radical chains

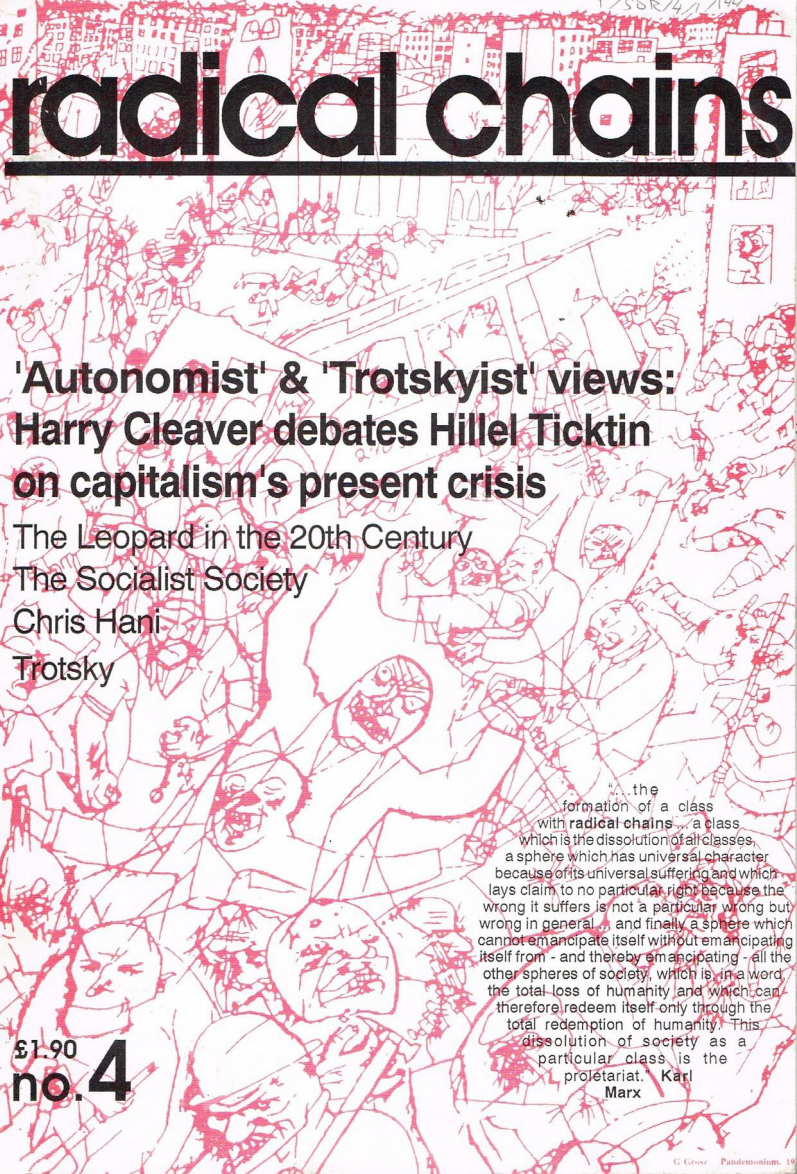
'Autonomist' & 'Trotskyist' views: Harry Cleaver debates Hillel Ticktin on capitalism's present crisis

The Leopard in the 20th Century

The Socialist Society

Chris Hani

Trotsky



"...the formation of a class with **radical chains**... a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere which has universal character because of its universal suffering and which lays claim to no particular right because the wrong it suffers is not a particular wrong but wrong in general ... and finally a sphere which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from - and thereby emancipating - all the other spheres of society, which is, in a word, the total loss of humanity and which can therefore redeem itself only through the total redemption of humanity.' This dissolution of society as a particular class is the proletariat." **Karl Marx**

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G. Grosz Pandemonium, 19

Statement of intent

The working class is bound by radical chains: it experiences suffering and dehumanisation of global significance, yet - because of this - develops capacities and needs which call for the supersession of class society. This 'greatest of all the productive forces' demands conditions adequate to itself, and is self-driven to bring them into being, ie to abolish itself as the working class. Communism is thus not merely an idea. It is a human need, embodied in the historical presence of combined propertyless labour power.

Communism is freely associating people creating themselves through conscious social planning. Communism is the living potential against which the alienated categories and experiences of the present make human sense.

Marx's method was developed in the period of ascendant capitalism. It remains the foundation of revolutionary thought and action today. The world in which we live is riven by a contradiction between the need for and possibility of planning and the law of value. Within the transitional epoch as a whole these correspond to the needs of the proletariat and those of capital, which remain the polarities of class relationships across the earth.

Planning has not superseded the law of value, and is not doing so. There cannot be planning except by the producers. Administration, by bureaucracies and elites, functions in a variety of forms as a surrogate for the law of value. Centralised, top-down attempts to coordinate the activities of the direct producers and adjacent social strata must fail, for they are properly subject neither to the discipline of the market nor to that of the consciously associating society. In the presence of combined labour, containment and external coordination of an administrative nature can only be partial, unstable, and unsuccessful.

The communist potential of the working class remains unrealised: the containment of October was primarily achieved before October, internationally, through bourgeois administrative responses to the proletariat in Britain, Germany, and elsewhere. The USSR was transformed into a centre of reaction penetrating the world labour movement.

For more than half a century stalinism partnered social democracy in obstructing proletarian self-transformation on a world scale. In fact, the bogus claims made for Soviet 'planning' gave social democracy a new lease of life by appearing to vindicate the rationality and viability of centralised administration. By virtue of its origins in the destruction of October, stalinism was able to bring marxism into disrepute. It corrupted marxism which became something else whilst seeking communist credentials, and being granted them by the political representatives of capital.

The problem today is even more serious than that of the years following 1848 when the revolutionary party, as Marx observed, was 'driven from the field' by the industrial and commercial recovery. It is not only that are we surrounded by the debris of October. The working corollary of this is that in different national locations the working class has been obstructed by often symbiotic mass stalinist and social democratic 'workers parties' and social structures functioning as barriers to proletarian self-development. Even worse, there continue to exist small but politically significant groupings which have internalised - with whatever reservations - key aspects of the stalinist ideological legacy. The crippling assertion that the USSR and similar entities were transitional societies is only the most obvious of these. Stalinism is too often narrowly and misleadingly seen as a primarily political degeneration.

The core of historical materialism is the analysis of social forms of surplus extraction and labour process control from the standpoint of communism. Stalinism may for a time have suspended the law of value as a means of economic regulation, but without bringing about a move towards planning, which can only be conscious, democratic and global. Social democracy has done the same in more partial ways, where capital remains the direct form of surplus extraction. Imposing limits upon the law of value only preserves it. During an entire historical period the prevention of communism has been, and remains, for capital, the pressing requirement, even where the resulting social forms are barriers to the self-expansion of capital.

Radical Chains exists in order to develop revolutionary critique and thus to carve out a theoretical space within which the need for and movement towards human emancipation can be explored. This objective requires the re-evaluation of categories and concepts which have previously been debased. This does not simply necessitate a project of recovery, but an attempt to forge new categories and concepts appropriate to our own period.

We are not a party, nor even the nucleus of one, though we aim to develop as a contributing strand towards a future formation. The revolutionary party of the proletariat will not come into being without a revolutionary movement in the working class. In the meantime, the closest available approximation to such a party necessarily takes the form of dispersed individuals and groups, of which *Radical Chains* is one. To declare a political party nucleus prematurely without recognition of the complexity of the prevention of communism is to create yet another barrier against proletarian self-formation, and to perpetuate the dispersal.

In this period of deepening decay and disruption, our starting point can only be the need for free association and the potential for abundance.

Contents

This issue was produced by William Dixon, David Gorman, M.K., Mike Neary and Bob Shepherd.

Disagreement and debate is vital for the development of revolutionary theory. Articles in *Radical Chains* express a range of differing views and pieces critical of articles in the journal are especially welcome. Contributions should ideally be sent on 3.5" IBM compatible discs, although type-written copy will also be accepted.

***Radical Chains* helps organise regular discussion meetings in London along with other groups and individuals of differing political outlooks. Anyone who wants to come along should get in touch with us for details (or come and see us at the *Critique* conference in January).**

Distribution of communist literature is becoming increasingly difficult, so if you think you can sell *Radical Chains* or get your local bookshop to stock it, please contact us and we will send you copies on a 'sale or return' basis.

Apologies for the delay between issues 3 and 4, and for the fact that some advertised articles have not been included. Due to lack of space these have been held back and will appear in issue 5. Apologies also to subscribers who have not yet received issue 4. This is because we have lost part of our subscribers list and we would urge you to get in touch with us as soon as possible so that we can sort things out.

Write to us at: BM *Radical Chains*, London WC1N 3XX

Europe: nationalism or class struggle

William Dixon

The virtual breakdown of the ERM, the European monetary system, appeared to be a purely technical phenomenon. It could be claimed that currencies such as the pound were overvalued or that there did not exist adequate controls over the movements of capital, so speculative money could destroy the system. Such considerations would appear to exclude action by the working class as in any way responsible. This view is supported by the absence of any significant class struggle in Britain that could be identified as having lead to the departure of the pound from the ERM. Yet, despite this absence it is still the working class that lurks behind the various terms and categories used in the debate. The difficulty is in uncovering the often tortuous mediations through which class struggle appears.

One important category used in the debate has been that of unemployment. It is a category into which the class struggle has been compacted. The reason for capital to be concerned about unemployment is not profit but the threat to political stability. This is not immediate and nor does it even necessarily mean the unemployed themselves, although this is not ruled out. As the absence of work it is the absence of the preferred means of social organisation and reward. Long term unemployment threatens the political order; it opens to question all political institutions and promises a polarisation of political positions. It opens the possibility of a real crisis, not just some spectacular adjustment on the stock exchange but a more serious political crisis within the ruling class as they argue about the best course of action.

The actual category unemployment poses the social question of capital as one concerning the continued provision of work. In this way it tends to mediate the struggle posing the interests of the class as synonymous with accumulation. The problem for capital is that this mediation does require a delivery of its promise that accumulation does not, perhaps now, cannot deliver.

We have already seen something of the impact of the class through this compacted category unemployment in the debate over Europe. The problem for capital is to devise the appropriate arrangements so that the class struggle is subsumed within them. The keynesian arrangements did for a period successfully achieve this. Capital temporarily gained a real objectivity; struggle was channelled via productivity into accumulation. Of course this objectivity did not last. The post war arrangement became incapable of containing the struggle. This opened up a period in which capital must re-assert its objectivity through crisis. In many ways this has been successful. The free market policies and new technologies, by reimposing absolute poverty, have made unemployment work for capital. However for this to be consolidated the old national restrictions on labour needed to be dissolved.

Profit is capital's national home

The dream of a unified Europe is of a single market in both capital and labour. The crucial element in this is of course the competition of labour for jobs from a capital with no loyalties to anything but profit. All the convergence requirements of the Maastricht Treaty have been designed to erase the vestiges of the old arterio-sclerotic Europe, the Europe of national working classes achieving national welfare deals of different kinds, but that lead to a form of leapfrogging and the export of inflation. The problem with convergence would be its success, eradication of the national peculiarities that each bourgeoisie share as their common totems of control. These peculiarities are either backward nostalgias for non-existent pasts, or are distinctions of dress, style of shoe and trouser, of crease and rumple, distinctions in sporting or culinary preference that are so inane that they may exercise the mind but not the intelligence. It is no accident that these several peculiarities that various nations have in common all tend to favour the continuation in power of the same tired gang (tradition). The peculiarities have assisted the bourgeoisie. Here nationalism has undoubtedly been the most reactionary and in fact murderous force in the history of capitalism. In its name social crisis is reduced to the construction of enemies.

Now the problem is that, with the attempt to create the unified Europe, tried and tested formulas of nationalism are at threat. We should not be surprised if the unbelievably crude Thatcher and all her cronies should be so against Europe. Was it not nationalism that saved her miserable reputation with the Falklands? She certainly did not miss the Labour Party grovelling during that episode as any loyal opposition should. These Tory anti-Europeans have a nostalgia for nostalgia. They perceive that in troubled times nationalism still has a card to play, a few more bodies may be piled up in tribute to it. They perceive a danger in Europe as a market without appropriate political institutions. This is a real danger for order. Convergence forced political tensions on Europe as different areas were faced by punitive interest rates, or tax rises, reductions in social spending and all with increasing unemployment. The Bundesbank though in the position to act as a European Bank did not. Indeed there seems nothing substantial in Europe to make up for what is lost as the distinctiveness of the nations is dissolved. In this situation the right talks of national unemployment and national policy.

One way offered to preserve the dream of a Europe for capital is a consolidated attack on the working class. In this case the aim will be reductions in what are called social costs. This prospect is being talked about in relation to the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty. There will be an attempt to organise the working classes into outdoing each other in giving up social benefits. We have already seen this spectre at the micro level in the moving of Hoover production from France to Cambuslang in Scotland. Where a similar deal was offered at Dundee-Timex and was faced by stout resistance, despite the union, the company simply closed down. Profit is capital's national home.

The lines between the so called third world and the west have little meaning when employment can be moved so easily. The USA working class, as well as the European, have been learning this hard lesson of international solidarity. The conditions of work, of contracts, of social benefits of workers several thousand miles away become a matter of practical concern when factories move across the world. Repression abroad arrives here as a natural necessity to work harder, as a plausible requirement to reduce social costs, as the need to do this, do that for work.

Both sides in the dispute over Europe have this much in common; they know the working class must work harder for less. Even Mr Major with all the verve and fascination of two short planks is well aware that attacking the working class is where the heart is. The real difference is in

the perceptions of the adequate political framework for organising the shambles. If the working classes are to compete across the world for jobs should not there be an even greater reliance on the nation as a means of preserving division across Europe, of competition of French and British etc etc, rather than workforces without any country. Or perhaps the nation should be more intimate with increased regionalisation of our treasured peculiarities? Thatcher and that lot do not appear to want to go that far. In fact the situation is difficult enough that it offers us the prospect of a real crisis in the Tory party. How that will spread it is impossible to say in advance. We can expect a more vicious polarisation on the right as a result. On the other hand if the national working class, rather than particular workforces, is to compete conditions of work downwards then maybe the Labour Party still has a role to play as a Party of Government. Unemployment will be the catchphrase, the national emergency will be its arena, sacrifices will be the game.

Adequate understanding of such events will require an analysis of capital as combining objective and subjective factors. Several articles in *Radical Chains* have attempted this but only as a beginning. An important theme arising from these attempts has been that the left itself has constituted a barrier to the movement to communism. The roots of the present revolutionary left are still firmly in the post 1945 period. A theoretical legacy of this is the tendency to deal with the objective and subjective as separate spheres. This separation in theory is a real result of the prevention of communism in the twentieth century.

The tendency of the revolutionary left is to fail to grasp real developments and instead rely on sectarianism. We can identify two broad strands, both tending to subjectivism. One side, usually leninist, stresses objective factors that will lead to a situation in which the class will become revolutionary. The problem is that objective conditions keep maturing without there being a revolution. In effect the objective is frozen within the analysis. The leap is then to excessively subjective explanations, often but not always implicit rather than explicit. We find here that the working class has failed whilst the party has to work even harder to overcome the obstacles to consciousness. The party itself becomes the frantic island of sanity.

The alternative view, we can call it anarcho-marxist, starts from the class itself by rejecting the notion that the struggle of the class has been ineffective. It rejects for example the usual notion of economism and instead stresses the oppositional nature of the struggle. This again tends to excessive subjectivism as the revolutionaries frantically attempt to convey the truth to the world. Explanations for the absence of communism must identify betrayals, lies, etc. So both sides tend to sectarianism. Particular premapped paths become the truth.

The left itself has constituted a barrier to the movement to communism

The crucial thing for the revolutionary left is to come to terms with the extent to which it has lost the perspective of communism. No single strand is privileged with the necessary view of the whole movement. We cannot simply discover the right ideas bolstered by our favourite book of quotes. Nor can re-thinking be achieved through rehashing. One problem is the immediate situation of much of the left, its organisational and social structures. The needs of their members tends to obstruct the threat to the organisation from rethinking. There are no innocents ordained with truth and position, those who act so merely recreate the crimes of the past. There are only participants for whom tension is necessary.

Letters are welcome and should be addressed to BM Radical Chains, London WC1N 3XX

Correspondence

From George Gordon.

I recently attended the public debate between Harry Cleaver and Hillel Ticktin on 5 July in London, organised by *Radical Chains*. I wasn't too interested in what Ticktin had to say (he's an unreconstructed Trotskyist) but I listened intently to what was said by Mr. Cleaver to get an idea of the real political approach behind his (often brilliant) writings about economics and ruling class strategy. My worst suspicions were confirmed. I have no hesitation in saying that Cleaver's approach is essentially just the old leftist racket of finding half plausible Marxist justifications for supporting liberal, 'progressive' politics. At one stage he claimed that 'unlike those who have abandoned Marxism', he did not like or use the term 'new social movements' because he thought that things often described as 'black struggles' or 'women's struggles' are actually expressions of the class struggle. He then went on to spend the rest of the evening talking as if he did believe in 'new social movements', referring completely un-self-consciously to 'the black community', 'women's struggles', 'what blacks/women want'... without any reference to class whatsoever. The most obscene example of this came right at the end when he referred to proposals made by the gang leaders in L.A. as an example of 'what black people want'. You may recall that these proposals included the policing of labour discipline by the gangs - so much for the refusal of work!

It's interesting how common it is for vehement anti-Leninists (which Cleaver is) to think in a very similar way to Leninists (although their methods of organisation are very different). It became more and more obvious that behind Cleaver's comments about what ordinary people want lay the assumption that there are basically two types of people involved in struggle - on the one hand 'ordinary decent' types who don't have much politics but do have hearts of gold and on the other (implicitly: middle class, academic) people who do have politics but are not directly involved in struggle and need to find ways of 'relating' to those who are. It's a problem of getting the message across - you can't be too critical of ordinary people because that might put them off. When he was talking about 'what people want' he mentioned with approval Marx's *Workers' Enquiry* which was a list of questions to ask workers. He then said something along the lines of: 'This is what we should be doing today. Go to the factories, go to the black community, go to the students, go to the women's movement. . . find out what people want'. O. K., it's not *quite* the same as what Bob Avakian *{leader of the Maoist RCP in the USA* ... ed. } would say ... But ...

To a certain extent he was just recognising his unusual position as a Marxist academic. What was offensive is that he was assuming that the audience must be composed of people of a similar social role.

I would describe Cleaver's overall position as 'council communism without the workers' council'. As with other 'councilists' there is a lot of truth in what he says. He stresses the need for workers to form direct links with each other rather than 'unite and fight' through adopting a common ideology or joining the same party. He rightly stresses the enormous diversity of the class struggle and how it is reactionary to try to impose a uniform way of doing things. It is true that a proletarian community of struggle is, and needs to be, diverse. But it still needs to be a community *not* (as I think Cleaver wants) a liberal multi-cultural swamp where everybody respects everybody else's views.

He is aware that the trade unions are against the workers (I know this because I had a conversation with him the day before in which he argued with someone who was trying to argue that workers used unions to organise struggles despite the reactionary leadership). However, when it comes to popular fronts containing 'Labor Organisations' this criticism is forgotten. In this particular case he was talking about the network of groups which was set up to oppose North American Free Trade Agreement, something which he sees as very positive.

What Cleaver's approach appears to offer is the possibility of being involved in struggle without having to bother about strategic questions (at least not in practice). No doubt if you tried (for example) to attack nationalism in general (black nationalism in US cities, National Liberation movements, the implicit US nationalism of people defending 'constitutional rights'... and so on) you would be accused of trying to impose uniformity on diverse movements. In other words his brand of autonomism offers the possibility of 'keeping politics out of politics'. In practice this always means 'leave politics to the politicians'.

3 out of 10, professor, must try harder!

Commentary

Escaping the 20th century

M.K.

Socialism is dead or dying. Soviet-style Stalinism has collapsed, Labour Party style social democracy now offers no alternative to market austerity and very few people believe in any sort of revolutionary socialism. Yet we should not regret its passing.

Socialism did not fail because people are intrinsically selfish, greedy or incapable of working together. After all, the various socialist regimes were never based on workers' democracy from below, but on state administration imposed from above. They had little in common with Marx's vision of communism, a society in which the working class has abolished exploitation, and therefore both money and the state have become unnecessary.

These regimes first came to power in the revolutionary upheavals that ended the First World War. Even then they were never intended to be fully controlled by workers. The Bolsheviks did lead 900 workers' councils or soviets to power in October 1917, but they also rejected the factory committees' proposals for democratic self-management of industry well before the civil war. Within eight months economic collapse combined with alienation from the working class created a situation in which Lenin's regime was resorting to widespread arrests, censorship and even shootings to repress strikes. A few months later the first social democratic government in Germany organised the slaughter of thousands to crush revolution there.

Since then these socialisms have acted as a barrier to any real tendencies towards communism by persuading workers that they need not take power directly and that they could rely on 'their' socialist governments to make changes for them (even the anarchists in the Spanish civil war supported the Popular Front government so enabling it to crush the revolution there). Not only did the Communist Parties in the East totally discredit socialism by slaughtering millions, but in the West they reigned back potentially revolutionary situations both after World War Two and after the May '68 upheavals in France.

There were, of course, considerable social improvements in this period, but these were not due to the benevolence of politicians; they were due to strikes and other forms of working class pressure which convinced governments of all political hues that they would never get social peace unless they provided comprehensive welfare services. As the Tory, Lord Hailsham, said in the 1940s: "If you do not give the people social reform they are going to give you social revolution."

A cartoon from Poland

Socialism is dead or dying ... Yet we should not regret its passing

By restructuring the system to formally recognise working class needs capitalism was temporarily stabilised. However these reforms also laid the basis for the next cycle of struggles, the strikes and countercultural rebellions of the '60s and '70s, which demanded much more and pointed beyond all possible reform.

This 'revolt against work' restricted profitability and provoked a major crisis, compelling governments East and West to attempt to return to the market to restructure industry, rediscipline workers and weaken their collective strength. In Britain this was begun with the mass unemployment and welfare and wage cuts of the last Labour government, which paved the way for the Tory offensive of recent times. In Soviet-style societies repression had made it impossible for workers to organise collectively but, despite this, they could still rebel individually, with sabotage, absenteeism and slow-working and this contributed to the collapse of their systems. Since then the Stalinist bureaucracies have also attempted to return to the market but this has had little success and has lead to chaos from Yugoslavia to Russia.

Having discredited, not only the name of communism, but the whole idea of radical change, these *preventions of communism*, are now largely bankrupt, yet many revolutionaries seem to wish to revive them. Most Trotskyists still call for trade union bureaucrats to lead strikes or for workers to vote Labour 'with no illusions'. Whatever their real intentions these tactics can only have the effect of maintaining illusions in a Labour left whose failure to lead any real fightback, from the GLC to Arthur Scargill, is what has demoralised and demobilised so many people over the years. The SWP's recent reprinting of Lenin's defence of similar policies from 1921, *Left-wing Communism; an infantile disorder*, shows the inability of even these 'revisionist' Trotskyists to really develop their ideas beyond those of the old Bolshevik leaders.

A few groups, such as the RCP who produce *Living Marxism*, have attempted some rethinking. Unlike more conventional Trotskyists they tend to concentrate on capitalism as a whole and so do not end up implying that the main cause of the crisis is simply the Tory party or that the main source of racism is the BNP. However, despite all their talk of being new and different, their basic Marxist theory has not developed much beyond that of Lenin. While they were right to say that the left's call for Western intervention or arming Bosnian nationalists showed their bankruptcy, their unimaginative alternative of waiting for the West to bomb Serbia so they could start backing Serbia against the West was no more radical than Russia's support for Serbia, or indeed Germany's support for Croatia or the US's for Bosnia. Such Leninist support for 'oppressed' nationalisms not only always effectively ends up supporting viciously anti-working class regimes but also rival imperialisms. Now that the role of national liberation movements such as the ANC and the PLO has evolved from one of largely recuperating and misdirecting working class struggles to one of openly policing them, the totally reactionary nature of any sort of nationalism could not be more clear.

This was the argument of many Marxists, including Luxemburg, who debated Lenin on this and other issues. Many left communists also argued that revolutionaries should not try to take power themselves but merely inspire workers to do so and they developed a radical critique of trade unions. These ideas seem particularly relevant in a period when the unions, from Timex to Burnsalls to UCH, have so systematically stifled anger and prevented strikes from spreading. However the left communists' critiques of many of the forms that contained the working class this century, such as bourgeois democracy and anti-fascist fronts, were lost to a left dazzled by the apparent success of the Soviet regime. Although a revolutionary Marxism more relevant to the post-war period was later developed by the situationists in France and the autonomists in Italy most revolutionaries never went beyond a rigid Leninism; in fact radicals were as likely to develop insights in the anarchist, feminist or green movements as in any Marxist groups.

This led to the present situation where much of the left still has no real under-

standing that it was the contradictions created by the power of the working class that lead to the collapse of the socialist alternative, and that capitalism's recent policies of economic crisis and deindustrialization were specifically strategies that attempted to contain the revolts of the '60s and '70s and escape the working class. Without this as a starting point the left can only see this process as a defeat and so put its energies into trying to revive various moribund institutions. Either, like most Trotskyists, they are trying to resurrect the old Labour movement, or, like the RCP, they are apparently giving up on class struggle and putting all their faith in the strategies of the party elite (or even putting their faith in even more absurd icons: witness the support some still give to Castro's Cuba which, since the collapse of Soviet subsidies, can no longer even supply the welfare benefits that in the past might have been used to justify a lack of civil liberties worse than many of the old East European regimes).

This is not to say that non-Leninist communists have all the answers on how recent class struggles, whether in the form of strikes, street protests or campaigns like that around the poll tax, can expand into a new working class movement... far from it. While the left's usual accusation that these 'ultra-lefts' do nothing more than abstractly call for revolution is blatantly untrue, it is true that many of them are as unthinking and dogmatically defensive as any Leninists and their failure to organise beyond small unstable groups can often make Leninist parties seem an attractive alternative. The marginalisation of these groups and individuals has created a situation of isolation, lack of debate and inadequate theory that shows that they are as much a product of the containment of communism as any other tendency; tragically we are all part of the mess that the left found itself in this century. We can only escape by learning from all the various revolutionary traditions, Leninist and non-Leninist, in order to create a Marxism, going beyond both Lenin and Marx, a politics relevant for the next century.

It is unfortunate that this article appears to be slagging off all the rest of the left in typical sectarian fashion, but all contemporary theories, not least of those in this journal, do need to be critiqued and superseded. Of course there is much more to revolutionary politics than just developing the 'correct' theory and more insights will come from activity than academic-style debate, but the left does need to understand and explain the world if it is to offer anything to the working class and be able to encourage rather than hinder any tendencies towards communism.

All contemporary theories, not least of those in this journal, do need to be critiqued and superseded

Talk of such a communist revolution seems ridiculously utopian in today's climate but we should not forget that virtually no-one predicted the explosions of workers' struggles at the end of the '60s. Although at present people lack confidence in real social change, they are still far less subservient than previous generations and it does appear that our rulers have no way out of their present underlying economic crisis. This crisis of both the market and of any attempts at socialist bureaucratic administration show that modern society will never stabilise until it is based on workers' democracy, until we can implement communism. The present anger about declining living standards indicates considerable potential for the future provided those who claim to be revolutionaries become an inspiration rather than a barrier to such revolution.

Searchlight South Africa was the first publication to expose the ANC's suppression of the 1984 mutiny. Here its editor, **Baruch Hirson**, writes about **Chris Hani**

Murder as a political weapon: a South African scenario

On 10 April 1993 Chris Hani, nationalist leader, secretary of the South African Communist Party, one time Chief of Staff of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (the ANC armed force), was assassinated outside his home in a small town near Johannesburg. The curious position of this man and the crisis that this has raised has more than local interest. It requires socialists everywhere to pose the most awkward of questions.

How is it that in this era in which the so-called communist movement is in almost universal disarray, a national secretary of the local Communist Party should be deemed a hero? What was the nature of his 'communism'? What was his role in the mutiny of the armed forces of the ANC? Did he help suppress a strike in the Transkei after he returned from exile? Why was he considered a nationalist hero?

