Salman Rushdie’s Nicaragua

Jim Denham reviews “The Jaguar Smile” by Salman Rushdie
Published by Picador £2.95

A book about post-revolutionary Nicaragua, written on the basis of a brief visit, organised, in effect, by the FSLN government, would not seem to promise a very objective source of information or analysis for socialists attempting to reach an understanding of what’s going on in that country.

In their (correct) caution to solidarise with Nicaragua against US aggression, many radicals have adopted a completely uncritical attitude towards the Sandinista leadership and all sorts of romantic nonsense about a “new road to socialism” opening up in Nicaragua is now widely peddled on the left.

Salman Rushdie, to his credit, makes no secret of the limitations of his personal experience, and thus of the book itself: “I was in Nicaragua for three weeks in July (1986). What follows, therefore, is a portrait of a moment, no more, in the life of that beautiful, volcanic country.”

Rushdie was invited over as a guest of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers, the umbrella organisation of artists and writers organised by the government. Indeed, the Sandinista leadership seems to be making up largely of poets and novelists — something that undoubtedly helped establish a warm rapport between Rushdie and his hosts. The country’s most famous poet, Father Ernesto Cardenal is Minister of Culture, Vice-President Sergio Ramirez is a novelist, and President Daniel Ortega is another poet. “In Nicaragua”, Ortega tells Rushdie, “everyone is considered a poet until he (sic) proves the contrary.”

Despite all the charmings, Rushdie retains his critical faculties. He does not like the government’s policy of censorship (the oppositional La Prensa newspaper had been closed down shortly before his visit) and he cannot go along with the official line that censorship would stop when US aggression stopped.

Rushdie is also unhappy about what he describes as “a kind of innocence abroad in Nicaragua. One of the problems with the existence of the word ‘revolution’ is that it can carry with it a sort of blanket approval of all self-professed revolutionary modernists.”

A good point, although without any further explanations, Rushdie goes on to criticise the failure “to make distinctions, for example, between the PLO and the IRA” as an example of this.

More tellingly, Rushdie describes his astonishment when one of his interpreters found it difficult to believe that there are labour camps in the USSR: “But how can it be?” she asked in obvious distress. “The USSR is so helpful to Third World countries. How can it be doing things like this?”

Elsewhere, Rushdie describes trying to raise criticism of Cuba with Minister of Culture Cardenal.

“What about Armando Valladore’s book, “Against All Hope” which speaks of over two decades in Cuban prisons, two decades of being made to eat shit and drink soup containing bits of glass? But it was like hitting a wall...I went away feeling depressed.”

But overwhelmingly, Rushdie’s impressions are positive. He continually stresses that the threat from the Reagan administration and its Honduras-based Contras overshadows whatever mistakes the Sandinistas have made. A vivid account of a meeting between Foreign Minister Miguel d’Escoto (“another formidable priest”) and a White House emissary, “Rocky”, brutally sums up the reality of US foreign policy:

“D’Escoto, an excellent raconteur, performed Rocky’s reply. “These Contras on your frontier, padre. They give me lots of trouble, don’t they?”

“D’Escoto had replied, but they wouldn’t if you stopped funding them. “There you go again,” Rocky said. “More hypocrisy. You’re hopeless, Father. The reality is that these people have to be funded. And they give you trouble. These are facts...”

“So what did he suggest, d’Escoto asked, “It’s easy,” came the reply. “Just do as we say. Just do exactly what we say...”

Politically, the most interesting part of the book is the section in which Rushdie describes his visit to Zelaya, on Nicaragua’s Atlantic coast. Here, the revolution had never been widely supported, and the inhabitants had been further alienated by a series of disastrous mistakes, including the forcible evacuation of the Miskito Indians from their old territory. Many Miskitos had been driven into the hands of the Contras. The Sandinistas now recognised their mistakes in the region and were setting about convincing Zelayans that their best interests lay with the revolution. Central to this project is “Autonomy” Rushdie describes how it is intended to work: “The autonomy scheme guarantees the cultural rights of minority communities in Zelaya. But it was an attempt to do more than simply compensate for previous blunders. Under the scheme, Zelaya would be given a large measure of self-government. The structure of the nation would be altered into a form of federation between two wings with Managua retaining responsibility for defence, internal security, foreign policy and overall budget, and economic strategy, most other functions would pass to regional executive and regional assembly.”

