BULLETIN MATTERS

The first article in this issue, the Socialist Party (of Great Britain)'s publication "Marxian Theories of Economic Crises, will seem heretical to many of us who were raised on the entirely rational and easily understood explanation for recessions and depressions: that workers are not paid enough in wages to buy back their product, hence
the accumulation of unsold products and resulting layoffs and recession. No doubt someone will respond to the SP's article. Next Mike Kolhoff answers Internationalist Perspective's DB55 article on the makeup of the working class. And Ed Stans responds to the translation of an article dealing with anarchism in the Dutch magazine Daad en Gedachte (Deed and Thought [I think]). Following is Jerry Mahar's answer to Larry Gambone's DB56 criticism of his article in DB53.

In the next letter, Dave Perrin attacks Laurens Otter's reading of SP(GB) history. T.J. Lawinmore also responds to Otter by defending the SP(GB)'s revolutionary strategy and attacking that of the anarchists. Alan Sanderson then presents an alternative strategy for socialist revolution, one that, to my way of thinking, combines the best elements of the anarchist and Marxist recipes.

(Cont'd on p. 8)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It was designed to serve as the financially and politically independent forum of a little known sector of political thought. It places the great divide in the "left," not between anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's statist left wing of vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. It is organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists.

The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism's wage, market, and money system along with capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often fiercely antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities, and begin a process, we hope, of at least limited cooperation.

The pages of the DB are open to anyone in this political sector, the only limitations being that submissions be typewritten, single-spaced, and copier ready. We do no editing here. As to content, we assume that submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the DB and will avoid personal attacks.

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INTRODUCTION

Britain, in common with a number of other countries, is currently in a recession. Investment has been curbed, output in a great many industries has fallen, and unemployment has risen. Historically, recessions have been a central feature of capitalism since the industrialisation of society. Britain has endured three particularly severe recessions; the great depression of the 1880s, the slump of the 1930s, and the more recent recession of the 1980s. We may now be in the fourth really major slump to have hit Britain; time will tell.

This education document will principally look at some of the theories that have been put forward to explain why periods of relative economic prosperity are regularly and sometimes violently interrupted by periods of economic downturn.

KEYNES AND GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

In his 1936 General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money Keynes argued that slumps are caused by a lack of effective demand in the economy. Like Karl Marx, Keynes rejected Say’s law that “every seller brings a buyer to market”. Keynes saw that profits did not automatically have to be spent and could be hoarded or saved, thereby causing a dislocation in production. Keynes argued that in a slump there is generalised overproduction, that is, that existing production and output has outstripped effective market demand. He argued that this arose because investors find that it is not in their interests to invest further, and decide to hoard their money instead. Keynes also held that the higher someone’s income, the lower their “propensity to consume” would be: they would spend proportionately less of their income as it increased, and save proportionately more. Indeed, he came to believe that a too unequal distribution of income alone could lead to a permanent slump if nothing was done about it.

The solution Keynes put forward to this apparent problem is important as it came to be taken up, at least in theory, by all the major political parties in this country and many others elsewhere, during and after the Second World War. Keynes’s solution was not a simple one, but comprised three basic parts.

The first step demanded by Keynes of governments when faced with a slump was that they should increase their expenditure and run budget deficits. The state’s spending more than it collected in revenue from taxation, Keynes thought, would serve to inject additional demand into the economy - demand, in a slump, that is lacking. This was interpreted by the Labour Party in their 1944 policy statement Full Employment and Financial Policy to mean that when unemployment and recession threatened:

“We should at once increase expenditure, both on consumption and on development i.e. both on consumer goods and capital goods. We should give people more money and not less to spend. If need be we should borrow to cover government expenditure. We need not aim at balancing the budget year by year”.

The second aspect of Keynes’s plan for capitalism without slumps was that the system of taxation should also be changed. Those with higher incomes and a lower propensity to consume and a tendency to hoard and save a significant part of their income, would be taxed more and those on low incomes would be taxed less. This redistribution was again intended to increase consumption and market demand.

The third major idea put forward by Keynes was that it was no longer necessary for governments to “watch and control” the creation of currency. The resulting printing of an excess of paper currency has been the real cause of the persistent rise in the price level in this country since 1940 or thereabouts.

These Keynesian theories on how to avoid a slump held almost unchallenged sway until the 1970s. The idea that governments can intervene in the economy to provide employment and offset a slump stems largely from Keynes. However, since the mid 1970s governments in Britain have tended to distance themselves from Keynes.

