinist drive in the late 1980s. During the war it became a conflict not just about the national rights of the Albanian Kosovars, but about their very existence as a people. We are for the Albanian Kosovars against the Serbian state.



Generally, over the last decade, the NATO powers have backed Serbia against the Albanian Kosovars, while urging Milosevic to be less brutal and inflammatory. As Albanian Kosovar resistance grew, they became alarmed and tried to push Milosevic into accepting the Rambouillet proposals. He refused. They bombed Serbia, initially believing Milosevic would concede after a few days or weeks, then kept bombing to avoid defeat and humiliation. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the fundamental conflict, the bombing

helped the Albanian Kosovars. It put mounting pressure on the Serbian state. Its victory has enabled the Albanian Kosovars remaining in their country to survive, those who fled to return, and the Albanian Kosovar people to gain some political autonomy. And it has not led to any sort of conquest or colonial oppression of Serbia. It is scarcely conceivable that it will.

Agitational advantage and positive principles

WE wanted the bombing stopped. We did not want it stopped at the cost of letting Milosevic have his way by completing the destruction of the Kosovar people. To "accept" that the Albanian Kosovars would be destroyed for agitational advantage would be to score a cheap point against one, subordinate and anomalous, phase of our ruling classes' policy — that attempt to coerce Milosevic — at the cost of whitewashing and supporting Serbian imperialism and devastation for an oppressed people. Slogans can summarise thought; adroit slogans cannot substitute for it. It could be opportunist, catchpenny, short-sighted, demagogic to throw ourselves into "stop the bombing" agitation at the expense of implying indifference to the fate of the Kosovars and thus undercutting the positive principles — consistent democracy and self-determination — which provide our basic intellectual weapons for indicting the whole course of big-power imperialist politics. Any working-class opposition built on such agitation would be intellectually corrupted, self-corrupting, unstable and unreliable.

Trotsky commented on Third Period Stalinist politics that revolutionary agitation based on false claims about the imminent collapse of capitalism, or demagogic equation of every bourgeois regime with "fascism", would have to pay for the apparently clear-cut and rousing character of its immediate slogans by longer-term disorientation and instability. He was right. Once activists, nour-

ished on the idea that every bourgeois regime was "fascist", could no longer suppress what they always half-knew about the realities of fascism and bourgeois democracy, they easily lapsed into popular-frontist anti-fascism. Activists hyped up to "anti-imperialism" on the basis of ignoring or minimising the facts about the Albanian Kosovars and Serb imperialism will easily collapse into more conservative politics as soon as they register the realities in front of them.

We would say to Serbian workers angry against the NATO bombing: we oppose NATO — always have done. Our effort is to support the Albanian Kosovars, with such slogans as "arm the Albanian Kosovars, international working-class solidarity". We know that any substantial movement on that basis would face NATO as an enemy. We focus on building a positive socialist, working-class alternative to NATO, not on "stop the bombing" — without an alternative. That would be to leave the Albanian Kosovars — faced with the need for immediate answers against attempted genocide — in the lurch. Milosevic is your enemy too. Work with us for independence for Kosova, for the overthrow of Milosevic, for Serb-Albanian workers' unity against both NATO and Serb imperialism.

The NATO bombing did not stop massacres and forced evictions of the Kosovars. "Was anything positive or humanitarian ever desired by the NATO powers?" asks Boris Kagarlitsky. Of course not. NATO acted for its own reasons of power-politics. But, as *WL55* pointed out, "NATO will not kill and disperse 90% of the population of Kosova. For the Kosovars, the immediate difference between NATO and Milosevic is...life or death". That "side-effect" remains important even though NATO allowed many thousands of Kosovars to be killed, and even if — as is possible — NATO consciously calculated for that in their decision to bomb.

Idiotically, some socialists say that Kosova is now a "NATO colony", and that that is no better than being under Serbian rule. But NATO is there with the support of the Albanians in Kosova. If Serbia was there then a fewer Albanian Kosovars would now be! There is a difference between foreign forces welcomed in, and foreign forces attempting genocide.

Combining the slogans?

OTHERS proposed "Stop the bombings" not as an alternative but as a supplement to pro-Albanian Kosovar slogans. If the pro-Albanian Kosovar slogans ("Independence for Kosova", "Arm the Albanian Kosovars", etc.) could gain enough force to annul any implication in "stop the bombings" of "let Milosevic have his way", this stance had an obvious advantage, in agitational force against our own ruling classes, which is not to be sneered at. But could they in fact? For a certainty, they could not.

In Britain this school of thought was best expressed in *Socialist Outlook* which blithely piled self-contradictory slogans on top of each other. A better and more serious response of this school was the Australian publication, *Green Left Weekly*. They carried some fine articles and polemics stating the case for the Albanian Kosovars. They righteously refused to join "peace" campaigns that would not support Kosova. But editorially *GLW* tied its arguments together by claiming that: "The real purpose for the US/NATO war is...to block the Kosovar people's struggle for independence from Serbia" (*GLW*360). That is half-true. As we wrote in *WL56*, "NATO's concern was that, once Albanian resistance began to take the form of guerrilla warfare, the increasingly savage Serb oppression of the Kosova Albanians could destabilise much of the Balkans... NATO wanted to secure some tolerable conditions of national life for the Kosovars [not the Kosovars' rights, just some deal which might quiet them down] before Milosevic and

the KLA set the Balkans alight". But once the war was well underway, the immediate result of NATO withdrawing would not have been to "unblock" the way for the KLA to sweep to victory against Serbia: it would and could only have been the destruction of the Albanian Kosovar people.

GLW was plainly influenced by the feeling that it was duty-bound to put anti-NATO slogans first. They reserved the condemnation "imperialist" for NATO, not for Serbia. They did not call for arming the Albanian Kosovars except in the small print and by implication.

At worst the combine-the-slogans schools of thought let their pro-Kosovar slogans drift to the small print. Their stance became a sort of mirror-image of *WL*'s. We said we wanted Serbian imperialism defeated, and if that meant a boost to NATO it was undesirable — and opposed by us, to the best of our political weight — but secondary. They said that they wanted NATO defeated, and if that meant the crushing of the Kosovars it was undesirable — and opposed by them, to the best of their political weight — but secondary.

The fundamental problem with combine-the-slogans is that "stop the bombing" is an immediate, do-it-now slogan, whereas "arm the Kosovars" and "independence for Kosova" were visibly proposals on a longer timescale. They were slogans that pertained to different dimensions. The immediate relevant slogan — "stop the bombings", which in practice meant "give Milosevic a victory and a free hand in Kosova" — made nonsense of the longer-term slogans. Independence for what Kosova? There would be little left of Albanian Kosova if Milosevic were given a free hand — after successfully standing up to NATO.

What was required was an anti-NATO slogan on the same timescale. "Stop the bombing" would inevitably tend to overshadow pro-Albanian Kosovar slogans because it would seem more practical. It would inevitably drift into a stance of proposing to stop one evil — the NATO bombing — first, and then tackle the other, the repression of the Kosovars.

The dilemma — that the sequence was impossible, since given a free hand, Serbia would crush the Albanian Kosovars — could only be escaped by the pretences of *GLW*: that the NATO bombing of Serbia and Serbian forces was really aimed at helping Serbia win against the KLA, or that "Stop the bombing" really meant "oppose the whole anti-Kosovar course of NATO policy over the last decade".

The fate of Serbia

WHAT about the fact that NATO was blowing the Serbian economy to bits? Were socialists not obliged to campaign directly against that? The proper answer to this argument is not to object that some of the NATO bombing was to be positively supported. Obviously we would welcome it if a NATO bomb stopped a Serbian military unit about to destroy a Kosovar village. In the first place we do not know for sure whether there was even a single such clear-cut case. In the second place, the worst imperialist armies can do some positive things as incidentals in a military campaign. In the era of high imperialism, big-power interventions were often justified on grounds of protecting local minorities — and sometimes they did protect minorities, at the cost of enslaving the majority population. Some of the left-wing arguments for minimising the Kosova question in favour of NATophobia seem to hark back to the polemics of the Marxist classics about such situations. The proportions were entirely different. Kosova was no secondary minority question, but the central issue. Serbia is not enslaved. That political difference is what we have to get across, not the common fact of some big-power military actions doing good.

AFTER THE WAR

Did the NATO bombing of such-and-such bridge, or such-another road, save Kosovars by disrupting Milosevic's military machine, or, on the contrary, bring suffering to Serb workers and peasants without any benefit to the Kosovars? We did not know and probably will never know. NATO had no special, separable campaign against civilians. It had a campaign against the Serbian state which, for its own reasons, it conducted in ways certain to have wide destructive impact on Serbia's civilian population.

We expressed opposition to bombing Serbia's economy to bits by indicting NATO's whole political course — by striving to build a "third camp" of the working class and oppressed peoples to support the Albanian Kosovars and, of course, by calling for "Serbian troops out of Kosova", a measure which would have immediately stopped the bombing. "Stop the bombing" would be a sharper way of stating the case? Yes, but at too great a cost of implying that the damage to Serbia was a worse evil (demanding immediate, do-it-now solutions, however flawed) than the genocide of the Kosovars (which could wait for more perfect answers). And how exactly do you measure damage to property in Serbia against immediate mass killings in Kosova?

The bogey of imperialism

WASN'T the NATO intervention imperialist? And aren't we duty-bound to make opposition to imperialism our first priority? It was imperialist in the general sense. "NATO remained fundamentally concerned with securing stable conditions in the Balkans for the 'imperialism of free trade' and with asserting US power". But imperialism had many variants even at the time that Lenin wrote his famous pamphlet in 1916. It has had many more variants historically. Even when polemicising against the imperialist World War 1, Lenin felt obliged to write that under certain circumstances he would support imperialism (of the sort he then had in mind) against more reactionary forces.

Lenin wrote that if World War 1 were really about and only about driving the German invaders out of occupied Belgium, then socialists would support those Big Powers doing that. Of course it could not. Belgium was not the central issue — the point is that the plight of the Albanian Kosovars and the support you give was.

In Kosova, there was no question of supporting NATO imperialism, because the aid it gave to the Kosovars was only a secondary,

unreliable and treacherous part of an overall conservative policy. Basically, however, for socialists now it should be as for Lenin. Opposition to imperialism is an element in the positive programme of working-class struggle, not an all-swallowing principle. And, with more of history to guide us than Lenin had available, we should understand that imperialism comes with differences. The imperialism of conquest and genocide is different from the imperialism of free trade. Our programmatic support for national self-determination clashes directly and frontally with the imperialism of conquest and genocide, but not directly with the imperialism of free trade. To recognise that fact is not to weaken our battle against the dominant imperialism of free trade. It is to put that battle on a rational basis, and to avoid trashing the programme that arms us to mobilise against that dominant imperialism when it too goes for conquest and genocide — which its current dominant free-trade orientation does not at all exclude.

If it were truly the case that victory against Serbia strengthens NATO's, or the US's, world power enormously, and enables it to repress any popular rebellions against IMF or World Trade Organisation rules anywhere at will, then that would still not justify us in minimising the fate of the Kosovars — how can we prepare the workers' movement to combat future attempts by US imperialism to bully small nations, if we educate it now to disregard the fate of this small nation? — but it would change the balance of what we should say. In fact, when NATO blundered into war with Serbia as an unplanned and miscalculated offshoot of a generally pro-Serbian policy, it never got more than grudging support even from the US and British Establishment, and its sequels are almost certain to be difficult and embarrassing for NATO. It was not a glorious triumph for NATO. The whole episode has probably made it harder, not easier, for the US and British ruling classes to get political support for military intervention against liberation struggles. The only part of it which has increased the big powers' scope for conquest and repression in future is that a large section of the left has been agitating and polemicising in favour of neglecting or ignoring the rights of small nations.

THE notion of imperialism as a fixed Greatest Evil, axiomatically identified with the big capitalist powers, comes not from Marxism but from Stalinism, and specifically from the reshaping of Lenin's ideas into a dogmatic system of "Leninism". In that system it was used to boost the Stalinist USSR as non-"imperialist". Also derived from Stalinised "Leninism" is the idea that Marxists must relate to forces at war either by being "defeatist" (positively desiring the defeat of that force) or by being "defencist" (promoting and aiding its victory). War is the continuation of politics by other means. Marxism knows many attitudes to bourgeois policies other than going all out to smash and thwart them at any cost, or contrariwise energetically promoting them and seeking to organise the workers as the leading force for those policies in place of the unreliable bourgeois. Our attitude to a war should be fundamentally a continuation of our attitude to the politics underlying the war.

When the Rambouillet treaty was formulated, giving limited autonomy to Kosova, socialists did not support it — we could not, since we champion self-determination for Kosova, not limited autonomy under Serbian sovereignty with the Kosova Liberation Army disarmed by NATO — nor did we shout: "Smash Rambouillet at all costs!" We recognised that Rambouillet autonomy would be an improvement for the Albanian Kosovars compared to unrestrained Serbian oppression, but criticised and proposed an alternative. Our stance in the war was a continuation of our stance over Rambouillet. And that is as it should have been.

Socialists are guided in all such questions by one stable, permanently operational objective and one over-riding political value — the nurturing, development and deepening of independent working class politics.

What is Workers' Liberty?

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty organises to fight the class struggle on all levels — trade union and social battles, politics and the combat of ideas. We are active in workplaces, in trade unions, in the Labour Party, in single-issue campaigns, in student unions, and in debates and discussions on the left. We aim to integrate all these activities into a coherent effort for socialism.



"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of race or sex."

Karl Marx

If you want to know more about the Alliance for Workers' Liberty write to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, phone 0171-207 4673 or email: office@workersliberty.org.

Why Yugoslavia collapsed

By Michael Kinnell

THE breakup of Yugoslavia, at the turn of this decade, prefigured the breakup of the USSR and Czechoslovakia. The unstable compromise which had held Yugoslavia together for 40 years began to fall apart at the end of the 1980s in a welter of strikes, nationalist protests and the sackings of party officials which threw the country into turmoil.

The biggest protests were, even then, around the ethnic conflict in the predominantly ethnic-Albanian Serbian province of Kosova. The Serbs, under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, claimed that the Serbian minority in Kosova was being persecuted and demanded that Kosova be re-integrated into Serbia. Serbian nationalism resurfaced in its ugliest form. This Serb nationalist agitation for Serb aggrandisement, and Serbia's drive against Kosova, destabilised the whole of Yugoslavia and eventually led to its destruction.

Meanwhile, Yugoslavia was in the grip of a tremendous economic crisis. Inflation ran at over 200% a year. Around one million were unemployed — 15% of the workforce. In some regions — the poorer south — the rate of unemployment was nearer 30%.

Unable to keep up with repayments on a foreign debt of \$20 million, the federal government negotiated a rescheduling deal with the IMF; the IMF, not surprisingly, demanded an austerity plan that removed state subsidies to loss-making enterprises, and a wage freeze.

The crisis, and the austerity plan, fuelled workers' protests. In 1988 workers and groups of students demanded an end to the economic attacks on the working class and also the right to organise.

The crisis exacerbated regional tensions. The northern republics — Slovenia and Croatia — were considerably more prosperous and highly developed economically than the south — Macedonia and Montenegro. The Northern bureaucrats resented what they saw as being forced to subsidise the poorer south.

THE Yugoslav CP, under Tito, had taken power after a guerrilla war in 1943-4 and broke with Stalin in 1948. They had massive support in Yugoslavia because of their struggle against the Nazi occupation. Stalin could not deal with a ruling CP that had an independent base. Between 1948 and 1950 Stalin withdrew all aid to Yugoslavia.

But Tito's programme remained a Yugoslav version of "socialism in one country". Many socialists saw Yugoslavia as a new anti-Stalinist model of socialism because the system of "workers' self-management", introduced in June 1950, appeared to give workers real power over their factories and communities.

But the "self-management" structures were never more than a top-down system that gave the workers only token power. All real social and political power lay in the hands of Tito and the CP. As time went on, it became clearer and clearer that in the factories the technocrats ruled, and the "power" of the councils was circumscribed by federal government. It was pseudo democracy with no real content.

Tito got Western financial aid after the split with Stalin. Industry was rebuilt and developed. Between 1950 and 1960 the economy grew at an average rate of 13% a year. But the economy was beset from the start by sharp regional variations in development, and by empire-building which meant that regional

bureaucrats duplicated production wastefully and ran many plants at a loss, putting a massive economic strain on the central government.

Tito's answer to this was "market socialism". Only profitable enterprises were to qualify for state money for expansion. All central plan directives to enterprises were abandoned. The new scope for market forces led to unemployment, increased inflation, growing foreign debt. It also exacerbated the divide between north and south. The federal government intervened to subsidise prices of basic goods and to direct banks to invest in the poorer regions. The bureaucracies in the richer regions resented this.

Yugoslavia — the state was originally established as the victors of World War 1 tried to sort out the fragments of the collapsed Turkish and Austro-Hungarian empires — comprised six republics and two autonomous provinces in Serbia. There were four main religious groups, 22 ethnic groups, and even two alphabets. In Vojvodina autonomous province, the public notices were all in four languages. Tito had to find some mechanism to avoid ethnic disintegration.

In 1974 a new constitution was introduced, giving considerable powers of self-government, including the right to raise taxes, to the republics. The federal government worked on a consensus basis so that no particular grouping could dominate. Sitting on top of this edifice, and holding it together, was Tito himself, with his huge personal prestige.

After Tito's death in 1980 a "collective presidency" was established consisting of representatives of each of the six republics.

By the late 1970s signs of a deep crisis were beginning to show. Things became steadily worse in the 80s, culminating in the IMF agreement.

Workers struck and protested, but the dominant form of dissent was

nationalism, partly for the reasons outlined above, but also because in a state where workers could not organise legally, nationalism was a sanctioned form of dissent.

The nationalist agitation in Serbia broke all bounds. Slobodan Milosevic exploited the discontent of the Serbian population. The leaders of other republics looked on this with horror knowing it would threaten their own power.

The nationalism of Milosevic had nothing in common with the legitimate demands for regional and national rights which would be part of the programme of a democratic workers' movement in Yugoslavia. The demand for control of Kosova was thoroughly reactionary.

Kosova's 90% ethnic Albanian population should have had the right to secede if they so wished.

Despite all its peculiarities, in many ways Yugoslavia as it began to fall apart showed its future to much of the USSR and Eastern Europe: the inability of "market socialism" to cure the crisis of the state monopoly systems, the explosive force of nationalism as the grip of Stalinist repression eased, the unbridgeable conflict between the bureaucrats and the workers. In the 90s the USSR and Czechoslovakia would fall apart like Yugoslavia.

The crisis in Yugoslavia already showed the impasse of "market socialism" even as the other Eastern Bloc countries looked to it as the answer to their problems. It showed that the Stalinist system was fundamentally irreformable.

Self-management structures were never more than a top-down system that gave the workers only token power.

Making bricks without political straw *

By Sinead Asch

IF socialists operate in politics according to worked out positive principles, then they will generally be consistent. Should circumstances arise that compel them to seemingly veer from those principles, then they will explain themselves in terms of the baseline principles involved, or of some higher principle.

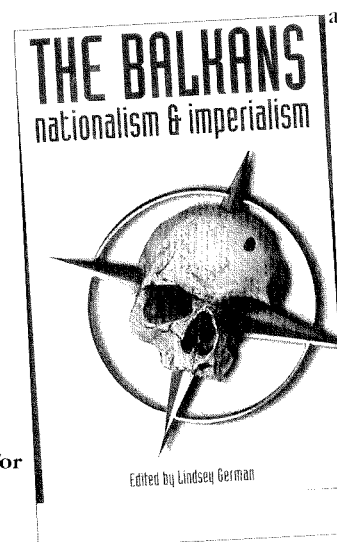
For example, socialists believe that peoples should be self-governing — that, for instance, where the compact majority wants it, Ireland has a democratic right to be free of British interference. But suppose that the British working class has taken power and a hostile Ireland is used as a base for attacking the British socialist workers' state? Defence of that state would be far more important than Ireland's national rights, and British (and Irish) socialists might choose — temporarily — to violate the democratic right to Irish self-determination in the name of a higher principle, working class self defence. Lenin's Bolsheviks had fought for Poland's right to self-determination, sincerely championing the Poles' right to secede from the Tsar's empire. In 1920, when they had beaten back invading Polish armies, they chased them across the border and took the Red Army as far as Warsaw.

What if you operate in revolutionary socialist politics in accordance with the belief that "tactics contradict principles" (the question is from Tony Cliff of the Socialist Workers Party: see *Workers' Liberty* 41)? Essentially, that positive principles don't matter much. You will wind up *extrapolating* your operational positive principles from your negativism towards capitalism. They will be imposed mechanically on you. Instead of a comprehensive picture of reality and intelligent attempts to apply your principles, you will have an utterly one-sided political picture — the part that shares your negativism. "More substance in your hate than in your love", so to speak. You will lose independence on all big questions and become a mere negative imprint of those you hate and oppose. Not guided by positive principles, you may choose to stand back, refusing to "take sides", where there is no energising anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist negativism. To an observer who does not understand your nature, you will seem to make crazy zig-zags.

For example, Serbian armies are invading Croatia, or Bosnia — in Bosnia they are "ethnic cleansing" Muslims, slaughtering and destroying. Serbia has most of the arms of the old Yugoslav state; the Bosnians do not and, moreover, they are subject to an international arms embargo. Do you defend the Bosnians' right to self-determination and side with them, denounce the arms embargo, indict the Serbs? No: you write articles saying that, for socialists, each side, each nationalism, is as bad as the other, and they are all to blame. Where Lenin acutely argued that "the nationalism of the oppressed is not the same as the nationalism of the oppressor", you say "Yes, it is", adding that the massacred are as bad as those who massacre, the ethnically cleansed as bad as their murdering cleansers.

In Trotsky's appropriately disgusting image for it, you complacently "pick your nose" and remain "objectively" aloof in face of state-sponsored ethnic slaughter. You sagely comment that the victims of ethnic chauvinism today will, if they get the chance, change places with their persecutors. Your answer to the conflict? Socialism! Now! Immediately!

That was the SWP approach to events in ex-Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s. The democratic programme of working class politics adopted by the Balkan socialists as long ago as 1910 — for



The SWP were "against NATO", "against war" and for Milosevic.

democratic Balkan federation in which each of the participants will have the maximum national freedom consistent with the national freedom of others — was for them a voice from the tomb of pre-Stalinist socialism. Yet the Balkan socialist's politics — the early Communist International took them over — were rooted in reality. They were tools elaborated by socialists concerned with positive advances, with living, suffering peoples, for whom socialism had to be the work of a working class that had found political ways of freeing itself from nationalism and chauvinism. Thus, the emergence of such formulas as that of a Democratic Balkan Federation — a proposal that would in the right circumstances allow the workers of the embattled people and fragments of peoples to imagine a viable national freedom within coexistence with other peoples. Thus it would enable the socialists amongst them to begin to unite across the blood-filled communal and national ditches.

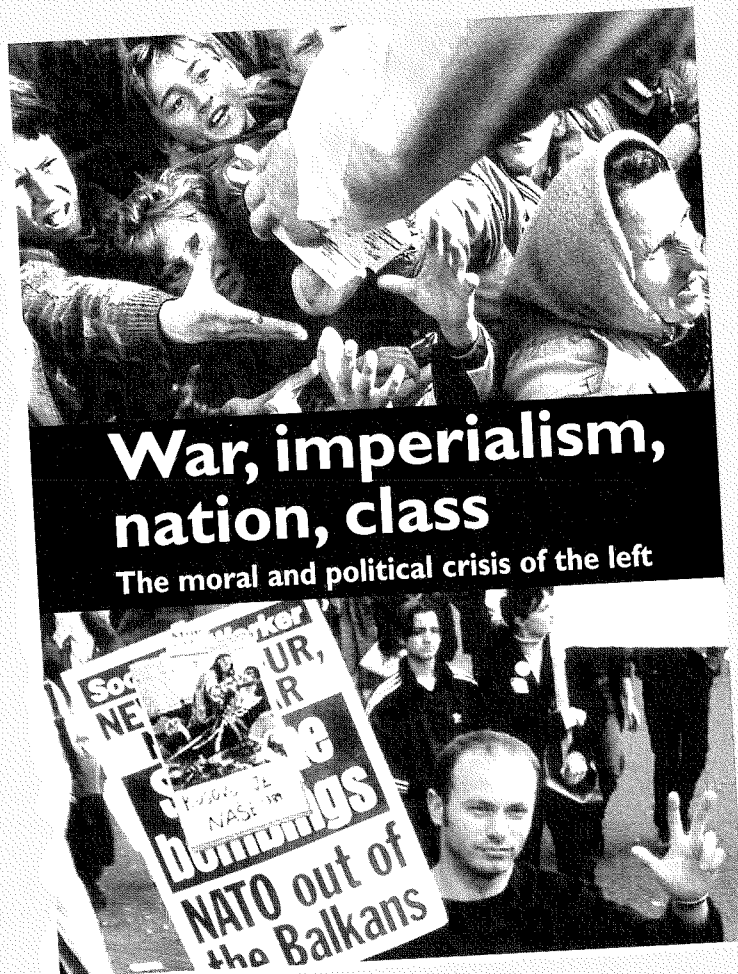
But our sectist friends, positive about nothing, except for the socialist final goal, are uninterested — they are determinedly, fixatedly negative. They are anti-capitalists of the primitive, say-no-when-they-say-yes-and-yes-when-they-say-no school; and they are "anti-imperialists" above all else. When Serbia started to clear out and kill off the Albanian people of Kosova (90% of the population), and NATO, for its own reasons and in its own extravagantly brutal and incompetent way, mounts a police action to compel Milosevic to stop — then the essentially depoliticised negativists know where they stand. They are "against imperialism". Which imperialism? Milosevic's primitive geno-imperialism? They are against NATO! It is not imperialism they are against, but NATO. Politics? For Marxists, war is politics by other means: what are the politics here? Politics? Who cares about politics? We are "against the war". Which war? Serbia's genocidal war in Kosova? NATO's war! They are above all "against the bombing". They mount a — feeble, but that was not for want of trying — Stop the War campaign allied with pacifists and *Morning Star* neo-Stalinist, uncritical partisans of Milosevic.