The project had not been without its opponents, who had argued that it would lead to the break up of the country, but the counter-argument, which had carried the day was that the project was not dividing the country but recognising the division that actually existed. By giving the Atlantic Coast this degree of independence, the chances were that the bonds between the coasts would actually be strengthened. That paradoxical assessment was borne out by what I saw...”

Rushdie makes no pretence of presenting a scientific analysis of the Nicaraguan revolution. This is a book of personal, subjective impressions. At times Rushdie admits to profound doubts and confusion about the FSLN government and their plans for the country. But Rushdie knows which side he is on when it comes to the Sandinistas vs US aggression: “For the first time in my life, I realised with surprise, I had come across a government I could support, not faute de mieux, but because I trusted its efforts (at survival, at building the nation, and at transforming it) to succeed.” He is more clear-headed about the Sandinistas’ shortcomings than many erstwhile Trotskyists, but in the end his conclusions are positive and generous: “...to oppose a government’s policy was not to oppose the government. Not for me, anyway; not this government; not yet.”

The left in Solidarnosc

Martin Thomas reviews ‘Rendez-vous nos usines’ by Zbigniew Kowalewski, editions La Brèche, Paris.

Zbigniew Kowalewski was one of the leaders of the left wing in Solidarnosc in 1980-1, and a member of the regional leadership in Lodz. He was outside Poland when martial law was imposed in December 1981, and has lived in France since.

He is a sympathiser of the Trotskyist current represented by Ernest Mandel and by the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League) in France (and Internationale in Britain), and he is also associated with the new left-wing alliance within Solidarnosc formed last year, the Workers’
Opposition. The majority in the Workers' Opposition regards Poland as state-capitalist. Kowalewski, however, has been a conservative of the Bundist faction of the Polish Communist Party. The Bundists are a traditionalist party that opposed the bolshevization of the Russian Revolution. Kowalewski criticizes the Bundists for their adherence to the old order and their resistance to change. He argues that the Bundists failed to recognize the need for a new social order and failed to seize the opportunities presented by the February Revolution. Kowalewski believes that the Bundists missed a chance to seize power and establish a new socialist order. He argues that the Bundists were too conservative and too attached to the old order to be able to seize power. The Bundists' failure to seize power led to the formation of the Polish Communist Party, which was more radical and more willing to seize power. Kowalewski notes that the Bundists' failure to seize power led to the formation of the Polish Communist Party, which was more radical and more willing to seize power.
ment use of the 1927 Act was thereafter discredited.

The book provides fascinating information on the international activity of Trotskyists within the British army in areas such as far afield as Egypt, Italy and India, and also accounts of the party's work with German refugees and prisoners of war. But by 1945, a whole range of new problems had begun to confront the Trotskyists; and ultimately they would engulf the organisation.

Firstly, the analysis bequeathed to the Fourth International by Trotsky — in particular the view that Stalinism would not long survive the war — needed critical reassessment in light of the newly-emerging post-war reality. Secondly, the RCP had to analyse the working class shift back to Labour around the time of the 1945 election and draw conclusions from that shift. These were life and death questions for the organisation: it never succeeded in answering them.

Throughout the war the WIL and RCP had called for "Break the coalition — Labour to power!". But by 1945, this was happening anyway, and the wave of industrial militancy was receding and giving way to industrial expectations of radical policies from a Labour government. At its foundation the RCP had committed itself to a policy of "building the independent party of the working class" and opposing work in the Labour Party, thus minimizing its potential such work. This policy was disastrous. Later carried over into the post-1945 period.