The questions could go further, but it is through an examination of the above posers that it might be possible to gain an insight, not only to the man but also the society that nurtured him. It should also lead to some important considerations about the objectives of the left in this period of social decay.

First, some background. Hani was educated in the Eastern Cape at Lovedale and then Fort Hare, both of them segregated institutions in the Transkei. Lovedale was one of the better schools for Africans; Fort Hare was designated a University for Xhosa speaking students after strict apartheid was introduced in 1959. Hani took a BA degree in the humanities before leaving the country. Then he left South Africa to join *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.

Hani was part of a group of guerillas involved in a disastrous incursion into Rhodesia in 1967 from which few emerged alive. To his credit he was one of the few men who later stood up and criticized the leadership for their mishandling of the operation. It is reported that the leader of the armed forces demanded that he be shot for his outspoken criticism.

Hani escaped with his life and was posted to Lesotho shortly thereafter, in charge of infiltrating men into South Africa. There is no information about his military or political skills. Hani is not credited with any campaign (although there are myths about some activities that do not bear scrutiny). There are also no known publications to his name, no political statements, and although he joined the Communist Party and became a leading official, no criticisms of events in the USSR, in Eastern Europe, or in other regions that named themselves socialist or communist. To all intents he was faceless, yet he rose to be an army commissar and then Chief of Staff of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and secretary of the Communist Party, both in succession to Joe Slovo. Furthermore, when the SACP met in conference in 1989 and praised the USSR for its achievements, Hani did not dissent. More recently he has visited China and Cuba and, in both cases, he either saw no faults or, if he did, never mentioned them publicly.

In sum, outside of mythology, Hani was a commander of an army that saw no action in South Africa. Politically he was a 'yes-man', able to accept everything that the SACP said, not known to have ever criticised the monstrous deeds of the world movement in which he rose to leadership. Nor did he ever utter a word that can allow for an assessment of his political views. How could he? It is said of this leader of 'communism' that he had never read any of Marx's works.

How then does such a man become a leader, a figure of veneration and also, if the newspaper accounts are to be believed, a man of immense learning and great erudition? At the outset it must be said that so desperate are the people in the black townships, that they will rally to any personality they see as their champion. Their extreme poverty and deprivation, their squalid squatter camp homes, and their helplessness in the face of daily violence, leave them in despair. They are also part of a vast population rendered illiterate by a rotten school system coupled with over a decade of boycotts that kept the schools closed. They seek a saviour, and who better than an army leader, capable, it is thought, of mobilizing them against the state's armed forces? His so-called communism dovetails with the hope of a new egalitarian society and, in any case, government propaganda against communism only made it more attractive to the dispossessed. What did it matter if Hani knew little more than them about the meaning of communism? His ignorance could only enhance him in the eyes of his admirers. The myth became fact in the case of Hani, and nobody sought to disillusion his followers, neither in life or in death.

Hani became a figure of interest to the left on two particular accounts. Firstly, by virtue of his involvement as an executioner in the mutiny of 1984 in *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. Secondly, because of his closeness to General Bantu Holomisa, the man who toppled the corrupt government of the Transkei and took control of the region.

Hani's position in the mutiny is of major interest. The events that led to the uprising, which involved the vast majority of troops arose from a number of interconnecting factors. The troops of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* in the Angolan camps were dispirited. They claimed that there was no democracy in the ANC and that the leaders were self appointed. Secondly, they said that their task was not to fight the Angolan opposition army, Unita, but to move into action against the South African government. For this they demanded that they be led in battle inside South Africa. Thirdly, they objected to being used in the many smuggling ventures in which their leaders (although, it appears, not Hani) were involved.

After a number of smaller upheavals there was a rising of considerable numbers, at Viana camp in Angola. In this case there was an additional factor. The troops were sickened by the torture and the treatment of dissidents in the army.

The mutiny was suppressed when the Angolan army was summoned and, at a tribunal, men accused of being the ring-leaders, were sentenced to death. It has been claimed by former mutineers that Hani was on the tribunal and/or witnessed the executions. The evidence is not clear cut, but Hani was in the camp when this occurred. His own claim, published in the South African journal *Work in Progress*, is that he opposed the executions and flew to Lusaka to get the ANC leaders to stop the killing. This is ingenuous. Hani, as army commissar was the senior *Umkhonto* man present and could have ordered an end to the brutality. He did not.

Hani did nothing to redress the wrongs of 1984 and, when the inmates of an ANC camp in east Africa elected a majority of ex-mutineers to the camp committee, Hani travelled there post haste to oversee the dissolution of the democratically elected committee.

When next heard of, after the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations, Hani was installed in the nominally independent Transkei. Once again the details are blurred but there were reports which indicated that Hani and his army comrades were installed in the presidential residence and that they had assisted Holomisa in putting down a local strike. All in the best of Stalinist traditions, even if our man in the Transkei had not read his Stalin.

In the Commissions of Enquiry, of which there have been three, the facts of the mutiny, the repression and the tortures, are now well established. Details of this are carried in *Searchlight South Africa* No 10, April 1993. What was not disclosed is the names of all those responsible for the tortures and executions. It seems certain that Hani bears direct responsibility for the latter. But even if he did not give the orders, his position in the ANC army makes him culpable. It is possible that his martyrdom at the hand of an assassin will allow the investigators to draw a veil over his guilt.

The assassination must also draw attention to the circumstances under which Hani was shot. It is hardly necessary to state that Hani's lack of security, which included the dismissing of his bodyguard over the Easter weekend, was not the action of a man with military experience. Obviously, a determined assassin can always strike, but to offer an opportunity such as Hani did on that fatal morning is beyond understanding.

The second fact was the use by the conspirators of a Pole. It is a telling indictment of the former Stalinist countries that in their long period of control of the states in Eastern Europe, they reared so many people who opposed the existing regimes and that so many have appeared in recent years as skinheads, racists, fascists, or generally members of extreme right-wing gangs. The forces of reaction to the Stalinist states, so obviously widespread, were both positive and negative, but little was said about them by those who were one-time admirers of these states in the Communist Party in South Africa. However, the crucial factor in this case was the eagerness with which the South African government went out to recruit such personnel to bolster their white supremacy policy. Such people, added to hardened racists from Zimbabwe and Mozambique and extremists from within the local population, provide the membership for right wing groups and parties. These are men and women dedicated to race supremacy who will use every method to maintain their privileged position.

Behind them stand the elements of South Africa's Military Intelligence which have been responsible for the wave of killings in the country over the past decade. This body, which has been allowed, or encouraged, by the government to remove opposition leaders is still intact. It is a force with a public presence but a covert set of operations that will persist in its destabilising course until forcibly broken up.

The continued killings, although less dramatic than assassination, are not the work of white racists alone. The spectre of terror has gripped the country, embracing murder in the black townships, (black) taxi-rank war, white vigilante sniping, random sectarian attacks and pitched battles between the Inkatha Freedom Party, the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress, and other smaller groups. Some of these bodies are more horrible than others, none offer the hope of social change and democratic rights.

There was a time when revolutionaries called for the arming of the people in order to usher in a new society. It is doubtful whether this would be an appropriate solution for South Africa today. It could be more useful to call for the disarming of the population, except for the obvious conclusion that this would leave the state police and army as arbiters of the country's fate and that opens the way to political suicide. Quite obviously, however, a disciplined armed force under trade union (or similar) control would be an answer, if it was achievable. Given the political climate in the country today, this does not seem possible.

It is at this point that other options must be considered, and that takes me back to the issue of the mutiny. Consequent on the publicity given to this event, and the equally nasty prison camps run by the South West African Peoples Organisation (Swapo), in *Searchlight South Africa*, a Campaign for Justice in Southern Africa was launched. This small group of individuals called for an International Commissions of Inquiry into these events; campaigned for the release of men kept in prisons in central and east Africa on behalf of the ANC security department; demanded statements from Nelson Mandela and the ANC; called on Amnesty International to investigate these matters, and so on. By persistent action remarkable successes have been recorded. Men have been released from prisons, the ANC was forced (literally dragged) into investigating the mutiny, and there has been widespread publicity over the mutiny in South Africa. The article exposing the mutiny in *Searchlight South Africa* No 5 was translated into Zulu and reprinted in three issues in the Natal based paper, *Umafrika*. The Namibian leaders, living in the new luxury derived from their political positions in the country, have ignored the calls for an inquiry into the prison pits they created in Angola.

In raising the issues, the Campaign for Justice saw beyond the fate of individuals, as important as that aspect might have been. The question of civil rights, of justice and equality of justice, and of the right to walk free and talk openly, are central to the demands of all socialists - whatever our criticism of the way such matters are viewed in contemporary societies. This is a moral dimension of the socialist perspective that has been overshadowed by other considerations for too long a time. The failure to press these demands allowed the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe to ride roughshod over the rights of their populations. Yet it was the basic right of individuals to be protected from arbitrary repressive forces that was once the concern of socialists. A return to basic considerations demands that a new sense of moral purpose inform Marxists.

It is too soon to determine what factors will be required to rescue socialism from the chasm of despair that followed the collapse of the states of Eastern Europe. That it must revive is certain, but when it does it will require new values, able to by-pass revived elements of Stalinism (whether in Russia, Yugoslavia or South Africa) and set an agenda that points a way to a socialism unsullied by the practices of the past 75 years. A campaign for justice, against victims of state violence and against the cynicism of nationalist movements might well provide one of the crucial slogans in the coming years.

Postscript: Nothing New out of Africa

Charles Nqakula has been appointed to succeed Chris Hani as general secretary of the South African Communist Party. He is reported in *The Guardian* (30 April 1993) as saying that he and his friends do not talk about the collapse of the USSR and its satellites. 'We are talking about resurgence. Communist parties in a number of these countries are beginning to resurface. Some have even won elections'.

Although apparently jolted by the events of 1989-91, Nqakula says, they sat down and analyzed the factors that led to the collapse and looked to their own party to see what lessons could be learnt. It is perhaps unbecoming to be sarcastic about his observations, but what can be said about his new understanding, as spelt out by the life-long Stalinist, Joe Slovo: who suddenly discovered, first that Gorbachev was the most important thinker after Lenin in the USSR and then led him to pronounce the need for a 'democracy' that consisted (in a 'sunset scenario') of a power sharing government comprising the National Party of de Klerk and the ANC?

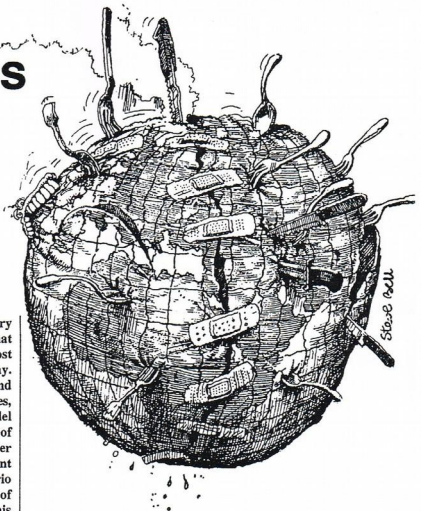
Nqakula, it must be added, was trained in military and espionage work by the NKVD in the USSR, the Stasi in East Germany, and in Angola. Did his new understanding come out of his training in those models of 'democracy'.

Editorial Note.

Baruch Hirson wrote this article in May 1993, shortly after Hani's assassination. In August, the ANC published a report which, despite its fudging of the issues, admitted that Hani was guilty of sending people to Viana camp although he knew what was happening there. In all the hype surrounding Hani's death, Searchlight South Africa *was virtually the only publication in this country to publicly criticised the man.*

Harry Cleaver debates Hillel Ticktin

on capitalism's present crisis ... danger and opportunity



It's not often that you can bring together people from very different revolutionary traditions for a public debate that attracts one hundred and thirty five people who represent most strands of the revolutionary left as it exists in this country today. Harry Cleaver, a former editor of the journal *Zerowork* and author of *Reading Capital Politically* (Harvester/Humanities, 1979), was one participant in this debate. The other was Hillel Ticktin, editor of the journal *Critique* and author of a series of important articles on the political economy of the USSR. Cleaver is an American who has drawn on and developed the important work of Italian autonomists such as Toni Negri and Mario Tronti, helping to challenge various 'orthodox' versions of marxism and placing class struggle firmly at the centre of his analysis. Ticktin, of South African origin, is closer to the trotskyist tradition (although he carefully distances himself from the orthodox trotskyism of the Fourth International) but no less innovative than the autonomists in his approach which has helped stress the importance of the law of value.

The debate was organised by *Radical Chains* in conjunction with the autonomist magazine *London Notes*. The organisers believed that there is not enough interchange between the different fragments of the marxist tradition and when they heard that Cleaver would be visiting Britain in July they decided to ask him if he would debate with Ticktin. While there has always been a degree of criticism *within* autonomism or *within* trotskyism or *within* situationism, critical engagement *between* different traditions has been rare. It is this engagement of the adherents of one tradition with the ideas of another which is necessary if the fragmentation and dispersal of the revolutionary left is to be overcome.

The debate was transcribed by Mike Neary and David Gorman and edited by David Gorman. The most interesting contributions from the floor have been included, together with responses from the speakers. Because of the success of the event, *Radical Chains* intends to hold further debates on a range of topics in the future.

Hillel Ticktin:

When looking at the present capitalist crisis it appears to me that there are four aspects to it. Since it's not possible for me to go into any detail in twenty minutes I am just going to have to assume that people have some understanding of certain of the concepts. So in the first instance it seems to me we are talking about the long wave and a long term downtown that began roughly in 1973. My view of the long wave is not the same as Ernest Mandel who most people would identify with it. I'd see it much rather in a kind of classical way which underlies what I am going to say and might differentiate me, I'm not at all certain, from the other speaker.

That is to say, if one looks at the movement of history in marxist terms, there are always two aspects to it: the movement in the categories themselves and the class struggle. And it seems to me the art or duty of the marxist is to be able to put the two together correctly to see how, in fact, the form of the class struggle is merging with movement of the categories. If one simply analyses the movement of the class struggle you will not understand the history. All you do is end up with an amount of empirical detail, which is useful but which will not really give you a proper understanding of the nature

of the economic system or movement. So one has to understand the categories. In other words, in this instance, one has to understand what is happening to value, to accumulation. Now the difference I think that have with Mandel here is that Mandel looks at it in a much more technical way and would place much more accent effectively on accumulation and technological change. I don't. For me the long waves are much more to do with changes which are related to accumulation which in turn is related to the class struggle itself. Accumulation has proceeded to a certain point, the class struggle has become so intense, that the capitalist class sees the only solution in pulling the plug, if one can put it that way. And I think that is precisely what happened in 1973.

In 1973 they realised - I think it was completely conscious - that unless they went for a long term downturn and raised the level of unemployment, they would be faced with increasing demands for control over production. The result was the permanent mass unemployment that we have seen over the last twenty to thirty years. But what they also did, and that's the second aspect of this crisis, was to go for finance capital. That is to say, they switched from the overall decision that had been made by the capitalist class of 1940, and made more permanent in 1945 when they decided to go for industrial capital.

If you look at it historically, when referring to the world capitalist economic structure the various documents of the Comintern constantly refer to finance capital. If you look at Trotsky and Lenin, they refer to finance capital and never to anything else. Now quite clearly what happened after 1940-45 was again a deliberate decision by the capitalist class to go for growth, which had enormous effects. It changed the whole mode of accumulation, leading to the possibility of a welfare state which otherwise would not have been possible. But in 1973, by pulling that plug, everything was of course called into question. And then effectively they turned towards finance capital. In effect they took one step back and saw to it that they received their surplus value indirectly - through interest, rent, insurance companies, pension funds, and so on, rather than immediately through production. This appeared to be at some distance from the working class, and it appeared much easier for the capitalist class to actually extract its surplus value through this form.

Now what has happened is that this twenty year period has come to an end. It's fairly obvious that one cannot go on extracting surplus value in this way without killing the host. The parasite finance capital can't go on taking surplus value from industry without industry itself being harmed. Now it's quite obvious in the case of Britain, but it is not only true of Britain of course. Inevitably there would have to be an end to this. There would have to be a downturn. At some point industry could not supply the surplus value and the attempt to make money out of money would come to an end, and of course it did come to an end in 1989. Which effectively means that the strategy to which they turned after 1973 has come to an end. That is to say finance capital has exhausted itself.

But this crisis has now shown itself in another form which, in a certain sense they didn't anticipate. And this raises two questions. One is the question of long term decline; the other is the question of stalinism. You will not find stalinism as a political-economic concept of Western capitalism in many marxist textbooks or marxist theorists but it seems to me it's absolutely fundamental in understanding modern capitalism. It is precisely the explosion or implosion or death of stalinism which is now creating a crisis of a kind that has not existed in capitalism for now sixty to seventy years. One has to understand what is lying behind it. It seems to me, to come to another point, that at least since 1917, or some other date in the early part of this century, we are talking about a decline in capitalism and if one is talking about a decline in capitalism, then there are not many solutions available to capitalism itself. In effect declining capitalism can only do one thing - it can delay. It can't succeed in avoiding its own overthrow. But it can delay it. Some people might want to argue it can delay it 300 years, 500, a thousand years, I wouldn't argue that. I don't think it can delay it all that long. But it has had a whole series of forms of delay and I have actually mentioned one, that's finance capital, and one can go into the other forms as well.

Now the obvious immediate forms which come to mind are social democracy and stalinism. I see them not just as subjective forms but as objective forms. If social democracy did not actually come to power, it did come to a position where it was governing at some sort of level, and we did have a welfare state and that again affected accumulation itself. Stalinism was embodied in Eastern Europe and China and so on. These were objective facts in history, they were objectified. And it appears to me that it was precisely these that acted as the subjective forms of delay, of maintaining capitalism, in other words. The problem is that both are dying or dead, and the capitalist class does not appear to have a means of replacing them.

What else is going to replace stalinism? I think it's worth while saying a few more words about what stalinism actually has done and what the removal of stalinism now leads to. In the first place, it's fairly obvious that because of stalinism we had the Cold War, and the Cold War provided again a means of accumulation. Now, I don't mean the Cold War was just on the side of the US; it was just as much on the side of USSR. But the US knew perfectly well that the USSR was much weaker but preferred to maintain it, to make a whole period in which it could have a particular form of accumulation. Now that of course had come to an end. It is no longer possible to invest in the arms industry in the old way. The arms industry is very important because its prime function lies in the way it can discipline the working class. As long as you have an arms industry it is much easier to control the working class both inside and outside the arms industry. It is possible to argue that there is an enemy which has to be fought, people have to work harder, there are spies all over the place, and in the US of course anti-communism played a particular role. As it happens I think the anti-communism in the US had a partial truth. That is to say, it is perfectly true that the USSR was a horrible society and nobody would want to live under it. But what it was serving as was a very important means of control. That's gone. What is going to replace it? What is the disciplinary form of control that is going to replace the Cold War? I don't think there is a form that they can actually use.

Stalinism didn't serve in the Cold War only in a particular economic way. It also served politically and was most important in the post-Cold War period in supporting social democracy. It is no accident that the two are dying together. One can't understand social democracy without understanding the tremendous importance of stalinism for it. I'm not saying that the social democrats before 1917, before there were stalinists, were supported by stalinists or that in the period before the Second World War stalinism was that important. I'm saying in the post war period stalinism was crucial in maintaining the welfare state and social democracy and the forms of concessions that were being introduced by the capitalist class. And in so far as you don't have stalinism in the working class, you don't have the same kind of mass support that could come into existence in order to support the ruling class in this country or in any other country. So one then has to ask exactly how are they going to deal with the situation. I don't know.

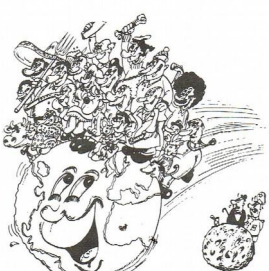
If one looks at it politically again the elimination of the Communist Parties is a fantastic gain. It may not look like that in so far as bookshops like Collets are going under and one can't buy marxist books any more, and there are fewer marxist firms that will take marxist publications. But in reality what it means that the kind of suppression of the left that existed for so many years is going or has gone. It's no accident that in this country and in other countries the far left is beginning to show itself in a similar form, in a similar way

or in similar places where the Communist Parties did before.

What does this lead to? The point is that stalinism is no longer there as a means of control, therefore the ruling class no longer has the same form of delay that it did. Or, if you invert it, I don't think there could have been any real change in the world until stalinism had been removed. I don't think there could have been a victory in Spain, or later, by the far left, precisely because Stalin or stalinists did not want it and they had this enormous measure of control. But it's gone. So the capitalist class is now faced with the fact that it's in industrial decline, finance capital as a means of control and as a form of retreat is in trouble, the various forms of delay it had through stalinism are no longer there. What strategy can it actually use today? And that is its real crisis: that it has no strategy. It is a unique crisis, there hasn't been a crisis like this since 1923.

One can put it another way. In terms of the long term downturn, or in terms of the long wave, what we are in is a position where the working class has to be defeated in order for accumulation to proceed. If one actually looks at Trotsky's description of the long wave you can see that he is arguing that it is precisely through the defeat of the working class that the capitalist class has the possibility of extracting extra surplus value. Now to the degree that it does not have that it won't accumulate. In a certain sense, this becomes a subjective phenomenon above the capitalist class: if the capitalist class does not think it will make sufficient profit, it will not invest, and that is where we are. It has to actually defeat the working class under conditions that are no longer as favourable as they were before. It may not appear like that, and most people I encounter seem to be pessimistic, but in my view it is just the opposite. We are in an extremely optimistic position. It may not be that there are enormous numbers; there aren't. There may be very few but that is neither here or there. Let me remind you that the Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD, only had one per cent of the vote in 1878 but by 1890 it was already a major party. So, change can happen very quickly, and I think that is what we must expect.

So the crisis we are in is a unique crisis, it's a crisis in every aspect of capitalist civilisation. It's a crisis of ideology, it's a crisis of politics, it's a crisis of the ruling class, and we've witnessed the way the ruling class cannot hold itself together whether in Japan or this country. The ruling class is now divided; it no longer has a means of keeping itself together. The former means that it used, the Cold War and stalinism, are not there. It hasn't the collectivity it had before, precisely because of the collapse of stalinism. In a certain sense when stalinism came to an end the capitalist class managed to shoot themselves in the foot. I'm not saying that the position today is wonderful; it certainly could be better. But the position is far better objectively than it has been for sixty or seventy years. The crisis is enormous. It's not a terminal crisis: tomorrow we won't have a socialist society. But it is a crisis from which the capitalist class can not recover as it were. It has no solution.



Harry Cleaver:

Now you get a different view, at least partially. As there is a certain amount of overlap in the positions that we take, at the same time as there are radical differences, I will try to emphasise the latter more than the former so that we can in fact have something like a debate. I think that Hillel was intuitively correct when he said that there were some fundamental theoretical differences between us. In particular, I would say that his opening comments about there being a difference between the movement of the categories and the movement of the class struggle is a difference. Categories of what? Categories of capital that is, in some sense, different from the class struggle? Not from my point of view. The categories of marxist analysis are the categories of class relations; capital is a class relation - a class relation of struggle. All of the categories of marxist analysis in the three volumes of *Capital* and elsewhere are those of that social relation - which is the class struggle. The only movement of the categories is a movement that occurs as part of the class struggle. There is no other subject as far as I am concerned.

The crisis of capital is a crisis of the class relation. That means that it is a crisis from the point of view of both classes. With respect to capital, Hillel has said some relevant things. But, we also have to recognise that the crisis for capital is simultaneously, in certain ways, a crisis for the working class. The crisis of capital, the manifestations of which began to appear from the early seventies, can be traced to an international cycle of class struggle which ruptured an epoch, a particular organisation of capitalist organisation, of its command. It was epoch making in the sense that we are still in the same crisis. We've gone through business cycles, we've gone through a variety of kinds of changes, but fundamentally the problems that were created in that period of time, the late sixties and early seventies, have not been resolved - nor is there any evidence that they are likely to be resolved in the near future. So, the crisis of capitalism is, first and foremost, once we cut through the fetishism of its categories like money and finance, a failure of old methods of control.

The crisis is profound because it is a crisis of capital's most fundamental mechanism of control: the endless imposition of work. At the heart of the crisis lies the rupture not only of the capitalist productivity deal (higher wages for more work), but also, more generally, the capitalist ability to continue to shape and to subordinate life to work - throughout what some of us call the social factory.

Now the crisis for the working class comes precisely when the old mechanisms of command are abandoned, because workers always struggle about, against and beyond problems that they face, the limitations that work sets on them. When capital counter-attacks, it shifts the ground of the class relationship, and that means a problem of adapting, of figuring out what the hell is going on, of dealing with the new strategies that are mobilised against them. This is what workers have been struggling with for the last twenty years. The counter-attacks have occurred at all levels. They began with the devaluation of the dollar in 1971 and continued through the food and energy crises, changes in the monetary system, increases in the price of oil, restructuring in industry and so on.

In too many ways capital has had a considerable amount of success. Especially in beating down wages and reducing standards of living but also, to some degree, in imposing more work especially in the Third World, but in the First World as well. In the US, workers today are working a twelfth more on the average than they were twenty years ago - an extra month of work per year. That's a substantial defeat any way you look at it. So, at the level of austerity there has been some success and we have had some defeat. Yet, at the level of the reorganisation of class relationships, which is what

is necessary in order to found a new, long wave of accumulation, capital has made much less progress. Some reorganisation of industry and reorganisation of the relationship between the state and the market has been undertaken for some time, but it is not at all clear that it has been successful or that it has laid the foundations for future capitalist development.

The reorganisation of the relation between the state and the market has been a prominent feature of this attempt to create a new (decomposed) set of class relationships. Britain, like the US, has suffered through Thatcherism, Reaganism, the substitution of market mechanisms for certain kinds of government regulations. But this is merely a recomposition. Despite the ideology of vaunting the market against the state, what has been involved has been a recomposition of the relationship between them. Ultimately the market is merely a planning mechanism. It is used when it works (i.e., gives the desired results). It is abandoned when it doesn't work. It is one planning mechanism among others. Market and plan cannot be juxtaposed in the way that they have traditionally been. Understanding the crisis involves seeing through such ideological constructs and reinterpreting them in class terms.

Besides talking about the nature of the crisis, we were also asked to talk about the associated dangers and the opportunities. The dangers are self-evident in the successes that capital has had in making life worse for us, in making our situation more unlivable. The process of decomposition has been undertaken on a world scale, and one of the biggest dangers is not to recognise that it is global and not to deal with it at that level. It isn't enough to talk about it in national terms. The major state institution today is the International Monetary Fund, which has overseen the imposition of the new organisation of capitalist rules at a global level; the deindustrialization of the North is closely connected to the reindustrialization of the South; jobs are not disappearing from industry, they are just being displaced - at least in many industries. In the US, the old industrial belt of the North has become a rust belt and the numbers of Ford auto workers is increasing by the tens of thousands across the border in Mexico. The electronics industry has also moved many of its operations south. Industry hasn't disappeared, it has just been recomposed geographically at the same time as it has been recomposed technologically. At the same time work is being imposed massively, partly in industry, partly outside of industry, throughout the world. The history of the debt crisis of the eighties was exactly the history of that imposition. The IMF assumed a central role as it has gone around the world telling governments and private capital how they have not been doing a proper job in imposing the rules of the game and that they must do so. The state has imposed such changes with austerity and with privatisation, which is to say countries have been opened up to foreign and multinational investment in order to achieve this process of capitalist recomposition (through the decomposition of working class power). This process has been going on at both the micro level and the macro level and we have to respond to both.