By way of depoliticised negativism against advanced capitalism and NATO, they back themselves into positive support for Milosevic. They make propaganda — the pamphlet *Stop the War*, for example — which by deliberately minimising what the Serbs are doing in Kosova is effectively cover-propaganda for attempted geno-

* *The Balkans, nationalism and imperialism*, edited by Lindsey German, published by Bookmarks, £6.50

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detailed critique of the
left on Kosova and the
1999 Balkans war.

From page 13

cide. Having no positive programme of their own, except a disembodied "socialism", they wind up recoiling from NATO into *de facto* acceptance of the *Morning Star's* programme and... Milosevic's.

For the three months of the NATO-Serb war *Socialist Worker* turned itself into a vulgar, pro-Milosevic, war propaganda sheet on behalf of Serb imperialism in Kosova; they excluded mention of the Kosova Albanians except to insist that "NATO" was lying about what was going on in Kosova, and minimise it by indignant, pedantic refutations of exaggerated claims by ministers and newspapers that the Serb drive against the Albanians was the equivalent of the Holocaust. In meetings all over the country they fought against adopting slogans about Kosovan Albanians' rights. They achieved the difficult feat of being marginally less critical, less "objective" in their "reporting" than the *Morning Star*.

The nearest equivalent in the history of the British labour movement to *Socialist Worker* in these three months is the hypocritically pro-Hitler (Stalin's ally) "anti-war" propaganda of the *Morning Star*, then called the *Daily Worker*, between October 1939 and the government suppression of the paper in mid-1940, when a German invasion seemed imminent.

Where *Socialist Worker* should have taken sides, in Bosnia, for example, it was aloof, sectarian and politically abstentionist. Where it should have taken sides with the Kosovan Albanians, it refused to and in a passion of hysterical negativeism towards advanced capi-

talism and NATO wound up actively and positively — again see *Stop the War* — on Milosevic's side, that is on the side of Serb imperialism as it attempted genocide against the population of Serbia's colony, Kosova.

It would be difficult to imagine a more decisive, or more horrible, demonstration that socialists need positive politics — that is independent working-class socialist politics — unless reflex negativity is to turn them into reactionaries. Without positive politics rooted in an analysis of the whole of your reality, independent working class politics is impossible. To be merely negative, no matter how oppositional and r-r-revolutionary it sounds, is in fact to turn yourself into the imprint of whoever you are against. It is the opposite of independent politics.

This book, which came out after the end of the war, in June, is a collection of pieces by various people in *Socialist Worker* over 10 years. It has the general politics described above. But it has comparatively very little from *Socialist Worker's* coverage of recent events. The overall impression is a misleading one of balance — too much, sectarian, balance and "nose-picking" objectivity, in fact. From this collection, which will circulate for years, you will get no inkling of *Socialist Worker's* crazy three months as unrestrained war propagandists for Milosevic, as he was trying to clear Kosova of Albanians. The book, so to speak, seals off that period.

It will be a pity if this rich, disruptive and spectacularly unprincipled sect is allowed to flush its three month record of Serb imperialist apologetics down the memory hole. Something tells me they won't...

Another Day A plague on both houses?

"SOME of the left are tempted to take sides... But... neither of the nationalisms currently tearing Yugoslavia apart has anything to offer the mass of the people." With those words (in Alex Callinicos's "Comment" column, 23 November), *Socialist Worker* washed its hands of the war in Croatia.

Callinicos declares that "all the different peoples of Yugoslavia should have the right to self-determination, the right to form their own separate states freely", but argues that in the war between Croatia on one side, and Serbia and the Serb-dominated federal army on the other, both sides are wrong.

He points to the failure of Croat leader Tudjman to disassociate himself from the fascist and murderously anti-Serb Ustashi, or to offer any guarantees to the Serb minority which is 12 per cent of Croatia's population.

These are certainly important factors in the situation. Support for Croatia's right to resist Serbian conquest must be coupled with support for the rights of the Serb minority in Croatia. And, as long as it remained possible, socialists should have argued against Croatia's secession and for keeping some federal framework in Yugoslavia: given the intricate intermingling of peoples, the break-up of Yugoslavia could never have failed to produce horrors.

Nevertheless, federal Yugoslavia is dead. And on all the evidence, the war in Croatia is not primarily about the rights of the Serb minority there, or equally about that and about Croatia's rights.

The pattern over the last several years has been for Serbia — the strongest nationality in Yugoslavia, and the one

dominating the federal army — to make ever more aggressive moves for Serbian domination. That pattern was established well before the war in Croatia.

The Serbian government extinguished local rights in Vojvodina (an area of mixed population) and Kosova (an area where the great majority are Albanians). It used great violence in Kosovo.

The Serb-dominated federal army tried to use force to stop the independence of Slovenia, a republic which has no significant Serb minority.

The Serbian war in Croatia has driven deep into areas which have clear Croat majorities.

All these facts mean that socialists cannot avoid siding — however critically, and with whatever qualifications — with Croatia.

Socialist Worker's usual line on national conflicts is to look for the "good", oppressed nation and then pose as the most gung-ho, aggressive and "revolutionary" champions of that nation against "bad" oppressor nations. That, for example, is how *SW* approaches the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The war in Croatia cannot be fitted into that approach. Neither the Croats, historically often "pro-imperialist", nor the Serbs, clearly aggressive and dominant, fit the role of "good nation".

Unfortunately, *SW* has chosen to retreat to abstract socialist abstention rather than rethink its general approach to national conflicts.

From *SO510*, December 1991

As we were saying:

Oppose intervention? In the name of what?

THE old Yugoslav state broke down because, over the last decade, aggressive Serb chauvinism provoked and alarmed the smaller peoples, Croats and others, of the Yugoslav Federation.

At the heart of the chaos into which Yugoslavia has now dissolved is the predatory expansion of the Serbian state, led by neo-Stalinists whose regime has a great deal of popular support. They utilise people such as the Serbs in the territory claimed by Croatia to serve a drive which is essentially a drive to create the largest possible "Greater Serbia". It is a primitive form of imperialism, whose real content is summed up in the phrase which expresses their policy for non-Serbs: "ethnic cleansing".

Nationalism and chauvinism inevitably breeds... nationalism and chauvinism.

The Croats were pushed and provoked by the Serbs. But when Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia, large numbers of Serbs — substantial majorities in some parts of the territory of historic Croatia — were cut off from other Serbs and trapped as a helpless minority in an alien state.

In the Croatian state set up under German patronage during World War Two, as many as half of the Serbs in Croatia — perhaps 3/4 of a million men, women and children — were massacred by Croat chauvinists, the Ustashe.*

While Serb state leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic whose policies through the '80s led finally to the destruction of Yugoslavia, were, chauvinists, people motivated by the desire to aggrandise Serbia, the Serbs in independent Croatia did not have to be chauvinists to resolve to fight rather than submit to outright Croatian rule. They needed only to remember the not too distant past and look around them at the efforts being made to revive Ustashe banners, uniforms and catch-cries in the new Croatia.

Thus while millions in Croatia — to stick to the one example — felt the understandable need for separation, they could not achieve independence without oppressing and threatening others. And not only in Yugoslavia. The whole of the Balkans is a crazy pavement of peoples and fragments of peoples interlocked and overlapping, and standing in the way of each others' full autonomy.

From this it followed that maintenance of a broad federal structure was the best possible way for the peoples of Yugoslavia to arrange their affairs. But the structures broke down; the central state apparatus became increasingly a tool of Serb domination, serving Serb expansion. Everything dissolved into the bloody chaos of ethnic and national wars which is now raging.

Despite all the crimes of the Croatian chauvinists, the Croats' right to self-determination became the major issue between Croatia and Serbia; socialists have to uphold that right, championing the minority rights

of the Serbs within Croatia but denying to Serbia any right to use those minorities as a pretext for trying to conquer as much of Croatia as they can.

The Serb chauvinists were as aggressive against Kosovo and Slovenia where there were no big problems of an oppressed Serbian minority as against Croatia.

Yugoslavia today may offer a picture of their own future to many other ethnically interlaced groups of people, including the occupants of large parts of the former Soviet Union.

Within this situation there is a growing demand for Western — UN, NATO — intervention to bring an end to the fighting. It is by no means certain that there will be Western military intervention. If there is, it is unlikely to bring peace or create a political framework within which the peoples of the former Yugoslavia can coexist. What military intervention would most likely amount to is action to stop Serbia expanding further, and to "freeze" the current carve-up of Bosnia. Already, anti-Serb sanctions are being mounted.

Is the conflict turning into something like the build-up to another edition of last year's war against Iraq? The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait quickly became the occasion for a savage Western war against Iraq.

Should socialists "Defend Serbia" from "Imperialist Aggression"?

If there is Western military intervention it will be a police action to avert chaos on the borders of the immensely powerful European community: it will be a limited police action. If the cluster of wars now going on are allowed to burn themselves out, they will go on for a long time, many thousands will die, hundreds of thousands and maybe millions will be "ethnically cleansed" into refugee camps, and "Greater Serbia" may become a lot greater than it is now.

As socialists and anti-imperialists, we have no confidence in the Western capitalist powers: we warn against relying on NATO or UN intervention; we advocate working-class independence. But in the name of what alternative would we denounce and condemn, and demand an immediate end, to a limited police action by the big powers?

On the ground that everything that "imperialist" Western European states do is ipso facto "imperialist" and wrong, even if it has desirable results? This is not Marxist or working class politics but absurd "oppositionism", nihilism.

On the ground that 'outside' intervention is always wrong? What meaning can such a 'principle' have in face of the bloody ethnic melée which is engulfing the peoples of Yugoslavia? Why has Serbia more 'right' in Bosnia than a UN army acceptable to the majority of Bosnians would have? That reasoning is absurd.

On the ground that neo-Stalinist Serbia is a 'socialist' or 'workers' state? It is nothing of the sort, but even if it were, then that would not require of socialists that we back Serbian imperialism, with all its

* Footnote, 1999: it was probably considerably less than that.

AFTER THE WAR



inevitable slaughters and “ethnic cleansings”. Such a position would be a *reductio ad absurdum* of a decades-old ‘tradition’ of kitsch Trotskyist “defencist” policies for the Stalinist states. It is sheer nonsense, on every level.

Or should we oppose a big power police action because we believe the destruction of Serb power, the prevention of the consolidation of the Greater Serb state is the real goal of Western “imperialist” intervention? For certain, the Western powers will only intervene militarily, with all the accompanying costs, dangers and precedents, to serve their own interests.

There are powers with imperialist ambitions to gain semi-colonies and spheres of influence in Yugoslavia and the whole area round the Black Sea.

The UN, the EC, and NATO will not, however, lend their banners to Greek or Turkish ambitions! Germany will not vote for a UN operation which is a cover for neo-colonial action by the US – as the Gulf war against Iraq was, to a large extent – and no other power is strong enough to be able to use the UN and NATO banners as its own. Indeed that is the reason why there has been no military intervention, and may well yet be none: the intervention will not give any big power a colony, or a sphere of influence, that it did not have before. From a capitalist point of view, it will have no advantage beyond stabilising the region for normal business, and they may have great difficulties even doing that.

That is why the governments so eager to send troops and weapons to the aid of “poor little Kuwait” are so cautious about Bosnia.

To be sure, the Western powers would probably be happy to kick Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbian neo-Stalinists into history’s abyss, and that might give some of them an added reason to intervene. But even a big war on Serbia might not do that, as Saddam Hussein could tell them.

Their main interest if they intervene will be to secure peace on the European Community’s borders and ‘stability’ in Europe.

Absurd too is the idea that Western capital — in the

first place German capital — needs military occupation to secure its domination in the former Eastern European Stalinist states. It has no such need.

The normal workings of the market – the sheer economic power of the West Europeans – make their domination in the East a certainty in the years to come — unless the working class should take power there. Right now the working class is in no condition to take power. Military intervention will just add to their costs, not facilitate West European capitalist penetration of the former Russian Empire.

If US and West European capital tries to play the international policeman on the EC’s borders, we should counterpose to it something better. What exists in Yugoslavia now is worse. We are against the existing capitalist states, but we do not want to replace them with something worse: chaos is a lot worse.

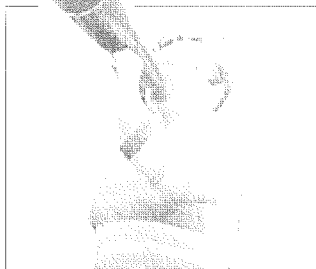
The best outcome from the Yugoslav chaos would be for the working class in the various conflicting peoples to come together, settle accounts with their own chauvinists and tin-pot imperialists and restore a federation, this time under the control of the workers.

Short of that, socialists should want an end to the bloodshed and chaos. We have no confidence in the big capitalist powers and do not call on them to intervene: but if the West does intervene socialists can not side with Serbia and become “defencists” for Greater Serb imperialism.

Socialists should not declare, explicitly or implicitly, that the best thing is for the Yugoslav conflict to take its course with the strongest coming out at the end on top of the bloody pile.

Those socialists who adopt this posture because they want to be “anti-imperialists” will prove in their own way the basic truth that there is no consistently revolutionary politics without thought, clarity and Marxist theory. It will unfortunately, be a negative proof. This “anti-imperialism” is not anti-imperialism at all but support for the weaker and more primitive imperialism – Serbian imperialism!

Editorial from Socialist Organiser 529, July 1992



Indictments

1. Serbs condemned?

HAVING read articles in *Workers' Liberty* and also the leaflet you issued entitled "Kosova and the Moral Collapse of the Left", I am surprised that you do not call for solidarity between Serbian and Kosovar workers and peasants. Instead you appear to treat all Serbians as the baddies and all Kosovars as the goodies.

You rubbish the view that NATO bombing provoked ethnic cleansing by stating that "by the same token Churchill was to blame for ('provoked') the Holocaust". When one considers that the Tory government and press praised Hitler (and Mussolini) pre-World War 2 and Churchill was opposed to Jewish refugees coming to this country, only a limited number allowed in, there is irony in your statement. Churchill wanted refugees to be resettled in Africa. In 1940 Jewish refugees were whipped up and interned as a fifth column, a number being sent out to what were the Colonies. Everyone should know the story of the sinking of the Arandora Star by a U-boat, in which several hundred Jewish refugees and Italians resident in Britain died. So don't whitewash Churchill to me!

I cannot grasp your analogies between Lenin being sent by the Germans in World War One on a train to Russia, or the Irish nationalists purchasing arms from Germany during WWI, and the bombing of Serbia and Kosovo. During the bombing much of the infrastructure was destroyed, releasing chemicals into the atmosphere, depleted uranium was used and the Danube blocked by bombed bridges, this latter preventing surrounding countries using the river for trading purposes.

Surely socialists should call to all the workers and peasants to Yugoslavia to join hands in solidarity and not play the politics of the Great Powers or ambitious nationalists?

Sheila Labr

2. Workers' Liberty and eclecticism

ECCLECTICISM is the ability to select ideas from different philosophies and weld them together, even if the ideas oppose each other.

Patrick Murphy's letter in the *Guardian* of 11 June reminded me of this method of thinking. He sneeringly attacks the anti-war movement, does not condemn the bombing of Serbia and Kosova by NATO, but half-heartedly criticises them by saying "it was possible to give support to the Kosovans without putting any trust or confidence in NATO".

Workers' Liberty policies on the Kosovan crisis lack a class attitude. You regard the war as an inter-imperialist war whereas it was (and still is) a war of aggression by the major imperialist powers against an underdeveloped capitalist country with nationalist aspirations. *Workers' Liberty's* attitude to the criminal attacks on Serbia and Kosova is muted and contradictory to say the least. In a confused, nonsensical imaginary debate written by the aptly-named John Nihill (*Workers' Liberty*, April 1999) "Kate", a clear, Marxist comrade trained by *Workers' Liberty*, gives the correct line to "Tony" and "Linda" — obviously intended to be muddle-headed SWPers. Tony wants the left to demand "NATO out of the Balkans", but Kate puts him right: "This is the politics of the lunatic asylum." And again, "to side with the Serbs beggars belief. Yet, that is clearly what concentrating on denouncing NATO comes down to." However, we must receive our dose of eclecticism, because in the same article Kate says: "Of course, we are against the bombing." But as she wants "Milosevic to lose", she must mean she wants NATO to win, and furthermore, "If...

they stop or even limit the slaughter and uprooting of the Kosovars I'll be glad of it."

So in fact *Workers' Liberty* implicitly does support the bombing, and thereby accepts the arguments of Blair *et al* that the destruction ("degrading" is the term used by NATO military) of Serbia and Kosova is for humanitarian aims.

One more aspect of *Workers' Liberty's* attitude. You support an organisation, set up on 20 May, called Trade Unions for Kosova. One of its draft aims is "to support Kosovar trade unions and trade unionists in rebuilding their organisations and the social infrastructure of their country". A noble aim. No socialist can possibly disagree.

But what about giving Serbian trade unions and trade unionists the same support? What about supporting the rebuilding of the Serbian infrastructure destroyed by NATO? Not a word. Instead: "To develop where possible contacts with trade unions and trade unionists in Serbia, Montenegro and throughout ex-Yugoslavia on the basis of opposition to ethnic cleansing and the promotion of working class solidarity" (my italics).

The implication is clear: the Serbian working class are contaminated by ideas of ethnic cleansing — but there is no mention of the KLA's attitude, either in the draft aims or in the April or June/July issues of *Workers' Liberty*. On the front page in April you have the slogan "Arm the Kosovars". But nowhere in your many articles do you say which Kosovars are to be armed. Do you mean the KLA, and are NATO to arm them? Your silence is hardly surprising. The KLA is a shadowy organisation.

The omission of the need to help Serbian trade unions and the rebuilding of Serbia's infrastructure, and the omission of the programme and role of the KLA, is in line with the attitude of Blair and Clinton. They will give no economic aid to Serbia because they blame the Serbian people for Milosevic and his policies. Or rather, they use that argument as a pretext — just as they use the excuse of Saddam Hussein to starve the Iraqi people. *Workers' Liberty* is in good company.

Workers' Liberty loves quotations: here are two you've missed. The first is from Marx, where he explains that communists "are distinguished from the other working class parties" by two factors, of which the first is: "In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries they point out, and bring to the front, the common interests of the whole proletariat, interests independent of all nationality." (*Communist Manifesto*, 1848).

And even more to the point of this debate: "All advocacy of the segregation of the workers of one nation from those of another, all attacks upon Marxist 'assimilation' or attempts in matters concerning the proletariat to contrast one national culture as a whole with another allegedly integral national culture, and so forth, is bourgeois nationalism against which it is imperative to wage a ruthless struggle" (Lenin, *Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism*).

This fits the comrades in *Workers' Liberty* like a glove. Your attitude to the Serbian working class contrasts sharply with that to the Kosovan working class. But possibly I am being too generous in my implied characterisation of Patrick Murphy and his comrades as "bourgeois nationalists". Perhaps I should borrow the polemical terminology of *Workers' Liberty* itself, and characterise him as a Kosovan chetnik, in view of his silence on the ethnic cleansing of Serbs by the KLA.

David Finch

The Good Friday Agreement: Revolutionary realism or revolutionary surrealism?

THE question of deciding what is, or what is not, the correct response to questions of constitutional order arising in bourgeois states is difficult and complex. The reason

is that they are embedded in and cannot be easily separated from a myriad of other problems.

In states such as Northern Ireland and the Lebanon working class politics are, for all practical purposes, buried in communal politics. Armed conflict between the communities closes off any immediate prospect of working class unity across the sectarian religious divide. Some agreement on constitutional questions, allowing the communities to live together, is a prerequisite for workers to unite in struggle against the capitalist class.

The question of constitutional order arose quite quickly after the February 1917 revolution in Russia. The words of any constitution are of themselves of only secondary or tertiary importance. What is decisive in any particular situation is the relationship of social forces. Notwithstanding this, once the project to set up a Constitutional Assembly was under way, Marxists, while not spreading illusions about the ultimate worth of constitutions, had an obligation to keep alive the project. They saw it as important to resist any attempt by bourgeois forces to shunt aside constitution-making, or relegate it to the distant future. It was possible in certain future conditions that a Constituent Assembly could provide an arena within which the Bolsheviks could usefully combat the class enemy. In other words, the Bolsheviks, while sticking to basic principles regarding constitution-making, saw the vital importance of a tactical orientation which took account of the urgent, immediate interests of their class.

In his *History of the Russian Revolution* Trotsky says:

"But the Bolsheviks also, although finding no way out on the road of formal democracy, had not yet renounced the idea of the Constituent Assembly. *Moreover they could not do so without abandoning revolutionary realism.* [Italics added]. Whether the future course of events would create the conditions for a complete victory of the proletariat could not with absolute certainty be foreseen. Exactly as the Bolsheviks defended the compromiser soviets and the democratic municipalities against Kornilov, so they were ready to defend the Constituent Assembly against the attempts of the bourgeoisie" (*History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol 2, p343, Ann Arbor).

(It should be noted that the bourgeoisie, through its main party, the Constitutional Democrats (KADETS), had no desire to proceed with constitution-making until the important business of crushing the Bolsheviks had

been brought to a successful conclusion. Hence on this question it dragged its feet before October.)

The Bolsheviks for their part concentrated all their efforts on winning over those workers and peasants who had initially supported the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in the Soviets. After their successful seizure of power in October the Bolsheviks saw no point in debating the finer points of constitution-making with the representatives of parties who were either open bourgeois enemies or Compromiser "Left" parties, discredited in the eyes of the workers. They squashed bourgeois efforts to convene the Constituent Assembly and create a focus for armed rebellion against Soviet power.

The analogy from the February-October period in 1917 is of course not exactly "on all fours" with the situation existing in the run-up to the Irish referendum. The question of setting up the Constituent Assembly was, for example, never posed to the Russian people as a Yes-No referendum proposition. Nonetheless the stance taken in the Bolshevik press, to win over the hearts and minds of the rank and file members of the Compromiser parties, has considerable relevance.

It is in this connection that Trotsky's reference to the parallelism between the Bolshevik party's exemplary attitude to a working class United Front aimed at rebuffing Kornilov's threatened assault on Petrograd, and its position vis-à-vis the question of the Constituent Assembly is germane to recent Irish events.

The Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionary parties' grovelling support for the policy of continuing the imperialist war, and all the other major policies of the KADETS, objectively marked them out as enemies of the proletariat and the peasantry. The Bolsheviks knew that the leaderships of these parties, and the parties themselves, would likely suffer the same fate as the Bolsheviks, if Kornilov's forces succeeded in conquering Petrograd. When lackeys, traitors and muddleheads cease to have any use for the ruling class, why should a victorious general, acting for the bourgeoisie, handle them gently? Nor was this point lost on the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries themselves. They accepted the Bolshevik proposals to set up joint defence committees. Kornilov and his forces were then easily rebuffed.

In Ireland, so long as Sinn Féin emphasised military struggle to attain its goals of ending the Orange ascendancy, attain-

ing overall Irish unity etc., it was paradoxically doing the very thing that would frustrate its own aspirations. In one sense it could be argued that in the present period Marxists should not give even critical support to proposals likely to benefit a party that had for so long propagated the crassest nationalistic illusions. Such would, however, be a thoroughly superficial view. In the same way as the Russian Bolsheviks sought to win away rank and file support for the traitorous or muddleheaded "Left" parties, by initiating joint activity around the Kornilov threat and doing the same thing on the Constituent Assembly issue, a Marxist approach in Ireland, prior to the referendum, would have been to support the Yes vote sought by Sinn Féin, while setting out all the possible dangers inherent in so doing.

The Bloxam-Murphy position [see WL 54] additionally was absolutely correct in pointing out that Sinn Féin in the very recent past had, implicitly at least, shifted away from its former dead-end militarism, and this combined with shifts in the Unionist camp created an opening that should have been seized with both hands.

If there was even a slight possibility that an Irish constitutional reordering, resulting from a Yes vote, would over time "drain away the sectarian poisons" in Northern Ireland, then Marxists everywhere should have supported the Yes vote critically.

Both the WL Conference majority and the Bloxam-Murphy resolution refer to lesser-evilmism. It is unfortunate that the pithy capsule character of the term "lesser-evilmism" has no positive counterpart. It is time one was invented. If we posit the expression "greater-goodism" and apply it to the Irish referendum question, it is clear that the essence of the issue is reframed, and it becomes a useful demystifier. The ultimate re-establishment of working class unity, or a near approximation to it, by ending forever dead-end militarism, would be a "good" which would produce incalculable benefits for the proletariat of Northern Ireland. Of course in the here and now it is a potentiality only, and that would have to be spelled out. What, on the other hand is the "good" that flows from abstention that can be set against possible future proletarian unity?

