

Workers' Liberty

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

The April sun was now well up in the sky, shedding its glorious warming rays on the teeming earth. Life was springing from her fertile womb, buds were bursting into leaf and the fields were quickening with fresh green grass. Everywhere seeds were swelling and lengthening, cracking open the plain in their upward thrust for warmth and light. The sap was rising in abundance with whispering voices, **the germs of life were opening** with a kiss.

On and on, ever more insistently, his comrades were tapping, tapping, as though they too were rising through the ground. On this youthful morning, **in the fiery rays of the sun**, the whole country was alive with this sound.

Men were springing up,
a black avenging host was slowly germinating
in the furrows, thrusting upwards for
the harvests of future ages.

And very soon **their
germination would
crack the earth
asunder.**

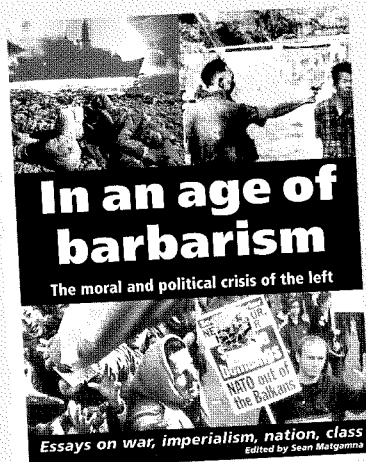
Emile Zola, Germinal

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"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of age or sex" — Karl Marx

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Livingstone, London and working-class politics

New Labour cracks open

AT THE Labour Party conference last October, the biggest group of resolutions from local Labour Parties was against the privatisation of air traffic control. They never got anywhere near the conference floor. Without comment or explanation, the New Labour government has now announced that it will privatise air traffic control in this parliamentary session.

Privatisation is more unpopular than ever, both in the labour movement and in the population at large. Yet the London borough of Islington, a long-time Labour stronghold and once one of its left-wing showcases, has just had all its schools removed from its control and handed over to private contractors. National Health Service hospitals are being mortgaged to private contractors under the "Private Finance Initiative". The Post Office is being reorganised in preparation for a privatisation that even the Tories shied away from. Effective privatisation of pensions is under way.

Pretty much the whole London labour movement, and for that matter the majority of the people of London, opposes Tube privatisation. The Labour leadership is going to extraordinary lengths to bar Ken Livingstone, the only candidate speaking out against Tube privatisation, from selection as Labour's nominee for Mayor. Despite the frantic Blairite campaign, a clear majority of London's trade unionists will probably endorse Livingstone — it would be a much bigger majority if key pro-Livingstone unions, RMT, ASLEF, MSF and BECTU, hadn't been barred from the ballot — though with the electoral college rigged that does not guarantee at all that Livingstone wins the selection.

THIS development confirms what we have argued in this magazine about the need for socialists to continue to relate to the remaining "old Labour" life within the "New Labour" structure. The rank and file of the trade unions and the Labour Party is no more uniformly "Blairite" than the whole population was "Thatcherite" in the years of Tory ascendancy. However, the broad assessment we made in September 1998 also remains valid.

"[The trade unions] still have 50% of the vote at Labour Party Conference; they have 20% of the places on Labour's National Executive Committee... [but] policy is — nominally — now made by a new body, the National Policy Committee, on which the Cabinet has 50% of places, the NEC 50% and the leader the casting vote... Blair towers above the Party... he can confront the party structures as an independent power." The



Privatisation threatens health and education as well as the Tube. Photo: John Harris

trade unions could not win within New Labour structures by constitutional means alone — though a serious fight by them, over privatisation for example, would still cause a massive shake up inside the Labour Party.

Changes since then have been for the worse rather than the better. The latest "consultation process", *A 21st Century Party*, will abolish representative structures in local Labour Parties and remove the right of trade union delegates to influence local Party policy. It is still on track to be rubber-stamped at the next Labour conference.

Nevertheless, the Livingstone candidacy, with vast media coverage and sizeable meetings all across London, has stirred up the labour movement perhaps more than any other spat in the two and a half years of New Labour government. Formally, it is only a replica of the row over Labour's Welsh Assembly leadership, where the Blair machine imposed the English-accented muzak-announcer type Alun Michael and blocked challenger Rhodri Morgan just because Morgan, no left-winger, showed flickers of responsiveness to the rank and file. Livingstone is no left-winger either. The London business amounts to more because what supporters perceive in Livingstone — a symbol of the days of a combative Labour left — is very different from what he says. It has put the issue of working-class representation on the stage of mass public politics, and socialists can and must run with it as far and as fast as we can.

New Labour, five years on

The levers of class politics

IN JUNE 1994 when Tony Blair stood for election as leader of the Labour Party he denied wanting to get rid of Clause Four, the Labour Party's long-held, ambiguous, but potently symbolic, commitment to reform socialism. Four months later, when installed as leader, Tony Blair told Party conference that the time was ripe to ditch such out-of-date aims and replace them with a "modern" mission statement. Six months later a special conference voted to do that.

The Labour Party leaders, Blair and the team which was rapidly gathering around him, were committed Thatcherites. Their political outlook went hand in glove with their aspiration to convince British bosses that New Labour could be their natural choice of party for government. The Blairites, at this point, knew that they either had to make the trade union leaders acquiesce to the "modern" agenda, or ditch the structural links between Labour and the unions. Stephen Byers, then a shadow minister, said as much a few months before the 1997 General Election.

Labour's membership was sick and weary of having the Tories in power, and so battered after years of defeat. Blair spun the media, convinced the trade union leaders that his was the only game in town, pulled the strings of an internal machine and brought the old soft left — Cook, Prescott and Short — into line. It was enough.

In government the Blairites have done their utmost to smooth a path for the capitalist exploitation of labour. They have had to face down significant revolts over lone parent and disability benefits from the Parliamentary Labour Party. With Labour Party internal channels largely blocked, Parliament is now the only ready arena for political revolt. The left was not able to put up strong resistance to the "Partnership in Power" changes to Labour's structures, adopted in September 1997.

After "Partnership in Power", Labour's annual conference became a complete sham of policy making. No motions can be submitted directly. Labour's National Executive Committee is a hollowed-out body. The real policy-making takes place in Blair's office. Long-winded consultation processes, modelled on the Stalinist transmission-belt-style "democracy" are now the order of the day. "We are the rulers and we tell you, the plebs, what we are doing."

Labour had never been a Clause Four reform-socialist party,

but it had been the political wing of the trade union movement. When in power Labour, under pressure from the unions and its members, would attempt to win concessions from capitalism. That relationship no longer operates. At the same time, Labour's links with big business, financially and through a network of "advisers", are being institutionalised.

The relationship between the unions and Labour has died, or at least gone into a coma, because the unions no longer demand their rights. Everything New Labour wanted to do, even on anti-union legislation, has been accepted by almost all the trade union leaders. The trade union leaders have done everything in their power to stop their members pressing for real change, even modest demands for a better minimum wage.

The unions were cowed by Thatcher and remain so under the new Thatcherites. Many of the unions leaders are university-educated professional functionaries who have no direct experience of winning concessions from the bosses on the shop floor. Their daily existence consists of stepping into smooth-running sound-proof Rover cars and driving to their offices. They certainly no longer know how to be anything but the most junior of "partners" in government.

To paraphrase one of Blair's heroes, Blair has brought us to "the beginning of the end" — the end of all that the best elements in the Labour Party have aspired to since the party's foundation in 1900. It would be very foolish for socialists not to face up to this reality. It would be foolish, also, for us simply to abandon to Blair important arenas of struggle in the trade unions or in what remains of the Labour Party.

WHAT the working class needs as an alternative to Blairism is not *just* more agitation by small socialist groups — valuable and *irreplaceable* though that agitation is — but renewed mass working-class politics. The organised working class needs to reclaim the Labour Party, splitting away core working-class support from Blair's neo-liberal party-within-a-party, or to establish a new mass party based on the trade unions. The way forward is through the unions, and through the patient organised work of socialists in the unions. They cannot be bypassed.

Immediately, socialists can create political campaigns which attack New Labour policies such as the wave of privatisations and promote the interests of our class.

Reduced, bureaucratised and undermined by the passivity of the union leaders, the trade union link remains. A big fight by the unions is not on the cards today. But serious campaigns by the left in the unions are. The political fund can be used as a lever to argue for New Labour to back off or deliver on particular policies. Trade union activism is at a low ebb, but not as low as the do-nothing consensus which dominates TUC gatherings would suggest. Tony Blair is completely out of touch with what many trade union members think and believe. Trade unions still have to bargain within the system, however badly. Haringey council workers (in London) are set to strike against the local Labour council's £4 million cuts in staff wages. One of the local Labour parties has been won to oppose the cuts. The dispute calls into question the whole strategy of Labour councils — how they waited and waited for New Labour's election to save them from

Workers' Liberty

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THE WORKING CLASS WILL RISE AGAIN!

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making cuts and how now... they are still making cuts.

The working class must have a political voice, but because of Blair's grip on the structures of New Labour, our tactics have to be more flexible. It has never been a matter of principle to Marxists not to stand against Labour, but it made little sense while the structures inside the Labour Party were open. Today, standing in elections in order to promote socialist ideas and counterpose a class alternative to New Labour can enable us to reach out to people otherwise excluded from politics. It can assert the idea that workers should have a political voice in a direct way that no other immediately available tactic can. Socialists should not have a fetish about electoral campaigns — but they can help develop a profile for what we say. The experiences of the left's attempts so far to get joint slates against New Labour has been very mixed — but that is to be expected. The questions of pol-

itics and orientation are central, and have still to be argued out.

We live in an apolitical climate where there is very little effective criticism about even the most obvious "failures" of capitalist society — high unemployment, social deprivation, rising inequality and deep-rooted evils such as physical and mental ill health among the poorest in society. The weak are often scapegoated. Those that work to soften inequality — teachers, and other public sector workers — are often scapegoated too. They are told that they are not doing enough to foster "social inclusion".

The job of the left is to make ourselves the most trenchant critics of the exploitative and unjust world in which we live — and to combine our agitation with a programme for a workers' government. We say that class is the prime organising principle, that fighting on class issues can win, and above all that the labour movement needs a political voice.

Workers and the Grand Coalition

ONLY a short while ago it seemed very unlikely that the new coalition government in Northern Ireland would be set up. Now the question is, can it survive? Pressure from the British state, backed by the European Union and the USA, and also from below — from a majority desiring peace has been strong enough to get it this far.

David Trimble had to give a pledge to the Ulster Unionist Council that he will resign in February if Provisional IRA decommissioning has not started. If the IRA does not decommission — and that remains a serious possibility — then Trimble may lose so much Protestant support that the Unionist pillar of the Good Friday Agreement will collapse and the Executive will be unable to continue. But if the IRA does make sufficient gestures of "decommissioning" by February, and the coalition holds, then conditions for working-class politics in Northern Ireland are potentially much better than in the midst of a bombs-and-bullets Orange-Green war — so long as socialists can keep firmly in mind the central facts about the coalition government and the Good Friday Agreement under which it has been set up.

If working-class politics revives, it will not be *through* the coalition government, but in class struggle on the whole range of social and political issues *against* it and against the bourgeois parties which sustain it — Orange and Green, and Sinn Féin as much as Trimble's Unionists. Appeals, in the name of peace and

communal compromise, not to trouble or embarrass the power-sharing government will be used to suppress class politics.

The new political structures in which everything is weighed and measured in communal terms will exert great pressure on workers not to break from "their own" political tribe and thereby give "the others" an advantage. Pressure against cross-community class unity

is a major consequence of the way that the Northern Ireland politics is structured under the Agreement. The advocacy of workers'-unity politics by socialists is more important than ever.

Working-class activity on social issues can generate working-class politics capable of reshaping society only if it is tied to a program of consistent democracy on the national and communal questions around which Catholic and Protestant workers can unite, each recognising the others' rights. The Good Friday Agreement flatly contradicts the democratic program of working-class socialists for Ireland — full individual rights, the maximum of self-determination for each community compatible with the rights of the others, a federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the Protestants, a confederal link with Britain.

The Agreement tries to bury the basic question of two conflicting identities under a structure of balanced and weighted bureaucratic sectarianism, coupled with a highly explosive long-term pledge. It proposes to decide the question of a united Ireland by majority vote within Northern Ireland. This proviso leaves the Northern Ireland Catholic minority entrapped for now; and it cancels out the right to autonomy of the Protestants when demographic change makes them a minority in the Six Counties, as nationalist and Republican politicians expect it will. When that happens, the issues that the bourgeois politicians now hope to have buried will come back to disabuse them.

Only if working-class socialists maintain their political independence, and the clear counterposition of their program to all the bourgeois alternatives on offer, can working-class unity be built on such peace as we may hope for from the power-sharing deal.



What program can secure peace between the communities?

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 must be the act of the working class itself" — Karl Marx

If you want to know more about the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, phone +44 (0) 20 7 207 3997 or email <office@workersliberty.org>.



Solidarity reborn

MID September: Find out that our Tory council is planning a scheme under which all council workers will have to pay for days off sick by "payback" (losing wages) or "workback" (doing extra work). Union activists are a bit stunned.

22 September: Councillor Heaster does countless radio and TV interviews announcing his intention to stop "serial sickies". An article in the *Daily Mail* calls us "cheats" and "skivers". Petition is circulated and hundreds sign within two days. Some of us meet Councillor Heaster. Smarmily he tells us that he wants to reach agreement and that some staff would welcome the proposals.

23 September: Office buzzing with anger. A colleague tells me, shaking with emotion, that he has hardly had any days off sick for 20 years until this year when he had an operation. Yet now councillors insult him.

September: Our union, Unison, puts out material to build for a special meeting. Wandsworth Council has the lowest sickness level of any London borough.

5 October: Massive turnout for Unison meeting. Meeting votes overwhelmingly to ballot immediately for one-day strike action. Takes hardened activist like myself by (pleasant) surprise. Real feeling of solidarity and a sense that on this issue, unlike reorganisations and cuts, we are all in it together and can win.

October: All my colleagues, including non-unionists, keep asking if the union will be striking. One tells me that he was thinking of resigning from Unison because it didn't fight back. He is not leaving now.

14 October: Over 250 people turn up to a joint union meeting. It's the biggest meeting in over 10 years. A great feeling. The strategy of balloting for



Over 1000 Wandsworth council workers struck on 24 November

one-day strike action is agreed unanimously. Meeting told that Councillors talked contemptuously about "Monday and Friday" sickies and "duvet sick days".

October: Try hard to recruit more members. Some say no because of the money. I feel that some are so defeated that they think the council can not be swayed. Generally, though, application forms are flooding into the Unison office.

Mid October: Countless discussions with regional officer and other unions about timetable for ballot. Eventually push it forward to what we want. However GMB don't get around to balloting. Speak at shop meetings to gee up support for yes vote in ballot.

22 October: Notice sent to employers. We are going to ballot! Leaflet town hall a couple of times in the morning. The response is encouraging.

29 October: Ballot forms sent out.

30 October: Receive my ballot on Saturday morning; vote and post within the hour.

Early November: Some members haven't received ballot forms. Try to sort it out. Most say they have voted within the first week.

15 November: Branch secretary keeps ringing to get ballot result. Told to wait till after lunch. We get a 80% yes vote on a 45% return. Relief and excitement.

WE are going on strike. 16 November: Another big Unison branch meeting. Despite management withdrawing their proposals from the committee meeting on 24 November, the feeling is such that we vote to go on strike next week.

17 November: Send notice to employer. Start organising for pickets and rally for strike day. Constant discussion in office about the strike. Keep being asked which picket line I'll be on. One member who has only

come to one meeting in the last few years asks me what time he has to turn up to picket.

24 November: In the week up to today's strike over 127 people have joined Unison. Turn up to picket at 7.30 am. Town Hall seems very quiet all morning. Big pickets in Social Services and Housing. Apparently nine out of ten libraries are closed. Must be over 1,000 members taking action and many more taking annual leave or off sick. Over 200 at lunchtime rally. Unison regional convenor Geoff Martin is well received when he talks about a united London-wide campaign.

25 November: Back to work. One non-member clapped me for taking strike action. Told her she should be joining me in Unison.

29 November: Management write down their "options". It is as Unison said - the worst case. They are now talking about taking away annual leave. Members are asking, what action will we take next?

1 December: Unison Annual General Meeting votes to ballot again for further strike action ballot starting before Xmas. The struggle continues!

Sharing power in Belfast

THE political process which led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 has once again shown its resilience. Declared dead more times than Rasputin, it was moving into its most advanced stage so far as *Workers' Liberty* went to press in early December.

Since June 1998 there has been an elected Assembly in Northern Ireland, and the outlines of a North-South body. The centrepiece of the Good Friday Agreement, a power-sharing Executive which includes members of all parties with substantial electoral support, has proven much harder to establish. That was always going to be the case. The central obstacle was, and still is, the question of IRA disarmament.

Sinn Féin's right to seats in the Executive derived not only from its democratic mandate but also from the legality of the Agreement. There was, as Gerry Adams repeatedly reminded us, no requirement for the IRA to decommission a single weapon in advance of the Executive. On the other hand the Ulster Unionist Party expected some decommissioning to commence long before the May 2000 deadline, and preferably before the Executive was established. Even the keenest Unionist supporter of the deal found it hard to stomach repeated declarations by the IRA that "not a single bullet would ever be handed in" and occasional evidence that new arms and explosives were being gathered in.

The formally correct response from those who backed the deal as the best way forward was to point out that decommissioning was not the central issue. The continuing ceasefire was. Even if the IRA partially disarmed, unless the ceasefire held it could rearm very quickly.

Such formal accuracy counted for very little in an atmosphere in which Unionism was seriously split over the whole deal. The 70% vote for the Agreement in the North hid a large proportion of Unionist opposition. That opposition was consolidated in the elections to the Assembly, and was reflected in the ranks of David Trimble's UUP as well as in Ian Paisley's rabidly sectarian DUP. The strength of the Protestant anti-Agreement forces and their influence over waverers has been the decisive factor in making decommissioning the central issue. Repeatedly over the last year it has seemed that the whole edifice would collapse around that issue.

Then suddenly in the last few weeks there has been dramatic progress, and the



Supporters of power-sharing rejoice after the UUP vote on 27 November to back Trimble

Good Friday Agreement has been given a new lease of life. During the review of the Agreement chaired by George Mitchell since September, something convinced Trimble either that Sinn Féin were sincere in their desire to end the war once and for all, or that it was time to put them to the test. He accepted a proposal to set up the Northern Ireland Executive in advance of any IRA decommissioning — a clear reversal of his previous policy of "no guns no government".

PERFORMING U-turns is a rare skill in Unionist politics, and very few have successfully carried it off. Trimble declared that he would put his new policy to the ruling council of his party at a special meeting on 27 November. He had few selling points. The IRA would appoint someone to the decommissioning body for the first time, Sinn Féin renewed their promise to work for disarmament. There were, however, no deadlines, and the British government continued to avoid any commitment to eject Sinn Féin if the IRA did not deliver.

Despite that Trimble won 58% of the vote with a promise to come back in February and resign if the promised progress on decommissioning had not occurred. He would have preferred more than 60% of the vote, but the victory was enough to proceed. As I write the membership of the Executive has been announced and Northern Ireland is about to have its first government made up of locally elected politicians in a generation.

The crucial new element is the decision by Unionist leader David Trimble and his core supporters to take on the opposition in and just beyond his own party.

Once confronted, the poverty of those opponents' arguments is shocking.

It has been decisive, for example, that they simply have no alternative to the way ahead spelt out in the Agreement. The real nature of the opposition has also become clearer, even to Trimble's supporters. Ian Paisley let his own thin mask slip in a press statement on Monday 29 November after the parties had nominated their cabinet members. He warned the people of Northern Ireland that the fate of their children from nursery to University was "now in the hands of Sinn Féin/IRA and the SDLP" (emphasis added).

He made this comment not just because Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin had taken the Education post, and Sean Farren of the SDLP had been given responsibility for Higher Education. It was clear that what Paisley found horrifying was that power was in the hands of Catholics.

The position of the hard-liners in Trimble's party is generally the same. The issue for them is, at a minimum, the principle of sharing power with Sinn Féin (armed or disarmed) and, for too many, sharing power with nationalists at all. Decommissioning is a powerful cover for this communalism, and one of the most encouraging things about the last few weeks has been the willingness of Trimble supporters to acknowledge that and tear the cover away.

On numerous occasions over the decisive weekend of 27 November it was possible to hear prominent Unionists on TV and radio pointing out that the opponents of Trimble's latest deal had also been opposed to the peace process, then the Agreement, then the referendum and so on throughout the last few years. Even more

startling was the new willingness to confront the emotional blackmail about IRA violence and the memory of the victims. A turning point in Trimble's summing-up speech was apparently when he responded to a heckle about the memory of an assassinated Unionist MP by pulling out and reading a letter from the victim's widow, warmly endorsing the strategy of power-sharing before decommissioning. On radio I heard a power-sharing Unionist silence an emotive dihard by attacking head-on the cynicism of exploiting victims in this way.

What does all this mean for progress in Northern Ireland? The oft-repeated caveat is true: there is a long way to go and there are many problems ahead. The central one for now remains IRA disarmament. Trimble took the only course tactically open to him but, whether by design or accident, has actually put the contradictions of Sinn Féin's recent evolution into a sharp focus.

ARE they decisively now a political or a military movement? Do they accept for the time being the existence of Northern Ireland and the implicit requirement to win a substantial number of Protestants to a united Ireland, or are they still involved in "Tactical Use of Armed Struggle"? They have been able to avoid these questions up to now without too much public pressure, but Trimble's decision to test their good intentions and create his own deadline makes life more difficult for them. It puts the dihard and communalists in the republican movement in the same sort of dilemma that their Unionist counterparts faced in recent weeks — that is, it poses the question, what is your alternative? Pessimists might still see their scenarios borne out in February as a result, though the underlying developments here all suggest otherwise.

Within all the limits of bourgeois liberal politics these developments are wholly positive. This is not like the much-quoted Sunningdale period when power-sharing was last on the agenda in Northern Ireland. It is by no means certain that Trimble and his supporters will continue to carry the day, but they are willing to fight in a way that Brian Faulkner, the Unionist leader then, never was, and they are an independent force whereas Faulkner was doing the bidding of the British government with no real conviction. It was significant that Trimble pointedly rejected any offer of help from Blair, whose spin and manipulation in July almost destroyed Unionist faith in the whole process.

Having made the decision to fight alone, however, the Trimble Unionists have had to use the only effective rational

arguments available to them, and that has meant a critical review of some of their own assumptions. In the *Observer* on Sunday 28 November, journalist John Farrelly talked of the development of "civic unionism" and contrasted it to "ethnic unionism". It was a useful and perceptive summary of what has been emerging in Unionism for some years now. The slow growth of the PUP and UDP out of the loyalist paramilitaries was the first sign of this. Mainstream Unionism was lagging behind, frightened by the ghosts of Lundy and Faulkner.

The development of "civic nationalism" is much more advanced, because nationalism is a good deal more confident and assured. The nationalists know they will win in the end, just as the Unionists know they will lose. Much of the republican moderation and democratic rhetoric is born out of that certainty, as is much of the Unionist bluster and defiance. Those are not the features of two opposite forces, one progressive and one reactionary. They are the Jekyll-and-Hyde voice of two nationalisms facing contrasting futures.

There is nevertheless an "ethnic nationalism", and it is now a greater threat to communal compromise than Ian Paisley's DUP or Willie Thompson's potential split from the UUP. The IRA can isolate and defeat fundamentalist Unionism rapidly and bloodlessly. They may have to take account of the rituals and machismo of the long physical force tradition in Irish republicanism, and this may mean that they proceed cautiously and try to avoid reinforcing the variety of splinter groups around their edges. They should nevertheless disarm as quickly as possible. They should certainly do enough to ensure that there is no revival of ethnic Unionism in February, and from then on they should make it clear they have opted for politics and not war.

If socialists advocate disarmament, it is not in order to rescue Trimble or "liberal Unionism". Those are not our concerns. We advocate it because there is no prospect of any democratic settlement in Ireland as long as nationalism and Unionism relate to each other by way of military conflict rather than communal compromise and dialogue.

The power-sharing Executive with its North-South bodies and Council of the Isles is not a democratic settlement, but the process got us this far. The withering away of both revanchist militarist republicanism and "No Surrender" Unionism is welcome and encouraging. It promises infinitely better prospects for the growth of class-based politics than did the simmering civil war of the previous 30 years.

Patrick Murphy

The WTO and capitalism

CAPITALISM is evil. It has lesser evils and greater evils. The World Trade Organisation, which opened its conference in Seattle on 30 November 1999, is one of the largest-scale lesser evils.

Capitalism means ruthless competition between rival profit-makers, and thus also between the rival states which serve the big nationally-based associations of profit-makers. It has an inbuilt drive to war. Together with its companion organisations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the WTO organises the actually-available capitalist alternative to world war.

Yet the protesters in Seattle say that the global "imperialism of free trade" organised by the WTO, IMF and World Bank means a few billionaires becoming ultra-rich while one quarter of the world's children do not get adequate food. Global inequality is increasing rapidly. While \$2000 billion in speculation whizzes around the world's financial markets every day, workers are pushed into a "race to bottom" to "compete globally", and small farmers are ruined by unchecked competition from giant agribusinesses. Millions are pushed into poverty so that the big international banks can secure their profits from payments on Third World debt. Environmental and safety regulations are trashed in the name of free trade. The world is made a free-fire zone for the big transnational corporations, especially the US transnationals which are usually the biggest and have the strongest state power behind them.

Every word of it is true. Our sympathies are with the demonstrators in Seattle. Our friends and comrades in the USA were there with them, on the streets. Capitalism does not offer a fair and harmonious alternative to world war. Its alternative to military war between exploiters is a compromise between the biggest, strongest exploiters for joint economic war against the poor. That is what the WTO represents.

We support neither capitalist free trade, nor capitalist nation-state economic barriers. We oppose the WTO, but eschew slogans like "Scrap the WTO" or "Kill the WTO" which imply that some immediately-available capitalist alternative to the WTO would be better. Our answer is neither free trade, nor protectionism, but working-class solidarity across all national borders, to create a global economy planned for human need rather than for profit.

Rhodri Evans



No fees!

ON 25 NOVEMBER, the National Union of Students called its first national demonstration since 1995 — its first national protest against the introduction of university tuition fees.

NUS's "New Labour" leaders accept the replacement of student grants by loans, but they have now been pushed into action by the widespread student militancy around non-payment of fees — and by the existence of a well-organised left wing in NUS, the Campaign for Free Education. CFE's slogan, "Grants, not Fees!" was popular on the 15,000-strong demonstration.

Sarah Shooter

Photo: Jess Hurd, Report.

Livingstone and the London Mayor election

The view from the Underground

TO READ newspapers or watch the TV on the London's Mayoral election, you would get the impression that Ken Livingstone was the knight in shining armour riding to the rescue of beleaguered tubeworkers. Ah, if only... However, the truth is a bit more complicated than that.

To give credit where it is due, Ken is correct in identifying the privatisation of the Tube as the key issue in the election to be held next May, and in the selection of Labour's candidate for the election, to be done between now and February. But it is hardly the only issue — and of course there is opposition and opposition.

Jeffrey Archer, between his other "activities", said that Labour's "public-private partnership" scheme was nonsense and he would tear up the contracts once elected. What has Ken Livingstone's position been?

Take his speech at a rally for tubeworkers at Conway Hall before one of the strikes last year. From the welcome starting point that he supported our action, he then insisted that the only way to win was to go on all-out strike — anything less was

pointless! Was this really intended to be helpful — given that an initial 48 hour strike was followed by a scaled down 24 hour strike, followed by suspending the action due to lack of support? What Ken's game was at that point is difficult to say. His speech was more like that of a union bureaucrat trying to undermine action than a fellow socialist trying to lend support.

Livingstone is remembered with affection by tubeworkers for the Fares Fair policy, but it is less well remembered that he was also responsible for the introduction of One-Person Operation in 1985 and the subsequent loss of thousands of guards' jobs. As leader of the Greater London Council in 1981-6 he related to tubeworkers as a (sometimes benign) manager, not as a fellow fighter seeking to mobilise our support. Managers often have to make hard decisions — hard for their workforce, that is. And this time round, as Mayor, will it be any different?

The fight to get Livingstone elected is important and should be supported. But it is vital that our campaign is capable of thinking critically and placing the empha-

sis on policy, not personality.

Where exactly does Ken stand on tube privatisation? At a public meeting called by the rail unions at Friends' House, he repeated an assertion he has made before. If the contracts for the privatisation are already signed before he becomes Mayor — or before the government cedes control to the Mayor — then there will be nothing he can do except ensure the contracts are followed to the dot and comma. Ah, that well known socialist demand! If he is elected, he will have an immense democratic mandate to tear up the contracts. That is the commitment we need from him.

Ken Livingstone gets headlines trumpeting his opposition to Tube privatisation while there are plenty of get-out clauses in the small print. The last thing the labour movement needs to do is give him a blank cheque. We need to mobilise broad forces in a campaign that fights to win the selection, and then the manifesto and the Mayoral election, on the basis of socialist policies, not "three cheers for Ken".

K I Callan

The working class in the 21st century

By Chris Reynolds

THE working class worldwide is larger than it has ever been before. The world has over 2.8 billion wage-workers today (2,806 million in 1997, according to the World Bank). Of those, about 550 million work in industry, and 850 million in services.

Of the 1.4 billion in agriculture, an increasing number work under more-or-less modern capitalist social relations, rather than in archaic or semi-feudal relations, but exact figures are unavailable. Forty per cent of the population of the "low and middle income" countries live in cities now, and 77% of the population of the "high income" countries.

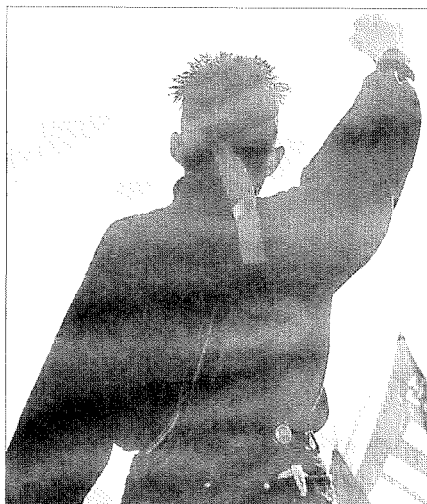
In the cities of the Third World, large and growing proportions of workers are "informal" (in petty trade, repairs, transport, construction, and contracted-out manufacturing). This work, as the International Labour Organisation notes, "rarely involves a clear-cut employer-employee relationship... In Asia, the sector absorbs an average of 40 to 50% of the urban labour forces, a proportion which rises to 65% in the poorer countries... In Africa, it is estimated the urban informal sector currently employs 61% of the urban labour force".

Thus the wage-working class proper is surrounded by, and shades off at the edges into, a class, maybe equally large, of "semi-proletarians" — people who scrape a living by varying combinations of petty trade, self-employment, theft, begging, domestic work, and straightforward wage-work. But probably today, for the first time in history, the wage-workers and their periphery are a majority, or near a majority, of the population.

This is a tremendous shift. In Russia, at the time of the 1917 revolution, the wage-workers, both city and country, with their families, were only 17% of the population. Only 2% of the population lived in large cities.

In Germany, the country which Marxists at that time cited as the epitome of high industrial development, fully 34% of the labour force were self-employed or working for their families. Of the agricultural workers (35% of the total), most still worked under feudal regulations (the *Gesindeordnung*, abolished only in 1918) which made them semi-serfs. Only 27% of the population lived in cities; only 11% in big cities (of over 300,000 people; all figures for 1910).

At the time Karl Marx published *Cap-*



ital volume 1, in 1867, the total employed in more-or-less modern capitalist industry in England and Wales (textiles, clothing, metalworking, mines, railways, gas, etc.) was just 1.7 million — 17% or less of the population of working age. Other countries were far less industrially developed.

The increase of the wage-working class is not just one economic statistic among others. It has huge political and social implications.

We sell our labour-power for a wage because other people, the capitalists, monopolise the means of production — large-scale means of production, which the individual worker cannot hope to own. Around those large-scale means of production, we are educated, trained, and organised, and assembled in large numbers, primarily in cities. More and more these days, we move from job to job, the constant in our lives not being a particular trade or location but the social fact of being a wage-worker.

BUILT into the wage-bargain is constant conflict. How high or low will the wage be? Once having bought our labour-power, how much labour will the boss squeeze out of us? Against the boss, how far can we assert the priorities of our health, our nerves, and the human interests which we can pursue generally only outside the tyranny of work?

Wage-workers organise, in a way no other basic producing class ever has done. Today there are 164 million trade unionists world-wide (latest ILO figures, dated 1995). In 1869, two years after Marx published *Capital*, there were only 250,000 trade unionists in Britain, and hardly any in other countries.

Official statistics show a recent decline in trade union numbers. Part of that is real (a 16% drop in Western Europe, a 10% drop in Central and South America, and a 19% drop in Australia and New Zealand, in 1985-95). Part is artificial. The membership of trade unions in Eastern Europe and the USSR is sharply down, but now they are real (if weak) trade unions, where before they were police-state labour fronts.

In many key areas trade unionism is growing. In South Korea trade union membership grew 61% in 1985-95, in Taiwan 50%, in Thailand 77%, and in South Africa 127%. There are now 34 million trade unionists in Asia, not far short of the 41 million in Western Europe.

South Korean workers organised a tremendous general strike in January 1997. Their Confederation of Trade Unions finally won legal recognition from the government in November 1999. Workers played a central role in the overthrow of South Africa's apartheid (in 1993-4) and Indonesia's military dictatorship (in 1998). Increasing numbers of strikes and underground trade unions are challenging China's Stalinist state. Ecuador, Bolivia, Nigeria and many other countries saw mass political strikes in 1994-7.

The workers of the "old" industrial countries do not dominate the world labour movement as they used to, but are far from a spent force. France's mass strikes in November-December 1995 involved more workers in positive activity (meetings, delegations to other workplaces to spread the action, demonstrations) than the famous general strike of May-June 1968.

Such class struggles have a society-changing logic both in countries where most workers would describe themselves as broadly "socialist" or "communist" (like France) and in those (like Indonesia or Korea) where the words "socialist" and "communist" convey only images of brutality and enforced uniformity. A large-scale class struggle inevitably raises the question of who owns and controls the social wealth, the means of production. It points towards a definite answer — that the means of production should be owned in common, and their use democratically planned for the common good rather than being governed by a destructive, greedy race to expand the already-gross wealth of rival profiteers.

Looking forward from 2000

By Colin Foster

IN the year 2000, humanity has greater resources and possibilities to change the world for the better than ever before. What holds us back are the ideas that progress is impossible and meaningless, or alternatively that it has already reached its highest point.