In his talk Hillel noted the end of the cold war, the death of the Soviet bogey-man as a means to a permanent arms economy and the social control of the working class, and raised the question of what might replace the Cold War in capitalist strategy. Roughly speaking, I agree with this bit of his analysis. In class terms, the role of the Russian bomb was basically to help the Americans and the West Europeans to keep control and the American bomb helped the Russians do the same thing. Now those threats are no longer there - and in a certain sense they haven't been since the movie, *Dr. Strangelove*, came out, which was after all subtitled, *How to stop worrying and learn to love the bomb*. In the end many realized that the bomb was not really a threat - at least not the generalised threat of annihilation that everybody had been convinced that it was. We had been lied to. We eventually realised that the Americans weren't going to drop thermo-nuclear bombs on the Russians and the Russians weren't going to drop them on us. Having understood this, we stopped worrying about it, and realized we could fight against racism, the war in Vietnam, and authoritarian schooling because they were not going to drop a nuke on the San Francisco Bay area - it just wasn't going to happen. That whole strategy of fear collapsed as the New Left joined Southeast Asian peasants and took the offensive against capital in the sixties.

Of course, there was an attempt to bring the fear back in the mid-seventies with the discussion of limited nuclear war. Pentagon scenarios were leaked. Ex-NATO General Hackett wrote his novel of World War Three in which Birmingham (England) was nuked by the Soviets while the US took out Minsk. And then the Ukrainians overthrew the Politburo, dismembered the USSR and the war was over. But of course instead of provoking fear and trembling and reintroducing the bomb as an effective weapon of political control, these efforts to launch a second Cold War produced the biggest peace movement in history and deepened the ongoing problems of capitalism.

Well, as Hillel suggests, we certainly should ask with what might such a mechanism be replaced? The theoretical answer is that it can only be replaced by the same kinds of mechanism: those that divide us in order to conquer us. Capital rules through divide and conquer. The replacement of one such mechanism by another happens historically and must be appropriate to the level of the crisis of command. One of the characteristics of the struggles that created the current crisis was that it was an international cycle of struggles. It wasn't just the Americans over here and the French over there, and the Italians over there, and the Vietnamese over there, and Che Guevara down in South America. These things were all interlinked. There was an overcoming of international divisions at that period in time as struggles circulated internationally - even the struggles that overthrew the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had such an international character. Therefore, not surprisingly, we find that one of the fundamental and more obvious aspects of capital's attempt to regain control has been the reintroduction - with a vengeance - of nationalism and racism. The situation in Central Europe is just the most blatant and disturbing example. Nationalism and racism are being wielded to divide and conquer throughout Western Europe, North America and the South as well. Everywhere we find not only extremists preaching hate and carrying out acts of violence, but also moderate politicians adopting an only slightly more subtle form of racism to kindle fear of the enemy within (e.g., the immigrant, the jew, the minority, the religious other), now that the enemy without (the global communist conspiracy) is gone.

At the heart of the international cycle of struggles which ruptured the old capitalist (and, if you like the term, stalinist) mode of accumulation were those of women, people on the streets, people in their homes, people at school, i.e., those of unwaged workers whose battles circulated into the factories and back again. Fundamental to all of these were the struggles of women. Thus along with nationalism and racism, sexism and the attack on women has also been central to the new capitalist efforts to divide and conquer. The other side of the Reagan attack on the wage and government regulation was the so-called social agenda. That agenda - most of which could not be implemented at the level of government and was pursued instead through private groups such as the religious Right - was aimed squarely at the womb. It was aimed squarely at making women barefoot and pregnant and pushing them back into the house. It is extremely basic to the situation in the States and I warrant elsewhere. If you go to Italy today you see the consequences for women's struggle to gain divorce rights and then abortion rights: plummeting birth rates, reproducing in just a few years the whole earlier pattern of the post war period in Western Europe. The capitalist response has involved importing prostitutes from Africa and increased violence against women. Such are part of the dangers

we face due to new forms of divide and conquer.

The opportunities which are present in the current crisis can only be perceived through understanding our own processes of political recomposition that caused the crisis. If we can understand how the mechanisms of accumulation were ruptured, what were the class forces that ruptured them and how they have been modified by the struggles over the last twenty years then we are in a position to talk about where we go from here. In other words, the only basis for the elaboration of effective working class politics against capital is a proper assessment of our own strengths. One of the problems in Hillel's discussion of the crisis (one he shares with many other marxists) is a tendency to spend most of his time talking about capital as if it were something separate from our relationship to it. We need to talk about us, about how we (the working class both collectively and specifically) created this situation, the degree to which we have suffered setbacks, the degree to which we have avoided defeat and the strength we have to push forward our own demands. Hillel is quite right that this is an epoch-making period of crisis. It really does threaten the continuation of capital, even more so than the situation in the nineteen thirties, for example, which did force a fundamental reorganisation at all levels. But what constitutes the threat?

The content of the struggle that has brought on and maintained this crisis goes to the very heart of the capitalist organisation of life around work, the subordination of society to work. The nature of the struggles that precipitated the crisis, once we understand them, give us an indication of what the alternatives to capital are; and their analysis means that we can abandon a lot of old illusions. On the basis of analyzing the processes of self-valorisation that people are trying to develop, we can reject the old ideas of transition and the old conception of socialism as a homogeneous social project. The struggles that ruptured the system, did not simply break the mechanisms of domination, they also have had a positive content: they were proposing new ways of being and developing projects of new ways of being. I'm thinking here not merely of what workers in cities have done, but what women have done, what the environmentalist movement has done. We need to look at the positive content of these so-called new social movements, to see how they have been trying to create new social relations in the present (the future in the present as Marx said). Those new relations are not out there, and there is no transition to them. They are already being constructed and while the problem for capital is, and always has been, to recuperate, reintegrate and to instrumentalise them, our problem is not only to recognize the emergence of real substantive alternatives to the present order but to facilitate and foster their development. We not only need to be aware of projects like those of women to achieve androgyny, the recomposition of gender relations in society, but we need either to participate in them, or to elaborate other projects and work out the politics of the circulation of struggle across the diversity of such efforts. Now there you have a political project that damn few marxists have been involved in as far as I can see.

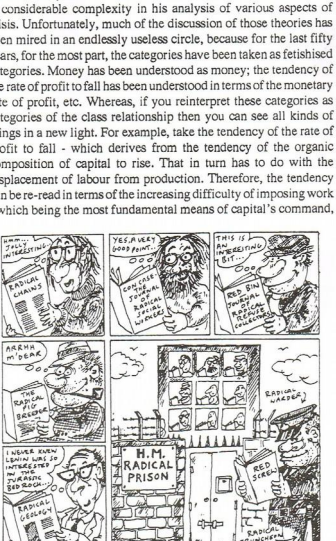
The fact that capital counter attacks in new ways, means that we have new opportunities. I don't like the language that Hillel uses about objective conditions, but the fact of the matter is that because European capital is moving toward EEC unity, it is both responding to and forcing a level of international working class collaboration of struggle that we have never seen before. Because the US is pushing the North American Free Trade Agreement to link Canada, the US and Mexico, we are seeing an internationalisation of struggle that has never existed. Today in the US there is a coalition of almost 300 groups fighting against NAFTA - labour groups, women's groups, student groups, environmental groups, all kinds of groups. In Canada there is a similar coalition; in Mexico there is another series of coalitions, and those of all three countries are linked and working closely together. They are connected with computer networks; they are circulating information, at a rate which only capital has been able to do over the last forty years. Workers are by-passing the old institutions of control, creating a new international fabric of alliances and cooperation.

As marxists we need to draw the implications for politics. What we are seeing is a reconstitution of politics, an abandonment of the old institutions (trade unions and political parties) with which we are so familiar and have often tried to work through, and the problem is to figure how to elaborate new kinds of politics within and among struggles which are diverse and will not be homogenised. The usefulness of the old 'Unite and Fight' slogan is finished. It's useless. To talk about socialism as a homogeneous project is useless. The end of capital is not going to involve, as far as things look at this point, a replacement of one homogeneous system by another homogeneous system. It is going to be more like what Marx evoked in the *Grundrisse*: an explosion, or, as people like Deleuze and Guattari like to say, the emergence of various lines of flight of alternative kinds of social relations and experience. The problem then is that of creating a politics of difference minimising antagonism. It is not a problem which will be solved automatically. Politics, especially new politics, always has to be constructed.

Discussion.

First Speaker: How far do the causes of crises as put forward by Marx in *Capital* contribute to, or account for, the present economic crisis that we're in and why did neither speaker mention any of them?

Harry: I think nobody mentioned them because of lack of time. Marx's theory must be resituated within a historical context; there is considerable complexity in his analysis of various aspects of crisis. Unfortunately, much of the discussion of those theories has been mired in an endlessly useless circle, because for the last fifty years, for the most part, the categories have been taken as fetishised categories. Money has been understood as money; the tendency of the rate of profit to fall has been understood in terms of the monetary rate of profit, etc. Whereas, if you reinterpret these categories as categories of the class relationship then you can see all kinds of things in a new light. For example, take the tendency of the rate of profit to fall - which derives from the tendency of the organic composition of capital to rise. That in turn has to do with the displacement of labour from production. Therefore, the tendency can be re-read in terms of the increasing difficulty of imposing work - which being the most fundamental means of capital's command,



makes it, as Marx said, the most fundamental problem for capital in the long run.

Hillel: I agree with what Harry said to a large degree, but it seems to me that Marx is not saying that there's a simple decline or a sudden collapse or that there is one factor that immediately leads to this. What he is saying is that in a period which leads to a crisis the contradictions in a society reach a point where they can no longer be held. That is the point at which one actually has a crisis. So then one has to look at the different forms of that contradiction: there's the question of the declining rate of profit, there's the question of disproportionality and the third one is one of markets.

The trouble with talking about the declining rate of profit is that it's not that simple. It is not at all clear that one has to argue that there is a simple declining rate of profit and a crash. The same force leading to the rising organic composition of capital leads to a rise in productivity. The result is that it is not at all clear that you get an automatic decline in the rate of profit. So then one is involved in a fairly complex question as to exactly what is going on. It seems to me that what is then involved are the different aspects of the rate of profit. That is to say one then has to talk about the rate of surplus value. One has to talk about the cost of the different elements which go into it.

Now the interpretation of the declining rate of profit is different but I don't see it as an automatic feature. Perhaps we agree - I don't know - but it seems to me you will only get a declining rate of profit if the capitalist class is not able to offset the decline which is occurring for other reasons (largely because the rise in the organic composition of capital, but that again is complicated) by a rise in the rate of surplus value. In other words, if it is not able to cause a decline in the relative wage. In general it is often able to do that through a series of complex forms: taxation; directly attacking the wage; extending the amount of time that people work. So when discussing the declining rate one is discussing not one category but effectively all categories in the end and that is why it is so complex. But it is a crucial category and those are the three aspects. But having said that, what is interesting is not to go over what Marx had to say, but to discuss the present in a more general context. One has to ask why, when one doesn't get that kind of crisis in exactly that form, why isn't it taking place in that form? The answer of course has been that the ruling class has been in a position to have a degree of control which it didn't had before and we haven't had the same sort of sudden slumps as you had before 1944 and for very good reasons. But we are now back in it.

Second Speaker: Both speakers have emphasised the positive aspects of the current period so I just want to throw in a couple of questions. To start with, I disagreed with the last bit of Harry's speech. Socialism is nothing if it cannot become a homogeneous movement. A lot of the movements he talked about are atomised and sectionalised. They are not the new within the old; they are spanners in the works of capitalism. Hillel argued that the splits in ruling classes of various countries are occurring now because they are losing their collectivity. But isn't it also because, with the collapse of the old accommodationist forms of working class representation like social democracy and stalinism, the ruling class senses that the working class has no collectivity? They feel safer to carry out recomposition in a situation in which the working class actually has no homogeneous collectivity. Harry talked about emergence of regional blocks and the positive side of that in actually internationalising class struggle but neither of the speakers actually mentioned the prospect of a third inter-imperialist war.

Hillel: There is not the same degree of fear of the working class. But I'm not at all certain that the ruling class really regarded the Communist Party as a threat. I think they knew perfectly well they didn't want to take power. I think they knew perfectly well that in Britain, America, France, Italy or Japan there was no possibility of the working class reaching any degree of threat. So it's true that the limited degree in which the working class did constitute a threat is no longer there, and I'm sure it plays some role. But I think the fundamental aspect which has led to their internecine conflict, is the fact the Cold War having gone, they can no longer find a mechanism for their collectivity. Let's remember that before the Cold War there wasn't the same degree of collectivity as during the Cold War; before 1917, there was the same degree. I think it is no accident that that is so.

You also asked if there would be an inter-imperialist war. I am not a prophet so I don't know. However, I think it is extremely unlikely. I never thought that one side would drop bombs on the other side, I thought that was highly unlikely and I think today that it is equally unlikely that god knows who will drop bombs on anybody else. I don't see who is going to fight who. It's perfectly true that one can imagine minor wars occurring: the Ukraine could fight Russia and I could imagine a few more globally unimportant wars, as it were, but a war between the US and another imperialist power eg., Japan or Germany, seems extremely unlikely. For one reason, if one actually looks at the present day, you still have US control over those two countries. There are still troops in Germany. Japan is still forced to invest in bonds in the US which is losing money. Why on earth is it doing that if it is an independent country? So I find it difficult to imagine an inter-imperialist war at least in the next twenty years.

Harry: I'll respond to two things. First the business of homogeneity. You said socialism is nothing if not homogeneous. I would say socialism has always dreamed of homogeneity but has never gotten it, never will get it; it's not in the nature of the species. So socialism is nothing in a sense, and particularly today. Second, the other issue: the prospect of inter-imperialist war. If by that you mean what Lenin meant by imperialist war (war between competing blocks of capitalists: e.g., WWI, WWII), then I agree with Hillel that it's not likely. However, if you understand inter-imperialist war not in terms of competition for raw materials and capitalist markets or commodity markets but in terms of a political mechanism used for the control of the working class, then the fact of the matter is that we already have war. We have war all over the damn place. Our world is rotten with war and a couple of years ago we just went through a war that is being discussed as paradigmatic of the future of war under capitalism - the damn Gulf War. The fundamental role of the Gulf War was regulating labour relations in the Gulf and at home. The strategy of the US government was to try to use the so-called need to send US troops into the Persian Gulf to break through a whole series of blockages which workers have placed to capitalist development within the US, not least of which is in the field of energy which is not surprising. The Gulf after all, from the US point of view, is nothing but an oil pit, one big gas station which has to be available. So what do they try to do? Workers and people in the US defeated the nuclear energy industry back in the seventies. Capitalist planning was for nuclear power plants to be supplying 60-70% of electricity in the US by the year two thousand, but after 1974 there were no more nukes being built, there were no more nukes being commissioned and most of the ones that were being built were being abandoned. That industry was killed. One of the things that Bush tried to do with the Gulf War was to use it as an excuse to revitalise the nuclear power industry and to open up the north shore of Alaska to oil exploration. Both of which had been blocked by social struggles in the US up until that point - mostly struggles by the peace and environmental movement. As for other wars, we can talk about Yugoslavia, South East Asia, Timor, and elsewhere, Southern Africa and so on. War has always been an integral part of capitalist class relations; its not about to disappear; it will continue.

Third Speaker: Nobody said anything about communism. Communism is a society without wage labour, without commodity production, a world human community. How do we get to communism? The working class has to overthrow capitalism. It has to become autonomous - from all the forces of capital. I don't think it's a debate any more between communists whether stalinism, social democracy and trotskyism are part of the working class or not, some form of working class representation. They are part of capital. The system in the so-called Soviet Union was a capitalist system, the Communist Parties were capitalist parties, and the trotskyist organisations were capitalist organisations. We don't need trotskyism or a new version of trotskyism.

There are some basic definitions we need before we can have a debate. Imperialist war wasn't mentioned. The question of imperialist war separates people very clearly. During the Iran-Iraq war, there were some people who called themselves marxists who said we should support one side in that war. But if this is declining capitalism, which I think it is, one of the ways that it survives is through imperialist wars. What happened in 1945 was a period of reconstruction after imperialist war. That period came to an end and we're now in a profound crisis. The war in Yugoslavia is an imperialist war, not just a war between Serbs and Croats. There is already the beginnings of new imperialist alignments. Are you on one side or the other or are you for the working class against all the imperialist powers? That's the real question for revolutionary marxists.

Hillel: I agree with you that the working class has to be separated from stalinists and social democrats. I'd go further and say that it's true that most groups today have a long way to go, whoever they are, including your group. Unfortunately the formation of small grouplets over the whole stalinist period has stalinised all of them. It doesn't matter what they where. It doesn't matter whether they opposed the Russian Revolution in 1917 and regarded it as state capitalist, they all became small stalinised-type grouplets. It's impossible to hold out under these conditions and not be deformed. But we are now in a new period where, hopefully, we will not spend all our time fighting one another and leaving everything to the capitalist class. Under present conditions the previous differences, arising out of stalinism, are no longer so important. As long as people are opposed to capitalism as a whole and are not reformists, it's important that differences should not become once again important reasons for the development of sectarian groups, and gurus. But it seems to me that the last speaker didn't give us any way forward in that regard.

I do agree with the speaker who said that there is only one socialism. And I also agree with the last speaker that we are talking about the working class. I don't think it has been abolished. I think the vast majority of the population do belong to the working class. It is the universal class - I don't think that has changed at all. But the issue, which the last speaker was not facing, was why nothing happened effectively for the last eighty years, sixty years or whatever it is. It's no good just calling Russia state capitalist and saying we got nowhere. Why didn't we succeed? Why are we in small groups? And why are we marginalised? That question has to be asked. And answered. And it seems to me you don't answer it by saying that that awful society that existed, over there in Russia is just the same as what exists over here. In certain respects it was far, far worse. But whatever it was it was not the same, and it played a crucial role in maintaining capitalism itself, precisely because it was not capitalist.

Harry: I just want to respond to part of what was said. Yes, of course, the working class must be autonomous from capital, and it has been, and that is why capital is in so much trouble. The question is: what does it mean to be autonomous from capital and what is the content of autonomy? Autonomy is not homogeneous. Capital formed the working class, right, and that's the story of primitive accumulation, the formation of the working class. Capital formed a group which from its own point of view was homogeneous and malleable, could be divided and conquered, and moved around and used. Now the struggle against that making, from the beginning and on through all the years of accumulation, involved a rejection of that homogeneity, sometimes a utilisation of it, but ultimately a struggle against being, as Marx put it, mere worker. The traditional marxist vision of socialism - which Hillel seems to share - is a world of workers. Socialism, or communism for that matter, is not understood as a classless society but as a one class society.

But that class is what we want out of. We never wanted into it in the first place, and we want out of it now. But out of it to do what? Out of it to do all kinds of things, not to do one other thing. That's what we mean by domination, the imposition of a single universal order. At least that's what I mean by domination. I can imagine several different kinds of such an order, but the point is that in any form of domination you have the imposition of homogeneity. So, when we talk about autonomy from capital we mean autonomy from homogeneity. It also means we have to recognise the autonomy of different sectors of the class and the struggles of people to get out of their class status. The struggles of women are not the same as the struggles of men; the struggles of blacks are not the same as the struggles of whites. Our problem is the construction of a politics that gives up the illusion that everyone can be talked into agreeing how the world ought to be and, on that basis, unite and fight. That is what the left has been trying to do for the last one hundred years and it has gotten absolutely nowhere. Now you can, as some do, say that the so-called new social movements have nothing to do with the working class. But what do you think the working class is? If you think the working class is just traditional factory proletarians, I'm afraid that that is only a small part of the whole at this point. The working class is not just made up of workers throughout the world

who are busy producing commodities. It includes all of those people who are busy producing what is the most fundamental commodity of all: labour power. Such producers include women in the home and students in schools and a vast number of other people. That's the reason why the working class continues to make up the vast majority of the population. All of those people are struggling from different positions in the class structure and they are struggling for different things. Now if you don't develop a politics that recognises and appreciates that autonomy among the people opposing capital then you'll just go on in this room talking to each other for ever.

Fourth Speaker: I want to follow on from what Harry has just said. I think the problem we're faced with is that the left is stuck in a nineteenth century paradigm and this is partly due to the experience of stalinism. The whole approach to the centrality of the workplace and trade unions, and an approach to, and a model of, revolution that hasn't progressed anywhere beyond 1917, shows how far out of step the left is with the way in which capital has developed in the past seventy years and how that development has remade the working class. Working class experience is far broader than just the experience of the factory or the office or the workplace. In moving beyond a concern solely with workplace struggle, and beginning to take on other areas of struggle, I think we actually begin to develop the whole process of struggle and an attitude to class struggle that is actually far closer to the totality of working class experience. That has to be important if we want to move towards a communist society. But I think there is a problem in the way Harry has been putting it forward. While it is important to move into a whole multiplicity of arenas that the left has never considered as part of the struggle for communism, I think that if you start denying any possibility of leading or totalising those struggles, you leave those struggle in the hands of the petty bourgeois careerist politicians. If you look at who's dominated the women's movement, anti-racist work, the gay movement, it hasn't been working class activists, it has been middle class activists imposing their values on people in struggle. The question I really want to pose is: what, if any, role is there for the revolutionary party in the struggle for communism?

Harry: I am not opposed by any means to linking struggles. A fundamental concept in the work I do is the notion of the circulation of struggle. Instead of talking about uniting and fighting through ideological methods, it means building concrete linkages between struggles. In the sixties, the students in the US and the Vietnamese peasants in the rice fields were not linked in a party, but struggle circulated across the Pacific and caused enormous problems for capital and ultimately, its breakdown. The struggles of women are not often united with the struggles of men in a party or in any unified institution, yet it is quite clear that their struggles have circulated and profoundly affected the activities of men and the politics of men. The problem of politics is the problem of the circulation of struggle and the organisation of the circulation of struggle. When I reject the party, and I do in the traditional sense, it is not a rejection of organisation, it is simply the rejection of a particular form of organisation which was maybe appropriate to the skilled workers at the turn of the century but is certainly inappropriate to workers today. Our problem is to discover the way these connections are being established today. It's not done through a party; its not done through a centralised organisation; yet the circulation of struggle is extremely rapid, the speed of optical fibre.

Hillel: It's impossible to discuss the party in one minute. In my view we certainly can't do without a party. I think we're going to have to have a much firmer party. If we look the way that things are developing I think one has to consider not just the importance of democracy in a party, which is very important, and different centres of influence in a party, which I think is extremely important, but the fact that a party is a fighting party. The ruling class is not just going to go away. They may be fighting one another but when the working class does become a danger the ruling class will stick together. How do you then deal with it? You can't go around saying I'm opposed to it, or linking up all over the place. When it is fighting you and putting you in gaol, you are in gaol. You have to find a way around it. You have to then go underground if necessary. Now the exact form of the party, the exact form the working class will take in the course of struggle, I don't know. It will come into being. Just as the soviet was the particular form that took place in Russia, so here in the West or wherever there will be another form. I don't know the form, but it will come into being and there will have to be a party or perhaps a number of parties, but there is no other way around it. I don't know any other way of overthrowing a ruling class.

Fifth Speaker: It's a bit dangerous to say capitalism doesn't have any strategy after stalinism. The threat of proletarian revolution occurs because of inter-imperialist conflict. Therefore, when capitalism is devising a strategy to oppose proletarian revolution, it cannot allow inter-imperialist antagonism to lead to inter-imperialist war. Therefore the strategy that is being developed by the capitalist powers to prevent the proletarian revolution is that of ultra-imperialism. Marxists have been blinkered about looking at the question of ultra-imperialism because at one time it was associated with Karl Kautsky. But the major imperialist nations are getting together to offload the crisis of capitalism in terms of war, a joint offensive against the international working class. In trying to divide the working class, the capitalist powers are developing this strategy of ultra-imperialism and therefore the question of internationalism is linked to anti-imperialism. That is how they are trying to redevelop their ideological cohesion after the fall of stalinism. If one strategy, for various reasons, becomes defunct, then obviously new political strategies have to be developed. I think the real problem in what Hillel Ticktin argued is that of objectivism, fatalism, saying: after stalinism, it's our turn. That minimises question of the seventy years of the culture of defeat the working class has had that has created fatalism and defeatism within the working class itself.

Hillel: In terms of what you said, that is not much of a strategy. It's a strategy for chaos. To fight Saddam Hussein a hundred times over doesn't get anywhere. I don't think it's dividing anybody and it's not establishing any form of control. All it is, is a tragic comedy or a comic tragedy, but it is not a means of control. It doesn't compare to the Cold War or the previous forms. None of these small wars are achieving this object. One can see this by the results of ten days ago when Clinton bombed Iraq. What was the result? Did he achieve very much? Did he achieve anything except more criticism of himself? He achieved very little, so I can't see that that is much of a strategy. So, if you are going to ask: is the strategy a nationalist strategy, dividing people on a nationalist basis, and is it a form of imperialist division results, now this is true. Quite obviously there are national differences which are being played on; that is absolutely correct. However, one has to ask how long people are going to go along with that. I don't think Yugoslavia is any example. It is the result of the decay of stalinist forms. It may be that capitalist powers got involved, but even if they didn't it would still have occurred and it's got to do with stalinism and not with capitalism as itself, so that is not an example of nationalism. But for capitalism, nationalism in general is of course crucial and Harry has mentioned it. The problem is that it has obviously failed. Has it worked in Africa where the standard of living is below that which it was under the colonial overlords? Clearly it hasn't worked. How long do people need to be told that it doesn't work? I don't think that it's that long. That isn't a strategy, and if you are talking about imperialism, that is what is actually involved, let's say binding together the whole population

on a nationalist basis. My answer, therefore, is that it cannot work, they don't have a strategy. It may work for one or two years. But that's all.

Harry: I just have a couple of things to say. Just because a strategy fails does not mean there is no strategy; to say that there are limits to what has been achieved so far through the use of the Gulf War is not to say that nothing was intended and nothing was accomplished. The fact of the matter is that there has been a militarisation of the oil fields of the Gulf and around the rest of the world. The message went to Nigeria and to a lot of other places. The uprising in Caracas and Venezuela mirrored that of the Gulf. That militarisation has made the struggles of people in those areas extremely difficult. The Palestinians are suffering the consequences, but they are not alone. The Iraqi working class is suffering the consequences. The fact of the matter is that in the Gulf War Bush was responsible for the killing of Saddam Hussein's opposition. You will remember the Revolutionary Guards were pulled back from the front in Kuwait and they were not wiped out. In a very real material sense the Gulf War left Saddam Hussein in better control internally than he was before, that was the result, and I would argue that there was a strategy to use the war to regain control over the working class. In the US the war was being used to rationalise all sorts of attacks on the working class. The fact that they haven't always succeeded doesn't mean it wasn't a strategy.

The second thing concerns nationalism and racism. To say nationalism and racism have failed in Africa is a statement I just don't understand. The racism in South Africa, the rupture of that racism, or apartheid, through the struggles of the black working class in South Africa has been an integral part of the crisis of capital. That racism functioned for a very long time in the context of the global accumulation of capital to make possible the existence of a monetary system of a certain sort (based in part on gold) and the extraction of vast quantities of surplus value. You don't measure the efficacy of a capitalist strategy by whether or not the workers are well off in a particular area of the world, for God's sake, or whether constant capital is accumulated in a particular place. Imperialism is the differential accumulation of constant and human capital and an intentional hierarchy of income. When you get right down to it that is what marxist analysis is about: accumulation is always uneven. The IMF imposition of austerity in Africa facilitates the extraction of surplus value everywhere. The surplus value produced in Africa is being transferred through international pricing, transferred through the manipulation of money and commodity prices out of Africa, like it always has been.

Sixth Speaker: What is socialism?

Harry: What do I mean by the time for socialism is gone and how else are you going to relieve the problems of war and poverty for humanity? I don't mean that we abandon the struggle against capitalism and that we abandon the struggle to create a new world by any means. I mean that the concept of socialism has been ambiguous in a lot of ways. Ultimately the problem with it was that it posed the idea of replacing one kind of homogeneous society by another homogeneous society. That's the project which it seems to me is gone, or it should be gone. I also know it's not gone for a lot of people; they are hell bent on doing it. But they are not going to succeed because it's irrelevant at this point in history. The class struggle has moved way beyond that. It may be that it was a sustainable illusion for a certain period of time, but I do not think that it is sustainable in this period of time. That's what I mean by the time for socialism is gone - not that we don't have to replace capitalism, not that we're not to design social alternatives - but that the old models that are still being clung to are obstacles to the social processes which most likely to contribute to the actual transcendence of capitalism.