It is, we suppose, a "good" that some simple souls, incapable of looking beyond a banner headline "Vote Yes", would not have their illusions fostered. Every one of the sensible caveats and qualifications

could have been set out in summary form in any agitational material promoted by Marxists.

It is worthwhile to compare the "abstention" recommendation in the referendum on British entry into the Common Market, with the same plea, if we suppose that it had been made, regarding the Irish referendum.

In the first case it was absolutely correct to stress that if Britain went into Europe, or if she stayed out, the consequences for the British working class would have been equally bad. In a beauty contest between a rattlesnake and a tarantula, the extreme ugliness of both contestants rules out even the possibility of a choice.

For the reasons explained above, in the Irish referendum there was on the other hand an infinitely greater "good" (in potential at least) that could be set against a markedly lesser "good" on the other.

The WL majority says "Voting 'Yes' to this British state project was wrong in principle". This statement seems to us to fall into the error of "putting a plus where the foe puts a minus, and a minus where he puts a plus". In the vast generality of cases the brains behind the ruling class state will, within the limits of their understanding, promote whatever is to the detriment of the long term interests of the working class. We must acknowledge that generally throughout the world they have been extraordinarily astute in assessing the vulnerabilities of the exploited classes, and promoting their own interests against them. There have, however, been exceptions which go to show that the class enemy is not all-wise on every occasion. When in 1917 the German military High Command agreed to transport Lenin from Switzerland across Germany in a sealed train, so that he could return to Russia, it correctly calculated that this dangerous agitator could assist in deepening the revolution and might possibly contribute to knocking Russia out of the war. In the short term they were proved right, but in the long term things turned out badly for them. Bolshevik fraternisation with war-weary German soldiers in the end led to the collapse of German armies on the Western front and the end of Imperial Germany.

The actions of hostile state machines must in every instance be looked at in their own terms. Simplistic rule of thumb formulas must be ruled out.

Long live Revolutionary Realism!

Harry Holland, New Zealand

An end to "lost texts"

By Eric Lee

ICAN still remember the excitement we felt upon discovering Goldwater's bookshop on an upper floor of a small office building on east 12th street in New York City.

It was some time in the mid-1970s and we were a small group of young socialists eager to learn more about some of the more obscure Marxist writers, such as Max Shachtman.

On Goldwater's dusty shelves and in boxes scattered randomly around his shop, we were able to find — and buy — back issues of *The New Internationalist*, the theoretical journal of Shachtman's Workers Party in the 1940s and 1950s, and many other lost and obscure left-wing journals.

Until we discovered Goldwater's, private libraries belonging to older comrades and the rare good collection at a university were our only sources for this kind of material.

In the late 1970s, we reprinted some of the very best material — such as the historic debate between Shachtman and Earl Browder, the deposed leader of the US Communist Party — in a small journal called *The New Internationalist Review* which itself has become a dusty specimen now to be found only in libraries and shops like Goldwater's.

With the Internet, all that is now changing. The possibility now exists of making vast amounts of material previously found only on dusty shelves in libraries and used bookshops readily available to all. Such material would not only be accessible, but fully searchable.

It makes it possible to easily scour the writings of Shacht-

man, Trotsky and others to easily locate half-remembered passages that might be useful for an article or speech. And it makes printing out copies of particular articles for study groups extremely easy.

As readers of this publication know, a good number of Shachtman's articles on Russia are now once again available in the volume *The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism, Volume I* (1998). The web is the best place to learn about the book, starting with its home page at: <http://www.workersliberty.org/book/index.htm>. The book can also be easily ordered online from the world's largest bookshop, Amazon.com, and its UK affiliate, Amazon.co.uk.

In fact, Amazon lists three books by Shachtman in their online catalogue, and that's not counting the collection *Neither Capitalism nor Socialism* (1996) which doesn't include Shachtman as one of its named authors. Two of the titles are out of print, but Amazon will search for these, as will many other online bookshops.

Probably the best place to begin learning about Shachtman and his group is the Marxists Internet Archive, located at <http://www.marxists.org>. They have produced a very helpful page on Shachtman located at

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/shachtma/> which provides links to the complete texts of no fewer than 14 articles and three books or pamphlets. (These include the classic 1946 programme of the Workers Party, *The Fight for Socialism*, a copy of which I located with great difficulty a quarter century ago on Goldwater's shelves.) The archive is constantly expanding, with several of the items having been added this summer.

But this is only the beginning of what can be done.

The Tamiment Institute in New York City, which maintains an extensive Shachtman collection, could publish online at the very least their catalogue. They should be encouraged to eventually publish the entire archive on the net.

Workers Liberty could publish the entire text of the book, which includes nearly 40 articles by Shachtman, online. (The website promises, in a link, the full contents of the book, but what is meant is the full table of contents. The only section of the book currently available online is the introduction.) By doing this, the number of articles by Shachtman available to the online public would more than triple.

As part of its project to rediscover "lost texts of critical Marxism", AWL might consider gradually publishing one after another as many of the works of Shachtman (and other selected WP/ISL writers) as possible. The investment of time and money in this as compared to reprinting the articles in book format is negligible. (Much of the material can be scanned in and using optical character recognition software, converted to digital text.)

Finally, every effort should be made to secure audio recordings of Shachtman's speeches — which were extraordinary events never to be forgotten by those who heard them — and make digital copies for display on the net.

The frustration we felt in the 1970s searching for "lost texts" was felt again by comrades two decades later. Even the publication of dozens of classic articles in book format or in our journals does not guarantee that they will not become lost again.

The only way to ensure that our revolutionary legacy is preserved for the next generation is to digitise it and store it on publicly accessible networked computers. This should be a priority for socialists of this generation.

The Fate of the Russian Revolution



Lost texts of critical Marxism

Including: Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, CLR James and Leon Trotsky

Edited by Sean Matgamna

608 pages

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The workings of a dream factory

By Clive Bradley

IT'S often said that Hollywood films are "formulaic". The release of *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* has focused attention on George Lucas' explicit debt to one particular formula, taken from the work of Joseph Campbell, a writer on comparative mythology, whose book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* became a best-seller on the strength of Lucas' recommendation. Campbell's "hero's journey" or "monomyth" model is not the only one popular in Tinseltown, and indeed it has been fused with a more general "three-act" paradigm popularised by a host of script gurus, especially Syd Field and Robert McKee.¹ But what do these "models" or formulas tell us about the way Hollywood sees the world?

The "hero's journey" is supposed to be the mythological template from which all stories derive — a conclusion Campbell reached after a lifetime's comparative study of the world's myths. Campbell was very influenced by Jungian psychology, which also adores mythic "archetypes", and via him a huge amount of pop-Jungian buzz-words have become popular in Hollywood. In fact, Campbell himself was utterly promiscuous in his theoretical borrowings, snatching phrases from Freud as happily as from Jung, but the producers, directors and writers who think his work solves every dramatic problem under the sun are obviously not so interested in that. *The Hero...* is spoken of in Hollywood almost as if it is a religious text, and reading it a mystic revelation. In reality, though, most of them probably haven't read it, as the book is quite heavy-going, and rely instead on the simplified interpretation provided by Christopher Vogler in his book *The Writer's Journey*. Vogler was a script analyst at Disney who wrote a brief "guide" to Campbell which soon became required reading in the industry. Now he is employed on vast sums of money to probe writers with questions about the "threshold guardians" in their scripts in an effort to improve mediocre material.

The "hero's journey" goes like this. A hero living in the ordinary world receives a call to adventure. At first s/he refuses the call, but with the aid of a mentor crosses the first threshold and embarks on his/her journey. After meeting tests, allies and enemies, s/he approaches the inmost cave where s/he undergoes the supreme ordeal, and escapes with some prize — a sword, or magical talisman, or the "elixir of life". S/he is pursued on the road home by enemies, symbolically dies and is resurrected, and returns to the ordinary world with the elixir, transformed, and so transforming

the world s/he left at the beginning.

This pattern is very obvious in the original *Star Wars*. Obi Wan is the mentor; the supreme ordeal is where Luke is pulled under the water of the Death Star trashmaker and we think he is dead. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, the inmost cave and supreme ordeal are when Luke is on Yoda's planet. In all three of the original films there is a battle scene in which Luke is almost killed but "resurrected".

Others have used it quite transparently — for example Terry Gilliam in *The Fisher King*, the eponymous hero being a favourite of Campbell's — but scores of film-makers use the approach for stories with no apparent mythical element at all. The underlying theory is that stories work because they follow the pattern of myth, which has the resonance it has because myths tap into, and are metaphors for, common human experience. We are all the "hero", and the "journey" is a metaphor for life.

Vogler explicitly relates his version of Campbell to the "three-act" paradigm all Hollywood producers, writers and script analysts have long since sworn by (act two starts with crossing the first threshold, act three with the "road back"). At one level this three-act system is simply a statement of Aristotle's view that all stories must have "a beginning, middle and end". But the Hollywood dramaturgists go further than this, and specify precise proportions between acts, and even at what page in the script the acts should start.²

There is an element, even a large one, of truth in both the "hero's journey" and the "three-act" paradigm. Indeed, if there wasn't, these approaches would not have proved so popular and influential. But there are other reasons than their partial truthfulness and practical use which have made these "models" so vital in contemporary Hollywood.

IT'S child's play to point to films which violate either the "three-act" structure (try and find the clear turning points in *Mean Streets*), or have nothing much to do with a hero's journey, except in so far as you can make anything fit if you try hard enough. But the element of truth is important. It's true that stories often have power because at their core they are about some universal, common human experience; and it's surely true that many myths are metaphors for life. A story narrowly focused on some

specific social ill, for example, will often feel best suited for an American-style TV movie ("disease of the week", as they like to put it), or will feel like somewhat declamatory propaganda.

But even mythological templates can serve an ideological purpose, something to which Campbell is quite oblivious. Take, for example, the myth of Icarus. Daedalus makes wings for himself and his son, Icarus, to escape imprisonment, attaching the wings to their bodies with wax. Despite warnings, Icarus flies too close to the sun, the wax melts, and he plunges into the sea. No doubt it's possible to interpret this as a general life-metaphor. But it is surely, first and foremost, a story about knowing your place, and not meddling with things outside your role in life — about social and political power. Neither Campbell nor his Hollywood disciples seem in the slightest aware of this side to mythology.

Similarly, it is undoubtedly true that stories need beginnings, middles and ends, and that in some way the end resolves whatever conflict is established at the beginning.³ Thus far, any story can be divided into three "acts". But what does an "end" mean; what does "resolution" mean? In Hollywood it almost invariably means a finished, absolute resolution of whatever problem: "order" is restored and the world is once again a safe, or better, place — which often takes the form of a "happy ending". But it is not only that stories shouldn't have to have happy endings; more than that, a "resolution" can raise questions it doesn't seek to answer.

In the Italian neo-realist classic Da Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, an unemployed worker pawns his family's sheets for a bike which he needs for a new job. When the bike is stolen, he embarks on a journey across the city with his young son to find it. He fails to do so, and after thinking he's put his son on a bus home, steals a bike leaning on a wall. He's caught, and his son witnesses his humiliation. There's no simple resolution here,⁴ but there is no question that the story has ended. It has ended, however, not with a crass restoration of "order", but with a more complex emotional and political question, which hangs unanswered in the air.

"RESOLUTION" in Hollywood, happy ending or not, usually has a quite specific ideological content. The hero faces a series of obstacles which have to be overcome. And s/he does overcome them: all that is required to do so is courage and determination. There is rarely a place in Hollywood films for the idea that the social obstacles might simply be too severe for the hero to conquer them. And in this, of course, "three-act" structure as it is understood in Hollywood is simply a version of the American Dream. Anyone, with enough courage and will, can achieve whatever they want.

It's true that sometimes film-makers are forced to change endings to make them happy.⁵ But it's more complex than mere studio cowardice. Aristotle's concept of "catharsis", (the purging of emotion), in Hollywood rarely means more than that the audience leaves the cinema feeling everything is all right now. More challenging notions, or the idea that the audience should think for themselves about problems or reflect on their lives, are ruled out, because they don't fit with an ideology of unlimited possibilities for personal success.

This also means, of course, that in Hollywood films certain types of character and plot material are no-go areas. Movies about working class people, whether engaged in struggle or not, are fantastically rare, and if there is a struggle, it's to climb the social ladder. Mike Nichols' *Working Girl* is about Melanie Griffith fulfilling the American Dream and moving up from secretary to boss (albeit a nice boss, not like tyrannical Sigourney Weaver). This is not only because the subject matter itself is beyond the ideological pale and too risky financially. It's also because it would be unthinkable in the dominant screenwriting paradigm, which rarely allows for more than one hero/ine, excluding the possibility of collective action, and largely prohibits the possibility of an unfinished, "the

struggle continues"-type conclusion. In the Hollywood universe, there's nowhere for Melanie Griffith to go, if she's talented and intelligent, except management (and marriage to Harrison Ford); no other kind of ending is possible. The only other positive "resolution" would be the overthrow of exploitation, and they're plainly not going to "go there". (Actually there is one other conclusion, which is that such a character fulfils their real potential by getting a job as a dancer or singer; but she would almost certainly have had to be a waitress).⁶

These formulas, from Syd Field to Chris Vogler, are popular in the Hollywood system because they provide easy guidelines to tell fundamentally ideological stories. Of course the quality of films suffers additionally from the fact that many film-makers treat them literally as (crude) formulas. Hollywood films seem formulaic because they are.

Both Syd Field and Robert McKee are great fans of *Chinatown*, written by Robert Towne and directed by Roman Polanski. Field, for example, shows at great length how his version of the three-act paradigm functions in Towne's script (including a "mid-point" crisis). Whether Towne was aware he was writing to such a paradigm or not, it is of course one thing when an intelligent writer's material is structured according to these patterns (and *Chinatown* does not have a simple, corny "resolution"). But it's another when someone thinks that all you have to do is fit any old meaningless drivel into a set of structural norms, and you have a story that works. There's no doubt that the scripts of all those noisy, bombastic, big-budget adventure movies from *Godzilla* to *Eraser* were analysed to death to check where their "plot points" were, and possibly, Campbell-style, where thresholds were crossed and who was wearing the mask of the "shadow". But they remain meaningless drivel — or in so far as there is meaning, it is average American-bourgeois ideology.

There are thousands of screenwriters in America burrowing away at their scripts, with their Field or McKee or Vogler open at the relevant page, but their material is often so poor because the entire approach they have been taught to adopt is so simple-minded and superficial. These "how to" manuals spend a lot of time discussing whatever pet theory they have about structure, but much less on how the meaning of a story is determined by its structure. Consequently you get structure empty of content, mere "spectacle", as Aristotle would have said. No amount of structural refining can give life to dead, hackneyed or vapid material. Structural models can make order out of chaos, but what gives a film its power is passion and fresh ideas. Hollywood scripts are often like those structures in the grounds of mansions called "follies" — perfectly designed bits of masonry serving no purpose at all.

THE quest to establish the few basic stories of which all others are versions has quite a long pedigree; the "hero's journey" is just another one of these. Michael Hauge, author of *Writing Screenplays that Sell*, thinks the story of stories is David and Goliath (hero faces apparently impossible odds). It is probably true that understanding the "archetype", or well-known prototype, of a story is artistically useful. But again, in Hollywood this method — establishing what the pattern of the story resembles to work out how it should evolve — has given way to a spate of films which are simply self-conscious reworkings of classic tales (from *Clueless*, based on Jane Austen, to *Ten Things I Hate About You*, on Shakespeare). There is nothing inherently wrong with doing this — Shakespeare himself only twice wrote plays from original stories, the rest were borrowed; the Greek tragedians almost never invented stories, but used well-known myths — but in Hollywood it seems to be the mark of the producers, at least, losing confidence, if not giving up. They want to know something works, and don't have the real tools to judge whether it works or not, so something with proven literary and commercial success is a safe bet — or, failing that, something

which conforms to a model of how structure operates.

Of course, big-budget Hollywood movies are usually formulaic at a more obvious level. Since they are these days so ludicrously expensive to make, investors want to be sure they won't lose money, and follow like sheep whatever has recently been successful. Science fiction, or historical dramas, or musicals, are "out" until somebody breaks the taboo and has a hit, whereupon you get a rash of SF, historical dramas or — though this hasn't happened, despite *Evita* — musicals. The old-style thriller is currently almost dead (in America), subsumed into megabuck action-adventure; the Western still limps into view occasionally, where in the '40s and '50s it was one of the staples. But it's important to understand that Hollywood has a keen understanding that story-telling has structure, and before serious money is sunk into a project, they want to feel there is something which has been proven to work at script level. However, as William Goldman (top scriptwriter, with credits like *Butch Cassidy* and *Marathon Man*) famously commented, nobody in Hollywood knows what makes a film successful, and frequently — normally — they miscalculate.⁷ So they're always on the lookout for new theories. Recently there have been script gurus making their buck by alleging that "three-act" structure has been dead since *Pulp Fiction*, and writers need a new paradigm with twenty-odd features on the check-list. You wonder what Shakespeare would have made of it.

Another factor, also, has made the Campbell/Vogler model attractive to Hollywood writers, most of whom still are men. The hero, ostensibly, doesn't have to be male; but if you look at the "journey" deduced from myth, it is plainly a "he" who is on it. The hero's journey is also, in contemporary language, about the male effort to assert himself in the wake of feminism. Think of *City Slickers* and its sequel, about a city businessman learning to be a cowboy. This imagery, of the days when men were men, calling on men today to rediscover the wild, elemental force inside them (while keeping in touch with their feelings) runs through many mainstream movies.

A CONTENT-LESS "structure" emptied of meaning thus lies at the heart of most Hollywood films. Because they are meaningless, or tell us nothing new or thoughtful or surprising, the films basically insult us in their entire conception, not merely because the dialogue and characterisation are shit or they expect us to be dazzled by special effects even if the story is as thin as gruel. The success of *The Matrix*, for example, is in part due, I think, to the fact that there's something a bit more intelligent about it — even if it doesn't stand up to much scrutiny.

I don't mean to say that it's wrong for films to aim primarily to entertain, or that only profound "art house" movies are worth making. I loved *The Matrix*, and many other action-packed mainstream films. Alfred Hitchcock saw himself firstly as an entertainer, whose great joy was to play with his audience without a "philosophical" purpose. But look at the "rules" of contemporary screenwriting Hitchcock broke: the heroine snuffs it in *Psycho* half way into the film, leaving no love interest for the man who is searching for her; *The Birds* ends without any resolution at all. Films like *Vertigo* have a nasty, misanthropic undercurrent no modern studio would touch with a bargepole. Films should be entertaining. But most of the films coming out of Hollywood today are barely even that. Something more than an effort to please the crowd needs to be going on, or the films are circus, not drama, hardly justifying the millions of dollars they cost. They are formulas and nothing more.

It was not the intention of the script gurus, some of whom have useful and intelligent things to say,⁸ but the dependence on very specific, strict "rules" about structure has killed a great deal of creativity in Hollywood. No doubt this is only true for film-makers whose creativity was pretty meagre to begin with, and really talented writers and directors either ignore these "rules" altogether, or work through them without treating them as rules at all.⁹ A large part of the prob-

lem stems from the studio executives who wouldn't know quality if it slapped them in the face and are looking for little more than reassurance that they won't lose their jobs.¹⁰

But the end result is that nowadays it seems reasonable to think that a film "isn't bad, considering it's Hollywood". When you think of the marvellous movies that have come out of Hollywood in the past, this is very sad. Independent American film is still thriving (although here, no less than in Los Angeles, film makers lap up the script gurus' words of wisdom), and the Hollywood execs are always on the look out for something fresh they can "discover". This impoverishment of the mainstream American output is not only due to the absurd sums of money involved and anxiety over profitability; it's also because there are indeed fundamental formulas employed across the board which have contributed — certainly in the hands of lesser talents — to impoverishing the art of American story-telling.¹¹

Footnotes

- 1 Although writers are notoriously low in status in Hollywood, with a few exceptions, they do far more than write the dialogue, as people often assume. A screenwriter also structures the film, and determines what action takes place, even if nobody is speaking. Sometimes, the story from its inception was the writer's idea, although a writer can be hired for a project initiated by a producer, director or the studio itself.
- 2 Vicky King's *How To Write A Movie In 21 Days* suggests that you've already got your script if you have 120 blank pages in front of you. Fill in a turning point on page 17, then another on page 83, and you're away.
- 3 Aristotle's *Poetics*, which the gurus tend to love, might be held responsible for some of Hollywood's problems, especially with his emphasis on "plot" over "character". But it's quite clear that for Aristotle, dramatic action had a different meaning than it does in the American film industry today: "To produce this effect merely by stage-effects is less artistic... Those who employ spectacle to produce an effect, not of fear, but of something merely monstrous, have nothing to do with tragedy..."
- 4 The "beginning, middle and end" idea might sound banal and silly, but it isn't. The problem with a lot of movies is that the writer hasn't understood what story is being told, therefore where it starts, what's relevant in the middle, and when it's ended.
- 5 In Robert Altman's *The Player*, a satire on all this Hollywood stuff, the producer played by Tim Robbins accidentally murders a writer outside a cinema where he has been watching *Bicycle Thieves* (or *The Bicycle Thief* as it sometimes, illiterately, known). When one of his colleagues wonders if they should do a remake, Robbins comments that they'd no doubt give it a happy ending.
- 6 There are two classic examples. Adrian Lyne's original ending for *Fatal Attraction* had Glyn Close thankfully murder Michael Douglas, but preview audience reaction was so negative that they changed it. George Stulzer's *The Vanishing* in its original Dutch version has one of the most terrifying endings in film history. The American version, which Stulzer directed himself (presumably on the grounds that if anyone was going to screw up his film it might as well be him), has a happy ending.
- 7 I want to be clear that I'm not indicting Hollywood films for not being socialist. If the only worthwhile, not to say great, works of art were socialist, there'd be very few of them — if any. Rather, the problem with the formulas is that they crush imagination, and force stories into very narrow ideological boxes.
- 8 Goldman's *Adventures in the Screen Trade* is a fascinating and honest account of being a Hollywood screenwriter. It's worth noting that Goldman is widely accepted as the real guru of the American structural approach, but hasn't written a book specifically on it. Most of those who have are not practising screenwriters, or at least have no major credits, but are analysts (basically what we call script editors) who started their careers as "readers" for the studios, writing reports on the huge number of projects submitted for consideration.
- 9 Robert McKee's *Story* is surprisingly thoughtful, and relies for many of its examples on non-Hollywood (European and Japanese) films. Lew Hunter's *Screenwriting* gets down to the real business of creativity to a considerable extent. And there is the occasional work which challenges the "rules" and accepted framework altogether: see Danciger and Rush's *Alternative Scriptwriting*, which includes a critique of three-act structure from a politically radical standpoint. Syd Field's classic manuals are *Screenplay* and *The Screenwriter's Workbook*.
- 10 Two successful, idiosyncratic film-makers who regularly flout and confound the rules are Spike Lee and Woody Allen. Whatever you think of their output, in this they are to be applauded. Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanours* is a conscious playing around with the rules, especially of genre, consisting of two parallel stories, one a comedy which ends tragically, one a noirish thriller which ends happily.
- 11 Altman's *The Player* is again full of jokes on this theme. Predicting the failure of a movie pitched to him by Richard E Grant ("it's got no second act"), Tim Robbins screws over his rival by handing him a project he knows will fail. Then he saves the day by completely changing the film — the new ending has Bruce Willis save Julia Roberts from the electric chair, where the original idea was that she died "because these things happen".
- 12 In Britain, it should be said, we tend to have the opposite problem — films with absolutely no sense of structured story-telling at all, with scripts that would have benefited from some American-style rewriting. But that's, so to speak, another story.

Why students must join

By Lee Serjeant

THE recent struggles of Iranian students have shown again how students can be a catalyst for political and potentially revolutionary change. Tens of thousands of students in Tehran and in eleven other cities around Iran demonstrated against a brutally repressive Islamic regime. They risked (and some lost) their lives fighting for political democracy; for free speech for writers, imprisoned for criticising the regime; and for the emancipation of women subjugated by the Islamic regime. They put their lives on the line for freedom and democracy.

The Iranian students' fight inspired the working class and the unemployed to join the demonstrations. This was an important step forward, not only for the students but for the cause of human emancipation in Iran. This is because the force that has the power to emancipate the people of Iran — the workers, the unemployed and students — and destroy the repressive state once and for all is the *working-class* in Iran. Iranian socialists understand this and try to get the students' movement to link up with the working class. On a recent picket of the British Iranian Embassy, the Iranian socialists chanted "Down with Khamenei, Down with Khatami, Long live socialism". The message was: Khamenei, the known reactionary would not emancipate ordinary Iranian people; Khatami, the supposed "reformist" will also not bring emancipation — he will betray the demands of the Iranian students.

The only solution is, as Marx put it: "The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself".

Iran 1999 is by no means the first time students have acted as a catalyst for or brought to life working class struggles.

In May 1968 students played an important role in a movement which brought France to the precipice of a workers' revolution. It started with 500 students protesting outside the University of Nanterre, demanding the right to visit the rooms of members of the opposite sex after 11pm. The student protests had escalated in under two weeks into 9 million strong demonstrations and the biggest general strike in history. Weeks before this, bourgeois commentators had said France had no base for class struggle.