KEYNES ABANDONED

Neither the Conservative Party nor the Labour Party now believe in the whole Keynesian package. Why is this?

The answer lies in the practical failure of Keynesian policies to offset economic recessions wherever they have been applied. The most notable attempt to put Keynes’s ideas into practice in this country occurred in 1974 when the newly-elected Labour government under Harold Wilson ran huge budget deficits, increased government expenditure and greatly expanded the note issue to literally give people more money to spend. When the policy was embarked upon, unemployment was rising towards the now relatively low level of about 750,000. Three years later, after this policy had been applied, unemployment was at 1.6 million. It had more than doubled. This type of experience has been repeated many times in other countries such as France, where Mitterrand in 1981-82 did the same thing and eventually had to abandon his attempt at using Keynesian policy to avert a slump because it proved ineffective in the face of rising unemployment.

What happened during the 1970s and early 1980s was that Keynesian policy clearly failed when put to a practical test. In addition, its adherents had no real theoretical answer to the appearance across much of the world of what the economists call "stagflation" - rising unemployment and industrial stagnation coupled with persistently-rising prices. In
Keynesian theory, unemployment and stagnation were a product of deficient demand, while rising prices were the product of an excess of demand in the economy. So a situation where prices are sharply rising at the same time as the economy is in a recession cannot be explained in terms of Keynesian theory.

Although only political mavericks and those on the wilder reaches of Labour’s left wing now still unashamedly use the language of Keynes, his influence has remained to the extent that many still hold the view that governments can, by their manipulation of the economy, avert a depression.

BACK TO MARX

The fact of the matter is that if you are looking for reasons why there are recessions, and how that situation can be ended, you will look in vain to the capitalist political parties whose aim it is to see that the profit system works efficiently and who promise that they can make it work smoothly without periods of economic downturn.

To get a proper understanding of the phenomenon of recessions you have to look back to someone the press and TV tell us has been discredited and whose influence in the world is supposed to have been wholly bad - Karl Marx. It was Marx who developed a real understanding of how the capitalist system operates and why it constantly fails to live up to the hopes of the politicians who preside over it.

Marx argued that “capitalist production moves through certain periodic cycles. It moves through a state of quiescence, growing animation, prosperity, over trade, crisis and stagnation” (Value, Price and Profit, chapter XIII). He showed that capitalism’s drive towards expansion is not a straight upward line but proceeded through cycles. Though there is a general upward trend in terms of total production, this is necessarily punctuated by periods in which production falls and unemployment grows. This analysis is, of course, in line with capitalist reality. Throughout his history capitalism has developed in this way. No-one has prevented slumps from happening or been able to ensure permanent boom conditions. That much is self-evident.

Marx himself did not leave a fully worked-out theory of why crises and depressions happen, a subject he proposed to deal with at length in the projected 6th volume of Capital. However, in part of his published analysis of the laws of motion of the capitalist system, Marx did leave behind some clear ideas and pointers as to why crises and depressions inevitably occur under capitalism.

Most writers and political organisations, claiming to stand in the Marxist tradition, have tended to put one of two basic types of view about crises and recessions. The first is that it is the falling rate of profit due to technical progress that is the cause of crises and slumps. The second sees slumps being the product of the restricted consumption of the working class. Both views are inadequate.

FALLING RATE OF PROFIT

The rate of profit is the rate of return on invested capital. It is expressed by the formula: S/(C + V), or surplus value (the unpaid labour of the working class), divided by constant capital (investment in machines, buildings, raw materials etc) plus variable capital (wages and salaries).

Surplus value arises solely from the variable part of the total capital, but as capitalism progresses technically so the amount of capital invested in machines and materials and the like will tend to rise. This means that the source of surplus value, variable capital, declines relative to constant capital and, other things being equal, so will the rate of surplus value to total capital.

Marx’s wrote about the tendency of the average rate of profit to fall in response to the views of classical economists such as Ricardo and John Stuart Mill, who had contemplated the eventual stagnation of the capitalist mode of production because the rate of profit would fall so low. Marx showed why this would be a very distant prospect since the tendency of the average rate of profit to fall in capitalism would be a very slow process indeed.