Hillel: I was asked to define socialism. I define it as a society where creative labour becomes mankind's prime want - the way it is defined by Marx. Everything else follows from that and it gets away from the question of income and a few other things. Obviously in a socialist society you do not have a law of value. It is planned, and planning involves the conscious regulation by the economy and society by the direct producers. There is total democracy if you want to call it that.

You also made the point, that I completely fail to understand, about the present epoch in terms of Iraq or South Africa or god knows where. There are wars all over the place. Of course there are wars all over the place. But that is not the same as before. The question is: are these wars all over the place, these different forms, meant to work in the same way as before, with the same degree of efficiency as before? Are they going to control the working class in the same way? That is the question. When capitalist powers are going into Iraq, does it mean that the crisis in capitalism is reduced, ameliorated, or removed?

The leopard in the 20th century

value, struggle and administration

An examination of the changes within capitalism as a response to the development of the antagonistic class. By William Dixon

Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è bisogna che tutto cambi (If we want everything to stay as it is, everything has to change), The Leopard, **Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa.**

Capitalism is a combination of both subjective and objective factors. In terms of the objective, capitalism is a system that operates through certain real categories, for example the opposition of use value and exchange value. From an analysis of such categories we may draw some conclusions regarding the tendency of the system. These in turn may appear then as expressing the laws of the system. As a specific and distinctive historical system capitalism does have objective characteristics; it is not feudalism, it is not primitive communism, it has its own forms. The surplus is appropriated as surplus value. We could now leave the analysis there and so reproduce all the worst aspects of 'scientific' marxism. Capitalism would then be seen as moving through objective laws. It would appear in this light as a naturalised system. Too much of marxism has appeared to endorse this approach. For example we are led to believe in a set of objective conditions that mature when, hey presto! - crisis! And the working class is woken up. Other than this the working class has no role to play. The subjective appears to have no historical presence until the final moment. The development of capital is seen as proceeding according to its own laws and through the interrelation of capitals.

The alternative view to this is to stress the struggle of the working class. This has been particularly characteristic of the anarchists but they have had no monopoly. This view has been necessary because of the previous orthodoxy of marxism. It fails though to consider adequately not just the categories through which struggle must move but also how the struggle leads to development of the categories and hence new conditions of struggle.

We need to develop an understanding of capital as embodying both objective and subjective aspects. As capitalism develops so the subjective aspect becomes more important, indeed decisive. This is an objective aspect of a system that cannot help but develop through the development of the division of labour and hence the creation of social labour as a global, truly social phenomenon.

The conception of 'partial suspensions of the law of value' is central to a thesis that attempts to understand the political economy of the twentieth century as the interaction of the subjective and objective. The formation of the working class and its political development are taken into account as well as modifications in bourgeois society by which the threat was contained. In this sense partial suspensions of the law of value are located at the heart of a twentieth century political economy that has been characterised by both the appearance of the revolutionary proletariat and also by regimes that have successfully disorganised that threat. Capital has no natural laws but it is a system that is constrained to change only in specific ways, through the categories and their modifications, of the law of value.

The view that explains twentieth century political economy on the basis of partial suspensions of the law of value contests what have been the orthodox right and left views that the USSR was a communist experiment and the welfare states represented an advance of the working class. In this view the significance of the Eastern European events of 1989 is that they mark an important milestone in the disintegration of anti-working class regimes. Similarly, the success of right wing free market projects in the West are indicative of a profound crisis in left wing political groups that have failed to represent the actual movement of the working class. In short the significant failure of the late twentieth century has been of regimes concocted on the basis of the prevention of communism, especially bureaucratic, often murderous, administrative regimes. The virtually wholesale implication of the left in these regimes has aided the disorganisation of working class responses to the fantastic opportunities of this period.

It is politically necessary to retrieve the communist perspective, to draw a sharp line through the left on this basis. If this is to avoid any sectarian assertion of purity, the insecure reliance on dogma, it is necessary to reclaim theory as the specific prerogative of the working class and communism as the heart of the movement. It is necessary to lay claim to a perspective that is confident that humanity's development, while proceeding through the productive forces, cannot establish its creative reason short of communism. Only then can the real creative individuality of our species be realised. Only then will individual development be freed from the external limits of money and administration. Only then can individual development be truly social.

The point now is to establish the communist perspective without apology and without compromise. The reclaiming of theory as the description of the real movement, the chronic tendency to communism, is necessary in order not just to orient practice, but also to disrupt and affront a left that has been complicit in the prevention of communism. This task can only be achieved if the retrieval of the communist perspective is insistent that it speaks of the development of humanity, the self-creation of the historic subject, only then will

the arrogant banality of so much of the left be shown up.

It is necessary in the retrieval of the communist perspective to grasp the political economy of bourgeois society as it has developed in the twentieth century. So much of this period has been claimed uncritically as representing working class progress. This progress must be reassessed from the perspective of communism. The possibility of such an appraisal is not intellectual; it is real development that makes theory possible and necessary. The rude fact smarting on the face of the old ideologists is that the previous regimes broke down not only without working class support but actually under the impact of working class opposition or resistance. After the breakdown of all this progress, all those limiting forms, reality leaves us no choice but communism.

In this article I will outline the phenomena from which the conception of partial suspensions of the law of value arose. After this I will explain briefly the view of the law of value from which it is then possible to explain partial suspensions. When this is done I will explain why this is a fruitful analysis by outlining the various facts, experiences, problems it can take account of within a theoretical framework that has an essentially simple core.

Grasping Politicised Facts

In this article I refer to 'we'. This includes several different people. They had in common that they were ex-members of different political segments aware of the limitation of their own background, not desperate to leap into another segment, not looking for position, but needing to evolve etc. Although the first article on the prevention of communism was by Binns and Dixon (*Radical Chains* 1) there were several other voices hidden in that text.

We had in common the need to reach an understanding of the present situation. While each would hold to the contribution they could make from their respective backgrounds there was no desire for a merely eclectic adding on of bits from different traditions. We all recognised that the common theory we sought would have to have its own basic simplicity from which eventually we could critique the different traditions from which we arose. We shared the recognition that there was a need for a theory and not for an agglomeration of ideas.

An immediate motivation was to make sense of the sorry state of the left in relation to the current development of bourgeois society. We shared the conviction, based on experience, that the left had lost contact with any communist perspective, irrespective of its marxist variant. This was reflected in its splintering into mutual antagonisms, Trotskyist, Left Communist, Autonomist, Leninist, etc. Each knew what was wrong with the other but remained studiously attached to its own limitations. The problem to be addressed was certainly not the success of the right (which still needed to be studied) but rather the horrendous failure of the left. In this light there was little to be gained through adopting one strand with militant fury and then blaming the rest of the left from that position. Sectarianism is this multiple correctness.

Our initial focus was on the twentieth century success of social democracy in the West while in the East and 'Third World' there was the political power of what we and others before us identified as Stalinism. These phenomena we regarded as something more than merely political entities. While clearly, indeed murderously, on the side of capitalist survival, they could not easily be dismissed as capitalist in essence, anymore than they could be claimed as wonderful victories for the working class, or as forms transitional to anything but hell.

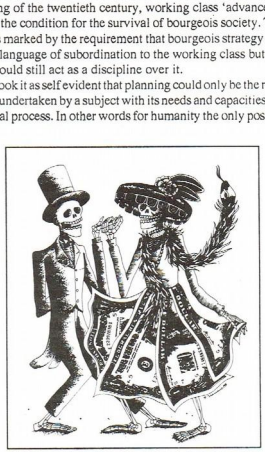
It appeared on both sides, East and West, that communism had been blocked and that the social forms that had evolved depended for their existence on this blockage. Furthermore the left was centrally involved in the blockage. In fact several forms of socialist organisation had developed, at best, ambiguous relations to the working class. It was clear that the left was actually a central element of the prevention of communism.

Our initial critical perspective towards the left allowed us to make sense of a split between class struggle and many of the forms of the labour movement i.e. CPs, Social Democratic Parties, trade unions etc. There were clearly struggles that had of necessity developed autonomy from the usual representative forms. At the same time these were struggles that showed up the limiting function of the welfare state. In fact a critical perspective to these forms would have been meaningless if there had not been social movement outside and against them. The critique of these forms already had a social expression.

There are never straightforward facts. It was our specific concerns as political activists able to share different experiences and perspectives that lead to the particular grasp of the problem to be confronted. The facts themselves were politicised. We needed to understand the blockage of the movement to communism and the development of highly dubious, indeed repressive, social forms supported by many parts of the left. The experience of these facts was not only common enough amongst many activists but they were perceivable because of the repeated opposition of apparent working class forms to actual working class struggles.

Our initial attempt to grasp these facts was the thought that the relation between the socialistic forms and the blockage of communism could not be accidental but was rather a necessary connection. We came to regard these forms as not transitional to communism but as necessary forms of the prevention of communism. Although the epoch as a whole may be transitional we regarded the prevention of communism as an inevitable institutional form within this transition. Clearly this required a questioning of the concept of transition. We were inclined to sympathy with a discontinuous conception, closer to that theorised by Pannekoek rather than what we considered the misleading continuity in transition of Trotsky. This latter conception tended to ascribe some virtues to forms inimical to the working class. In fact with the appearance of the proletariat as historical subject at the end of the nineteenth century, beginning of the twentieth century, working class 'advances' had become the condition for the survival of bourgeois society. Transition was marked by the requirement that bourgeois strategy should speak a language of subordination to the working class but essentially should still act as a discipline over it.

We took it as self evident that planning could only be the rational activity undertaken by a subject with its needs and capacities joined in a social process. In other words for humanity the only possibility



SERGIO NAVARRO. Acknowledgements to Latin American Bureau

of planning would be the formation of the working class as universal class, as the social power with no limitation by external mediation. It was obvious that no such process took place in the Soviet Union. The pretensions of the socialist elites did not disturb us, for the claim to planning by such elites and bureaucrats could never be sufficient evidence that planning was taking place.

Our conception of communism allowed us to view the socialist forms as quite distinct from planning, as administrative processes that had supplanted the functions of the money system but in which the social discipline of the collective was not established. It was clear that the socialisms defeated in West or East had never been victories of the working class anymore than they were victories of the bourgeoisie. Talk of victory and defeat may be suitable to those who still viewed class struggle as if it were a team sport but for the evaluation of a social process it could tell us nothing. We can see that the bourgeois survive so in this limited political sense the bourgeoisie have won, but then they will always 'win' until the social system is overturned. Rather than victories or defeats moving us backwards and forwards, to and fro, in a linear nightmare we aimed to identify real transformations in political economy. The conditions of accumulation and control over the surplus had changed in anticipation and prevention of communism.

It was inevitable that the development of proletarian potential would provoke measures to forestall it. Where the working class had developed these measures could not be crudely repressive but would have to be couched in terms of a formal recognition of the needs of the working class. The survival of the bourgeoisie required the opening of a political channel to the working-class but of course never for any other reason than intervention into the process of class formation.

Since at least the 1880s bourgeois survival has had to be couched in terms of a working class project, or rather, a project on behalf of the working class. They were all socialists then, magnanimously admitting to their socialist sympathies whilst coming up with their 'practicable' schemes for respectable working class improvement.

For communists this social progress has to be reconciled within a theoretical framework that grasped it also as the prevention of communism. The question then was not an quantitative one concerning how much better peoples' lives were, but a theoretical one of uncovering in what essential ways the system had changed. According to this criteria the crucial change to understand lay in the orientation of the system to needs and the limits of this change.

The theoretical explanation for the problems outlined here, what I may term politicised facts, came out of an understanding of the operation of the law of value. Indeed it had to. We followed Marx in identifying the law of value as the central mechanism and social form of capitalism. The surplus was, peculiarly to capital, extracted in the form of value. The social dominance of exchange value marked the social dominance of capital itself. All previous social forms had forms of power, dominance etc. The problem that had to be addressed was the fate of the capitalist form; this meant the fate of the law of value.

It is possible to identify the dominant tendency of the system at different times. In the period of capital's ascendancy the tendency was to assert the rule of the law of value, that is to clear away all obstacles and modifications. In essence this rule was the subordination of need to exchange. We can see it extolled and recommended in the works of Smith and Ricardo. These formed the theoretical basis for the movement of reform that allowed and expressed the social rule of money, become capital. It is in this period, from late eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century, that we see the height of the movement to supplant the aristocratic and mercantile control through state structures. The prospective achievement of the law of value, that is to say, the domination of need by exchange, was not considered in any way a threat to the system but as its completion and triumph. Although never achieved with a textbook purity, the

law of value was the essential element of the maturing system.

It was on the basis of this system, in this period, that Marx developed his critique of political economy. This included his identification, in the first chapters of *Das Kapital*, of the nature of exchange value and use value, abstract and concrete labour. He certainly did not waste his time by presenting acres of exceptions and departures from some ideal development; such a presentation would have negated the scientific purpose of his work. He showed the system of domination of needs by exchange to be inseparable from the social organisation of production for value and hence the inseparability of exchange from value production. This is especially true when our viewpoint starts from the necessity of transcendance of value by production for need.

The Operation of the Law of Value

The argument is that partial suspensions of this law of value have been characteristic of the twentieth century. We need to be sure that we are dealing with real change. The crux of the change can be seen, empirically, in the growth of administration but the essential element of this is the changing orientation of the system to needs. This change can be identified as a change in the operation of the law of value. To grasp this we must be clear about the essential operation of the law of value. We can then go on to specify what it means in terms of the social orientation to needs.

The law of value is the mediation, distribution, of social labour through exchange value. Through the tendency for products to exchange as equivalents, different concrete labours are equated. In this exchange their common characteristic of being abstract human labour is asserted. They are then, in this act of exchange, socially validated as containing some quantity of socially necessary labour. It is characteristic of capital that the social validation requires this act of exchange and that it occurs after the fact of production. Only in the act of exchange is abstract labour socially constituted as such because only in this act are different concrete labours brought into a relation of equality to each other. Without this act the sharing of some common characteristic, abstract labour, has no social or logical meaning. The possibility of equating different concrete labours is not merely an idea nor can it be established by decree. It can only, and must, be established in the exchange of the products themselves. The equality is made real by the exchange and only then can it be discovered by the investigator.

The law of value may appear as a functional process, a system of distribution of social labours. Indeed it is necessary that it does achieve a regulatory function. From this we may go on to conclude that the act of exchange is the social relation itself. Of course it is not. Although exchange is necessary for the existence of abstract labour it is not in itself sufficient. Exchange has existed for thousands of years without human labours being systematically reduced to abstract labour. The existence of exchange is not the same as its social dominance. Where it acts only in the interstices of society abstract labour cannot be said to have come into being. In such a society the majority of products are made for use even if under coercion. For the law of value to be the social form labour must be subject to its disciplines, that is to say to the requirements of successful exchange. The existence of exchange only indicates this potential; this is not the same as realisation.

Where the law of value pervades society then necessarily ex-

change value, hence money, must be dominant. If exchange is universal then there must be the universal equivalent. For this to have occurred specific social conditions must have come into being. The essential condition is the sale of labour power. This requires the separation of the labourer from the means of production. It is in this separation that we can see the social relation necessary to the law of value. It is only with this separation that labour is thrown by necessity into the world of exchange, that labour capacity itself becomes an exchange value. So it can only be on this basis, the commodification of labour power, that the law of value can become the social regulator of labour. In this circumstance the law of value is the form of relation of labour to itself. It is the social existence of the working class as labour power.

In the absence of the separation of labour from the means of production, the absence of labour power as a commodity, the law of value cannot develop adequately as a social form. There can still exist production for use, whether in coercive or co-operative form; in either case concrete labours are not equated through exchange and hence abstract labour is not established. We find then that abstract labour has another condition as necessary as exchange itself, that is absolute poverty. This condition is not accidental but is the other side to the formation of abstract labour. In the separation of labour from the means of production labour is abstracted; it is torn apart from all its specific concrete abilities. In this moment it exists as abstract labour but not yet in the process of social validation, though needing this validation as a matter of life or death. It exists to the extent that it is impelled to enter exchange. As the condition of value production, absolute poverty is the separation of labour from all means of production including itself; it is the required atomisation over which value is the necessary mediation.

What has been described here is the social relation of money representing the social wealth confronting labour as poverty. We are in the topsy-turvy world of capital. It should be obvious to anyone that in this world as described here the existence of abstract labour, the operation of the law of value as regulator, is inseparable from the necessity for the state. It is the organised form by which the separation of labour and means of production is ensured. It is the guarantor of the absolute poverty of the working class. The only fair play it knows is the abstraction of labour. The essential use value for capital and the use value without which there is no capital relation is labour capacity itself. This is the immediate source of value. This capacity is peculiar in that its production as use value is not a simple result of concrete labour. Its existence as use value must be established through the state. The most important commodity is produced by this 'invisible' hand of production.

In its cohesion and unitary power over society the state guards the atomised existence of the working class. It guarantees the everyday normalcy of the mediation of the law of value. It ensures, with all its compassion, that the need for the social existence of the law of value is a genuine need. Through its laws and regulations and police this social existence is established as ordinary and as contractual between equivalent citizens.

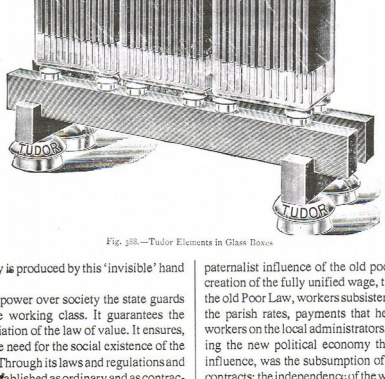


Fig. 388.—Tudor Elements in Glass Boxes

For its essential operation then the law of value requires the absolute poverty of the worker. This is necessary if exchange is to be able to equate different concrete labours in terms of abstract labour. In brief then, for the worker, to live means to work for the wage. At the centre of this social form is the complete subordination of needs to money mediation. It is because of this that we can identify the law of value as not merely a distributive mechanism but as the social existence of the working class. The law of value does not stand apart from the working class as a separate mechanism; it would be more purposeful to say that the law of value is the existence of the working class standing apart from itself. Needs and capacities are torn apart. Capital itself is the seizure of the collective power as production of value. As such it is a regime over needs, the mediated absence of subjectivity.

The atomisation of the working class is crucial to the operation of the law of value just as the law of value is necessary for the atomised working class. In this form of the working class we can see the full operation of commodity fetishism in which social relations take the form of relations between things. This is described of course in the first chapters of Marx's *Das Kapital*. I shall return to this later.

Bourgeois Reform: Absolute Poverty and the Unified Wage.

From the point of view of capitalist reform appropriate state structures must be achieved for the full operation of the law of value. I have already mentioned the defence of private property; this is obvious enough. The other side of this is the regulation of the poverty of the working class. In concrete terms this would take the form, in the first half of the nineteenth century, of a debate over the poor laws and the poverty composition of the working class. This in turn would become a real political struggle between bourgeois and landlord interests. At the pivot of this struggle was the relation to the working class.

This was the period of bourgeois reform as it pushed towards the democratic state against aristocratic influence. Along with the move to free trade, the abolition of the corn laws and constitutional reform there was also the tendency towards the abolition of the old poor laws. In the works of Ricardo and his many correspondents there is a shared belief in the necessity for the abolition of the Poor Law. This abolition was part of the completion of bourgeois political economy. It would be the expression and realisation of the full sway of capital over all social forms. It meant the end of the paternalist influence of the old poor laws, the local rates, and the creation of the fully unified wage, the independent labourer. Under the old Poor Law, workers subsistence still required payments from the parish rates, payments that helped foster the dependence of workers on the local administrators, the gentry. For those representing the new political economy the ideal, set against this feudal influence, was the subsumption of the worker to the free realm of contracts; the independence of the worker mediated socially through money.

The centrality of the unified wage as a distinguishing characteristic of the political economy is derived from its significance in the creation of a regime over human needs. The unified wage is a particular form of domination over needs; there are other forms but this is the specifically capitalist form in which needs are fully subordinated to exchange value, to money. As capital pushes towards the unified wage so it pushes towards the full naturalisation of its own political economy and the achievement of commodity fetishism.

In this early period there was an extraordinary effort to ensure the education of the working classes to the political economy. Benevolent institutions such as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge sponsored ideas that put the independent labourer at the centre of life for the working class. In this figure the working class were expected to identify the dignity of their own atomism. As one scholar has usefully described these educative efforts they were a 'campaign of containment' (R.Gilmour, *Victorian Studies*, Vol II, Dec 1967). This is true, but not complete, the essence of the message was that working class needs could not be met through collective action but rather through the dignified, self-reliant, independent channel of work. All needs were to be subordinated to money. This same point was put with delightful simplicity by the authors of the Poor Law Report of 1834. In clearly defining the limits to relief they stated that, "It has never been deemed expedient that the provision should extend to the relief of poverty; that is, the state of one who, in order to obtain a mere subsistence, is forced to have recourse to labour." (*Poor Law Report of 1834*, Penguin 1974). Freedom has never been so efficiently described.

In the matter of the poor laws Ricardo and his supporters had prepared the way for their abolition through the setting up of trustee savings banks that would enable workers to save from their wage and then in subsequent periods of need receive back funds for survival. In this way the principle of the unified wage would be asserted whilst practical measures to deal with periods of stagnation of trade were put in place. Despite this initial tendency the actual reform of the poor law did not go as far as some of these political economists had hoped.

The new Act of 1834 still allowed for the provision of relief; but there was nevertheless little doubting the real tendency and aim of the legislation, to put an end to dependence and to form independent labourers. In this respect it marked a break from aristocratic, feudal paternalism. Senior, the principal author of the new Act defended it when he said that previously, "...a large portion of the labourers of England were treated not as freemen but as slaves or domestic animals, and received not strictly speaking wages, regulated by the value of their labour, but rations apportioned to their supposed wants..." (Senior, *The Report Of the Handloom Weavers*). The unified wage could in these circumstances be regarded as a gain for the working class; it was also though a declaration of the absolute poverty of the working class, the full subordination of needs to the progress of accumulation. It announced the end of particular and personal dependence and a new world of universalised and democratic dependence. The legislation sought the perfection of universal poverty as the condition of the necessity to work, against the pauperizing dependence of the previous operation of the poor law. Workers would be fully committed to the accumulation from which there arose the demand for their labour. The actual act instituted a punitive system of administration over relief that would deter the able bodied from pauperization. It deliberately preserved pauperism as an exclusion from society, as the administrative simulcra of starvation. The unified wage remained the central paradigm of this period. It was the centre of the educative measures of political economy; it outlined a self-reliant path for improvement by the working class.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the movement of reform is towards the unification of the wage, the abolition of that part of

Fig. 656.—Concentric Wall Plugs

the wage received as parish relief. In legislation the Poor Law Amendment Act went much of the way to achieving this paradigm and some way towards the creation of the independent labourer. This period may be identified as the high point of the law of value. However, as the aspiration of bourgeois political economy, the unified wage of absolute poverty would begin to be modified under the impact of the developing formation of the working class.

As is clear to anyone reading the first chapters of *Das Kapital*, commodity fetishism is understood as resting on specific social conditions. "As the foregoing analysis has already demonstrated, this fetishism of the world of commodities arises from the peculiar social character of the labour which produces them. Objects of utility become commodities only because they are the products of the labour of all these private individuals who work independently of each other ... Since the producers do not come into social contact until they exchange the products of their labour, the specific social characteristics of their private labours appear only within this exchange." (Marx, *Capital*, vol I p.165, Penguin). The condition of the mediation by exchange is the independence of the producers, their atomisation. This is no psychological, philosophical, or subjective phenomenon. This is a real social condition but it is precisely because of this that it is subject to real social movements. This atomism is the atomism of social labour. This is its separation from itself in absolute poverty. Commodity fetishism is not then a phenomenon that crumbles under the weight of superior persuasion but does so under the action of the working class itself. The formation of the class cannot help but undermine the social condition of commodity fetishism. It brings forward the practical possibility of social labour. This in turn opens the catch-up space for intellectuals to understand the social phenomena.

There is no exterior force but a real development within capital that changes its own conditions of consciousness. The necessary struggle over wages etc creates the conditions in which workers see through the operation of the law of value. This is no philosophical discovery but is a practical result of and in turn condition for the process of class formation. Indeed to describe it as 'seeing through' is in itself misleading. It would be more accurate to say that from the struggle itself conditions develop for grasping new potentials. This involves an element of 'seeing through'. In this sense class solidarity, necessarily antagonistic, has also to be theory.

True, there continues on the surface of society the exchange of equivalents but in the struggle itself it is revealed that this exchange is far from being the basis of production. Here in the core of society there is discovered a basis beneath the "semblance of exchange". "This exchange of equivalents proceeds; it is only the surface layer of a production which rests on the appropriation of alien labour without exchange, but with the semblance of exchange ... there is no longer any ground for astonishment that the system of exchange values- exchange of equivalents measured through labour - turns into, or rather reveals as its hidden background, the appropriation of alien labour without exchange, complete separation of labour and property." (Marx *Grundrisse* p.509)

The revelation of the hidden background is generated within the system itself as part of its own development. The crucial point is the recognition by workers of the wage as a proportion of the product. The political economists would present the wage as received in

exchange for a specific use value, as an exchange of equivalents but: "As correct as this is in one regard, it also introduces the apparent form of barter, of exchange, so that when competition permits the worker to bargain and to argue with the capitalists, he measures his demands against the capitalists' profit and demands a certain share of the surplus value created by him; so that the proportion itself becomes a real moment of economic life itself. Further, in the struggle between the classes - which necessarily arises with the development of the working class - the measurement of the distance between them, which, precisely, is expressed by wages itself as a proportion, becomes decisively important. The semblance of exchange vanishes in the course of the mode of production founded on capital." (*Grundrisse* p.597). The crucial element in the process outlined here by Marx is the development of working class organisation. The necessity for it denies exchange as the real basis of the relation in production and forms the basis for grasping new principles of social organisation. Marx understood commodity fetishism as being undermined within the course of capitalist development.

The division of labour mediated by exchange, production for exchange i.e. production of value, generates the social condition for the creation of labour as a self-formed subject and so production for use. The social conditions necessary to, indeed intrinsically part of, the law of value mean that struggle is not just a struggle over proportion, an endless war over advantage, but is a more fundamentally antagonistic struggle. All struggles by the working class over its conditions of life, whether wages, hours, welfare or whatever assert a principle antagonistic to capital: that of production for use, human need joined to human capacity. In moving through the categories of the system the struggle cannot help but show the intrinsic limit of the system. Of course this is not magically transformed into communism. The point for now though is this, the struggle under the capitalist system is explosive and creative because within it there is the promise of a new social system. The contradiction of capital between value and use ensures that class struggle in continually confronting the limit of the system must develop theory. The antagonism over proportion cannot help but escalate to this more intransigent level. This not only enters the consciousness of the workers but also of the bourgeoisie.

The Enemy Within.

When confident of itself as the end of the tyranny of feudalism and as the completion of history, capital's tendency is towards the unified wage and, under production for exchange, the full subordination of needs to money. With Ricardo we find a ready confidence that workers are growing in independence and coming to a knowledge of political economy. Capital appears here in all the glory of an inviolable objectivity. This objectivity stands as the absence of a collectively constituted subjectivity. Workers' subjectivity is to amount to no more than individual knowledge of this ruling objectivity.

As the division of labour progresses, and with it the formation of the working class, so the assertion of the full subordination of needs to money appears as ever more dangerous to the survival of the bourgeois system. Real development forces on the political economists the recognition of a subjectivity in the working class that has torn away from this moment of capital's objectivity. The movement shifts gradually from the confident assertion of capital to its survival through the prevention of communism. In this movement the pivotal change is found in the orientation of the system to needs.

The process of class formation forces on capital the necessity to intervene in this formation. At the core of this intervention there must be a change in the orientation to needs, otherwise there could be no intervention in subjectivity. The political conditions of the unified wage allowed no scope for a political development of the working class within capital. Needs could not be recognised within bourgeois political channels but are supposedly channelled through accumulation. At a certain point this becomes a dangerous political rigidity for capital. At this point simple repression of the social force of the working class is inadequate. Towards the end of the nineteenth century it is not just that the working class is recognised as an antagonistic force but also that it has acquired a social cohesion within which it could with impunity discuss the future of bourgeois society. This was some way from Ricardo's confident vision of the independent labourer whose subjectivity consisted of coming to knowledge of the system.