In the summer of 1989 in Tiananmen Square, students stood as strong as tanks as the Chinese riot police flooded in. In the same year in other Stalinist countries, of Eastern Europe, students played a crucial role in the "glorious revolutions" of 1989-90 which brought down bitterly anti-working class regimes. In these so-called "socialist" states any kind of working class organisation — trade unions, newspapers, political groups — was banned. In Czechoslovakia, students initiated the pro-democracy movement. They occupied their colleges and used them as co-ordination centres for the opposition movement. Everywhere, as one regime after another was forced out of power, students stood together with workers in the battle to put democracy and liberation back on the agenda.

In Britain too students have joined up with important class struggles — in particular they played an important role in the 1984-85 miners' strike. Thatcher's bitter fight with the miners was an attempt by the ruling class to defeat the *whole* of the working class.



Students support the

Students gave their active support to the miners — collecting money, setting up campus strike support groups, working with trade union activists and Labour Party members, standing on the picket line. This generation of students recognised that their fate was tied up with that of the working class. If the miners went down to defeat then Thatcher would be able to push through more cuts, including cuts in education.

Since the defeat of the miners, the Tories, and now New Labour, have used the low levels of struggle to dismantle the welfare state and curb the right of workers to organise, by backing a raft of anti-union laws, as well as taking away benefit rights and grants from, and introducing fees for, students. The defeat of the working class in the 1980s was a defeat for students. Equally any victory in the future for the working class will help students to win their demands.

HISTORY shows us the revolutionary role students can play. This is a role recognised by Lenin, who led the only successful workers' revolution in history — the Russian Revolution. Because students had the time to think about ideas and the world they lived in, Lenin said, even middle class students could stand back from their own class upbringing and look at the world afresh; potentially they could see unprejudiced the glaring, barbaric and irrational truths of capitalism.

Since the beginning of the century when Lenin was writing there has been a huge growth of the student population worldwide. More students personally experience the naked truths of capitalism — a cut price education, the prospect of unemployment — more students today share a common interest with the

Join the class struggle!



miners' strike 1984-5

working class. The victories and defeats of the working class are more and more linked to victories or defeats for students.

Why is the working class and class struggle important? In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx's starting point is that "[the] history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". He then goes on to explain this class struggle in terms of the relationship of different classes to the means of production.

Capitalism is based upon "simplified ... class antagonisms" due to a simplified relationship to the means of production. The capitalist owns the means of production and exploits the working class by purchasing its labour power and converting it into a profit which rests with the capitalist. The working class, forced to sell their labour power to get money to live is the oppressed class. This is as true today as it was in 1848 when Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto*.

As capitalism develops and expands so too does the working class. But, as Marx says, the working-class is the bourgeoisie's *gravedigger* because the working class inevitably stands in conflict with the capitalists and as the working class has no interest in oppressing any other class when it overthrows the bourgeoisie it will emancipate not only itself but the whole of humanity.

FOR these reasons socialists cherish and fight for the maximum democratic self-organisation of the working class. Socialists always try to look at politics from the point of view of the ultimate interests of the working class. We always ask ourselves the question "What will help the workers take power in the long-run"

The relationship of students towards the class struggle can only be conditioned by their world view: they must decide "Which

side am I on", "do I want to see the liberation of humanity?". If they do decide to join the class struggle, on the side of the working class or against the bourgeoisie, this often results as we have seen in students playing an important and dynamic role.

To be able to think about politics Marxists need to adopt an honest, non-sectarian view of reality. Because reality is often not what you want to see.

At the beginning of this century Marxists predicted international socialism would be born before the end of this century. At the end of the 20th century socialism is in retreat. Stalinism has played a big part in that reality by keeping down the working class in large parts of the world and by perverting and desecrating the rich and profound meanings of socialist ideas.

Other defeats impinge on our immediate reality. In Britain, the defeat of the miners' strike in 1984-5 led to 15 years of retreat for the British labour movement. In such a political climate many people, tragically many young people, are put off all politics.

Bourgeois commentators leap to tell us that this means that socialism is dead, and capitalism is triumphant. This is a false conclusion.

Class struggle has *not* disappeared. After all, we have seen it taking place in the last months in mass strike waves in South Korea, South Africa and Columbia. But the important point is that class struggle cannot disappear as long as the working class exists and until the working class has raised itself up and destroyed the class society.

Bourgeois commentators may assert that capitalism is here to stay or that the working class's attempts to overthrow it have been decisively smashed but their view of reality is warped, is based on their short-term triumphalism of the moment. Leon Trotsky said that the ruling class' way of viewing the world was like a still picture. Yet reality is like a rolling film. In the context of history, capitalism is one act; the low levels of struggle we currently see is one small scene.

By understanding where we are now we can have a huge effect on where we go next. And students can play a big part in ensuring we roll the film of history forward towards a better, fairer world.

And at the moment there are great opportunities for students to challenge the capitalist-friendly New Labour government. Thousands of students around the UK still haven't paid their fees and hundreds more are organising for the non-payment of fees in their colleges. This is being co-ordinated into a national campaign by the National Non-Payment Collective. We can make fees unworkable and force the Government to deliver free education. This itself would raise a banner for a decent welfare state for all. Every student should get involved in this fight.

If you are a student you need to decide which side you are on. You need to see the need to link your fate to the fate of the labour movement. A big student non-payment campaign is not enough. It needs to help create another link in the chain. It needs to make links with the grass-roots labour movement and to campaign for such things as the rebuilding of the whole of the welfare state and to fight for trade union rights.

Students should bring their activity, solidarity and understanding of history to the class struggle: Down with capitalism, long live international socialism!

Nadezhda Joffe 1906-1999

A socialist opponent of Stalinism

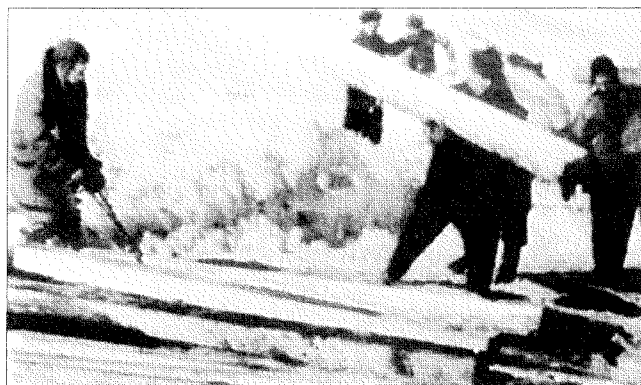
By Helen Halyard

NADEZHDA A Joffe, a member of Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition, survivor of Stalin's labor camps and author of the extraordinary memoir *Back in Time: My Life, My Fate, My Epoch*, died March 18 at a Brooklyn hospital. Nadezhda first suffered a stroke on February 9. While hospitalized she had two additional strokes and died after falling into a coma for the past week. She was 92 years old.

Nadezhda A Joffe was the daughter of Adolf Abramovich Joffe, a leader of the 1917 October Revolution. He served under Leon Trotsky's leadership on the Military-Revolutionary Committee that overthrew the bourgeois Provisional Government and established the Soviet state. Following the revolution, he was one of its most outstanding international diplomats and formed part of the delegation for peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. Joffe's diplomatic activity carried him to Germany, China and Japan. Along with Trotsky, he was an early opponent of the newly emerging Stalinist bureaucracy in the 1920s. Severely ill and prevented by the Stalin faction from seeking treatment abroad, he committed suicide in November 1927 to protest Trotsky's expulsion from the Communist Party.

A committed socialist, Nadezhda Joffe became a member of the Left Opposition soon after its founding in 1923. Her remarkable memoir *Back in Time* provides a vivid account of Soviet life during the 1920s and explains why many, like herself, sought to defend its principles. Evoking the sentiments of an entire generation during that period, Nadezhda remarked, "We wanted nothing for ourselves, we all wanted just one thing: the world revolution and happiness for all. And if it were necessary to give up our lives to achieve this, then we would have done so without hesitating."

The heart of Joffe's memoirs concerns the nightmarish years of the late 1930s, during which Stalin oversaw the physical extermination of socialist intel-



Life in the gulag

lectuals and workers in the USSR. Nadezhda was first arrested and deported for several years as an Oppositionist in 1929. A far more brutal period began with her second arrest and deportation to the Kolyma region in Siberia in 1936. Here Left Oppositionists, intellectuals, workers and peasants, died by the hundreds of thousands in conditions of back-breaking labour and deprivation. Nadezhda Joffe's first husband and political collaborator, Pavel Kossakovsky, was murdered in Kolyma in 1938.

Nadezhda Joffe's life represents the triumph of principle and human decency over repression by the Stalinist terror machine. Nadezhda celebrated her ninetieth birthday with family and friends at a gathering in Brooklyn in 1996. Among those present were her four daughters, Natasha, Kira, Lera and Larisa. The two youngest, Lera and Larisa, were born in the Kolyma labor camps of northeastern Siberia, while the oldest two saw their mother taken away by the Stalinist police. All paid tribute to their mother's love, and her strength and determination, which reunited the family against incredible odds.

Nadezhda Joffe's historically significant and unique memoir leaves its readers with the following afterword: "I returned to Moscow after rehabilitation in the fall of 1956, and wrote this book in 1971-1972, when the euphoria from the 'Krushchev thaw' had still not fully subsided, when we still heard such words as socialism, the revolution, the party..."

"I was personally acquainted with many participants in the October Revolution. Among them were people who renounced a calm, comfortable or prosperous life because they fervently believed in a radiant future for all mankind.

"Many of those whom Stalin considered to be the Opposition paid with years of exile, prison and camps for fighting him, and for understanding that the socialism which had been built in the Soviet Union was not the same socialism about which the best minds of mankind had dreamed".

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Introduction to Hal Draper on Bruno Rizzi

IN a heated argument each side will tend to construe what the other is saying into that which best suits their own case — that which is most vulnerable to their arguments, that which seems to buttress their own views. Thus, an alleged “best representative” of a particular position, though he may be the weakest, most absurd, most self-caricaturing representative of his school, is often nominated and established before a broad audience by determined opponents of his whole trend of thought. Where a powerful church, state, party does this, the misrepresentation may last decades and centuries or, as in the case of certain ancient Christian sects, forever.

Bruno Rizzi, the subject of the following article by Hal Draper, is an important case in point. He is still spoken of as either the originator or best representative, or both, of the view that the Stalinist USSR was a new socio-economic formation, not capitalist, not socialist, but “bureaucratic collectivist”.

In September 1939 Trotsky read a work of Rizzi's, whose circulation can only have been infinitesimal (most copies were destroyed after the book was banned on the eve of war in France) and, in Hal Draper's words, “Rizzi entered history when Trotsky whirled him round his head like a dead cat and let fly at the opposition” in the US Trotskyist organisation — Shachtman, Burnham, Carter, Draper himself and others, who refused to side with the USSR in its 1939-40 wars against Poland and Finland.

In *The USSR and War* (mid-September 1939) Trotsky asked: what if the Fourth International were to be forced by events to abandon the badly sapped and — even by Trotsky himself — already half-abandoned theory that the Stalinist USSR remained a form of degenerated workers' state? In a world where capitalism, not recovered from the great slump, was heading for imminent world war, a war that would most probably be succeeded by yet another world war which would, as Trotsky expressed it, be the “grave of civilisation”, then the conclusion, he insisted, would have to be that not working-class socialism but “bureaucratic collectivist” societies, like the Stalinist USSR, were likely to be the historical successor to decaying capitalism. Trotsky cited Rizzi's contention in *La Bureaucratisation du Monde* that Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, the USSR and even Roosevelt's New Deal in the USA were all aspects of a common trend towards a bureaucratised post-capitalist world. That, he said, is what serious and rigorous opponents of Trotsky's own views on the USSR were already saying.* No doubt, as Draper says, Trotsky wanted to “frighten the theoretical daylight” out of anyone inclined to reject his views.

II

YET Trotsky's own position was not that to identify in the USSR a new form of class society — he had done that in everything but the clear cut word — was forever ruled out so long as the economy remained nationalised. In September and October 1939 Trotsky argued that if the USSR, as it was, nationalised property and all, survived the looming war, giving way to neither capitalist restoration nor a new working-class revolution, then it would have to be seen as a new form of class society.

When some of his closest supporters cried “revisionism”, he argued that “bureaucratic collectivism” was no such thing (‘Again



and Once More...’, October 1939, see *In Defence of Marxism*). Trotsky's position at the end was that it was too soon to decide, and wrong to do so on the eve of the decisive test of war. He said “wait”. Trotsky was as outspoken in his castigation of Stalin's action in Poland, and even Finland, as any of those who opposed his political position. But he thought that the Finnish-USSR war would very soon merge into a war between the USSR and the democratic imperialist powers, France and Britain, that Finland had to be seen as a detail of a much larger picture, and that a partial shift, on Finland, from unconditional military support for the USSR against imperialism, to what he called “conjunctural defeatism”, would politically disorient the Fourth International.

In his analysis of the seemingly indestructible myths surrounding Bruno Rizzi Hal Draper gives a misleading account of the conflict between

Trotsky and Cannon on one side and Shachtman and Burnham on the other. He is too summary; he telescopes too much. Draper reads later developments and positions anachronistically backwards. The dispute in the SWP in 1939-40 was not fought out on the question of the class character of the USSR. Max Shachtman, Martin Abern and (I assume) most of their supporters shared Trotsky's designation of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state. Nor did they reject his position of “defence of the USSR against imperialist attack”. They explicitly shared it. What they rejected was defence of the USSR in the war with Finland, where the USSR, Hitler's partner in the recent partition of Poland, was acting as an imperialist power.

At this point, Trotsky, not his opponents, was the innovator: the long-term commitment to “defence of the USSR against imperialist attack” had not taken account of anything like the Finnish war; in so far as the issue of Stalinist oppression of nations had been discussed, in relation to the Ukraine, Trotsky was a passionate advocate of independence for the Ukraine, and therefore of a *national* fight for independence as part of the “political revolution” against Stalinism.

In the SWP-USA, a minority (a very small one, I understand) had from 1937 held that the USSR was no sort of workers' state. In fact, though Trotsky had recoiled from it, that conclusion was plainly indicated in Trotsky's own formulation in his book, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) that in the USSR “the state owns the economy and the bureaucracy, so to speak, owns the state”. Others drew the indicated conclusions. But those — including, I suppose, Hal Draper — who rejected the idea that the USSR was any sort of workers' state, continued like Trotsky to think it economically “progressive” compared to crisis-ridden capitalism, and that it should be “defended” against imperialist attack.

Here, too, in the separation of the evaluation of the class character of the USSR from his political conclusions, Trotsky was the innovator. From 1937 Trotsky had two separable and distinct bases for defencist political conclusions: that the USSR remained a degenerated workers' state, a product of the October revolution, *and* that, even if it wasn't that, its collectivised economy was nonetheless “progressive” compared to capitalism and should be defended against the restoration of capitalism. He separated the political conclusions from the degenerated workers' state “designation”. The political conclusion — progressive, therefore defend it — would remain unchanged even if the idea that the USSR was still some sort of workers' state had to be dropped — if the original class characterisation from which defencism was derived had been jettisoned. The same political conclusions could follow from different class

* In fact, Trotsky had in 1933 polemicalised against ideas very like Rizzi's. See Trotsky [October 1933: ‘The Class Nature of the Soviet State’] and *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*.

designations. The implication for the future of Trotsky's political tendency, once Stalinism survived the war and expanded across a further sixth of the globe, were after Trotsky's death, enormous.

Around the core idea that bureaucratically collectivised economies like that of the USSR were progressive, no matter what developed, post-Trotsky Trotskyism used Trotsky's terminology to describe things very different from what Trotsky thought he described in the USSR. Where Trotsky had separated the idea of the progressive collectivised economy from the increasingly nonsensical idea that the working class ruled, which he defended in the 1939/40 dispute, his epigones reconnected them, promiscuously slapping workers' state designations on the newly emerged Stalinist collectivist economies. From this root idea, that collectivised economy was progressive irrespective of the working class, would sprout the many branches of post-Trotsky Trotskyism, with its new attitude to Stalinism.

But Draper is mistaken in the idea that the discussions in 1939-40 were — other than implicitly — about either Trotsky's theory of the Stalinist degenerated workers' states or his *general* political conclusions. He generalises misleadingly from what may have been his own position then.

III

BETWEEN 1937 and 1939, and even 1940, Trotsky and the "new class" Fourth Internationalists agreed on everything, as Trotsky insisted, but names — that the collectivised economy remained progressive, or potentially progressive; that it had to be "defended" against capitalist restoration; that the working class would have to make a new — "political" — revolution. They parted when their politics diverged, at first on a limited question of "defencism" — on "conjunctural defeatism" towards the USSR in its Finnish war.

Even here Trotsky had blazed the first trail: after the USSR takeover of eastern Poland Trotsky wrote in favour of the possibility of what he would soon call "conjunctural defeatism" in future such cases. If not for his expectation that the British and French would very soon be at war with the USSR, he would, on his recent writings, have been a conjunctural defeatist himself [see *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*].

A minority of those opposing Trotsky in 1939-40, including perhaps Hal Draper, already had (but had not written down) or soon developed the idea that "bureaucratic collectivism" was neither progressive nor to be defended. That became the position of the whole Workers Party in 1947-48. In the first seven years of the Workers Party, Max Shachtman and others remained very close to Trotsky's last position; even after they decided that the USSR Stalinist autocracy was a new ruling class, they thought of the USSR's economy as still progressive, or potentially progressive; it should be defended against imperialism, they still said. In World War 2 they saw the USSR as being inseparable from its imperialist partners and subordinate first to Hitler and then to the USA and Britain and *for that reason* did not side with the USSR. Then they registered and responded with hostility to the powerful and by no means "subordinate" development of Russian imperialism from 1943.

The "official" Trotskyists, Trotsky's comrades-in-arms in 1939-40, developed from the 1937-39/40 position in the opposite direction. They lost much of the common all-pervasive alienation from the USSR of the 1937-40 period, especially after Hitler invaded Russia. They held firm to the idea that collectivised property was progressive. Though more "orthodox" than the dead man they treated as pope, they had no use for the separation Trotsky had laid down between the class character of the USSR and the supposed progressiveness of its economy. Whenever collectivised economies appeared they saw them as workers' states. They constructively wrote the working class out of history. Thus the unstable 'consensus of flux' of 1937-40 produced two radically different strands of Trotskyism.

IV

IN 1939-40, the "theses" which James Burnham produced at the beginning of the discussion, and then withdrew, did not state "a new class analysis" of the USSR, nor merely repeat the position he and others had had since 1937: he argued that bourgeois restoration in the USSR was already a fact. (See James' Burnham's text in *The Fate of the Russian Revolution* [FRR]). (He *would* present a new class position in *The Managerial Revolution*, 1941.) According to an account by Shachtman, writing in the Workers' Party internal bulletin in 1941 (it is in FRR) Joseph Carter, Draper's co-thinker, had a distinct position in 1939, but it played no part in the 1939-40 discussion.

Draper's account eliminates important distinctions, stages of development and zig-zags, and thereby loses a proper account of what really happened. At this distance that might not matter, except that something of very great importance is simultaneously lost: the picture of the development and trajectory of Trotsky's own thinking, and the relationship of Trotsky's thinking to the politics on the USSR developed after his death.

A careful reading of Trotsky's writing from 1937-40 would show that the Workers' Party's "Bureaucratic Collectivists" developed Trotsky's thinking along the trajectory on which he had been moving. Both those like Shachtman, who at first saw bureaucratic collectivism as 'progressive', and those who broke with that idea (Carter, Draper, Gelman).^{*} For someone concerned as Draper is to vindicate the Carter strand of bureaucratic collectivism in the first half of the '40s as against Shachtman's early version then, this is an odd patch of blindness to an immensely more important question — the relationship of Trotsky's thinking to both of the two strands of post-Trotskyist Trotskyism, associated with the names of Shachtman (or, if you like, Carter or Draper) on one side and of Cannon, Pablo, Mandel on the other.

What Trotsky really said and what his political trajectory was is important because the preservation and restoration of the real revolutionary tradition is immensely important for the work of socialists now and in the future.

Trotsky is the Spartacus of the 20th century, and much more. Trotsky's tardiness in drawing the unavoidable conclusions which most of his writings from *The Revolution Betrayed* onwards pointed to — that the Stalinist state was a distinct form of exploitative class society and the bureaucracy a new type of ruling class — and his too-violent and too self-contradictory polemics of 1939-40, contributed to the intellectual chaos that engulfed so much of post-Trotsky Trotskyism. If he really was at one with those who after his death put "Trotskyism" in orbit around the magnetic pull of the Stalinist empire, then so be it. There would be nothing to be done about it. If, however, it can be shown — as, I believe, it is shown in the FRR — that his entire trajectory was in the opposite direction, then Trotsky's tradition and Trotsky's memory should be rescued from his posthumous captivity to his "orthodox Trotskyist" epigones and not blamed for what they did in his name.

Nonetheless, Draper's account of Rizzi must be considered definitive, for three reasons: he was a participant in the discussions at the turn of the decade that would see the creation of a vast Stalinist empire in Eastern Europe and its establishment in China and he knows what influence Rizzi's ideas had on those who developed the bureaucratic collectivist positions; he sought out Rizzi in Italy in 1958 and discussed the question with him thoroughly; and Draper's article contains a summary with representative quotations, of that part of Rizzi's work containing his political conclusions, which the late Adam Westoby did not translate and include in his book on Rizzi, whose publication in the late 1980s was the occasion for Draper's article.

SM

^{*} See the introduction in FRR for a detailed exposition of this argument.

Anatomy of the Rizzi myth

By Hal Draper



Hal Draper

UP from the shadows of a thousand obscure footnotes comes the figure of Bruno Rizzi, who has now been rediscovered for the nth time as an early exponent of the New Class theory of the Russian Stalinist social order. But this time, thanks to Adam Westoby, at least a portion of Rizzi's allegedly "underground" book of 1939 has been translated into English. You can now rediscover Rizzi yourself.

Rizzi was one of a long line of theorists who in the last fifty years have suggested the view that "Stalinist society" (the short form in Rizzi and Westoby) is a *new* kind of social order, neither socialist nor capitalist, led by a new kind of exploitive class — a new ruling class for which the state bureaucracy is usually nominated. Of other figures in this succession, perhaps Djilas's *The New Class* and Burnham's *Managerial Revolution* made the greatest journalistic impact. ...

Rizzi's book was inaccessible for at least two decades after publication; and from the 1930s on, far more interesting theories of Stalinist society were bruited about. Why has Rizzi's name become the focus of so many myths — for example, the myth of his priority? Westoby suggests two explanations: 1. accident, and 2. "the appetite for folklore that... still characterizes the academic community." In the following, I discuss this folklore in two parts: I. myths about Rizzi and the history of his book, and, more important¹ II. a myth about the content of Rizzi's views

I

THE publisher's jacket blurb calls Rizzi's book not only "underground" (which is to be understood in Pickwickian fashion like the "underground" press formerly sold on every street corner) but also "long suppressed." This is the first of an unusually large number of blurbish false statements. Westoby's introduction is more responsible. The book *was* suppressed on its Paris publication in 1939 on the eve of the war, first by the democratic French government because of its pro-fascist anti-semitism and appeal for political surrender to the Nazis; and then by the Nazis because of its "Marxist" and "revolutionary" rhetoric.

But in fact copies became available almost forty years ago; microfilm reproductions were made and circulated; the book was catalogued by the Hoover Library and the National Union Catalogue, and aroused a ripple of interest.² Westoby's introduction, unlike the blurb, does a good job of documenting the facts about Rizzi using his personal papers (made available by heirs), police records, etc. If I have to modify some of Westoby's account in detail, this does not gainsay my appreciation of his work.

It has been known for some decades that Rizzi was an Italian travelling salesman in shoes, whose business took him to several countries. In Italy he hung around the left sects, including the Bordighists (ultraleft-communist sect stemming from Bordiga) and the anarchists, after being "pushed" out of the Communist Party³. In Paris

and London, he was a persistent hanger-on of the Trotskyists, and tried to participate in their discussions. There were two difficulties.

For one thing, the Trotskyists in Paris decided he was a mental case — as did also the police reports on him, and as the Italian CP must have done. Westoby mentions he had been "reportedly admitted to a clinic for mental illnesses." The reader of his book may begin to suspect this in the section, which is *not* in Westoby's edition. After talking to Rizzi for two days in 1958, neither I nor my wife had any doubt on this score. For decades I had seen harmless crazies like him on the fringes of various movements. I have to make this clear because Rizzi complains interminably about his rude reception everywhere, and footnoters may think the reason was the nature of Rizzi's views.

Secondly, there were very sharp suspicions that he must be a Fascist *mouchard*. This was not due to sect paranoia. Rizzi could not adequately explain why Mussolini's police allowed free travel back and forth by a man full of Marxistical elocution; and besides he had gotten his first book on Russia, *Dove va l'URSS?* (1937) legally published in Italy. A third reason must have been the views he was spouting, for they must have been similar to the profascist appeasement sentiments of the 1939 book.

He was never admitted into the Trotskyist group — again, just pushed away. His later talk of having joined the "Fourth International" refers to something that happened inside his own skull. He published his book (so he explains himself) because he could not get his "meditations" published in the Trotskyist internal or public organs of discussion.

Although Westoby relates that the book was "impounded" by the French government, and does not say what happened to these stocks, my understanding of the situation (gained, I think, from Rizzi) is that the Nazis destroyed the whole edition they found impounded, except of course for the copies in Rizzi's possession. This would account for the fact that so few turned up later, and bears on the Burnham-Rizzi myth (of which below).