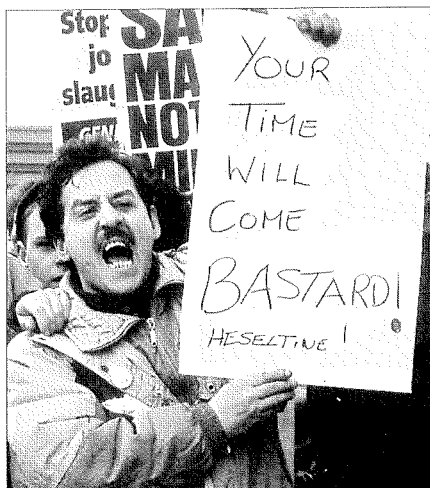
In the 40,000 or so years' evolution of *homo sapiens*, or even in the 10,000 or so years since humans developed cities, agriculture and tools, social progress is a new idea. The idea that we can and will improve our conditions and our society by understanding the world, working out plans, and then putting them into practice dates back, really, only as far as the rise of science, technology, and the capitalist mode of production.

The great German philosopher Hegel, from whom Marx learned much, explained: "Freedom does not exist as original and natural. Rather must it be first sought out and won; and that by an incalculable medial discipline of the intellectual and moral powers." In the French Revolution of 1789-99: "Not until now had man advanced to the recognition of the principle that Thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch." The younger Hegel, in 1793, had put it more forthrightly: "The halo which has surrounded the leading oppressors and gods of the earth has disappeared. Philosophers demonstrate the dignity of man; the people will learn to feel and will not merely demand their rights... but will themselves take them — make them their own."

Dictionaries tell us "progress" used to mean just walking forward, or, more specifically, an official tour by a dignitary. It started to mean "improvement" or "development" only from the early 17th century.

Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto*, explained: "Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form was... the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones."

In Marx's day, orthodox social theorists acclaimed progress. They also acclaimed capitalism as the highest point of progress. For them, "there has been his-



The current wave of capitalist triumph will not last for ever!

tory, but there is no longer any." This notion of capitalist market society as "the end of history" has been revived in recent years. It has been fed by euphoria about the supposed "New Economy" in the USA.

But the bourgeois optimists of today sound flaky and unconvinced compared to those of Marx's time. Yes, the New York stock-exchange index has risen higher and longer than anyone expected. Yes, the US economy has expanded more or less continuously for a longer span than usual — though it has done it painfully, and, on broad historical comparisons, slowly.

Is this really the high uplands of human improvement? Wal-Mart, cable TV, e-commerce, McDonalds, "lean and mean" production, and the Prozac nation — do these define the ideal society, to be filled out only by gradual amelioration here and there?

The idea of capitalism as the height of progress was shattered first by World War One and the great slump of the 1930s, and is repeatedly discredited again and again in our days. The Asian-centred world economic crisis of 1997-9; the rapid increase in global economic inequality; the vast numbers of people still malnourished (800 million, and more every day); the fact that one child in three worldwide grows up in absolute poverty; the homeless and wretched in the oh-so-booming USA itself — all these mock pro-capitalist optimism.

Pro-capitalist triumphalism has had any revival at all only because of the ruin of its mainstream rivals — the Stalinist and social-democratic ideas of progress. But, among

that majority who cannot accept the claims of capital, the common alternative conclusion is that all progress is a deceptive myth. The idea of reconstructing the world according to reason was just an illusion, pushed along by the intoxication of the first great spurt of science and technology in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In fact, they say, try to reconstruct the world according to reason, and you end up with Stalinism — or, at best, with a stultifying, stagnating "nanny state".

This thinking draws nourishment not only from obvious political facts but also from developments in science. David Hilbert, maybe the greatest mathematician of the 20th century, has his motto inscribed on his grave: "We *must* know. We *will* know." Since then some of the problems so confidently lined up for solution by Hilbert have been proved insoluble by other mathematicians. We will never know! We have to learn how to cope with not knowing! Quantum theory, chaos theory — some of the most talked-about developments of 20th century science are ones which indicate that in some fields we can only ever get broad, approximate understanding.

As we know more, the sphere of what we do not know does not get smaller. It expands, because the new knowledge reveals problems, uncertainties, complications previously unthought-of. This fact certainly does undermine Fabian, Stalinist, technocratic notions that the world can be made paradise if only the proper experts are allowed to plan everything.

But those notions are not the actual alternative to capitalism. The working-class socialist alternative is different. We do not base ourselves on any expert's claim to have the ideal blueprint for harmony and prosperity. We base ourselves on the "planning" already accomplished.

Co-operative, socialised production is not an ideal scheme invented by socialists. It is a reality developed by capitalism. With immense amounts of trial and error, and with cruel contradictions due to its subordination to capitalist private profit, it has nevertheless already brought great progress. We have a machinery of production which even today — without any planned reorganisation, without any drive to bring into useful jobs the 150 million or so people unemployed worldwide, and the hundreds of millions of others stuck in futile and

The idea of progress has been discredited not because progress has failed, but because in recent decades both real and illusory progress has been brutally reversed. The advanced capitalist welfare states, the highest achievements of capitalist civilisation, are being systematically trashed. Mass unemployment has become endemic in every capitalist country. Although income-per-head figures are still rising in most countries, there is some solid

The economists Tim Jackson and Nic Marks have constructed indices of “sustainable economic welfare” for the USA and the UK in place of the standard national income figures. For the UK, their figures show “sustainable economic welfare” reaching its highest point in 1974, and

Capitalism, too, has seen potentially

Progress has not hit some mysterious natural limit. It has been reversed because the working class has suffered severe defeats. The advances that we had were not handed down by capitalist generosity. They were won by many years of working-class struggle. When the workers are defeated, as we were in Britain in the great watershed of the 1984-5 miners' strike,

www.workersliberty.org/australia/index.html

mortal crises, recoveries, reorganisations, mutations. In 1921, when European capitalism was in utter chaos and the working-class revolutionaries confidently expected opportunities for its overthrow within a few months or at most a few years, Leon Trotsky said: "If we grant — and let us grant it for the moment — that the working class fails to rise in revolutionary struggle, but allows the bourgeoisie the opportunity to rule the world's destiny for a long number of years, say two or three decades, then assuredly some sort of new equilibrium will be established."

"Europe will be thrown violently into reverse gear. Millions of European workers will die from unemployment and malnutrition. The United States will be compelled to reorient itself on the world market, reconvert its

industry, and suffer curtailment for a considerable period. Afterwards, after a new world division of labour is thus established in agony for 15 or 20 or 25 years, a new epoch of capitalist upswing might perhaps ensue."

And so it happened — principally with the rivalry-cum-aid of Stalinism, a development which Trotsky did not foresee.

It disorients socialists if we believe (as some do) that world capitalism has been "stuck" in its "final crisis" of around 1921 continuously for the last 80 years, and all its development and expansion since then has been mere illusion and secondary detail. But the proper conclusion is not that the crisis of European capitalism in 1917-23 was not potentially final — it is very hard to give an explanation of the defeats of the revolutionary workers' movements of those years in Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary and other countries based on some intangible extra strength that the bourgeoisie derived from the fact their system would be able to have a new and unprecedented "golden age" 25 years later, but easy enough to explain it from the mishaps and mistakes of the working-class left. We can explain, also, how the monstrous historical detour

of Stalinism — though it was scarcely a manifestation of the vitality of capitalism! — disabled the working-class left for decades after that crisis.

Nor should we think that our task now is to wait for the real final crisis. Despite some rhetorical flourishes in his earlier years, in his more considered writings, such as *Capital*, Marx pointedly avoided the idea

Unfortunately, others, including the great revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, felt obliged to respond to Bernstein by hotly insisting that capitalism would indeed reach an economic dead-end. In the socialist movement before World War One, that idea was taken up by others much less revolutionary than Luxemburg, including the older Kautsky, to paint a scenario in which



The Chinese workers and students rose up in 1989 — and were crushed. They will rise again.

of an economic "final crisis of capitalism". That idea was introduced into Marxist debate primarily by the "Revisionist" Eduard Bernstein, who at the end of the 19th century set it up as a "straw man" for his polemics. Marx and Engels had predicted that capitalism would reach an economic dead-end or a "breakdown", wrote Bernstein, and, behold! there was no such breakdown.

The proper reply to Bernstein was given at the time by Karl Kautsky. "No special 'breakdown theory' was expounded by Marx and Engels. The expression derives from Bernstein, just as the expression 'immiseration theory' comes from opponents of Marxism... [The authentic Marxist theory] sees in the capitalist mode of production the factor that drives the proletariat into class struggle against the capitalist class; that makes it increase more and more in numbers, in collectivism, in intelligence, in self-awareness, and political maturity; that increases its economic significance more and more and makes its organisation as a political party, and its victory, unavoidable, just as the establishment of socialist production will be an unavoidable result of that victory..."

the task of socialists was not so much to struggle as to bide their time and conserve their strength until the "final crisis" of capitalism put the future in their lap.

And the same ideology was later taken up by the Stalinist movement. Its utility for them is obvious. So the USSR looks abhorrent? they could tell workers. Too bad. Capitalism is in a final crisis. You have little choice. Capitalism does not work, and Stalinism, whatever its faults, does. So support Stalinism. The mirror-image argument is now being used by capitalist apologists who say that, whatever its faults, capitalism works and its actual alternative, Stalinism, does not.

There will be no definitive final crisis. Capitalism will not break down of its accord. It will have to be broken down. But it creates — is still creating and augmenting — the force that will break it down, the working class.

Production is increasingly socialised and cooperative. Claims that the giant capitalist enterprise is being made obsolete by a great flowering of small-scale capitalist enterprises and pure market mechanisms are false. As the US economist Bennet Harrison shows in his detailed study *Lean and*

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Mean, "The emerging global economy remains dominated by concentrated, powerful business enterprises. Indeed, the more the economy is globalised, the more it is accessible only to companies with a global reach... Rather than dwindling away, concentrated economic power is changing its shape, as the big firms create all manner of networks, alliance, short and long-term financial and technology deals — with one another, with governments at all levels, and with legions of generally smaller firms who act as their suppliers and subcontractors."

The consolidation of the world working class into a political force is, of course, far from automatic. It is a huge and difficult job. One chief difficulty is nationalism. Many writers argue that Marxist socialism has failed because it could only understand class conflicts, and thus was bewildered by the scope and size of national conflicts in the 20th century. But even in the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels explained the gathering-together of clans and provinces into "one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interests, one frontier and one customs tariff", as a normal part of bourgeois class development. And one of the main distinctive points of Marxist socialism, historically, as against the many socialist schools of thought prior to it, was its close combination of the idea of socialism with that of democracy. Democracy, to Marx and Engels and the radical democrats of their day, obviously included the democratic rights of nations. As Engels put it:

"When [in the 1830s] the extreme politicians of the greater part of civilised Europe came into contact with each other, and attempted to mark out a kind of common programme, the liberation and unification of the oppressed and subdivided nations became a watchword common to all of them... There could, indeed, be no two opinions as to the right of every one of the great national subdivisions of Europe to dispose of itself, independently of its neighbours, in all internal matters, so long as it did not encroach upon the liberty of others. This right was, in fact, one of the fundamental conditions of the internal liberty of all."

What has disarmed much of the socialist movement in the 20th century, when faced with nationalism, is not some doctrinally-inspired reluctance to recognise national facts, but the wholesale and opportunist submergence of socialism into nationalism practised by Stalinism, which has also infected the anti-Stalinist left. The USSR's bureaucracy saw that nationalist movements might be made allies if the bureaucracy could present itself as a reliable and potent counterweight to the Western states against which those movements

rebelled. So, without scruple or conscience, again and again the bureaucrats directed Communist Parties to embrace not merely national rights, but nationalism, and not to recoil or complain at any chauvinist or revanchist excesses.

In place of a program of consistent democracy was erected a picture of the world divided into "good nations", oppressed and freedom-seeking, and "bad nations". Who was good, and who bad, varied of course with the shifts of USSR foreign policy.

On the national question, as on the question of "final crisis", the socialist movement needs to reconstruct itself intellectually and purge the legacies of Stalinism.

And on democracy, too. The Stalinist movement spoke much of democracy. Stalin's 1936 constitution was "the most democratic in the world". The states he conquered in Eastern Europe were "people's democracies". The word "democracy" was levered away from any definite content, and became a makeweight phrase for agitation.

The great capitalist classes are doing much the same thing today, in a different way. As with progress, democracy seems like the mayfly. After a long semi-existence, constrained in a larva, it finally emerges into full life, able to fly — and dies almost immediately. There are more of the forms of representative democracy in the world today than ever before. Not only the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe, but also the ex-military dictatorships of Latin America, have multi-party elections and parliaments.

Yet in the most advanced capitalist country, the USA, which also has more voting than anywhere else, democracy is rotting apace. Fewer and fewer people bother to vote. Politics becomes more and more a game played by rich people with the media, with the mass of the people as bemused spectators of a raucous parade of trivialities, scandals, personality-projections and image-creating exercises which drive out real political information and debate.

Those same mass-media could be channels for spreading information and debate much wider than ever before. What makes them the opposite is the media monopolies' greed for safe, secure profits — made by cultivating the crassest, and thus most reliable, desires of their public — by disinformation and dumbing-down.

Democracy, progress, science — all these words carry a bitter taste with them as the century ends, because of the misuse of the words, and of the realities, by Stalinism and by capitalism. In their hands of their proper owners, the organised working class, those same words will be the keynotes for the future.

The 20th century in retrospect

By Moshé Machover

IT is often said that we all possess twenty-twenty hindsight vision. Like most clichés, this one is only partly correct: hindsight can indeed be acute — but only if you actually make the effort to use it. Wilful retrospective purblindness is widespread in the Marxist movement; and there are none so blind as those who would not see.

Of all Lenin's writings, the most influential (though arguably not one of the best) was *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, written in the spring of 1916. The whole of that book leads to the following punch-line:

"From all that has been said in this book on the economic essence of imperialism, it follows that we must define it as capitalism in transition, or, more precisely, as moribund capitalism."

The dictionary definition of "moribund" is *about to die or in a dying state*. So Lenin clearly believed in 1916 that capitalism was on its deathbed. But what did he mean by "capitalism in transition"? He makes this clear in his preface to the French and German editions to *Imperialism*, dated 6 July 1920:

"Imperialism is the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat. This has been confirmed since 1917 on a world-wide scale."

So Lenin believed that the world of his day was in transition towards the impending demise of capitalism and its overthrow by a world-wide socialist revolution.

Similar views were held by Trotsky. They were also shared by almost all of their revolutionary Marxist contemporaries; but Lenin and Trotsky are unique in having present-day disciples, *Leninists* and *Trotskyists*, who find it very difficult to admit — even in the face of the clearest evidence that has accumulated in the last 80 years — that the great men were wrong.

Moreover, these very views underpinned the actions of Lenin and Trotsky as leaders of the Bolshevik insurrection that was designed to push the 1917 Russian Revolution beyond its bourgeois-democratic phase and transform it into a social revolution of the proletariat. Since it was obvious to them (as to all Marxists) that backward Russia itself, in isolation, was quite unready for socialism, the only possible justification for their actions was the assumption that capitalism *as a world system* had reached the end of the road, and therefore a proletarian revolution in Russia would trigger off similar revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries, which *were* supposedly ripe for socialism; consequently the brightest hopes of humankind would soon be realised and socialism would replace capitalism as a world system. Without this justification, the Bolshevik insurrection and the transfer of power to the soviets would have to be regarded as acts of extreme voluntarism, which, from a Marxist point of view, amounts to irresponsible adventurism.

Small wonder that Lenin's disciples are reluctant to admit that the theoretical justification for the October Revolution, no matter how persuasive it may have seemed at the time, has turned out in retrospect to have been fatally flawed.

In their misguided adherence to Lenin's pronouncements, the disciples put themselves in the impossible position of having to explain how capitalism, which has allegedly been moribund during the whole of this century, nevertheless appears miraculously to have continued to develop the productive forces to a prodigious extent, penetrate new socio-economic spheres, and spread to almost the whole of the planet. They also have to explain why

the social revolution of the proletariat, which according to Lenin's 1920 prediction was about to erupt on a world-wide scale, has failed to materialize.

Typically, the explanations they offer speak of "usurpation" (of Soviet power), "betrayals" (of the Russian Revolution by Stalin, and of the working classes by their leaderships) and failure of consciousness. These "explanations" explain nothing; they simply beg the questions. Moreover, in offering them — and thus attempting to explain the political history of this century in purely superstructural terms, without delving into the underlying economic base — the disciples remain faithful to Lenin's pronouncements at the price of abandoning his Marxist method.

Before I go on, I must make it clear that I use the term "capitalist mode of production" in its strict Marxian sense: referring to the mode of production in which the means of labour are privately owned, but mostly not by the direct producers, who must sell (alienate) their labour power as a commodity; the owners of the means of labour appropriate the surplus product (extracted from the direct producers) in the form of surplus value. *Capitalism* is the social order in which the capitalist mode of production predominates.¹

At the beginning of the 20th century, capitalism was about 150 years old — not a very great age, historically speaking, for a social order. Nevertheless, according to Lenin capitalism at that time had entered its highest, "moribund" stage. In hindsight, this seems a bit hasty, doesn't it?

A Miracle of Resurrection?

IN part, this was a case of *revolutionary optimism*, the sort of wishful thinking to which all revolutionaries are prone, and without which they would hardly be able to muster the will for revolutionary action. But, even discounting subjective optimism and speaking objectively: given the information available at the time, Lenin's premature predictions did not seem unreasonable, for two reasons.

First, capitalism is by far the most dynamic social order in the whole of human history. As Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto*:

"The bourgeoisie... has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exploits of nations and crusades.

"The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify."

Because of its unprecedented dynamism, the capitalist mode of production generated in a few decades more material change, greater increase in humankind's productive forces, than previous

modes of production had been able to achieve in as many centuries. From this perspective, the first 15 decades of capitalism do not seem a short historical time-span.

Second, capitalism is inherently crisis-ridden. While each production unit, each firm, is subject to detailed conscious regulation and strict discipline, the system as a whole is buffeted by blind anarchic market forces, which inevitably result in fluctuations, some of which are quite extreme. In particular, the era that Lenin and others defined as that of "modern imperialism" was ushered in by the deep slump of the 1890s. Then came the 1914-18 war — an horrendous international slaughter of unprecedented dimensions and previously unimagined savagery. The world as it had been known before was clearly coming to an end. Anyone who was looking for signs of an apocalypse did not have far to look.

But is it perhaps possible that Lenin's assessment was right? Could it be that capitalism was indeed moribund in 1916? Was a social revolution of the proletariat a real possibility then in the most advanced capitalist countries? Was it only prevented by the Stalinist usurpation, by the betrayals of social-democratic leaderships and failure of the "subjective factor"? Did these usurpations, betrayals and failures allow capitalism miraculously to revive and rise like Lazarus, and gain a new lease of life?

Modern capitalist development

THE answer to these questions must be negative, if we accept Marx's famous dictum (in his 1859 preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*):

"No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions for their existence have matured in the womb of the old society."

It is highly debatable whether by 1916 the material conditions for the existence of socialist relations of production had matured even in the most advanced capitalist countries. But in any case it is certain that the productive forces for which there is room within capitalism had not all been developed by 1916, or for that matter by 1956 or even 1996. For it is a plain observable fact that the forces of production have developed prodigiously *under capitalism* during this period. So what Marx regarded as a necessary (though not sufficient!) condition for the demise of capitalism has not as yet been fulfilled, and was absent during the whole of the 20th century.²

Had the development of the productive forces nearly exhausted the capacity of capitalism to accommodate it, we would surely have witnessed a more or less prolonged period of technological and economic stagnation. Nothing of this kind has come to pass. If the steam has gone out of capitalist production, it is only because it has been electrified. True, technical advance and economic growth have occurred at a very uneven pace, but in this there is nothing new: it has ever been so, since the early days of capitalism.

Nor have the human social consequences of this development been wholly benign. But, again, this is inherent in the nature of the system: development is driven not by genuine human needs, but by the private profit motive, working through blind market forces; any progress in general human welfare is either an incidental unintended spin-off, or must be fought for and won in the class struggle.

Far from stagnating, the capitalist mode of production continued in the 20th century to evolve apace, along the lines drawn by Marx, and notably summarised by him in the chapter on the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation in volume 1 of *Capital*. Let me highlight a few prominent points.

- Centralisation of capital has proceeded during this century to much greater extremes than ever before. In each important sector of the economy, the global market is almost totally dominated by a very small number of oligopolistic firms. This is equally true in traditional industries such as mining and shipbuilding; in branches that were in their infancy at the beginning of the century such as car manufacture, aircraft building, telecommunication and pharmaceuticals; and in very new spheres such as computer software, in which the lion's share of the market has been swallowed by a single firm, whose founder is now the richest person in the world.

- The co-operative form of the labour-process has recently expanded and broken out of its old local confinement. Previously, human beings could not normally engage simultaneously in a consciously synchronised and co-ordinated productive activity, unless they were physically brought together to one place. Now, with the advent of new modes of communication, they can synchronize and co-ordinate their productive activity in real time, across continents.

- The conscious technical application of science has been greatly stepped up and has become more consciously planned, systematised and institutionalised in the latter half of the century. Formerly, scientific research was for the most part carried on in publicly financed academic institutions and other non-business research foundations. Now big capitalist firms have their own research and development sections, geared *directly* to profit-seeking; and at the same time big business has also become the chief paymaster of academic scientific research. Science as the pursuit of truth without regard to its business applicability is regarded as old-fashioned and is poorly supported out of the public purse.

- The methodical cultivation of the soil has now spread to all parts of the planet. Agriculture, the last major refuge of petty commodity production, has become the domain of big agro-business, which not only aims to control the activity of the direct producers but also uses the most advanced scientific techniques to modify, subjugate and dominate nature itself.

- The socialisation of the labour process has also intensified in the last decades of the 20th century. Since the most modern instruments of labour have become dependent upon centrally supplied power, rapid transport and continual on-line communication with remote computers, they are really only usable by direct and explicit co-operation of one user with many others. The economising of all means of production by their use as means of production of combined, socialised labour has now advanced much further.

- The world market itself is of course not new. But its scope and degree of integration, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the global market, have gone very much further in recent decades. Capitalism now truly encompasses the whole planet. And as remaining national economic barriers come tumbling down, the international character of the capitalist regime — its globalization — has reached a degree much greater than a generation ago.

- The working class has continued to grow in numbers. In the present context, where we are discussing the *economic* development of capitalism, the term "working class" must be understood in a narrow sense, as comprising only those workers whose wages are paid out of capital (that is, constitute expenditure of capital rather than of revenue) and from whom surplus value is extracted directly. These are what Marx called *productive* workers.³

When Lenin wrote *Imperialism*, the most numerous occupational category in England (then the most highly developed capitalist country) was domestic service. Although servants may belong to the working class in a *social* sense, and although they are paid wages, these wages are not business expenditure; the servants do not produce a saleable commodity, so that no surplus

value is extracted directly from them. After Lenin's time, huge numbers of such workers have joined the ranks of the surplus-value producing working class.

Even more recently, while some traditional industries have contracted drastically, the growth of the working class has received a massive boost as a result of the ruthless privatisation of the public sector in most capitalist countries. When a refuse collector, nurse or bus driver is employed directly by the public sector and are paid out of tax revenue, they are not a productive worker in the technical sense; so, economically speaking, they are not part of the working class. But when their jobs are "outsourced", and they become employees of a private contracting firm, these workers join the working class — although they do exactly the same jobs as before! Now their wages count as capital expenditure of their direct employer, the contractor, who sells their services as commodities, and in so doing extracts surplus value.

Before our very eyes, capitalism has continued to develop dynamically (although of course by fits and starts, as before) and spread into new territories; and it has expanded into new sectors of the economy, even in its old homelands. None of this is compatible with the decline or stagnation of capitalism.

Once this is accepted, then from a Marxian point of view there is no need for all those subjective *ad hoc* explanations as to why, contrary to earlier expectations, the 20th century has not been the epoch of the overthrow of capitalism and the transition to socialism. Capitalism has not been overthrown because — as we can see in hindsight — it had not reached a stage at which the monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production which has sprung up and flourished along with and under it. The knell of capitalist private property is yet to sound.

The century reconsidered

HAVING witnessed the economic and political thunderstorms of the early years of the 20th century, Lenin, Trotsky and many of their comrades and followers mistook the summer of maturation of capitalism for the winter of its senescence. This fundamental misjudgment not only led them to the false prognosis that capitalism was moribund. It has also been a source of erroneous assessments of several central economic and political features of this century.

Instead of the 20th century being the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, its major theme has in fact been the globalisation of capitalism, its spread to new territories and new sectors. In this process it encountered several major economic, social and political obstacles, which gave rise to traumatic crises and conflicts. The most damaging theoretical and political errors made by revolutionary socialists in the course of this century stem from a common root: an insistence — in the face of a gradually mounting body of evidence — on regarding these crises and conflicts as stemming from the decline of capitalism rather than from problems of its growth.

Here I wish to comment briefly on a few of the most salient of these errors, which can be detected clearly through the powerful telescope of hindsight — provided one doesn't put this telescope to one's blind eye.

● Imperialism was dubbed by Lenin *the highest stage of capitalism*. The imperialism of his time was characterised, among other things, by the fact that virtually the whole world had come under more or less direct political and military subjugation by the most powerful capitalist-colonialist countries. This was gener-

ally regarded at the time — not only by socialists — as vital for securing for the advanced countries markets for the export of their capital and manufactured goods, and sources of cheap raw materials.

The First World War was quite reasonably seen as a war for re-partition of the globe among the capitalist powers. It was widely believed and often claimed that so long as capitalism continued, such wars between rival great capitalist empires would be a repeated occurrence, as the shifting balance of economic and military power would lead to new challenges against the current partition of the planet, and attempts at fresh re-partition.

The Second World War seemed to confirm this prognosis. But the latter half of the century saw a process of decolonisation, which socialists had not anticipated and had not believed possi-

ble under capitalism. True, in *Imperialism*, Lenin did note that some underdeveloped countries were nominally independent, but "in fact enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence". In this connection he quoted the example of Argentina. But such cases and other forms of semi-dependence were regarded

by him as "transitional". For him, the normal and most typical form of imperialist domination was the direct colonial, political-military one. And, as far as I know, he did not even consider the possibility that this form of subjugation would all but disappear and be almost totally replaced by more purely economic forms of capitalist domination, through market forces.

But in retrospect we can see that direct colonial subjugation was a relic of pre-capitalist and early-capitalist eras. It is not a typical mature capitalist relation. Under capitalism, all relations of domination tend to assume economic form, the form of exchange between free and nominally equal parties. As Marx puts it in his *Grundrisse*, under capitalism:

"...the power that each individual exercises over others' activity or over social wealth exists in him as the owner of exchange values, money. Thus both his power over society and his association with it is carried in his pocket."

And much the same thing holds also for international relations under mature capitalism.

As for a future major war between great capitalist empires, for a re-partition of the globe — at the end of the 20th century such a war seems so unlikely as to be virtually ruled out. Rivalry between the advanced capitalist powers has assumed its mature form, which is almost purely economic. Military force is no longer used to settle disputes between these countries. It is used by them as a means of disciplining smaller rogue states, whose unruly behaviour threatens to disturb the order of the global capitalist market-place. The everyday business of international exploitation is carried on by business means.

Present-day capitalism may perhaps still be called "imperialistic": this is largely a matter of definition. But it is certainly very different from the imperialism of Lenin's time, which, far from being the highest stage of capitalism, can be seen in hindsight to have been a relatively immature stage.

● Analysis of the Soviet Union and of other Soviet-type societies has been a much debated issue among revolutionary Marxists. I do not wish to enter here into the detailed arguments for and against the three main views of those societies: whether they should be regarded as degenerated or deformed workers states, as state-capitalist, or as a *sui generis* bureaucratic-collectivist social formation. I regard the last-mentioned view as by far the most reasonable; but what I would like to point out here is that the whole debate has been distorted by the false assumption,

shared by most of the participants, that the overthrow of capitalism was objectively possible during the 20th century, and that this century was, at least potentially, part of the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism. So the debate about Soviet-type societies has been conducted as though it is essentially part of the problematic of the transitional epoch.

In my opinion, the only connection between bureaucratic collectivism and transitionality is the following, purely negative one. Lenin, Trotsky and the other Bolshevik leaders of the October Revolution acted on the premise that capitalism, as a world system, was moribund. As reality soon proved this premise to be false, the October Revolution found itself at a dead end, unable to fulfil its intended historical mission. The Bolshevik leadership found itself without a feasible socialist programme, and were reduced to short-term measures allowing them to hold on to power, in the vain hope that some revolutionary development might turn up in the West. In this they left a vacuum, into which stepped a newly created class, led by Stalin, who did have a historically feasible programme. This programme had nothing whatever to do with socialism, but found it necessary to use socialist verbiage in order to maintain political and ideological legitimacy.

Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolsheviks, who thought they could see more clearly than most people, were in fact the blind tools of history. Based on their wrong assessment of the condition of world capitalism, they believed the 20th century would be the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism. Clearly, they got it wrong by at least 100 years. Instead, the major historical theme of the 20th century (as we can now see clearly in retrospect) has been the spread of capitalism over the whole globe ("globalisation"). In this context there was a very serious sub-theme regarding the major under-developed countries — countries like China, Japan, Russia, Turkey and Persia, which had been great powers and were never colonies, but in which capitalism had not developed properly, and which therefore found themselves left behind. In all these countries the "objective" historical task was to get modernisation and industrialisation going. And in all of them the ruling classes (traditional or newly arrived to power) imposed some form of *forced* modernisation and industrialisation.

In some of those countries, such as Japan and Turkey, this was achieved by capitalist means, which were however kept under strict state control. But the new ruling class led by Stalin attempted another road to modernisation and industrialisation: command planning, while market forces were largely suspended.

A valid historical assessment of bureaucratic collectivism cannot be performed by comparing it, even negatively, to socialism. This would not only be unfair to the very idea of socialism, but also irrelevant to the place of bureaucratic collectivism itself in history. Rather, that regime should be assessed in terms of its true historical goal, that of achieving modernisation and industrialisation by purely forced, non-market means.

Seen in this light, bureaucratic collectivism may tentatively be said to have achieved some limited success in some countries, albeit at an enormous human cost. This is not the place for drawing up a detailed balance sheet, in which the technical and other advances of the USSR, China and other "second-world" countries are weighed up against the barbarities of Stalinism and its Maoist variant. The main point is that that regime must not be judged in the context of "moribund" capitalism, still less as a failure of socialism, but as an attempted forced-march detour away from relatively immature and under-developed capitalism.

● Fascism is a specific form of capitalist barbarism of the 20th century. Many Marxists have attempted a theoretical analysis of Fascism and Nazism; but the most brilliant is perhaps that offered in many of his writings by Trotsky. However, his analysis — like that of many other lesser theoreticians — is vitiated by one fundamental error: Fascism and Nazism are falsely depicted as a

response to terminal capitalist decline. Thus Trotsky, writing in 1936, claims:

"The instability of the present structure in Germany is conditioned by the fact that its productive forces have long ago!!! outgrown the forms of capitalist property."

With the benefit of hindsight, we can now see quite easily that this was a grotesque misjudgement. The productive forces of Germany are now enormously greater and more highly developed than they were in 1936, and they have yet *not* outgrown the forms of capitalist property. Moreover, if Fascism and Nazism were associated with the "over-ripeness" of capitalism, as Trotsky repeatedly claimed, then we would expect such regimes to arise in the most highly advanced capitalist countries. Nothing of this kind has happened.

On the contrary, Fascism was associated with the crisis of capitalism in vigorous growth, in countries where it developed relatively late, and very rapidly. As we know — and as Trotsky himself had often pointed out — the global development of capitalism has been very uneven. In countries where it started relatively late and proceeded with extreme rapidity, the crisis of growth was particularly acute. Fascism was a way of "dealing" with this crisis by putting an oppressive totalitarian lid on social discontent. This is why it came to power in countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain and Argentina. The more mature capitalist countries had very different ways of dealing with social discontent.

This is of more than historical importance; it has direct relevance to present political reality. Where is the danger of Fascism greatest today? Not in countries where capitalism is most highly developed and "ripest"; but, on the contrary, in places such as the former USSR, where capitalism is newly being implanted or re-implanted, causing traumatic social dislocation.

Other aspects of traditional Leninist and Trotskyist theory may and should similarly be examined with the benefit of hindsight. Trotskyists in particular should ponder why the theory of permanent revolution, whose internal logic is undeniably very attractive, has nevertheless never worked out in reality. Not a single bourgeois-democratic revolution, and in particular no struggle for national liberation, has been transformed to a genuine socialist revolution.

Addressing the decline of capitalism

IN order not to leave any room for misunderstanding, I must state that I do not believe that history has come to an end, or that capitalism will continue as long as there is human life. I find such views not only repugnant but also absurd.

Capitalism, precisely because it is driven by blind market forces which operate as it were behind the backs of humanity, carries within it the seeds of its destruction.

However, the question as to the inherent process that can be expected to bring about the decline of capitalism requires much discussion and clarification. In my view, this is the most urgent theoretical task of the socialist movement.

1. I avoid the loose use of the term "capitalism", which covers also the older social order of petty commodity production, in which the means of labour were largely individually owned or rented by the direct producers. Capitalism, in this loose sense, is well over 500 years old.

2. When I pointed this out on a previous occasion, a respected Marxist scholar tried to rebut me by claiming that the productive forces would have developed even more highly had capitalism been replaced by socialism. This may well be true, although I cannot see how such a counter-factual proposition can be proved or refuted. But in any case it is irrelevant, because there is no way in which the hypothetical superiority of a hitherto non-existent social order could bring about the destruction of an existing one.

3. No value judgment is implied by this term. Under capitalism, whether a worker is productive or not depends not on the job s/he does, or how socially useful that job is, but only on the worker's location within capitalist relations of production.

The Internet is changing politics

By Eric Lee

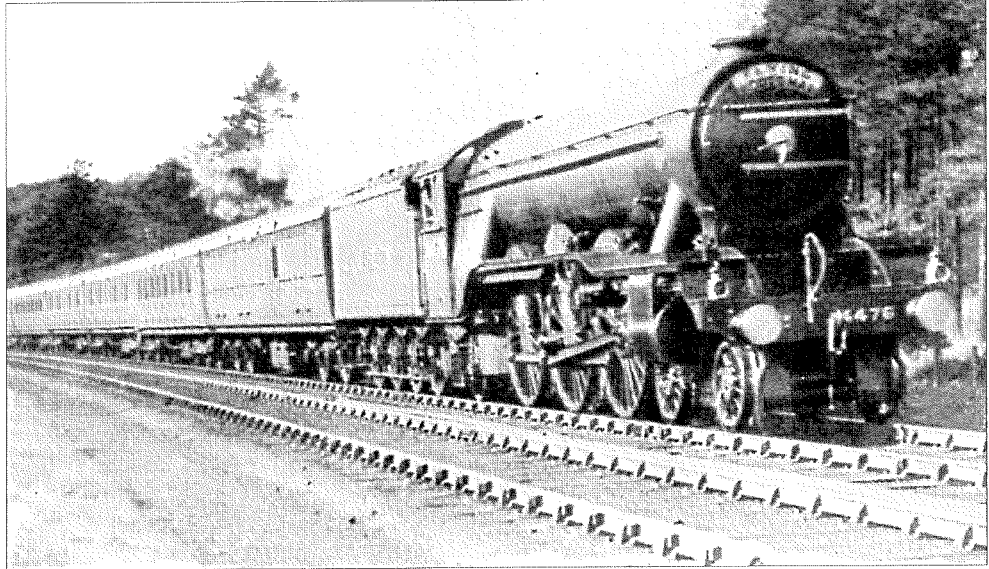
WHEN I saw a grinning Tony Blair standing in front of a computer last night on the television news, telling us how important the Internet is, I began to worry. The hype really has gone too far. And I have to take some small responsibility for this myself. For six years now, I've been writing and speaking and urging people in the unions and on the left to embrace the new communications technologies. I haven't been alone doing that and there were people doing it even before I started. But in terms of Internet time, I go back almost to the beginning.