For Marx, the falling rate of profit was not an inexorable law of capitalism, but simply a tendency that could be slowed, and even reversed, by countervailing factors. These counter-tendencies generally involve cheapening the elements of constant capital or increasing the amount of surplus value extracted from the workers either by increasing productivity and the intensity of work or by lengthening of the working day through the introduction of shift work and so on (see Capital, Vol III, chapter 14).

Despite this, a number of organisations insist that the long-term tendency for the average rate of profit to fall is central to Marx’s explanation of economic crises. This is, by and large, the view taken by the SWP (see, for instance, Explaining the Crisis by Chris Harman, Bookmarks, 1986), by the RCG (see The Revolutionary Road to Communism in Britain, Larkin Publications, 1984) and others, and it comes as no surprise that, whenever capitalism is in crisis, they argue that the final state of stagnation has been reached, or is just around the corner.

In reality, of course, capitalism has not had a final crisis or breakdown. Nor is it true that a long-term fall in the average rate of profit is the causal explanation of crises and depressions. For this to be so, technical progress in capitalism, and the increase in constant capital relative to variable capital, would have to be extraordinarily rapid, and in practice it rarely, if ever, is. The tendency of the rate of profit to fall due to technical progress has therefore to be dismissed as a cause of crises.

NOT ENOUGH SURPLUS VALUE?

A more interesting variant on “the tendency of the falling rate of profit as a cause of crises” view is the one which focuses on the falling rate of profit in conjunction with the idea that the onset of a crisis corresponds to a period of insufficient production of surplus value. This is the view associated with writers like Paul Mattick (see his Marx and Keynes, Merlin Press, 1980 and Economic Crisis and Crisis Theory, Merlin Press, 1981) and from a general theoretical point of view it does have a limited validity. This theory is valid in the sense that, in theory, after a
proliferated period of capitalist prosperity the reserve army of labour could all but disappear, forcing wages up which would cut into profits and lower the rate of profit itself. Whether this has actually been the cause of any crisis in recent years in a country like Britain is rather more open to question. The international mobility of labour ensures that the reserve army of labour is not entirely depleted in a period of boom. There is also the fact that there are millions of women workers, housewives and others who ebb and flow on the fringes of the labour market.

There are other difficulties associated with the view that crises are a product of rising wages cutting into profits. After all, if this is the cause of a crisis then the solution would appear to lie in increasing the production of surplus value by increasing the exploitation of the working class. This would most likely involve cuts in real pay for the workers, leading to increased profits. It should be obvious that, if taken far enough, this argument can degenerate into pure Tory Party-style propaganda along the lines of “wages are the real cause of the crisis; if the workers and trades unions would forgo wage increases then the problem would be solved”.

What this view overlooks is that when a crisis occurs, simply increasing the production of surplus value is not the major precondition for a return to a boom situation. In a capitalist crisis there is an overproduction of commodities for market sale, so there will already be large stock-piles of commodities that no-one can buy. There can, therefore, be little to gain by reducing the effective demand of the working class through pay cuts so that investment can be increased even further and more commodities can be produced when there is no-one willing or able to buy them.

Nor is there any empirical evidence to suggest that when a crisis has begun and unemployment starts to rise wage restraint can provide a solution. Far from it. When the last Labour government imposed wage restraint after an economic crisis unemployment continued to rise steadily, and that has been an experience repeated on innumerable occasions across the globe.

UNDERCONSUMPTION

The second type of view on the cause of crises and depressions put forward by Marx, particularly in Vol II of Capital, recognizes that capitalist crises are simultaneously problems of production and of the realisation of surplus value on the market. The explanation of slumps suggested by Marx does not simply rely on a long-term tendency which may or may not be operating at any given time nor on the entirely mistaken view that capitalist production will always tend to outstrip total market demand.

The explanation suggested by Marx goes to the root nature of the capitalist mode of production itself. Capitalism differs from other modes of production such as feudalism or chattel slavery in that under these previous forms of class society, most production was carried on for use. Capitalism, having separated the producers from the means of production and only allowing them access to them via the exploitative wages system, promotes productive activity only when goods can be sold on a market with the expectation of profit.

Decisions about production - from what is to be produced, to how much it should be produced and where - are not taken with the satisfaction of human needs in mind. Decisions about production are decisions to produce those goods that appear the most likely to procure a profit when sold on the market, at any given moment.

This drive to procure a monetary profit is not essentially a product of the desire of the capitalists to have a luxurious lifestyle. If a capitalist or group of capitalists are to stay in business they must accumulate capital to expand and survive...
against their competitors. It is this process of re-investment that uses up much of the profits made by the capitalist class.