Rizzi used his few copies efficiently by sending a number of them to prominent personages, including fascist fuehrers, with a plea for recognition. The copy he sent to Trotsky in Mexico hit pay-dirt. Trotsky was in the midst, right after the outbreak of World War II, of a general revolt inside the Trotskyist groups — a revolt against his insistence that the Stalin regime, which had just invaded Finland in alliance with Hitler, had to be defended in the war as a "workers' state," solely because its economy was statified⁴ and despite the fact that the workers in this "proletarian prison" had no political power. Especially in France and America, a large minority wing of the Trotskyists rejected this view, in favor of a "Neither Washington nor Moscow" position. Trotsky was busy casting anathemas and thunderbolts in their direction; on reading Rizzi's book, he seized on it for ammunition. Rizzi entered history when Trotsky whirled him around his head like a dead cat and let fly at the opposition.

What Trotsky found useful is still the sum-total of many of the obscure footnotes, though it is a minor part of Rizzi's total theory. This was the contention that Russian Stalinism, German and Italian fascism, and the American New Deal were *all* manifestations of the same wave-of-the future: an autocratic, statified social order which Rizzi labeled bureaucratic collectivism. Trotsky thundered: if you doubt that this Russian "workers' prison" is a "workers' state," then you must adopt as the alternative the unknown theory of the unknown Bruno R. Rizzi's function, for Trotsky, was to scare the

¹ We are indebted to Alan Johnson for drawing this text to our attention.

theoretical daylight out of the opposition.

Still no one knew a thing about this book. All that was known for years was Trotsky's few tendentious sentences and vague claims, with Rizzi's profascism concealed. It is from this launching pad of Trotskyist factional polemics that Rizzi's rediscovery of the New Class theory first began to trickle into the footnotes.

The first public report on the actual contents of the book, and still one of the best, came in an article "The Mysterious Bruno R." written by James M. Fenwick* and published in 1948 by the former minority-oppositionists now organized as the Workers Party (renamed Independent Socialist League in 1949), in its monthly magazine *The New Internationalist*.⁵ The first reliable personal report on Rizzi himself came ten years later, as the result of the publication by *Le Contrat Social* (Paris) of a hapless article by one Georges Henein, who had just rediscovered the book, but who got the author's name all wrong, and announced he was dead. As it happened, I had visited Rizzi earlier that year, and wrote in to the magazine. More important, so did Pierre Naville, who had been a leading figure in the French Trotskyists when Rizzi was hanging around. (For some reason, Westoby does not list Naville's piece in his bibliography, though it is still a major source). Rizzi also wrote in to the magazine, not only to show life but especially to dispute my description of his anti-Semitic fantasies — his refutation being an anti-Semitic tirade. The material in *Le Contrat Social* became a considerable spur to the incidence of footnotes and successive rediscoveries.

One of Rizzi's reiterated claims, echoed by many others, was that Burnham's *Managerial Revolution* had been plagiarized from his, Rizzi's, book. There were similarities, to be sure, especially the lumping together of Stalinism, Fascism and the New Deal as expressions of one and the same social order. (This common feature is also part of the reason why both are now more than a bit passé.) The myth was fueled by Rizzi's assertions to all and sundry that he had "proof" of Burnham's plagiarism. This myth is now recurring even in reviews of Westoby's book, even though Westoby is affective in demonstrating that there is not an iota of reason supporting the claim.

I would like to be more categorical about it than Westoby can be. I give two reasons why the myth should be buried.

1. Burnham was not a liar. It is a question of his character. Now I do not claim that I knew Burnham well personally: we spent a year working together as the National Education Department of the Socialist Workers Party, he as chairman and I as executive secretary; but anyone else who was familiar with his work at the time would do as well. Burnham's mind was (I can speak only of the past) an unusually rigid organ; his "Marxism" was as wooden a thing as I ever saw; his character, as inflexible and starched as a Sutton Place gentleman's collar should be. Creative lying takes some freewheeling; Burnham was not the type. Besides, there was no reason for him to lie.

No, Burnham never saw Rizzi's book. To me, this is an objective judgment, but I appreciate that not all will see it so.

2. Unlike Westoby, I had the opportunity to cross-examine Rizzi on his claim.

I visited Rizzi's villa on the hillside above Gargnano on Lake Garda in late April 1958, while travelling in Italy. As mentioned, we talked for two days, and inevitably Rizzi's expostulations about Burnham's "plagiarism" kept coming up. I told him I thought Burnham was telling the truth. He rocked me when he announced that he had "documentary proof," apparently something by Burnham admitting the plagiarism, right in the house; he would put it in my hands; and he went to fetch it. Soon he came back to say that he couldn't find it. Well, what exactly was it, and what did it say?

Rizzi eventually came out with it: his "documentary proof" was

nothing more than some evidence (itself vague, but no matter) that a New York bookdealer had ordered and received a copy of *La Bureaucratization*. Who was the dealer? He had no idea — what difference did it make? How did he know the copy was for Burnham? Answer: Well, whom else could it be for? Was he certain that the one copy had gone to New York? He was convinced, though he had apparently not sent it himself.

Getting to this point had taken persistent questioning. Before this, and no doubt afterwards too, Rizzi merely broadcast his claim that he had "documentary proof" of the plagiarism. In fact, the proof existed only in an odd corner of Rizzi's disturbed mind.

The New Class theory (as Westoby rightly says) was in the air at the time. It was being developed in this period by better minds than Rizzi's. In 1940, when the theory of bureaucratic collectivism was given its fullest and most effective form by Joseph Carter in the Independent Socialist (WP) group, it owed nothing to Rizzi's still unknown work.⁶ ...

II

THEORIES about the novel nature of the Stalinist state and its social order started burgeoning in the 1920s among anti-Moscow leftists and Bolshevik dissidents (C Rakovsky, Bukharin); there were proposals by Mensheviks, Karl Kautsky, anarchists (Machajski), et al. This first period has still not gained its historian, though it is more important than Rizzi. In the next period there were other thoughtful proposals, like Rudolf Hilferding's.

The issue reached a new level of interest in the wake of the Great Stalin Purges and the Moscow trials, which marked the ritualized destruction of the revolutionary generation. The Trotskyist groups became the main incubators of thinking on the question (known as the "Russian Question"), usually through revulsions against Trotsky's own "degenerated workers' state" theory. This is where Rizzi came in.

By the late 1930s the English and French groups with whom Rizzi was in contact were abuzz with the "Russian Question." The theory that Rizzi carpentered for himself was by no means the most interesting or best thought-out.⁷

In Europe the most prominent minority analysis was a thesis by Yvan Craipeau. In the United States, Burnham and Carter raised the question in only a tentative way in 1937-38. Rizzi's book itself makes clear that these Trotskyist discussion documents, with Trotsky's replies, formed the kiln in which the Italian hanger-on baked his own hypothesis.

To make clear what Rizzi did, here is a Do-It-Yourself guide to the fabrication of positions on the "Russian Question." A number of issues cut across it, with multiple-choice answers; and any combination of these produces a special position.

A. Check one: Stalinist society is a. a socialist or "workers' state" in some sense; b. a capitalist state; or c. something else. This division is not altogether neat since theories calling it "state-capitalism" may belong to b. or c. — Rizzi checks c.

B. This social order is a. "progressive" or b. no. The answer suggests the difference between political support or opposition to world Stalinism, also support of one or another of the war camps in the looming world conflict. — Rizzi checks a with a bang.

C. About this society's stability and future perspective: is it a. a transient aberration of history, a bastard bump in the curve, or b. the historic Wave-of-the-Future? — Rizzi checks b.

D. Stalinism and fascism (whatever they are) are the same social order? a. Yes, b. no, c. maybe. An affirmative could be given from quite different points of view: for example, from within the framework of Carter's seminal theory of bureaucratic collectivism, Dwight Macdonald was going to answer yes in the 1940s; CLR James, having invented a "state-capitalist" theory of his own, called Russia "fascist" flat-out; and Rizzi's answer was also yes.

E. what was the "ruling class" of this novel society? Check one

* See *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*.

or more: a. the proletariat, a la Pickwick; b. the “intellectuals,” whatever you think they are; c. the bureaucracy, with subchoices under various kinds of same; d. the “technocrats”; e. the “managers”; see comments under b and c; f. the “petty-bourgeoisie,” ditto; g. the capitalists, if you can find any; h. none of the above. Rizzi’s answer was c, d or f, depending.

Rizzi’s regurgitations of the Trotskyist factional discussions (these constitute much of his book) are quite weak analytically, as compared with Craipeau and Carter in particular. For example, he is virtually empty on the question, vital to the discussion, of how a bureaucracy can be a ruling class, or any class, without being a private-property-owning class. What there is to Rizzi’s analysis is presented in the sixty pages of Westoby’s translation. But this is less than a third of Rizzi’s book. It is in the rest of the book that one finds out what Rizzi is getting at, the political meaning of his theoretical excursions.

The middle section, on the New Deal, is of little account. Its argument for the identity of New-Dealism with the new class society is based mainly on windbagery by Henry Wallace, and little else. It is in the last section, titled “*Où va le Monde?*” that Rizzi presents his serious program.

What Rizzi proposes, as a program for the socialist movement, is the *support of the triumphant fascist movements* that were then browning over Europe. It was a question of support of *fascism* because (Rizzi repeats) Stalinism was going to be absorbed into the fascist world.

And so the most dangerous of the Rizzi myths presently being promulgated — and providing much of the pizzazz behind current interest in Rizzi — is reflected in the fact that he is being hailed by the leader of the Italian Socialist Party, Bettino Craxi, “as a pioneer thinker of democratic socialism and theoretical analyst of totalitarianism” (Westoby).

“Pioneer thinker of democratic socialism” — this is good going for a strident profascist! Let us leave aside what this claim means as a symptom of the mind of European neo-reformist Social-Democracy today: what are the facts about Rizzi?

The full answer can be gotten only by reading the last section of Rizzi’s book. But this is what is still “suppressed.” No one connected with the mini-Rizzi-industry wants to say. The greatest service I can render here is the appended condensation of “*Où va le Monde?*” — consisting of direct quotations and close paraphrase-summaries, including detailed page references. Here, Signor Craxi, is your “democratic socialist”! — a virulent profascist.

The “democratic socialist” myth is only weakly countered by Westoby’s introduction. It is true that he covers himself by speaking (almost incidentally) of Rizzi’s anti-Semitism and profascism; but he does not even make a beginning in showing it to the reader. Why? It cannot be lack of space: this edition gives only sixty pages to the translation of Rizzi’s Part I; with introduction and all, its text ends at page 97. It is hardly even a small book, more like a clothbound pamphlet.

I am not questioning Westoby’s bona fides; I think that, wittingly or no, he left out the guts of Rizzi’s book because a true presentation would turn people away in disillusioned disgust, would devalue Rizzi as an academic commodity. But it is not possible to justify the misleadingly slight summary that Westoby gives of Rizzi’s profascist section. He quotes one mild expression of approbation for Hitler and Mussolini “as the grave-diggers of international capitalism,” and asserts repeatedly that Rizzi later “dropped his support for Nazism.” This claim is a tendentious interpretation of a late chapter in which Rizzi wrote partially and murky about his “revision” of views.

Actually, at the end of his introduction Westoby states with greater truth that Rizzi’s revision is “a merely moral reassessment” still *inside* the framework that looks on the New Class as the next stage of historical evolution. It is very difficult — for Westoby or

me — to briefly summarize what Rizzi says about his “revision” because his mouth is full of marbles. But I would suggest the following reasons for paying little attention to the claimed revision;

1. To the extent that Rizzi amends his analysis of the New Society without which he cannot revise his support for it — he makes his book worthless and without interest. Insofar as he has any call on our attention, it is because of his relatively comprehensible wave-of-the-future theory.

2. Not only in the “revision” chapter but throughout his book, Rizzi constantly shifts arguments and contradicts himself; he says so, repeatedly. Anyone who worries about untangling this is naive; Rizzi was writing up a blizzard, which was going on in his skull.

3. When Rizzi starts backwatering, he starts substituting inanities for analysis. At one point he predicts that the fascist dictators “will become lambs” if their appetites are satisfied [276]. The fascist-Stalinist rulers will become indistinguishable from proletarians. Comes the revolution, even the capitalists will forget their bad bourgeois natures and “remember their humanness.” [342] The “terrestrial paradise” (literally!) is around the corner. [265] Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini “in the bottom of their hearts” are themselves unhappy about the bad features of their regimes. [344] They “will begin to pardon and to preach the law of Love which is the great law of Life.” [271] This sort of pap is scattered throughout; in every blizzard there are quiet lulls.

We need not depend only on Rizzi’s 1939 book to show the continuance of his essentially antidemocratic perspective. We can look at what he published even after fascism had been defeated in the war and his wave-of-the-future had dried up. Certainly his virulent anti-Semitism never lagged; it poured out of him when we talked in 1958. But there is more direct evidence.

When Rizzi wrote his *Il Socialismo dalla Religione alla Scienza* in the latter 1940s, the fascist pressure was off. One would not expect him to write in favor of fascism as brashly and as programmatically as in 1939.

But in this work, without invoking the now-dirty word fascism, he was forthright in *excluding the possibility of democratic society*. The new society he looked to, now dubbed “socialism,” would be — how far from his previous views?

This is what he wrote:

Many political men, maybe in good faith, believe they can expand liberty, democracy and welfare by means of governmental action. There is nothing more illusory... In the present historical conjuncture, this kind of talk is charlatanry even if good faith is not excluded... It is a question of changing an economic system which is worn out, finished, blocked up... The so-called Marxist who preaches liberty, democracy and greater social justice a la Mussolini is willy-nilly a pure demagogue. If certain well-defined economic conditions do not exist, liberty, democracy and welfare are not possible... Either advance to socialism or retrogression to state capitalism. Either go beyond liberalism or return to absolutism. Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and various of their kind are already clear and evidential manifestations of the avant-garde.

The democratic and liberal impotence of the self-styled dispensers of democracy and liberty is already more than obvious. They knock down whatever there was of the choreographic, ideological and superficial in the fascist phenomenon, while they keep the whole essential part alive... The practical result is that eating at the State’s trough is a Communist, a Socialist and a Christian-Democrat in place of the accustomed fascist. [Vol. 6, page 64f]

The final thrust, arguing that there really isn’t much difference anyway from frank fascism, is a well-known way of justifying the latter. It is quite clear that, even at this late date, Rizzi scorned the notion of associating “democracy and liberty” with his “socialism.” He essentially remained the theorist of a New Social Order controlled by new bosses, whatever new label he applied to this old vision of Socialism from Above.

Bruno Rizzi as pro-fascist

[In the following condensation of the last section of *La Bureaucratization du Monde*, titled "Où va le Monde?", direct quotations are between quote marks in roman type, and my connecting paraphrases and summaries are in italics. Only the main points can be covered here in reasonable space; there are worse passages. Page numbers are given in brackets.]

For an alliance with fascism, support of the fascist movement

■ *Rizzi's summary of "the political program of the proletariat":* "The proletarians must become convinced, and soon, that the fascist movements are henceforth anticapitalist movements; the proletarians must demand an alliance with them; they must press for an international bloc with nazism, fascism and stalinism; they must recognize the historically leading role assigned to countries like Italy, Germany and Japan; they must, again, recognize the so-called living space demanded by these countries and declare themselves ready to discuss ways and means." *The first condition for victory is "the unity of the proletariat with a single leading party" and "under one single program". The second condition is "the creation of an anticapitalist bloc to be joined by all the national anticapitalist forces, that is, the fascist movements which are done with capitalism and the petty-bourgeoisie which will give the maximum in technicians to the coming ruling class."* [324-25]

For support to the fascist bloc in the war

■ *The fascist "autarchies" Germany and Italy are have-not countries deprived of living space and raw materials. Their seizures of small countries are justified.* "With the blossoming-out of the autarchies, their existence daily becomes more difficult and anachronistic... We have no desire to be brutal with regard to the small, highly civilized peoples who lead a tranquil and inoffensive life. We believe it will not even be necessary to sacrifice all of them" *since many of them will probably join up with the fascists themselves.* "But if one wants peace in the world and the increasing development of production, it is necessary to find a peaceful way of giving space and essential raw materials for the building of the German and Italian autarchies. The sacrifice of the independence of some small state is an already demonstrated necessity for economic development today." *But it would not be "wise" for the fascists to deal, "severely" with the peoples grabbed.* "We believe that a proportional distribution of the lands and raw materials must lead to a more rational and intense exploitation of the wealth of our planet." [249-50]

■ "Unfortunately, today we are still in the painful position of having to say very logically that cannon are more necessary than butter. But whose fault is it?" *The fault lies in the fact that the fascists are deprived of necessary lands and raw materials.* [252]

■ *The victory of Germany and Italy in the looming war is the outcome to be desired. Their defeat would have had consequences. Suppose that "fascism and Nazism emerge destroyed" or even suppose a victorious proletarian revolution in Germany and Italy: what would be the consequences?* "The creation of a new constellation of small states in Europe, incapable of living by themselves in the midst of a tottering capitalism, while a proletarian power in Italy and Germany would lead only to a bureaucratization of the Russian type..." *A still more improbable revolution in*

France and England would only "degenerate into bureaucracy as the Soviet phenomenon has amply shown." [258]

■ *In the fascist states, the New Class state MUST take on a "warlike character."* [260] *But war can be avoided if the new Bureaucratic Collectivist society is accepted as the wave-of-the-future.* [262] *The evil monster to be fought is capitalism, which "still has the impudence to rebel against the autarchic fascist movement which is the social synthesis, that is, the new ruling class in the world." The enemies of the workers are not Hitler or Mussolini, who "are already involved with the Italian and German working class on the new social road, toward the new world."* [263-64] *In contrast, the French, English and American workers, who are unfortunately hostile to Hitler and Mussolini, are "dwarfs."* "The latest fable told to the miserable dwarfs is called 'Antifascism.'" [267-68]

■ *The new regimes of the New World will inevitably be "military and police states... a historically necessary product."* [276] *The Munich settlement brought peace and avoids war. It is the French, English and American workers who will be responsible for the war if they cannot impose their will on their own capitalists (ie, to force them to yield to the fascists' needs).* [281]

■ *The whole world will be divided into Units each dominated by a "central nucleus": for example, the Yellow Unit headed by Japan. There will be a German Unit, and a Latin-Mediterranean Unit, among others.* "The wealth and exploitive capacities of the world will be divided among these." [293] *The world proletariat must ally itself with Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini* in order to provide space and raw materials for both fascism and national-socialism, that is, in order to share the world reasonably and then exploit it rationally." [314]

Fascism as the wave-of-the-future

■ "Trotsky admits the progressive character of the Soviet economy, but if he wants to be objective, he must also admit the same for the German and Italian autarchies, for if they have not yet attained the total nationalization of the major means of production it is only because they have not yet exhausted the first chapter of autarchy: the question of space and raw materials." [252] "We have no sympathy for this bureaucratic society, but we state its historic necessity." [254]

■ [We are] to begin a new historical cycle with a new society still divided in classes... The autarchic subdivision of the planet is a technical and political necessity for its industrialization and rationalization." [262]

■ *Marx was wrong in talking about the future society as socialization. No, it must be statification* — "the transfer of private property purely and simply to the state." [264]

■ "The New World will be entirely a labor-yard and workshop animated by an army of workers. Fascism, National-Socialism and above all Stalinism have already undertaken the job. Give them the space they want along with the necessary raw materials and the world will see marvels... Mussolini and Hitler hold out the hand to Lenin. Proletarians of France, England and America, hold out your hands to Hitler and Mussolini." [278]

■ "The class struggle of the capitalist historical cycle has to cease to be transformed into a critical collaboration of control with the new ruling class. It is not for nothing that the fascists have launched the slogan of collaboration..."



Hitlerite anti-semitism

■ *The Nazis' racial theories are unscientific, and bloody pogroms are unwise; but otherwise Rizzi bails the fascist' anti-Jewish "campaign". Rizzi's own theory is that "the" Jews form a world-wide secret conspiracy, going back to Marx and the First International and before. "They" possess most of the world's wealth, including three-quarters of all the wealth in France. The struggle against capitalism is identical with the struggle against the Jewish people; "a mass anti-Jewish campaign must be undertaken because Jews and capitalists form in general a single and identical thing. The racist struggle of National-Socialism and fascism is at bottom only an anti-capitalist struggle... theoretically erroneous but just in practice... Hitler is right, and we are wrong."*

■ Rizzi then talks about the "pogrom" he's for: "The anti-Jewish 'pogrom' which is starting inexorably and progressively all over the world does not spring from nothing... As usual we laughed at the theoretical reasons given by German racism" *but we were wrong. It was the "German anti-Jewish movement" that showed us our error. We finally realised that "the" Jews want nothing but*

to amass gold, etc. etc. Rizzi sloganises: "Drive out the Jew!" and he repeats: "We laughed at the racist theories but Hitler was right..."

■ *True, Marx and Trotsky were Jews, but "very beautiful flowers grow isolatedly on dungheaps, but on the whole the Jewish people has become a pile of capitalist dung". This is the final note on which to take leave of Rizzi: dung.*

Notes

- 1 To be sure, the NUC gave the author's name as Rizzi Bruno and listed the book under B for years, until a letter of mine called the error to its attention. But the book was out in the open.
- 2 Westoby does not mention Rizzi's anarchist connections. They transpire from his appendix material in his work of the late 1940s, *Il Socialismo dalla Religione alla Scienza* (Milan, n.d.), Vol. 4, that is the fourth pamphlet out of the six making up the publication. Rizzi told me he was *not* expelled from the Italian Communist Party, just "pushed away". This vague term may be explained further on.
- 3 Westoby says *one* of the first, inaccurately. As editor of the *NI* at this time, I was quite certain nothing of the sort had ever appeared, and I still am. One of the minor myths is that this excellent article was mine, since a piece by Dan Bell once said so. Fenwick was the pen name of a charming and witty writer, to whose article I contributed only some editorial dressing-up.
- 4 Westoby erroneously calls this village "Gargano", which is the name of a mountain and promontory in southeast Italy.
- 5 Here I must acknowledge a personal interest, to be sure, since I was involved with Carter in the presentation of this view; in fact, I drafted the formal thesis in which it was embodied. Westoby quite justifiably quotes the characterization of the Independent Socialist group as a "first-rate think tank", Max Shachtman at first fought the Carter position violently, counterposing a theory of *progressive* "bureaucratic state-socialism" in Russia. When this collapsed, he adopted Carter's theory for a while and up to a point. A documentary history of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism is being prepared by Ernest Haberkern, of the Center for Socialist History, in collaboration with me. It would be digressive to pursue this *fercockte* historical question here, including Westoby's inadequate account.
- 6 *Communist Against Revolution* (London, Folio, 1978).
- 7 For the next academic seeking a better subject than Rizzi for folkloric footnotes, I suggest the "rediscovery" of a thesis by Dan Eastman (Max's son) and Eleanor Deren (who later as Maya Deren became a pioneer in dance film). They submitted it in late 1938 to the Trotskyist group then being reconstituted, to be named Socialist Workers Party. Their thesis proposed a knowledgeable and well-thought-out New Class theory of Stalinism far superior to Rizzi's later one. Unfortunately, they made the mistake of labeling their New Society "Industrial Feudalism," a label that turned everyone off. (This label, by the way, was long used by the De Leonite SLP.) The positive content of the Eastman-Deren thesis was absorbed two years later into Carter's theory of bureaucratic collectivism.

them

them
getting me to conform,
getting you to...

I tried to shout,
but they

found their masking
tape and

sealed my lips.

I found a pen and began
to write

but they saw this movement
and hacked

away my protesting hand
and threw

the pen into
the corner.

I somehow found a way to cry
between all

the loss and they
surgically

removed my tear ducts
to stop

all the unnecessary

emotion.

they want
me

just like
them

armageddon

If you had asked the bank man
he would have told you

Most of us
are debits in this world

we take up space
and space, presently, is cost

air will become a commodity
as water is one

we are constantly indebted to our birth
our existence which we had no control
over

our right to live is increasingly being
questioned
as the cost in human rights increases

a lucky few have the money to buy their
human rights
and will escape many things:

the prison
the factory
the debt
the rent

and the bills
that appear in seeming multitudes

the chains of mortgage have become the
fate of millions
as this innovator of stress has killed as
many.

when patience will be expended
when tolerance has become intolerance
when the masses have been made aware

a threshold will appear

and
then

it will
be

every man

for
itself

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What is Irish republicanism? part one

By John O'Mahony

SINN Fein/IRA is now a force and a power in Northern Ireland and, indeed, in broader British "mainstream" politics. One might say it is a power because it remains a "force". It is becoming a power in the 26 Counties, and on present showing must become a bigger one, where coalition government is now the norm and a few TDs, or even one, can hold the balance.*

More than that, they have — in part and for now — brought to life something resembling the dream that tied the old Irish Home Rule nationalists to the Liberal Party for the 28 years before 1914 — that the British government would pressurise the Irish Protestant minority for them. They would be the fools they plainly are not to rely on it, but that is how things stand now.

They have in the Good Friday Agreement a delayed-action commitment to a united Ireland on a bare head-count majority in the Six Counties, without any provision for home rule for the British-Irish minority. The Blair Government is manifestly afraid of them. Sinn Fein/IRA has much international support; it has the "support" of the "Pan Nationalist Alliance", Irish political parties and Irish Americans who have always shared their goals, balking only at their militarism.