In relation to this subordination of subjectivity it could be said that the system, even if temporarily, had a type of objectivity to which Ricardo could apply his 'science' and explain 'natural' price. Such objectivity could only crumble when there arose within it a socially based subjectivity that was positing an alternative. This disrupted the 'science'. There was not only a growth of working class organisations but also of theory as coherent principle derived from a practice and experience that was antagonistic to political economy. Under the conditions of the unified wage these new movements would tend to monopolise a debate on the assertion of human needs. Political economy was recognised by the working class as an enemy; political economy itself had to change if political economy was to remain the same. The Leopard would change its spots.

From at least the 1870s but gathering an accelerating momentum from the mid-1880s there developed movements within respectable society that shared as their basis a recognition of the need to allow political channels in which working class movement could be constrained and defused. The intellectual and social development of this movement can be traced through the principal reformers of the later nineteenth century. In different thinkers and campaigners different elements are emphasised but in all there is the persistent need expressed for a new relation to the working class. The working class were not to evolve their own autonomous relation. Arnold Toynbee appeared as an early inspiration along with his friend (later Lord) Milner, also Samuel and Henrietta Barnett whose statistical work on working class living standards helped Charles Booth to take up his project to make a social survey of London. There was also W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, collaborator with William Booth, Benjamin Kidd, the Webbs, Alfred Marshall, L.T.Hobhouse, and so it goes on. This cannot be an exhaustive list, only indicative. For now what I am concerned with is the theoretical development; the social and intellectual history can follow in a

subsequent article.

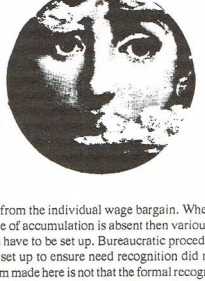
The crucial point is that a need for working class development within capital was recognised and that the unified wage was an obstacle to that development. In as much as the system is founded on the subordination of needs to money so each successive stage of struggle threatens to be more explosive in its effects on bourgeois society. Intervention, necessary to the survival of bourgeois society required intervention in the regime of needs. Class formation could not be repressed without the antagonism between use and exchange value being socialised. This potential, deadly to bourgeois society, imposed on it the necessity for some controlled recognition of need if that class formation were to be intervened in. Bourgeois society developed its own socialism on the basis of a divided wage.

The Division of the Wage.

At the core of the new political economy, interventionist in relation to class formation, was the modification of absolute poverty. Needs would be recognised outside the unified wage. There was instituted a divided wage, on one side the enterprise wage still subject to the disciplines of profit and on the other the social wage subject to the disciplines of administration. It is at this point that we can speak of the emergence of partial suspensions of the law of value. The regime of needs lived by the working class was changed; it is still a regime, of course, but through the divided wage there was a modification in the orientation to needs. There could exist need recognition outside the immediate discipline of exchange, of money. This would in turn affect the relation between abstract and concrete labour. As we have seen a vital condition of abstract labour is absolute poverty; if this is modified, if economic security displaces the cold rule of money then the substance of accumulation itself may be blocked. Capital may tend to find itself confronting an all too concrete labour in the sense that sets of needs have entered an arena in which political negotiation appears to replace the immediate discipline of enterprise calculation.

Partial suspensions should not of course be confused with complete abolishment. Where something is partially suspended it should be clear that it still operates, if in a modified form. The real question is how it operates. This is what needs to be explained and this will require a development of points already made. I have already emphasised above that the law of value is not simply a mechanism of distribution and nor is it adequate that abstract labour is established through exchange. The law of value as the mediation of social labour is also the form of existence of that labour, its social atomisation, and requires for its inseparable condition the necessity on the part of labour to sell its labour power. This point is worth emphasising with another quote from Marx, "For the domination of exchange value itself, and of exchange-value-producing production, presupposes alien labour capacity itself as an exchange value - i.e. the separation of living labour capacity from its objective conditions; a relation to them - or to its own objectivity - as alien property; a relation to them, in a word, as capital." (Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp509-10 see also pp514-5). It is clear that production for value, the alienation of living labour, is inseparable from exchange value. The domination of the latter must entail the former.

Partial suspensions of the law of value are suspensions of the form of existence subordinated to money. The division of the wage institutes a new regime of needs. It seems at first just to be an additional channel yet it cannot help but alter the operation of the system. The actual history need not concern us for now. What is crucial is that a set of needs were recognised outside the immediate discipline of accumulation. The areas covered by the divided wage included unemployment benefit, income support, pensions, sickness benefit, administered pricing of food and housing, and health. In each area there is a formal recognition of need. What this means is the recognition of need in such a way as to promise economic



security apart from the individual wage bargain. Where the immediate discipline of accumulation is absent then various administrative structures have to be set up. Bureaucratic procedures and data systems were set up to ensure need recognition did not get out of hand. The claim made here is not that the formal recognition of need is synonymous with the granting of a right to subsistence but rather that a significant shift in the regime of needs occurred.

There are several levels to this recognition of need. We call it formal in order to capture something of its ambiguity. It never constitutes an explicit right yet in effect this is its ever present promise, indeed it is *de facto* treated as such by the working class. Against this is set the bureaucratic policing of the recognition of need. This leads to a particular aspect of the formality of the recognition. Although, for example a need for housing is recognised, so rents are controlled, tenancies are secured and houses are allocated outside the market etc, this recognition is never certain. There remain not only shortages but also poor quality in terms of such things as damp, infestation, size, location, as well as administered divisions such as on the basis of race. The recognition is there, can be accessed, but falls short of what would be planned. This highlights an important element in the meaning of formal recognition; it remains mediated and separated from capacity. Although the discipline is not immediate, the ultimate purpose of the changes is to preserve accumulation. As such need recognition must be formal, fixing poverty rather than relieving it, and the endemic scarcity of the system no longer takes on a natural air but is identified with administration itself.

Administration: the Precise Form of Capital's Ambiguity.

The division of the wage opened a channel that confounded the impact of the radical critique. An ersatz politics could develop, crucially within capital. It was ersatz because it presupposed containment in class rule, continued production for value, even if it did have to be founded on real changes. This project, now identified as left-wing or socialist, had its roots earlier but its appearance as a distinct state strategy may be located in the People's Budget of 1909. From here there began a new regime for working class needs and an effective intervention into the development of working class organisation.

Starting from the law of value as the core we can through its partial suspensions explain the development of administrative forms. The formal recognition of need that lies at the base of the divided wage and hence the welfare state conflicts with the subordination of needs that characterises the full operation of the law of value. It allows space in the modification of the conditions of absolute poverty for an evasion of life as labour capacity. Given that the purpose of the divided wage is to preserve the rule of capital, the formal recognition of need has to be controlled within the continu-

ing discipline of the requirements of the law of value. From this impossible situation we can trace the growth of the state administrative forms in the twentieth century.

Administration is excreted by a system that is forced to recognise and cannot recognise need, a system whose substance is abstract labour, indifference to particular labours, producing for value, but that must allow a political channel recognising concrete labour. Rather than ensuring that needs are met i.e. rather than the social relation of planning, administration must ensure their containment, restriction and limitation. Entitlement is subdivided into administrative categories that in turn subdivide the class. There had to be a recognition of need in formal channels but there could not be social abundance. Here then the independent labourer of classical political economy is to be preserved as worker by a promotion to citizen with entitlements policed in the welfare administrative forms. This is not planning. It is rather a tendency to anti-planning, the prevention and interception of class formation.

As has been observed in a theoretical work on the state (Kay and Mott, *Political Order and The Law of Labour*, Macmillan 1982), we can detect in administration the archaeological remains of class struggle. They point out that the origin of the word administration is appropriately in the management of the estates of deceased people. The matter of left or right wing is scarcely of interest. The struggle is absorbed but as its opposite; a dead administrative form. The struggle becomes the citizen. It is no accident that this process is analogous to the absorbtion of living labour by dead. The absorbtion of struggle appears as the formal recognition of need that removes the occasion for solidarity and hence the conditions of class formation. To put it simply there is no concession that is not also preservation of atomisation. The formal recognition of need bears with it the requirement that it be administered. Offices, rules, classifications, queues, all these preserve need as a limited entitlement and on the condition of atomisation. In this way intervention in class formation can be made compatible with accumulation.

Commodity fetishism is modified by direct administration. Social relations are mediated within direct administrative structures. These are essentially anti-planning; the condition and indeed purpose of their existence is the social absence of the class. They preserve the formality of need recognition within the law of value. Commodity fetishism is preserved by an administrative channel that allows the development of a political form, social democracy, which includes the Labour Party and a particular form of trade unionism. They appear in dialogue rather than antagonism. It is a curious situation in which social democracy does not confront commodity fetishism yet it speaks a language of need. Its compatibility with the law of value arises from the separation of political and economic spheres that it not only accepts but also by its existence confirms. This separation expresses and preserves the continued separation of need and capacity. Since social democracy allows a discussion of need within its narrow political confines it appears to normalise the separation.

Under these conditions communism not only appears as unnecessary but more importantly as utopian since the basis of the struggle that could achieve it can always be undermined. It is because of this that the division of the wage is a central development within political economy. It is the precise form of capital's ambiguity.

The problem for capital is that the conditions it sets up for the prevention of communism become, in turn, the basis of a new struggle. It appears then to capital that the division of the wage has become the source of struggle rather than its containment. The formal recognition of need provides a focus and indeed base of struggle that evades the limits of the organisational representatives, the trade unions and Labour Party, within which the formal recognition was intended to channel class formation. This breakdown was expressed outside the factory as well as in workplace relations, unofficial strikes, control over pace of work, resistance to productivity deals etc. Eventually and inevitably, the conditions of the divided wage were identified as part of an interlocking social package that had obstructed adequate control over the workplace.

The real problem for capital in all this is that any partial suspension threatens the reproduction of labour capacity as an exchange value. Yet at the same time some modification of the absolute poverty of the working class becomes necessary if capital is to survive. The pivotal change that capital must endeavour to contain and live with is the recognition of need. Simply, such social recognition contradicts absolute poverty and so threatens the formation of labour capacity. The substance of capital is abstract labour; the unified wage is the form by which money confronts this labour. The divided wage mitigates this confrontation.

Concrete Labour, Particularity and Resistance.

To accumulate, capital cannot simply put into motion abstract labour; it must pass through particular labours, concrete labour. The indifference, nevertheless, of capital to the concrete labours is its indifference to use values as such, in other words the subordination of needs to accumulation. This is no formal requirement. The actual control in the workplace is dependent on this overall social condition. Indifference of capital to concrete labours is for the worker substitutability. This is the threat of ruin. To illustrate the significance of this we must turn to a third aspect of abstract labour.

We have identified abstract labour as established in exchange. We have seen further that this required absolute poverty for it to be generalised. In this sense abstract labour is also the condition of the labourer shorn of all specific abilities, shorn of all use-making capacity and hence requiring the sale of labour power to the capitalist. The problem for capital comes in trying to ensure a fair deal, a fair day's work in return for the wage. Of course supervisors, management systems, co-operation etc are all of use but what, ultimately do they depend on? The worker's substitutability is crucial and this depends on abstraction. Yet at the same time capital cannot float in mid-air. It must produce and sell actual things that require concrete labour. Capital's circuit must pass through concrete labour. This presents a problem of control. Concrete labour can involve specific tasks that are not necessarily substitutable. Worse,

over time, as workers gain confidence based on principles of solidarity known to themselves and other workers, skills can and are imposed on capital as forms of counter control by workers. Or, the fear of substitutability is overcome through the generalised level of struggle across many different sectors.

In these conditions there is a tendency for workplace discipline to flounder. To reassert control capital must reassert the abstraction of labour. Recession is one means of this but the crucial means that is associated with recession or crisis is through machinery. The particular labours on which workers had been able to develop their refractory hand are absorbed into machinery. Skills tend to be abolished as there is a tendency for the system to achieve its indifference to particular labours as an actual form of labour. Concrete labour itself, being in fact developed through the circuits of capital tends to the peculiarly capitalist form of labour, to abstract labour, to mere work without redeeming feature. This tendency is imposed by the requirements of exchange, the realisation of profit in exchange. Capital accumulation, whose substance is abstract labour and depends on abstract labour, also develops concrete labour to actualise abstract labour. Of course, as this development advances it tends to automation and hence to conditions of abundance where labour as the basis of the system, as value, is abolished. With greater struggle so capital must seek escape from concrete labours but in doing so tends to abolish its own presuppositions. The struggle itself, the subjective, moving through the objective categories of the system, forces the system to achieve the conditions of communism.

We have examined this relation between abstract labour and the workplace without linking it to the development of forms of welfare. We have seen that labour process control is especially dependent on general social conditions. With formal recognition of need these social conditions are partially modified. Administrative proceedures must ensure the continuation of workplace control. At the same time there was a tendency for there to be negotiated deals, productivity deals, and incomes policies for which the presence of the welfare state is itself part of the deal. In this situation the labour movement develops a rigid and centralised bureaucracy that must police the deals on which its position depends. Counter to this the working class experience a greater economic security because of the formal recognition of need. This obstructs control in the workplace and instead enhances the particularity of labour. This may be overcome by central negotiation but this in time is undermined by a working class that resists and opposes the bureaucratisation of the movement.

This resistance is enabled by the welfare state itself since certain requirements for which the working class had depended on its own movement were displaced by the welfare state. The success of welfare in disorganising the movement was also the condition by which the working class could achieve some independence from its bureaucratisation.

Confronted by these conditions it is understandable that the call for the right to manage and the attack on the welfare state have gone hand in hand. While many on the right may now criticise and find fault with the achievements of Thatcherism there remains still a tenacious hold on the belief that Thatcherism allowed a 'revolution' in management control. Indeed this is a real legacy of the changes since 1974. This change though has been achieved through the re-emphasis of the power of money over needs and the dissolution of forms of negotiation. The system cannot avoid its basis in abstract labour as the substance of value. The creation or enhancement of a new managerial stratum has been achieved on the back of growing economic anxiety, the dismantling of the welfare state. Insecurity from cradle to grave has become the watchword for today's state reform. It is also the condition for the evolution of new working class forms and cultures of resistance. This in turn acts as a break on the proposed dismantling of the welfare state in as much as her majesty still requires a loyal opposition that has a modicum of credibilty.

The fight against inflation with its cost in unemployment has been the visible thrust of the right's campaign. At its heart has been the steady erosion of the divided wage, under the heading of supply-side economics, as the so called consumer is put at the centre of economic life. The only consumer that matters in this regard is the consumer of labour power. As for the rest of us 'choice' is the dignified way in which we are expected to give up all hope of change, 'choice' is to be our immersion in economic atomism, the retrieval of a disciplining edge to absolute poverty. 'Choice' is how we give up more and more and learn to love it. Insecurity is reasserted as the foundation of work discipline. What we must observe now is the gradual change in the politics of the labour movement as it finds it increasingly difficult to express needs that arise from this economic insecurity and which must tend to focus on the money system as its enemy. This process has already started but is one that takes years and not days or months.

Analysis - For Communism

The analysis presented here is certainly not complete. I have for example deliberately avoided the development of finance capital. This would have been crucial if we required now a full understanding of why it is suspension and not abolition of the law of value that is described here. Although this is important it is beyond the scope of this article's limited purpose. Nevetheless, some provisional conclusions can be offered.

Suffice to say for now that partial suspensions of the law of value have tended to mediate the tendency to abstract labour through nationalist frames that from the viewpoint of value quite arbitrarily link together large groups of concrete labour. This nationalisation of course had its political purpose in serving to undermine the international tendency of the workers' movement. This national element would however eventually become an obstacle, a basis of struggle, that was identified as the arterio-sclerosis of Europe. As capital escaped its national forms so it required the free purchase of labour power, the competition of a wider labour market.

The advantages of this basis of analysis can be summarised briefly:

1. The analysis puts the law of value at the centre. Agreement or disagreement requires a grasp of the law of value. This means that irrespective of the particular fate of this analysis it supports a tendency to escape the narrow confines of the left's political analysis, e.g. at its worst waffle about consciousness, culture etc, and to develop a theory at the level of political economy (and its critique). The question is whether any section of the left is capable of escaping the emergencies of the immediate situation to develop the new theories they all seem to promise but never deliver.

2. The analysis presents the law of value as inseparable from the state. This enhances the point above. The theory provides a simple theoretical explanation for administration that does not separate the phenomenon from 'economics' or whatever. Disagreement is forced to an understanding of the state that takes account of the vaunted simplicity of the present approach and must, in doing so, take account of the law of value.

3. The establishment of labour power is seen to be at the heart of the inseparability of state and law of value. Hence from the beginning needs and the forms of mediation are placed at the heart of the theory.

4. From the above it follows that there is presented here the basis for a clear theory of change that places the change in the control over surplus extraction and so the regime of needs as central.

5. This places the working class as a force, or power within the system, a power whose development provokes modification of the system's orientation to needs because its very nature as working class condemns it to be the object for money but the subject of the

struggle for needs. From division of labour mediated by exchange value to the struggle for production for use the movement to communism is seen as immanent to capital.

6. This theory explains the political phenomena of the twentieth century without recourse to external agencies, *deus ex machina* or some supposed inadequacy on the part of humanity. For example social democracy is located as having developed as the form dependent on the division of the wage, i.e. as an aspect of the modification of bourgeois political economy. We can explain real phenomena in the political sphere as arising from changes in the political economy and these in turn result from the development of the historic subject as a consequence of the development of the division of labour. The system has its own motion; the subjective is internal to it, we might say as an objective aspect.

7. The analysis confronts the same material that led people to the belief in *The Forward March of Labour Halted* but reaches quite different conclusions since the crucial element in this march was not the development of class subjectivity but rather alteration of bourgeois political economy to penetrate and forestall the basis for that subjectivity. It is not a forward march that is halted but the prevention of communism that is shown to be an inadequate social form.

8. From the present analysis it follows that the crisis of the organisational forms of the prevention of communism is a crisis of a relation to the working class. Underneath this lies the far more serious issue, in fact the dominant issue, what will be the outcome of the present changes in the labour movement? Will the current organisational forms of the working class, the incumbent labour movement, develop? What has been revealed is that these forms were inadequate for subsuming the working class. The relation to needs that is implicit in working class struggle implies also a social content that must supersede the inadequacies of administration. This in turn implies a far more serious crisis in a labour movement that has been too often tied into administration. However there is no magical transformation of working class organisation; the forms of resistance to the imposed peace of the welfare state cannot adjust immediately to the erosion of the welfare state.

The ambiguity of capital continues. If the prevention of communism was inadequate it might appear that the free market is the only social logic since the formal recognition of need 'failed'. Yet as the welfare state is questioned, as unemployment grows and economic anxiety becomes the central principle of the market of choices, the end of guaranteeism, so it would appear that the working class is pushed into defending the welfare state. Yet despite resistance at local level and over particular issues this has not happened in any significant manner, notwithstanding important skirmishes such as the poll tax. The Labour Party and TUC have so far survived the social upheavals although changes are obviously in train.

If, as many have predicted, unemployment is here to stay, if even recoveries will not get rid of the problem and if as also seems likely, especially in Britain, that the recoveries themselves are short-lived and if we are therefore to see more Dundee Timexes in conjunction with more drastic reductions and modifications of the welfare state then inevitably the present forms of working class organisation will prove inadequate. In a small but still significant way we have already seen this in the poll tax campaign. The problem for capital is to find forms that are adequate to control the working class. For us the problem is whether crises in the labour movement will sound the death-knell of bourgeois society.

The analysis presented here is a reaffirmation of communism as the tendency of the struggle. The placing of needs at the centre, simultaneously places the working class at the centre not simply as an agent of struggle but as the bearer of a new organisational principle that, in its inescapable antagonism to value, must make capital a socially explosive and eventually doomed system.

Revolutionary movements, theory and practice: **The Peruvian experience of the 1980s**

Why has the Maoist guerilla movement, Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path), thrived when the rest of Stalinism is in such crisis? By Bill Langan

"Father of mine, your face like the great sky, hear me: the heart of the señores is now more terrifying, more filthy, inspires more hate. They have corrupted our very own brothers, twisted their hearts and together killing us armed with weapons that the king of devils himself couldn't invent or produce. And yet there is a great light in our lives! We are shining! We have descended upon the city of the señores. It is from there that I speak to you. We have descended like the endless columns of ants in the great jungle. Here we are, with you beloved leader, unforgettable, eternal Amaru." (Jose Marie Arguedas, leading Peruvian indigenist author, from his extended poem 'To Our Creator-Father Tupac Amaru' in his work Katakay)

In 1968 the military took power in Peru and, presenting themselves as a 'national revolutionary government', managed to re-channel much of the revolutionary ferment affecting all social sectors under their 'democratic' predecessors, with extensive land reform, nationalization and development programmes. In the harsher international climate of the mid-70s its reformism ran out of steam, giving way firstly to monetarism and then a return to democracy under popular pressure at the end of the decade.

During the 1980 elections which marked this transition, the Communist Party of Peru (Sendero Luminoso) declared the start of its 'popular war' after nearly a decade of 'reconstitution'. The conservative Belaunde government (1980-85) was succeeded by the left-nationalist APRA government (1985-90) , which in turn was defeated by the current president, Alberto Fujimori. He has played for popularity by portraying himself as a technocrat separate from and above the 'corrupt' political class. Indeed, he closed down the Congress in May 1992, reopening it with elections in November of the same year, which were boycotted by the traditional opposition parties. He is a new breed of populist, who has made greater use than any previous leader of direct appeal to the populace via television and radio, particularly in the 'war on subversion'. Sendero has overcome some harsh setbacks over the years , but all depends now on their ability to overcome the capture of leader Abimael Guzman in September 1992.

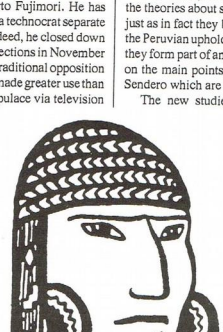
Contrary to popular belief, Peru is not a country of peasants, but one where two-thirds of the population are now 'urban'. However, a large part of this 'urban' population is concentrated in and around provincial towns and they maintain close family and trade links with the rural population. Although the growth of the informal sector in urban areas has been widely commented on, what is more striking statistically is the pauperization of this sector over the decade in terms of income levels compared to that of the more traditional working class.

Peru is a country rich in characters who have striven to compose radical theory which can then be put into practice. At the turn of the century, for example, the Peruvian anarchist movement was inspired by the ideas and contributions of one Gonzalez Prada, the first writer to address the so-called indian problem from a revolutionary position. He was followed in the twenties by the marxist analysis of Jose Carlos Mariategui, Peru's foremost historical figure on the left, who also founded the original PCP (Communist Party of Peru), and whose writings and influence deserve an article of their own. Later we have the Trotskyist Hugo Blanco, a key figure in the 1960s peasant uprisings and guerrilla insurgency, and we also find that the 'Liberation Theology' of radical Catholicism originated as a concept with the Peruvian Gustavo Guttierez.

The leader of the PCP-SL Abimael Guzman styles himself as the successor to Mao, and I think that within that authoritarian marxist tradition of Lenin- Stalin - Mao, he probably has every right to, given his record of applying theory to practice. His so-called Gonzalo Thinking is basically an adaption of maoism to the Peruvian situation, dominated by the idea of Power and how to conquer it, the Struggle of Two Lines, the militarized political party, and his historical analysis (all described *ad nauseum* in a widely available interview from 1987).

The Social Movement Theorists

What I would like to do is to hold up the experience of Sendero (as a revolutionary movement acting in modern conditions) to some of the theories about social movements that began to become popular just as in fact they began their 'popular war'. I have only looked at the Peruvian upholders of these theories, but I think you'll agree that they form part of an international trend. So I'll start by commenting on the main points of these new theories and then the aspects of Sendero which are relevant to this comparison.



The new studies of social and political movements which emerged at the beginning of the eighties sought to overcome what was seen as the dogmas of the old theories which had concentrated on the complimentary roles of class, state and power: the key phrases were instead now grassroots social movements, citizenship and democracy. There was a strong urban bias, in keeping with the urbanization trend and which corresponded to the idea of trying to use social reality as a *base* for theory, rather than the old habit of making the reality fit the theory. We see this in the new trend towards social history rather than the history of impersonal structures as a means of recording the past.

This theoretical trend coincided with an important political development: the relatively peaceful end of military rule in Peru at the end of the 1970s. As in Spain at approximately the same time, and other countries

that experienced such a transition, a democratic euphoria accompanied the end of dictatorship. This euphoria was shared by virtually all the left apart from Sendero. The traditional peasant and workers movements lost their importance as academic interest refocussed itself on movements whose demands corresponded not just to the productive sphere. As for how to effect political change Gramsci appeared to offer the answer for these 'new times' with his idea that these new social movements could form part of national popular blocs: social alliances replacing the old class-based formations.

The new theorists identified a series of new characteristics of social struggle in the 'new democratic environment'. These were:

1) **Change in Social Structure**: that new sectors such as the 'informal sector' would assume greater importance than traditional categories of urban and rural workers.

2) **New Organizations**: that in keeping with the above structural change, new small scale 'micro-level' organizations would assume more importance than the old mass organizations (unions and peasant federations).

3) **New Struggles**: the idea that the 1980s movements would be concerned with demands other than the old 'class-based' demands.

4) **New Methods of Struggle**: that the age of direct action had ended. While this meant a lot of positive eye-opening, these new ideas often led to the throwing out of class as a means of looking at society, and revolution as a feasible solution. Because of that I'll argue that on the one hand, the experience of the eighties, with the joint rise and fall of the new social movements and the democratic left in Peru, suggests that something was wrong with the conclusions drawn from the ideas that went accompanying both. And, on the other hand, that the new theorists were incapable of understanding the rise of a revolutionary movement such as Sendero.

Social Base

One of the first questions raised about Sendero is what is their social base, and what is their appeal? What I want to emphasize is the impossibility of pigeonholing (as so many have tried to) the answers to both questions.

Firstly, the social origin of the party members who were joining from the late sixties onwards and were thus 'in' on the start of the war in 1980 can be generalized as students and teachers who would often have a peasant background but had moved to provincial towns for educational reasons (as the beneficiaries of a national trend towards popular education in the state sector). Now, given that virtually every urban dweller in Peru has close relations in the country, you're talking about quite a wide and typical section of people making up the original militancy, not a purely 'peasant army' but neither exactly a 'urban middle class elite', a label favoured by Sendero's detractors on the left who contrast it to the 'true' armies of the oppressed such as the Sandinistas and Castro's followers. To criticise Sendero it is not necessary to falsify their nature and mythologize the latter guerrilla - cum - regimes.

The party has continued ever since to recruit heavily amongst young people with close links to both urban and rural life. A son of a landowner once simply said to me, 'peasant plus university = terrorist'.

Secondly, the peasantry is seen as 'principal force' in the overall war strategy and the rural areas have always been a main focus of Sendero activity as they have recruited among young peasants for both static support and to make up mobile columns. Peasantry is maybe now something of a misnomer as the rural population (who now make up little over a third of the total) are largely incorporated in the market economy, and so Sendero correctly identify them as 'rural proletariat'.

Thirdly and finally, in the urban sector Sendero is active in traditional industrial sectors, but does not favour them above other areas of struggle. Rather it has kept abreast of the fact that many of the working class are employed in small-scale labour operations in the so-called informal sector. Everyone from the very poor (working class) and the relatively prosperous (lower middle class) sectors are the object of Sendero's work[2] (an example of Sendero's involvement in this sector is that in the town where I lived a teacher was shot dead on the local university campus, because in his position as a town council member he was involved in a major dispute with the town's street traders).

To understand the nature of this work I think we have to locate its activities in the perspective of an overall strategy that deals with *all* areas of urban life such as neighborhood organizations, housing, education, producers/traders asssociations, morality, justice, movement on the streets, cultural life....There are many examples of their work in each one of these areas, which is carried out by a complex web of front organizations, as well as lower level intervention in already existing organizations.

In both town and country the Party tries to eventually convert itself into the guardian of every aspect of social activity. The idea (and the practice) is to create a shadow state which begins by operating clandestinely, and when the time is right, emerges more openly. And as with all states, the bottom line of social control is the threat of violence.