The RCP's incapacity to solve these problems and its incapacity to retreat or itself to the post-war world, were — together with factionalism within the USA and the RCP's relationship to the Fourth International — to determine the future of the RCP and leave a legacy which is still a potent force within British Trotskyism to this day.

Comrades Bornstein and Richardson have their own view on these matters, and it colours the way the history of the RCP is presented in the book. It can be summed up — I hope without caricature — as follows. The Fourth International ceased to exist during the war because of the nationalisation of Europe (the Trotskyists in Hitler-occupied Europe were cut off until 1944) and an inability to analyse what was going on and became "a prisoner of the American SWP". The RCP majority — together for a time with Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman in the USA — provided a fundamentally correct theoretical analysis from 1946 onwards.

For example, in 1946 they said Stalinism had emerged stronger from the war, that there would be a post-war boom; in 1947 they analysed the states of Eastern Europe as workers' states, while the Fourth International still described them as capitalist.

The RCP made the mistake of not supporting the Labour Party in 1944 and collapsed partly because of an absence of perspective, partly because of a general decline in working class activity and partly because of the unprincipled factionalism of the RCP majority led by Healy and supported by the International Secretariat. (The minority argued for Labour Party work with a perspective of an immediate slump leading to radicalisation of the workers inside the Labour Party).

The authors' view of the virtue of Trotsky's majority and its "worthlessness" of most of the rest of the world's Trotskyist movement leads them to an ahistorical, teleological perspective of events. The villains of the piece are Healy, James P. Cannon and Michael Pablo, the new secretary of the organisation that reconstructed Fourth International.

While their manoeuvres certainly did not help the RCP, its main problem was the failure of the Party's war-time perspective that "the revolutionary Party" could be built outside the Labour Party by a linear building up by way of recruiting individuals from industrial struggle (the line of the SWP today). In 1944, they respected the RCP majority proved just as incapable of analysing the post-war world as the other Trotskyist who attracted the authors' veneration. While comrades Bornstein and Richardson agree with what was wrong with the Trotskyist perspective, the book seems to downplay its importance in the eventual collapse of the RCP.

In the end, in 1949, when the RCP was shrinking and this perspective could no longer be maintained, some of the leaders such as Hasting abandoned Trotskyism altogether. Others, such as Grant, dedicated any leadership role and collapsed into the Labour Party to vegetate and degenerate politically for the next 15 or 20 years.

In their description of the theoretical analysis of the RCP, there is a tendency to have the gift of hindsight. While it is certainly true that the rest of the Fourth International was not fully quickly able to react to the failure of Trotsky's perspective after the war, there is a danger in believing that tendencies that now appear — in retrospect — cut and dried historical fact were at the same time.

It is possible now, in retrospect, to deny the revolutionary possibilities that existed in mid-'40s Europe, for, after all, they were not realised. The Trotskyists were defeated but serious people cannot assume their own defeat in advance or admit it prematurely, without losing the capacity to struggle.

One can also examine events. For example, it was by no means clear prior to 1947-8 that the whole of Eastern Europe would become states on the model of the USSR. Stalin made repeated offers to the US and Britain of a "neutral" Germany and this type of solution did later, in 1955, occur in Austria. While the Fourth International was slow to adjust to events, its position was not as lunatic as it is presented.

Similarly comrades Bornstein and Richardson fail to draw any link between the policies of the RCP majority and the policies of Militant and the SWP today. In the final chapter, Militant is attacked for its equating of internationalisation with socialism and its theory of "proletarian bonaparitism". Yet Grant developed this position in the '40s as part of the RCP's analysis of the USSR — one of the theoretical positions the book mentions favourably. Tony Cliff's theory of state capitalism (1947) Grant wrote: "...where we have complete statification, quantity changes into quality, capitalism changes into its opposite...complete statification marks the extreme limit of capitalism...The elements of the new society which were growing up within the old, now to become dominant" (Reply to Tony Cliff: emphasis in the original).