So it is with some trepidation that I once again approach the subject in these pages. After all, what can I say that is new? Many of you reading this have a computer now. You use email. You visit websites. The Internet "revolution" has already taken part in your organisation and in your union. Enough of the hype, already.

I think something new is happening today — in the UK and around the world — and that is what I want to talk with you about. The old political culture of holding meetings, getting people to come to meetings, travelling distances to and from meetings, waiting for meetings to begin, and so on is going to decline. In fact, it already is in decline. A new culture of online discussion and debate is being born, and this will replace it. Activists will meet when they want to, when it is good to meet, and will be able to focus on the essential, having dealt with mundane matters online. Time currently wasted — particularly in travelling to and from events but also in repetitive tasks like collating and stapling flyers, stuffing envelopes, etc. — can perhaps be more profitably spent reading and writing.

The Internet is already in the process of changing from an experimental tool, used by roughly a quarter of the adult population in the UK, into a true mass medium, accessible to all. In time, those who choose not to use the Internet's new possibilities of communication will be marginalising themselves as much as those who today would choose never to use a phone or motorised transport.

There have been roughly two periods of Internet use in the UK. Until three or four years ago, to have had access to the net meant to have been an academic. Then the Internet as a mass medium was launched, and first computer hobbyists, later millions of others,



In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels argued that railways could be a potent factor in speeding working-class unity. Can the Internet play the same role today?

bought their computers and modems and logged on. The introduction of the Netscape browser, back in December 1994, followed by other changes in software, made it infinitely easier to get online. Today, PCs are sold with Internet software pre-loaded and often all one has to do is double-click on a screen icon to get online and beginning using the world wide web.

Another critical factor leading to universal access is the rapid drop in prices of all three components of getting online. Computer hardware has never been cheaper, and if one is prepared to be, say, three months behind the cutting edge, computers can be had practically for free. I'm not exaggerating. I'm writing this article on a free PC recently acquired from Tiny Computers, a major High Street firm. Time Computers also has a free PC deal, as do others. Several companies in the US are offering better deals, with very few strings attached.

In fact, you don't need a PC to access the net. Digital televisions now being sold in the UK already offer up a form of Internet access, including email. The new Sega Dreamscape games console also offers up email — at a fraction of the price of buying a PC. BT sells a telephone for under £80 that allows email access. So much for hardware being expensive.

The cost of Internet subscriptions used to also be a stumbling block, and as recently as a year ago, I and many others were paying up to £200 per year for the privilege of accessing the Internet. The launch of Dixon's Freeserve put an end to all that. Today,

Freeserve is in decline, picking up "only" 14,000 new customers a week, down from its peak which was double that number, due to the competition of more than 200 other free Internet providers (including several unions).

The final cost of going online has been the telephone bill. As you all know, we have to pay per minute here in the UK, even for local calls — unlike in the USA. The first cracks in that barrier appeared when some providers, including BT, began offering free weekend calls to the net. The recent announcements by AOL and Freeserve of 1p per minute Internet calls and ten hours free use per month mean that the introduction of truly free access via an 0800 number is only a matter of time. Indeed when Blair's new e-minister took up her post recently, one of her first meetings was with the Campaign for Unmetered Telecommunications, which is fighting for low-cost access.

The rapid drop in the costs of getting online mean nothing for the upper classes, who have been online since the early 1990s, if they so desired. The tens of thousands of people signing up for Freeserve and its competitors every week are people for whom cost was and still is a barrier to using the net. The Internet revolution taking place today is bringing millions of working class families online for the first time. As costs drop, people coming online now are going to be online for more time and will have newer and better tools — both software and hardware — to enjoy the experience.

According to one estimate, 60% of the

population of the UK will be online within a decade. I think this is conservative.

But access is not the only barrier to using the net. As anyone who uses even the very fastest modems available today — the so-called 56K modems — knows, a major barrier to using the Internet remains its slow speed for anything more complicated than simple text. Pages take forever to download. Graphics on a page become an annoyance, not a pleasure. Multimedia including videos and audios are unrealistic so long as we are limited by our current primitive analog connections to the net from our homes. All that is about to end too.

BT has announced that early in 2000, it will begin making high speed digital access to the net available through existing telephone lines. This technology is called ADSL and has existed for some time. It allows speeds of access that can be 400 times as fast as 56K modems. And ADSL access will be unmetered — users will pay a flat monthly fee, and can be connected to the net 24 hours a day. There are alternatives to ADSL (including other versions of the DSL technology) and these include cable modems (Internet access through your television), satellite dishes and even Internet via power lines. But the most promising one for now seems to be ADSL.

Universal access and high broadband access are both coming at more or less the same moment. Just as the sudden arrival of Internet for public use in the mid-1990s caught the left and labour movements by surprise and only now have many unions and groups managed to get up proper websites, so this development is also catching us largely unprepared. And yet it will change the way we work even more than the Internet revolution of the last four years has done. I think we can expect a revolution of rising expectations from Internet users. By this I include members of the left groups themselves, trade unionists, ordinary workers,

everyone. People will increasingly expect to find timely and relevant content on websites — and not just online brochures. BBC Online is setting the standard with a continuously updated website which is financed to the tune of tens of millions of pounds per year. If the last era of Internet use required us to talk about updating our websites from time to time, in the coming era, those sites will need to be updated continuously.

Broad bandwidth access means the possibility of finally delivering a rich multimedia experience to users. Most of our websites are now entirely text-based, which is appropriate to people using analog modems and paying 4p per minute. In the very near future, we will have to add colour photos, videos and audio to our sites in order to compete with well-funded, mainstream corporate sponsored sites. All left groups and unions have figured out that where possible, we add colour and photos to our print publications. Where we can, we produce videos and even CDs. The arrival of extremely high speed access to the home will make using multimedia a requirement on our websites as well.

Increasingly, the best websites already see themselves not only as providers of information but also as providers of services and community. In a recent controversial deal signed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, very cheap computers and Internet access will be delivered to working people who will access the net through portal web pages which are personalised for them and their unions. Instead of seeing a page which every other member of the union sees, they will be greeted by a personal page which includes their own pension fund details, access to bank accounts, and much more.

For a left group or union, at the very least websites should be tailored according to what is known about members today in databases. For example, a member of a particular union branch should see on her personal web page the date of the next branch meet-

ing, contact details for branch officers and local branch news without having to specifically request this information. The personalisation of web portals, pioneered by Yahoo and Excite, has taken off and that standard of service which people receive from the major websites is going to be expected from the left and labour ones as well.

Universal access is a precondition for the building of true online communities. The more people are online, the greater the likelihood of web forums, chat rooms, and mailing lists to work as they were intended to work. The success of the left in this period depends not only on its webmasters designing sites compatible with broadband access but with a major cultural change in our movement. We will have to learn to work in revolutionary new ways. This means adopting e-mail and instant messaging services (like ICQ, Goody, AIM, etc.) and using these instead of the far more expensive and inefficient phone and fax — not to mention snail mail. It means increasingly using interactive tools like web forums and chat rooms as supplements to the traditional kind of face-to-face meeting that takes up so much of our time.

Meetings in rooms will still take place, but they can be shorter and more efficient if they have been prepared by pre-meetings online. The widespread adoption of small digital video cameras which can be mounted on computer monitors (the cheapest ones in the UK now sell for £40) mean that video-conferencing is just around the corner, and this is a far better replacement for meetings than text-based web forums and chat.

Broadband Internet, universally accessible, opens up the possibility for the British Left of reaching a vast audience at almost no cost. It can free up activists from many currently boring and repetitive tasks and allow them to focus on what really matters: winning the battle of ideas, strengthening solidarity among working people, and building a new International.

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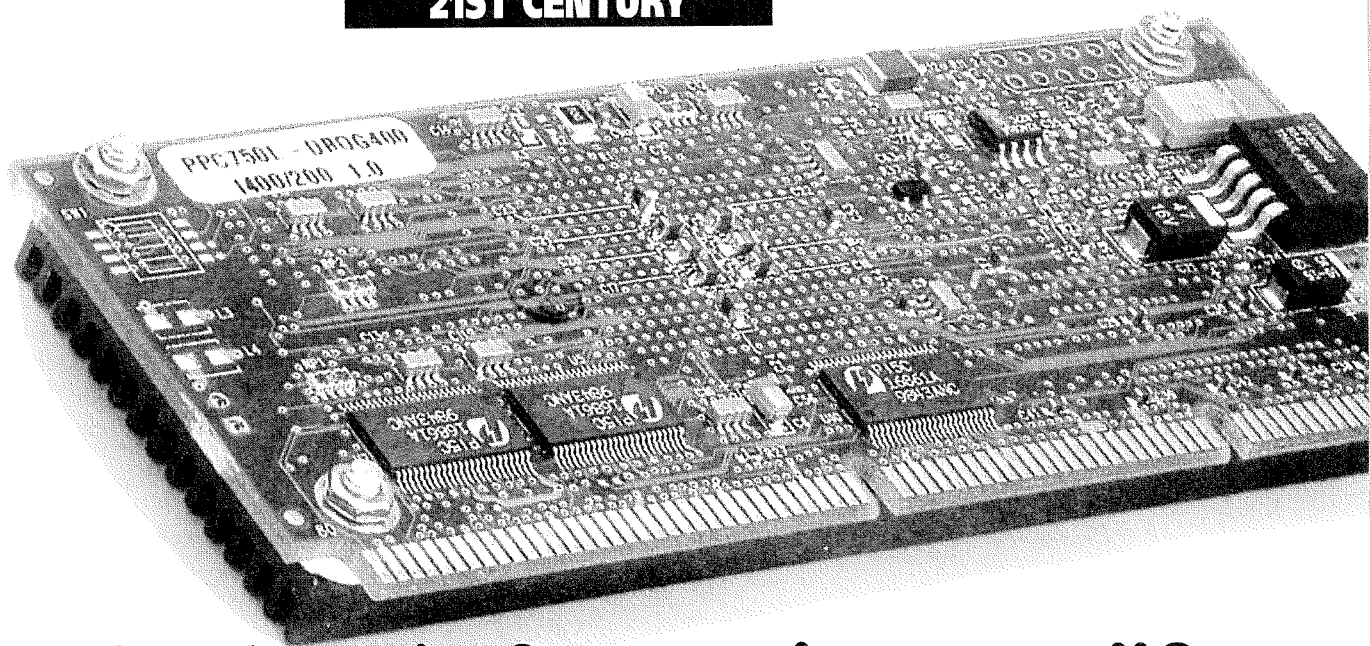
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Is this the “information age”?

By Bruce Robinson

CAPITALISM today is changing more quickly than ever. Vast flows of capital move round the globe in search of profit. New commodities spew out at an unprecedented rate, needing large expenditure on advertising and marketing to ensure they are purchased before the next new thing comes around. New areas of human thought and endeavour are colonised to become saleable. Production is rapidly and continuously restructured.

Technological innovation — particularly that based on information and communication technologies — is both an enabler and product of this change. Many changes to production, consumption, and leisure have followed the widespread implementation of the microprocessor from the late 1970s. The new technologies have been crucial both as capital goods and as constituents of consumer goods.

This marriage of changing information technology and the imperatives of capital can be seen in the e-commerce and Internet shares frenzies. Firms have rush into electronic commerce (buying and selling on the Net), hoping to find new markets and either keep up with or outstrip their competitors. Stock exchange speculation in firms with Internet-related activities has boomed on a scale recalling the ‘railway mania’ of the 1840s or the South Sea Bubble. Many speculators realise the bubble will burst — but they are desperate to try and find the next Microsoft, even if they have no real idea who it might be.

Probably the dominant ideology of capitalism at the century’s end is that we are living in “the information age”, “information

society” or the “knowledge economy”. Frank Webster comments: “it is now quite orthodox to conjure, as a matter of unarguable fact, [the] ‘information society’ as the knowledge-based, high tech and service-centred world we allegedly inhabit”¹.

THE politicians of the “Third Way” see this “information age”, together with globalisation, as defining the parameters within which they act. The market and globalisation cannot be challenged. Manufacturing jobs have largely gone for good, enticed to Third World countries with low wages. Clinton’s ex-Secretary of Labor, Robert Reich, sees future wealth creation as the province of “symbolic analysts” who “solve, identify and broker problems by manipulating symbols.” Entry to this elite, 20% of the workforce according to Reich, comes through acquiring and maintaining education and skills. So Clinton, Blair, and their like wave both carrots — the hope of life-long education and high-skill, high wage jobs — and sticks — the end of “jobs for life”, and the threat of being cast into the low-skill, low-wage “McDonaldised” economy — to reshape their countries to compete in the new, turbulent times.

Blair said in 1995: “Education is the best economic policy there is for a modern economy... it is in the marriage of education and technology that the future lies... The knowledge race has begun. We will never compete on the basis of a low wage, sweat shop economy... We have just one asset. Our people. Their intelligence. Their potential... This is hard economics. The more you learn the more you earn. That is the

way to do well out of life. The combination of technology and know how will transform the lives of all of us... Knowledge is power. Information and opportunity. And technology can make it happen.”

More recently, he added: “We couldn’t block this new industrial revolution even if we wanted. We would just be left behind. But we are ideally positioned to help shape it... Business will continue to lead this revolution but Government has a key role to play.”

Beyond doubt there are purely ideological elements here. Beniger² lists 75 theories of social transformation published before 1985, and as long back as 1950, all of which intended to show that society has passed from capitalism into some new historical stage. “Post-industrial” guru Daniel Bell was explicit about their purpose: “The distinction between the industrial and post-industrial or scientific-technological society means that some simplified Marxist categories no longer hold.” The working class, they say, is no longer an agent of change. A knowledge theory of value (whatever that is) should be substituted for a labour theory of value.³

Since the 1970s, these post-industrial theories have been increasingly premised on the centrality of computer technology and information.

Examining information society theories, Webster¹ concludes that these new versions also display an ideological function — that of making the changes demanded by capitalism appear inevitable. They are vague, imprecise, and give contradictory criteria for deciding whether the new infor-

mation society has arrived or not. They tend to have a naive technological determinist view in which (as the second quote from Blair shows) technology emerges from somewhere outside human control and reshapes society, while society can have little effect on the course of technological development. (To debunk this view, one need do no more than follow the recent course of events in the development and abandonment of genetically modified organisms by Monsanto.)

And they increasingly see information and knowledge as something disembodied and disconnected from both human labour and the hard, material commodities required to process it. They have a view of knowledge in which it is separated from its human carriers and floats along wires, appearing as outside the social relations of capitalism. "The social relation [behind information] appears as the relation between bytes — a second-order fetishism"⁴.

Information society theorists overestimate the real importance of information in the world economy by forgetting its dependence on manufactured goods such as personal computers, videos, and CD players for its functioning⁵. These require large manufacturing plants, even if they are now more likely to be in the Third World.

HOWEVER, information and the technologies used in its processing and communication really have become more central to capitalism. They have been driven forward by the need for capitalists to compete by adopting the most advanced technology; to find profitable outlets for capital; and to increase the rate of exploitation in the workplace.

Sharper competition, in a period of deep technological change, has forced firms to adopt the most advanced technology in order to survive. As the technology is itself changing, there is a constant rush to catch up, both at the level of the firm and of national economies. Information technology is central to this. For example, while the growing share of hi-tech investment in the US can be traced back to the 1940s, it markedly accelerated in the wake of the 1974-5 recession and had reached 36% by 1985⁶. It has been calculated that around 50% of capital investment in the US is now in information and communication technologies⁷. Capital goods are increasingly being written off as a result of obsolescence rather than being used to the end of their lives.

The need to find new profitable outlets for a fast growing mass of capital can be resolved either by the creation of new markets (e.g. in the countries of the ex-Stalinist bloc and China) or, for as long as confi-

dence lasts, by speculation continuing to feed on itself, or — and this is decisive in the growing importance of information in capitalism — the creation of a stream of new commodities. This can be done either by shortening product life cycles (therefore quickening obsolescence), by creating totally new commodities (easier in a period of fast technological change) or by making items that were freely available into commodities. The product life of car models has decreased from around seven to about two years. For personal computers it is now around three months, making them obsolete almost as soon as they are sold. In this sense, capitalism is becoming more wasteful than ever.

This approach does not free capital from the necessity of finding consumers with the cash to buy the goods (though that is made easier by the wide availability of consumer credit and the cheapening of certain goods). It does both allow the destruction of capital through write-offs, the creation of new markets and the subjection of new areas to the logic of capital.

Information technology, and information itself, make it possible to have a flexible and faster response to change and to produce in smaller batches. For example, integrated computer-aided design and manufacture with programmable machine tools makes it much easier to develop new models and put them into production. Information flows can also be used both to coordinate and integrate production processes distributed over the globe. Marketing and consumer information is collected (for example, by recording supermarket and credit card purchases) to try to decrease the uncertainty of producing for the market.

Information can also become a commodity, or a component of commodities — so, for example, the supermarket data can itself be bought and sold. "Intellectual property" industries — software, education, consultancy, media production, data-management etc., are now the fastest growing. Bill Gates became the world's richest man through selling a stream of "ever-improving" software products, none of which works perfectly and each of which has a new collection of less necessary functions.

The directly knowledge-based elements in commodities (e.g., design) are becoming more important in distinguishing them.

Patents and copyrights attempt to ensure that intellectual property emerging from scientific research, higher education, consultancy, advertising, images, films, CDs, news networks, databanks cannot be used without payment. Medical research and drug development is now predominantly funded by private interests who retain con-

trol of the output. They are also trying to patent the genetic information underlying human, animal and plant life.

Higher education is increasingly subordinated to the production of information commodities — research, or saleable course materials, now often to be found on the Internet.

An increasing number of commodities include microprocessors and software. Information previously available cheaply or for free becomes commodified, as for example in the increasing replacement of public libraries by online resources or the threat to public broadcasting from private satellite and cable companies. This restricts access to those who can afford to pay.

Information as a commodity needs to be protected by legal constraints and secrecy because it has the unfortunate property from the capitalist point of view of being easily reproducible and transferrable. Thus, as information commodities become more central, there are increasing discussions of the need for regulation of "intellectual property rights" and of the dangers software and CD copying pose for profits.

Information technology also aids capital in increasing the productivity of labour and cutting jobs. Automation has extended from manufacturing jobs to those concerned with information manipulation and customer service. Over 100,000 jobs have been lost in banking and insurance in the UK. In addition, information technology makes detailed surveillance of the labour process possible without direct human supervision, thus both thinning out the lower levels of management and controlling workers more closely.

IN a whirlwind of change, there is a real contradiction here between a felt need to take control of and exploit the worker's knowledge of their own job (epitomised by the management fad of "knowledge management") and the equally felt need not to be constrained by the past and to be able to throw the way things have traditionally been done up in the air in order to steal a competitive edge. Thus, many of the American firms that most embraced "downsizing" have found that they have sacked the people who had the best knowledge of how the organisation really worked.

Information and communication technologies enable the faster and more efficient circulation of capital. Billions of pounds travel daily across the wires and speculative capital itself becomes more and more purely a collection of symbols with less and less reference to real world assets or events⁸. New types of investment such as derivatives are simply speculative instru-

ments, traded on computerised markets and at removed at several levels from capital goods or commodities.

Despite the importance of information in capitalism, we are still a long way from the scenarios outlined by "information society" theorists such as Peter Drucker⁹, who writes that "the typical business will be knowledge-based, an organization composed largely of specialists who direct and discipline their own performance through organized feedback from their colleagues, customers and headquarters." Rather it seems more likely that these jobs will remain a tiny minority, with a far greater mass of routine, often part-time, clerical work, requiring limited computer skills and performed under strict management control — as in call centres — together with a lot of low skill, low paid service jobs. Doug Henwood has calculated that Reich's "symbolic analysts" were only 7% of the US labour force in 1995.



New information technologies aid bosses' surveillance of workers

EQUALLY, market-led development of information access is likely to lead to a growing gap between the information-rich and information-poor — who are also the income-rich and the income-poor. A recent report on "The Digital Divide" by the US Commerce Department stated: "Households with incomes of \$75,000 and higher are more than twenty times more likely to have access to the Internet than those at the lowest income levels, and more than nine times as likely to have a computer at home... Whites are more likely to have access to the Internet from home than Blacks or Hispanics have from any location." The technological-determinist naivety of Clinton and Blair's attempts to reconcile trying to remove the digital divide (for example, by putting Internet access into schools and libraries) and doing nothing to remove the wealth divide can be seen by this statement from Clinton: "I think we should shoot for a goal within the developed countries of having Internet access as complete as telephone access within a fixed number of years. It will do as much as anything else to reduce income inequality."¹⁰

A similar divide exists between rich and poor countries. Europe and North America count for nearly 80% of those people with access to the Internet. Fewer than 1% of people in South Asia are online even though it is home to one-fifth of the world's

population. Fewer than 2% of the world's population are connected, and over 80% of the world's population have never used a phone simply because the infrastructure to do so does not exist. While an Indian entrepreneur is trying to overcome this by using satellite phones to bring the delights of Internet shopping to rural India, the same applies here — as does Clinton's market-driven stupidity whereby developed countries should work to "get more cell phones and computer hook-ups out there in poorer nations... The people in Africa are no different from the people in America. If you give people access to technology, a lot of smart people will figure out how to make a lot of money."

In these statements we can see the ideological con of the "information society" solution to inequalities. The ideological functions of "information society" theories is not just to disguise the real nature of society but also to enlist acquiescence in the new profits race from the majority as buyers and workers, while the happy few will "make a lot of money".

None of these developments should surprise us. Marx warned long ago that capital will try increasingly to seize hold of the collective knowledge of society and use it for its own ends in production and to realise profits. However, the left needs to do more

than point to this foresight, expose the ideological element in the new orthodox wisdom and reassert the fundamentals of Marxist ideas. It is also necessary to develop a real, critical understanding of what precisely is new in contemporary capitalism and how it affects working-class organisation and politics. The new information-based forms of commodity, work organisation and capital are an important part of this.

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3. Schiller, D., "The Information Commodity: A Preliminary View", in *Cutting Edge: Technology, Information, Capitalism and Social Revolution*, J. Davis, T. Hirsch, and M. Stack, Editors. 1997, Verso: London.
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Fetishism", in *Resisting the virtual life: the culture and politics of information*, J. Brook and I.A. Boal, Editors. 1995, City Lights: San Francisco.

5. Huws, U., "Material World: The Myth of the Weightless Economy", in *Global Capitalism versus Democracy*, L. Panitch and C. Leys, Editors. 1999, Merlin Press: London. p. 29-55.

6. Schiller, D., "How to think about Information", in *The Political Economy of Information*, V. Mosco and J. Wasko, Editors. 1988, Univ. of Wisconsin Press: Madison, WI.

7. Kling, R., "What is Social Informatics and why does it matter?" *D-Lib Magazine*, 1999. 5(1).

8. Graham, P., "Hypercapitalism: Political economy, electric identity, and authorial alienation", in "Exploring Cybersociety" Conference. 1999, Newcastle.

9. Drucker, P., "The Coming of the New Organization". *Harvard Business Review*, 1988(January-February): p. 45-53.

10. "Internet: Clinton warns of 'digital divide'", *Financial Times*, 22/11/99.

Information is used here in the broad sense of anything based on symbols with the ability to communicate meaning. As such it includes images, sound and cultural artefacts, which are now able all to be processed in the same way by information technology by virtue of being reducible to binary digits.

2000 years of anti-Jewish lies

In the last few years, undisguised anti-semitism has again become a force in Europe, especially in Russia and the east. It has re-emerged both in its racist, zoological, 19th century form, and in its earlier Christian, "native Russian", form.

Why does this happen? Why, again and again, in one form or another, time after time, does Jew-baiting become a force in history? There are always "immediate" historical reasons, but one central, continuous, underlying "cultural" reason is this: anti-semitism is threaded into the very fabric of Europe's 2000-year-old Christian civilisation.

Christianity is saturated with anti-semitism. The Christian New Testament is one of the main documents of historical anti-semitism.

As the classic Marxist writer Karl Kautsky shows in the excerpt from his book *The Foundations of Christianity* on the following pages, the New Testament writers set out, deliberately and systematically, to demonise the Jews and foment hatred against them as the murderers of Christ. They did it by inventing fantastic and self-contradictory tales about the death of Christ.

The events he analyses are set 2000 years ago in Roman-occupied Judea. The vast Roman Empire united Europe, much of North Africa, and parts of Asia. The Judeans resisted Roman rule fiercely. While the upper classes tended to make peace, the people refused. The Jews were divided into parties and factions — Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots. Eventually, in 70 AD, the Romans razed the city of Jerusalem to the ground, completing the dispersal of the Jews, who already had settlements all over the empire.

The early Christians were one sect of Jews, feeling sectarian hatred towards the others. As time wore on, the dominant Christian faction, led by Paul of Tarsus, ceased to be Jews, no longer, for example, requiring converts to be circumcised. By the time the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written, decades after the events they purport to depict, the antagonism between Christian and

Jew was very bitter.

Christianity grew stronger in the next 300 years, until it became a mighty power in the ossifying Roman Empire. At the beginning of the fourth century Christianity became the official religion of the empire, and its priesthood merged with the immensely powerful bureaucracy of the Roman state.

Over time it got to the position of not having to tolerate other religions, or Christian factions other than the dominant one.

Thereafter, the New Testament and its stories, ideas and motifs became, for well over a thousand years, the *main* subject of art and literature.

Many dozens of generations of children were drilled in the New Testament's malignant tales, presented as the word of God. "Who condemned Jesus Christ to death?" went the question in the Catholic catechism which, until recently, children from the age of five or six learned by heart. The answer? "Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, did it at the desire of the Jews." Recently the Catholic Church has "exonerated" the Jews of guilt for Jesus Christ's death — 2000 years and many millions of victims too late.

An imaginary parallel will make the point clearer. Suppose that our own civilisation has broken down, as that of Rome did in the fifth and sixth centuries in Western Europe. Most of the survivors regress to subsistence farming. Literacy is almost lost, becoming the special expertise of ideologising monks and priests.

Most of our great books of learning and science are lost. Those we have saved acquire great authority in a world where scientific observation and experimentation have gone out of fashion, and where venerable authority is again, as in the Middle Ages, considered sufficient. One of the books which survives, preserved by its devotees, is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This book purports to be a Jewish account of Jewish plans to take over the world. It was forged early this century by the Okhrana, the political police of ultra-Christian Tsarist Russia.

It recast the traditional Christian Jew-hatred, with which Tsarist Russia was saturated, into a venomous

modern political fantasy. It has had immense influence in this century. It has rightly been called a "warrant for genocide".

Suppose then that in our imaginary world, thrown back to the level of barbarism, a new religion takes shape, a sort of primitive evangelical neo-Christianity, organised by a powerful caste of priests. It worships, as one of its central "holy books", the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

And then, as society evolves and develops over many hundreds of years, slowly redeveloping a civilisation, generation after generation would learn the divine truth concocted by the Okhrana policemen. It would form the subject of paintings and literature and drama. When a new Enlightenment arose, and drove this nonsense off the highways of intellectual life, it would survive as prejudice and folk-wisdom. Living Jews and their behaviour would be judged not according to everybody else's standards, but according to the patterns of malevolence outlined in the *Protocols*.

This fiction is horribly close to the true story of our civilisation and its development. The New Testament — with whose vicious anti-Jewish libels we are so familiar that they can and do go unnoticed — has down the centuries been the warrant for generations and ages of anti-semitism in Eastern Europe and Russia.

The Stalinist rulers did not fight anti-semitism but fomented it. They took Christian anti-semitism and wove it into their "Protocols", according to which the great evil conspiracy is not Jewish exactly, but "Zionist", and centred on Israel. Many on the left, misled by their justified and proper sympathy with the Palestinian Arabs who are in conflict with the Jewish state of Israel, uncritically accept this Stalinist reworking of the old anti-semitism.

Karl Kautsky's detailed analysis of the anti-semitism threaded into the New Testament, and therefore at the heart of 2000 years of European civilisation, is part of the necessary antidote to this poison, which, in its "anti-Zionist" mask, still infects much of the left today.

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The Gospel writers made their peace with Roman power and turned against the Jews. 313 AD: the Emperor Constantine seeks blessing from the Pope.

The death of Jesus

By Karl Kautsky

THERE are indeed few things that may be pointed out in the Gospels with a certain degree of plausibility as actual facts in the life of Christ: his birth and his death; two facts which indeed, if they can be proved, would show that Jesus actually lived and was not merely a mythical figure, but which throw no light whatever upon the most important elements in a historical personality: namely, the activities in which this person engages between birth and death. The hodgepodge of moral maxims and miraculous deeds which is offered by the Gospels as a report on these activities is so full of impossible and obviously fabricated material, and has so little that can be borne out by other evidence, that it cannot be used as a source.

Not much different is the case with the testimony as to the birth and death of Christ. Yet we have here a few indications that an actual nucleus of fact lies hidden under the mass of fabrications. We may infer the existence of some such basic facts if only from the circumstance that these stories contain communications that were extremely embarrassing for Christianity, which Christianity had surely not invented, but which were obviously too well-known and accepted among its adherents to have enabled the authors of the Gospels to substitute their own inventions for them, which they often did without hesitation in other cases.

One of these facts is the Galilean origin of Jesus, which was very inconvenient in view of his claims to be a Messiah of the line of David. For the Messiah had to come from the city of David. We have seen what peculiar subterfuges were required in order to connect the Galilean with this city. If Jesus had been merely a product of the imagination of some congregation with an exaggerated messianic vision, such a congregation would never have thought of making a Galilean of him. We may therefore at least accept his Galilean origin, and with it his existence, as extremely probable. Also, we may accept his death on the cross. We have seen that the Gospels still contain passages which permit us to assume that Jesus had planned an insurrection by the use of force, and had been crucified for this attempt. This also is such an embarrassing situation that it can hardly be based on invention. It is too sharply in contrast with the spirit prevailing in Christianity at the time

when it was beginning to reflect on its past and to record the history of its origin. Not — be it remembered — for historical purposes, but for polemical and propaganda purposes.

The death of the Messiah himself by crucifixion was an idea so foreign to Jewish thought, which always represented the Messiah with the splendour of a victorious hero, that only a real event, the martyrdom of the champion of the good cause, producing an ineffaceable impression on his adherents, could have created the proper soil for the idea of the crucified Messiah.

When the pagan Christians accepted the tradition of this crucifixion, they soon discovered that it had a drawback: tradition declared that the Romans had crucified Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, a king of the Jews, in other words, a champion of Jewish independence, a traitor to Roman rule. After the fall of Jerusalem this tradition became doubly embarrassing. Christianity was now in open opposition to the Jews, and wished to be on good terms with the Roman authorities. It was now important to distort the tradition in such a manner as to shift the blame for the crucifixion of Christ from the shoulders of the Romans to those of the Jews, and to cleanse Christ not only from every appearance of the use of force, but also from every expression of any pro-Jewish, anti-Roman ideas.

But as the evangelists were just as ignorant as the great mass of the lower classes in those days, they produced the most remarkable mixtures of colours in their retouching of the original picture.

Probably nowhere in the Gospels can we find more contradictions and absurdities than in the portion which for nearly 2000 years has always made the profoundest impression on the Christian world and stimulated its imagination most powerfully. Probably no other subject has been so frequently painted as the sufferings and the death of Christ. And yet this tale will bear no sober investigation, and is an aggregation of the most inartistic and crude devices.

It was only the power of habit which caused even the finest spirits of Christendom to remain obtuse to the incredible interpolations made by the authors of the Gospels, so that the elemental pathos involved in the crucifixion of Jesus, as well as in any mar-

tyrdom for a great cause, had its effect in spite of this mass of detail and imparted a brighter halo even to the ridiculous and absurd elements of the story.

THE story of the Passion begins with Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem. This is a king's triumphal procession. The population comes out to greet him, some spread their clothes before him on the road, others chop down branches from the trees, in order to strew them on his path, and all shout to him with jubilation: "Hosanna (Help us!); blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mark xi, 9).

Kings were received thus among the Jews (cf. Kings ix, 13, speaking of Jehu). The common people are attached to Jesus; only the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, "the high priests and scribes", are hostile to him. Jesus conducts himself as a dictator. He has sufficient strength to drive the sellers and bankers out of the Temple, without encountering the slightest resistance. He appears to have absolute control of this citadel of Judaism.

Of course this is a slight exaggeration on the part of the evangelist. If Jesus had ever possessed such great strength, it would not have failed to attract considerable notice. An author like Josephus, who relates the most insignificant details, surely would have had something to say on the subject. Besides, even the proletarian elements in Jerusalem, the Zealots, for instance, were never strong enough to govern the city without opposition. They encountered resistance again and again. If Jesus had been attempting to enter Jerusalem and purify the temple against the opposition of the Sadducees and Pharisees, it would have been necessary for him first to fight a victorious battle in the streets. Such street battles between the various Jewish factions were everyday events in Jerusalem at that time.

It is worthy of note, however, in the tale of his entrance, that the population is represented as greeting Jesus as the bringer of "the kingdom of our father David", in other words, as the restorer of the Jewish kingdom. This shows Jesus not only in the light of an opponent of the ruling class among the Jews, but also as opposing the ruling classes of the Romans. This hostility is surely not the product of a Christian imagination, but of the Jewish reality.

There now follow in the report of the Gospels the events that we have already treated: the order that the disciples obtain arms, the treason of Judas, the armed conflict on the Mount of Olives. We have already seen that these are remnants of an ancient tradition that later were no longer felt to be appropriate and were retouched to make them more peaceful and submissive in tone.

Jesus is taken prisoner, led to the high priest's palace and there tried:

"And the chief priests, and all the council sought for witnesses against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together... And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying: Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him: Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said: I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? and they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (Mark xiv, 55, 56, 60-64).