Social Appeal

We can't take the movement's slogans at face value. The rhetoric varies according to the audience addressed. For a movement to effect social change it has been suggested that it must work at three levels: the *daily* or *micro-level*, the *sectoral level* and the *national level*[3], and synthesize the three. Sendero has to some extent done this: At the daily or neighborhood level the slogans are reformist: *Electricity and Water for the Barrios!, Down with the Rent Rise!* Particular groups are organized around their specific demands (eg squatters or small businessmen in the towns or coca-growers in the country). This can be done through infiltrating already existing local associations or unions.

On the sectoral level, the front organizations operating in different local struggles draw likely recruits into the wider scheme of things. The front organization is seen as an operation which represents the party in different localities on a sectoral level, such as the Young Peoples Popular Movement in schools/colleges, Classist Neighbourhood Movement in residents associations, etc. In this way the recruit enters into contact with the party, and starts to learn the revolutionary rhetoric via intensive, parrot-fashion ideological training.

But when Abimael Guzman's own philosophy teacher and great personal influence was asked in an interview, what do you think of all these simple maoist slogans that your ex-pupil's followers churn out, he just laughed and dismissed it as verbal fodder. So on a national level there is serious ideological work being done which represents the combining of theory and practice on a very high level. This is why I talk about the war in Peru as being one in which ideology is given a uniquely privileged role, which of course relates to the strong tradition of revolutionary theory in the country, mentioned earlier.

Although I have emphasized the complex nature of the Party's structures, it's obviously wrong to go overboard and see it as some kind of completely well-oiled machine, above and beyond the actual human beings who run it! This is the image the party itself often convincingly portrays, but obviously there are overlaps between different sub-groups in the Party and breakdowns of structure.

The key point then is that Sendero works across all type of social sector and class. Furthermore, despite the apparent rigidity of its doctrine it is very responsive to social trends that affect these divisions, such as migrations or the informal sector. This grasp of

modern and changing conditions has been the key to its success. Instead of asking why has Sendero achieved what it has, maybe we should ask, why has it not got further?

Consequences for SM theorists

So what are the consequences of the 'Sendero experience' for the various social movements theories? Well it clearly challenges the conclusion that a class-based revolutionary movement cannot get to grips with the new conditions. To go back to the formulation of the SM theorists:

In terms of the ***new composition of the working class,*** the party has shown itself broad-based enough in its strategy to accomodate all different sectors of the working class and some sectors of the middle class. This new composition has, it should be added, been highly exaggerated, because there has always been a large and at various times politicized informal sector.

In terms of ***new 'micro-level' organizations*** it has either tried to dominate these or else destroy and replace them, with the use of front organizations.

In terms of ***new struggles*** SL has simply tried to head any type of popular demand going, including those of 'citizens rights' as opposed to 'workers rights'.

Finally, as far as new forms of struggle go, the party has been the first to try (not always with success) to develop these in order to replace the old forms of struggle which the state learnt to handle. A main example is the Armed Strike which at its most effective has managed to paralyze Lima.

The new theories were largely correct in their observations, most of all in their attempt to look at ***all*** areas of social life in place of a vulgar economic focus. This is important because it is the all-encompassing nature of SL's strategy, applying itself to all aspects of social life, which I believe is the key to their success. Groups such as the Stalinist PCP-Unidad which concentrated all their efforts on building trade union power bases, have found themselves at the end of the 1980s in the position of Emperors with No Clothes On. The irony, then, is that Sendero took the key observations of the 'new times' analysts in their stride, and incorporated those observations within their own strategy.

The new social movement theorists and their many fellow travellers,both academic and political, got many of their observations right. But their ***conclusion***: that the advent of democracy made class-based revolutionary movements redundant, and their ***anticipation***: that small scale cross-class popular bloc movements would provide the basis for popular politics in the 'new times', have both been shown (in the Peruvian case) to be wrong.

How then has Sendero adapted itself to the new conditions which the theorists identified? What I think we learn is that a revolutionary movement in these modern conditions must have a ***continually extending*** social base and geographical base to overcome repression (this is something Sendero learnt through practice: when the military launched a major flushing out campaign in their original base province of Ayacucho in 83/84, the party was partly forced to relocate its activities to new areas.) By looking at society such as the Peruvian one in its totality, we can see that there are many different ***'points of power'*** that a revolutionary strategy needs to deal with, by capturing or neutralizing each one. In this way we can look at Sendero's strategy and the state's counter-strategy with regard to the peasant self-defence groups, the MRTA (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement - Peru's other main guerrilla force), the unions, universities etc, etc.

The failure of the new social movements to provide the embryo for national change can, apart from anything else, be linked to the shortcomings of 'democracy' in Latin America generally. The popularity of the theory went hand in hand with the democratic euphoria which accompanied it in Peru and elsewhere upon the end of military rule in the late 1970s, therefore the fate of the theory is linked to the fate of these 'democracies'. Neither have really fulfilled their promises in practice. *The shortcomings of the social democratic model make necessary a revolutionary critique of Peru's political realities which is relevant to both theory and practice. Such a critique needs to take seriously the evidence of Sendero's experience, whatever our many misgivings about their politics, rather than seeing it as a freak aberration or guerrilla leftover from the sixties.*

'Analyzing the Analysts'

I would like now to go over why so far such a critique is barely available. Having looked at the theoretically based defenders of Peru's social democracy, we now need to 'analyze the analysts' of Sendero itself: the self-styled experts on Peru's high level of social conflict. This means identifying the political associations and ideological assumptions which underline their work (and hence a large part of our information).

Virtually all analysts whose books or articles you might find come somewhere along the scale between those on the reforming left and those who are basically military advisors in an academic guise, the so-called 'counter-insurgency experts'. I describe them as being on a scale rather than as two distinct groups, because there is a grey area, and the difference between the two is becoming even more blurred in line with the global post-Cold War trend towards a naked convergence of interests between the 'left' and the 'right' under capitalism. Both 'ends on the scale' express their main aim to be protecting Peruvian 'democracy'. Which translates as: how do we defeat Sendero and protect the State?

This grey area regularly manifests itself. At a recent meeting in London for instance John Crabtree, a sympathetic author-critic on the Peruvian left shared a table with Rosemary Thorp, an Oxford economist who tutored Fujimori's until-recently Economy Minister and called for greater liberalization in the 1980s. The blurred lines are also there when the leftist analysts complain that the right wing Fujimori government does not listen to their proposals, or indeed when the government *does* listen, without admitting it of course, and embark on symbolic social help programs such as the army going into shantytowns to distribute free food and haircuts.

It is not necessarily the counter-insurgency people who are less accurate, as they are not weighed down like the leftists are by an alternative programme for administrating capitalism which they have to put in every piece of writing. They are much better about simply seeking out and presenting information on Sendero so that the government, military or business know just what the score is: one of the most realistic assessments of the continuing conflict in Peru after Guzman's arrest came from Gordon McCormick, an advisor to the American Rand Corporation, in an interview with the liberal Peruvian news weekly *Caretas* (Nov 92).

The leftist analysts are compromised by association just as much as their rightwing counterparts are. They share a common ground with the solidarity campaigns, the charities and non-governmental organizations (ONGs), and the leftwing politicos. I'm not trying to make them out to be some organized mafiosi, simply pointing out the connections. For instance, I found Peruvians well aware that many ONGs were jobs-for-the-boys outfits for the left wing parties. Anyway, the analysts and those outfits share the basic beliefs in the rule of parliament, constitution and all the other trappings of the modern democratic state, and as organizations (not necessarily individuals) oppose revolution, violent overthrow etc.

These analysts are informed by certain key themes which,while all containing certain essential truths, are harnessed in favour of an anti-revolutionary perspective, which puts the onus on an elected government to make the necessary changes.

One such theme is of course *Human Rights*. It is not my

intention here to go into the flaws of human rights as a concept, suffice to say that both the military and the PCP (SL) have been guilty of gross abuses of ordinary people. But this is in their nature as authoritarian institutions belonging to a state and a shadow state respectively. On practical grounds this theme is directly relevant to leftist analysts, as the reformist left are often victim of both state and Sendero attacks.

Another is the idea of the people *caught between two fires* - that the war is being fought between two merciless outside factions, with the 'ordinary people' caught haplessly in the middle. It is certainly true that anyone trying to work outside the Fujimori state and Sendero's shadow state is a potential victim of both. However this refrain is also used to make the populace appear a passive community, and particularly lends itself to such a stereotyping of the peasantry, who would presumably be happier half-starving and growing crops for Western export than hoisting the flag of revolt. The reasons for revolt remain valid and real, and the government is worried about the prospect of the (originally rural but now going urban) citizens self-defence militias which it originally armed turning their sights on their masters.

Finally there is the idea that *greater social spending* and democratization are necessary to defeat Sendero: which brings us back to the basic dilemma of the reformist left: that such a programme would still have to go hand in hand with a military operation. In other words: continued war.

So we see that the analysts of Sendero are not in a hot air balloon overlooking events, but play a direct role as advisors through *association*, on the one hand, with the reformist left and associated institutions, on the other hand, with both the Peruvian and foreign state, military and business institutions, and ever more obviously with both.

In developing a revolutionary critique of the situation, I think we also need to decide on what forces to associate with, both in terms of their theory and their political practice. For anyone who finds themselves there, this a very real question.

Firstly there is of course Sendero itself. In terms of numbers, capability and territory it is obviously still the key revolutionary force. But of course unless you're in the inner circle, ther's no room for non-party line thinking except say in an internal crisis which reaches up to the highest level (which must be what happened after the arrest of Guzman). Probably every Peruvian who flirts with radical politics has to decide personally how to relate to the Party. In normal times ideological debate is seen as super-dangerous to the party's discipline and cohesiveness, the party is only there to instruct. As one person (involved in a supportive role to the Party) said to me with some awe, 'the comrades have an answer to everything'. In the Cusco region a new guerrilla column started up around 1987 which wanted to support the armed struggle while remaining outside the Party. By all accounts they were virtually eliminated by Sendero, after wielding some influence in the region.

The other main guerrilla group is the MRTA who have a classic Latin American guerrilla ideology, trying to be what they would call the armed wing of the popular movement along FMLN/Sandinista lines. What others would call the armed wing of the bourgeois left. The MRTA would appear to be a more broad-based movement but has in fact been fraught by internal power struggles resulting in public splits, desertions, and murders of rival leaders. It is difficult to know how much of a future they have, as their only opportunity for growth appears to be if the official left or factions of it, is pushed further out of the political spectrum - which is actually a possibility now that it has virtually no parliamentary representation. Certainly the Robin Hood nature of many of the MRTA's actions are designed to make people morally sympathetic, and a lot of hopes for a humane but revolutionary 'third alternative' have been pinned on them over the years.

As for the official left itself, it is really now on a life support machine more than ever since its re-entrance into national politics in the late seventies. As in so many other countries in the world now, it's popularly identified as part of the whole corrupt party political circus. Its Congress representation was almost decimated in the December 1992 elections, it now retains power only on a limited local level. Its credibility was also indirectly damaged by the complete failure of the supposedly left of centre APRA government of the mid eighties, which really showed the limits of trying to apply populist left policies in a capitalist environment.

In the 1980s there was certainly a revolutionary flavour at the grassroots of the Peruvian left, tied in with the hopes that the new social movements would provide a new 'revolutionary subject'. But now it remains a set of leaders without followers, whose incorporation into the system was never made clearer than in January of this year, when the 'Democratic Left' grouping in Congress (a new proto-party arisen from the ashes of the once strong United Left) proposed a special Congress medal for military officers who excelled in the 'battle against subversion'!

Finally we come to the fringe groups who might or might not become relevant in the future. If they do become relevant it will probably be in terms of the legacy of their ideas rather than their small existing organizations. In Peru the trotskyists and anarchists are the only groups I know of with a revolutionary vision that challenges the Sendero/MRTA orthodoxies, (although the former are limited by their own authoritarian tendencies), and both groups have long and interesting histories of their own in the country. There is I believe potential for a popular renewal of the anarchist or libertarian socialist/communist vision.

The reason I believe there is such an audience owes itself to the tradition of grassroots rebellion in Peru itself. Although this tradition has been harnessed by Sendero and MRTA in the 1980s, it has in fact manifested itself under a variety of different flags over the decades and centuries, and indeed often under no flag at all. There is a history of communal acts against authority, from land seizures to supermarket looting.

On the other side of the coin there exists a strong tradition of *communalismo* and mutual self-help on the part of both rural and urban dwellers, which, although at various times taken up by political groups, has a life of its own beyond the timespan of such groups. Taking away the political conclusions of the analysts, many of what they identified as new social movements in the 1980s represented the urban continuation of this rural tradition of combatting poverty and bettering communal life through mutual aid.

A proper examination of this twin tradition of anti-authoritarian struggle and mutual cooperation is outside the realms of this article, but provides an always strong potential alternative to both the social democracy of 'left' and 'right' and the stalinist authoritarianism of the PCP (SL).

(A campaign is being built up around the imprisonment of two anarchists in Peru, falsely accused of working for Sendero Luminoso. Donations are badly needed for legal fees and food (which is not supplied for prisoners). Contact: The Peruvian Solidarity Project of the Love & Rage Network, PO Box 3, Prince Street Station, New York, New York 10012, USA.)

Notes

1 The following four points are taken from *Movimientos sociales: Elementos para una relecturá* (Social Movements: starting points for a reassessment) (Desco, Lima 1990)

2 Although individuals higher up the social scale than this may be attracted, and the press will always make great play of this, I have not yet seen evidence of an attempt to attract the more comfortable middle classes and upwards as a sector or class, although the support of sections of the 'national bourgeoisie' is envisaged in the anti-imperialist/popular front stage of Sendero's plans.

3 Three levels identified in the excellent book by Diego Palma, *Lo popular, la informalidad y cambio social* (The popular classes, the informal sector and social change) (Desco Lima 1990).

4 Author this year of *Peru under APRA: The Lost Opportunity* (Oxford Univeristy Press), whose title says it all about his slant on the left nationalist government of Alan Garcia which ruled 1985-90.

Towards a political economy of stalinism

Paul B.Smith reviews **Hillel Ticktin**'s recent book: *Origins of the Crisis in the USSR: Essays on the Political Economy of a Disintegrating System* (M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1992, ISBN 0-87332-888-4).

This is an important book. Written by a Marxist critic of both Western Sovietology and Stalinism, it is a major contribution to the critique of the political economy of the former USSR. As such it offers a refreshing contrast to the sterility of Cold War thought on the Soviet Union, whether bourgeois or socialist.

Over the last twenty years or so, Hillel Ticktin was probably the only theorist to predict that the USSR would disintegrate, arguing, contrary to scholars influenced by Cold War rhetoric, that it was a profoundly unstable social formation. He is, moreover, one of the few persons who made an attempt to understand its laws and tendencies by returning to the method of Marx's critique of political economy. For this reason his work has generally been ignored both by bourgeois sovietology and by the left. That he was right is confirmed by events. Ticktin's work makes it possible to emerge from a theoretical wilderness of competing political definitions of the USSR - 'degenerate workers state', 'state capitalist', 'bureaucratic collectivist', and so on.

Ticktin's work is better known in the USA than in Europe. He has lectured to hundreds of students in Los Angeles and appears regularly on phone-ins organised by independent radio. He is also known in South Africa where, since liberalisation, he has organised a large conference on the future of Marxism and had a newspaper article published on developments in the former Soviet Union. In the UK, he teaches at Glasgow University and edits the journal *Critique*. Through this journal he has developed a critique of the political economy of the USSR and enabled the publication of the work of left wing anti-stalinist scholars who would otherwise have gone unrecognised. He has written extensively on finance capital, class, capitalist decline, the nature of a socialist society, Trotsky, the Jewish Question, and the Gulf War. His first book, *The Politics of Race: Discrimination in South Africa*, was published by Pluto Press in 1991 and has been reviewed in recent issues of *Radical Chains*, *Searchlight South Africa*, and *Revolutionary History*. His work on the Soviet Union is now helping to challenge accepted ideas and stimulate debate amongst sections of the left.

The book's form as a collection of essays presented in chapters enables the reader to examine Ticktin's system as separate parts and as a whole. Anyone interested in finding an explanation for the failure of Gorbachev's *perestroika* should go straight to Ticktin's account of disintegration in the ninth chapter, skipping the rest of the material. Although written before the 1991 coup that brought Yeltsin to power, the information to be found there is a good introduction for anyone trying to understand contemporary developments. Chapter nine stands on its own as an elegant essay which demolishes illusions in so-called 'market socialism' and argues persuasively that attempts to force the market onto the working class will fail.

Ticktin's originality shines through most brilliantly in the second chapter on social control. Here the reader will enjoy studying a careful critique of the Cold War literature on the nature of the atomization of populations in totalitarian systems. Ticktin refines the category of atomization and creates a political economy of bureaucratic dependency. Ticktin's understanding of the category of atomization is richer and deeper than any other, precisely because it contains within it a recognition of the form labour power takes in a declining capitalism: a decline within which the contradictions within value and abstract labour are becoming increasingly antagonistic - as capital struggles to contain combined labour within the sphere of exchangeability. To fully appreciate the subtleties of his argument it is helpful to have some understanding of categories derived from Marx, especially the discussion of dependence and independence to be found in the *Grundrisse* and that of commodity fetishism found in *Capital* and elsewhere.

Ticktin's arguments are persuasive whether or nor one is a scholar of Marx. The reason for this is his grasp of method. Ticktin has not simply read *Capital* and then proceeded to impose the categories of commodity and value on the USSR. In the introduction to the *Grundrisse* Marx stated that theory must start from the concrete, the empirical reality of the society being discussed. Ticktin follows this approach, developing his categories in relation to both the vast amount of empirical research on the USSR that has taken place and the various explanatory frameworks that have been put forward by both right and left. His categories are not imported from some *a priori* schema but grow organically and logically out of the material he has studied. His knowledge of the Russian language (acquired in part through having lived and worked in the USSR itself) has enabled him to penetrate the *bureaucratese* of the official documents of the stalinist elite in which tone is just as important as content. This raises his understanding to a higher level than most on the left. Even if the reader rejects or is sceptical of Ticktin's theoretical foundations, she or he is likely to learn a great deal about the Soviet Union from this book.

The Ruling Elite.

Ticktin's thinking is demanding but rarely dull. The esoteric aspect to the book - the application of the categories of contradiction, law, actual and potential use-value, and real and imagined product - reveals quantity and quality of study which it is difficult to imagine being equalled by any contemporary Marxist. Yet Ticktin's presentation of categories neither obtrudes nor drifts from a path that is clear and exact. Practically every term he uses is carefully defined so that if the reader gets lost, she or he can retrace their steps to the point of confusion. This makes it easy to follow the logical relations between the categories and the direction of his thought.

For example, class is defined as *'a collectivity that has a particular relation to the extraction of the surplus product'* (p.61). Surplus product is defined as 'that portion of the social product that a whole or part of the society has decided to allocate for uses other than the immediate satisfaction of the needs of those engaged in productive work: in other words, those who produce the surplus product itself' (p.10). These definitions are useful in deciding whether the members of the ruling group in the Stalinist system constitute a class. This belief is held to by adherents of the idea of

state capitalism, such as C L R James, Raya Dunayevskaya and Tony Cliff. In contrast, Ticktin argues that there was no ruling class within the Stalinist system. Control over the extraction of surplus product is almost completely restricted by a negative control that atomised workers have over the labour process. This manifests itself in absenteeism, sabotage, alcoholism and defective products. Moreover, the ruling group is also atomised. Members live in constant fear of losing their privileges and cannot pass them on to their children with any certainty. They are therefore insufficiently stable to form a collectivity. If they are prevented from forming a collectivity, then they cannot form a class.

How should this ruling group be described? Ticktin plumps for 'elite'. Despite its unfortunate sociological connotations, 'elite' has the advantage of suggesting that the ruling group is unstable and incoherent. He defines it as '*those people who have some limited control over the surplus product*' (p.48). He goes on to argue that the attempt by the elite to escape the threat of its abolition motivates its members to aspire to achieving the stability, continuity and coherence of a class. This utopian dream drives them to shift the system towards the market.

The Political Economy of Stalinism.

Ticktin's aim is to provide an 'outline of the political economy of the USSR' (p.6). The fact that the USSR has formally ceased to exist hardly invalidates his work, for the entity for which he provides a political economy, and which is now disintegrating, is Stalinism. This started its life as the subjective doctrine of 'socialism in one country'. The doctrine took on an objective form when attempts were made to extract an absolute surplus from the working class and peasantry by brute force. This culminated in and survived the purges of the 1930s. The system formed out of this failed doctrine is now in terminal crisis. It may cease to exist before any viable social formation emerges out of its ruins.

Ticktin argues that the Stalinist system was never a planned society. Lack of control over the process of production by a democratic collectivity of freely associated producers makes all talk of planning in the Soviet Union meaningless. The atomization of the elite and of the working class makes impossible the communication necessary for planning. There is thus no sense in which the USSR can be described as a workers' state, however degenerate. Nationalisation in the absence of genuine workers control is not a sufficient condition for the existence of a workers' state.

Nor did the Soviet Union have any significant growth. The idea that the USSR was a growing economy is now disproved. Soviet statistics were deliberately falsified. The regime claimed that GNP had expanded ninety times over the last sixty years. Official sources now say that expansion was only six times during this period. When inflation has continued to be higher (*3% per annum*) than expansion of GNP (*2.4% per annum*), then growth in the economy is negative (p. 126). Moreover, growth of GNP is calculated as growth of net product: a quantitative increase of goods over time. But producer goods were so defective that they led to increasing shortages of consumer goods.

Defenders of the old USSR have argued that the regime was able to compete with capitalist countries in the space and arms races. They forget, however, that Soviet workers in the arms sector were both better paid and under strict military discipline. It is a fact that when workers are slaves or semi-slaves, they can be made to create products of some durability in a short space of time. The pyramids of Egypt and the Great Wall of China were made by such workers. The battleships and military aircraft of the First and Second World Wars were produced by workers under military discipline. Yet, besides the notable exception of the Kalashnikov rifle and a few other products, the majority of Soviet arms products are at such a low level of technique that they are unable to compete in the world market. No sensible nation will want to buy Soviet arms after the Gulf War. It is ironic that some left-wingers should use Soviet arms production to support the doctrine that the USSR had features which made it a superior mode of production to capitalism.

The Soviet Union was not a workers' state nor was it 'state capitalist'. It was based on the obliteration of commodity production and there was therefore no value, no money and no capital. By contrast with capitalist societies, where production is dominated by exchange value, Ticktin argues, 'in the case of the USSR ... use value is all important' (p.11).

Ticktin shows that the rouble does not function as money, because it does not exist as a measure of value. His first reference to money is an historical one: money was abolished in the early 1930s 'in order to deal with the massive shortages operating throughout the economy' (p.33). The wage is therefore 'nominal'. The rouble does not enable the worker to acquire 'an apartment, a car, or most consumer durables without being placed on a waiting list, and often he needs to belong to a particular institution with a particular status' (p.36). As the labour is semi-forced, through the social controls of atomization, the wage is in effect a type of pension (p.84). Ticktin makes a distinction between exchange value and value. Forms of exchange exist in the system but 'capital goods cannot be bought and sold, land cannot be bought and sold, and the transport system, construction, and housing for the individual are all virtually allocated or so heavily subsidised as to make all talk of purchase and sale a mockery' (p.133). The argument that money does not exist is developed in chapter nine where he states that 'There can only be value if labour power itself has value, or in other words, if it is bought and sold'. If there is no value, then there can be no measure of value. If there is no measure of value there can be no money. The rouble functions as a 'defective means of circulation' (p.160). Ticktin's account is fully consistent with Marx's in the *Grundrisse*

and *Capital*.

Is it possible for the rouble to be converted into money? Not without a capital market and a labour market. The former needs a stock market and bankruptcies and the latter needs unemployment and the right to hire and fire. This is what the elite are attempting to push through at time of writing (July 1992). Ticktin argues that this policy has already failed. Even if the figures of ten million unemployed predicted by the International Labour Organisation are achieved by the end of the year, he argues that at least forty million unemployed will be necessary to function as a reserve army of labour. Moreover, unemployment will not function to control the workers if the individualised control over the labour process breaks through its atomised form and becomes increasingly socialised and politicised. The control workers have will be strengthened further. It could only be broken if there is a massive aid package from the West which might serve to divide privileged from unprivileged workers. This is not forthcoming and will not be forthcoming during a period of world slump led by the American recession. It was only under intense political pressure from the G7 countries that the IMF reluctantly released one billion of the twenty four billion dollars promised Russia. As Bush has stated, trillions of dollars would be needed to rescue the Russian economy.

Stalinism and Decline.

What is the nature of this unlovely beast? How can we understand this historical black hole? Ticktin suggests that its dynamic is the outgrowth of the attempt to contain revolution in the context of capitalist decline.

Early on in the book, Ticktin states that Stalinism 'constitutes a conservative social formation that has taken on a monstrous and *sui generis* form precisely in order to *prevent* social revolution' (p.9). He says that it represented the victory of capitalism in preventing a move towards socialism. Like other non-viable social formations which copied it (such as China, Pol Pot's Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola and Cuba) systematic repression is specially reserved for the left. The difference between Stalinism and its surrogates, and between Stalinism and other non-viable social formations (such as fascism and the theocracy in Iran) is that Stalinism evolved out of the defeat of world-wide social revolution. Whilst control over the product was seized from them, the workers retained a limited control over the labour process in an individualised and atomised form.

Brute force is a limited method of extracting a surplus. If the society was to progress beyond the extraction of an absolute surplus, other methods had to be tried. These included workers setting norms and rates of work at the factory level. These measures, however, acted to socialise labour despite the atomization. Throughout the book, therefore, Ticktin stresses that the elite has been conscious of the possibility of its abolition. Its moves and its factionalisation have been motivated by attempts to control, persuade and cajole a working class which is becoming increasingly strong and increasingly threatening. The move to the market is a last ditch attempt to destroy the basis of the potential of workers for social revolution. It is an attempt to destroy the control they have over the labour process. Looked at in this light, developments over the last few years reflect the needs of a desperate and fearful social grouping who are clearly acting as allies of the world bourgeoisie.

Capitalist decline, on the other hand, serves to explain the emergence of social formations which are non-viable and have no potential. Ticktin states that his study is concerned with the laws of transition in a world where the laws of capitalism are in decline but where a new mode of production has yet to come into being. He writes that the 'fundamental law of the transition period is that of the growing contradiction between incipient and often distorted forms of planning and the market' (p.185). Planning is defined as 'the conscious regulation of the economy by the associated producers themselves' (p.182-183) and the market as 'the sphere of action of the law of value' (p.183). Planning and the market are in contradiction with one another. Every effort is made by the bourgeoisie to keep the market alive and to stop, slow down, or assist the bureaucratic destruction of embryonic planning forms established by workers who take charge of the means of production.

Thus in the USSR, in the early 1920s, there was an attempt to plan at the same time as holding on to elements of the market. This attempt was still-born once the revolution was defeated worldwide. The logic would have entailed opening the USSR to capital investment from the West. This proved impossible for political and economic reasons. The reparations would have been immense, and the West was in a slump and could not afford to reinvest. Stalinism emerged out of the degeneration of the law of value and of the law of planning in the late twenties. It became a system without value and without planning. It had its own peculiar contradictory laws. These Ticktin calls the law of organisation and the law of self interest.

The Contradiction within Use Value.

Ticktin defines a law as 'a description of the process of movement of the poles of a contradiction' (p.118) and defines contradiction 'in its Hegelian and Marxist sense' as 'a necessary relation between opposites that interpenetrate and change each other' (p.13). The two opposite poles within Stalinism are derived from a contradiction within use value. Ticktin uses various terms to describe the contradiction. In the introductory chapter he states that it lies between a 'real' use value and a 'potential' use value. The example he gives is of a jacket with one arm shorter than another: 'it has a real use value; but the use value is less than that of a jacket with two arms of the same length' (p.12). Later he writes: 'A jacket is a jacket but a jacket with one arm shorter than the other may or may not be said to be a jacket' (p.134). Thus it is questionable whether a use value is a use value in the Stalinist system. It is possible to imagine a society in which there is production intended for need but in which every product is useless. Within Stalinism there is a massive production of goods of such poor quality that they are as good as useless.