This continuity, which also applies to Cliff's and Healy's organisations, makes a nonsense of the last chapter's claim that there has been a fundamental political break in British Trotskyism and that the solution is somehow a return to the tradition of the 1940s. While nobody can deny that subsequent generations have added some idiosyncrasies all their own (e.g. student power, rainbow coalitions, and various new mass vanguards), we have all had to deal also with problems going back through the whole post-war period.

These disagreements with the political line of "War and the International!" are not meant to diminish its value as a history that puts different points of view and lets the participants speak for themselves. The massive amount of evidence and comrades Bornstein and Richardson have put into it will serve as a basis for any discussion of the history of British Trotskyism in the future. Such an open discussion would help define the remaining unresolved problems and provide a way to develop not only Trotskyist theory but also Trotskyist practice.

A history of the Condom

Jane Ashworth reviews 'Johnny Come Latley', by Jeanette Parisot. Journeyman, £4.95.

BEFORE the Aids panic every one said Durex. Now the condom is in fashion and to promote safer sex condoms in a variety of shapes, colours and sizes are given away at parties (and have even been stapled to the inside of Leeds Student Union newspaper!)

When they were marketed as small, medium and large no one bought the small size. But changed to medium, large and extra large, medium — small that is — sold well.

Perhaps the Communist Party didn't have the same problem when they marketed the Marxism Today Red Stripe condom but certainly they had a different problem — Red Stripe condoms aren't safe — especially when chipped into other CP paraphernalia — the MT Filofax.

None of these stories are in 'Johnny come lately: a short story of the condom'.

Marxists, and Parliament

Jack Cleary reviews 'Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma', by A Y Badayev with an introduction by Tony Cliff, published by Bookmarks.

TSARIST RUSSIA did not have parliamentary democracy. One of the basic political demands around which the workers' movement in Russia — perhaps the most consistently revolutionary
workers' movement that has ever existed — organised was the demand for a democratic parliament on the model of the British or French parliaments.

After the defeat of the 1905 revolution, a fierce mockery of a bourgeois parliament, the Duma, was set up. It had no real power and was not democratically elected. For example, the workers elected their deputies in special groups (curia), and a worker's vote was worth only a fraction of the vote of various other social classes.

The Duma bore all the marks of its origin as a reaction substitute for the democratic parliament: the workers and middle class alike, of something imposed by the Tsarist reaction. Would the workers' movement of the Russian workers be to this Duma? When it was first imposed upon the Bolsheviks by Tsarist pressure, it was a chance to fight for something better, and not to be willing to be forced into it. And the revolution continued to ebb. Nothing better was likely in the period ahead.

So Lenin concluded that the working class should use the Duma as a platform from which to agitate and make propaganda, which would help drum up the forces that could eventually go beyond the Tsarist police and help bolt the Bolshevik parliament. Most Bolsheviks, however, did not agree. Lenin was actually by that time at Bolshevik ranks, and in uncomfortable agreement with the less revolutionising wing of the workers' movement, the Mensheviks.

But events — the continued decline of the workers' movement itself among them — converted most Bolsheviks to Lenin's view. And thus you got the paradox that the most consistently revolutionising party in history participated as fully as it legally could in the Tsar's reactionary and counter-revolutionary congress of a parliament, and put to good use the labour movement platform. Lenin later commented that if the Bolsheviks had not known how to do such things, their cause might have been lost.

In 1912, the Bolshevik deputies were elected to the Duma, and Badayev was one of them. His book is an account of their task in the new Duma. It was tried and sentenced to Siberian exile for life. It is a day by day account of the parliamentary fraction of the Bolshevik party as it immersed itself in the newly-revived Russian labour movement. Acting as one of a number of their lodges, subordinated to the party, the parliamentary fraction used the Duma platform to support workers in struggle and to give workers a political base.