Truly a remarkable form of court procedure. The court assembles immediately after the arrest of the prisoner, the same night, and not in the courthouse, which was probably on the Mount of the Temple, but in the palace of the high priest. What would we think in Germany of the reliability of an account of a trial for high

treason, with the court reported as sitting in the Royal Palace in Berlin? False witnesses now appear against Jesus, but in spite of the fact that no one cross-examines them, and that Jesus makes no reply to their accusations, they can adduce nothing to incriminate him. Jesus is the first to incriminate himself by declaring that he is the Messiah. Wherefore all this apparatus of false witnesses if this admission is sufficient to condemn Jesus? Their object is solely to demonstrate the wickedness of the Jews. The death sentence is immediately imposed. This is a violation of the prescribed forms, on which the Jews at that time laid very careful stress. Only a sentence of acquittal could be pronounced by the court without delay; a condemnation could only be pronounced on the day following the trial.

But did the council at that time have the right to impose sentence of death at all? The Sanhedrin says: "Forty years before the destruction of the Temple Israel was deprived of the right to pronounce judgment of life and death."

We find this confirmed in the fact that the council does not execute the punishment of Jesus, but hands him over, after having tried him, to be tried again by Pilate, this time under the accusation of high treason against the Romans, the accusation that Jesus had intended to make himself king of the Jews and thus free Judea from the Roman rule. An excellent indictment to be drawn by a court of Jewish patriots!

It is quite possible, however, that the council had the right to pronounce sentences of death which required the approval of the Procurator for their execution.

NOW what course does the trial take before the Roman potentate? "And Pilate asked him: Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him: Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying: Answerest thou nothing. Behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired, and there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying: Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priest had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them: What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again: Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them: Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly: Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified" (Mark xv, 2-15).

In Matthew, Pilate goes so far as to wash his hands in the presence of the multitude and to declare: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said: his blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew xxvii, 24, 25).

Luke does not tell us that the council condemned Jesus to death; the council simply denounced Jesus to Pilate.

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate, and they began to accuse him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said: Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people: I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry,

beginning from Galilee to this place" (Luke xxiii, 1-5).

Luke is probably closest to the truth. Jesus is here accused of treason in the presence of Pilate and with courageous pride he does not deny his guilt. When asked by Pilate whether he is the king of Jews, in other words, their leader in the struggle for independence, Jesus declares: "Thou hast said it." The Gospel of Saint John is aware how awkward it would be to retain this remnant of Jewish patriotism, and therefore has Jesus reply: "My kingdom is not of this world," meaning: if it had been of this world, my subordinates would have fought. The Gospel of Saint John is the youngest; it therefore took a long time for the Christian writers to make up their minds thus to distort the original facts.

THE case for Pilate was very clear. As a representative of the Roman power, he was merely doing his duty in having the rebel Jesus executed. But the great mass of the Jews had not the slightest cause to be indignant at a man who wished to have nothing to do with Roman rule and summoned them to refuse to pay taxes to the emperor. If Jesus really did so, he was acting in full accord with the spirit of Zealotism, then dominant in the Jerusalem population. It therefore follows from the nature of the case, if we assume the accusation in the Gospel to be true, that the Jews sympathised with Jesus, while Pilate was obliged to condemn him.

But what is the record in the Gospels? Pilate finds not the slightest guilt in Jesus, although the latter admits such guilt himself. The governor again and again declares the innocence of the accused, and asks what evil this man has done.

This alone would be peculiar. But still more peculiar is the fact that although Pilate does not recognise Jesus's guilt, he yet does not acquit him.

Now it sometimes came to pass that the Procurator found a political case too complicated to judge it himself. But it is unheard of that one of the emperor's officials should seek a solution of the difficulty by asking the masses of the people what was to be done with the accused. If he preferred not to pronounce condemnation in cases of high treason, he would have to send the accused to Rome, to the emperor. The Procurator Antonius Felix (52-60 A.D.), for example, acted thus. He enticed the head of the Jerusalem Zealots, the bandit chieftain Eleazar, who had harried the land for twenty years, to come to him, by promising him safe-conduct, then took him prisoner and sent him to Rome, besides crucifying many of his adherents.

Pilate might thus have sent Jesus to Rome. But Matthew assigns a most ridiculous role to Pilate: a Roman judge, a representative of the Emperor Tiberius, lord of life and death, begs a popular gathering in Jerusalem to permit him to acquit a prisoner, and on their deciding negatively, replies: "Well, slay him, I am innocent of this blood". But no quality could more violently contradict that of the historical Pilate than the clemency suggested in the Gospels. Agrippa I, in a letter to Philo, calls Pilate "an inexorable and ruthlessly severe character," and accuses him of "corruption, bribery, violence, theft, manhandling, insults, continuous executions without sentence, endless and intolerable cruelties."

His severity and ruthlessness produced such terrible conditions that even the Central Government at Rome became disgusted and recalled him (36 A.D.).

And we are asked to believe that this man was exceptionally just and kind in the case of the proletarian seditionist Jesus, besides showing a degree of consideration for the wishes of the people that was of fatal outcome for the accused.

The evangelists were too ignorant to notice these difficulties. But they must have felt that they were assigning a peculiar role to the Roman governor. Therefore they looked for a cause that would make this role more plausible: they report that Pilate was accustomed to release a prisoner at Easter at the request of the

Jews, and that when he offered to release Jesus they replied: "No, we should rather have the murderer Barabbas." In the first place, it is peculiar that no such custom is mentioned anywhere except in the Gospels; such a custom would be contrary to the Roman practice, which did not give governors the right of pardon. And it is contrary to any orderly legal practice to assign the right of pardon to an accidental mob rather than to a responsible body. Only theologians could accept such legal conditions at their face value. But even disregarding this, even if we accept the right of pardon so peculiarly assigned to the Jewish mob that happens to be circulating in front of the Procurator's house, we must nevertheless ask what is the relation between this practice and the present case?

Jesus has not even been legally sentenced. Pontius Pilate is faced with the question: Is Jesus guilty of high treason or not? Shall I sentence him or not? And he answers with the question: Will you make use of your right of pardon in his favour or not? Pilate, instead of pronouncing judgment, appeals for pardon! If he considers Jesus innocent, has he not the right to acquit him?

NOW follows a new absurdity. The Jews are supposed to have the right to pardon; how do they exercise this right? Do they content themselves with asking that Barabbas be freed? No, they also demand that Jesus be crucified! The evangelists apparently infer that the right to pardon one implies the

Lenin on anti-semitism

THIS speech by Lenin, from 1919, shows how the Bolsheviks attacked the problem of age-old Russian anti-semitism after the workers' revolution of 1917.

"Anti-semitism means spreading enmity towards the Jews. When the accursed Tsarist monarchy was living its last days it tried to incite ignorant workers and peasants against the Jews. The Tsarist police, in alliance with the landlords and capitalists, organised pogroms against the Jews. The landowners and capitalists tried to divert the hatred of the workers and peasants who were tortured by want against the Jews. In other countries, too, we often see the capitalists fomenting hatred against the Jews in order to blind the workers, to divert their attention from the real enemy of the working people, capital..."

"It is not the Jews who are the enemies of the working people. The enemies of the workers are the capitalists of all countries. Among the Jews there are working people, and they form the majority. They are our brothers who, like us, are oppressed by capital; they are our comrades in the struggle for socialism. Among the Jews there are kulaks, exploiters and capitalists, just as there among the Russians and among people of all nations. The capitalists strive to sow and foment hatred between workers of different faiths, different nations and different races. Those who do not work are kept in power by the power and strength of capital."

"Rich Jews, like rich Russians, and the rich in all countries, are in alliance to oppress, crush, rob and dis-unite the workers."

"Shame on accursed Tsarism which tortured and persecuted the Jews. Shame on those who foment hatred towards the Jews, who foment hatred towards other nations."

"Long live the fraternal trust and fighting alliance of the workers of all nations in the struggle to overthrow capital."

right to condemn the other.

This insane judicial practice is paralleled by a not less insane political practice.

The evangelists depict for us a mob that hates Jesus to such an extent that it would rather pardon a murderer than him; the reader will please remember, a murderer — no more worthy object of clemency was available — and is not satisfied until Jesus is led off to crucifixion.

Remember that this is the same mob that only yesterday hailed him as a king with cries of hosanna, spread garments before his steps and greeted him jubilantly, without the slightest contradicting voice. And it was just this devotion on the part of the mob that constituted — according to the Gospels — the cause for the desire on the part of the aristocrats to take Jesus's life, also preventing them from attempting to arrest him by daylight, making them choose the night instead. And now this same mob appears to be just as unanimous in its wild, fanatical hatred against him, against the man who is accused of a crime that would make him worthy of the highest respect in the eyes of any Jewish patriot: the attempt to free the Jewish community from foreign rule.

Has anything happened to justify this astonishing mental transformation? The most powerful motives would be needed as an explanation of such a change. The evangelists merely utter a few incoherent and ridiculous phrases, if anything at all. Luke and John assign no motives; Mark says: "The high priests incited the multitude against Jesus"; Matthew: "They persuaded the multitude." These turns of phrase merely show that the Christian writers had lost even the last remnant of their political sense and political knowledge.

Even the most brainless mob cannot be talked into fanatical hatred without some motive. This motive may be foolish or base, but there must be a motive. The Jewish mob in the Gospels exceeds the most infamous and idiotic stage villain in its stupid villainy. For without the slightest reason, without the slightest cause, it clamours for the blood of him whom it venerated but yesterday.

THE matter becomes still more stupid when we consider the political conditions of the time. Distinguishing itself from almost all the other portions of the Roman Empire, the Jewish community had a particularly active political life, presenting the highest extremes of all social and political oppositions. The political parties were well-organised, were by no means mobs beyond control. The lower classes of Jerusalem had been completely imbued with Zealotism, and were in constant sharp clash with the Sadducees and Pharisees, and filled with the most savage hatred against the Romans. Their best allies were the rebellious Galileans.

Even if the Sadducees and Pharisees succeeded in "inciting" certain of the people against Jesus, they could not possibly have brought about a unanimous popular demonstration, but at most a bloody street-battle. There is nothing more ridiculous than the notion that the Zealots would dash with savage cries, not against the Romans and aristocrats, but against the accused rebel whose execution they force from the jelly-fish Roman governor, in spite of the governor's strange infatuation for the traitor.

No one ever invented anything more outrageously childish. But with this effort to represent the bloody tyrant Pilate as an innocent lamb, and to make the native depravity of the Jews responsible for the crucifixion of the harmless and peaceful Messiah, the genius of the evangelists is completely exhausted. The stream of their invention runs dry for a bit and the original story again peeps through at least for a moment: After being condemned, Jesus is derided and maltreated — but not by the Jews — by the soldiers of the same Pilate who has just declared him

innocent. Pilate now has his soldiers not only crucify Jesus, but first has him scourged and derided as King of the Jews; a crown of thorns is put upon his head, a purple mantle folded about him, the soldiers bend the knee before him, and then they again beat him upon the head and spit on him. Finally they place upon his cross the inscription, "Jesus, King of the Jews."

This again brings out the original nature of the dénouement.

Again the Romans appear as Jesus's bitter enemies, and the cause of their derision as well as of their hatred is his high treason, his claim to be King of the Jews, his effort to shake off the Roman yoke.

Unfortunately, the simple truth does not continue to hold the floor for long.

Jesus dies, and it is now necessary to furnish proof, in the form of a number of violent theatrical effects, that a god has passed away: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matthew xvii, 50-53).

The evangelists do not report what the resurrected "saints" accomplish in and after their joint outing to Jerusalem, whether they remain alive or duly lay themselves down again in their graves. In any case, one would expect that such an extraordinary event would have made a profound impression on all eye-witnesses and convinced everyone of the divinity of Jesus, but the Jews still remain obstinate; again it is only the Romans who recognise the divinity.

"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly, this was the Son of God'." (Matthew xxvii, 54).

But the high priests and Pharisees on the other hand still declare Jesus to be an imposter (xxvii, 63), and when he is resurrected from the dead the only effect is that the Roman eyewitnesses become richer by the bribe we have already mentioned, in payment for their declaring the miracle to be an imposture.

THUS, at the end of the story of the Passion, Jewish bribery transforms the honest Roman soldiers into tools of Jewish treachery and baseness, which had shown devilish hatred in fighting the sublimest divine clemency. In this entire tale the tendency of servility toward the Romans and hatred for the Jews is laid on so thick and expressed in such an accumulation of monstrosities that one would think it could not have had the slightest influence on intelligent persons, and yet we know that this device worked very well. This tale, enhanced by the halo of divinity, ennobled by the martyrdom of the proud proclaimer of a high mission, was for many centuries one of the best means of arousing hatred and contempt for the Jews, even in the most benevolent minds of Christendom; for Judaism was nothing to them, and they kept aloof from it; they branded the Jews as the scum of humanity, as a race endowed by nature with the most wicked malice and obstinacy, that must be kept away from all human society, held down with an iron hand.

But it would have been impossible ever to secure a general acceptance of this attitude toward the Jews, if it had not arisen at a time of a universal hatred and persecution of the Jews.

Arising at a time when the Jews were outlawed, it has immensely aggravated this condition, prolonged its duration, widened its sphere. What we know as the story of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is in reality only an incident in the history of the sufferings of the Jewish people.

The shores of Amerikay

(Vladimir Columbus and the 20th century)

"And tomorrow I sail far away
O'er the raging foam,
For to seek a home
On the shores of Amerikay".

(*The Shores of Amerikay*, 19th century Irish song)

"O my America! my new-found-land"

(John Donne, *To His Mistris Going To Bed*)

VLADIMIR Columbus has set his sails due West
Into the stormy deep unknown, much-charted seas
To find Amerikay: he goes to test and quest
For the Unfound Land; where others hide and bide, he'll
seize

The chance; for he is sure his crew could, sailing to Hell,
Prevail, they who have learned their trade in the hardest
schools:
Map-makers have well done their work — practice will tell
The true mariners from the timorous wistful fools

Who haunt the shore and dream of a far-off Unfound
Strand,
Afraid to launch their craft out on the raging main,
Though they too know the next New World is now at hand
And can be won — chains to lose, a world to gain!

And Vladimir knows this tide may go again and strew
Them there becalmed on the shore, dim dupes to passive
hopes:
With straining sails and bodies stretched and torn, his
crew
Of heroes fight the waves and tides until the ropes

Have strands of flesh clinging to them, and the waves are
blushed
With red from their own blood, and the myriad dead float
thickly
Out on that bitter deep Sargasso Sea, 'til hushed
In awe, they reach Amerikay, there logically

Where they want it to be. But no: it is terrain
Unknown, uncharted, almost undreamed about, they've
found;
There Vladimir unfurls, 'midst lightning, sleet, hail, rain,
His red, no-quarter banner on rock-strewn, icy ground.

That is not Amerikay, the sought-for, unfound land!"
Soon Vladimir knows that this is no Amerikay;
He dies aghast, not sure what land it is. A brigand
Boor, self-crowning Josef, names it "Amerikay".

II

It is the Unexpected Place, an Atlantis rearing,
Unmapped, in the strange dark sea, askance the old, gross
world
Athwart the new. Lost, they dream of realms of sharing;
Regressed, they think they've set the future to unfurl

— In that barren place! Less free of harsh necessity
Than older worlds: where Want, which withers human life
Is sharper, rougher, deeper, stronger; where no City

Of God can build amidst the depredating strife

And endless war — all against all! Wars fought for place
Or freedom; wars to stay on top, sweet nature's heir,
Or rise; wars by the lords of life, mankind's disgrace,
To keep the enslaved, slaves — class war, raw and bare!

A place of bondage free of mercy as of laws:
Those who fight serf-making Josef — as Vladimir's crew do
— Are branded warriors in slavery's foul cause
And killed in millions, beasts in Josef's New World Zoo;

The waves of death engulf the people; the land is flushed,
And swamped in drained red blood; the dead are piled up
high
And deep as the bitter sad Sargasso Sea, 'til, hushed
In awe and terror, they bow to Josef's Enthroned Lie,

And hail the brigand's king, as God: — "He makes the Sun!"
— He, who curbs free act and thought with the butcher's
knife
And state-empowered ignorance, turning the gun
On Spartacus, and on Kepler* too, disdaining life!

III

So, the Odysseyan heroes who outfaced
Harsh Nature fell. There rose an old, and no New World: —
There, lying Josef annexed "Amerikay", disgraced
The Quest, purloined the maps and Vladimir's now furled

Red Flag for the wilderness wherein he peonised and
maimed.
Now we stand stranded on the shore, perplexed, lost band,
Our own Amerikay unknown, unwon, unclaimed,
Chained by bleak Necessity's iron countermand.

Many who signed to sail because our world is foul
Turned back in grief, hating that false and savage place,
Amerikay, that was not Amerikay — they growl
And curse those who quest still as a mad malicious race:

"No world can be with neither slave nor ruling brigand;
No other Amerikay is hidden in the sea;
There is no escape from cold Necessity's command
To Freedom: Amerikay will *not* be!" — fools decree!

Amerikay still looms ahead for humankind;
It will rise, like the Indies, up out of the rough wild sea;
And in no far-off place — nearer than that, they'll find
It will rise up out of our now calm, familiar sea;

And we will climb from Necessity — mankind trepanned —
To Freedom, and dwell in that new-won Amerikay,
Making a world with neither slave nor ruling brigand
— Our own long-sought, long battled-for Amerikay!

O my Amerikay! my un-found-land.

SM (*Socialist Organiser*, 11 May 1989)

* Karl Marx's heroes, he said, were, Spartacus and Kepler,
symbolising the revolt of the slaves and the struggle for knowledge
and science.

Contemporary The escape in

By Cath



Steve McQueen: *Deadpan*, 1997

STEVE McQueen, a film and video artist, has won the last Turner Prize of the twentieth century. The fascination of the Turner Prize, though, lies not in who wins and who loses, but in the publicity, the hype, the annual row about whether contemporary art is any good, or even art at all. Tracey Emin, who was shortlisted but didn't win, has had far more publicity out of it than McQueen ever will. Why? Because she's this year's prize controversy — and that's what matters.

How to set yourself up for success in British modern art at the end of the twentieth century? Video is "in", so are installations. Painting, at least realist painting, is out of the fashionable picture. Use art to deconstruct art, construct your work around its own creation. Art about its own process, about the role of artist, curator, gallery and public, is the definitive art for the end of the millennium. The fashionable art has turned in on itself, had some therapy sessions, and put its analysis in a glass case. The worse the analysis, the better.

Nothing gets the chattering critics of contemporary art chatting like a bit of controversy. Take Marcus Harvey. He made a picture of Moors murderer Myra Hindley from children's handprints. It was displayed in the Royal Academy and vandalised by outraged protestors. The vandalism became

"Fashionable art has turned in on itself, had some therapy sessions, and put its analysis in a glass case".

almost a part of the art work. It's the same in New York, where the same RA exhibition, *Sensation*, was banned by the Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, and then unbanned by the courts. It's even been dragged into a Senate election battle as the Republican Giuliani and his rival Hillary Clinton trade insults: moral turpitude versus the Great American

Freedom of Expression. The lawyers love it. The National Gallery of Australia has bottled out of even showing the exhibition. But is the art any good?

Turner Prize winner McQueen has been praised for the lyricism of his art, its poetic quality. He's something rather different from the Emin/Damien Hirst/*Sensation* crowd, not, in my view, really better. But he's rather an exception to the fashion. And it's the fashionable, sensational art that I want to look at here. What's going on in British art today?

Art being art, and not science, it's tricky to be scientific about the whole subject. As anyone who read the newspaper coverage of the Turner Prize will know, it is easy and populist to rubbish contemporary art. There is even a simple if crude "Marxist" way of doing it: point at the Turner Prize shortlist, at Hirst and Emin and the rest, and condemn it as bourgeois decadence in the extreme, as elitist and inaccessible, as utterly irrelevant to the working class.

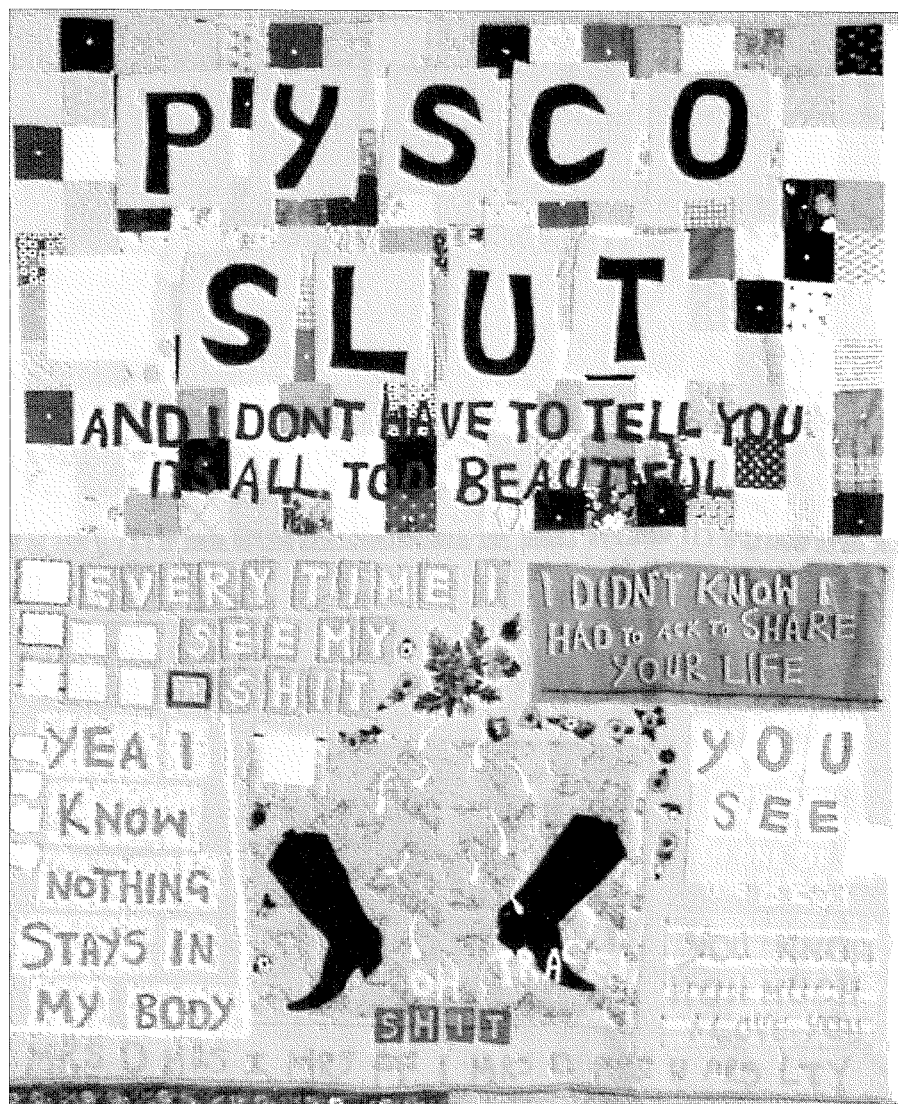
There's a certain amount of evidence for this. One of the leading patrons of the Brit-art brat-pack is Charles Saatchi. Saatchi made his fortune in advertising and his name as Margaret Thatcher's image guru. Shame he never commissioned Damien Hirst to slice Maggie in half and pickle her in a tank of formaldehyde, really. He's one of a very small group of dealers and gallery directors (a recent *Spectator* article put their number at just 17) who set the trends.

The Saatchi influence is most clear in the advertising that runs alongside fashionable contemporary art. Don't just pickle a shark, open a restaurant. Don't just paint pictures, picture yourself, like Emin, on a beer bottle (Hirst and Gilbert & George have also produced limited edition, not-for-sale bottles for Becks). Use the media, court controversy. Sell yourself, sell your self on canvas (or more likely video).

The great escape of contemporary art, the decadent art of self not society,

y art in Britain to wickedness

Fletcher



Tracey Emin: *Psyco Slut*, 1999

is into wickedness, to borrow George Orwell's 50-year-old comment on Salvador Dali. It's good to be bad, to leave one's knickers lying around the Tate Gallery. That's what gets the critics going.

Of course scandal has helped for years to attract attention to art. Think of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, or Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. Sexual, cultural, political, whatever: controversy sells. Engels complained last

century:

"It became more and more the habit, particularly of the inferior sorts of literati, to make up for the want of cleverness in their productions, by political allusions which were sure to attract attention."

Today's scandals, though, are not only not political, they are not even particularly scandalous.

Let's take as an example Tracey Emin, shortlisted for the Turner Prize,

the artist who put her bed in the Tate Gallery. Emin is one of the most talked-about of the fashionable young British conceptual artists.

Her art encompasses a wide range of media: video, watercolours, drawings, installations, appliqué. Her theme is her own life: she deals with her experience of rape, of abortion, of relationships. The shock factor? She gets drunk on the telly, she talks about sex, she is thoroughly "badly behaved". Yet although her experiences do relate to significant social questions, there is no sense of universality here, no feeling that this art is about anything other than Tracey Emin.

"On the political level, this is the art of its time, of Thatcherism and post-Thatcherism. 'There's no such thing as society' in it".

It could indeed be put like this: "Emin is by her own diagnosis narcissistic and [her work] is simply a strip-tease act conducted in pink lime-light."

You wouldn't have been surprised to read such a comment in the reviews section of any of the newspapers recently. Emin's art, the subject of which is herself, has come in for a critical bashing. But the quotation isn't about Emin at all. It's what George Orwell, writing in 1944, said about Dali's autobiography.

The Dali of 1944, whom Orwell savaged in an essay called "Benefit of Clergy", bore more than a little resemblance to the artists of today. Decaying animals (Damien Hirst), shit (Chris Ofili) and overlaid sexual metaphor (Emin) were shocking audiences in the 30s and 40s.

Why the drive to be shocking?

CONTEMPORARY ART

There is an easy answer: because there is nothing new to say. Culture has become so utterly sterile that the outrage route is the only one remaining to the attention-seeker.

Obviously there have been changes in modern art over the past 50 years. We have new technology: video, computers, which make possible forms of art that couldn't have existed a few years ago. Some of that new art is very striking indeed. But much of it is not.

The key question for Marxists in all this is that posed by Trotsky in *Literature and Revolution*:

"It is very true that one cannot always go by the principles of Marxism in deciding whether to reject or to accept a work of art. A work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is, by the law of art. But Marxism alone can explain why and how a given tendency in art has originated in a given period of history; in other words, who it was who made a demand for such an artistic form and not for another, and why." (p.207)

So what characterises the art of Tracey Emin? I think it is above all about the individual, atomised, outside society

or at least alienated from it. The only engagement with the outside world is the engagement of self-promotion, publicity and attention-seeking. This is the art of confession: putting the private life in the public sphere and making a statement of doing so. If it is therapeutic for Tracey Emin then that is no bad thing for her. But it has little of interest for

"This is the art of confession: putting the private life in the public sphere and making a statement of doing so".

me. On the (a)political level, it is the art of its time, of Thatcherism and post-Thatcherism. "There's no such thing as society" in it.

Now that is not to say that there is anything fundamentally wrong with art based around the self, around confession, if you like. But this, like any other subject in art, can range from the sublime to the pathetic. And it must also be seen in the context of its time. The first portrayals in bourgeois art of the human individual, rather than of classical or sacred types, represented huge progress. Today it represents nothing of the sort.

Many people respond to contemporary art by rejecting it in its entirety: please-sir-can-I-have-a-nice-still-life-with-apples. It is true that contemporary art is perhaps less accessible than previous periods of art, if only because it is not directly representational. For example, it is possible to look at a medieval religious icon and appreciate its beauty without knowing the Bible story to which it refers. With some modern conceptual art, that is much more difficult (although there is plenty which can be appreciated simply on the basis of what it looks like).

But it's also the case that when people argue that this art is inaccessible, they seem to forget that so-called 'high art' in bourgeois culture has always been the preserve of a very limited number of people. When the *Daily Mail*, or whoever, demands popular art for all, they are crying for a mystical golden age that never existed.

We have to look at British contemporary art in the context of politics today. The class struggle is at a low level. Other radical movements are limited. It is not surprising that in a situation where there is no concrete alternative movement for visual artists to relate to that art begins to talk to no-one but itself.



Emin, ever the self-publicist, celebrates losing the Turner Prize.

Questions from a worker who reads

WHO built Thebes of the seven gates?
In the books you will find the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
And Babylon, many times demolished
Who raised it up so many times? In what houses
Of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
Where, the evening that the Wall of China was finished
Did the masons go? Great Rome Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Had Byzantium, much praised in song
Only palaces for its inhabitants? Even in fabled Atlantis
The night the ocean engulfed it
The drowning still bawled for their slaves.

The young Alexander conquered India.
Was he alone?
Caesar beat the Gauls.
Did he not even have a cook with him?
Philip of Spain wept when his armada
Went down. Was he the only one to weep?
Frederick the Second won the Seven Years' War. Who Else won it?

Every page a victory.
Who cooked the feast for the victors?
Every ten years a great man.
Who paid the bill?

So many reports.
So many questions.

Bertolt Brecht

There's more to life than genes

Clive Bradley reviews the arguments of Richard Dawkins and Stephen Jay Gould

MARX wanted to dedicate *Capital* to Charles Darwin, a fact sometimes constructed by Marxologists to suggest that the founder of "scientific socialism" saw a crude parallel between his theory of social development and Darwin's theory of evolution. In fact, of course, Marx merely recognised the enormous importance of a theory which put our knowledge of natural history on a materialist, i.e., scientific, footing, abolishing once and for all the notion of divine intervention.

Today in large parts of America it is official educational policy that Darwin be treated on the same level as the religious mumbo-jumbo of "creationism", that evolution is only a theory "some scientists" believe in. In one state, Kansas, the teaching of evolutionary theory has been banned. Nevertheless, Darwinian evolution has been probably the single most important idea in the history of science. American fundamentalism notwithstanding, very very few scientists doubt the theory of evolution. Even so, within the scientific establishment there are, so to speak, Darwinians and Darwinians. Neo-Darwinianism, which fused Darwin's theory with modern genetics, is probably dominant, and best known in Britain through the writing of Richard Dawkins. Another well-known popular science writer, the American palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould, is Dawkins' chief opponent in modern evolutionary theory.

Dawkins is extremely influential, if not in the scientific community itself then certainly among the general public. Partly for this reason, and partly because he is a skilful and readable writer, the Tories gave him the job of chief public educator on scientific matters. As a result, the most widely read authority on questions of biology and evolution is the man who made his name as the author of *The Selfish Gene*, a very particular spin on the neo-Darwinian theme. The general public is thus often unaware that Dawkins' views are contentious among scientists¹.

The most commendable side to Dawkins' work is his trenchant critique of "creationism", and his corresponding atheism. Acknowledging the awesomeness of life, Dawkins sets out to show that natural selection is the only convincing explanation of its development. The titles of his books — *The Blind Watchmaker*, and *Climbing Mount Improbable* — are good indicators of his approach, which is to address a sceptical audience and prove Darwinian theory to them. In the process he reveals how fascinating biology can be.

Nevertheless, the argument from *The Selfish Gene* runs through Dawkins' work, and he is a point of reference for broadly right-wing thought, including for example the philosopher Daniel Dennett, whose *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* is virtually a companion volume. Dawkins holds that life evolves as a result of fundamental genetic imperatives, and the prime mover in evolution is the genes' drive to replicate. "We are survival machines," he writes, "robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes." As a result, Dawkins' work is a general theoretical manifesto for genetic determinism in all its forms.

Moreover, among evolutionists there is a sharp debate about the "gradualism" of the evolutionary process. Dawkins (and Dennett) are popular heavyweights in favour of the slow, gradual evenness of evolution, sharply critical of Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldridge, whose theory of "punctuated equilibria" holds that long periods of "stasis" are broken by sudden (in evolutionary terms) breaks and periods of biological convulsion. Although, characteristically, Dawkins denies

any meaningful political component to this debate, he and Dennett are explicitly opposed to Gould's view because it has a political dimension — i.e., that evolution itself follows a revolutionary, rather than gradualist, pattern.

Indeed, one of the features of Dawkins' work, and of those influenced by him, is an emphasis on the neutralism and non-ideological nature of science. Dawkins is dismissive of those who accuse him of a political agenda. In this he is in marked contrast to Stephen Jay Gould, for example, who has a clear conception of the ideological parameters of science. One of Gould's books, *The Mismeasure of Man*, is a brilliant polemic against IQ testing, detailing the history of all attempts to measure intelligence and demonstrating irrefutably the recurring racism inherent in them². Central to Gould's preoccupations is the idea that "science" is based on certain ideological and cultural assumptions, and is never "neutral". This is not, of course, to dismiss all science as simply false. But it would be hard to imagine Dawkins even being interested in this area of study.

The "selfish gene"?

THE theory that genes explain everything is increasingly popular. Pop-documentaries on research "proving" that there is a "gene for" everything from homosexuality to aggressive behaviour are part of regular TV programming. Far less publicity is given to alternative research, even when widely-disseminated results which have been judged definitive ignominiously collapse in the face of later studies. A few years ago the discovery of a "gay gene" was given a huge amount of news coverage (see WL 44). When this research was recently discredited, other scientists being quite unable to replicate the results, it warranted only a few small articles in the press. Meanwhile discoveries of "genes for" violent behaviour, etc., etc., etc., are made all the time — which means, of course, that money is being spent on looking for them.

Dawkins' "selfish gene" theory underlies the entire approach. If we are "robots" for our genes, this means that every aspect of human behaviour, from sexuality to anything else you care to mention, can be, in the last analysis, explained by genetic imperatives.

Dawkins, naturally, refutes the idea that his theory is reductionist, i.e., that it is an effort to explain "everything" crudely in this way, and attacks his critics for setting up straw dolls.

The biochemist Stephen Rose, in *Lifelines*, tackles Dawkins' defence head on. Rose's book is specifically about genetic reductionism, but he deals in passing with a more general reductionist philosophy in science. This is the view that prime explanatory power must be given to a "fundamental" level of reality — biology gives way to chemistry and chemistry to physics. He quotes Dawkins ridiculing his critics:

"The belief attributed to the 'reductionists' is exactly equivalent to the following: 'A bus drives fast, because the passengers sitting inside it are all fast runners'... I shall make a distinction between... 'two step' reductionism and 'precipice reductionism'. Precipice reductionists probably do not exist... Step-by-step reductionism is the policy adopted by all scientists with a sincere wish to understand..."

Rose responds: "But... the belief attributed to reductionists is nothing to do with the passengers... [It is that they] wish to explain why the bus drives fast in terms of its mechanical properties... and that this in turn is to do with the molecular properties of the petrol or diesel... which is in turn to do with the quantum properties of the

atoms... While this is one perfectly appropriate way of describing how the bus drives fast, the why question relates to the complex framework of public and private transport, schedules, road congestion, driver skills, and so on, within which the mechanics of the bus engine are embedded..." (Rose, *Lifelines*, p.87).

The point here is that the argument of the selfish gene rests on the assumption that genes can be considered a fundamental "cause" of behaviour, and that — step-by-step or otherwise — an account of genetic imperatives can be considered a meaningful explanation of anything.

Like Dawkins, researchers into "genes for" behaviour usually make disclaimers, and bemoan the simple-mindedness of the media who generalise from partial conclusions. As Rose notes, in fact the scientists are usually their own most excessive self-publicists, if only because they need investment in their research and can only guarantee it if they play the PR game.