Ticktin describes the contradiction in various ways. For example, he sometimes describes it as lying between a real use value and an 'apparent' use value (p.127). At other times he describes it as lying between a real use value and an 'imagined or intended' use value. This difference of usage would appear to be necessary to make the connection between the contradiction within the product and the contradictions within the system. Both are clearly related. The one causes the other and vice versa. Ticktin quite clearly wants to connect the two yet never quite gets round to stating the logical relationship explicitly.

The clue to the relationship between the two levels of contradiction - within the product and within the system - is to be found in the following statement: 'The contradiction within the product is then between the administered form of the product and its use value' (p.134). Consideration of the administered form of the product leads directly to the means of social control: atomization and bureaucratic dependency. The fact is that labour power is expended in such a way that it is useless both to the individual worker and to society as a whole. Ticktin makes this connection clear when he writes that '...behind the administered product form lies a form of control over labour' and 'the imagined performance of labour power is one thing, its actual utility is another' (p.137).

The contradiction within the use value of the product is now derived from its administered form. This in turn reflects the contradiction in labour power. Workers alienate their labour power in a way that satisfies neither their own interests (because workers have no control over the product or over society) nor the interests of the

elite (because the elite has no control over the labour process and only limited control over the surplus product). It follows that the 'fundamental contradiction of the Soviet system lies in the form of control over the workers, through their atomization' (p.117). It is in the interest of the workers to remove this form of social control. This can go two ways. On the one hand, they might accept a form of control based on the market, with mass unemployment functioning as a reserve army of labour in return for wages which function as money and can buy commodities. On the other, they might reject all forms of control and express a desire for a full expression of democratic control over the products they make. If they take the latter road, then the contradictions within use value are abolished and the real and imagined character of needs are expressed in a social unity instead of standing in an antagonistic relationship to one another.

Organisation and Self-Interest.

The law of self-interest that Ticktin sees as operating within the Stalinist system has two opposing poles: the atomised worker and socialised labour. The atomised worker can therefore be understood as the actual use value of labour power within the system. The atomised worker has no interest in producing a non-defective use value. From the point of view of the elite, the labour power of the atomised worker is defective because it does not produce a surplus they can appropriate. It is therefore in the interest of the elite to try to socialise labour towards this end. Socialised labour, on the other hand, expresses the potential or imagined use value of labour power. This can only produce non-contradictory use values if it bursts through its atomised fetters and becomes a democratic collectivity which plans not only for the needs of the particular individual but universally - for the needs of every individual. The more labour is socialised, the more it becomes apparent that the interest of workers is to gain control of the surplus.

The two opposing poles of the law of organisation, on the other hand, are central control and the interests of the elite. To repeat, the interest of the elite is to gain complete control over the labour process. They try to do this through centralised control. The centrally controlled worker, however, is atomised and prevents the elite gaining real control. The more they attempt to control, the more defective use values are produced. Economic and social units express the interests of their unit by acting independently from central control. This makes for an increasingly defective surplus product and a gradual disintegration of the economy. The elite nurtures a utopian desire for a market with no centralised controls but attempts impose it through centralised controls. As a result, the process of disintegration speeds up.

The Zero century. The Fool before an abyss. The century of crises. (20th century).

The above account of Ticktin's theory of the laws of the system is extrapolated from various sections of the book. The relationship between the contradictions in use value and the laws which govern Stalinism are not obvious. The reason for this is that the discussions of atomization, use value and law take place in different chapters and appear, at times, unrelated.

A good example of this is chapter seven, 'The Nature of the Soviet Political Economy'. In the section on the laws and contradictions of the system, Ticktin mentions the phenomenon of waste as a category and refers also to the difference between actual and potential *output*. However, he refrains from any explicit discussion of the relationship between the laws, and the contradictions in use value he examines elsewhere. It may be that he thinks that the discussion on waste in chapter two is a sufficient introduction. If so, it would have done no harm to remind the reader of this in the later chapter. If, moreover, he intended the chapter to stand on its own as an independent essay, it would have been helpful if he had made these relationships more explicit and shown how the contradictory laws of the system can be derived from the contradictions within the product and vice versa.

Disintegration, Decline, and Terminal Crisis.

Ticktin argues, further, that workers in the USSR will move to the left as they realise that the market cannot be introduced without a deeper deterioration in their standard of living - as attempts are made by the elite to stifle demands for democracy being communicated from within the work-place to the whole of society. This argument about the impossibility of introducing the market is based on a broader theory of capitalist decline. Because there is a lot of confusion over the meaning of this category it is necessary to spell it out in more detail.

Some people seem to think that to say that capitalism is in decline is to say that it is facing a terminal crisis. This is not so. Ticktin keeps the two concepts distinct. Stalinism is undoubtedly in terminal crisis and disintegration is the form of this crisis. By disintegration Ticktin means the 'pulling apart of the poles of the system, so that the social groups, factions, and economic categories stand in opposing and noncooperating forms' (p.14). If there is any slogan to be found in his book it is the constant re-iteration that *there is no third way*. Either the market or socialism will burst through the disintegrating system. A terminal crisis for capitalism would be analogous to the events leading up to the 1917 revolution. There is no indication that such a terminal crisis is likely in the immediate future in the absence of a coherent left.

Decline is a completely different idea. Ticktin's view is that the 'decline of capitalism involves the decline of its fundamental law and social relation; it is therefore the decline of the law of value itself' (p.173). The discussion then becomes one about value, abstract labour, money, capital and the market. Ticktin draws attention to the rise of a needs based sector, the growth of monopolies and corresponding lack of competition as evidence of this decline. He also mentions the higher capital-labour ratio requiring long term investment before a return of profits, the management of capitalist economies by their governments, the short term investment policy of finance capital and the rise of bureaucracy.

The consequences for disintegrating Stalinism are threefold. Firstly there can be no proper introduction of a functioning reserve army of labour if it does not function properly under capitalism. Secondly, there can be no internal competition of firms if utilities such as transport, housing, health and education remain in the state or a monopoly sector, and if, even in manufacturing, industries are handed over to cartels. He writes that the system needs 'not just competition but a raging competition to re-establish capitalism with all its controls over the workers' (p.175). Thirdly, finance capital will not be interested in investing in the system 'because it demands quick returns and so does not permit investment that provides profits only over a long time span' (p.167).

The policy of the elite is to introduce the market 'with an iron fist' (p.164). Ticktin argues that this policy has failed. Yet at one point he states: 'Ultimately the market will burst through in spite of the forces holding it back, but it will be in an explosive form' (p.170).

This statement appears to contradict the general thrust of his argument. It implies that labour power will take the form of value; that money, capital and abstract labour will come into being and that the policy of the elite will be successful. It is the only statement of its kind. Ticktin was writing this book in 1990 when it was not clear that the liberal section of the elite would take power. It is possible to interpret this statement in hindsight as a prediction of what has in fact happened. In this sense, 'the market' has already burst through explosively. In which case his use of the word 'market' is ambiguous, referring both to a mature entity and to its parasitic and decadent offspring: the black market and the mafia.

Nationalism in the USSR.

This book does not give much attention to the rise of nationalism or to the position of women and of the peasantry in the USSR. The reason for this is to do with publication pressures and Ticktin apologises in the preface for these omissions. It is possible, however, to construct his views on nationalism from various references he makes in the book. Events have, of course, gone beyond the scope of the book: war with the Ukraine is being discussed in some circles in Russia and elsewhere, and the ghost of Yugoslavia haunts the East as a warning of the failure of 'market socialism' and a dire premonition of the future. Nevertheless enough information can be gleaned from the book to serve as the foundation of a theory of nationalism that has contemporary relevance.

Nationalism is understood to be 'interclass or intergroup' (p.23). It is the doctrine most likely to appeal to the intelligentsia as the system disintegrates and their position becomes increasingly unstable. The intelligentsia include 'all those who both alienate their labour power and assist in the process of extraction of the surplus product, usually by being in charge of others' (p.75). This intermediate group roughly corresponds to all those with a higher education. It is the most insecure group in the system. The intelligentsia tend to think of workers as 'cattle' and are pre-disposed to anti-semitism and nationalism. As the system disintegrates the standard of living of members of the intelligentsia will decline. They will fluctuate between a dependence on the working class and on the elite. Some no doubt will form part of an emergent left as they start to identify themselves with the working class. Others who ally with the elite will intensify their hatred for workers and Jews and will try to whip up general discontent into patriotic fervour.

War is an option for this layer. But war between Russia and the Ukraine will not be favoured by that section of the elite desperate for stability. Nor will it be favoured by the bourgeoisie in the West. It would be an admission of the fact that the attempt to introduce money and the market had failed. Moreover, it might speed up the process of the working class moving to the left. War is a high risk strategy. That does not mean, of course, that it will not happen. Compounding the despair, misery and fear that already exists with a good dose of mass slaughter might serve the interests of a small determined faction for a while.

Conclusion.

To reiterate, this is an important book for any honest enquirer into the nature of Stalinism. It is difficult to imagine that it will be superseded until it has been translated into Russian and Ukrainian and forms part of the internal critical debate that is already under way on the prospect of the reforms. It is the development of critical thought within the intelligentsia and the working class that the elite most fears and it is a process they are powerless to prevent. As Ticktin states:

'Indeed, whatever the reforms may be, there can be no hope whatsoever of their success if there cannot be a critical discussion of their progress. This problem, however, is insuperable because any real discussion must come up against the nature of socialism itself - with the majority controlling, work become humanity's prime want, interchangeability of occupations within the division of labour, and hence the abolition of the elite itself' (p.80).

Books Received

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Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, & Kosmas Psychopedis (eds) - **Open Marxism; Vol I; Dialectics and History**, Pluto Press, 1992, ISBN 0-1453-0590-3

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Society as a stadium

Vincenzo Ruggiero

During the 1990 World Cup, I was in Turin, Italy, and was expecting English friends to visit. We had planned to watch the Brazil side, which was based in Turin for the first tournament. I was able to host one of them in my flat, but had to provide accommodation for others. Well, I had to ring several hotels before getting English customers accepted. The argument which reassured the frightened hotel manager was that those English were black.

The feelings created by football are not only powerful among the supporters, they affect side observers as well. Sometimes these feelings seem to follow an idiosyncratic logic, whereas other times they appear to mirror commonly shared attitudes found in society as a whole. In the above episode, the Italians, who like other Europeans, are generally not particularly benevolent towards black immigrants, somehow suspended their day-to-day sentiments. The blacks, be they supporters of Cameroon, Brazil, Costa Rica, or even England, were preferable to pale, blonde, beer-sodden youths. My friends took an extra precaution, as they wore green and gold T-shirts, thus posing as and mixing with the beloved Brazilians who flocked the streets.

Research on football hooliganism has been conducted in a number of European countries, but unresolved controversies remain with regard to the sources and methodology utilised. Each researcher seems to claim a higher degree of credibility for their material with respect to others, in a contest where the willingness to contact, talk to and observe the supporters at first hand is deemed to be crucial. 'Insufficiently detailed empirical data' is the criticism that one levels at the other. Those who usually boast the unparalleled veracity of their material are also those who implicitly seem to affirm: we are one of the lads!

I suggest that it is important to analyse the impact of football on society in general, and vice versa the impact of 'society in general' on football. Continuities may emerge between the two which are surprisingly meaningful.

I believe two main factors emerge when observing the relationship between football supporters and the general public. The first can be called an 'imitative factor'. This also arises when analysing hooliganism. Think of the behaviour of the supporters of England in Germany, where the finals of the European Championship took place a few years ago. They were symbolically mimicking, in the arena available to them, behaviours and attitudes which were prevalent in the official society. Incitements to show national pride and the notorious urge to 'rejoice' were taken at face value by the supporters. They saw their acts of 'conquering a territory' as being consistent with the general climate which loomed in their country during the Falklands war.

Examples of the imitative factor are easily found in places where traditionally rival communities cohabit. The Catholic-Protestant frictions in Liverpool and Glasgow are but the two best known instances of how social conflicts and are mirrored by the two rival teams in each town. Looking at Italy, other striking examples can be provided. Here, the North-South divide has recently made a disquieting return. The obsessive hatred with which the Naples team is received in the North resonates with the subtle violence displayed in the official discourse of newly formed separatist leagues in the same area of the country. When Naples plays in affluent Milan, they are taunted with the same slogans and the grotesque hymns composed by the Lombard League for its political propaganda. Bergamo and Verona, probably the wealthiest towns in Italy, are the most inhospitable to the Southerners. When the teams of Bari, Naples, and even Rome play there, banners are displayed that echo common accusations against the South. Laziness and the Mafia are the favoured topics both in and outside the stadium. Unemployment becomes an insult hurled at the rival supporters, who 'deserve it' and 'choose it'. In Verona, the local supporters salute their unwealthy counterparts of the South by waving swastikas and 100,000 lira notes.

This feud caused interesting repercussions during the World Cup. The Argentinean team was abusively received in all the Italian cities of the North because Maradona, a Naples player, was in it. In Naples, in turn, the local spectators applauded Argentina, and in overt dissent from the predominant stereotype they welcomed the English supporters with a gigantic warm banner.

The second factor which informs the relationship between football and the general public I call a 'sewer factor'. This definition need not sound offensive to the supporters. It only alludes to the fact that the football world recaptures values and ideas that have been apparently discarded by the official society. Think of Italy again, where a high geographical mobility has long ago suspended town parochialism, and sexual roles and discrimination had been subjected to violent criticism during the innovative 1960s and 1970s. Well, the football world collects parochialism and machismo before they are definitively dumped. These 'cultural items' are kept alive because, in a sense, they have not completely exhausted their social function. They are revived by football and offered back to society, where the provision of new, alternative values is faced with difficulties. In the relative vacuum, those old values still prove useful as sources of identity.

The 'imitative factor' in football gives society a reflection of itself. In this respect it would be intriguing to explain why staunch German and Dutch players are bought by Italian teams based in the North, and imaginative Argentinians and Brazilians by those based in the South. Do fans identify themselves with the respective characteristics of their stars? In 'Calvinist' Turin, for example, the supporters of Juventas appreciate the defensive and undaring style of their team. There, the final score is more important than the spectacle. The city, its team and supporters seem to have a lot in common. By the same token, when we witness violent confrontations between rival supporters, we should be wondering: My God, haven't we got something in common with them?

The 'sewer factor' allows the return of such values which, in the face of social development, we regard as redundant. However, like recycled refuse, they still prove useful. After all, isn't garbage used for the production of new alternative energy?

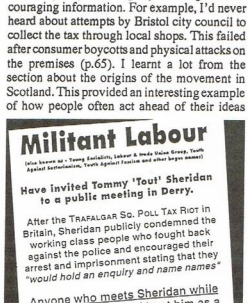
Poll Tax Rebellion

George Gordon

Poll Tax Rebellion
by Danny Burns, (AK Press/Attack International 1992)

It has to be said that this is a very useful book. As well as reviving many happy memories for class struggle militants it provides a valuable record of the events which led to the defeat of the poll tax. I don't know of any other publication which does this with the same level of honesty and accuracy. It would be particularly useful for giving to comrades from other countries who want to know about this high point in the class struggle in Britain. In particular, Chapter.3 provides an excellent description of the self-organisation of anti-poll tax groups where people lived - this was the most important aspect of the struggle. Its politics are generally of the wishy-washy libertarian variety but I'm not going to condemn it just because it doesn't call for the dictatorship of the proletariat at the end of every paragraph. Its overall tone is very "reasonable" while at the same time making quite a few hard-hitting points about the need for the working class to organise outside the labour movement. It also calls for the extension of the non-payment tactic - something which is particularly relevant given the recent announcement of the imposition of VAT on fuel bills.

I was seriously involved in the anti-poll tax movement in London from late 1989 so much of the stuff about the development of the struggle in England was already familiar but even for me there is plenty of thought-provoking and encouraging information. For example, I'd never heard about attempts by Bristol city council to collect the tax through local shops. This failed after consumer boycotts and physical attacks on the premises (p.65). I learnt a lot from the section about the origins of the movement in Scotland. This provided an interesting example of how people often act ahead of their ideas given that many of the first "Anti-Poll Tax Unions" (APTUs) were set up by people with pronounced Scottish nationalist sympathies. This didn't stop resistance to the poll tax in Scotland (particularly to the Sheriff's Officers, i.e. bailiffs) being an enormous inspiration to anti-poll tax activists in England and Wales. If anything the anti-poll tax struggle will have weakened Sottish and English nationalism (let's hope so!).



Poster produced by Irish anarchists, which shows the bitterness created by Militant tactics

Non-sectarian

Danny Burns (DB) understands the difference between civil disobedience (the middle classes demanding to be arrested) and resistance (proles being determined to break the law and get away with it). He's also good at describing how the class struggle has lots of different elements to it: violent/non-violent; legal/illegal; "individual"/ "mass", and that these are not mutually exclusive. This last point is argued explicitly in the concluding chapter ("After the Poll Tax") although, it has to be said, it isn't argued too well. He says "the actions of those who were not prepared to break the law were not undermined by the actions of the few who chose to throw fire bombs". This is true but it conveniently ignores the fact that the actions of people lobbing fire bombs into poll tax and bailiffs' offices certainly were undermined by certain people in local APTUs who went to the press "dissociating" the movement from these actions. He continues: "those who chose to leave Trafalgar Square peacefully, were not tarnished by those who chose to fight back against the police attack". Again, this is true but it ignores the fact that it would have been better for those of us fighting the police if more people had stayed around rather than heading for their coaches as the stewards directed.

This is indicative of a central weakness of the book - the way it bends over backwards to be non-sectarian, taking the view that anyone involved in the anti-poll tax movement was basically OK. This obscures real conflicts that went on within the organised movement - between pro and anti-Labour Party forces, between those who really wanted the struggle to succeed and those who wanted to subordinate it to their political ambitions (notably *Militant*), between those who wanted to take the struggle into workplaces and the union hacks who didn't, between those who thought the Trafalgar Square uprising was "fucking brilliant" and those who thought it was an embarrassment. This weakness is expressed most clearly where he describes the comments made by Tommy Sheridan (Chair of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation) immediately after Trafalgar Square as "defensive" (p.104). In this statement Sheridan denounced the rioters. The next day he and Steve Nally were to say that they intended to "name names" and "root out the trouble-makers". This was to earn them the well-deserved epithets of "Nally the Nark" and "Shop'Em Sheridan". There was nothing defensive about the remarks made by these gentlemen. They indicated a real desire go on the offensive... against the proletariat! In a similar vein he describes the All-Britain Federation's "People's March Against the Poll Tax" as an "inadequate response" (p.116). This consisted of a few dozen *Militant* supporters (OK, one or two weren't) in expensive track suits marching to London from various parts of the country. It was *Militant*'s response to widespread demands for more demos in London after Trafalgar Square. To call it "inadequate" is to mask the fact that it was an attempt to demobilise the movement.

In general DB puts forward the need to organise *outside* the labour movement but not *against* it. In practice this doesn't matter too much in community based struggles - in many cases it *is* possible to simply avoid leftist manipulators (e.g. by setting up alternative local groups to the *Militant*-dominated ones). Even here, though, important *political* choices must be made. For example, do we lobby a council meeting (as, of course, Labour Party types want to do) or do we disrupt it? In workplace struggles this is a much more important issue. Workplaces where there is a tradition of militancy will tend to have strong unions which cannot be ignored, they must be fought. This did happen to some extent, albeit on a completely informal level. I remember hearing about a union rep. telling a group of nurses that they couldn't hold an anti-poll tax meeting in their hostel without permission from the union (COHSE). He was told to get stuffed and that the meeting was "nothing to do with the union anyway". DB certainly understands that the unions hindered the anti-poll tax struggle - p.164 contains an important piece of information about how the UCW (Union of Communication Workers) tried to suppress the group "Postal Workers Against the Poll Tax". For DB, though, this was just an "organisational problem".

Crime

"If you tell people to break the law by not paying the tax, you're not far off telling them to break other laws as well".
Norman Tebbit, Tory Party Chairman, 2.6.90

I feel I must object strongly to DB's insulting characterisation of poll tax non-payers as honest law abiding citizens (p.50). It's probably true that most regarded themselves as such. Whether they actually were is another matter. According to the Home Office, a third of men in Britain will have been convicted of a "serious" criminal offence by the age of thirty. On p.183 DB says "millions of people broke the law for the first time" - I very much doubt it! As we all know, millions of proletarians supplement their incomes by illegal or semi-illegal means, whether it's non-payment of various bills, TV license evasion, theft from work, fiddling the dole or whatever. The prevailing attitude to these activities, however, is one of individualism - if I do it and get caught it's my problem; if you get caught it's your problem; "if you can't do the time, don't do the crime". Many people

will do these things without even telling their closest friends or relatives that they're doing it. One of the positive things about the anti-poll tax movement is that non-payment was a typical form of working class law-breaking which became socially acceptable and was seen as completely legitimate. People were prepared to say "I'm proud to be a poll tax non-payer" whereas they wouldn't (yet) say "I'm proud to be a shoplifter". The bosses' austerity measures will, without any doubt, drive millions of people (deeper) into crime. The anti-poll tax movement could be the beginning of the politicisation of the criminals. It's become normal for bourgeois commentators to talk about a "culture of non-payment" which will undermine any form of local taxation. In particular, I think that bailiffs threatening to come to your house *is* a nerve-wracking experience for most people. But when it's happened once and you've successfully kept them out, or they've never turned up as frequently happens, it's a very confidence building experience. This is particularly true in Scotland where there was mass resistance to bailiffs in the form of large crowds gathering outside threatened houses. We'll see what happens when they start harassing Council Tax non-payers.

As revolutionaries we know that it's pointless to try to use the law to serve the interests of the proletariat. We also know that a good lefty lawyer can often keep you out of prison. The price you pay for not going to prison is that of legitimising the legal system - the right of the police to make arrests and the right of the courts to jail "guilty" people. Given the present level of class struggle it's hard to imagine what it would mean for there to be a large-scale refusal to play the game of capitalist legality. The anti-poll tax movement did, however, give us an inkling of what can happen. One strategy used by almost all anti-poll tax groups was to encourage people to turn up for their Liability Order hearings in order to "clog up the courts". This strategy worked for a few months. Eventually, though, the councils got most of the liability orders they needed. But it didn't do them any good! The courts generated a mountain of liability orders (millions of the things!) but these pieces of paper had no practical meaning. There were too few bailiffs and they didn't know how to operate in conditions of widespread hostility. With the Committal (potential imprisonment) hearings it was obvious to almost everyone involved in the anti-poll tax movement that the best advice was not to go to court. Most of those summonsed to these hearings didn't go. Warrants were issued for their arrest and ... nothing much happened in most cases. At the present time there must be tens of thousands of these "fugitives from justice" at large in Britain. "Legal advice" was an important part of the struggle but as things progressed the nature of the advice given was less and less legalistic and more just along the lines of "millions of us are getting away with it, why shouldn't you?". With the benefit of hindsight the whole "have your day in court" strategy can be seen to have been a waste of time. In the end the argy bargy over whether the state would allow "McKenzie Friends" (informal legal advisers with no right to address the court) proved irrelevant to the class struggle. Magistrate's courts *were* sometimes disrupted, rather than being used as a tribune for denouncing the poll tax, but this was almost never a declared aim of anti-poll tax groups. In the end the instinctive policy of complete non-participation in the bourgeois courts proved to be the right one.

Trafalgar Square

As with the rest of the book, DB's account of the Trafalgar Square uprising and the police repression which followed it provides much valuable information. The main problem with it is that it is very much oriented towards the events in Trafalgar Square itself - there is almost nothing about the widespread trashing of bourgeois property throughout the West End which followed. Partly this is just because Trafalgar Square is where Danny was most of the time, as is obvious from his account. Partly, I suspect, it's ideological as well. By concentrating on the Square itself he can emphasise the defensive aspects of the struggle. It's true that the police attacked us first and that most of our activity in the Square was defensive... and very inspiring. It's certainly the only demo I've ever been on where I've seen police snatch squads try to break up a crowd and totally fail to do so! But even here we did many things that were more *offensive*, like collectively deciding to attack the South African embassy and then doing so (not very successfully, it's very well fortified!), like wrecking an army recruiting office and looting an off-license (this did have the unfortunate effect of many demonstrators being the worse for drink when a clear head was required to fight the police). None of these events are mentioned in the book. Nor does he say that the main reason so many rioters were arrested after the demo is that so few of them *covered their faces* during the uprising. This is a vital lesson which I am sure DB must be aware of. It's downright irresponsible not to mention it.

DB repeats the well-worn liberal cliché that the police deliberately set out to provoke a riot (p.100). Perhaps they did but they were obviously completely unprepared for the scale of our response. It's more likely that they were expecting a peaceful middle class stroll like the CND demos of the early 1980s but then realised (too late) that without a massive police presence and effective stewarding it's impossible to assemble 200,000 proletarians in central London without a major confrontation with bourgeois property relations ensuing. For a more balanced view of events I would direct the reader to the pamphlet *Poll Tax Riot - 10 Hours That Shook Trafalgar Square* (Acab Press, BM 8884, London WC1N 3XX) which contains several first-hand accounts.

On p.116 DB says:

"Often attack is the only effective form of defence and, as a movement, we should not be ashamed or defensive about these actions, we should be proud of those who did fight back."

Fair enough, Danny, but shouldn't we be doing more than just feeling proud of these people...? Like organising effective measures in advance for next time the pigs attack us? The anti-poll tax movement certainly organised legal support for arrested demonstrators, mostly through the TSDC (Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign, described in the book), but there was almost no attempt made to organise physical defence of demos. Any suggestions at "official" Federation-run meetings that this should be done were very quickly sat on by *Militant* hacks (in particular one Mr. Wally Kennedy) who quite openly stated that march stewards should "protect" demonstrators by handing trouble-makers over to the police! More subtly, the TSDC tended to function as a means of turning class struggle militants into "legal liaison volunteers" rather than rioters.

One final point about Trafalgar Square. Am I the only revolutionary to be irritated by the description of the targets of our anger on that fateful day in March 1990 as "symbols of wealth"? There's nothing symbolic about a car showroom filled with top of the range BMWs. This *is* capitalist wealth (even if it's not "means of production").

Conclusion

In DB's conclusion on the last page of the book he says that the community "will remain, for some time, the strongest base for political action". I can certainly imagine "community" based struggles (mass non-payment and resistance to evictions, for example) being very important in Britain in the next few years. Part of the reason for the success of the anti-poll tax movement was the complete absence of any community equivalent of a trade union bureaucracy, but this doesn't mean that leftists (such as *Militant*) won't try to create one. DB's book is useful in pointing out many positive aspects of the anti-poll tax movement and how it achieved its immediate aim but to really "learn the lessons" we need to look more closely at the forces that stopped it from going further.

I'll leave you with one final thought. Just what did we win in fighting the poll tax? I would suggest that the main concession made by the state was not the formal abolition of the tax itself but the fact that the state effectively gave up trying to collect it without, of course, ever admitting to such a thing. There was (and is) a *de facto* amnesty for non-payers in most of the country. This may have cost the state about a billion pounds or so in lost arrears. This is not *so* serious when you consider that the overall cost to the bourgeoisie's economic plans was more like £10 billion, mostly in the costs of administrative reorganisation involved in abolishing the poll tax and introducing yet another completely new one. The advantage of this unannounced concession is that the mass of non-payers carried on not paying but didn't become organised or politicised, the mass of people who were paying carried on paying and the activists didn't have much to be active about. Once it was realised that working class homes were not going to be besieged by SAS-style squads of bailiffs and the police were not going to kick pensioners doors in and drag them off to prison the local groups gradually disintegrated. What this shows is that although the poll tax represented a major break with the post war social democratic consensus (which is part of the reason it aroused such widespread opposition, even from sections of the middle classes who benefited from it financially), *in retreat* the state was still able to make use of a social democratic type of strategic concession designed to preempt any proletarian class formation.