Badayev's account is an inspiring report from one part of the political front of the mass front -class war waged by the Bolshevik party, on the economic and ideological fronts as well as the political front. This combination of different fronts of struggle was the essence of the revolutionary workers' party — this, and not any formal organisation of rules, for Lenin's organisation changed frequently, in line with changing conditions of legality and illegality, etc. It allowed the party to be flexible with the spontaneous workers' movement in all its phases, whether of strike or wave, ebb, militancy or exhaustion.

The struggle in the Duma was the main political front at that time. In that place the Bolsheviks knew that it was necessary to be able to function in the front of the struggle, and that otherwise the less revolutionary wing of the labour movement, or the Bonapartist, would occupy the political space. And thus the Bolsheviks went into, worked within, and told the workers to orient politically, the bloody-handed Tsar's reactionary Duma.

Almost as arresting as the self-linkage of the Bolsheviks to the revolutionary Duma is the in-congrous publication of this book by the British Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). The SWP thereby commits a dangerously anti-revolutionary act of political commercial calculation (or both). It is as if Aleksinsky or Bogdanov, Lenin or another Bolshevik operative on the Bolsheviks, had published a pamphlet in favour of it.

Most of the time the SWP fights shy of propounding basic principles of any sort and of binding itself by them. It makes no dogmatic principle of anti-parliamentarism such as certain syndicalists and ultra-left 'council communists' do. Nevertheless, in what it writes and says about current policies there is a sub-text of dogmatic anti-parliamentarism. It goes far beyond the necessary revolutionary socialist stress on direct action, on the primacy over parliamentary jousting of activities which involve workers directly in struggle for their own economic and political interests; it counterposes such direct action to parliament.

For workers, concerned about parliament, involvement in parliament, wish to win parliamentary elections — these are bad, these are necessarily and purely the waste of time, the rain of the right wing and the so-called left-wing politics; they cannot win elections, at least in normal times, therefore concern for elections drags you irresistibly to the right.

Propaganda against parliament is cheap and easy. Even though it is never rigorously codified or even consistently expanded, they are in practical policy the condition of workers' political life. This is the case. But what they say about the Labour Party, and the role of the Labour Party as a consequence of the Labour Party for its involvement in parliament. They even claim the dirty dealings of Militant in Liverpool by the Labour Party's involvement in parliament.

If you focus on parliament — the place filled for traditional Marxism, you must subordinate the class struggle to electoral considerations. So fight parliamentarians!

But in practice, this means leading politics — effectively most of current politics — to the Labour Party right wing and the soft left. That point is clear and I am not to repeat it or mention it more than once, as I go through the argument.

The SWP focuses on industrial struggles and socialist propaganda about a desirable future world. But how is the world to get from where it is now to socialism? Revolution! But how will the working class prepare itself, change itself, to be able to make a revolution? What can socialists do to help it change? The SWP's answer is not that of the Bolsheviks, or of Leon Trotsky, at any period of his life.

In the proper place of politics, the place filled for traditional Marxist parties and for the Bolsheviks by limited political objectives — including industrial demands which allow the working class to develop by immediate political struggles and definitely in their place. Tony Cliff's SWP puts the demand. 'Build the SWP, Build the Revolutionary Party', he says. Socialist and socialist propaganda must be the link between now and socialism. This is what Cliff, in his better days, used to discuss as second 'Bolshevik'. Lenin's. It leaves, to repeat — the right and left with a virtual monopoly of the hope-and-now politics which concern the mass of workers, separating their political concerns from the struggle for socialism and usually even from the industrial struggles.

It seems revolutionary and radical, but it isn't at all. It means abandoning the broad labour movement, the working class, workers, for formulae and getting on to the moralists' bandwagon. For the Trotskyists, all this is trivial; and less radical.

The Socialist Workers' Party's practice with the radically different practice which Badayev records from poor to show that for the Bolsheviks "Parliament was never the central focus on political activity", and stresses the importance of less one-sided than the one-sided parliamentary model, is to link and combine the different fronts of the class struggle and integrate them into a single organisation, one of the most efficient and effective of the Bolsheviks, the Bolsheviks.