But the wild claims being made about these genetic discoveries are not only scientifically spurious: they are politically dangerous.

This is true in two main senses. First, take research into the aggressive behaviour of rats. A particular hormone may be claimed to correlate with such behaviour; but what researchers fail to mention is that other features may also correspond, such as violent vomiting, but these features are simply ignored in the publicity. Thus a direct correlation is "proven" where its applicability to human beings is doubtful to say the least. Second, the research suggests a particular policy to deal with the problem it has identified.

Rose again: "Reductionist ideology serves to relocate social problems to the individual... Violence in modern society is no longer to be explained in terms of inner-city squalor, unemployment, extremes of wealth and poverty, and the loss of hope that by collective effort we might create a better society. Rather, it is a problem resulting from the presence of individual violent persons, themselves violent as a result of disorders in their biochemical or genetic constitution." (Rose, p.296).

Dawkins' "selfish gene" theory, or more generally what is termed "sociobiology", lays the groundwork for this dangerous notion, precisely because it locates the explanation at the level of genes — molecules — rather than organisms. An organism is more than simply the sum of its genes, and as Rose notes in meticulous detail, organisms interpenetrate with their environment even at the molecular level, even choosing and affecting that environment. Dawkins' step-by-step reductionism is still reductionism, and attractive because it is so simple, and being simple, crude and therefore fundamentally wrong.

Gould has challenged Dawkins' assumption on a similar basis. Evolution, he notes, cannot operate on the level of genes, because genes are invisible in nature.

"There is no gene 'for' such unambiguous bits of morphology as your left kneecap or your fingernail. Bodies cannot be atomised into parts, each constructed by an individual gene... [S]election doesn't even work directly on parts. It accepts or rejects entire organisms because suites of parts, interacting in complex ways, confer advantages... Dawkins will need another metaphor: genes caucusing, forming alliances, showing deference for a chance to join a pact, gauging probable environments. But when you amalgamate so many genes and tie them together in hierarchical chains of action mediated by environments, we call the resultant object a body... If most genes do not present themselves for review, then they cannot be the unit of selection." (Gould, "Caring Groups and Selfish Genes" in *The Panda's Thumb*, p.77).

To my knowledge, Dawkins and his co-thinkers have not bothered to respond to this criticism, preferring instead to play games with

the term "reductionism". But it is a devastating criticism of not only a scientific approach, but an entire philosophical world-view.

The world view is what can be called a crude materialist "atomism". It is materialist because it rejects God, and looks to biological explanations. But it is "atomism" because it seeks to find the single, smallest unit which can provide explanatory power and focuses exclusively on it — the gene (although you can, as Rose notes, take the reductionism all the way down to quantum mechanics) — not only ignoring the mediation between genes and their environments, but rendering the exploration of that mediation conceptually impossible.

The "selfish gene" is not, in Dawkins' theory, assumed to have a consciousness which motivates its action and quest for replication; genes are not literally "selfish", and the phrase is intended to be metaphorical. But metaphors injudiciously used can take on a life of their own, and there is no doubt that in the popular understanding of the theory, the "selfishness" is regarded more straightforwardly. Dawkins has done little (or nothing) to dispel this misconception of his own theory. It is, of course, a striking phrase, typical of Dawkins'

vivid prose style, and no doubt played a big role in making his work so popular.

The idea is that since genes "seek" to replicate, organisms will adapt in such a way as to facilitate this rather than obstruct it. But it is intended to explain human behaviour — we are, remember, "robots" for our genes. But how can the multifaceted aspects of human behaviour, from the production of art to the development of scientific knowledge, possibly be accounted for in this simple model? Stephen Pinker, in *How the Mind Works*, drawing heavily on Dawkins, has attempted, unconvincingly, to account for it.

Evolution

DAWKINS and Dennett get very hot under the collar in criticising Stephen Jay Gould's theory of "punctuated equilibria" in evolution. There is a version of non-Darwinian theory known as "saltationism" ("leaping"), in which new species abruptly emerge in a single generation, and although Dawkins acknowledges that Gould is not a "saltationist" properly speaking, part of his objection seems to be that Gould and his co-thinkers are resurrecting this discredited theory.

Gould is a palaeontologist. Gould and Eldridge discovered that the fossil record revealed that there were long periods of time (in evolutionary theory a short time would be a million years) in which there appeared to be little "speciation" (the emergence of new species), followed by "sudden" bursts of it. They put forward an essentially factual argument, that evolution appeared to follow a pattern of "equilibria" or "stasis", broken by "punctuation" or "abrupt" change. Evolution, in other words, was not a gradual process. Dawkins considers this heresy, and in contradiction to the theory of evolution as he understands it.

What also upsets the neo-Darwinians is that Gould and his colleagues are far less bothered about the dogma of Darwinism. Gould has, for example, challenged the idea that natural selection accounts for absolutely everything. His theory of "exaptation" puts forward the idea that there can be adaptations brought about by one thing which turn out to have an accidental, but more profound, advantage for the organism.

Dawkins *et al* accuse Gould of giving ground to the creationists. The argument runs that the "sudden bursts" of evolutionary activity are left unexplained by Gould, and the only plausible explanation which could fill the gap is divine intervention. The only consistent theory which does not require God is the slow, gradual evolutionary

model. In addition, Dawkins and Dennett claim that Gould has publicly attacked Darwin, giving grist to the creationists' mill.

The accusation is ludicrous at every level. If creationists want to find solace in Gould, they would have to avoid reading him to do so. Gould repeatedly assaults the creationists. To take just one example: creationists claim that the whale is an anomaly for Darwinians, because there are no intermediary mammals to show, as Darwinians claim, the evolution of whales and dolphins from an earlier land-based mammal. Gould (in "Hooking Leviathan by its Past" in *Dinosaur in a Haystack*) records recent fossil finds which prove beyond doubt the existence of such intermediary species. Gould's critique is not of Darwinism, but of neo-Darwinians like Dawkins.

Here as elsewhere Dawkins *et al* simply do not understand what Gould is about. Gould's work is packed with interesting, thought-provoking ideas which are far wider in range than anything in Dawkins', and his influence on contemporary scientific thought is incomparably greater. Moreover, as already mentioned, Gould is constantly aware that he is not dealing with neutral matters. An important aspect of Gould's work, for instance, is his firm, sustained attack on the popular equation of evolution with "progress". Gould rejects any notion that there is some teleological tendency in evolution towards the development of humanity, locating this belief not only in the 19th century's general belief in progress, but in its racism¹. His beautiful book *Wonderful Life* is an account of the first forms of life, found in the famous Burgess Shale fossil deposits, which reveals many organisms utterly unrelated to those alive today. Evolution has had many false starts and dead-ends, and the contemporary world domination of mammalian hominids is a complete historical accident.

Whether or not Gould is a bit over the top here, the point I am making is that on every level he is an intellectual giant, certainly in comparison to Dawkins. The theory of "punctuated equilibria" is not of the same species, to coin a phrase, as Dawkins' "selfish gene" or Darwinian dogmatism. It is a working scientific hypothesis, based on a huge amount of empirical research. Dawkins, Dennett *et al*, quite contrary to their constant claims to scientific neutrality, can only grasp Gould's work as a kind of Grand Unified Theory which challenges their narrow world view. But such an approach is quite alien to Gould. Gould is indeed conscious of the challenge "punctuated equilibria" represents to the cosy certainties of the Darwinian establishment, but only in the sense — which runs through his work — that scientists tend to be unaware that their theory rests on ideological assumptions. In this case the assumption is the inevitability of gradualism, which has a political implication, and Gould is pointing out that the fossil record does not fit with the assumption.

Of course there is a political implication for Gould also. He writes: "If gradualism is more a product of Western thought than a fact of natural history, then we should consider alternative philosophies of change... The dialectical laws [i.e. official Soviet science] express an ideology quite openly; our Western preference for gradualism does the same thing more subtly." ("The episodic nature of evolutionary change" in *The Panda's Thumb*, pp.153-154)

Gould's method is, it seems to me, that of a real scientist able to take into account aspects of the broader picture, rather than of a vicious polemical idiot, which is how Dawkins *et al* tend to interpret him. Dawkins simply never asks questions about his own ideological bias, or if he asks them, only dismisses the question as absurd.

Hidden ideology in science

DAWKINS has performed an important service in writing accessible books on evolution which have been read by a wide audience. To be fair, in *The Blind Watchmaker*, for example, he explicitly deals with his arguments with other evolutionists, including Gould. But to the extent that the general readership is unaware of the specific place of Dawkins in contemporary science, his influence is problematic.

Dawkins' work stands in the tradition, fundamentally, of those materialists who were an influence on Marx but whom Marx criticised in the *Theses on Feuerbach*. "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism... is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice... Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity."

In Dawkins a material fact — the gene — is abstracted from human practical activity, such activity conceived essentially as simply caused by genetic imperatives. In Stephen Jay Gould and Stephen Rose, on the other hand, the relationship between the two, and the "objective" character of human activity and culture are clearly understood. All genetic determinism suffers from the same "basic defect".

"Our world may be," Stephen Rose writes, "— is, I would claim — an ontological unity [a unity at the level of 'being'], but to understand it we need... epistemological diversity [at the level of 'knowledge']... And if you still aren't convinced, and believe you can hang-glide off Dawkins' precipice without coming to harm, why bother reading the words, paragraphs and chapters of which this book is composed? All you need to do is examine the individual letters on the page, call in an analytical chemist to give you the formula of the printer's ink, and a microscopist to describe the fibre structures of which the paper is composed. This is why reductionism, once it ceases to be merely methodological, when experimenters can just about hang on to the edge of the precipice by their fingernails, so rapidly tumbles into ideology." (*Lifelines*, pp.95-96).

Even the word "selfish" in *The Selfish Gene* serves an ideological purpose. The underlying thought, and certainly the use to which the theory is put, is that we are vehicles for fundamentally, implacably self-serving molecules. If the molecules are selfish, so are we — biologically, naturally, irremediably. Social organisation is an evolutionary accident, or arises only from some reproductive imperative. It is a world view in which socialism, plainly, is a utopian ideal. Dawkins *et al* explicitly refute the notion that the theory should be taken to have any ethical ramifications. But of course it does, ethical and beyond.

It is not merely, however, that it is politically distasteful to recognise any validity to Dawkins' theory. The theory is wrong. It is wrong in the sense that both Rose and Gould have outlined so eloquently. It reduces a complex reality, which includes social relations, to a molecule. The host of "genes for" this, that, and the other which have been "discovered" suffer from the same methodological and philosophical pitfalls.

1. Or indeed, more than contentious. Stephen Rose, in *Lifelines*, describes how most of his colleagues thought it a waste of time to bother refuting Dawkins in print, as his ideas were so maverick and unrespectworthy. Rose, rightly, responded that this was precisely why they should be tackled publicly.

2. The second edition of *The Mismeasure of Man* has a devastating attack on Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve*, the latest popular attempt to prove that black people are naturally more stupid than white. Gould's theoretical approach has interesting wider dimensions. For example, he attacks the notion that there could be a measurable "general intelligence" which is supposedly an aggregate of other types of intelligence, and simply assumed to be a "thing", an objective entity. His critique of this method applies with equal force to those who assume a measurable thing such as "violence" or "aggression", or whatever.

3. The most graphic example of racism is the popular image of human evolution as a progression of humanoid shapes gradually becoming more upright and European. In older versions, Africans were explicitly portrayed as less evolved than white people.

Dawkins and Gould have written very extensively. This is a list of the work referred to in this article. Richard Dawkins: *The Selfish Gene* (Penguin 1976); *The Blind Watchmaker* (Penguin 1986); *Climbing Mount Improbable* (Penguin 1996). Stephen Jay Gould: *The Panda's Thumb* (Penguin 1980); *Dinosaur in a Haystack* (Jonathan Cape 1996, also available in Penguin). See also Daniel Dennett: *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (Penguin 1995). Two books which should be read by every socialist are: Stephen Rose, *Lifelines* (Penguin 1997) and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (Penguin 1983). There is also a new book about the controversy between Dawkins and Gould, *The Darwin Wars* by Andrew Brown (Simon and Schuster 1999).

TEACH YOURSELF MARX'S CAPITAL



How money represents labour

Part two of Otto Rühle's abridgement of Karl Marx's classic dissection of the basic processes of capitalism, *Capital* volume 1, summarises chapters 2 and 3 of *Capital*, which show how "money is the phenomenal form that must of necessity be assumed by that measure of value which is immanent in commodities, labour-time". Rühle presents the core of Marx's argument in Marx's own words, stripped of outdated examples and contemporary polemics. We urge all readers to join us in this collective study.

2. Exchange

IT is plain that commodities cannot go to market and make exchanges of their own account. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are also their owners. Commodities are things, and therefore without power of resistance against man. If they are wanting in docility he can use force; in other words, he can take possession of them. In order that these objects may enter into relation with each other as commodities, their guardians must place themselves in relation to one another, as persons whose will resides in those objects, and must behave in such a way that each does not appropriate the commodity of the other, and part with his own, except by means of an act done by mutual consent. They must, therefore, mutually recognise in each other the right of private proprietors.

This juridical relation, which thus expresses itself in a contract, whether such contract be part of a developed legal system or not, is a relation between two wills, and is but the reflex of the real economical relation between the two. It is this economical relation that determines the subject matter comprised in each such juridical act. The persons exist for one another merely as representatives of, and, therefore, as owners of, commodities. The characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economical relations that exist between them.

His commodity possesses for the owner no immediate use-value. Otherwise, he would not bring it to the market. It has

use-value for others; for himself its only direct use-value is that of being a depository of exchange value, and consequently, a means of exchange. Therefore, he makes up his mind to part with it for commodities whose value in use is of service to him. All commodities are non-use-values for their owners, and use-values for their non-owners.

Consequently, they must all change hands. But this change of hands is what constitutes their exchange, and the latter puts them in relation with each other as values, and realises them as values. Hence commodities must be realised as values before they can be realised as use-values. On the other hand, they must show that they are use-values before they can be realised as values. For the labour spent upon them counts effectively, only in so far as it is spent in a form that is useful for others. Whether that labour is useful for others and its product consequently capable of satisfying the wants of others, can be proved only by the act of exchange.

Every owner of a commodity wishes to part with it in exchange only for those commodities whose use-value satisfies some want of his. Looked at in this way, exchange is for him simply a private transaction. On the other hand, he desires to realise the value of his commodity, to convert it into any other suitable commodity of equal value. From this point of view, exchange is for him a social transaction of a general character. But one and the same set of transactions cannot be simultaneously for all owners of commodities both exclusively private and exclusively social and general.

The exchange of commodities, therefore, first begins on the boundaries of such communities, at their points of contact with other similar communities, or with members of the latter. So soon, however, as products once become commodities in the external relations of a community, they also, by reaction, become so in its internal intercourse. The proportions in which they are exchangeable are at first quite a matter of chance. Meantime the need for foreign objects of utility gradually establishes itself. The constant repetition of exchange makes it a normal social act. In the course of time, therefore, some portion at least of the products of labour must be produced with a special view to exchange. From that moment the distinction becomes firmly established between the utility of an object for the purposes of consumption, and its utility for the purposes of exchange. Its use-value becomes distinguished from its exchange value. On the other hand, the quantitative proportion in which the articles are exchangeable, becomes dependent on their production itself. Custom stamps them as values with definite magnitudes.

In the direct barter of products, each commodity is directly a means of exchange to its owner, and to all other persons an equivalent, but that only in so far as it has use-value for them. At this stage, therefore, the articles exchanged do not acquire a value-form independent of their own use-value. The necessity for a value-form grows with the increasing number and variety of the commodities exchanged. The problem and the means of solution arise simultaneously.

A special article, by becoming the equivalent of various other commodities, acquires at once, though within narrow limits, the character of a general social equivalent. This character comes and goes with the momentary social acts that called it into life. In turns and transiently it attaches itself first to this and then to that commodity. The particular kind of commodity to which it sticks is at first a matter of accident. Nevertheless there are two circumstances whose influence is decisive. The money-form attaches itself either to the most important articles of exchange from outside, or else it attaches itself to the object of utility that forms, like cattle, the chief portion of indigenous alienable wealth. Man has often made man himself, under the form of slaves, serve as the primitive material of money but has never used land for that purpose. Such an idea could only spring up in a bourgeois society already well developed.



objects, gold and silver, just as they come out of the bowels of the earth, are forthwith the direct incarnation of all human labour. Hence the magic of money. The riddle presented by money is but the riddle presented by commodities; only it now strikes us in its most glaring form.

3. Money, or the Circulation of Commodities

THE first chief function of money is to supply commodities with the material for the expression of their values, or to represent their values as magnitudes of the same denomination, qualitatively equal, and quantitatively comparable. It thus serves as a *universal measure of value*. And only by virtue of this function does gold, the equivalent commodity *par excellence*, become money.

It is not money that renders commodities commensurable. Just the contrary. It is because all commodities, as values, are realised human labour, and therefore commensurable, that their values can be measured by one and the same special commodity, and the latter be converted into the common measure of their values, i.e., into money. Money, as a measure of value, is the phenomenal form that must of necessity be assumed by that measure of value which is immanent in commodities, labour-time.

The expression of the value of a commodity in gold is its money-form or price.

The price of commodities is, like their form of value generally, a form quite distinct from their palpable bodily form; it is, therefore, a purely ideal or mental form. Their owner must, therefore, lend them his tongue, or hang a ticket on them, before their prices can be communicated to the outside world. Every trader knows that it does not require the least bit of real gold to estimate in that metal millions of pounds' worth of goods.

If gold and silver are simultaneously measures of value, all commodities have two prices — one a gold-price, the other a silver-price. These exist quietly side by side, so long as the ratio of the value of silver to that of gold remains unchanged.

The values of commodities are changed in imagination into so many different quantities of gold. Hence, in spite of the confusing variety of the commodities themselves, their values become magnitudes of

Money is a crystal formed of necessity in the course of the exchanges, whereby different products of labour are practically equated to one another and thus by practice converted into commodities. At the same rate, then, as the conversion of products into commodities is being accomplished, so also is the conversion of one special commodity into money.

An adequate form of manifestation of value, a fit embodiment of abstract, undifferentiated, and therefore equal human labour, that material alone can be whose every sample exhibits the same uniform qualities. On the other hand, since the difference between the magnitudes of value is purely quantitative, the money commodity must be susceptible of merely quantitative differences, must therefore be divisible at will, and equally capable of being re-united. Gold and silver possess these qualities by nature.

The money-form is but the reflex,

thrown upon one single commodity, of the value relations between all the rest. That money is a commodity is therefore a new discovery only for those who, when they analyse it, start from its fully developed shape. The act of exchange gives to the commodity converted into money, not its value, but its specific value-form. By confounding these two distinct things some writers have been led to hold that the value of gold and silver is imaginary. The fact that money can, in certain functions, be replaced by mere symbols of itself, gave rise to that other mistaken notion, that it is itself a mere symbol.

Money, like every other commodity, cannot express the magnitude of its value except relatively in other commodities. This value is determined by the labour-time required for its production, and is expressed by the quantity of any other commodity that costs the same amount of labour-time. When it steps into circulation as money, its value is already given.

What appears to happen is, not that gold becomes money, in consequence of all other commodities expressing their values in it, but, on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in gold, because it is money. The intermediate steps of the process vanish in the result and leave no trace behind. Commodities find their own value already completely represented, without any initiative on their part, in another commodity existing in company with them. These

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the same denomination, gold-magnitudes. They are now capable of being compared with each other and measured, and the want becomes technically felt of comparing them with some fixed quantity of gold as a unit measure. This unit, by subsequent division into aliquot parts, becomes itself the standard or scale. Before they become money, gold, silver, and copper already possess such standard measures in their standards of weight.

As *measure of value* and as *standard of price*, money has two entirely distinct functions to perform. It is the measure of value inasmuch as it is the socially recognised incarnation of human labour; it is the standard of price inasmuch as it is a fixed weight of metal. As the measure of value it serves to convert the values of all the manifold commodities into prices, into imaginary quantities of gold; as the standard of price it measures those quantities of gold. The measure of values measures commodities considered as values; the standard of price measures, on the contrary, quantities of gold by a unit quantity of gold, not the value of one quantity of gold by the weight of another. In order to make gold a standard of price, a certain weight must be fixed upon as the unit. The less the unit is subject to variation, so much the better does the standard of price fulfil its office.

No matter how this value varies, the proportions between the values of different quantities of the metal remain constant.

A general rise in the prices of commodities can result only, either from a rise in their values — the value of money remaining constant — or from a fall in the value of money, the values of commodities remaining constant. On the other hand, a general fall in prices can result only, either from a fall in the values of commodities — the value of money remaining constant — or from a rise in the value of money, the values of commodities remaining constant. It therefore by no means follows, that a rise in the value of money necessarily implies a proportional fall in the prices of commodities; or that a fall in the value of money implies a proportional rise in prices. Such change of price holds good only in the case of commodities whose value remains constant.

By degrees there arises a discrepancy between the current money names of the various weights of the precious metal figuring as money, and the actual weights which those names originally represented. The world pound, for instance, was the money-name given to an actual pound weight of silver. When gold replaced silver as a measure of value, the same name was applied according to the ratio between the values of silver and gold, to perhaps one fifteenth of a pound of gold. The world

pound, as a money-name, thus becomes differentiated from the same word as a weight-name.

Since the standard of money is on the one hand purely conventional, and must on the other hand find general acceptance, it is in the end regulated by law. A given weight of one of the precious metals, an ounce of gold, for instance, becomes officially divided into aliquot parts, with legally bestowed names, such as pound, dollar, &c. These aliquot parts, which henceforth serve as units of money, are then subdivided into other aliquot parts with legal names, such as shilling, penny, &c. But, both before and after these divisions are made, a definite weight of metal is the standard of metallic money. The sole alteration consists in the subdivision and denomination.

In this way commodities express by their prices how much they are worth, and money serves as *money of account* whenever it is a question of fixing the value of an article in its money-form.

Price is the money-name of the labour realised in a commodity. Hence the expression of the equivalence of a commodity with the sum of money constituting its price, is a tautology, just as in general the expression of the relative value of a commodity is a statement of the equivalence of two commodities.

But although price, being the exponent of the magnitude of a commodity's value, is the exponent of its exchange-ratio with money, it does not follow that the exponent of this exchange-ratio is necessarily the exponent of the magnitude of the commodity's value.

Magnitude of value expresses a relation of social production, it expresses the connection that necessarily exists between a certain article and the portion of the total labour-time of society required to produce it. As soon as magnitude of value is converted into price, the above necessary relation takes the shape of a more or less accidental exchange-ratio between a single commodity and another, the money-commodity. But this exchange-ratio may express either the real magnitude of that commodity's value, or the quantity of gold deviating from that value, for which, according to circumstances, it may be parted with.

The possibility, therefore, of quantitative incongruity between price and magnitude of value is inherent in the price-form itself. This is no defect, but on the contrary, admirably adapts the price-form to a mode of production whose inherent laws impose themselves only as the mean of apparently lawless irregularities that compensate one another.

The price-form may conceal a qualita-

tive inconsistency, so much so, that, although money is nothing but the value-form of commodities, price ceases altogether to express value. Objects that in themselves are no commodities, such as conscience, honour, &c., are capable of being offered for sale by their holders, and of thus acquiring, through their price, the form of commodities. Hence an object may have a price without having value. The price in that case is imaginary, like certain quantities in mathematics. On the other hand, the imaginary price-form may sometimes conceal either a direct or indirect real value-relation; for instance, the price of uncultivated land, which is without value, because no human labour has been incorporated in it.

A price therefore implies both that a commodity is exchangeable for money, and also that it must be so exchanged. On the other hand, gold serves as an ideal measure of value, only because it has already, in the process of exchange, established itself as the money-commodity. Under the ideal measure of values there lurks the hard cash.

IN so far as exchange is a process, by which commodities are transferred from hands in which they are non-use-values, to hands in which they become use-values, it is a social circulation of matter. The product of one form of useful labour replaces that of another. When once a commodity has found a resting-place, where it can serve as a use-value, it falls out of the sphere of exchange into that of consumption. But the former sphere alone interests us at present. We have, therefore, now to consider exchange from a formal point of view; to investigate the change of form or metamorphosis of commodities which effectuates the social circulation of matter.

The comprehension of this change of form is, as a rule, very imperfect. The cause of this imperfection is, apart from indistinct notions of value itself, that every change of form in a commodity results from the exchange of two commodities, an ordinary one and the money-commodity. If we keep in view the material fact alone we overlook the very thing that we ought to observe — namely, what has happened to the form of the commodity. We overlook the facts that gold, when a mere commodity, is not money, and that when other commodities express their prices in gold, this gold is but the money-form of those commodities themselves.

Commodities, first of all, enter into the process of exchange just as they are. The process then differentiates them into commodities and money, and thus produces an external opposition corresponding to the internal opposition inherent in them, as

being at once use-values and values. Commodities as use-values now stand opposed to money as exchange value. On the other hand, both opposing sides are commodities, unities of use-value and value. But this unity of differences manifests itself at two opposite poles, and at each pole in an opposite way. Being poles they are as necessarily opposite as they are connected. One the one side of the equation we have an ordinary commodity, which is in reality a use-value. Its value is expressed only ideally in its price, by which it is equated to its opponent, the gold, as to the real embodiment of its value. On the other hand, the gold in its metallic reality ranks as the embodiment of value, as money. Gold, as gold, is exchange value itself. These antagonistic forms of commodities are the real forms in which the process of their exchange moves and takes place.

The exchange becomes an accomplished fact by two metamorphoses of opposite yet supplementary characters, and by the following changes in their form:

Commodity (C) — Money (M) — Commodity (C)

But the apparently single process is in reality a double one. From the pole of the commodity owner it is a sale, from the opposite pole of the money owner, it is a purchase. In other words, a sale is a purchase, $C - M$ is also $M - C$. As the person who makes a sale, the owner is a seller; as the person who makes a purchase, he is a buyer.

The complete metamorphosis of a commodity, in its simplest form, implies four extremes, and three dramatis personae. First, a commodity comes face to face with money; the latter is the form taken by the value of the former, and exists in all its hard reality, in the pocket of the buyer. A commodity-owner is thus brought into contact with a possessor of money. So soon, now as the commodity has been changed into money, the money becomes its transient equivalent-form, the use-value of which equivalent-form is to be found in the bodies of other commodities. Money, the final term for the first transmutation, is at the same time the starting point for the second. The person who is a seller in the first transaction thus becomes a buyer in the second, in which a third commodity-owner appears on the scene as a seller.

The two phases, each inverse to the other, that make up the metamorphosis of a commodity constitute together a circular movement, a circuit: commodity-form, stripping off of this form, and return to the commodity-form. No doubt, the commodity appears here under two different aspects. At the starting point it is not a use-

value to its owner; at the finishing point it is. So, too, the money appears in the first phase as a solid crystal of value, a crystal into which the commodity eagerly solidifies, and in the second, dissolves into the mere transient equivalent-form destined to be replaced by a use-value.

The circuit made by one commodity in the course of its metamorphoses is inextricably mixed up with the circuits of other commodities. The total of all the different circuits constitutes *the circulation of commodities*.

NOTHING can be more childish than the dogma, that because every sale is a purchase, and every purchase a sale, therefore the circulation of commodities necessarily implies an equilibrium of sales and purchases. Sale and purchase constitute one identical act, an exchange between a commodity-owner and an owner of money, between two persons as opposed to each other as the two poles of a magnet. The identity implies that the commodity is useless, if, on being thrown into the alchemical retort of circulation, it does not come out again in the shape of money; implies that the exchange, if it does take place, constitutes a period of rest, an interval, long or short, in the life of the commodity. No one can sell unless some one else purchases. But no one is forthwith bound to purchase, because he has just sold. Circulation bursts through all restrictions as to time, place, and individuals, imposed by direct barter, and this it effects by splitting up, into the antithesis of a sale and a purchase, the direct identity. To say that these two independent and antithetical acts have an intrinsic unity, are essentially one, is the same as to say that this intrinsic oneness expresses itself in an external antithesis. If the interval in time between the two complementary phases of the complete metamorphosis of a commodity becomes too great, if the split between the sale and the purchase becomes too pronounced, their oneness asserts itself by producing — a crisis.

The movement of the commodity is a circuit. On the other hand, the form of this movement precludes a circuit from being made by the money. The result is not the return of the money, but its continual removal further and further away from its starting point.

In the first phase of its circulation the

commodity changes place with the money. Thereupon the commodity, under its aspect of a useful object, falls out of circulation into consumption. In its stead we have its value-shape — the money. It then goes through the second phase of its circulation, not under its own natural shape, but under the shape of money.

The continuity of the movement is therefore kept up by the money alone, and the same movement that as regards the commodity consists of two processes of an antithetical character, is, when considered as the movement of the money, always one and the same process, a continued change of places with ever fresh commodities. Hence the result brought about by the circulation of commodities, namely, the replacing of one commodity by another, takes the appearance of having been effected not by means of the change of form of the commodities, but rather by the money acting as a medium of circulation, by an action that circulates commodities, to all appearance motionless in themselves. Money is continually withdrawing commodities from circulation and stepping into their places, and in this way continually moving further and further from its starting-point.

Hence, although the movement of the money is merely the expression of the circulation of commodities, yet the contrary appears to be the actual fact, and the circulation of commodities seems to be the result of the movement of the money. Again, money functions as a means of circulation, only because in it the values of commodities have independent reality. Hence its movement, as the medium of circulation, is, in fact, merely the movement of commodities while changing their forms.

MONEY keeps continually within the sphere of circulation, and moves about in it. The question arises, how much money does this sphere absorb?

Since money and commodities always come bodily face to face, it is clear that the amount of the means of circulation required is determined beforehand by the sum of the prices of all these commodities. As a matter of fact, the money in reality represents the quantity or sum of gold ideally expressed beforehand by the sum of the prices of the commodities. The equality of these two sums is therefore self-evident.

We know, however, that, the values of commodities remaining constant, their prices vary with the value of gold, rising in proportion as it falls, and falling in proportion as it rises. Now if, in consequence of such a rise or fall in the value of gold, the sum of the prices of commodities fall or rise, the quantity of money in currency must fall or rise to the same extent. The change

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in the quantity of the circulating medium is, in this case, it is true, caused by money itself, yet not in virtue of its function as a medium of circulation, but of its function as a measure of value. First, the price of the commodities varies inversely as the value of the money, and then the quantity of the medium of circulation varies directly as the price of the commodities.

Exactly the same thing would happen if, for instance, instead of the value of gold falling, gold were replaced by silver as the measure of value, or if, instead of the value of silver rising, gold were to thrust silver out from being the measure of value. In each case the value of the material of money, i.e., the value of the commodity that serves as the measure of value, would have undergone a change, and therefore, so, too would the prices of commodities which express their values in money, and so, too, would the quantity of money current whose function it is to realise those prices.

If we consider the value of gold to be given, and if now we further suppose the price of each commodity to be given, the sum of the prices clearly depends on the mass of commodities in circulation. If the mass of commodities remain constant, the quantity of circulating money varies with the fluctuations in the prices of those commodities. It increases and diminishes because the sum of the prices increases or diminishes in consequence of the change of price.

The velocity of that currency reflects the rapidity with which commodities change their forms, the continued interlacing of one series of metamorphoses with another, the hurried social interchange of matter, the rapid disappearance of commodities from the sphere of circulation, and the equally rapid substitution of fresh ones in their places. On the other hand, the retardation of the currency reflects the separation of these two processes into isolated antithetical phases, reflects the stagnation in the change of form, and therefore, in the social interchange of matter.

The total quantity of money functioning during a given period as the circulating medium, is determined, on the one hand, by the sum of the prices of the circulating commodities, and on the other hand, by the rapidity with which the antithetical phases of the metamorphoses follow one another.

The three factors, however, state of prices, quantity of circulating commodities, and velocity of money-currency, are all variable. Hence, the sum of the prices to be realised, and consequently the quantity of the circulating medium depending on that sum, will vary with the numerous variations of these three factors in combination.

That money takes the shape of coin, springs from its function as the circulating medium. The weight of gold represented in imagination by the prices or money-names of commodities, must confront those commodities, within the circulation, in the shape of coins or pieces of gold of a given denomination. Coining, like the establishment of a standard of prices, is the business of the State.

During their currency, coins wear away, some more, others less. Name and substance, nominal weight and real weight, begin their process of separation. Coins of the same denomination become different in value, because they are different in weight.

This fact implies the latent possibility of replacing metallic coins by tokens of some other material, by symbols serving the same purposes as coins.

The tokens keep company with gold, to pay fractional parts of the smallest gold coin. The weight of metal in the silver and

“If the split between sale and purchase becomes too pronounced, their oneness asserts itself by producing — a crisis”

copper tokens is arbitrarily fixed by law. When in currency, they wear away even more rapidly than gold coins. Therefore things that are relatively without value, such as paper notes, can serve as coins in its place. We allude here only to inconvertible paper money issued by the State and having compulsory circulation.

Some one may ask why gold is capable of being replaced by tokens that have no value. But it is capable of being so replaced only in so far as it functions exclusively as coin, or as the circulating medium, and as nothing else. Each piece of money is a mere coin, or means of circulation, only so long as it actually circulates. The minimum mass of gold remains constantly within the sphere of circulation, continually functions as a circulating medium, and exists exclusively for that purpose. Its movement therefore represents nothing but the continued alternation of the inverse phases of the metamorphosis $C - M - C$, phases in which commodities confront their value-forms, only to disappear again immediately. The independent existence of the exchange value of a commodity is here a transient apparition, by means of which the commodity is immediately replaced by another commodity. Hence, in this process which continually makes money pass from hand to hand, the mere symbolical existence of money suffices. Its functional existence

absorbs, so to say, its material existence. Being a transient and objective reflex of the prices of commodities, it serves only as a symbol of itself, and is therefore capable of being replaced by a token. One thing is, however, requisite; this token must have an objective social validity of its own, and this the paper symbol acquires by its forced currency.

But as soon as the series of metamorphoses is interrupted, as soon as sales are not supplemented by subsequent purchases, money becomes petrified into a hoard. Hoarding serves various purposes in the economy of the metallic circulation. In order that the mass of money, actually current, may constantly saturate the absorbing power of the circulation, it is necessary that the quantity of gold and silver in a country be greater than the quantity required to function as coin. This condition is fulfilled by money taking the form of hoards. These reserves serve as conduits for the supply or withdrawal of money to or from the circulation, which in this way never overflows its banks.

The development of money into a medium of payment makes it necessary to accumulate money against the dates fixed for the payment of the sums owing. While hoarding, as a distinct mode of acquiring riches, vanishes with the progress of civil society, the formation of reserves of the means of payment grows with that progress.

CREDIT-MONEY springs directly out of the function of money as a means of payment. Certificates of the debts owing for the purchased commodities circulate for the purpose of transferring those debts to others.