The clearest measure of the power the Adamsite "Republicans" exercise is that under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement the release of IRA prisoners was linked to progress in implementing the Agree-

ment, including at least the beginnings of disarmament. Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly gave his word on this and other things in his campaign to secure a Yes vote in the June 1998 referendum on the Agreement.

There has been no disarmament, not a pretence of it, or even a token beginning. The IRA has said plainly that it will not disarm. It is public knowledge that they are *re-arming*. In the two years of the ceasefire they have killed, maimed and exiled Catholics at gunpoint. They have faced no sanctions in retaliation.

Prisoner releases have continued steadily. Over 250 prisoners have been released (there are fewer than a hundred left). Blair said publicly last year that to stop releasing prisoners as a means of putting pressure on the IRA would abort the "peace process". (He did not say what will happen when he runs out of prisoners to release.) In slightly plainer words, they *did not dare* — and do not dare.

The British acted as "enforcers" for Sinn Fein/IRA in the negotiation of late June and early July, putting all the pressure they could on the Unionists to concede places in government to Sinn Fein, without even a token of intent by their putative Sinn Fein/IRA partners in government that their private army will be decommissioned.

It is as if Blair and his friends, who have proclaimed themselves heirs to Gladstonian and Asquithian Liberalism, are trying to undo the Liberal betrayal of Irish Catholic nationalism when, in face of a Northern Irish and British Tory-Unionist revolt, they decided on partition.

They are also picking up the broken threads of the 1960s Labour government policy, which was to *move slowly* towards a United Ireland once the UK and the 26 Counties were within the European Union. The Protestant backlash, the return of a Tory government (June 1970), which was a great deal less sympathetic to the nationalists, the eruption of the Provo war, the prolonged political stalemate and the long war of attrition, the abolition of Belfast home rule in March 1972, the wrecking in 1974 by the Orange general strike of the Sunningdale Agreement on institutionalised, Protestant-Catholic powersharing, and a Council of Ireland — all this derailed the tentative British government policy of the mid- and late-1960s, which had destabilised the Six Counties by encouraging a Catholic civil rights movement and alarming the Protestants.

There must be strict limits to how far a British government will go in twisting Protestant arms for the nationalists — and it will be set by Protestant reaction. Britain takes the line of least resistance. That the fear of IRA bombs in British cities has the power to enlist the British Government as enforcer and bamboozler for the other side, may not be lost on Unionists.

Revolutionary socialists throughout the world have backed, and most still back, Sinn Fein/IRA as revolutionary nationalists, or even as "socialists". Their "socialist" projection of themselves has won wide credence. In Ireland itself, in the 1980s, they won over a large part of the Trotskyist groups affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, including its most prominent trade unionist, Anne Speed. They simply joined Sinn Fein.

What then in political terms *is* Sinn Fein/IRA? Sinn Fein/IRA's relationships with the British, US and 26 Counties governments, and with the British Government now, partly answers the question. One way of answering the question what is Sinn Fein/IRA is to ask



Old-style Republicanism: 1798 rebel leader and Protestant, Edward Fitzgerald

* A few years back, the independent left populist TD for a Dublin constituency, Tony Gregory, sold his decisive vote to the government, conducting public bargaining to get the best price in terms of benefits for his constituency. The state of the negotiations at each stage was reported in the press.



and answer the broader and deeper question of not only what is Sinn Fein/IRA now, but what is Irish republicanism?

Oliver Cromwell

THERE have been *many* different editions of Irish republicanism. It has at different times expressed the interests of different classes. It has migrated from one of the two distinct peoples on the island to the other. Its political content has changed radically, again and again. The best way of giving a defining account of it in a manageable space is to use snapshots of republicanism in its various historical incarnations.

The first republicans in Ireland were the conquering, murdering armies of Oliver Cromwell. They went around slaughtering Catholics, or capturing young people and shipping them in slave ships to the West Indies. The idea that the Gaelic Catholic Irish are the black people of Europe has more to it than self-pitying victim-psychology and nationalist hype. The conquerors had a saying to justify killing Irish children; the great, late 19th-century, Liberal-Unionist historian, Lecky records it: "Nits will make lice".

Lecky also records that those of Cromwell's soldiers who settled in Ireland on confiscated land, needing wives, married Irish women who raised their children as... Catholics. Catholics will make Catholics.

If there were native born republicans in Ireland in the 1640s and 1650s they were amongst the English and lowland Scots settlers, whose relationship to the Gaelic Irish was that of white American settlers to surrounding hostile "Indians".

For Cromwell's republican regime a good case can be made out that, perhaps excepting the Netherlands, it was the most tolerant government wielding real power in the 1300 years since the Catholic Christians had won control of the Roman Empire and suppressed all their Christian and pagan competitors — tolerant for all shades of Protestants. Cromwell allowed the Jews — Jews had been expelled from England 400 years earlier — to return. But Catholicism and Catholics were regarded both as agents of the Pope and of Catholic foreign powers, and as a sect which, if it was

allowed to thrive, would suppress all others.

In the English Civil War Royalist Irish soldiers were, when captured exterminated to the last man — made to dig trenches to drain off the river of blood unleashed when the bound soldiers were made to lie down by the trenches and had their throats cut. Irish women and children camp-followers of the royal army were automatically slaughtered too.

Religious and national bigotry and what would now be called ethnic chauvinism or racism combined to ensure that English republicanism appeared as the devil's work to Irish Catholics. That some of Cromwell's most radical soldiers had refused to go to the wars in Ireland was not known, nor could it have affected how Irish Catholics saw Cromwellian republicans.

William of Orange

AND during Britain's "Glorious Revolution" in 1688 and its wars fought in Ireland between Kings William and James? English republicanism had given way to the Whig politics of aristocrats and rich plebeian merchants, who finally imposed parliamentary sovereignty on the Monarch. They did it by kicking out the Catholic King James and putting in a king of their choice, on their terms — William.

Residual republicanism was a submerged, underground current. In his bungling attempts to make himself absolute monarch, James II relied on subventions from the absolutist king of France, Louis XIVth, and on Irish Catholic soldiers. Their importation and encampment on Blackheath was one of the causes of the final break between King James and Parliament. After the defeat of the Irish Catholic royalist and French armies at the Battle of the Boyne (1690) an Irish officer, disgusted at the pusillanimity of King James, is supposed to have said to one of his English counterparts: "Swap kings with us and we'll fight you again". Kings were part of an unchangeable natural order.

Shiploads of Irish officers and soldiers, chose to migrate to France — the hills around the bays from which their ships set sail echoing with the "wild ochone", the high-pitched, funereal cries of mourning from the women and children left behind. They

fought for King Louis, whose regime, measured in human liberty, was, compared to the London government where English, Scots and Irish Protestants were concerned, the embodiment of the worst reaction. Many of the Republican goals earlier summed up in the demand "No kings, no bishops" had been realised in the oligarchical Whig "compromise" of 1688 — a constitutional monarchy under Parliament and a state church subordinate to Parliament.

The curious but well-known Protestant toast to "the glorious and pious memory of King William of Orange, who saved us from popery, knavery, slavery, brass money and wooden shoes" is not redolent of republicanism, but it does celebrate one they had a right to think of as their liberator and custodian of old "Republican" goals. Not for the Irish. The conquered Catholic Irish were from this point on condemned by the Dublin Protestant parliament backed by London to a hundred years of helotry, under a system of "penal laws" remarkably like South Africa's late and unlamented apartheid.

Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmert

REPUBLICANISM as a mass force for all-encompassing democracy came to Ireland from revolutionary France in the 1790s. Yet that republicanism, which appeared in Ireland now as the very name of personal and national liberty, was a direct descendant of the republicanism that had confronted the Gaelic-Catholic Irish as a merciless, would-be genocidal force of unrestrained butchery in the 1640s and 1650s.

The principles of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which to many 18th-century Europeans embodied their own aspirations to liberty, helped shape the American republic set up by Britain's former colonies after they rebelled in 1776. In turn, the American revolution was a mighty example to those in France who began the revolution in 1789.

Who were the Irish republicans in the 1790s? They were mainly Protestant, and of those, through such leaders of the Society of United Irishmen as Wolfe Tone and Edward Fitzgerald were Anglican, mostly Presbyterian.

Belfast, where large parts of the population in the early '90s marched on 14 July to celebrate the French revolution, was the

heartland of republicanism. They wanted independence from England, protection for Irish trade (which had suffered badly from English repressive legislation in the 18th century) and an end to the rule of the Anglican-Protestant landed oligarchy who controlled the parliament in Dublin.

Benefiting from the 18th century "Age of Reason" and the indifference to religion produced by the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, which had ended in stalemate between Protestant and Catholic

Europe, republicanism had broadened its appeal, cut off from 17th century religious dogma, and purified itself into secular, modern politics. This republicanism was new in its attitude to Catholics, for whom it demanded full religious and civil equality. It stood for what the French revolution stood for — the rights of man and the citizen. As Wolfe Tone put it, the Society of United Irishmen stood for "the rights of man in Ireland".

The United Irishmen were linked to equivalent secret societies in England. The nationalism associated with this stage of the French revolution was a generous, liberating nationalism which saw its own salvation inextricably linked to the freedom of all peoples. The United Irishmen looked to France for military help in winning Irish liberty.

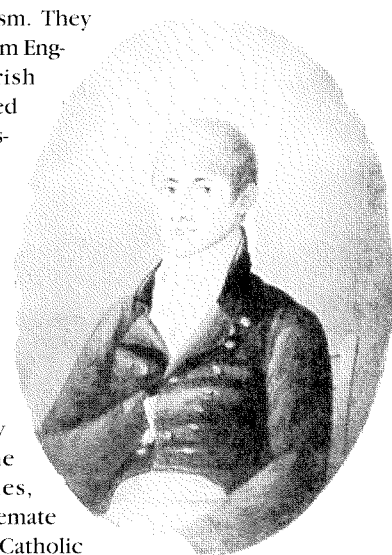
The United Irishmen chose to link up with Catholic agrarian secret societies, such as the "Defenders". The Orange Order was founded after a battle at "the Diamond" in County Armagh in 1795, between Catholic and Protestant peasant secret societies.

The Society of United Irishmen was destroyed by systematic British terror and by the failure of French help at decisive moments, particularly by the inadequacy of that which finally came in 1798 — and by the deep Protestant-Catholic divisions.

In 1798 the United Irishmen was broken. "The rebellion of 1798" was a number of scarcely connected movements. Protestant United Irishmen rose in rebellion in the north, where they were defeated and their leaders, such as Henry Monroe, hanged. In Mayo in the west, a small French army under General Humbert landed, rallied the local people, proclaimed the "Republic of Connaught" and inflicted defeats on a more numerous British army sent against them, before they were finally defeated themselves. In Wexford in the south-east, a Catholic peasant rebellion, led in part by priests, erupted. They inflicted defeats on the English and Protestant yeoman forces sent against them, before being defeated and massacred. The Wexford rising was a shaping event for subsequent 19th century Irish history. In the rising of the Catholic peasants anti-Protestant sectarianism — like Protestant sectarianism the opposite of republicanism — came out in all its ugliness.

The final stand of the Catholics took place at "Boilavogue". A song called "Boilavogue"* which celebrates the Wexford rising and its terrible end is still one of the most popular of Irish nationalist songs. In Wexford, there was also a place called Scullabogue. Into a barn in Scullabogue local Protestants were herded by armed Catholic rebels, who then set fire to the barn.

1798 was probably the last chance for the fusion of the Gaelic Irish and those of planter stock into one people: even the Angli-



Robert Emmert



Wolfe Tone

* The song was written a hundred years later by a Home Rule Party publican Dublin councillor called PJ McCall, against whom James Connolly stood in a bitterly fought election at the turn of the century.

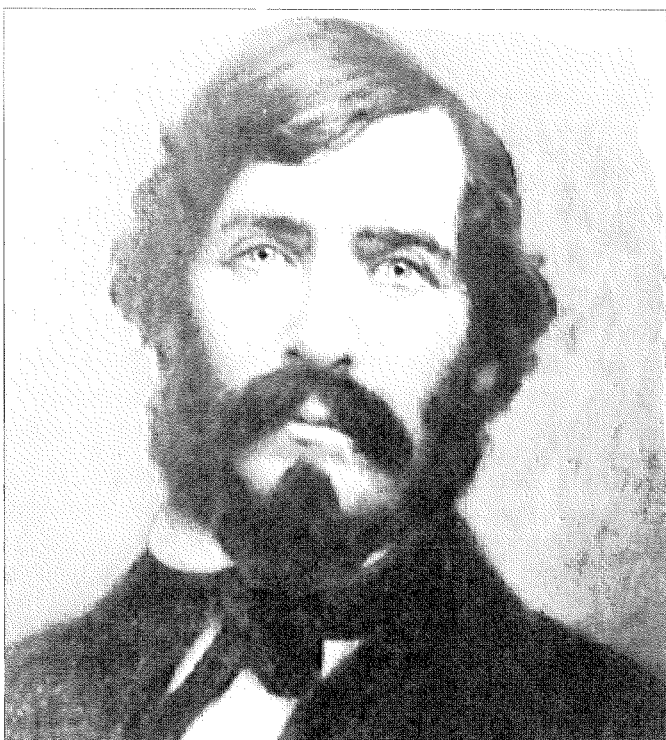
can peasants could have been mobilised in a victorious, French-aided revolution that broke the power of the landlords. An island-wide Irish nation could have been forged in the crucible of a great democratic revolution. The British state was too strong, the Irish too weak and too divided; French aid was too little, too half-hearted (in 1796, a great fleet had been assembled to go to Ireland, but was by General Bonaparte taken instead to invade Egypt...)

Five years later, another United Irish rising was planned by Robert Emmet, but aborted by an accidental explosion in a republican arsenal. This was mainly a movement of Dublin artisans and semi-proletarians, many of whom would, like Emmet, have been Protestants. Emmet too had links with underground Jacobins in England. After this defeat republicanism disappeared for four decades.

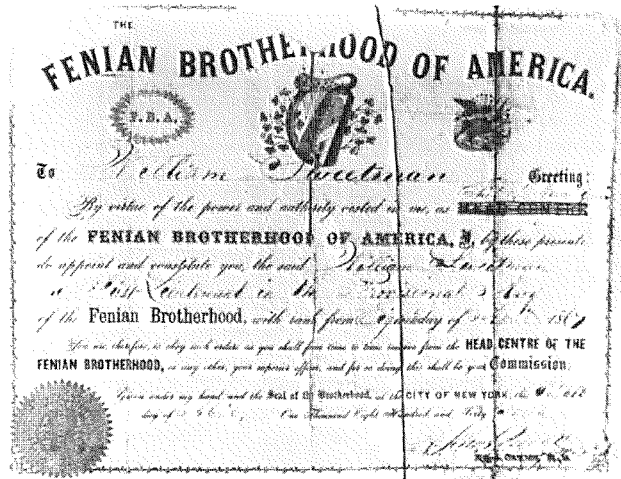
Young Ireland

WHEN republicanism reemerged in the early 1840s as “Young Ireland” it was, in its philosophy of equality and unity amongst all the Irish, the descendant and heir of the United Irishmen. But it was still a heavily Protestant movement, in its “prominents” at least — lawyers and journalists and members or future members of the so-called liberal professions — and probably in its cadre. Moreover, Young Ireland found itself in conflict — political, not primarily sectarian, antagonism — with the mass Catholic political movement that had grown up in the decades since the United Irishmen. Catholic “politics” had moved a long way from the peasant societies Tone had worked with. Most of the old Protestant mass republican base in the north was gone. The Dublin parliament too was gone, the target of much republican animosity in the 1790s. Ireland was, since 1801, united with Britain in a “United Kingdom”. Wolfe Tone’s goal, to unite the religious sects and the Irish people of different origins, was much further away than it might have been in the 1790s. What had happened?

When Ireland was united with Britain, civil disabilities against Catholics were not removed, not until three decades later (1829). In working to achieve “Catholic emancipation”, Daniel O’Connell, with the powerful network of Catholic priests as the backbone of his political-religious political machine, mobilised the masses of Catholics in enormous meetings and the collection of petitions. Their demands had liberal Protestant support. When Catholic



John Mitchell



A membership card of the American branch of the Irish Republican Brotherhood

Emancipation won and Daniel O’Connell began to call for “repeal of the Union” — Irish Home Rule — the priest-stuffed O’Connell movement, controlling the big majority on the island, came to be seen by the Protestants as a threat of priest rule in an Ireland again separated from Britain. Daniel O’Connell said that he took his religion from Rome, not his politics, but it did not carry great conviction because it left unanswered the question: where did the priests so ubiquitous in his movement take *their* politics from?

The north-east had prospered under the Union. In short, the children and grandchildren of the Protestant United Irishmen came to be reconciled to unity with Protestant England and deeply afraid of coming under Catholic domination

Young Ireland was a splinter from O’Connell’s movement — republican, looking back to the United Irishmen for inspiration (“who fears to speak of ’98?” demanded their best party song), resistant to the Catholic-sectarian dimension of O’Connell’s movement (on education, for example), and demanding more militant tactics, including possible armed force, which O’Connell shunned and sincerely rejected. (In 1798, as a young man, he had turned out to fight the United Irishmen).

Two facts shaped the fate of Young Ireland: the separate and independent organisation of Catholics as Catholics, led by priests and political allies of priests; and the gap between separatist republicans and the Protestants, which was a byproduct of the relations of Catholics and Protestants. Nor was political virtue entirely with them as against O’Connell.

O’Connell was a liberal Whig. Leading Young Irelanders followed Thomas Carlyle, a great, perhaps the greatest, intellectual influence in Britain for much of the 19th century. While O’Connell for example was against black slavery, some of the United Irishmen were, like Carlyle, outspokenly for it. Carlyle was what Karl Marx called a “reactionary socialist” — a bitter critic of industrialism and the capitalism which left no tie “between man and man” but “the cash nexus”, who idealised the half-imaginary past. That too influenced such Young Irelanders as John Mitchell, who therefore won much praise from the first Irish socialists, especially from James Connolly. Mitchell was also the most determined on revolutionary action (he was locked up before he could act).

Famine devastated Ireland between 1845 and 1848. Preaching armed rebellion and resistance to the removal of food from the starving country, the best Young Irelanders were arrested and deported; others organised a tragic parody of an armed rising. James Connolly would use this incident to forever stigmatise as comic opera posturing what Young Ireland did in 1848: a rebel-band led by William Smith O’Brien, an MP and a landlord, moving

about the starving countryside, sent into a landlords "big house" for permission to cut down trees to build a barricade!

The Young Irelanders were a modern middle class movement in a country unripe for their sort of politics, except for the north, from which they were cut off by their alignment with the Catholic movement and their republican separatism. Significantly, the fate of the prominent Young Irelanders was far from that of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen. O'Brien was, indeed, sentenced to death, but reprieved; Charles Gavan Duffy became a head of the government of New South Wales; John K Ingrams, who had in 1842 demanded to know, who feared "to speak of '98", became a professor of economics in London, John Mitchel an Irish-American politician: in the American Civil War he wholeheartedly supported the south and, outspokenly, advocated slavery for black people.

The Fenians

THE Irish Republican Brotherhood, known after their US branch as Fenians, was founded in 1858 by veterans of Young Ireland and the tragic fiascos of 1848. There is republican continuity from now on, yet this was a new sort of republicanism, far more radical than Young Ireland. The Fenians were mainly an urban movement and had their greatest support among the massed Irish emigrants mainly of rural origin but now working in British cities and in the USA. They were organised as an oath-bound, secret society, and yet by the 1860s had attained the dimensions of a mass movement (in 1865, there were perhaps 15,000 Fenians in the British army in Ireland!). By now real republicanism had more or less made its migration from Protestant, "planter" Ireland to Catholic Ireland, though there would always be Protestant republicans, and prominent ones, until modern times. The Sinn Féin/IRA lack of Protestant supporters today is very significant and symptomatic.

The mass emigration since the famine — it would continue until about 1970, and has recently resumed — internationalised the Irish question and made hitherto unthinkable financial support, political pressure-group action in the UK and USA available to nationalism: today's pan-nationalist alliance is the continuation of

it. Karl Marx said of Fenianism — he persuaded the International Working Men's Association, the "First International", to back the Fenians — that it was "socialistic" in the negative sense of opposing the massive land clearances then going on, expelling people to make way for grazing animals.

Fenianism was denounced as both an oath-bound secret society and as a violent revolutionary movement by the Catholic bishops. Notoriously, one of them said that "eternity is not long enough or Hell hot enough" to punish the Fenians. Some Fenians — for example, Thomas Clarke, one of the leaders shot after the 1916 rising — were made hostile to the Catholic church for life. Most were not. It was the beginning of the long and strange tradition in which the church has repeatedly anathemised republicans, refused them the sacraments, done its best to rouse Catholic opinion against them and actively aided their enemies — and yet the republicans in the main remained Catholic. The Fenian paper, *The Irish People*, sided with the Pope against those fighting to unify Italy.

Like the Jacobin/Blanquist secret societies of France, which influenced them, the Fenians believed that revolution was a matter of a well-prepared, set-date uprising. They hesitated until their best chance (in 1865) was lost and finally organised a feeble rising in March 1867, which was easily quelled. Thereafter, the Fenians fragmented. Some, in the 1880s, became terrorists, setting off bombs in London. One of their leaders memorably described such terrorism as the weapon of the weak against the strong. It proved not to be an effective weapon then.

At this time the politics which republicanism in most of the 20th century would treat as dogma was laid down. The franchise in Ireland excluded most of the people. There was no possible electoral road forward. It was an Ireland that had lost three-eighths of its population in two decades, and from which people were being driven at a great rate. The Fenians laboured under the belief that the Irish would win control of their country either "soon — or never!". There would not be many Irish left in Ireland. Like other mid-century democrats — for example, the Chartists of the 1830s and 1840s, who sought the vote because they saw it as the tool that

The Irish Republic Proclamation, 1867

The Irish people of the World

WE have suffered centuries of outrage, enforced poverty, and bitter misery. Our rights and liberties have been trampled on by an alien aristocracy, who, treating us as foes, usurped our lands and drew away from our unfortunate country all material riches. The real owners of the soil were removed to make room for cattle, and driven across the ocean to seek the means of living and the political rights denied to them at home; while our men of thought and action were condemned to loss of life and liberty.

But we never lost the memory and hope of a national existence. We appealed in vain to the reason and sense of justice of the dominant powers. Our mildest remonstrances were met with sneers and contempt. Our appeals to arms were always unsuccessful. Today, having no honourable alternative left, we again appeal to force as our last resource. We accept the conditions of appeal, manfully deeming it better to die in the struggle for freedom than to continue an existence of utter serfdom. All men are born with equal rights, and in associating together to protect one another and share burdens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintains equality instead of destroying it.

We therefore declare that, unable longer to endure the curse of monarchical government, we aim at founding a republic, based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour. The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare also in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and state. We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justice of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England; our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields — against the aristocratic leeches who drain alike our blood and theirs.

Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human freedom.

Herewith we proclaim the Irish Republic



Peasant family eviction

would allow them to change society — the Fenians saw power, (won in the only way it could be won, by force), as the goal only because they saw no other way to win social redress. It was the only political means to their goal. They were, however, far from clear about how, and about what, they would do once they had power. Their belief that armed insurrection was the only way they could possibly at that point win their goals were true to reality and therefore rational. When the Fenian rump and its splinters rigidified that into timeless dogma, they separated from rational politics. Some Fenians graduated to socialism — for example, Jim Connell, the author of *The Red Flag* (in 1889).

Degenerate Fenianism

MOVE on a third of a century so that we can look back from the year 1900. What is republicanism now? The failure of 1860s Fenianism led to decline into a variety of sects. The main Fenian founder and leader — called “Head Centre” in a constitutional structure modelled on that of the American Republic — James Stephens was deposed in 1866, in preparation for the abortive rising. Stephens was in social questions a radical of the left. In exile in France after 1848, he had joined one of the French left-wing insurrectionary secret societies. But questions like that were for the time when Ireland would be free to solve them. For the republican movements thereafter, that would be the pattern: particular social and political questions and issues, and differing opinions on them, would have to wait on the victory of the “armed struggle”.

In the Fenian’s heyday, constitutional politics consisted of Irish MPs at Westminster individually allying with British parties. In 1870 a movement re-raising O’Connell’s demand for “Repeal of the Union”, now called “Home Rule”, was started by Isaac Butt, a Protestant lawyer who had defended Fenians in court. The new party had MPs, but it was weak, loose and feeble. Joseph Biggar MP, a Belfast Protestant pork merchant and a member of the Fenian supreme council when he first became an MP, started to use the rules and customs of the House of Commons to disrupt its business. Charles Stewart Parnell, a Wicklow Protestant landlord with

Irish republican and American anti-British ancestors, joined him. Over years, they forged a new party, tight-bound, organised for maximum striking power in the House of Commons.

The Irish bourgeois revolution

THE Act of 1884 which gave the vote to large numbers of rural Irish, gave the Parnellite party a mass electoral base. The Fenians had already frightened the British establishment into making reforms in Ireland, reforms that would, by the eve of World War One, grown into a thoroughgoing Irish social revolution. This Irish “bourgeois revolution” was organised by the British bourgeois state, not by an Irish bourgeoisie.