Critical Unrealism

David Gorman

A Meeting of Minds: Socialists discuss philosophy - towards a new symposium

Roy Bhaskar (ed), foreword by Roy Edgely. Published by the **Socialist Society** for The Socialist Movement, ISBN 1 872481 10 8, £3.95.

Edited and mainly written by Roy Bhaskar, this short book seeks to explore the relation between Bhaskar's critical realist philosophy and the political project of socialist emancipation. Its real importance, however, is that it constitutes a statement of the philosophico-political project of the grouping that calls itself The Socialist Movement. For this reason alone it deserves serious attention.

In the first two chapters, which outline Bhaskar's critical realism and its political applications, a form of critical realism is advocated, one which, it is argued, underpins the politics of socialist emancipation. Critical realism, it is claimed, penetrates below superficial surface appearances to reveal enduring structures and generative mechanisms. Critical realism stresses what it sees as the 'transformative nature' of social activity and a 'relational' conception of society. Social systems are, from this point of view, intrinsically open and so essentially subject to the possibility of transformation. It is this that makes socialism possible. Socialism itself is seen as the result, not of the amelioration of states of affairs within a given social structure, but of the actual transformation of those structures. This in turn underlies the opposition of Bhaskar and his comrades to post-1945 social-democratic government and to stalinism.

The critical realist view appears to start off on the right track, stressing the historical nature of all social institutions, the market included. It is argued, for example that the market is not natural or given but socially and historically specific. From this, however, the conclusion is drawn that market relations are compatible with human emancipation: 'Emancipatory socialist action will involve transforming the market - more precisely, abolishing some markets, socialising and democratising others' (p.30). Rejecting the 'market-socialism' of Alec Nove and the 'market-less socialism' of Ernest Mandel, Bhaskar *et al* opt for the 'socialised market' proposed by Diane Elson (in *New Left Review* 172, Nov-Dec 1988).

A political project that is essentially uncritical of the value form must be rejected but it is necessary to be clear on what grounds. What is needed is not a merely abstract dismissal of the conclusions reached - the 'socialised market' - but criticism of the premises from which these conclusions arise. This is no easy task for these premises include ones that many communists would share. Politically, the acceptance of the 'socialised market' flows from rejection of stalinist and social democratic administration. But it has theoretical roots as well. The argument for the 'socialised market' starts off from the legitimate concern to reject all 'reified' conceptions of the market. It is argued that the market is neither natural nor given and nor is it unchanging. The market has taken on different forms at different times in history and in different societies. And as an empirical observation, it must be conceded that this is true. Bhaskar's political conclusions cannot be refuted by appeal to the unchanging nature of the market. More than that, however, Bhaskar's concern to reject all 'reified' conceptions of the market has a resonance with the concerns of those writers in *Radical Chains* who have opposed the 'naturalisation' of the laws of capital (see Dixon and Gorman in *Radical Chains* 3).

There is here a resonance but also a dissonance. The two projects meet and also part. Bhaskar and the other philosophers of The Socialist Movement are critical of the reification of 'the market' and conclude that the market can be 'socialised'. For those writers who have taken up the question in *Radical Chains*, by contrast, the concern has been to understand how the laws of capital have been transformed by and have in turn transformed conscious activity. From this follows the need to abolish the value form and all surrogates for it. The Socialist Movement philosophers derive their categories from sociology and economics and not from the critique of political economy. Where the *Radical Chains* project is concerned with the understanding of a system or totality of interlocking social relations, Bhaskar and company see instead a mere aggregation or collection of relations that are subject to an open set of permutations. This can be seen in Bhaskar's description of the socialised market: 'It involves public ownership and worker-managed enterprises with a basic wage guaranteed irrespective of work, in exchange for domestic or caring labour, with labour, producer goods and consumer goods markets, subject to over-all planning norms and with market-making undertaken by publicly funded bodies and backed up by buyer-seller information networks' (p.28-29).

The Socialist Movement wants to abolish the market in capital but retain the market in labour. At the same time, however, it wants to guarantee a basic wage 'irrespective of work'. How is the circle to be squared? A socialist project that wants to retain the labour market does not anticipate the emancipation of human activities, needs, and desires from external discipline. It has, in fact, no conception of real human emancipation. A 'basic wage guaranteed irrespective of work' is, however, incompatible with money mediation, the discipline of the law of value. If needs can be met without recourse to wage labour people will not exchange their labour power for a wage. To this extent the law of value is partially suspended. Yet in so far as society is still subject to the pressure of the law of value, to the extent that there is still a market in labour power, people must be forced to work. Administrative structures will proliferate as the socialist regime strives to make the recognition of needs compatible with the discipline of the law of value. If the regime is not to succumb to crisis, the extent of needs recognition will have to be reduced. Necessarily the socialist regime comes into opposition to the class of producers.

If this sounds familiar it is only because it replicates, at a higher level of decay, the inadequacies of the social democratic project that it rejects. It replicates the inadequacies of that project and also takes over its language and categories. The references to 'over-all planning norms' and 'publicly funded bodies', 'public ownership and worker-managed enterprises' indicate the degree of dependence on previous outmoded projects. Planning is equated with the activities of the organisers of labour and not with the activity and subjectivity of the producers themselves. The project does not point to the future but appears to try to salvage the wreckage of the past. The philosophers of The Socialist Movement are unable to identify class subjects with a potential for self-emancipation and thus cannot conceive of the transcendence of value relations. Thus they are condemned to become, if anything, the guardians of absolute poverty in decline. Market relations and the laws of capital are subject to change and transformation but the possibilities are not endless. At some point the questions of power and supersession must and will be posed.

If the first two chapters are devoted to outlin-

ing the basic ideas of critical realism and their application, chapters three to five examine the relative merits also of critical theory and postmodernism. This takes the form of a debate between Roy Bhaskar, William Outhwaite and Kate Soper. Bhaskar's contribution consists of a critique of Habermas (the representative of critical theory) and of Rorty (who represents postmodernism). The form of this critique is very much apparent but its content is elusive. For Bhaskar, Habermas 'remains ensnared in the antinomy of transcendental pragmatism'. He 'tacitly inherits a positivist ontology and an instrumentalist-manipulative conception' of the natural sciences and the sphere of labour (p.34). Habermas's system 'readily takes on a dualistic overly anti-naturalist hue' while Rorty 'remains wedded to a positivist account of the natural sciences'. Rorty, moreover, 'erects a Nietzschean superstructure (as a superidealist "epistemology") in the guise of an undifferentiated "linguistified" monism on a Humean-Hempelean ontological base' (p.35).

This is a lot of '-ists' and '-eans' to be crammed into less than two pages of text. It is not, however, the result of trying to distil the essence of his longer works into a small space. Readers of Bhaskar's weightier tomes, - *The Possibility of Naturalism*, for example - will have noticed the same tendency at work there. The suspicion is that the adjectives - 'positivist', 'Nietzschean', 'superidealist', and so on - are doing all the work. They are surrogates for real argument. What exactly is a 'dualist overly anti-naturalist hue'? How would you recognise a 'superidealist epistemology' if you encountered one? Bhaskar would seem to presuppose more knowledge on the part of the reader than could be deemed to be reasonable. Perhaps he could have provided a glossary, or better, an index of -isms.

Yet there is something less than humorous about these procedures. To say that someone's philosophy 'readily takes on a dualistic overly naturalistic hue' is not to argue a point but to refuse debate. It is a form of intellectual policing, the outcome of which cannot be a broadening of views or an exchange of ideas. In it, however, there is more than an echo of Stalin's denunciation of the economist I.I. Rubin for 'Menshevising idealism'.

After all this, Outhwaite's response appears initially as a breath of fresh air, his chapter opening promisingly with an unpretentious attempt to unravel the relation between critical realism and critical theory. This soon degenerates into an attempt to show that Bhaskar and Habermas have more in common than is normally thought. The purpose and relevance of the exercise is unclear.

The most interesting of the last three chapters is Soper's discussion of postmodernism, critical realism and critical theory. Soper identifies postmodernism as a response to the experience of fascism, stalinism and what she describes as the 'nuclear age and looming ecological crisis' (p.43). These, she argues, have generated doubt, scepticism and a questioning of Enlightenment rationality and conceptions of progress. These real concerns are expressed in the postmodern consciousness. Yet, with postmodernism, conceived not just as a form of social consciousness but as a philosophical project, these legitimate concerns are subjected to a kind of 'theoretical overdrive'. In the end it invites us to 'disown the very aspiration to truth as something unobtainable in principle' (p.45). Thus it degenerates into a total relativism and a form of libertarianism or anarchism 'of distinctly New Right-ist overtones' (p.46).

Soper's distinction between postmodernism as a spirit of the age and as an intellectual project is useful. However, while recognising the socio-historical roots of the postmodern consciousness, Soper deals with postmodernism only as an intellectual concern. Thus she appears to think that it can be overcome by showing it to be logically incoherent. But a critique which addresses only the relativism and libertarianism of postmodernism is not sufficient. We need to understand the social processes necessary to the breakdown of the current condition of disorientation and to the emergence of a new rationality. If this cannot be done, then criticism is limited to an essentially conservative reaction, an attempt to restore what is in fact irretrievable.

Soper's predicament, however, highlights a problem that is general. The supposed task of the project seems to be that of rectifying 'the error of reification' (p.9) or 'illusory or false consciousness' (p.11). It is as if socialist thought develops autonomously of human social relations, that intellectual work is not subject to the same processes that supposedly mystify everyone else. This goes together with a lack of recognition of social subjectivity. Bhaskar says that his contribution is 'part of the longer term project of recapturing the intellectual high ground' (p.7). It is difficult to avoid concluding that he thinks that intellectual hegemony is enough. There is no recognition that individuals must transform society and so transform themselves.

The book is presented as a contribution to the process of socialist 're-thinking' and in particular as a response to the collapse of stalinism in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the weakening of the national liberation movements in the Third World (p.5). Yet the general impression is that the philosophers of The Socialist Movement remain trapped within the old perspectives. There is no real break here with the old practices of administrative intervention and the concern to socialise the market merely echoes the current preoccupations of the Soviet elite.

Trotsky Reappraised

David Gorman

The Trotsky Reappraisal
Terry Brotherstone and Paul Dukes (eds), Edinburgh University Press, 1992.

Leon Trotsky is undoubtedly one of the most controversial figures of twentieth century marxism. Opinion about him is divided firmly between pro- and anti-, and few seem capable of adopting a neutral attitude towards the man. There cannot be another marxist, other than Stalin, who has inspired so much devotion on the one side, and so much loathing on the other. Clearly, sympathy with Stalin tends to obstruct a positive attitude towards Trotsky and the fact of Trotsky's demonisation by stalinism has only added to, deepened and sustained his clear attraction for many opponents of stalinism. This in itself has induced a polarisation which has obstructed attempts at objective evaluation of his work. It is difficult to discuss the theory of permanent revolution, the law of combined and uneven development, and the analysis of fascism, independently of Stalin's attitude towards them. The mere fact that stalinism treated them as a dangerous heresy, has actually added to their appeal.

But serious discussion of Trotsky has been impeded also by a deep polarisation within the anti-stalinist left itself. Here the split between those pro- and those anti-Trotsky has been reproduced. For some, trotskyism has been the only real opposition to stalinism, while for others there is no real difference. On the one hand there are those who will tolerate no criticism of his views and on the other those who seem to regard him as anathema. If some anti-stalinists have been influenced at least in part by the rabid anti-trotskyism of the stalinists, other anti-stalinists have focused rather on Kronstadt, on the militarisation of labour, and on the destruction of the Makhnovist movement. It would seem that for some anti-stalinists, stalinism is bad but trotskyism is worse. Attacks on Trotsky by many anti-stalinists all too often resemble those by the stalinists themselves.

This circumstance does not encourage change. Rather it reinforces the view that trotskyism is the only principled opposition to stalinism. Significantly, the only serious critical work on Trotsky to have emerged in the last fifty years has come from within the trotskyist movement itself. In many cases, such as those of Victor Serge, Raya Dunayevskaya, and CLR James, criticism has been a prelude to a political and theoretical break with trotskyism but this does not alter the fact that serious criticism has come only from within. In fact the tendency towards iconisation within trotskyism was always uneven in its development and is now clearly breaking down. The real obstacle to dialogue today is the absurd sectarianism of the professional anti-trotskyist.

Trotskyism has persisted at least in part because stalinism has existed; it has defined itself very much by opposition to stalinism. The ongoing disintegration of stalinism will lead therefore, either to the regeneration of trotskyism, or to its collapse. There are clear signs of both: a new theoretical openness on the one hand, and blind retrenchment on the other. It is within this context that it is possible to evaluate the contents of *The Trotsky Reappraisal*, a collection of papers presented at one of three conferences held in 1990 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Trotsky. The conference in question, 'Trotsky after fifty years', was held at Aberdeen University in July and August 1990. Anyone who wants to know more about the conference itself should read the review by Baruch Hirson in an earlier issue of this journal ('Fifty Years of the Assassin', *Radical Chains* 2).

Not all of the papers presented at the conference have been included in the book. Nevertheless, the published material addresses a wide range of questions and issues, covering philosophy, history, politics and political economy, and it does so from a variety of perspectives. As one of the editors, Terry Brotherstone, notes in his concluding essay: 'No reader could agree with everything in it. The collection is deliberately eclectic' (p.235). Also included is work by several scholars from Eastern Europe and the former USSR, who have been able to study Trotsky since the opening of the archives in the course of *perestroika*.

It is impossible to comment on everything. Instead I want to focus on a series of papers which discuss Trotsky's relation to bolshevism and to Lenin in particular, and the paper by Hillel Ticktin on Trotsky's political economy. Challenging the common view that Trotsky and Lenin agreed on virtually all things at least in the period after the revolution, these papers argue for a clear distinction between Trotsky and mainstream bolshevism. The aim is clearly to try to rescue Trotsky from association with bolshevism. I want to examine their arguments and briefly indicate some problems.

In 'Trotsky and the struggle for "Lenin's Heritage"', Michael Reiman traces Trotsky's changing relation to Lenin in the period after the revolution: from the trade union debate of 1920, through the 'Lenin-Zinoviev coup' at the 10th Party Congress, to the Lenin-Trotsky bloc of 1922. Reiman outlines and explores their arguments and disagreements but never in a sectarian manner. As he himself notes, criticism of Trotsky is necessary but it 'must not proceed from the assumption that in conflicts between Lenin and Trotsky all right and truth lay on one side and all evil and falsehood on the other' (p.50). In exploring these conflicts, and Trotsky's hesitations in his struggle against Stalin, Reiman emphasises Trotsky's late membership of the Bolshevik Party - he joined only after July 1917 - and his consequent marginalisation within it.

Related to this is the question of Trotsky's political individuality and independence. Unlike most of the Bolshevik leaders, Trotsky was not a pupil of Lenin but an independent theorist, the author of the theory of permanent revolution, who had clashed with Lenin on many issues before 1917. When he joined the Bolshevik Party, it was not because he had adopted 'bolshevism', but rather, because Lenin and a few other Bolshevik leaders had adopted a position close to his own on the nature of the revolution. The acceptance of a perspective similar to that of permanent revolution was not universal within the Bolshevik camp even after 1917 - Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin had always rejected it and even opposed the seizure of power in 1917 - and Trotsky remained marginalised. Summing up his argument, Reiman says '...the fundamental charge that history must direct against him [Trotsky] is that, in October 1917, it was Trotsky who to a great extent ensured that victory in the revolution belonged to a party that was not his party and which he did not control. Apart from the initial period of the revolution and the Civil War, the only role open to him was as a critic of this party' (p.51).

The same theme appears also in Udo Gerhmann's piece on 'Trotsky and the Russian Social Democratic controversy over comparative revolutionary history'. This article covers much of the ground covered elsewhere by Michael Lowy in *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development* (Verso, 1980). Gehrmann's account, however, shows greater scholarship. Its knowledge of the positions of Russian Social Democracy on the question of the Russian Revolution is wider - Gehrmann discusses not only the positions of Lenin, Trotsky and Plekhanov, but also the views of Axelrod, Lunacharsky, Martov, Martinov, and Tseretelli. In addition Gehrmann's account addresses in greater depth the role of the French revolution of 1789 in the ideology of the Russian marxists. The main criticism must be that it accepts the terms of debate as laid down by its subjects thus failing to challenge the notion of the 'bourgeois-democratic revolution', for instance. Is there such a beast? Where does the idea come from? The usual source cited is the *Communist Manifesto* but while Marx and Engels distinguish the tasks of the bourgeois revolution from those of the proletarian revolution, no mention is made of there being a 'bourgeois democratic revolution'. Nevertheless, in this Gehrmann's failure is no greater than that of anyone else who has written on the subject while his contribution to our knowledge of the period is more valuable.

A third article to examine the question of Trotsky's relation to Lenin is Richard Day's 'The political theory of Leon Trotsky'. Here Day attempts to link Trotsky's understanding of the role of consciousness in history to his political critique of stalinism and the Five Year

Plans. Day situates Trotsky's understanding of consciousness within the dialectical tradition of Hegel and Marx and carefully distances it from Engels, who, he argues, 'helped to create confusion for an entire generation of Marxists' (p.121). Whereas Engels saw consciousness as a 'reflection' of the material world, Day claims that Trotsky, like Marx, stressed the 'active relation of consciousness to the external world' (Trotsky, quoted by Day, p.121). Trotsky's differences with Engels, moreover, 'distinguished him clearly from the mainstream of Bolshevik thought' (p.122). To demonstrate this point Day briefly examines Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Bukharin's *Historical Materialism*, and Stalin's *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. All of these texts, he argues, had their philosophical roots in Engels and all of them worked with a reflection theory of consciousness. Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, he argues, constituted a break with this tradition and brought Lenin's understanding of the role of consciousness closer to that of Trotsky.

By outlining the philosophical differences between Trotsky and the Bolsheviks, Day seems to reinforce the argument put forward by Reiman. But Day fails to show precisely how Trotsky's philosophical understanding of consciousness informed his politics. He argues that the reflection theory of consciousness held by the Bolsheviks underpinned a view of planning that denied a conscious role for the working class, whereas Trotsky's emphasis on the active role of consciousness led him to argue for the central role of working class activity. Yet many statements can be found where Trotsky identifies consciousness with the party or even the state. Thus in *The Third International after Lenin* (1928) he argued that in a period in which the objective prerequisites for socialism had matured, 'the key to the whole historical process passes into the hands of the subjective factor, that is, the party' (*The Third International Since Lenin*, p 84). Statements like this sit uneasily with Day's claim. A large proportion of Trotsky's work betrays an acceptance of a reflection theory of consciousness that Day believes he rejected. There is here a clear parallel with Lenin. Through his reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic* in 1915 Lenin seems to have discovered a more dialectical view of consciousness; this is clear to anyone who has read his *Conspectus of Hegel's 'Science of Logic'*. In his more political works of 1916 and 1917, ie. *Imperialism* and *The State and Revolution*, however, the same mechanical view that informed his earlier works still pervades.

Whatever their shortcomings, the articles by Reiman, Gehrmann and Day do hold out the promise of a more critical understanding of Trotsky's relation to bolshevism. At the very least, they succeed in detaching the question of Trotsky's relation to Lenin from the question of the truth of his views. The two had become linked in the 1920s when Stalin managed to make agreement with Lenin the litmus test of truth and, in order to survive, Trotsky himself had tried to show that he had never had any serious differences with Lenin.

But perhaps the most important article in the book is Hillel Ticktin's 'Trotsky's political economy of capitalism'. This too touches briefly on differences between Trotsky, Lenin, Bukharin and others, but its main function is to explore various aspects of Trotsky's political economy: the notion of 'the curve of capitalist development', the theory of capitalist decline, Trotsky's conception of the relation of crisis and revolution, his understanding of categories such as 'imperialism', 'fascism' and the 'transitional epoch'. Ticktin has a deep knowledge of Trotsky's writings and the picture that emerges is initially very persuasive. This is particularly true of his account of Trotsky's understanding of capitalist decline. For Ticktin: 'Trotsky's crucial perspective is one of a declining capitalism which was desperately seeking its way out of its old age. At certain periods it was able to find temporary alleviation through imperialism, fascism, war and stalinism/cold war, but the palliatives become ever more useless over time' (p.222).

His account of the category of the transitional epoch has much to recommend it too. In Ticktin's view: 'Trotsky never produced a political economy of the transitional epoch, but it may be pieced together. In the first place, it is a period when capitalism has been overthrown in a part of the world, without the introduction of socialism itself. In the second place, capitalism continues to decline. In the third place, the subjective aspect plays a crucial role as the leaders of both social democracy and stalinism are seen as saving capitalism in this period' (p.225). Subjectivity is crucial to Trotsky's perspective. Ticktin argues that 'Trotsky is the only Marxist theorist to put the subjective into political economy. He stands in stark contrast to theorists like Paul Mattick and Henryk Grossman who in their own ways tend to objectivise economic laws. Capitalism, for them, will come to a natural end ... What Trotsky did was to add a new dimension to political economy by arguing that the movement of capital has to be seen as part of the class struggle and not just as an unconscious movement of rates of profit' (p.218).

Ticktin's interpretation is compelling but it is also open to criticism. Trotsky's political economy is ambiguous but in Ticktin's account these ambiguities are not explored. In his writings of the twenties and thirties Trotsky tended to elide the concept of decline with that of collapse thus producing a political economy which fostered a catastrophist view of the immediate situation. In his discussion of the transitional epoch, moreover, Trotsky tended to separate the subjective from the objective and then, as we have already seen, to identify the 'subjective factor' with the party rather than with the working class. This separation, which found its fullest formulation in the notion of 'the crisis of revolutionary leadership', tended to reinforce the catastrophism inherent in the theory of decline. Trotsky, moreover, identified decline with the chronic disruption of capitalist 'equilibrium', itself an ambiguous and confusing notion, and with the decomposition and collapse of the productive forces. His view was one of the objective development of capital to the point where the contradiction between the productive forces and social relations of capitalism led to collapse and forced the working class to struggle. However, within this objective movement of capital the working class played only a subordinate role. This was the basis for the role of the party as directing organ. The result was a theory of transition that looks more like a description of defeat.

This book contains a wide diversity of material which explores different aspects of Trotsky's contribution from a variety of political perspectives and this review has merely scratched the surface. It is to be hoped, however, that the issues raised in the articles mentioned above will find their way into the trotskyist movement and the wider anti-stalinist movement.

Cartoon from a Soviet satirical magazine (circa 1920), showing Zinoviev, Lenin, Marx, Kamenev, Lozovsky & Chicherin standing, with Radek, Sosnovsky, Trotsky, Riazanov & Bukharin seated.

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too enters working class consciousness. Workers are aware that they are exploited under capitalism but they are also aware that the historically existing "alternatives" do not solve the problem. In so far as the forms of the prevention of communism appear as alternatives, by appearing to be the only possible alternatives, they seem to indicate that there is in fact no alternative.

The prevention of communism permits the nationalised recognition of needs within the wider context of a world market economy, this nationalised recognition of needs being the basis for the global preservation of capital. The law of value is suspended to different degrees within specific national locations in order for it to be preserved globally through finance capital. International finance capital thus becomes the source of external discipline which is transmitted to the working class within specific national locations, through the forms of the prevention of communism. Through the movements of financial capital, absolute poverty and abstract labour are constantly re-created globally. Workers organise nationally only to find that the problem is international. Finance capital appears to be beyond the reach of working class action.

There is a sense in which social production has become increasingly "de-fetishised". To the extent that the law of value decays into bureaucratic administration social relations become more "transparent". Nationalisation, government subsidisation of industries inefficient from the standpoint of value, the welfare state, "full employment" etc indicate that the distribution of social labour can no longer be achieved through the law of value alone, but increasingly requires direct forms of social control. Thus, for example, the government intervenes in the "economy" to influence "demand", interest rates and inflation, to set up relatively permanent institutions of industrial arbitration, to adjust rents and to maintain of undermine "full" employment. With this intensification of direct forms of social control, however, it becomes clearer that it is people and not things which are the source of the problem. On the other hand, these non-value forms of control themselves are subordinate to value globally and function to preserve it. Social democracy and stalinism thus combine with finance capital to sustain the illusion of the eternality of the value form.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that much of the left has tended to present the forms of the prevention of communism as being transitional to communism. This is true not only of orthodox stalinist organisations but also of certain strands of trotskyism. For some of the latter: "The Soviet experience, despite its very specific character, was nevertheless a great laboratory for establishing the superiority of planning over the anarchic market economy of capitalism, and for learning from the gross mistakes and miscalculations perpetrated by the Stalinist bureaucracy" (Anonymous "Forward" to the New Park edition of Trotsky's Towards Capitalism or Socialism, 1978,p70). By presenting stalinism as being with whatever critical reservations, an advance on capitalism, such statements only obstruct the movement towards communism. Worse still, when the working class begins to move against the social forms within which it has been partially contained, it finds itself being urged back into line by the self-proclaimed enemies of the existing order: not only by the social democrats and the stalinists but also by those who claim to have developed the revolutionary critique. Workers rejection of the forms of the prevention of communism is then taken as evidence of continued passivity in the face of bourgeois ideology. The active intervention of these organisations into the communist movement of the working class itself obstructs that movement.

Communism has thus become identified with the prevention of communism. Disillusionment with the prevention of communism takes the form of disillusionment with communism itself. This does not imply a simple ideological victory for value. Consciousness can be understood only in its relation to political economy and the political economy of the working class is conscious determination of needs. Having been forced to recognise needs, even if only formally and bureaucratically, capital cannot institute their derecognition when the need arises. While it has been possible, with the unwitting aid of the left, to discredit communism, it is impossible to discredit needs. The political economy of the working class has not been - and cannot be - dislodged.

Inherited Ideology and Practical Needs

Communism is not an ethical ideal to be realised by means of proletarian revolution. As the society of the freely associating producers, communism is a practical need and can emerge only out of the struggles of the workers themselves. Proletarian revolution is not one possible means amongst others by which to bring into being a desired end, but the necessary outcome of a real social process.

This process is the process of self-formation of the working class. Marx observed it at the moments of the (partial) victory of the political economy of the working class over the political economy of the bourgeoisie, and recognised it as a process tending towards communism. Since Marx, however, the intervention of the bourgeoisie into its own political economy has appeared to undermine the possibility of proletarian self-emancipation. The results of this intervention have been understood in terms of consciousness and ideology alone and thus the communist perspective has been lost.

If we are to retrieve this perspective we must re-found our analysis on the movement of the working class itself. The critique of social democracy and stalinism cannot be developed in terms of consciousness alone but must begin form the standpoint of working class needs. Our task is not to apportion blame but to re-found marxism on the basis of an analysis of class composition and class formation within the political economy of the epoch as a whole. Failing to do this, the left has been unable to free itself from the inherited ideology of working class passivity. Losing contact with the political economy of the working class, the left is reduced to making assertion about consciousness, which assertions must degenerate into sectarianism.

It is unfortunate that many of those who have stressed the reality of proletarian self-activity have done so in a rather crude fashion. This is true of certain strands of autonomism. Thus Cleaver, for example, sometimes - but not always - presents the struggle of the working class as a process without end (Harry Cleaver, Reading Capital Politically, Harvester, 1979) If, however, the working class can continue to transform the social forms of capital accumulation indefinitely, the struggle of the working class has no tendency towards communism. Failing to analyse the fate of the law of value under the impact of the self-formation of the proletariat, the critique of "leninism" and "leninism" itself become polar opposites which eternally reproduce each other.

The crucial thing is to recognise the problem. Included in this is the unbridgeable gap between the project outlined in What Is To Be Done? and the principle of proletarian self-emancipation which formed the bedrock of the International Working Men's Association. We must return to Marx. More importantly, however, we must return to the developing political economy of the working class. Crucially, we must examine the conditions which are the outcome of working class struggle but against which the working class is forced to struggle again, if we are to understand the full complexity and difficulty of the situation. To begin to characterise this complexity we can use the words of William Morris, bearing in mind the different context in which they were written and discounting their gender specificity, reflecting on " ... **how men fight and lose the battle and the thing that they fought for comes about In spite of their defeat, and when it comes about turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name**" (A Dream of John Ball). But this, it should be stressed, can only be our starting point.

David Gorman