When the production of commodities has sufficiently extended itself, money begins to serve as the means of payment beyond the sphere of the circulation of commodities. It becomes the commodity that is the universal subject-matter of all contracts. When money leaves the home sphere of circulation, it strips off the local garbs which it there assumes, of a standard of prices, of coin, of tokens, and of a symbol of value, and returns to its original form of bullion. In the trade between the markets of the world, the value of commodities is expressed so as to be universally recognised. Hence their independent value-form also, in these cases, confronts them under the shape of universal money. It is only in the markets of the world that money acquires to the full extent the character of the commodity whose bodily form is also the immediate social incarnation of human labour in the abstract.

What is Irish Republicanism? Part 3

Stalinism and the IRA

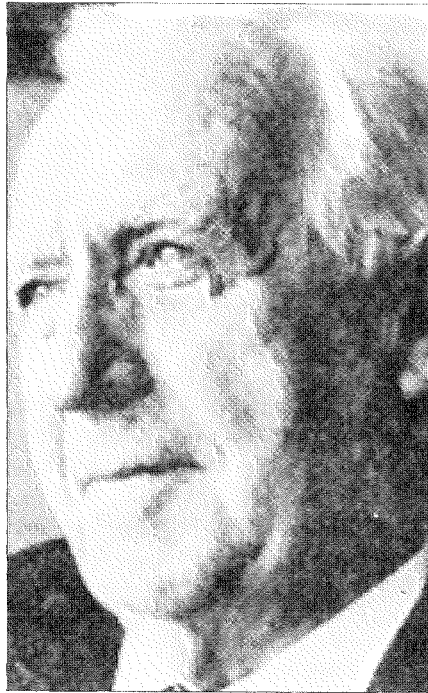
By John O'Mahony

THE IRA's "Border Campaign" — of guerrilla attacks from the South on Northern Ireland state targets — was called off in March 1962. It seemed to many, including such academic experts on guerrilla movements as Bowyer Bell, that Ireland's strange and archaic militarist Republicanism had finally shrivelled into nothingness. What place could there be for it in prosperous "modern" Western Europe? Or in the comparative prosperity of the Six Counties?

The conventional wisdom was that the Welfare State had reconciled Northern Catholics to partition, or at any rate drained much of the life from their opposition to it. Though they were victims of job and housing discrimination, and local government vote-cheating, they did benefit in equal measure with the Protestants from the National Health Service, the social benefits, and the educational possibilities introduced by the British Labour government after 1945. No such amenities were available in the South, nor anything like them. The "second class citizens" in the working-class ghettos of the North were on average a great deal better off than working-class full citizens in the Free State/Republic. Those Six Counties Catholics who were not reconciled could be coerced, and were.

The 1956-62 campaign had established that Catholic nationalist zealots from the South would never "liberate" a "British-occupied Ireland" where the Protestant-Unionist two-thirds of the people, the main "British occupying force", were implacably hostile to them and determined to oppose what they wanted; and the other third were at best only passively sympathetic to them.

To revive after 1962, Catholic Republicanism would have to make the Northern Ireland minority the fulcrum of its efforts to move the status quo. Passive support for militarist champions would have to change into a widespread mass revolt. To set the Northern Catholics in motion against the Six



Paedár O'Donnell — a central figure in the move by the IRA in the 1920s and early 1930s towards official Communism

Counties state would take something other than appeals for a united Ireland — a ground-level campaign for their betterment, for Catholic-Protestant equality within the Six Counties and against second-class citizenship. The IRA which had crashed to virtual nothingness at the end of the Border campaign had been incapable of that. The survivors would have to be taught a new approach. Left-wing populist Republicanism, buried since the 1930s, would have to reappear — and play the role of incubator for a rebirth of old-style militarist Republicanism in the early Provisional IRA. Those who, in the main unwittingly, prepared the rebirth of militarist Republicanism, called themselves "socialists" or "Republican socialists". In fact they were Stalinists of varying hues, or the pupils and tools of Stalinists. The story of Republicanism in the seeding decade of the 1960s is a tragedy of confused identities, masked actors, and actors who don't know who or what they are, blundering around a darkened stage — a story in which goals and objectives turn into their opposites, in which those who set out to turn Republicanism to the left and

towards politics triggered the Provos' long war.

The Republicanism whose devotees mounted the "Border Campaign" of 1956-62 was an archaic revolutionary sect. The emergence of that archaic militarist Republicanism in the late 1930s was a direct result of the success of De Valera's "reform Republicanism" on the one side, and the utter failure of Stalinist-influenced left-wing Republicanism on the other (the Republican Congress of 1934). That failure was, it has been argued in part 2 of this article, fundamentally the responsibility of Stalinism.

But more. The entire history of Republicanism since the civil war of 1922-3 is impossible to grasp apart from Stalinism. We have touched on this question in part 2. We must now examine in some considerable detail the symbiosis of Stalinised Communism and post-civil-war Republicanism.

Against everything that follows, the question can reasonably be raised: even without the work of the Stalinists, would not Republicanism have survived, sustained by the official ideology of the 26 Counties state and a big "unredeemed" Catholic nationalist population in the Six Counties? Most likely. In historic fact, however, Stalinism has intertwined and cross-bred with Republicanism since the 1920s. In the 1960s, it played maybe the decisive role in sustaining it ideologically and preparing its revival. The reader must judge on the historical facts.

To tell the story, we must start with the beginnings of Communism in Ireland, before Stalinism.

Communists in the civil war

OF course, the Communist International supported the Irish in their war of independence against Britain (January 1919 to July 1921). The very important "Theses on the National and Colonial Question" of the Communist International's Second Congress (July-August 1920) were understood to apply to Ireland.

"The Communist International should collaborate provisionally with the revolutionary movement of the colonies and

Parts 1 and 2 of this study of Irish Republicanism, taking the history up to the end of the Border Campaign in 1962, appeared in *Workers' Liberty* 57 and 58.

backward countries, and even form an alliance with it, but it must not amalgamate with it; it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage".

The Theses restated the doctrine propounded by Karl Marx in 1850 for communist work with the revolutionary nationalists and democrats of that time. The communists, keeping their political and organisational independence, would ally with such people for common goals, "marching separately and striking together". Retrospectively, this was broad endorsement of what James Connolly had done in 1916, if not of the way it was done*.

The Communist Party of Ireland was born twinned to the national question in a way that prefigured what Stalinism would

do to it. At the start it was mistaken one-sidedness; soon, it would be a matter of cynical manipulation in the interests of the Stalinist Russian ruling class.

The CPI chose to ally with the revolutionary nationalists in the civil war which started a few months after the party was founded, and not with the labour movement, which opposed the drift to civil war with a one-day general strike. Because of its size, the CP was a mere tail of the more militant revolutionary nationalists. It could not hope to lead the revolutionary nationalist movement, and therefore it was led along after it. It is possible to think, as the writer does, that this approach was broadly correct, its shortcomings inevitable in the circumstances, and yet see it in the light of later events as a prefiguration or indication of a propensity that would cause great damage in the future.

The first Communist Party of Ireland was formed out of the Socialist Party of Ireland in September 1921, and formally declared and named the following month. The War of Independence had ended in a truce that July. British forces were still occupying Ireland. In December 1921 and early January 1922, Sinn Féin, and with it Dail Éireann, would split into supporters and opponents of the Treaty with Britain — "Free Staters" and "Republicans". In its aspects which split Sinn Féin, the Treaty had been dictated by Britain, using the threat of "immediate and terrible war".

Britain also used trickery, assuring the Nationalist Irish negotiators that partition would only be for a short period. Yet the question of partition played very little part in the Dail's impassioned debates. Nobody felt they could do much about it, for now. The questions of Ireland continuing allegiance to the British monarchy, and Britain continuing to have military bases in Ireland, were more overtly central.

Five months later, Michael Collins, acting on a British ultimatum to disarm the anti-Treaty Republicans, launched open civil war. Symbolically, he borrowed British field guns to fire on the Republican headquarters in Dublin. The civil war was soon over in Dublin, but it would continue in the south and west for a year. It was a savage war by the Irish possessing classes, using a Free State army many of whose soldiers were mercenary former British army men, to assert their "law and order" and consolidate their state. The Free Staters were, and were seen as, enforcers of the British dictate they had reluctantly accepted.

The CPI

THE SPI, part of which reorganised itself as the CPI in late 1921, was a feeble, almost moribund, little organisation. When the leaders of the SPI, Cathal O'Shannon and William O'Brien (who was also the acting leader of the Irish Transport and

* Before the 1916 Rising, the Citizen Army which Connolly led had merged with the Irish Volunteers in a national army. Though James Connolly's influence can be seen in the 1916 Proclamation — in its explicit assumption, for example, that women had the right to vote, though they had not yet won it in Britain — they made no independent political statement. Connolly's advice to his comrades — 'We are going out to be slaughtered, but if we should win, hold on to your rifles, for some are with us now who will not go as far as we want to go' — has come down to us only as disputed hearsay.

What happened when

DECEMBER 1918: Westminster election.

Sinn Féin wins 73 of the 105 Irish seats and sets up a separate Irish parliament, Dail Éireann.

January 1919 - July 1921: War of Independence. Truce in July 1921.

September 1921: Communist Party of Ireland founded.

December 1921: Collins and Griffith, under threat from Britain of "immediate and terrible war", sign a Treaty which gives the 26 Counties of southern Ireland "Dominion" status — like Canada or Australia — but requires them to keep allegiance to the British monarchy and keep British naval bases in Ireland.

June 1922: After the Treaty has been approved by the Dail, and then in a Free State general election, the Free State government launches civil war against the diehard Republicans.

May 1923: The IRA "dumps arms" and abandons the civil war.

October 1923: Moscow launches the

"Peasant International" (Krestintern).

Late 1923: The Comintern tells the CPI to dissolve and join the Irish Workers' League, set up by trade-union leader Jim Larkin after his return from the USA.

June-July 1924: At its Fifth Congress, the Comintern codifies a turn towards looking for nationalist movements and "worker-peasant parties" which can supplement the Communist Parties as foreign allies of the USSR.

November 1925: The IRA separates from Sinn Féin. Most of Sinn Féin goes with De Valera into Fianna Fáil (1926) and into parliamentary politics. The IRA swings left, to sympathy for the USSR and (Stalinised) communism.

1926: A section of the old CPI reconstitutes itself as the Workers' Party of Ireland, outside the IWL. The Comintern tells them to dissolve and rejoin the IWL. Some do; the rest maintain the WPI for two or three years longer.

August 1927: De Valera's faction of Sinn Féin, now called Fianna Fáil, take their seats in the Dail.

1930: The Comintern, giving up on Larkin's Irish Workers' League, reorganises its Irish supporters as the "Revolutionary Workers' Groups" and then (from June 1933) as a new "Communist Party of Ireland".

July 1931: The IRA launches a political party, Saor Éire, pledged to fight "Irish capitalism". It is quickly quashed by condemnation from the Bishops and government repression.

December 1931: The Statute of Westminster concedes almost complete independence to the "Dominions" of the British Empire — the Free State included.

February 1932: De Valera wins a general election. Over the next six years his government levers the Free State into full political independence. The 26 Counties are neutral in World War 2, 1939 to 1945.

General Workers' Union), were expelled in the course of the birth of the CPI, it was for "non-attendance"... The CPI would be weak like its parent group.

A "Bolshevik group" had existed for some time within the SPI. It was led by Paddy Stephenson, Sean MacLoughlin, James Connolly's son Roddy, and a returned Irish-American, Eamonn McAlpine. These were mainly young people. MacLoughlin had been with James Connolly in the GPO, the insurgent HQ, during the 1916 Rising, and had been promoted to Commandant during the fighting. He was then 15 years old. Roddy Connolly was about the same age. They were rooted personally in the national liberation movement. Two other members of the CPI executive committee had been out in Easter Week, Sean McGowan and J J O'Leary. Though believing in James Connolly's dictum that the true measure of national freedom was the fate of the "lower" classes, the first CPI leaders tended to see the main task of Irish communists as the emancipation of Ireland from Britain.

Both Roddy Connolly and Eamonn McAlpine attended the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in July 1920. Connolly was a member of the commission on the National and Colonial Question.

When the CPI emerged from the SPI more than a year later, it immediately took up a position on the far-Republican wing of the nationalist movement organised in Sinn Féin. In London, the Irish delegates led by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith were locked in negotiations which ended with them reluctantly accepting that there could not be a fully independent Ireland, or an Irish Republic, and that there would be partition (temporarily, they believed). They had no authority to accept such terms. They came back to Dublin to fight for their acceptance by the Dail. Even before they came back, the CPI paper, the *Workers' Republic*, was preaching civil war against compromise (see box, this page).

When civil war broke out in late June, some of the CPI leaders, including Roddy Connolly, placed themselves at the disposal of the Republican leadership. After the Republican headquarters at the Four Courts fell to the Free State, early in July, the Republicans soon withdrew from Dublin. The CPI now urged an end to fighting. They issued a manifesto, written by Sean MacLoughlin, urging the Republicans to adopt a radical social policy as a means to rouse support against the Free State.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International had issued a message to the CPI (published in *Workers' Republic*, 1 July 1922: see box, next page). It was a workaday document, focused on imme-

The CPI calls for civil war, 1921

THE young Communist Party had very close ties, personal and ideological, to the revolutionary nationalists. The manifesto abridged here was published in *The Workers' Republic* of 17 December 1921.

MEN and women of Ireland! Workers of Ireland! Today the representatives of the Irish Nation, elected to fight for an Irish Republic, meet to accept or reject, in your name, a Treaty with the Robber Power, England. This Treaty proposes the most shameful betrayal of Ireland's fight for national independence and of the cause of Irish Republicanism.

In exchange for a hollow mockery of the aspirations of the Irish people, Ireland, as a "Free" State, is asked to become an ally of the most hateful tyranny that history has produced. Thinly disguised as partners, we are asked to become lackeys of the British Empire in her efforts to subjugate the whole world and ruthlessly suppress every spark of Freedom that exists.

Another of the long series of betrayals of the Irish people is about to be perpetrated.

On this momentous occasion, the Communist Party of Ireland, as the vanguard of the Irish Working Class, addresses the people of Ireland and in particular the revolutionary workers, to warn them of the danger that confronts them and help to overcome it. We call upon all true revolutionaries in An Dail not to betray the men of Easter Week, not to dishonour their Oath of Allegiance to the Irish Republic, but to denounce the Treaty, reject the terms, and stand fast for the Republic.

The most critical moment in the history of the Irish people has come. No compromise will be tolerated by the Irish working class. For the working class is the only class revolutionary to the end. The politicians of the upper class have always and ever compromised on the most vital principles of the struggle of the people for political and social freedom. They are about to do so again. We proclaim this bitter truth....

This so-called Free State will bring neither Freedom nor peace. Instead, civil war and social hell will be loosed if it is accepted.

The Empire is rocking! It is being broken and crushed in India, destroyed in Egypt, and will soon be torn asunder by proletarian uprising in England itself. Above all, the hostile attitude of America threatens to seal its doom. Faced with the greatest crisis in its history it foregoes its claim to rule unchallenged in Ireland, thereby effects a compromise with the weaker spirits among the Republicans, and

immensely strengthens its position in the coming inevitable conflict with America.

Into this war Ireland will be drawn as a pawn fighting for England's domination of the world. This peace is but the preparation for battle; the lull before the world hurricane. Its moral effect will, as Dr Fogarty says, mean half a navy to England. Its material effect will mean a secure flank for England, complete possession of the most favourable naval and aerial base in Europe, the service of several thousands of bayonets hitherto thrust against her — and no possibility of being "stabbed in the back".

Ireland is to become the outpost on the Atlantic defending the interests of British Imperialists against the attack of the American Finance Kings. The IRA is to become the watchdog of English Capitalists!...

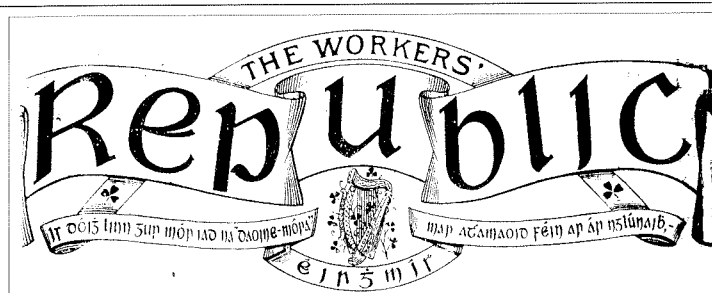
Oh, God! to think that the people of Ireland are asked to renounce the Republic that Connolly and Pearse fought and died for — to renounce such a prize in favour of a phantom mockery for which Griffith talked and negotiated! To think of all the tortures our internees suffered! And all for the privilege of living enslaved and subject, in a "Free" State, and of having their representatives swear allegiance to King George.

As against the British Empire we stand for an Irish Republic. As against any State that will foster or promote the interests of the British Empire we will fight for an Irish Republic. We stand and fight for an Irish Republic against the Free State. We will ally ourselves to whoever fights against the Free State for an Irish Republic.

The Communist Party swears no allegiance to the Free State; will not be faithful to King George. We repudiate with scorn and hatred common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain as she now is. We denounce as a fraud and a mockery the British Commonwealth of Nations. The only true Commonwealth of Nations is the world federation of workers' republics. Only as a unit of such a world federation can Ireland achieve her freedom.

The Communist Party allied to the revolutionary parties of the world alone can lead the way to an Irish Republic.

The Communist Party of Ireland stands with those who fight for Pearse's ideals, Connolly's Republic. On to the Republic! Down with the British Empire! Down with any Free State allied to the Robber Trust! Long live the Irish Republic! Long live the World Federation of Workers' Republics! Work for a Republic! Hold your guns and fight for a Republic! Join the Communist Party of Ireland!



Masthead of
no. 1 (13
August, 1898)
of *The
Workers'
Republic*,
edited by
James
Connolly

The Comintern on the Treaty

MESSAGE from the Comintern "to the workers of Great Britain and Ireland", June 1922 (shortly before the outbreak of the civil war).

THE Irish proletariat is again being faced with a fateful decision. After prolonged peace negotiations English imperialism is again preparing to coerce the Irish people by force of arms.

After all the efforts of the English bourgeoisie to maintain its domination by force of arms had been frustrated by the heroic self-sacrificing defence of the Irish people, it was obliged to come to an understanding with the Irish bourgeoisie. For the semblance of an independent Irish Free State the representatives of the Irish capitalists, Collins, Griffith and Co., sacrificed the fruits of the long and successful struggle, and received in return as a Judas reward the right to exploit the Irish workers together with the English bourgeoisie.

The party of small peasants and of those workers who are not yet class conscious, represented by De Valera, saw through this game. However, the election compromise which this party has arrived at with the Irish exploiters shows their lack of determination to fight against the latter. The working class elements of this party, and above all the IRA, which consists mostly of proletarian elements, are justified in being indignant at this pact, and seeing in it the beginning of a future betrayal.

The Irish Labour Party is fully aware that every attempt at emancipation on their part will be hopeless until the party will direct its struggle against the twofold oppression of English imperialists and Irish capitalists. Nevertheless the Irish Labour Party is much too opportunist to continue the revolutionary traditions of Connolly and Jim Larkin. In all questions concerning real independence and the Irish Republican Army, the Irish Labour Party does not go beyond phrases. Instead of demanding complete independence, it clings to an ultra-constitutionalism just like its twin sister the British Labour Party. Instead of supporting the Republican Army under arms, it advocated an army "under the control of the people". Confusion and indecision exists in its own ranks, and prevents it from being the leader of the Irish proletariat.

It is only the young Communist Party of Ireland which has the courage and determination to point to the right path and say:

"It is only after the yoke of the English imperialists has been shaken off that the struggle against the Irish exploiters will have any chance of success! It is only after the establishment of real independence that the class struggle will be able to develop untrammelled by any national question".

The attitude of the proletarian majority of the IRA is proof that the Irish Communist Party, notwithstanding its short existence, is on the right path and represents the will of the Irish working class. The clearer and more determined it pursues this path the sooner will the English and Irish capitalists understand that the large majority of the Irish people, the workers, are not inclined to have filched from them the fruits of a long and self-sacrificing struggle for the semblance of independence which is being offered to them.

The English capitalist class is fully aware of this, and at the moment when it sees that the Irish workers refuse to be swindled on this question, but demand from England a real free state, it will again land its troops in Ireland, and is ready to renew the war rather than grant an independence which would interfere with its plans of exploitation.

Workers of Great Britain! Your duty now consists in frustrating this predatory campaign of your bourgeoisie! Do not allow the Irish people to be subjugated once more by the English capitalists!

Workers and peasants of Ireland! You must be fearless and determined in your struggle for the liberation of Ireland, and thus continue your fight for your own emancipation. But you must bear in mind that liberation from the yoke of the English oppressors is only a prelude to the great final struggle for the abolition of the reign of your own exploiters. In this struggle the Irish Communist Party and the Communist International will assist you with counsel and action.

Long live the Irish people freed from national oppression!

Long live the Irish proletariat!

Long live the solidarity of the English and Irish exploited workers!

diate concerns, the first of which was the resistance to the Free State's compromise with the British Empire. Even so, it is a notably one-sided, even politically crass, document.

There was already, here, an "infection" from Republican mysticism, or at any rate a parallel to it. "It is only after the establishment of real independence that the class struggle will be able to develop untrammelled by any national question". What did "real" independence mean? A greater emancipation for small nations than that given by political independence alone could be won only through international socialist class struggle, not prior to it. The Comintern statement also ignored the fact that the question of Irish independence sharply divided the working class, and that only with a democratic program broader than independence, to address that division, could united workers' struggle develop.

Social republicanism?

THE CPI was appealing to Republicans to adopt a social program which would rally people to "the Republic". For them, this meant an appeal to fight for a different Republic, a Workers' Republic. It was propaganda for communism. So had been James Connolly's much-quoted formulation: "The cause of Ireland is the cause of labour; the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland". Connolly attempted to fuse the national struggle with the working-class interest, and to define the nationalist dimension by the interests of the working class.

But this approach was a two-edged sword. It needed only a certain shift in perspective to convert it from an attempt to enlist a certain sort of nationalist for the cause of working-class socialism, into its opposite — co-option of working-class and broader social concerns as sources of nourishment for nationalism and nationalist projects. With that shift, the working-class interests are no longer paramount. They are subordinate to the national question. This is populism. It is a confusion that recurs again and again in Irish politics, down to this century's end.

Having issued their manifesto, Sean MacLoughlin and Roddy Connolly travelled south to Republican-held territory in Cork to try to persuade the Republican military leader Liam Lynch to adopt their program. Lynch, a 30 year old small-town shop assistant, refused, telling them he was a soldier and not a politician. Symbolically, the CPI emissary Sean MacLoughlin stayed with Lynch, rejoined the IRA, and was immediately restored to the rank of commandant.

In the writer's opinion, the CPI and

the Comintern were right to side with the revolutionary nationalists once the lines were drawn — but, as we have seen, the CPI's stance went much further than that.

The civil war would end in May 1923, after Liam Lynch was killed on the Knockmealdown mountains. However, one prominent Republican, Liam Mellows, who had been captured after the Four Courts fell, picked up the ideas in MacLoughlin's CPI manifesto. He incorporated them in letters on strategy and tactics smuggled out of Mountjoy Jail, which were captured and published in the *Irish Independent* in September 1922. Mellows gave the ideas a Republican-populist twist. The point of the social policy was to win support for the nationalist revolutionaries, not, as with James Connolly and the CPI even in its nationalist one-sidedness, to win the Workers' Republic. "The unemployment question is acute. Starvation is facing thousands of people. The official labour movement has deserted the people for the fleshpots of Empire. The Free State government's attitude towards striking postal workers makes clear what its attitude towards workers generally will be. The situation created by all these must be utilised for the Republic..."

The IWL

HALFWAY through the year of civil war, there was a strong recoil within the CPI against the national-liberationist, anti-imperialist one-sidedness that had so far characterised the party. The first CPI congress was held in Dublin on 20 January 1923. There were 23 people at the Congress, 22 of them from Dublin, though the party could claim a few loose affiliates outside the city. Roddy Connolly failed even to get re-elected to the Executive Committee. The party now turned strongly to the working-class movement.

In the War of Independence and the civil war there had been an eruption of small-scale labour militancy and the declaration of soviets by isolated strike committees in perhaps 40 separate cases. What the young CPI might have achieved had it been allowed to learn, think, and develop, helped by the Communist International, cannot be known. The CPI was killed off by the Comintern, which in late 1923 told it to dissolve and its members to join a new organisation, the Irish Workers' League, set up by Jim Larkin. The difficulty was that the IWL never really existed!

Jim Larkin, the founder of the modern Irish labour movement, had been released from prison in the USA in 1923, and



A representative figure of "reform Republicanism", Sean Lemass. He took part in the Easter Rising, was one of de Valera's chief deputies in government from 1932, and later opened up the Irish economy to the world market as Taoiseach after 1958.

returned to Ireland after nine years' absence. He had participated in the US communist movement, and still had great authority and popularity with the Dublin workers. When, in circumstances which are outside our concern here, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union split in 1924, two thirds of its members in Dublin (16,000) followed Larkin in founding the Workers' Union of Ireland. Larkin was a great charismatic rouser and leader of workers, but he was erratic, disorganised and incapable of accepting constraint.

The Irish Workers' League never had much existence outside of Larkin. It had no membership structure, dues or branches. It was a name, an occasional electoral identity, and a sub-section of the Workers' Union of Ireland, which was affiliated to the Profintern, the communist International of labour unions.

That it made sense to the Communist International to try to group the forces of Irish communism around Larkin is understandable. A great deal might have been done. Larkin and his son, "Young Jim", repeatedly got large votes in Dublin. In 1927, Larkin was elected to the Dail, though he was then disqualified as an undischarged bankrupt. 500 attended the meeting to launch the Irish Workers' League. When Lenin died in January 1924, Larkin led 6,000 workers through the streets of Dublin in a procession of mourning.

The tragedy was that Larkin could not

organise, nor educate, the people who would have followed him much further. The Communist Party of Great Britain tried to help organise the IWL, sending over an experienced party leader, Bob Stewart, but with little result.

Those who had organised the CPI set up a successor to that organisation, the Workers' Party of Ireland, in 1926, believing nothing could be done with the IWL. They published a paper called *Hammer and Plough*, then later *The Workers' Republic*. The prominent veteran socialist Republicans Maud Gonne and Charlotte Despard were on the WPI executive. When the Comintern told the WPI to dissolve and "join" the IWL, some of the leaders, Roddy Connolly for example, once more accepted Comintern discipline and did as they were told. Most of the members refused, and maintained the WPI for two or three years.

That in broad outline is the story of Irish communism in the 1920s. We will now explore the politics of it, in connection with the changes in Ireland and in the Comintern in that period.

The Free State evolves

THE Free State consolidated itself, and so did the Northern sub-state. A functioning parliamentary democracy survived the civil war. In 1927, De Valera would lead the major Republican forces into the Dail, against whose majority vote they had been in revolt, thus massively strengthening the bourgeois-democratic system. After March 1932, the bourgeois democracy would survive the installation of the losers of the civil war as the government, and the consequent dislocations of the quasi-militarised Blueshirt opposition and the Economic War with Britain.

More. De Valera would expand the independence of the 26 Counties until it was true for him to claim in 1937 that the Free State was a Republic in external association with the British Empire or Commonwealth. In 1938 De Valera negotiated the removal of the three remaining British naval bases, thus creating the possibility of a fully independent, neutral, foreign policy in World War 2.

Even from the early days of the Free State, those who had accepted Michael Collins' view that the Treaty gave them "the freedom to win freedom" had worked at expanding that freedom. The Statute of Westminster in 1931, giving effective independence to all the Dominions (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Free State), was in some part the result of their work at successive Imperial Conferences. The "national revolutionary"

movement discerned in the Comintern's 1920 resolution, and by James Connolly, gave way to successful national reformism.

The great failure of the "national reformists" was that they neither ended partition, nor rationalised it by the transfer of the extensive Catholic-nationalist majority border areas to the Free State. They abandoned the democratic principle of the right of the Catholics not to be held against their will, perhaps because they saw the Catholics in the Six Counties' border areas as a future argument for Irish unity. In 1925, Professor Eoin MacNeill — he who had been responsible for the collapse of the plan for a national rising in 1916, and the consequent isolation of Dublin — took on behalf of the Free State government a cash payment from Britain as compensation for accepting partition, and came back to Ireland boasting that he had got "a good price".

Communist policy had to take these developments into account. It also had to take account of the fact that partition left most of the industrial proletariat of Ireland in the Northern state, and that the proletariat in most of the 26 Counties was in a situation not unlike that described for Ennis in part 2 of this article.

Partition

PARTITION was radically different from the Catholic-nationalist depiction of it as a matter of "British-occupied Ireland" that came, through Stalinist influence, to dominate most of the left both within Ireland and outside it. The Six Counties entity was, of course, a British imperialist imposition. The Catholics were the majority in nearly half the land area of the sub-state. Ultimately the Six Counties is an unviable unit.

Nonetheless, the internal Irish root of partition was the existence of a minority, distinct from the rest of the Irish, who demanded separation from the Irish majority and unity with the UK. To Catholic chauvinists these were "bad", "traitorous", "quisling" Irish, or "colons" (300 or 400 years after their community had settled in Ireland!), but this view was neither true to reality nor compatible with the democratic principle on which Catholic-nationalist Ireland itself had claimed and won separation from Britain.

In the Ireland that emerged in the mid 1920s, the Ulster Protestant-unionists had self-determination. The 26 Counties population had something very close to it. The only part that could meaningfully be called "occupied Ireland" was the borderland Catholic-majority areas of the Six Counties (Fermanagh, Tyrone, South Armagh, Derry

City) — and these were "occupied" by the Protestant-unionist Irish sub-state.

The rights of the Six Counties' Catholic second-class citizens, and of southern Protestants and other non-Catholics — these were properly matters of concern for democrats and socialists. But to make "Irish unity" a central, even all-shaping, concern — that did not necessarily follow. The idea of conquering Northern Ireland, and forcing the compact Protestant-unionist population of north-east Ulster into a united Ireland, was repugnant both to democracy and to Wolfe Tone republicanism. If a unitary Ireland could be achieved at all now, it could not be done by force, and in any case should not be done by force. A federal Ireland, or maybe a more equitable partition, in which the Catholic majority areas were allowed to choose the Six or the 26 Counties states, were the only possibilities.

Though the attitudes to the North of post-civil-war Republicans, both reformists (De Valera) and revolutionaries, were subsumed into their general anti-Britishness and "anti-imperialism", they all rejected the idea of force against the Northern Protestants. They knew it could not achieve its goal.

The political prerequisites

THE precondition for serious socialist and revolutionary politics in Ireland was a rational response to these two realities: the evolution of the Free State into real independence, and the fact that the opposition to an island-wide state came from the majority in the Six Counties state — Irish people who had been willing in 1914 to fight against the British government rather than accept Irish unity.

The pre-1914 nationalist and unionist Irish bourgeois politicians had prepared the way for the brutal and poisonous partition of 1921-2 by their long decades of indifference to finding a properly democratic constitutional settlement in Ireland. It fell to the left to find one in the messy aftermath of Ireland's "bourgeois revolution". Divisions on the "constitutional question" had led to murderous and long-term division in the Irish working class. As a condition of political life, the Irish working class needed its own "constitutional proposals", a mutually-agreed Protestant-Catholic working class idea of how they could live together without the oppression which the Six Counties Catholics felt and the Six Counties Protestants feared from a united Ireland.

The tendency of both the early communists and the left Republicans was to blur the issue of conflicting national identities and postulate future Irish unity as unity of the common people in a Republic

as radically different from the official Republic of 1919-22 as it was from British monarchism — the Workers' Republic. But it was not and could not be an answer. France and Walloon Belgium will not necessarily unite as one state immediately after both become socialist.

There was a powerful communist literature on this question, and clear-cut model proposals — "wide regional autonomy and fully democratic local government, with the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions determined by the local inhabitants themselves on the basis of their economic and social conditions, national make-up of the population, etc." (as a Bolshevik resolution of 1913 put it). There had even been some talk among Republicans in the early 1920s, including Eamonn de Valera, about "federalism". One of the leading publicists of Sinn Féin, Aodh de Blacáin, talked about "cantonisation" as a possible solution in a book published in late 1921 between the truce and the Treaty.

It would seem that only the chauvinist mystics and obscurantists of the different nationalisms could object to some such arrangement of Irish affairs. Not so.

Stalinism and nationalism

THE Comintern's Fourth Congress, at the end of 1922, was the last Congress led by Lenin and Trotsky. The Fifth Congress, in June-July 1924, was, arguably, the last gathering that deserves to be called a congress. The Sixth and Seventh Congresses (1928 and 1935) were rigidly-controlled Stalinist charades.

The Lenin-Trotsky Comintern, whose day-to-day leadership was in the hands of Grigori Zinoviev and Nikolai Bukharin, made mistakes. They were honestly discussed and corrected. The Comintern after the Fourth Congress differed in two respects. Its mistakes, most importantly the catastrophic bungling of the possible German revolution in October 1923, were not admitted, not discussed, and not honestly corrected. And it came to be dominated by, and used to serve, the interests of the party bureaucracy in the USSR, which by 1921 or 1922 had fused with the state bureaucracy and increasingly served its own interests. The Comintern was being taken over by a solidifying new ruling class in the USSR.

By late 1922 the Comintern executive had (privately) come to criticise the one-sidedness of the CPI on the national liberation question. But by the Fifth Congress, 18 months later, the new Stalinist approach to the national question was being openly codified — it meant using national questions to serve USSR interests, or to

supplement weak communist organisations, and using them inorganically and artificially, irrespective of their proper weight and importance for working-class communists in a given situation.

It was no longer the old Comintern. Lenin had died in January 1924. Sections of the Russian party bureaucracy had fused with the state bureaucracy and seized political power. The Stalinist doctrine that "socialism in one country" could be built in backward Russia would not be promulgated by Stalin until October 1924, but its elements had gone like a prefiguring shadow before it. The idea which would henceforth dominate the USSR's foreign policy was that there would be no new working-class revolutions for a long time, perhaps decades, and consequently that the role of the foreign Communist Parties was to work in their own countries at whatever would help the USSR survive. The Comintern and its parties would increasingly be pliant, paid-for tools for manipulating workers in the perceived interests of Russian policy.

As Trotsky explained it, looking back from 1928, the core of it was a loss of confidence in the working class of the West — and also in the Communist Parties. Needing international frontier guards for the USSR, the troika at the head of the USSR and the Comintern, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin, looked for ways of supplementing or bypassing the CPs. They sought bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, nationalist and peasant allies, and subordinated working-class interests to those allies, that is, ultimately, to the Stalinist estimates of the needs of USSR foreign policy. A new, degenerate, period of the Communist International was inaugurated, the incubation period for the later cynical and open use of the Comintern as a mere department of the Stalinist state.

The Communist Party of China entered the bourgeois-nationalist Guo Min Dang army/party of Chiang Kai Shek, acted as a brake on the militant Chinese workers, and ultimately paid for it with their lives and the lives of many thousands of Chinese workers. It was a caricature re-enactment of the mistakes of James Connolly in 1916, but with much less excuse.