Tony Cliff says that the British labour movement, with its parliamentaryism, is the purest form of a class. The British Trotskyists are not quite. One-sided, a political or pretend-political, syndicalism is the real opposite of British parliamentaryism, both in logic and in the history of our move-
ment. Bolshevism is distant from both, yet it subsumes both and creates something qualitatively higher.

You would never think from Clitt's picture that the central political slogan of the Bolshevists throughout this period was the demand for a fully governing, freely elected parliament, a slogan that remained central until just before the October Revolution.

Socialism in the sense of Lenin and Trotsky tradition would quarrell not, of course, with Clitt's positive emphasis on direct action. And with his a historical history: for example, he makes much of the class composition of the Bolshevik Dumka faction, who were metal and textile workers, and then neglects to mention that the leader of the Bolshevik deputates, "the metalworker Malinovsky", was a police spy (died by the Bolsheviks in 1918).

He belaburs Eric Heffer for his views on parliament, accusing him of downplaying the central political role of the TUC, especially during the great strikes of the early 1970s, when the general strike was on the up and up and was the key to working class industrial relations. But the TUC declared a one-day general strike, forcing the government to release the five, IS didn't dare call for a general strike at the point when it mattered.

The depth of the depression is shown when Clitt endorses (from the left) the ultra-right wing view that the working class industrial defeat can be electorally good for Labour, citing the steady growth of the Labour vote after the general strike as evidence of industrial defeat. Labour being the biggest party in the House of Commons after the October 1929 general election.

The fact, of course, is that there is often a zig-zag pattern. Blocked in industry, the class turns to politics. Blocked in politics by a Tory government, as in the '50s, or frustrated by a right-wing Labour government, as in the '60s, the class turns, if employment and other conditions are favourable, to industrial struggle.

To say that one of these things is "bad", to condemn the turn to politics because it is not the "right" form, is to confuse the two forms industrial class struggle and implicitly to identify it as necessarily right or wrong - as Clitt does - is both stupid and defeatist.

Defeatist, because it is a central fact of working-class life that we experience industrial defeats, and that there is a limit to what can be achieved by industrial gains unless the workers "go political". Short of generalised industrial action - a general strike - leading to revolution, no amount of pure industrial militancy can generate a political solution. The best merit of Bolshevism was that it linked up the industrial militancy of the working class with revolutionary politics.

That being so, to "insist" on the mass remains most important - one industrial, plane, and unhesitatingly to reject and disdain the other, political, plane - what Clitt does in the purge of the Bolsheviks, to be replaced in parliament - is to rule out real development of the real working class into the world as it is.

- You might say that Clitt's formula is "boom-time Trotskyism". When the workers are on the up and up and then we have a role - when they are down we have no political role, except to help to rebuild on the small, local issues and to make general socialist propaganda, and the right and soft left come into their own.

But even this is incoherent. For the workers were very much on the up and up in 1973-4. We took on the Tory government, challenged its authority, and pacified Heath in a general election.

We lost. It was then that the right and soft left came into their own. They had nothing to say about the defeat of the movement and the workers needed politics. The workers, however militant, had no political ideas of their own to put to the Labour Party - and thus the great and successful industrial push against the Tory government resulted in a Labour government - which soon demobilised the industrial militancy.

What Clitt misses is that the real essence of the matter for socialists as it is posed in principle and in British reality is political struggle and the industrial to be integrated and for socialists to be able to interpret them they have to do more than build an organisation - though that is irreplaceable: they have to win the ideological battle, against both the straightforwardsional versions of right-wing ideas and the more subtle versions we get within the labour movement which tie the workers to the bourgeoisist.

One of the central ideas of the latter sort is of course the notion that you can get socialism through parliament. But one of the sources of this false idea is that you can get some things through parliament. We cannot defeat the idea of socialism through parliament by counterposing to it different principles in parliament. Everywhere else but pure industrial struggle. The SWP's, a political, or pretend political, "socialism and talk to the people during the revolutionary party now", is no substitute for engaging wholeheartedly in saying "parliamentary politics" as the fight to return a Labour government now.