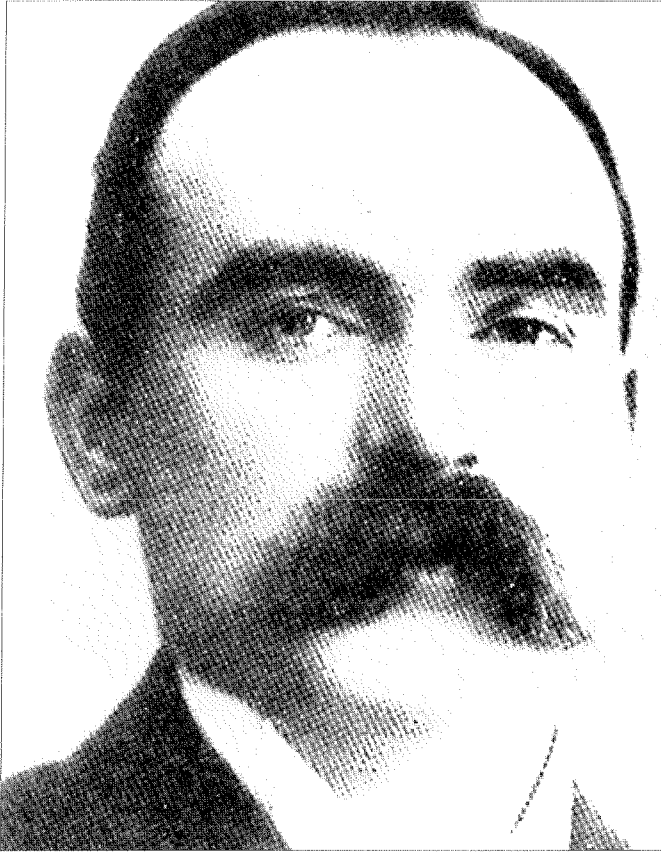
First the Anglican church, “the Church of Ireland”, was disestablished and partly disendowed in 1869. Then legislation to prevent tenant farmers being robbed by an evicting landlord, who could until then simply seize any improvements made by an evicted tenant — that is, confiscate his capital.

In 1888, far more drastic legislation was brought in, giving tenants the so-called “3 Fs” — free sale (of tenants’ assets on the farm), fair rent, fixity of tenure — no evictions except for non-payment of rent. Courts were set up to fix rents. In effect, the tenant was given rights that seriously encroached upon the private property rights of the owning landlord. This was quasi-revolutionary legislation and the Liberal PM Gladstone was denounced for encouraging communistic tendencies. It was an event which accelerated the transfer of the allegiance of the industrial bourgeoisie from their old Liberal Party to the Tory Party.

In 1886 Gladstone came out for Irish Home Rule, splitting off both the right and the radical wings of his party, who eventually fused with the Tories.

More than that though. The legislation of 1869-70 gave tenants the chance to purchase their holding from a landlord willing to sell. The state would put up one-third of the price, which the tenants would pay back over time. Very few transfers occurred as a result of this.

From the mid-1880s, the Tories began to make available to the tenant the full cost of buying the holding on a mortgage basis, with



James Connolly

the repayments usually notably lower than the rent had been. The Liberals were highly critical of this: only "deserving" tenants, with savings, should get such benefits.

The Fair Rent courts took the fixing of rents out of the landlords' hands, and kept them down. The development of the trade in frozen meat, and bulk movements of grain from the USA and Australasia, led to a prolonged crisis in UK agriculture. Increasingly, landlords were willing to sell. In 1902 a conference of tenants and landlords met and jointly proposed the wholesale transfer of land. The Wyndham Act of the following year provided the necessary state finance. This was the Irish bourgeois revolution — for the achievement of which the republican Fenians had wanted to seize power — carried out by the British bourgeoisie.

In Protestant Ulster the same years had seen a tremendous growth of industries such as shipbuilding. The Protestant settlers had long ago had their bourgeois revolution — as part of the British bourgeois revolution. When the relationship of the Catholic tenants to their lords of the land was feudalistic — as we have seen the landlords right until 1870 to confiscate the farmers' invested capital — that of the Ulster tenant farmers was akin to the bourgeois relationships in England.

The Liberal proposal in 1886 to concede the Parnellite demand for limited Home Rule polarised Ireland radically. The Protestant majority in north-east Ulster pledged themselves to refuse to accept and to fight Home Rule. There were demonstrations and conferences, including mobilisations of the Ulster Protestant working class, the main proletariat in Ireland, against Gladstone's two failed Home Rule Bills, in 1886 and 1893.

The Tory *social* revolutionary measures were intended as an alternative to the Liberal proposal for Home Rule. The alternating tugging of these two approaches — and and of these parties of their allies in Ireland, the Orange Unionists with the Tories and the nationalists with the Liberals — ultimately wrecked havoc in Ireland.

Eclipse of republicanism

WHERE was republicanism? The Irish Republican Brotherhood gave support to Parnell and Biggar for a limited experimental period, and then concentrated on breaking up Parnellite meetings. The Head Centre of this depleting sect was Charles J Kickham, a novelist, poet and writer of at least one fine song still widely sung about the experience of the immigrant poor. Kickham led them into a cul-de-sac, where the movement continued to shrivel and die. Kickham was near deaf as a result of an explosion, half blind and he had a speech impediment: his enemies saw in his personal afflictions a metaphor for the state of the movement he led. It declined to nothing.

Politics was now the Home Rule Party, under varying names. Once the Liberals came out for Home Rule it became increasingly a satellite of that party, relying on it to eventually carry a Home Rule Bill and set up a Dublin parliament.

Gladstone had talked of local autonomy for then northern Protestants, but it led to nothing. The Home Rule Party and the northern Unionists felt no need to reach a democratic *modus vivendi*, the one looking to the Liberals to eventually coerce the Unionists into accepting rule from Dublin under an all-Ireland Catholic majority, the other relying on the Tories to continue to stop Home Rule forever. The Home Rule Party soon came to dominate everything in Catholic Ireland, including the early labour movement.

James Connolly

IN the middle of this period a different strand of republicanism appeared for the first time. The Fenians and earlier republicans had in varying ways expressed and embodied social and class concerns. In their time and place, the Fenians, or some of them, had been radical. So in the 1840s had John Mitchell in some of his many facets, and James Fintan Lawlor.

Now, for the first time, the need for a republic with a boldly stated class allegiance and class goals was proclaimed — the *workers' republic*. In 1896 James Connolly and a few others founded the Irish Socialist Republic Party. In August 1898 James Connolly started a newspaper in Dublin whose title embodied his programme — *The Workers' Republic*. By that time, Connolly later recalled, the bold proclamation of republicanism of any sort was a shocking and startling thing in post-Parnell Dublin.

Connolly embraced and attempted to build on the Irish revolutionary republican tradition that stretched back a hundred years to Wolfe Tone, and to give it a consistently radical, modern interpretation. Connolly redefined republicanism.

In France, the Third Republic was bourgeois and corrupt, far distant from the objectives of the ragged Parisians who won the First Republic in the 1790s; in America the republic was ruled by plutocrats. In Ireland, Connolly rightly thought that *Republic* still had a pure, clean meaning, whose goal of liberty, equality and fraternity, *The Rights of Man* in Ireland, could only be achieved in a "republic of the workers", in a "co-operative commonwealth".

His credo was that a republic worth the name had to be measured by the well-being of the lower class within it and be the rule of that class. It had to be a workers' republic. Within that framework, Connolly, educated in the British Marxist movement, advocated aggressively the Marxist ideas common throughout Europe then.

He tried to root and vindicate his political message in the experience of the Irish in history, portraying capitalism as an alien, English imposition and much of Irish history as the conflict between that alien *social force* and a native, Gaelic, primordial communism, which he saw in the old Irish clan system, (remnants of which had survived into the 17th century, to go down before the Cromwellian land confiscations and "ethnic cleansing"). Connolly based himself



Members of the Irish Socialist Republican Party in Phoenix Park, Dublin, 1901

on statements by John Stuart Mill, on Lewis H Morgan and on Frederick Engels account of Morgan in *The Origins of Private Property and the State*.

Connolly did what the Stalinised Communist Parties would do, often ludicrously, in the Popular Front period — uncover for his movement a revolutionary genealogy stretching far into the past. It was not false, because Ireland remained unemancipated, and Connolly did not falsify: he surveyed Irish history with the eyes of a proletarian and denounced some of the icons of conventional Irish nationalism. His *Labour in Irish History*, which appeared in book form in 1910, is, I believe, a “living book” — exhorting to action, trying to forge revolutionary working class consciousness in the proletariat of a long oppressed people. Despite Connolly’s intentions, it did not sufficiently distinguish the working class outlook from other “republicanisms”. This would have grave consequences for workers’ republican, socialist, politics in the future.

The republican renewal

LET us move forward now to 1914. When mass republicanism reappeared it was an overwhelmingly Catholic movement; and yet it was a by-product of Protestant Ireland — this time a reaction against what was happening in Protestant Ulster.

Dependent on the Home Rule Party in the House of Commons to sustain it in office, the Asquith Liberal government brought in a third Home Rule Bill. There was an assured majority for it in the House of Commons — and the House of Lords (which had vetoed the Home Rule Bill passed in the House of Commons in 1893) had recently lost its absolute veto.

Led by Edward Carson, the Ulster Unionists openly organised a strong, armed force, the Ulster Volunteer Force, pledged to resist a London-empowered Dublin parliament. They had the active backing of the Tory Party, whose leader, Bonar Law, reminded the Liberal government that “there are things stronger than parliamentary majorities”.

In response, Catholic Ireland organised an armed force, the Irish Volunteers, to defend Home Rule.

The underground Fenian Irish Republican Brotherhood, which had recently been reorganised and given some life where there had for a long time been virtually none, expanded in the Home Rule crisis. Previously moderate Home Rulers such as the schoolteacher Padraig Pearse, faced with the Orange revolt, transmogrified into militant republicans. The Ulster Unionists had brought the gun back into Irish politics; their example fed Fenianism and brought its withered stump back to vigorous life.

The Home Rule and Irish Volunteer leaders accepted in principle that Ireland should be partitioned for a supposedly limited period, and then went on to back Britain when World War One broke out, acting as recruiting sergeants for the Army. A minority, under the Irish Republican Brotherhood’s secret control, broke away from the volunteers, retaining the name (the majority became known as the National Volunteers) Fenian republicanism had quickly become a greater force than it had been for four decades.

Who were the republicans? Schoolteachers, journalists, academics were the leaders. The rank and file were mainly workers in town and country. What did they believe in? In the old Fenian principle. “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity” — the Irish could not hope to win an armed conflict except when England was at war, and then only allied to England’s enemy. They believed in a rising to win Ireland’s independence and set about preparing it, in alliance with Germany and, they hoped, with German help. That was all they had in common, though some of the leaders — Pearse, for example — were broadly socialistic and had sided with the workers during the Dublin labour war of 1913-14 led by socialist trade union leader Jim Larkin.

James Connolly, at the head of the small “Citizen Army” that grew out of the self-defence militia set up to fight the police in the 1913-14 strike, shared the immediate objectives of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. He allied with them, though he saw this as the first step in the fight for the workers’ republic.

Though some of the leaders were Protestants — Sir Roger Casement, Constance Marckewicz — and one, Tom Clarke, a staunch anti-clericalist, this was a Catholic movement. But it was not a sectarian movement. Padraig Pearse, the leader of the IRB, had publicly, though not wisely, offered the support of republican Ireland to

Edward Carson and the UVF if they would declare separation from England.

The Home Rule Party had before the war fallen under the control of the then powerful Catholic equivalent of the Orange Order, the Ancient Order of Hibernians. (They claimed origins in such Catholic peasant societies as the Defenders, with which the United Irishmen had allied.) The IRB paper *Irish Freedom* denounced the Hibernians in terms more bitter than they used on the Orange Order, blaming the Hibernians for making conciliation with the Protestant-Unionists even more difficult. They ruled out the idea that they might try to coerce north-east Ulster. This was a Catholic republicanism that still had living roots in the United Irishmen.

It had, however, another aspect — a commitment to Gaelic culture and to the revival of the Gaelic language. The cultural Gaelic revival movement had nurtured some of them, such as Pearse, towards revolutionary politics. From now on this would be part of republicanism. It inevitably would lead to "cultural sectarianism" where the Northern Irish Protestants were concerned and, bizarrely, also where the children of self-ruling Catholic Ire-

land whose native language was English, were concerned.

Republicanism triumphant

MOVE forward to the aftermath of the December 1918 General Election. In January 1919 a majority of the MPs just elected seceded from Britain and set up an Irish Republican Parliament in Dublin.

Republicans had won 48% of the vote and 73% of the Irish seats, many of which were not contested. It was common in the UK then that "hopeless" seats would not be contested. What was republicanism now? Though for some it was a shining ideal, republicanism was now essentially a flag of convenience. Under it the antagonistic and potentially antagonistic forces of Irish nationalism, indeed of the Irish Catholic people, had rallied. There were individual Protestants in it, but the north-east Ulster community was far outside its remit. For them "republicanism" now meant Catholic "Rome Rule", the opposite of the liberties their United Irishmen ancestors had aspired to. Republicanism seemed to have sub-

Brón Caoin Daithi O'Connell

(Lament for David O'Connell)

(David O'Connell helped found the Provisional IRA and invented the explosive-filled car bomb. He died peacefully in bed in 1990.)

(Richard Talbot, Duke of Tirconnell was the Irish Catholic leader in the religious wars won by the Protestant leader, the Dutch King of England, William of Orange. A hundred years later, Wolfe Tone inspired by the French Revolution founded the United Irishmen who advocated the unity of the peoples of Ireland of all religions and different origins in a secular Republicanism. Irish politics has not yet reached the level to which Tone aspired 200 years ago.)

"They think they have pacified Ireland... they think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fool! — They have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace."
Patrick H Pearse

"Ireland without her people means nothing to me."
James Connolly

Six hundred years of strife behind,
Of pain and slaughter, sept and sect;
When Tone said, we needs must grow blind
To creed and race, for self-respect.
But History, knowing how to breed
Malign sly ghosts who mesmerise
With Hate and Hope, pleas that mislead,
Seeds too-ripe truth with rancid lies:
Two peoples yet, not citizen peers,
Still Talbot's children, William's heirs

"Without her people, Ireland is nothing!"

Saviours inbred on poisoned soil,
Souls shaped by Joe Devlin's shout
Minds rough-hewn in turmoil, toil:

Meeting, ambush, banishing doubt;
And civil fratricidal war,
Unleashed in Tone's and Emmetts' name
By ardour tender as a roar,
Sept-love impervious to blame:
They groped blood-blind, by Murder led,
Calling Tone: Tyrconnell came instead!

"Without her people, 'Ireland' is nothing!"

To "finish what Wolfe Tone began",
They masked the face in England's blame
Of Irish folk, and aimed the gun
Republican name: communal game!
Old words mutated, goals recast,
"Unity" sunk to sect war-cry,
The Rights of Man defined by the blast
Of bomb and gun — sectarian lie!
Two peoples' fight to hold, regain,
Two songs with one hate-loud refrain.

"Without her people, 'Ireland' is nothing!"

They'd open eyes, re-light lost light:
A mystic's war would malice drain,
Fresh blood by magic could unite
Hate-mangled tribes, mad in disdain:
— the fools, the fools! Demented choices;
Known history unknown, unread:
Talk to yourself in pantomime voices
And think to hear the Fenian dead!
Can Erin unite, blood-soldered stones,
Despite her peoples, over their bones?

Without her people, 'Ireland' is nothing!

SM



Patrick Pearse. He read out the 1916 Declaration of the Irish Republic from the steps of the General Post Office in Dublin.

sumed the old Home Rule movement. Or was it the other way round? The Rising of 1916 had been the great turning point. Against the plans and intentions of its organisers, the Rising was confined to Dublin, striking only a couple of fleeting sparks elsewhere. They surrendered after a week. As prisoners were marched off, some to their deaths, there were hostile demonstrations from the Dublin crowds. Over a period of 10 days, ending with the killing

of the wounded Connolly and Sean Mac Diarmada on 12 May, 15 of the leaders were shot. Roger Casement was hanged two months later.

The Larkinite socialist Peadar Kearney — who wrote the Irish national anthem, *The Soldiers Song* — could write: "They are not ancient heroes/From the dim and misty years/But the dearest friends we had on earth/Who shared our joys and tears." But mythical heroes is what they quickly became. The shootings awoke historical memories, and transformed the much-resented rebels of Easter week, who had turned Dublin into a battlefield, from seeming maniacs into legendary heroes.

The Home Rule Party had rested on a culture that incongruously glorified the struggles and rebellions of the past. A tame and venal MP, living well on "Home Rule" in London, would go home to his constituency and make a rousing speech telling them that his "patience" and that of the Home Rule Party was not infinite — that if they did not get their way they would know in good time how to once again "unsheath the Fenian sword". The insurgents set fire to this sub-culture and the blaze consumed the old Home Rule Party. The republicans replaced the Home Rulers.

However, without the fuel added to the fire of 1916, by Britain's attempt to introduce conscription (in operation in Britain since 1916) to Ireland, it is improbable that the annihilation of the old Home Rule Party would have happened with anything like the speed and completeness that it did. About 200,000 men from Catholic Ireland joined the British army, town and country labourers mostly. Yet imminent conscription stirred up a tremendous storm. Resistance to it was preached and organised in Catholic churches by priests and bishops. Britain backed down, but not before the Home Rule Party had withdrawn, under pressure, from Westminster.

The Irish bourgeoisie had been bitterly against the Rising. The Dublin Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution condemning

the rising as "Larkinism run amok". *The Irish Independent*, the newspaper of Murphy, who had organised the Dublin lockout in 1913-14, urged on the British to shoot the wounded James Connolly. Provincial Chambers of Commerce followed where Dublin led. The Chamber of Commerce in Ennis, County Clare, where Eamon De Valera would win a landmark by-election a year later, passed a resolution identical in its sentiments.

The insurgents had no party. The Rising was popularly and, to the British, officially known as the "Sinn Fein Rising" (Sinn Fein means "we ourselves", not "ourselves alone" as it is often rendered), but Sinn Fein had had nothing to do with the rising. Sinn Fein was a monarchist party! Its founder and leader, a one-time IRB man, Arthur Griffith, wanted the UK reorganised into a "British-Hibernian Monarchy" modelled on the reorganisation of Austro-Hungary in 1867. Personally an honest man and a poor one, who detested the corrupt politics of the Home Rule Party, he was fanatically committed to market economics and to the development of Irish capitalist industry. Therefore he was an enemy of trade unionism because it raised wages and thus costs for manufacturers. He had long advocated the withdrawal of Irish MPs from Westminster, as the Hungarians had done before the Austro-Hungarian state reorganised itself.

In 1917 a second Sinn Fein emerged from the first Sinn Fein's Convention. Eamon De Valera, the senior surviving leader of the Rising replaced Griffith as President (Griffith was his deputy), and the goal of an Independent Republic, the Republic proclaimed in 1916, was agreed as the Party's goal — until it was won. After that differences on the best constitutional arrangement could safely have free play. Withdrawal from Westminster would be its tactic and the re-proclamation of the Republic its first goal. Thus was a great

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN. THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty: six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children, to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,
SEAN Mac DIARMADA, THOMAS MacDONAGH,
P. H. PEARSE, EAMONN CEANNT,
JAMES CONNOLLY, JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

The Proclamation issued by the Provisional Government.

national coalition put together around the single goal of winning an independent republic. In 1919 Dail Eireann would adopt a Democratic Programme recognising some responsibility for social welfare. It never got beyond paper.

The Catholic bourgeoisie was dragged in the wake of this movement.

The fate of the Workers' Republic

THE idea of a workers' republic did not disappear — far from it. Connolly's martyrdom gave socialism and the idea of a workers' republic a tremendous and widespread popularity. But there was no coherent, properly organised revolutionary workers' movement able to transmute it into hard working class consciousness and purposeful activity. There were powerfully organised forces doing the opposite. Connolly was hardly dead before clever priests started to publish "interpretations" of what he "really" stood for. Worse, the workers' republic on its own was a vague concept that could easily be assimilated to both Catholic social teaching and ideas of "restoring" a mythical Gaelic past.

Connolly had invoked that past in order to use it as a springboard to a modern working class socialist class consciousness. But that proved to be a double-edged weapon. For example a book advocating the workers' republic as a variant of backward-looking arcadia, rooted in the quasi-mythical Gaelic past won wide readership even in Britain where it was circulated by those who would soon form the British Communist Party. It was written by Aodh De Blacam. De Blacam would live to be an apologist for the Catholic Francoites during the Spanish Civil War...

In the course of the battle that developed between the British occupation forces and the IRA, defending Dail Eireann, working class radicalism led to the raising of the Red Flag by strikers over occupied creameries (dairy factories) and in perhaps as many as 40 separate cases the declaration of local soviets. A soviet existed in Limerick City for a while in early 1919 — with the support of the nationalist bishop Fgarty (who would be a prominent blue shirt fascist in the '30s).

Central to the inconsequentiality that was the fate of this splendid militancy was the alienation of the northern working class. It deprived the southern Irish working class of the proletarian big battalions: the workers fought and organised strikes against the occupying forces, but socially we were a weak force, in mainly agrarian Ireland. In the north the workers organised great strikes in 1919 — and in 1920 pogroms against Catholics and "soft" Protestants in the shipyards.

United Catholic Irish "republicanism" fought Britain to the conference table to offer previously unavailable concessions. A truce was called in July 1921.

Civil war and partition

MOVE on a year from the truce to the civil war that broke out between two wings of Sinn Fein in June 1922. One of these would be the root of all subsequent republicanism until the emergence of the present Adamsite Sinn Fein/IRA.

Britain offered Ireland the same Dominion status under the British crown as Canada and Australia. But Britain said that under no circumstances would it accept an independent Irish Republic. The 1917 Sinn Fein "compromise" had postponed resolution of the differences within Sinn Fein on desirable and acceptable constitutional arrangements to the aftermath of victory over Britain and the consolidation of the Republic. Under British pressure, the differences re-emerged now. Griffith, the dual monarch man, found his maximum demands satisfied in Dominion status; Michael Collins, who had organised the fighting IRA squads, thought it would "give us the freedom to win freedom". They signed the proffered treaty in London and then went back to Ireland to enforce it against their former comrades who would not agree. Collins was head of the underground Irish Republican Brotherhood, and the Irish Republican Brotherhood helped push the compromise through.

Partition had been "sold" to Griffith and Collins by trickery. The Six Counties population is one third Catholic and they are the majority in large parts of it? That is to your advantage, Prime Minister Lloyd George told Griffith and Collins. In a few years we will redraw the boundaries, lop off the Catholic majority areas — which included the Six Counties' second city Derry — and attach them to the 26 Counties. At that point, deprived of so much territory, all of the present Six Counties will feel obliged to come into a United Ireland.

Lloyd George told the Unionists that once their sub-state was set up, they could dig their heels in. They did. Six Counties Catholics were second-class citizens for 50 years, after which they revolted.

Yet no faction of Sinn Fein had any proposals for resolving the Six Counties problem. At the turn of 1921-22 when Dail Eireann debated the Treaty, the issue of Northern Ireland played remarkably little part. That the Treaty decreed compulsion to take an oath of allegiance to the British king was the emotive issue. By a small majority Dail Eireann backed Griffith and Collins. The minority walked out; the majority set about constructing a state, building up a professional army from ex-British soldiers and a minority of the fighters in the war of independence.

The well-off classes rallied around the Griffith/Collins wing of Sinn Fein. What did the diehard republicans represent? Commit-

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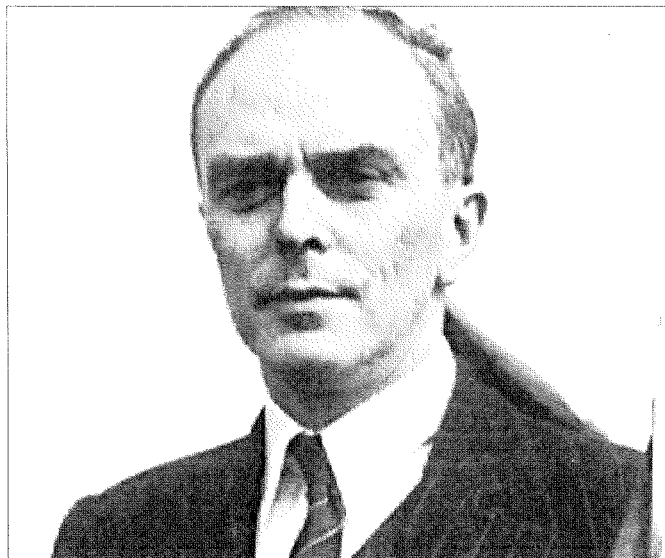
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A new face of Republicanism. Leader of the right and Catholic wing of the IRA under the 1930s, he founded *Clan Na Poblachta* in the '40s, run by a core of ex-militarists.

ment to an independent republic, which for some of them was a metaphysical abstraction; repugnance for the oath of allegiance, which would mean breaking their oath to the republic. Their alternative to the Treaty was the idea that an independent Irish republic could be in "external association" with the British Empire. In practice, the republican militarists led by Rory O'Connor acted as if they wanted military rule.