In Britain, the Comintern looked to the leaders of the TUC, and kept the young CPGB's politics subordinate to them even during the General Strike of May 1926, which those trade union leaders were misleading and betraying. In October 1923, the Comintern founded a "peasant International", the Krestintern.

What concerns us here is what this approach meant on the national question. The Fifth Congress adopted a report by one of the Comintern's leading officials, Manuilsky. It claimed to be continuing the

approach codified at the Second Congress. In fact it was radically different. Wherein lay the difference? In the fact that for the Second Congress the national question was an aspect of the proletarian revolutionary movement, and in 1924 and after it became a substitute for it, a "stage" separate from it and counterposed to it. The new emphasis on national issues was part of a search for alternatives to the Communist Parties. National questions were used manipulatively and cynically with an eye on Russian foreign policy and on disrupting such states as Yugoslavia in Russia's interest, irrespective of the effect on working-class politics. In the Comintern's efforts to supplement the CPs with peasant parties and nationalist movements, the CPs became promoters of nationalism instead of working-class advocates of international unity of the proletariat across the national divides on the basis of a common fight for consistent democracy and freedom for all peoples.

For authentic communists, promotion of democratic national rights was a means of mending national divisions in the working class, developing the democratic content of revolutionary nationalism to socialist conclusions, and ultimately dispelling nationalism by satisfying its legitimate democratic demands. For the Stalinists, promotion of selected local nationalisms became a tool for use in the national interests of Russia.

There had been serious errors in the heroic years of the Comintern. So-called "national Bolshevism" had briefly been attempted in Germany, with the CP trying to co-opt German nationalists angry against the Treaty of Versailles into their camp. That was an aberration. From 1924 on, such things would increasingly become the norm.

The example of the Balkans

THE clearest example of the Comintern's trend on the national question in the mid-1920s known to the writer, and therefore the best way to show the pressures and demands on the Irish CPers from the end of the civil war, was in the Balkans.

In 1910 the Balkan socialists had begun to promulgate the idea of a democratic Balkan federation as the answer to the vast mosaic of national, religious and dynastic conflicts in the region. At the end of World War 1 Yugoslavia was formed, to combine Serbia, which had been on the side of the victors, with Croatia, Slovenia and Dalmatia, which had been part of the defeated Austro-Hungarian state. Kosova, "old Serbia", had been annexed by Serbia in 1913, and was given back to Serbia after the war.



In the 1920s, the Comintern tried to use national grievances in the Balkans in the interests of the USSR

Serbia was also given most of Macedonia, from defeated Bulgaria. Apart from those areas, this was in the main a voluntary union. There had for many years been a movement for a South-Slav federation within the Austro-Hungarian empire, notably from the Croats.

However, conflict within the new state erupted from the beginning, between Serbian "centralists" and "federalists" such as the Croatian Peasant Party. The centralists prevailed because many of the federalists chose to boycott the Belgrade assembly (though they were not trying to secede from Yugoslavia) and also, perhaps more decisively, because the centralists had an established state machine and army.

The Balkan Communist Parties, organised in the Balkan Communist Federation, called for a socialist federation of the Balkans. Advocating socialism and federalism, and national autonomy for the component peoples of Yugoslavia, the main CPY leaders thought that Yugoslavia represented progress in itself and also could be a step towards Balkan federation. The Bulgarian regime of Alexander Stambulisky's Peasant Party (1919-23) favoured Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation.

From the Comintern's Fifth Congress onwards, irresistible pressure was brought to bear on the Yugoslav CP not to champion federalism and autonomy for the peoples in the Yugoslav state, but instead to be the best Croat and other nationalists — working for the breakup of the Yugoslav state, whose rulers were very hostile to the USSR and had close links with France. All notions of changing Yugoslavia into a democratic federation were stigmatised as "reformism" and "Austro-Marxism".

The leader of the Croatian Peasant

The 5th Congress

AT the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in 1925, Manuilsky put forward a new approach to the national question. The Comintern was still far from fully-consolidated Stalinism, and Manuilsky hedged all he said with Marxist qualifications. But the drift is clear with hindsight: towards using the national question as a lever for getting the nationalist or even chauvinist movements of selected nationalities to bulk out the international network of support for the USSR.

"At the Second Congress, basing ourselves on the rich experience of the Russian Lenin-Stalin way of putting the national question, we put forward for the first time the idea of the united revolutionary front between the proletariat and the oppressed nations and colonies.... But... at the Second Congress we were unable to recommend concrete methods for the realisation of a workers' united front between the proletariat and the colonies. Only now can we seriously consider a number of new problems on the strength of concrete experience...

"Lately we observe in a number of countries a tendency among large masses of workers to form workers' and peasants' parties with a comparatively radical program for the fight against imperialism. This tendency resulted for instance in the formation of such a workers' and peasants' party in the Dutch Indies, and especially in Java, and in the formation of the Guo Min Dang party in China. It is also due to this tendency that purely peasant parties are being formed such as for instance the Republican Croatian Party of Radic in the Balkans, whose influence is felt beyond Croatia...

"We are faced with the question not only of revolutionary collaboration in existing parties of this kind, but of the advisability of Communists taking the initiative in organising such parties in countries with a low standard of economic development. We notice that Communists approach this question with great timidity with the result that we lose control over the national liberation movement which passes into the hands of native nationalist elements. To this group of questions belongs also the question of the Communist attitude towards various kinds of committees of the national-liberation movement. Imperialist oppression, which reached its culminating point in the post-war period, of course, contributes to the growth of this kind of organisations, which are bound to become more numerous as time goes on. As an example, let us take the Macedonian Committee, headed by Theodore Alexandrov..."

Party, Stephan Radic, had attended the Fifth Congress. His attendance was considered immensely important — an increase in the Yugoslav forces that might "defend the USSR". Zinoviev, the president of the Communist International, and Bukharin, obligingly developed populist ideas about a "new" socialist peasantry.

Radic went back to Yugoslavia, and in 1925 joined the government! But there were other Croat nationalists — the future Ustashe. These were national and religious chauvinists. They were possessed by a murderous "race hatred" of Serbs, and during World War 2 they would, as Nazi stooges, massacre hundreds of thousands of them. Until the mid-1930s the CP would collaborate with them — even when the Ustashe was in the pay of Mussolini, who desired the break-up of Yugoslavia because he coveted Dalmatia — and the Comintern's press would boost them as revolutionary Croatian patriots. This would change only with the turn to Popular Fronts, that is, to the period after 1934-5 when the Comintern accepted and championed the territorial integrity of the existing potentially anti-German states, among them Yugoslavia (and the British and French empires).

Similar policies were pursued in Macedonia. Missionaries of the Bulgarian church had stamped a Bulgarian national identity on the Macedonian peasants. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) had been formed in 1895 to organise guerrilla raids against the Turkish rulers of Macedonia, which it did with the approval and tacit support of the government of Bulgaria (independent from Turkey since 1878). Bulgaria won Macedonia in the First Balkan War of 1912, and then lost most of it to Serbia and Greece in the Second War in 1913. In the First World War, IMRO worked with the Bulgarian occupying army in Macedonia and parts of Serbia, allied with the Germans, and was responsible for atrocities against Serbs and Greeks. In the 1920s it worked with those in Bulgaria who desired Balkan union but under explicit and rampant Bulgarian supremacy. It helped overthrow the Stambulisky Peasant Party regime in June 1923. IMRO was now a paid tool of both Bulgarian governments and of Mussolini.

Working-class politics would normally have led the Bulgarian CP to try to win and re-educate IMRO militants. It would certainly not have led them to adopt IMRO's politics, but that is what the CP did. A policy of advocating "Macedonian unity and independence" was imposed on the Greek Communist Party, even though virtually the entire population of Greek Macedonia and Thrace, the areas affected, was Greek*.

As with the IRA, the CP did help crystallise a "left" (less chauvinist, perhaps)

wing within the IMRO. The point is that these were fundamentally the politics of manipulation and bribery for Russian state advantage. The Stalinists' evocations of Lenin's ideas on national rights were arbitrary and false ideologising. Italy pursued similar politics, for Italian state advantage, and more successfully on that level, though not mainly through a party of "its own" such as the purged and Stalinised CPs were for Russia.

Ireland and the 5th Congress

WHAT was the impact of these "5th Congress" politics in Ireland? The Communist International made no objective "theoretical" analysis of "the Irish question" after Dublin got Dominion status and Belfast, Home Rule. Even before Stalinism, there had been little real discussion. Apart from the debate at the Second Congress in 1920, when the Anglo-Irish war was raging, there were two articles in the Communist International magazine, by "Thomas Daragh", who was Roddy Connolly, 20 or 21 years old at the time. The articles adequately retold the old story of the Irish struggle for independence and the labour movement's recent role in it, but that was all. Thus there was very little obstacle of previously-established Marxist culture to the noxious effects of the Comintern's turn.

The post-Lenin turn of the Comintern on the national question — using it to the advantage of the USSR state, and here in particular against the UK — ruled out a working-class approach. The nationalist discontent in Ireland, and the existence of a revolutionary Republican movement, were Russian foreign-policy resources to be exploited.

The CPI had begun to correct its mistaken one-sidedness in 1923, but Larkin and the IWL, who now had the Comintern's support, were already "soft" on the nationalists, and in full accord with the demands of the Comintern line after the Fifth Congress. Larkin's pre-1914 paper, *The Irish*

* The Greek Left Opposition, the Archio-Marxists, opposed this policy. Trotsky, in a 1932 discussion with the Archio-Marxists (*Writings, Supplement 1929-33*), asked them searching questions. Were the Greek government's claims that the population of the area was almost all Greek to be trusted? Even if there were as few Macedonian Slavs as the Greek government claimed, what about their rights? The questions indicate an approach. If the population of Greek Macedonia was Greek, then the Comintern policy was wrong; if there were Bulgarians still there forming a majority in any area, they had a right to autonomy or secession.

Worker had had much in it of the loose, sloppy, sentimental, conventional Irish nationalist culture cultivated by the Home Rule party, a political culture that the harder-headed Connolly had bitterly despised, calling it "sunburstery" (after the sunburst flags, supposedly from ancient Ireland, that the Home Rulers often carried).

In July 1927, shortly after de Valera's new reform-Republican party, Fianna Fail, had won 44 seats in a general election to the Free Staters' 47, the important government minister Kevin O'Higgins was assassinated. Severe government repression followed, suppressing civil liberties. What did Larkin and the IWL do? Defying a ban on meetings, Larkin addressed a large meeting near the Workers' Union of Ireland headquarters. He moved this resolution:

"That this mass meeting of citizens, union officers and union men and women, holding diverse political views [call on] the leader of the second largest party elected to the Dail [to summon a meeting] of representative men and women of all parties opposed to the government [to organise a conference] and draw up a programme with a view to meeting the tyrannical measures of government, and to find a common denominator in defence of the lives, liberties and rights of the common people."

De Valera responded with a statement. "Following on a request sent me from a mass meeting of workers held in the city last night", he was calling a meeting of opposition political parties and trade unions. Only Larkin and De Valera attended. After a ten minute chat, they went about their own political affairs.

That appeal for a cross-class joint program with bourgeois nationalism was representative of Larkin's approach — and it fitted perfectly with the Comintern's conceptions. Larkin had another political trait: implacable hostility (which was returned, with interest) to the rest of the labour movement, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and Labour Party alike. This gave his political tailending of the "revolutionary nationalists" a caricature quality.

At the beginning, the WPI attempted to analyse Irish national reality as it was evolving. Roddy Connolly now put the emphasis



A political turning point: Eamonn de Valera (right) and his deputy Frank Aiken walk to the Dail to take their seats, breaking the tradition of Republican abstention. Within less than five years de Valera would form a government.

on class, reiterating James Connolly's approach to the national question: only on the basis of the workers' struggle for emancipation could the fight for national freedom be carried to a successful end. De Valera, said Connolly, represented the "national bourgeoisie". This posing of the question was still within the nationalist framework, but it was a left twist to it. It was far to the left of both Larkin and the Comintern.

WPI and IWL

But the WPI soon struck their tentatively independent political flag in deference to the Comintern. Even those who continued the WPI in defiance of Comintern instructions became defenders and propagandists of the Comintern's political line. In the 1927 general election the WPI called for unity "among all progressive parties", and "unity of the left-wing forces", "to fight the common enemy" and defeat the Free Staters. For the WPI, the "left-wing forces" included Fianna Fail, the rump Sinn Fein (from which the IRA had separated in November 1925, and De Valera

in March 1926), and the Labour Party. Larkin excluded the Labour Party.

When, in October 1926, the Comintern told the WPI to disband and "join" the IWL, it also called on the IWL to reorganise. For what political purpose? To "carry on the revolutionary struggle for national independence of the Irish people, to complete... separation from the Empire... [by establishing] a united front with the nationalist organisations which have not abandoned and betrayed the cause of independence". Trying to win Comintern favour, the WPI paper defined De Valera and Fianna Fail as "national revolutionary forces still carrying on the struggle against British imperialism... They are the standard-bearers of the national revolutionary struggle and must be supported". Their election would be "one more step towards the Irish workers' republic". The WPI's advocacy of a Labour-Fianna Fail coalition put them politically to the right of the Labour leaders!

All of this lacked any critical assessment of the "national question" at this point, and any all-island — or even Free State — working-class perspective. The WPI, too, declined. In 1928 the Comintern endorsed Larkin's position: no support to or collaboration with the Labour Party — work with the nationalists.

The IRA turns "communist"

WE will now examine the development of left-wing Republicanism to the point where a "national Communist Party" — not so called — emerged out of the IRA.

The "second" Sinn Fein, from 1917 to 1921-2, was a great coalition of separatist Catholic Ireland. Intellectually it hegemonised southern Irish labour too, which played an important collective part in the fight with Britain, including strikes and even a general strike. Though there was more than one reason for it, the Labour Party gave Sinn Fein a clear field for the December 1918 general election. This meant that within the portmanteau Sinn Fein there were people of left-wing views and working-class political sympathies. They were against imperialism and colo-

nialism not only in Ireland, but all over the globe.

In the Dail Eireann debate on the Treaty, Liam Mellows had made an appeal to the deputies not to betray India, Egypt and the other victims of British colonialism by opting for "the fleshpots of Empire" as a 'White Dominion'. Later, jailed and shortly to be shot (in December 1922) by the Free Staters, he echoed the manifesto of the CPI in his own Fenian terms. Republicans, he said, following Wolfe Tone a century and a quarter earlier, are "back to the men of no property".

Those who were determined to continue the fight for the Republic could not but be aware of the Irish social forces against them. In the "split", they had seen the "stake in the country people" rally around the Free Stater wing of Sinn Féin and put their stamp on it. The big farmers, the cattle ranchers, the Church, the Chambers of Commerce (which had rushed to condemn the 1916 Rising), and all those they could influence, stood in behind the Treaty and the Free State's war with the irreconcilables of the IRA. From their own point of view, the IRA now approached James Connolly's idea that national freedom is measured by the fate of the working class. Only by going socially deeper could they go forward in national independence beyond the Free State compromise which the "stake in the country people" had accepted.

A hostile, but perceptive and knowledgeable, analyst of the evolution of the Republican movement, James Hogan, wrote this: "External ideas impinging on the mentality of a party in a revolutionary mood but without any philosophy of its own will produce surprising growth in a very short time. It is not possible to isolate a thing so contagious as a revolution in ideas within geographical or national boundaries".*

In November 1925 the IRA formally separated from Sinn Féin. It was, of course, not an army so much as an armed party. The defection of De Valera's forces from "revolutionary nationalism" to national reformism and parliamentarism further perplexed the IRA.

The search for answers to such questions as who, in social terms, "signed" the Treaty, and which classes betrayed the Republic of 1916-22, led the IRA towards "Communist" ideas. After 1926-7, the IRA travelled towards the Comintern — only it was now the Stalinist. Some Republicans, including David Fitzpatrick and George Gilmore, went for military training to the USSR. In 1925, when there were near-famine conditions in the west of Ireland, left Republicans, such as Maud Gonne, Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, Charlotte Despard and Peadar O'Donnell, were part of a Comintern auxiliary organisation, an Irish

section of the "Workers' International Relief", which organised aid. Other Comintern auxiliaries involved the IRA in their work. Sean MacBride, a central IRA leader and Maud Gonne's son, was secretary of the Irish section of the "League against Imperialism" from 1926, and around 1930 the IRA affiliated to it. In 1930 an Irish section of the Krestintern, the Comintern's peasant international, was set up with Peadar O'Donnell as secretary.

In autumn 1927, David Fitzpatrick, from the IRA headquarters staff, was in Moscow for a congress of the Friends of Soviet Russia, and appointed to the presidium. He told the congress: "When we return to our country, it will be our task to convince our fellow-workers that their hope, their salvation, is bound up with Soviet Russia".

The tragedy was that the USSR and Comintern to which they were drawn were anything but healthy. Later in 1927 a 10 person delegation of IRA headquarters staff and IWL people went to Moscow to attend the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution — exactly as the revolutionary communists led by Trotsky were being expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The IRA expressed their politics of opposition to Irish capitalism in terms of anti-imperialism: "Undo the Conquest". Here they followed James Connolly: the Norman-English conquest signified the imposition of alien class patterns and a ruling class on a supposedly clan-communistic primordial Gaelic society.

But the degree to which the IRA party-army was "communist", or prepared to tolerate "communism" in its leaders, is startling. The explanation lies in the parallelism between many of their own ideas, from nationalist and republican stock and their experience of the Irish national revolution and civil war, and the version of "communism" which they now took on board. There was also much sympathy for the

Russian Revolution among Irish workers and Republicans who had in deference to Connolly's memory taken a sympathetic attitude, at least, towards socialism. They were alienated from and contemptuous of the bourgeois-democratic parliamentary system. In a confused way, the IRA in early 1922, during the stand-off with the supporters of the Treaty which led to the civil war, had seemed to want a military dictatorship — after the model, ironically, of Oliver Cromwell's dealing with compromising, hesitating and corrupt parliamentarians during the English Revolution of the 1640s.

O'DONNELL wrote in *An Phoblacht* on 5 May 1928: "Parliaments are for museums. They will here and forever betray revolution. The thing to work towards today is a national executive of peasant Ireland and town workers organised industrially to seize back the soil and to secure workers' control of industries and services within the co-operative commonwealth".

This is characteristic of both their boldness and their confusion. Workers and farmers are identified; parliamentary democracy is identified with bourgeois rule in a way that is at least open to the anti-democratic conclusions common to the militarist elitism of the IRA party-army and to their Stalinist mentors. The "executive" of the working people of Ireland could be elected by soviets, or something like that — but everything is blurred here, and in a world where Italian fascism had dressed itself ideologically in gutted syndicalist theories of "corporatism" and Stalinist Russia had turned the forms of soviets into their opposites.

An Phoblacht, 1928: "I believe our movement for freedom must be based on the peasant farmers and the town workers, and that we must openly declare ourselves for a government based on this section of the nation".

Again (O'Donnell, *An Phoblacht* 19 April 1930): "There is no longer any possibility of the separatist movement being merely an attack on the military occupation of the country. It must be the mobilisation of the working classes for a transfer of power to the workers... There is no political party in Ireland today standing for anything more than an extension of freedom just to those limits where a native bourgeoisie will be rid of Britain and free to exploit the working class and working farmers in Ireland".

O'Donnell, *An Phoblacht*, 7 February 1931: "Beat the landlord out of life, beat the capitalist out of industry, smash the state machine, arm the workers. Vest in them, in alliance with the working farmers, all the

* James Hogan, Professor of Mathematics at Cork University, was a Blueshirt, one of those — the present Fine Gael party — who split with Owen O'Duffy in 1934. His polemic *Could Ireland Become Communist?* culled its facts, it seems, from the extensive Free State police files. His purpose was to make the most of the case that the IRA was "communist". He feared that De Valera would be a "Kerensky", to be replaced by the revolutionary left. Yet he was acquainted with Marx and the history of socialism and — more so than the Stalinist republicans — with Russian reality of the 1930s. Many of his objections to "communism" were valid objections to Stalinism. Though his views were those of a 1930s "social Catholic", his picture of the evolution of Stalinist republicanism was perceptive.

power over production..." And: "The priest who comes out with the bosses against us will get his good share of the missiles we throw; just leave those issues to the crowd, keep out of the sacristies [i.e. leave the Church as such alone]; keep busy in the struggle and relate our enemies, lay and clerical, to the interests they serve, not the things they say".

An Phoblacht, 14 July 1932: "The state as we know it is the organisation of coercive weapons for upholding the exploiting order... The parliamentary machine, once constituted, becomes the instrument, willing or unwilling, of the exploiting class".

In January 1933, nearly a year after De Valera's reform Republicans came to power, an all-Ireland delegate gathering of the army-party (an "Army Convention") adopted an address to the Irish people:

"We are in favour of shutting out British goods, but we do not believe that this should result in the enrichment of an exploiting manufacturing class. We believe the reorganisation of Irish life demands the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in a state based on the needs of the mass of the people". This was their comment on and alternative to De Valera's nationalist policy of building up Irish capitalist manufacturing behind high tariff walls.

That these were revolutionary socialists can scarcely be disputed. That this organisation could have been the basis for the development of a sizeable communist movement and provided it with a tempered cadre was at least a serious possibility.

Yet in its vagueness and unclarity on the distinction between workers and farmers, in its catch-all idea of "the people", and in its nationalism, the IRA resembled the populist Russian Social Revolutionaries more than the Bolsheviks or the parties of the early Comintern.

Organising farmers

THE IRA differed from out-and-out, or, where such as O'Donnell were concerned, from "out", Communists in their professed Catholicism and in their definition of their socialism in national and not international terms (though they did of course express concern that other nations should do for their people what they advocated for Ireland).

In international politics the IRA were uncritical, even adulatory, of the USSR. They, not the official Stalinists, controlled the Irish "Friends of Soviet Russia". Nor was their "national-socialism" or "national-communism" out of step with the Stalinists.

The IRA which, between 1927 or earlier and 1933, underwent the political

evolution discernible in the quotations above, did not engage in conventional politics. It was on principle against both the Belfast parliament and the Dail as usurping bodies; and it was inclined to be against parliaments as such. Nonetheless, as it turned, under Comintern influence, towards social agitation, the need for a more conventional political wing manifested itself.

In terms of social agitation, the first turn was towards the small farmers of the west. As we have seen, the Comintern's peasant auxiliary, known abbreviatively as the Krestintern, was part of the turn in search of supplements for the worker Communist Parties in their role as foreign-policy and diplomatic makeweights for the USSR. An Irish section of the Krestintern, the "Peasant Committees", or "Working Farmer Committees", was established by the IRA leaders in early 1930.

There was much small-farmer militancy and resentment at the annuities paid to former landlords under the terms of the Land Acts of the British administration from the early 20th and late 19th century; and organising the poor peasants of the west would have been an auxiliary concern of any serious revolutionary working-class movement. It was the chosen *chief* focus of the IRA "communists". A provisional organising committee was set up in January 1930, with O'Donnell as Secretary. Its stated goal was an independent Irish Republic "with power resting on the working farmers and town workers" (*An Phoblacht*, 8 February 1930). The Irish Working Farmers' Committee movement was formally inaugurated at a conference in Galway, on 5 April 1930, which passed this resolution:

"The Irish Working Farmers' Congress declares the exaction of annuities, which are landlordism under another name, to be as objectionable as were the old rents, and warns the political parties that the working farmers are not interested in the legal quibbles nor slushy talk about moral obligations in this matter; these charges are an injustice and should end... This Congress instructs the National Committee to proceed with the organisation of the working farmers of Ireland on the basis of our platform by forming committees of action in the villages and townlands which will conduct the everyday struggle of the working farmers, expose and prevent imperialist terrorism, organise meetings, demonstrations, etc., to explain our programme and methods of struggle".

In 1931, Matt Kent, an old Republican and a small farmer in County Wexford, was one of many who refused to pay, insisting that British land bondholders had no title to tribute from such as himself. In 1932, in Kinnity, in Offaly, a landless man named Pat Craven was to be evicted from a lodge he

Trotsky on worker-peasant parties

Beginning with 1924.... Stalin advanced the formula of the "two-class workers' and peasants' parties for the Eastern countries". It was based on the self-same national oppression which served in the Orient to camouflage opportunism, as did "stabilisation" in the Occident. Cables from India, as well as from Japan, where there is no national oppression, have of late frequently mentioned the activities of provincial "workers' and peasants' parties", referring to them as organisations which are close and friendly to the Comintern, as if they were almost our 'own' organisations, without, however, giving any sort of concrete definition of their political physiognomy; in a word, writing and speaking about them in the same way as was done only a short while ago about the Guo Min Dang...

Although the idea of the two-class parties is motivated on national oppression, which allegedly abrogates Marx's class doctrine, we have already heard about "workers' and peasants'" monogrels in Japan, where there is no national oppression at all. But that isn't all, the matter is not limited merely to the Orient. The "two-class" idea seeks to attain universality. In this domain, the most grotesque features were assumed by the... Communist Party of America in its effort to support the presidential candidacy of the bourgeois, "anti-trust" [anti-monopoly] Senator LaFollette, so as to yoke the American farmers by this means to the chariot of the social revolution... According to Pepper's [American CP leader's] conception, a party of a few thousand members, chiefly immigrants, had to fuse with the farmers through the medium of a bourgeois party and by thus founding a "two-class" party, insure the socialist revolution in the face of the passivity or neutrality of the proletariat...

There remains only for us to recall that the idea of a workers' and peasants' party sweeps from the history of Bolshevism the entire struggle against the Populists (Narodniks), without which there would have been no Bolshevik party... In order to arrive at a revolutionary alliance with the peasantry — this does not come gratuitously — it is first of all necessary to separate the proletarian vanguard, and thereby the working class as a whole, from the petty bourgeois masses. This can be achieved only by training the proletarian party in the spirit of unshakable class irreconcilability.

(Leon Trotsky, *Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International*, 1928).

had occupied for 13 years. When bailiffs and police arrived, 35 men armed with sticks were in occupation to prevent the eviction. On the door they had pinned the Proclamation of the Irish Republic from 1916, and a handwritten notice: "... No tribute to Britain! Down with the landlords new and old! Down with the Land Commission! The land for the people! No rent from the small farmers! Down with the robber banking system. Workers and working farmers unite!"

Such struggles were the business of communists; but they were limited in scope and implications. A bourgeois land redistribution had taken place. By 1932, 65% of the land of the 26 Counties was in holdings of less than 100 acres. The IRA's policy here was for the seizure of some large and middle-sized farms and their redistribution. This — in place of the reorganisation of the large farms under social ownership and workers' control — was in fact regressive. The whole policy amounted to playing with the embers of an Irish agrarian revolution that had essentially won its way, or picking over the bones of the bourgeois revolution already achieved.

Saor Eire

THE Galway congress, presided over by a Clare republican, Sean Hayes, adopted a resolution welcoming the formation of a "Revolutionary Workers' Party", the early name of a new Stalinist movement set up by returning pupils from the "Lenin School" in Moscow, with the help of the CPGB — "so that the common purpose [of workers all over Ireland] may make the town workers and the working farmers brother in the common fight to achieve a free Irish Republic and a workers' state" (*An Phoblacht*, 5 April 1930). O'Donnell gave these greetings to the Dublin workers: the aim of revolutionary Republicans, he said, must be "to set up and defend the Irish Workers' Republic, with power resting, as a Peasant Conference in Galway declared, in councils of the working farmers and working class" (*An Phoblacht*, 12 May 1930). The politics and the orientation are clear.

But the possibilities for those committees were restricted. In July 1931, the IRA, itself a cadre army-party, finally set up a preparatory committee for a new political party, Saor Eire (Free Ireland). What followed was to test the seriousness and moral courage of the IRA leaders, and ultimately prepare the split that came with the Republican Congress in March 1934.

On 26-27 September 1931 a national congress of 150 delegates in Dublin launched Saor Eire. Saor Eire's objective

was declared to be a Workers' and Farmers' Republic. It was "for the overthrow in Ireland of British imperialism and Irish capitalism". It offered "to achieve a revolutionary leadership for [sic] the working classes and working farmers... [and] to organise and consolidate the Republic of Ireland on the basis of the possession and administration by the workers and working farmers of the land, instruments of production, distribution and exchange" (*An Phoblacht*, 10 October 1931). The congress sent greetings to the USSR.

Looking back on the events of the previous 15 years that had brought such change to the island, Saor Eire argued that the War of Independence of 1919-21 had aimed at "separation from England as a means towards building up a native Irish capitalist economy and a policy representing the Irish middle classes". Dail Eireann in 1919, and the IRA as its agent, had represented the Irish capitalists, holding "the people" back from, for example, land seizures in the west. The Treaty, and the civil war to enforce it, were the Irish bourgeoisie consolidating its power. (This was James Connolly's idea that the Republic would be real only if it put the lowest class in power. But Connolly was putting forward a line of march in a future revolution; here, Saor Eire were poking in the embers after the bourgeoisie had consolidated power, still defining revolution by the goal of "the Republic").

Nor did Saor Eire entirely spare the Catholic Church. "It should be put on record that the Irish hierarchy played a part of special viciousness" (*An Phoblacht*, 3 October 1931). Eighteen months earlier, O'Donnell had said that next time, "We will not be making the revolution as Catholics under the bishops, but as workers under working-class leadership" (*An Phoblacht*, 1 February 1930).

Saor Eire seems to have effectively subsumed most of the broader political aspects of the peasant committees. Its platform was drafted by David Fitzpatrick, a fully convinced Stalinist with international Stalinist links, who was also Saor Eire's secretary.

O'Donnell toured the country for Saor Eire with Saklatvala, the former Labour Communist MP for Battersea, and Sean Murray, who would be secretary of a new Communist Party of Ireland formed in 1933. There were large Saor Eire meetings all over the 26 Counties, prefiguring the response to the Republican Congress in 1934. A contemporary (Hogan) wrote that Saor Eire "spread like wildfire". Its skeleton structure was provided by the IRA and the Stalinists, now called the Revolutionary Workers' Groups.

But the Bishops declared war on the new attempt by the IRA to move into more

active politics, denouncing Saor Eire as "communistic". And in October 1931 the government banned a whole galaxy of organisations, from Saor Eire through the Friends of Soviet Russia to the Revolutionary Workers' Groups.

Some IRA leaders rushed to prostrate themselves spiritually before the bishops. In first place was Sean MacBride, who had worked with the League Against Imperialism since 1926, and whose comrade and mother, Maud Gonne, had been on the executive of the Workers' Party of Ireland. The Church's assault, the government ban, and jailings of Republicans, ended the Saor Eire episode.

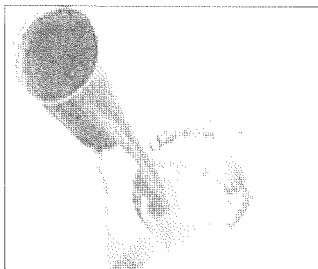
The regime of the Free State victors now had only months to run. When Fianna Fail came to power, in February 1932, it would reshape everything.

Fianna Fail took up the land agitation of the Working Farmers' Committee. In 1932 it stopped the payment of the land annuities to Britain (though they were still collected by the Irish state). Britain, which in 1931 had finally abandoned free trade, retaliated by slapping a ruinous tariff of 20% on all Irish imports. It hit Irish beef particularly. The Economic War began. The IRA-Stalinist groups set up "Boycott Britain" committees, and tried to stop the import of Bass beer and British coal ("Burn everything English but their coal!"). The Free Staters organised a mass quasi-fascist party. The fight against "Blueshirt" fascism dominated Republican and left politics. The revolutionary Republicans gravitated to Fianna Fail.

Yet the IRA that had struggled to clarify itself politically, that is, essentially, to make itself politically a movement able to define and fight for the social goals which the millenarian-tinged word "Republic" had meant or half-meant for many of those who had fought for it in 1919-23 — that organisation still existed. When Fianna Fail came to power, that would for some underline the necessity for a radical departure, and for others act like a magnet drawing them to the right. This IRA had some road to run yet before it broke up. It would continue to run in tandem with its political alter-ego: the Stalinist movement.

Part 4 in the next issue of Workers' Liberty.

Corrections: The title of the book edited by Denis Fahey was *Waters Flowing Eastward, not Waters Flaming Eastward*. In part 1, "Blanquist" should have read "Bakuninist". Wolfe Tone's grave is at Bodinstown, not "Borderstown".



The dynamics of bureaucratism

By Ernest Haberkern

THE *Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism Volume One* is a significant contribution to the literature of the anti-Stalinist left. Long buried in the archives the polemics and analyses of those socialists who refused to accept the definition of Stalin's barbaric regime as a "workers' state" simply because property was nationalised and private property, large and small, was obliterated, deserve to see the light. My criticism of this anthology should in no way detract from the valuable contribution made and, in view of the promised second volume, the criticism may be premature.

Al Richardson, in his review (WL 53), rightly emphasises that the book is weak in its analysis of the structure of the regime, its contradictions, and its "laws of motion." He also notes that this anthology represents the work of "Max Shachtman... and of his co-thinkers." As I documented in my review of Peter Drucker's biography of Shachtman (WL 25 and 27) these two facts are related. There was a great deal of material on the questions that rightly concern Richardson but little of it was produced by Shachtman.

Of course, most of it was done after the period covered in this anthology which, for all practical purposes, ends with the end of the Second World War. But even in this period, James Burnham, Joseph Carter and Dwight MacDonald began the investigation of these problems and their very interesting contributions are slighted. Carter is



Hal Draper and others developed an analysis of bureaucratic-collectivist "national Stalinism", as in China

represented by one piece. Burnham appears only as the opponent of the "defencist" position of James P. Cannon and the American SWP. And even at that his 1937 article which predated Shachtman on this issue and has some interesting things to say is ignored. His 1940 articles on "the Managerial Class" which were extremely important even if they were, in my opinion, mistaken are not reproduced. MacDonald is simply

ignored.¹ But these articles are important because they raise the fundamental questions facing the left today. The "Russian Question" in its original form obviously died in 1991. But the more fundamental questions remain: what is socialism? What is the alternative to a dying capitalism if the working class movement is unable to reorganise society on progressive lines? Is anti-capitalism even in authoritarian forms automati-

cally "progressive"?

In the period between 1948, when the Independent Socialist League (ISL) adopted as its official position the views first advanced by Joseph Carter, and 1958, when the ISL dissolved, its publications devoted most of their attention to these questions. The majority of the articles, but by no means all, were written by Hal Draper. I want to mention three of the major topics.