True to its trimming, hawking and ecletic politics, the SWP will opportunistically say "vote Labour" on election day - otherwise we would be isolated. But that is only the election-time version of its routine abandonment of policies to the right. Indeed, at election time it is more glaring. In 1979 Paul Foot put it like this: "For the next three weeks I am a very working Labourer".

The working class needs a revolutionary party. But such a party will not be a small pro-paganist apparatus, a small machine to counterpose to the existing labour movement. A party is a part of it and it can perform a certain range of activities, including conducting itself in all the affairs of the working class - which means all the political affairs of society, for this concern the working class, and if the working class does not have socialist answers it will - to repeat yet again and finally accept the answers of the Bourgeoisie and the reformists. The early Christians lived in daily expectation that the Second Coming of Christ was immanently. It would be the end of the world, and the Kingdom of God would come in being immediately.

Then as the decades passed they began to lose faith in the imminence of the Second Coming - and of course they never thought that they could do anything except pray to bring it about. They then turned to the belief that 'for now' the Church was the visible Kingdom of God on earth.

So too with the socialists who substitute for the Marxist work of political struggle within the working class experiment the building-up of their own organisation. The party becomes their Kingdom of God on earth.

Worse than the Christians, they regress from the Marxist belief in struggle to a calls for all fronts waiting for the "millennium", which for them is the revival of the industrial militancy of the '70s. In this they parallel the Marxists who waited paralysed for decades for the Great Slump to come back to radicalise the working class.

Hope for a millennium is comforting. It is especially comforting in periods of disappointment, setbacks and defeat. But we are going through.

But it is in its essence a turning away from the root of socialism - the working class in the whole range of phases and concerns of its struggles.

Going out of fashion?

From back page and that is that. Unfortunately, the caricature of Marxism is not just a caricature of Marx's ideas. It actually exists as an added version of present-day Marxism, in Militant and in its offshoot of Socialist Worker. So apparently justified polemics against Militant can give weight to the view of "socialism" divorced from class politics - from the Kinnockites on the right to Socialist Action on the left.

In its most right-wing version, "anti-economics"- leads to ordinary vote-catching electoralism, faced with a snobbish preference for the supposedly idealistic educated classes over workers, who are further than further from immediate material interests. As Ellen Meikiss Wood points out, "To a large extent, it is just another repetition of banal and hoary right-wing social-democratic nostrums."

"The idea that capitalism is democracy need only be 'extended' to produce socialism, or that some form of a new ideal of life capable of appealing to all right-minded people is respectable. For example, perfectly at home with say, Ramsay MacDonald, or even, for that matter, John Stuart Mill.

The new reformists are now disillusioned with what they see as revolutions socialism in China, Cambodia and Vietnam. They opt instead for reformed capitalist and dominant monarchies. The new social democrats and the new social nationalists usually not - whole-hearted Marxists, but they too saw the Chinese Revolution and Cambodian Stalinists as leaders of the world socialist revolution. Unlike the new reformists, they have remained revolutionary parties - by transferring their faith from Vietnam to Nicaragua, and retreating into moderate social democracy.

The bridge for the new reformism between Marxism and their present reformist phase is Ellen Meikiss Wood argues, Eurocommunism. She identifies the Greek/French writer Nicolas "Poullantzas as the 'monarchist' of the present retreat from class, and analyses his theories with refreshing brevity. This particular emperor is shown not only to have no clothes, but also to have no knobby knees and a sagging pouch.

The prominent 'new reformist' Ernesto Laclau had another channel in his path from being a defender of what he took to be Marxist orthodoxy and theoretical rigor to giving birth to an argument about 'national-popular' ideological themes not necessarily being tied to any one class or group of social groups but being contextual towards the political situation of his native Argentina and the interests of the "popular interpellations" of the Peronist tradition." From this attitude to Argentine nationalism, he continues to a critical view of socialist politics in the metropolitan countries to a new "national-popular" ideologies here.