Rationally, Collins was right and has been proved right by subsequent history. But it is not as simple as that. All the way back to Daniel O'Connell there was an element of millenarianism in nationalist mobilisations — people expected that their whole lives could be radically transformed by the desired political changes. The people who rallied to the republicans were the poor, the have-nots, those who wanted revolution but had no idea how to achieve it. Frederick Engels in the 1880s had called the Fenian terrorist faction of the Invincibles, Blanquists. In truth, from this time onwards, there were unmistakable elements in republicanism that had gone to the making of anarchism in underdeveloped southern Europe in the last century and well into this one. The whole movement was incoherent and socially and politically immature.

The small new Irish Communist Party lined up with the anti-Treatyists. Though it would have been better if the civil war had not happened, they were in the circumstances right to do that.

The republicans were crushed in a year's fighting that at the end was mainly in Munster, in the south-west. It was a war of great savagery and bitterness. And yet a functional bourgeois democracy was more or less intact at its end.

De Valera and his orphans

WE move now to 1926, a fateful year for republicanism. The order to "dump [hide] arms" was given in June 1923. The defeated were let out of internment camps and jails a year later in 1924, where thousands of them had participated in a mass hunger strike that had finally collapsed. Their political leader is Eamon DeValera. The republicans suffer police harassment, unemployment and forced emigration. They denounce the Dublin parliament as a usurping partition parliament, bound by the oath which every TD has to take to the English crown. They stand in elections, which show that they retain strong support, but, on principle, they refuse to take their seats. At the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis (conference) in 1926, Sinn Fein splits.

De Valera, faced with imminent government legislation to prevent abstentionist candidates contesting elections, proposes that they should abandon abstentionism. Defeated, he walks out and founds the *Fianna Fail* [the Soldiers of Destiny] Party. He takes most of the Sinn Fein support in the country with him. *Fianna Failers* take the oath to the king, but declare it an empty formality.

The 26 County political landscape has now set in the shape that still exists. The two main 26 County parties, *Fianna Fail* and *Fine Gael* (originally called *Cumman Na Gael*) stem from the 1921-22 split in the second Sinn Fein. *Fianna Fail* would form a government early in 1932 and rule for 16 consecutive years.

What was left of republicanism? The principle of boycotting the Dublin, Belfast and London parliaments (Northern Ireland sent MPs to Westminster) and its corollary, that progress could not but be by way of armed force. Soon the IRA declared its independence from the rump of Sinn Fein.

Stalinists and republicans

MOVE on eight years to 1934, when another important split occurs. The IRA is in fact a political army, a party-army. Its concerns still centre on Oaths of Allegiance and such matters. There is no notion that anything can be done about Northern Ireland. The IRA publishes *An Phoblacht*, a lively weekly in which there is a lot of discussion. There are now people in the leadership of the IRA who are identifiably Stalinists — Peadar O'Donnell, Frank Ryan and others. They engage in attempts to organise west of Ireland small farmers and affiliate them to the *Krestintern*, the Stalinists' so-called Peasant International. At its 5th World Congress in 1924, the Communist International proposed to organise worker-peasant parties in backward countries.

But what are the IRA's goals? What *can* they be? Ireland is a land of peasant owners and sizeable capitalist farms. There is no land revolution to make. There are restraints on Irish self-determination, but the Statute of Westminster of 1931 gives the Dominions effective independence: in power after 1932, De Valera will use this "freedom to win freedom".

Here too the hold-out republicans will be made politically redundant. What is left? An inchoate anarchistic hostility to the existing society on the part of some of its least favoured, who are drawn into the IRA because it seems to embody a recognisable and much respected tradition and because there is no credible or acceptable alternative revolutionary movement. For the republican veterans, tradition now includes civil war bitterness. A general "anti-imperialism" and ingrained hostility to England — "burn everything English, except her coal" is an important part of it. So is a romantic fascination with guns and death and violence. That too is a trait in common with, say, Spanish anarchism.

In 1931 the IRA launches its own political party, "*Saor Eire*" [Free Ireland], with socialistic politics. It is immediately denounced by the Bishops as "communist" and banned by the government. Quickly, the IRA leaders, in the first place, Sean McBride, issue a statement of obeisance to the bishops' wishes. *Saor Eire* dies. Dead Fenians turn in their graves!

The backbone of *Fianna Fail* is made up revolutionary nationalists who have been hardened by war, prison and persecution. In many ways this provides them with an incomparable cadre in politics. The IRA's relationship to *Fianna Fail* is central. They boycott politics but they give "critical support" to *Fianna Fail* and have many and deep ties with that party.

When *Fianna Fail*, backed by the Labour Party, becomes the major Dail party and forms a government early in 1932, the Irish Free State's bourgeois democracy is put to the test. Will those who defeated them in the civil war less than a decade ago let them take over the government? The answer is: "Yes... but..." The "but" will grow larger and louder.



Trotsky returns from exile*

DMITRI Volkogonov's two-volume work *Trotsky — A Political Portrait* was first published in Moscow in 1992. It quickly sold a million copies. An English translation in one volume (*Trotsky — The Eternal Revolutionary*) has been available since 1996.

Volkogonov was born in 1928. During the years of Stalinist repression his father was executed and his mother died in exile. Volkogonov himself became a professional soldier, eventually being appointed Director of the Institute of Military History in the mid-1980s.

By 1991 he had been forced to resign, following criticism by the Soviet military elite of his biography of Stalin (1990) and his "anti-Soviet" interpretation of the Second World War.

After the August coup of 1991 Volkogonov was "rehabilitated". He was appointed the special defence adviser to Yeltsin, and then head of the Russian Archive Declassifying Commission. By the time of his death in 1995 he had written biographies of all seven Soviet leaders, all of them within the same political framework.

When Volkogonov had been a Stalinist, as indeed he had been, he had thought that he was a Marxist and a Leninist. Consequently, when he turned his back on Stalinism, he equated this with a break with Marxism and Leninism.

As Volkogonov put it in his posthumously published *Seven Leaders*: "For many years I was an orthodox Marxist. Only now, in the twilight of my life, after a long and painful struggle, have I been able to free myself from the chimera of Bolshevik ideology..."

"Even today the open opponents of Lenin who deny Leninism in principle are few in number. I am one those, after having spent years in the camp of his supporters..."

"My two-volume work *Lenin* is the fruit of the painful reflections of a former orthodox communist who finally came to the conclusion that all the major misfortunes of Russia in the 20th century are due to Lenin and Leninism..."

Trotsky — The Eternal Revolutionary, by Dmitri Volkogonov.

As Volkogonov turned away from Stalinism — opportunistically, according to his Russian critics, given that Stalinism was already in an advanced state of decay — he looked instead towards "social justice and the free market", championed by Boris Yeltsin: "I am not afraid of appearing tendentious and subjective. In the long line of Russian leaders of the 20th century Yeltsin is one of the honourable and courageous figures."

"Many of us long understood that the ideals we proclaimed did not match the grim practice of Leninism. But few were those who rebelled against the vices of Leninism in practice. Yeltsin was perhaps the only member of all the Politburos since Lenin came to power who openly raised his voice — the only one!"

In Yeltsin, Volkogonov saw a supposedly democratic alternative to the Marxist concept of class politics: "It should never be forgotten, Lenin stressed, that all civilised society has been divided into hostile and irreconcilable classes. Every effort should be made, he wrote, to ensure that it is not the proletariat which is oppressed by the bourgeoisie, but vice versa. And then will arise the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', the salvation of humanity."

"Even taking into account our fanatical devotion to revolution, to unlimited methodological violence in the name of a distant future happiness for all, it is difficult to understand our past blind devotion to these anti-human postulates."

Inevitably, Volkogonov's biography of Trotsky was written within the framework of his own politics: a profound hostility to Marxism in general and the October Revolution in particular, and an inability to distinguish between Stalinism and revolutionary socialism.

As a result, Volkogonov's book is notable more for its mediocrity, and occasional incoherence, than it is for any new insights into Trotsky's life or politics. (In relation to Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, however, such a judgement is in need of qualification. For obvious reasons, the writings and

biographies of Trotsky were not available in Russia until the late 1980s and early 1990s. A selection of Trotsky's writings, edited by Vasyetsky, for example, was published in 1990, whilst Vasyetsky's own biography of Trotsky was published in 1992.)

Around the same time Trotskyist literature began to be published by the sister-organisations of Western European Trotskyist tendencies. Such literature was of mixed quality.

According to *The Revolution Betrayed Today* (published by Militant, now the Socialist Party, in 1992), for example, Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* was "his greatest book, the culmination of his all-sided 17-year long research and analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy".

According to the booklet, "workers and youth throughout the world are turning to this work [*Revolution Betrayed*] in an attempt to find a solution to their problems."

It concludes with the usual Militant idiot-optimism: "What we are seeing in the Soviet Union today [i.e., 1992, one year after the Soviet Union had ceased to exist] is without doubt the beginnings of a revolution. All its explosive elements are rapidly accumulating."

As Trotsky's writings had been banned for some six decades, Volkogonov's biography, for all its political limitations, did provide a wealth of information about Trotsky which had hitherto been largely unknown to Russian readers.

The Trotsky presented in Volkogonov's book is one motivated by vanity and a thirst for fame: "Trotsky was right to think he would become famous: that, after all, was his aim... For him the revolution was a vehicle of self-expression. Ego meant more to him than to many other leaders... Dedication to the revolutionary idea did not prevent him from being vain, from posturing before the mirror of history."

Many other writers, some of them sympathetic to Trotsky, have commented on his vanity. For Volkogonov, however, this vanity is elevated from being a personality trait to being the driving force in Trotsky's life.

Volkogonov also finds a contradiction between Trotsky's intellectual powers and his

commitment to Marxism: "Like all orthodox Russian revolutionaries, he believed in Marxism... It was profoundly paradoxical that a man with so powerful an intellect as Trotsky could believe so fanatically in the Utopian idea [of Marxism]."

Trotsky's basic shortcoming was that his fanaticism blinded him to the bankruptcy of Marxism: "Trotsky did not see that many of the fundamental tenets of Marxism, which he never doubted, were profoundly wrong... [He expressed] not the sober views of an intellectual innovator, but the feelings of a fanatical revolutionary."

Volkogonov's portrayal of Trotsky as "a Utopian dreamer where world revolution was concerned" and as someone who "lost contact with reality at times" is at one with the portrayal of Trotsky by Western histories hostile to the ideas of socialism. So too is Volkogonov's "analysis" of the Trotsky-Stalin conflict.

Volkogonov certainly rejects the Stalinist lies about Trotsky. Trotsky "was second only to Lenin in the Revolution... On all questions of major substance faced by the Bolsheviks in both the October coup [sic] and the civil war Lenin and Trotsky were at one... [October] was no doubt Trotsky's finest hour."

Stalinist historians are condemned by Volkogonov for "writing whatever they were ordered to". They created "new myths by which the whole country would be made to bend before Stalin". Trotsky's role in October was "the main object of camouflage and distortion, and it was precisely this that was ultimately erased from the popular memory".

But in recognising Trotsky's central role in the October Revolution, Volkogonov is damning rather than rehabilitating him. For Volkogonov, the revolution was "the most tragic mistake", which ultimately "led Russia to its historic failure" and created "the Soviet bureaucratic system".

Thus, concludes Volkogonov, Trotsky was a victim of his own revolution: "The man who with Lenin had laid the foundations of a mighty and sinister state system was

definitively rejected by it... He was also the first to create and defend that dictatorship."

Volkogonov even goes so far as to claim that there were no basic political differences between Lenin and Trotsky on the one hand and Stalin on the other: the three of them "complemented each other". Lenin was "the inspirer"; Trotsky "the agitator"; and Stalin "the executor, the one who carried out the idea".

Volkogonov continues: "Thanks to decades of brain-washing most people in the Soviet Union are not even aware that Marxism in Russia developed in three stages: Leninism, Trotskyism and Stalinism, all of them deriving from the same root."

Stalinism, according to Volkogonov, "was not an anomaly, but something that had grown organically out of Marxism and Leninism". Trotsky and Stalin "may have been diametrically opposed in personal terms, but they both remained typical Bolsheviks, obsessed with violence, dictatorship and coercion". The epochal political conflict between Trotsky and Stalin is virtually reduced to a clash of personalities: "Trotsky was utterly consistent in his total rejection of Stalinism, a fact chiefly motivated by personal considerations."

(Given Volkogonov's own politics, this sentence is politically incoherent. If Stalin and Trotsky were both Marxists and Bolsheviks, how could Trotsky reject Stalinism without rejecting his own ideas?)

In equating Stalinism with Bolshevism and Marxism, and reducing the conflict to a clash of personalities, Volkogonov provides no new insights into the history of post-1917 Russia. He is simply repeating the standard misinterpretation of Western bourgeois historians.

In dealing with specific aspects of the conflict of between Trotsky and Stalin in the '20s and '30s Volkogonov's failure to add anything new to an understanding of the issues is more than overshadowed by his evident inability to understand the fundamental political differences between the two. (But given that Volkogonov puts an "equals" sign between the politics of Trotsky and Stalin, this is only to be expected.)

According to Volkogonov, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution was "an entirely Marxist one [i.e., worthy of condemnation from Volkogonov's point of view]... It represented the primacy of the subjective over the objective, revolution for the sake of revolution. Mankind, the individual, the nation and the masses

remained somewhere on the sidelines."

But it was Stalin, rather than Trotsky or Lenin, who spread the Revolution to beyond the borders of the Soviet Union: "It was Stalin, not Trotsky, who would implement the idea of world revolution, albeit in a different form [!], after the Second World War, and without the Comintern's slogans".

Trotsky's pamphlet *The Lessons of October*, in which he fought the first beginnings of the re-writing of the Revolution, is dismissed by Volkogonov as "more romantic than the reality", whilst Trotsky's writings on Stalin's betrayal of the Chinese revolution are dismissed equally casually: "They were all targeted on 'Stalin's mistakes', and were thus rather unbalanced in their analysis."

Volkogonov refers to Trotsky's criticisms of the Popular Front in the Spanish Civil War (which demobilised the revolutionary forces) and to his condemnation of the European Communist Parties (who backed the NKVD's murder of socialists). But Volkogonov describes these as "mistakes of his own made by Trotsky in this uneven contest".

Trotsky's proposals that in certain countries his supporters should join social-democratic parties in order to gain a hearing for their ideas is described by Volkogonov in the following terms: "While Trotsky said nothing about terror of any kind, he certainly advocated illegal [!] and other ways of strengthening his influence in socialist and Communist parties."

In dealing with Trotsky's founding of the Fourth International, Volkogonov fails to place it in any kind of historical context. He makes no reference to Trotsky's argument that the Comintern's failure to prevent Hitler coming to power marked the final qualitative stage in its degeneration. Instead, yet again, Volkogonov reduces Trotsky's political activities to a misplaced expression of his vanity: "The creation of the Fourth International was the last expression of Trotsky's vast egoism, of his inability to accept that the time of his meteoric rise had passed, and that his brainchild was still-born. It was the most unrealistic venture of this Gulliver among a mass of Lilliputians, the squabbling Trotskyists."

"In attempting to infuse new blood into the anaemic new body, Trotsky reverted to the Marxist dogmas that had already been shown by Stalinist practice to be limited and historically vulnerable. Trotsky's new venture only exposed still more sharply the hopelessness

of his position, this Don Quixote of the 20th century."

Again therefore, in his treatment of Trotsky's writings and activities in the '20s and '30s, Volkogonov draws a figure familiar to Western readers of non-socialist historians: a latter-day Don Quixote, out of touch with reality, buried in the outdated dogmas of Marxism, and blind to a world changing about him.

And it is precisely for this reason that Volkogonov's book received such a favourable reception from right-wing historians and reviewers when it was first published in English.

"A most perceptive study of the great revolutionary," claimed Adam Ulam (*Wall Street Journal*). "Volkogonov has deployed previously unknown detail, often in a striking and illuminating fashion," wrote Robert Conquest (*New Republic*). "Original and fascinating to read," concluded Richard Pipes (*New York Times Book Review*).

There is nothing original about Volkogonov's book. His use of "previously unknown detail" adds nothing new to existing interpretations of Trotsky. It merely confirms what was already known, such as Stalin's rewriting of the history of the October Revolution, or his systematic murder of political opponents.

Moreover, bearing in mind that some 78 million Soviet archives had been declassified by the time that Volkogonov wrote his biography, there is little "previously unknown detail" here. (And Volkogonov certainly had access to these archives — he was in charge of declassifying them.)

To describe Volkogonov's book as "most perceptive" is equally inaccurate. Volkogonov's biography (like all his works) is lengthy rather than profound. He clearly lacks any grasp of the political abyss which divided Trotsky from Stalin, in relation to developments both within the Soviet Union and beyond.

But for right-wing historians in America and Europe all this is irrelevant. What they admire in Volkogonov's book is not the (non-existent) previously unknown detail and perceptiveness, but his conflation of Stalinism and socialism, and his rubbishing of Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution.

In praising Volkogonov's misinterpretation of Trotsky and his ideas, the bourgeois school of historical falsification is merely praising its own hostility to socialism which it finds embodied in Volkogonov's biography.

One further inadequacy of

Volkogonov's biography, or at least its English version, is the quality of translation, variously described by reviewers as "excellent", "admirable" and "luminous". In fact, entire paragraphs, or even entire pages, of the original Russian version have been omitted.

Whilst it is true that Volkogonov was a committed anti-Leninist and anti-Marxist who believed that Stalinism grew organically out of Marxism and Leninism, one wonders whether Volkogonov's right-wing admirers in the West would have been so fulsome in their praise had his book been translated in full.

Is it just coincidence, for example, that in the biography's conclusion (trimmed down from 11 pages in the original to five in the translation) paragraphs have been omitted which, however inconsistent they may be with the views expressed by Volkogonov elsewhere in his writings, portray Trotsky, and the general ideas of socialism, in a less critical light: "In this sense the socialist idea, if it is understood as a striving for social justice, will never die... and will always remain a historical possibility. It has so far never been possible to realise this idea (we cannot regard Stalinist "bureaucratic absolutism" as socialism)..."

"The time of revolutions is running out, but, clearly, it still remains alive in societies with a low level of socio-economic development..."

"Not infrequently the Bolsheviks were obliged to reply with force to the challenges of the counter-revolutionary forces. The decree "On Red Terror" [September 1918] was accompanied by a whole series of terrorist acts against prominent Bolsheviks..."

"Whether he wanted it or not, Trotsky stood out as a self-sacrificing fighter against the Great Lie. His criticisms, his exposures, his analysis of the reality of Stalinism, were the most profound of his age."

There is certainly nothing in such omissions which fundamentally alters the character of the book. Volkogonov might describe Trotsky as "a self-sacrificing fighter against the Great Lie". But he also holds Trotsky partially responsible for the "Great Lie" in the first place.

Such omissions do demonstrate, however, that this "most perceptive study" is nothing but a poor translation of a poor original. And the praise heaped on it by Western reviewers says rather more about their politics than it does about the quality of the book itself.

Stan Crooke

Chaos in East Timor

As we go to press, East Timor is being engulfed in a growing rampage of violence by Pro-Indonesian militias after the United Nations confirmed that 78.5% of those who took part in a referendum voted for independence. Thousands are fleeing what one UN diplomatic envoy has already called the "massacre". Tens of thousands more are taking shelter at churches and police stations or in the mountains. Hundreds at least are already dead.

The militias aim to destabilise East Timor and stop independence going through, and to flush out pro-independence Falintil guerrillas so that they can be attacked. They are shooting people, burning houses and driving from their homes anybody thought to support independence. Whole towns have been cleared.

The government of Indonesia — which has for decades violently suppressed East Timor's struggle for independence — has said that it "respects and accepts" the choice of the people of East Timor, but Indonesian police and military are doing nothing to stop the violence, and are undoubtedly arming the militias. In many areas, the military is said to be openly co-ordinating the militias.

The Australian government is leading calls for international intervention, echoed by UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook.

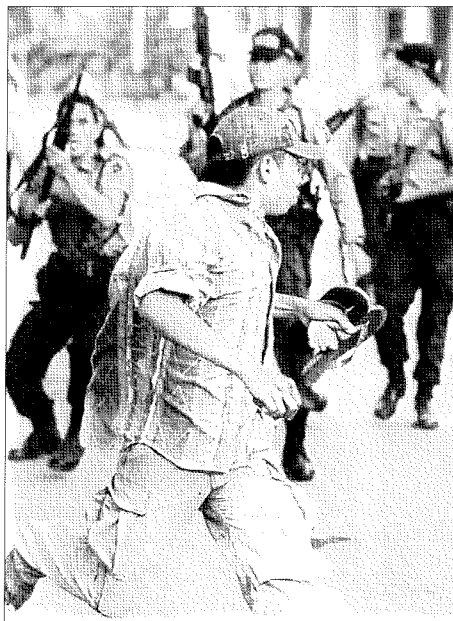
Here, Martin Thomas outlines the background.

THE independence movement had been confident of victory. But in the run-up to the vote, pro-Indonesian militias, tacitly supported by the Indonesian government, went on a campaign of terror. East Timorese leaders called for a UN force to intervene. "At this stage," said Jose Ramos Horta on 28 August, "a peacekeeping force is the only way to save the whole process and to save lives." On the same day, the *Australian Financial Review* declared flatly: "It is now clear that the Indonesian security forces have deliberately destroyed the chances of a free and fair independence ballot."

Indonesia is one of the world's biggest and most diverse countries, with 200 million people and dozens of ethnic and linguistic groups. For 30-odd years, until the fall of Suharto in May 1998, it was held together by an all-stifling military regime.

East Timor was a Portuguese colony for centuries, while Indonesia was "the Dutch East Indies". In 1975, Portuguese colonial rule in East Timor shattered, following the fall of the Caetano dictatorship in Portugal and victories for the independence movements in Portugal's African colonies. Given the green light by the USA and Australia, Indonesia seized the territory and kept control by massive repression.

Aceh is also rebelling against rule from Jakarta. Aceh, unlike East Timor, was part of the "Dutch East Indies", its northernmost tip, but discontent with Indonesian rule has been boosted by the way that almost all the revenue from rich oil and gas reserves in Aceh has been funnelled to Jakarta, leaving the Acehnese in poverty. Over the last 10 years,



Moments from death

military repression has increased. On 4-5 August, the province was brought to a halt by a two-day protest general strike.

Indonesia's regime is now "Suhartoism without Suharto". There is much larger scope for independent working class organisation and democratic organisation than there was under Suharto, but the same officials run the state machine, the same generals run the army, Suharto's former deputy B. J. Habibie is president, the army continues to police daily life, and the same mass poverty continues, sharpened by Indonesia's catastrophic economic slump since 1997.

In the country's first elections since the fall of the dictatorship, held on 7 June, Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI-Struggle won 24 million votes, while Golkar, the political party of the old military dictatorship, got 13 million. On the arithmetic, Megawati should be elected president by the People's Consultative Assembly when it meets in November. The exact outcome is not so certain, since the old Golkar machine may yet be able to keep B. J. Habibie as president with the help of minor parties and the army's guaranteed vote in the Assembly.

According to Max Lane in *Green Left Weekly* of 18 August: "If the Habibie group insists on an all-out push for the presidency, an explosion of political unrest is almost certain." For exactly that reason, big capital's "dream ticket" would probably be an alliance between Megawati and army chief Wiranto. Megawati has already told *Business Week* magazine: "The first priority is how to get the people to believe in their government... And then, after that, give the IMF a chance to solve the problems of the people of Indonesia". She is wooing the military. She has accepted a continuing "dual role" for the military — as an army and as a political and policing force — for the near future. And she defends Indone-

sia's claim to rule East Timor.

In *Green Left Weekly* of 25 August, Max Lane reported from a recent visit to Jakarta. "All over Jakarta, you could see small actions of one kind or another. Two hundred or more becak (pedi-cab) drivers drove down the main street to protest against harassment by city officials. In another place, 80 factory workers marched behind a banner demanding union rights.

"There were tents set up by students from campuses in West Timor protesting against the lack of facilities and repression there. A group of Megawati Sukarnoputri supporters marched down a main street with a 'She is My President' banner... Families of students shot in May 1998 rallied outside the UN offices demanding international support for the trial of the 'brains' behind the shootings. Several groups... protested in solidarity with the people of Aceh. More demonstrations demanded the trial of Suharto. On August 18, the TV showed 40 to 50 people with home loans occupying a bank to protest against the high interest rates..."

Apart from the relatively clear-cut secessionist movements in East Timor and Aceh, Indonesian politics is reviving slowly and patchily after the annihilating repression of Suharto. It is unsurprising that a bourgeois politician like Megawati should dominate mass politics at this stage, but remarkable that she should be able to do with so meagre an investment in commitments to or even rhetoric about change.

Indonesia's economy has changed dramatically since the 1980s, with a substantial growth of industry, and by 1997 fully 86 million of the country's 200 million people were wage-workers, 40 million of them in industry and services. But the workers' movement is still weak.

Nineteen independent trade union organisations have now emerged where once the government-controlled SPSI had a legal monopoly. Some of them have established an alliance, the FSU, to work together on common goals. The biggest independent union centre, the SBSI, claims 800 branches. According to Indonesian socialists, however, most unions still limit themselves to issues of wages and conditions — difficult enough in a drastic industrial slump — and lack confidence to take up broader political questions. In the June elections five socialist or workers' parties won about 200,000 votes between them.

Without a workers' movement strong enough to take a lead on the burning issues of democracy, there is a danger that the break-up of the old order will recruit forces for Islamic fundamentalism and communalism. Activists elsewhere should do all we can to help the Indonesian socialists gain strength and confidence, and to win freedom for political prisoners like PRD leader Budiman Sudjatmiko.