First of all, there was the whole question of "Titoism" and what the ISL called "national Stalinism". This discussion was provoked when the Fourth International reacted with enthusiastic support to Tito on his expulsion from the Comintern — even going so far as to address an open letter to "Comrade Tito". This enthusiasm for a regime that was as tightly organised a Stalinist dictatorship as its Russian model marked the definitive break with Trotsky's politics. It was denounced as such by Natalia Sedova, Trotsky's long time political and

The Fate of the Russian Revolution

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personal partner.² But several groups and writers who had previously identified themselves with "the Third Camp" also welcomed Tito's break as a step towards socialism. It was a classic case of Stalino-phobia leading to its opposite. Hatred of Stalin and Stalin's Russia led honest socialists to embrace any opponent of Stalin's even when, as in this case, the opponent was a class which was socially identical to its Russian counterpart. The same phenomenon was to reappear in 1963 at the time of the Sino-Soviet split.

For the ISL it was not enough to simply denounce Tito as a pocket-size version of Stalin. That was easy enough to demonstrate. Far more important was the theoretical analysis of the source of national conflict and national oppression in the Stalinist system. Precisely because it was a "national socialism", national conflict was an inherent part of the system. Centralised planning requires a rigid, hierarchical structure which can only be maintained by police state measures. This is a fundamental economic requirement of the system. "Fraternal relations between socialist countries" can only be maintained if the local bureaucracy is willing to commit class suicide. And so, national conflict was one of the principal forces that undermined the Russian Empire built by Stalin. The revolts in Poland and Hungary in 1956, the Sino-Soviet split in 1963, the Czech Spring in 1968, Ceausescu's pro-NATO policy in the '60s, all were fueled, in whole or in part, by the conflict between the "national Stalinism" of the indigenous bureaucracy and Russian imperialism. When, in 1989, the Russian centre could no longer control its Czech and German satellites the house of cards collapsed.

Underlying this analysis of the national conflict was the ISL's understanding of the fundamental contradiction of the system. The bureaucracy's control of the economy depended on its destruction of the last vestiges of private property and, therefore, anything resembling a market. In place of the gradual elimination of private property through a democratic state

controlled by the organised working class as Engels, Lenin and Trotsky envisioned, Stalinism brutally expropriated the small proprietor, especially the rural small proprietor. The process rivaled in brutality the expropriations by the bourgeoisie in England and Ireland in the period of "primitive accumulation." More to the point, as Trotsky documented in *The Revolution Betrayed*, this expropriation far exceeded the bounds of economic rationality. It corresponded to the economic and social needs of the bureaucracy but not to the level of technical development of the country. At the same time, the bureaucracy could only consolidate its position by destroying all forms of democratic representation, especially of the working class. The result — a system lacking any feedback mechanism. It had to plan everything but it could plan nothing.

If the fundamental contradiction in capitalism is between the ever-expanding productivity of capital and the ever-shrinking ability to produce at a profit, the fundamental contradiction of state planning is between the economy as conceived in the plan and the economy as it actually exists. And there is no way to reconcile the two.

Articles in the ISL press constantly emphasised the economic significance of the black market. It was the only mechanism available to reconcile the plan and reality. A shipment of 500 tyres leaves Minsk for Smolensk. Levy noted in the plan. By the time the shipment reaches Smolensk there are 250 tyres. Is this just gangsterism? Well, if the other 250 tyres had not been used to replace worn out tyres unknown to the plan, three factories would have been forced to shut down for lack of parts. I have to confess I made up this example but similar ones can be found in Alec Nove's *The Soviet Economy*. Even more biting is the account in Konstantin Simis' *USSR: the Corrupt Society*. Simis and Nove are basically muckrakers. They have no theory. But their books should be read by anyone who wants to understand what happened

to the economy of the USSR. And, for that matter, to understand the current Mafia economy of Russia and the other former Stalinist economies. The ISL did organise this material in a theoretical framework.

The final, the most important contribution of the ISL was to rethink the whole question of what socialism was really about. The main document here was Hal Draper's *The Two Souls of Socialism*. Stalinism, according to Draper, was not a sport, a strange mutant, but, rather, the recrudescence of the oldest concept of socialism; the idea that the people, the common herd, were too corrupted to save themselves. Capitalism and its unfettered competition could only be defeated, or controlled, by some form of collective authority, usually the state, safely in the hands of "those who know." It was Marx and Engels who were out of step in putting their faith in the popular movement. For a period, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Marxism prevailed intellectually, at least on the surface. In part, this was due to the genius of Marx. In part, to the attractiveness of the idea itself. But, in the main, it was due to the assertiveness and self confidence of the working class at that time. Conversely, the renewed popularity of authoritarian and statist alternatives to capitalism today are a result of the defeats suffered by the workers' movement in this century.

For a few years in the early '90s, following the spectacular collapse of the USSR, the illusion that a new "global" society would provide the economic basis for a rebirth of nineteenth century, laissez-faire liberalism prevailed. Even many on the left agreed, with more or less reluctance. Those illusions have been rudely shattered. Who defends the classic liberal values of freedom of speech and assembly, representative government, a free press and the rest? Boris Yeltsin's gangster friends? Grigory Zyuganov and his party of "Communist" anti-semites? The former New York banker Slobodan Milosevic? The Chinese Stalinist

"friends of Bill" and his Republican opponents? Everywhere, the unopposed rule of international capital has unleashed the most vile passions as the majority of the people see their lives destroyed in a moment.

But there is something more fundamental going on. Despite the anti-government rhetoric of capitalism's intellectual apologists, the process of increasing state control and state planning in capitalist economies continues. The IMF, the World Bank, GATT and the various trading blocs are based not on "free trade" but on managed and planned trade and investment. And the planning is done by nation states. It is not only the Great Powers and in particular the United States who do the planning. Without the co-operation of the state in the debtor countries the whole mechanism would fall apart. The predictions that the nation state would become an anachronism have proved false. What is happening is that within individual states what representative institutions exist have been weakened as against the executive and the bureaucracy.

To describe in any detail the process of "bureaucratic collectivisation" of capitalism that is taking place would require far more space than is available in this review, but this part of the ISL's contribution is the most relevant today. At no time has the blind identification of statification and socialism been more destructive and debilitating than it is today.

1. I should confess here that, as the editor of an earlier anthology which concentrated on these issues (*Neither Capitalism Nor Socialism: Theories of Bureaucratic Collectivism*: Humanities Press and the Center for Socialist History) my comments here are not disinterested.

2. The complete theoretical collapse of what was left of the official Fourth International was demonstrated by the fact that, shortly before Tito's unexpected break with Stalin, his regime had been described, in theses formally adopted by the Second Congress of the Fourth International, as "an extreme form of Bonapartism" whose function was to preserve capitalism.

The USSR and non-linear capitalism

By Martin Thomas

SEAN Matgamna's long article in WL56 adds a lot to our understanding of Tony Cliff's doctrine of state capitalism in the USSR. Far from being the original, or definitive, theory of Stalinist state capitalism, as SWP publicity would have us believe, Cliff's doctrine is a freakish variant having "little in common with other state capitalist theories". It is an incoherent mix of neo-Trotskyist "degenerated workers' state" and "bureaucratic collectivist" ideas.

In asides from his argument, however, Sean also claims that no state-capitalist interpretation of Stalinism is possible. Calling the Stalinist USSR state-capitalist, he declares, is as absurd as calling a marsupial a mammal.

In scientific classification marsupials *are* mammals! And so are some more apparently unlikely creatures, such as whales. The biological analogy proves nothing, but it does at least suggest that shortcutting the debate by an appeal to supposed sturdy common sense — "just look at this! It can't be capitalist/a mammal!" — is scientifically unsound.

Sean concedes in a footnote that "Trotsky's arguments against 'state capitalism' were never of the formal 'not-enough-market-regulation' type, but always of a concrete and historical type, aiming to show that the Stalinist system is located in history somewhere radically different from capitalism". But then, in the very passage to which that footnote is attached, Sean deploys exactly those same 'not-enough-market-regulation' arguments. "The USSR could not be analysed as a giant 'firm' in the international capitalist market... not a self-regulating, but a 'planned' economy... the idea that [Maoist China] was an economically regulated system, and not one of overwhelming totalitarian state power crazily out of control, cannot be sustained...".

Trotsky considered the Soviet Union certainly a market economy — not a free market economy, of course, but a market economy — only messed

up by the Stalinists' delusions about the ability of administrative decrees to replace market mechanisms. He rejected the equation of Stalinism with state-capitalism, not because Stalinism had "not enough market", but (as he wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed*) because he believed that the USSR's economy was *progressive* and capitalist statism *reactionary*.

If we reject the idea that Stalin's more-total statism represented economic progress (as Trotsky himself came close to doing in the course of the 1930s) and if we also reject a picture of capitalism as being at an absolute dead-end economically (as we must), then all Trotsky's arguments against describing the Stalinist USSR as state-capitalist fall to the ground.

Max Shachtman, the finest of the writers working in Trotsky's tradition after Leon Davidovich's death, took a different view. What Trotsky took to be the Stalinists' delusions, Shachtman took to be reality. What Trotsky took to be the hard underlying reality, Shachtman considered a pretence or facade. There was no market in the Soviet Union. Shachtman never argued this issue out, as far as I'm aware, or even mentioned the difference between his view and Trotsky's. But I guess Shachtman's thinking here is connected with the fact that as late as 1961 he was repeating Trotsky's assessment of capitalism as being in hopeless decline. To call the USSR "state-capitalist" would imply the conclusion (impossible in Shachtman's eyes) that capitalism might have a whole new phase of economic advance beyond it. If he called it "bureaucratic collectivist", with the proviso that this was a unique hybrid system, that avoided such implications.

Despite all the later anathemas against Shachtman by the orthodox "neo-Trotskyists", his arguments against state capitalism were reprised almost exactly by the most influential of those orthodox, Ernest Mandel. Via Shachtman, Mandel, and all their colleagues and fol-

lowers, the idea that capitalism = market, Stalinism = non-market, became fixed in all neo-Trotskyist discourse. But I believe it is false.

There are radical differences between "ordinary" capitalism and Stalinism, but they do not consist in "ordinary" capitalism being market-regulated and Stalinism lacking all regulation beyond political whim. Capitalism is never self-regulating. Sometimes it operates under "overwhelming totalitarian state power crazily out of control" (not just Stalinism, but also the Nazis and many Third World despots) — more often under more moderate state regulation. Alongside that regulation, markets are economic regulators, within limits. Conversely, the Stalinist economies were often extremely resistant to political will. They could not function without markets — extensive "black" and "grey" markets, but also extensive official markets, and extensive use of world markets by the bureaucrats to guide their administrative price-setting.

IN the early '30s Stalin's regime seriously talked about replacing wages by state rations. But it never did; and it never snuffed out market forces. Workers in the USSR and in most other Eastern Bloc countries moved from job to job, seeking the best bargain. Employers bid for the best workers with bonuses and perks, and tried to squeeze productivity out of their workers with piece-rates. When the workers mobilised, wage rises were among their first demands. Often the mobilisation was sparked by price rises, sometimes by uncontrolled inflation. The class struggle between workers and bosses, on both sides, demonstrated that the wage bargain was a real economic factor, not just a formal facade for political allocation of work and of food, clothing and shelter. *The Stalinist economies were state-capitalist because they were based on wage-labour*. It was wage-labour coupled with

extreme political coercion. As Bukharin pointed out in analysing it as a theoretical possibility, "State-capitalist structure of society makes the workers formally bonded to the imperialist state". But as the system developed and matured, the political coercion did not gradually become the dominant form of surplus extraction, with wage-labour more and more vestigial. *The opposite happened*. The system drifted more and more towards "ordinary" wage-labour. It did that because the wage-labour, and the states that exploited it, were embedded in, and competed within, the capitalist era of world economy.

As the terrible political torsion on the economies of the USSR and Eastern Europe (and to some degree China) has unwound, the economic substructure revealed has been not "collectivist" but capitalist. When the "bureaucratic twist" to supposed "bureaucratic collectivism" unwinds, the spontaneous outcome is not collectivism but capitalism.

Sean might reply that I am ignoring a "transformation of quantity into quality". Even if there is a continuous spectrum from USA-capitalism to USSR-economy, that does not prove that the USSR was capitalism any more than the existence of a continuous spectrum from red to violet proves that violet is red.

But the bedrock difference between "bureaucratic collectivism" and "state capitalism", in the whole long historical debate, remains this: "state capitalist" means capitalist, "bureaucratic collectivist" means something beyond capitalism. By now the evidence is clear. *The Eastern Bloc systems were not post-capitalist*. It is not true that they were generated because economic development needed state planning, and they satisfied that need albeit in a bureaucratic and bungled way. Heavy state intervention has proved necessary for economic development in less-industrial countries; the totalitarian planning which distinguishes the Stalinist states certainly has

not. It has no clear economic advantage over the milder forms of state capitalism which have dominated everywhere else in the less-industrial world. The Stalinist systems also did not represent a highest or ultimate stage of capitalism. They were limited episodes within the epoch of capitalism, and characteristically in under-developed countries.

To my mind, a "bureaucratic collectivism" which is deemed not post-capitalist is no "bureaucratic collectivism" at all. "New superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured in within the framework of the old society..." So wrote Marx in the *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*. Certainly we need to avoid summary and mechanical interpretations of this terse phrase. Avoiding mechanical interpretations is one thing. Quite another is the idea that a "bureaucratic collectivism" can emerge as a whole new mode of production (rather than as a distinctive politico-economic regime of capitalism) from within capitalism, without being post-capitalist — without representing a qualitative step forward from capitalism for *at least the decisive social classes involved*. A whole new mode of production does not spring up — least of all out of capitalism, the most dynamic, flexible, adaptable and mutable mode of production yet in history, in the period of its greatest flowering — just because this or that political group desires it.

To put a label ("bureaucratic collectivist") on the Stalinist bureaucracies' clashes with private capitalism does not clarify the contrast, but only restates it. (Why do they clash with private capitalism? Because they are bureaucratic-collectivist. Why are they bureaucratic-collectivist? Because they clash with private capitalism. The argument is circular.) Moreover the "bureaucratic collectivist" designation can seem to clarify the contrast between Stalinist economies and "ordinary" capitalism only for those who confine their analysis to the two polar cases typified by the USA and the USSR, and leave most modern economies in a comfortable blur.

If the state economies of

the Eastern Bloc were anti-capitalist, then inescapably the state sectors of Mexico, Algeria, Iraq, and many other countries were too; and their state bureaucracies were anti-capitalist ("bureaucratic collectivist") classes. Even in Mexico, the "bureaucratic collectivist" class (if that is what it is) was visibly more powerful than the private capitalist class. Analyses, incontrovertible in their own terms, have been written to show that pre-1982 Mexico, or Israel in the era of solid Labour/Histadrut domination, were "bureaucratic collectivist". The foremost writer of the "bureaucratic collectivist" current, Hal Draper, arrived, as is well known, at the idea that not only Stalinism but also social democracy and all other forms of non-Marxian socialism were incipiently bureaucratic-collectivist ("socialism from above"). The world shows not "bureaucratic collectivism" on one side, and "capitalism" on the other, but a spectrum of different mixes between "bureaucratic collectivism" and capitalism.

THE USSR was not very much like the USA. But if we define capitalism as "like the [modern] USA", then even disregarding Stalinism we will have to recognise that the 500 years of the capitalist era have included many forms of quasi-capitalism that certainly fall within that era but have not been much "like the USA" (capitalism in colonial and ex-colonial countries, for example). We will need a new word X for "capitalism or quasi-capitalism" or "a variable mix of bureaucratic collectivism and capitalism". The problem of analysing the specificity of the Stalinist states (precisely what sort of X were they? What is its historical relation to other forms of X?) is not clarified, but obscured, by adopting the label "bureaucratic collectivism".

Set aside the labels and look at the historic facts. The conflicts of the Stalinist or "statist" political autocracies with private capitalists in the less-industrialised countries have been not anti-capitalist but nationalist. The state bureaucracies in less-industrialised economies have originated from the petty bourgeoisie, and generally from more or less closely-knit military formations

drawn from the petty bourgeoisie. Those petty bourgeois rebelled against the parasitism, corruption and dependence of the old oligarchies or colonial administrations in their countries. They wanted national development. They made bourgeois revolutions or semi-revolutions against the bourgeois oligarchies and their allies, feudalistic landowners and colonial rulers. Depending how tightly-knit and ideologically coherent their organisation was, they pushed the old oligarchies aside, reduced them to second rank, or crushed them.

The petty bourgeois revolutionaries or reformers mobilised on the basis of bourgeois measures like land reform and national independence. But they did not want bourgeois democracy and free enterprise, which will allow the old oligarchs and imperialists still to hold considerable sway. In all cases they created powerful interventionist states; where they were vigorous, fervent, mass-mobilising revolutionaries (revolutionary Stalinists) they created totalitarian regimes, austere dedicated to national industrial development, protected by military discipline against disruption by individual profiteers or by the working class. In such cases the liberated peasants were re-enslaved, this time to the profit of the State rather than private landowners. Not merely the larger part, but the whole of surplus value was ruthlessly concentrated in the hands of the State and channelled into crash industrialisation. The state sectors developed large-scale national capitalism, not anti-capitalism.

Sometimes the state has consciously worked to foster an indigenous private-capitalist class. Sometimes it has been tightly committed to allowing no competitors, thus cementing many specificities (the elimination of most of the bourgeois civilisation that would normally accompany capitalist development; unmanageable economic biases towards chronic shortages, cycles of over-investment, stifled inflation, inadequate scrapping, and top-heavy industry; and so on). It has never broken out of the historic ambit of capitalism.

Much cited in the debate

about the nature of the USSR is the true idea that the development of class societies is more complex than a straight linear sequence — slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism. Necessary also, I think, is the equally true idea that the development of capitalism is not just a straight linear sequence. Capitalism can run on different tracks, in parallel, in different sectors of the world; it can back-track; it can develop in "inorganic" forms. In the era of "classical Marxism", before Stalinism, Marxists were not afraid to discuss different forms of capitalism (monopoly capitalism, finance capitalism, imperialism, state capitalism...) With Stalinism, all that discussion came to a dead halt. The standard Marxist scheme remains "competitive capitalism — monopoly capitalism — socialism". Even the early theorists of state-capitalism in the USSR remained trapped by that scheme, feeling that they had to "locate" the USSR at the most-monopolised (most-advanced) end of the "monopoly-capitalist" section of the sequence.

EVEN if you set all the Stalinist states aside, not all capitalist societies can be located along that linear sequence. We need a more complex, multi-track picture of the development of capitalism — and that, I think, can provide the understanding of the specificity of Stalinism ("capitalism without bourgeois civilisation", you might call it) which "bureaucratic collectivism", for all its verbal extremism, cannot give. There are serious, probably irreparable, difficulties with the one sustained attempt made so far by Marxist writers to develop a "multi-track" understanding of capitalism, the Regulation School of Michel Aglietta, Alain Lipietz, Robert Boyer, Bernard Chavance and others. It is highly significant, however, I think, that the attempt alone has led all these writers to categorise the Stalinist states either as capitalist or as some sort of quasi-capitalism, and has produced such rich and detailed analyses of the specific economic patterns of Stalinist economy (very different from those of Western capitalism) as Jacques Sapir's *Economic Fluctuations in the USSR*.



Karl Marx, revolutionary democrat

Karl Marx, by Francis Wheen. Fourth Estate.

FRANCIS Wheen is best known as a newspaper columnist whose speciality is dredging up the skeletons in his enemies' closets to expose their pomposity and hypocrisy. His usual targets are right-wing buffoons and Blairite politicians. It is no great shock, therefore, that his focus in this biography is on Marx "the man", his relations with family, friends and colleagues (almost all of whom sooner or later were to become enemies and the butt of his vitriolic wit), and his life-long hopelessness with money. Still, Wheen gives a fair account of Marx's ideas, and defends him from detractors past and present over the most important questions in his life.

Wheen stresses Marx's intensely democratic commitment, defending him (usually) against charges of undemocratic practice. The account of the battle with Bakunin for control of the International Working Men's Association is unsparingly critical of the Russian anarchist, and perceptive about Marx's concern to hold together a somewhat disparate and tentative step towards international working class co-operation.

Marx's point of departure was radical democracy — he was a democrat before he was a socialist — and the socialism to which he devoted his life was always conceived as "winning the battle of democracy", not negating it. Before Marx, socialist ideas took many forms, but the most revolutionary-minded socialists were small groups of conspirators who planned one day to carry out an insurrection, impose a benign dictatorship, and bring in a somewhat ill-defined Utopia.

Marx's background in radical philosophy and revolutionary democracy, mixed



with an understanding of the importance of the young working class movement in France and Britain, formed the basis for a revolutionary new theory of social change. The working class, he thought, was a class with "radical chains", a class whose liberation would mean the liberation of the whole of humanity from private property and capitalist misery. This was the significance of the *Communist Manifesto*, which Wheen calls "the most widely read political pamphlet in human history." It tied the revolutionary ambition of the earlier communists to a social force, the working class, and defined the role of socialists not to be secret conspirators, but a political force linked to, and learning and growing with, this working class, the agent of change.

Looking back at the 150 years since the *Manifesto* was written, the profundity of Marx's insight is staggering. Who else in the 1840s thought that this fresh, youthful social force would play such a role in subsequent events? By the end of the century, the working class had formed powerful mass movements across Europe and elsewhere. As the new century dawned, mass strikes and new forms of working class democracy rocked the Tsarist empire. In 1917, the working class took power in Russia. Everywhere the working class existed, it formed mass organisations to

prosecute its struggle for justice, and frequently political parties based or linked to those organisations which proclaimed, even if hypocritically, their commitment to socialism.

This is a phenomenon which has showed no sign of abating as the 20th century ends. Capitalist development in South Korea, the jewel in the crown of the "tiger economies", produced a working class which soon began to exercise its industrial strength, then form independent unions, then step towards creating its own party — all as Marx suggested.

Wheen gives a rather odd and half-hearted defence of *Capital*, somewhat overdoing his reading of it as, more or less, a work of fiction, full of satire and irony worthy of Swift. Marx's work was not "economics" in the sense of modern textbooks. It was a "critique of political economy", an attack on the ideological confusions of bourgeois economic theory, exposing the social reality beneath the surface appearance. Once more, Marx's detractors should consider those areas of his thought which have been vividly confirmed by later developments. As Wheen notes, there is much about the world today — capitalist globalisation, for example — which would not have surprised Marx; this could hardly be said for those who ridiculed him.

The Marxism of Marx therefore has enormous relevance to the new millennium. Will the collapse of Stalinism allow this genuine Marxism to be rediscovered, free of its totalitarian misrepresentations? Wheen's ambition in writing this book is to present Marx — critically but sympathetically — as a human being, to break with the traditions either of hagiography or demonisation. It is a good ambition. As Wheen demon-

strates, Marx himself was anything but a dogmatist, and would have hated the idea of his work being treated as a kind of sectarian Bible.

Engels, to whose intellectual contribution Wheen gives due credit, comes over in these pages as a pretty good bloke, down-to-earth, sensible and ludicrously patient. The effort to "humanise" Marx leads Wheen to devote a lot of energy to describing Marx's chronic inability to manage his finances — in particular because of a Victorian need to keep up middle-class appearances (piano lessons for his daughters, maid and personal secretary to be paid for, and so on). We are treated to lavish accounts of the painful carbuncles on Marx's bum (and penis), his drinking sprees down Tottenham Court Road, crazy feuds — including pistols at dawn — with his enemies, and several pages on the old controversy about whether or not he fathered a child by the maid, Helene Demuth. There are also many discomforting accounts of Marx's sexism and racism, by contemporary standards. He called Ferdinand Lassalle "the Jewish nigger", and there's plenty of other stuff along those lines, like his disappointment that his daughters wanted to marry *Frenchmen*.

Wheen points out, however, that Bakunin's claims that Marx was leader of a world Jewish conspiracy, and that the Jews should be exterminated, were of a different order to the casual Victorian bigotry into which Marx sometimes lapsed. I think Wheen sometimes gets carried away with his own knock-about, light-hearted style, and is more dismissive than he necessarily intends. Still, this is a friendly enough portrait of a great thinker, warts (or carbuncles) and all.

Edward Ellis

From communist to CIA man

A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone, Communist, Anti-Communist and Spymaster, by Ted Morgan, Random House.

ONE ex-leftist reviewer of this volume has claimed, without the slightest hint of irony, that: "(t)he great untold story of the 20th century... is the story of the heroic anti-Communist left — the romance of leftists and radical trade unionists who recognised that Communism was a catastrophic byproduct of their own movement, and who mobilised themselves, before anyone else thought to do so, to bring the Communists down."

In fact Jay Lovestone was not a socialist avenger, rescuing the dream of self-emancipation from its Stalinist despoilers, but a backroom manoeuvrer curiously devoid of any palatable social vision beyond Stalinophobia.

He was an early leader of the Communist Party of the USA who later led his own dissident "Right-Communist" group and then became a prominent right-winger in the US trade union bureaucracy. Unsurpassed in their zeal to rid the nascent American Communist movement of Trotskyists, Lovestone and his associates ultimately came to grief by their failure to distance themselves from Bukharin on the eve of his ouster from the presidency of

the Comintern.

Not that the Lovestonites were animated in any way by Bukharinite principles. Their subsequent virtually uncritical endorsements of the social policies of Stalin within the Soviet Union during the early 1930s, including the forced collectivisation and the first Moscow Trials, belied such ideological scruples. Rather, they lost control of the American party as victims of their own miscalculations.

Called to Moscow in the Spring of 1929, while in undisputed control of the American Party, Lovestone and his cohorts were denounced and stripped of their power. Having barely escaped with his life, Lovestone returned to New York, refused to accept expulsion and fecklessly organised an external faction to force readmittance into the Party. The self-justifying theory of "American Exceptionalism" (the right to national autonomy within the Comintern) became their hallmark and their only lasting "theoretical" residue.

By that time the American Communist Party was a wholly-owned subsidiary of the emerging Russian ruling class. But the Lovestonites denounced Stalinist factionalism in the Comintern not as the means of power-consolidation on the part of the bureaucracy, but as sowing chaos and confusion in the ranks of the constituent parties and thereby weakening the Comintern as an agent of revolution. Their blindness towards the connection between the internationalisation of the purge and the reconfiguration of class politics in the Soviet Union only ended with the suppression of the POUM in the Spanish Civil War and the execution of Bukharin.

With the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, the Lovestonites finally and irreparably repudiated the Communist International, began to rethink the Russian Revolution and were openly in search of a new ideology. By December of 1940, they had folded.

The Lovestonites, and

Lovestone in particular, became the hired guns of the social democratic opponents of Stalinism centred within the needle trades of the American Federation of Labor. Lovestone's talents came to the attention of George Meany, who was later to lead the AFL and ultimately the AFL-CIO.

When, in 1944, Meany and William Green set up the Committee for Free Trade Unionism to revive unions in war-ravaged Europe and Japan and to resist the Stalinist WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions), Lovestone was the natural candidate for executive secretary. He had past ties with the members of the Communist opposition of the 1930s, and retained a coterie of loyal comrades conversant with the inner workings of the Stalinist movement abroad.

One of Lovestone's chief lieutenants, Irving Brown, once philosophised that "he would [have] prefer[red] to fight Communism by building genuine mass movements overseas — unions, student groups, women's councils, peasant organisations." But, if that primary strategy of building mass movements failed, then the Lovestonites thought they had the duty to suppress communism by whatever means were at hand, including American militarism. Eventually there was to be little or no discernible trade union content whatsoever to Lovestone's machinations.

Right-wing Socialists, Catholics, and even strike-breaking Marseilles waterfront gangsters, were sought out and financed with sufficient seed money to break away from Communist trade unions and organise anti-Communist labour federations. (*Force Ouvrière* in France, for instance, was maintained for decades on an AFL-CIA dole. Their opposition to the student-worker strikes of 1968 was a point of particular pride to Lovestone.)

Not only Communism, but increasingly neutralism, revolution and radical nationalism were all seen to be enemies of the West and

therefore of the American trade union movement.

A convergence of world views led increasingly to a merger of the foreign operations of the AFL, and later AFL-CIO, with the counterintelligence sections of the CIA, under the paranoiac leadership of James Jesus Angleton. Millions of dollars were siphoned into Lovestone's operations through this source. At times no one knew if it were Lovestone who was guiding the CIA's labour operations, or Angleton's cadre who took the lead. It was a difference without a distinction. Where there was a Communist dominated union, the goal was to disrupt it and to find supine, reliable — that is, all too often, reactionary — trade union leaders to lead break-aways. The point was to neutralise Stalinism, not to advance an independent, left-wing alternative.

Though this volume is silent about Lovestone's meddlings in Latin America, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) — a joint project of management, government and labour in educating pro-business labour leaders — was most certainly financed in large part by the CIA. Lovestone, in his dotage surely one of the slowest learners in the Establishment, was among the staunchest cheerleaders for the war in Vietnam and remained so until the bitter end.

Had half the resources and ingenuity put into such efforts by Lovestone and others been invested in building a fighting labour movement dedicated to the ideological, organisational and political independence of workers here and abroad, American labour might truly have something to celebrate. Instead we are left virtually at ground zero, combating a legacy which insists that capitalism is the only vehicle for the extension of democracy and that there is no realistic program for social reconstruction other than free markets. This is the nightmare that Stalinophobia on the left helped to consolidate.

Barry Finger

Books received

Sharing the Wealth: Workers and the World Economy, by Ethan Kapstein. W W Norton.

Capitalist globalisation is increasing inequality. But Kapstein aims only to "enable working people to seize the opportunities that democratic capitalism has to offer".

Panic Rules, by Robin Hahnel. South End Press.

A brisk, crisp critique of neo-liberal economics; but it concludes that for now we should be "Lilliputian Luddites" and venture positive programs only after "corporate hegemony" has been fought to some sort of undefined standstill.



Mixed feelings

Why Feminism, by Lynne Segal. Polity Press.

At the end of the '80s Lynne Segal wrote *Is the Future Female?* as a critique of the cultural feminism of Andrea Dworkin, Catherine MacKinnon and others. *Why Feminism?* is a critique of the academic feminism of the '90s. *Where Is the Future Female?* was an unambivalent repudiation, Segal's new book seems less certain of the prospects for an alternative, socialist, feminism and less critical of its subject.

The new '90s feminism is a mishmash of fashionable (but not new) social theories, and is particularly influenced by post-structuralism. Feminism now is not about women fighting for equality with men but about deconstructing womanhood. The context for this feminism is a cultural climate where commentaries about gender uncertainty abound: about the disintegration of the family, the decline of the male breadwinner, the rise (and fall) of the lone mother, for instance. There have been ostentatiously right-wing responses to the same social changes and Segal spends some time trashing these.

Segal finds post-structuralist feminism partially appealing. She says — almost explicitly — that she wants to create a synthesis between this sort of feminism and her own. As a psychologist, she is curious about what constitutes and constructs female identity at any given point in history. At the very least this book is an attempt to point out possible insights in the new feminism by way of a critique.

The end result is an erudite, thoughtful, but sometimes confusing text. The confusion may be mine alone of course, but I think there is a real problem. Segal seems infected by her own sadness about the lack of a socialist feminist current: "I wasn't confident I could manage to write at all any more: no longer sure of whom I would be writing for, or why," she says in her acknowledgements. Her case for an openness to the new areas of study is reasonable, however: "When wider questions of social inequality and gender justice are posed alongside problems of identities and belonging, the domain of feminism immediately expands". Who could disagree with that?

The problem is that the overall impact of the new feminism is very bad. Once you accept that humankind can no longer construct an over-arching theory of social reality, it implies an indifference to attempts to reorganise the world. To some of the new feminists the only reality is micro-reality, interactions between individuals, or their own individual lives.

Segal is impressed by "queer theory" (lesbian and gay academic studies of the late '80s) because these sparked off some interesting ideas and championed what could be seen as "dissident" sexualities. Sexuality and gender were seen as fluid. The self-descriptions of "pushy femmes, divas, queens, butch bottoms, transsexuals, lesbians who sleep with men..." in themselves challenged gender stereotyping. Segal is not uncritical of the post-structuralist relativism; it was

too blasé, it had a "disdain for the psychic pain, fear and potential disintegration which so often accompanies gender uncertainties" (for instance for people who are transsexual).

This is a book that takes in many areas of study, including the latest controversies for psychologists about the legacy of Freud. In many ways Segal is revisiting everything that she has written about over the last 10 years, including that hot topic — the "crisis of masculinity".

At the end of the century many women in the advanced capitalist West may have achieved greater equality. While welfare cuts and low pay continue to constrain women's lives — Segal is absolutely clear about the importance of these issues — there are also other, more personal problems. If gender or sexuality are so integral to our sense of self, what it means to be human, how do we stop these things from constraining us? Confusion and frustration over male and female roles causes real problems (and not just for middle class women). Here are the roots of domestic violence, misogyny, homophobia and mental ill-health.

Segal's concern to analyse culture, language and psyche is admirable. There are not, and Segal did not set out to give us, many definite answers here. In the end the answer she gives to her question is a simple one. Why feminism? Because the world still needs to be a better place, not just for some women but for all women.

Cathy Nugent

The truth of Stalingrad

Stalingrad, by Antony Beevor. Penguin.

As well as being the decisive turning-point in World War Two, the battle of Stalingrad remains to this day a cornerstone of Stalinist myth, summed up in Soviet propaganda at the time: "The morale of an army depends on the socially just and progressive order of the society it defends."

Antony Beevor does not dismiss the genuine anti-Nazi determination that lay behind much of the incredibly dogged Russian resistance within Stalingrad itself. But he also notes that approximately 50,000 Russians fought for the Germans, and 13,500 Russian soldiers were shot by their own side for treachery, drunkenness, cowardice and "anti-Soviet agitation" — which could include any form of criticism of the regime. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Russian resistance was motivated as much by terror as by anti-Nazi fervour: the consequences of hanging back would be as bad — or worse — than going forward. The evidence of Russian soldiers' letters in any case suggests that morale only really began to improve after the tables were turned and the German Sixth Army surrounded.

Beevor demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that Stalin's commitment to his pact with Hitler very nearly handed the Nazis victory on a plate, as the Soviet dictator ignored repeated warnings over the previous eight months of what Hitler was planning. Stalin's savage secret police, the NKVD, spent far more time spying upon the Red Army than it did watching the Nazis. For sure, the victory of the Red Army owed nothing to Stalin, whose constant meddling in military strategy reduced his generals to despair.

This horrible, fascinating story of a monstrous war of attrition fully deserves its "bestseller" status.

Jim Denham

We have fed you all for a thousand years!

*We have fed you all for a thousand years,
And you hail us still unfed,
Tho' there's never a dollar of all your wealth
But marks the workers' dead.*

*We have yielded our best to give you rest,
And you lie on crimson wool;
For if blood be the price on all your wealth,
Good God, we have paid in full!*

*There's never a mine blown skyward now
But we're buried alive for you;
There's never a wreck drifts shoreward now
But we are its ghastly crew.*

*Go reckon our dead by the forges red,
And the factories where we spin;
If blood be the price of your cursed wealth
Good God, we have paid it in!*

*We have fed you all for a thousand years,
For that was our doom, you know,
From the days when you chained us in your fields,
To the strike of a week ago.
You have eaten our lives and our babies and wives,
And we're told it's your legal share;
But if blood be the price of your lawful wealth,
Good God, we have bought it fair!*