It is in this way — through the exploitation of workers, the profitable sale of commodities, and the accumulation of capital that capitalism is able to expand and develop the means of production. But this expansion is not planned expansion. The operation of capitalism is not planned at the level of the whole economy. Decisions about investment and production are made by thousands of competing enterprises operating independently of social control or regulation.

The unplanned nature of production, or the anarchy of production as Marx called it, is at the heart of Marx’s explanation of why capitalism is periodically beset by crises and depressions. Because production is not socially regulated, some enterprises will eventually invest and expand production to such an extent that not all of the commodities produced can be sold on the market at a profit. In the drive to accumulate capital as rapidly as possible, they oversupply market demand and expand their productive capacity beyond that which the market can absorb. Unsold goods begin to pile up. Expected profits are not realized, and production has to be curtailed. This, of course, will have a knock-on effect. The enterprises’ suppliers will be faced with reduced demand and will no longer be able to sell all their products either, and this in turn will affect their suppliers’ suppliers and so on.

The size and nature of the enterprises or industries which over-invest and over-expand their productive capacity in this manner will, of course, affect the nature of the crisis. A small number of large enterprises over-expanding and perhaps going bankrupt will not have nearly the impact of one or more key industries over-expanding. Indeed, it is one or more key industries over-expanding for the market that is the usual cause of a capitalist crisis and subsequent slump.

In his own elaboration of this view, Marx divided capitalist production into two main sectors (see Capital, Vol II, chapters 20 and 21):

DEPT I, producing means of production or what are sometimes called “capital goods”, and

DEPT II, producing means of consumption, or “consumer goods”.

Marx’s explanation of crisis was complicated enough, but the actual division of capitalist industry is, of course, much more complicated than this simple two-sector model. Marx’s aim, though, was to show that for capitalist accumulation and growth to be achieved steadily, then there would have to be a balanced growth between these two departments of production. Put simply, if say the consumer goods sector expands disproportionately more than the capital goods sector, then at some point the enterprises in that sector will not be able to sell all their products and will have to cut back on production and orders of capital goods causing a general crisis to break out.

Where this two-sector model is rather a simplification is that, if capitalist growth is to be smooth, all sectors or sub-sectors of the economy must expand in a balanced and proportionate manner. But because of the general anarchy of production in the capitalist system there will inevitably be a disproportionate investment and a disproportionate growth between the various sectors of the economy. When capitalists invest to expand production, they do not objectively consider the needs of the other sectors of the economy; they are interested in the rate of return they can get on their own investments and it is not therefore surprising that over-investment and over-expansion takes place in key sectors of the economy. It occurred in key industries in the consumer goods sector before the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and it has recently occurred in a number of those enterprises and industries that expanded at a fast pace in the 1980s, particularly micro-electronics, computing, information technology and so on.

HOW SLUMPS END

Let us now look now at what happens once the crisis has occurred and the slump phase of the economic cycle has been entered. One of the most important factors to consider when capitalism is moving from one stage of its trade cycle to another is the rate of profit or, to be more precise, short- to medium-term fluctuations in the rate of profit (as opposed to the long-term tendency discussed in a previous section for the average rate of profit to fall due to the replacement of variable capital with constant capital).

During a crisis and at the onset of a slump the rate of profit on investments will fall dramatically as firms are unable to sell all that has been produced and so are unable to realise surplus value embodied in them. But this decline in the rate of profit is not permanent, it is part of the economic cycle, and during a slump conditions eventually begin to emerge which point towards an increase in the rate of profit and renewed investment. No slump is ever permanent. This is because during a slump three basic things happen.

The first is that a number of enterprises will go bankrupt and their assets will be bought cheaply by their rivals. The result of this is a depreciation of the capital invested in them leading to a halt, and eventual reversal, in the decline of the rate of profit. An important factor in this is the decline in the value of the stocks that have built up towards the end of the boom, during the crisis and in the early stages of the slump.

The second thing to happen in a slump is that there is the re-appearance of a large reserve army of labour which makes an increase in the rate of exploitation possible. There will probably be a halt in the growth of real wages and perhaps even a cut, which will serve to increase the rate of profit without, at this stage of the economic cycle, damaging the prospects for realisation of surplus value on the markets, because capital depreciation and destruction of stocks will have been taking place and the supply of commodities will have been curtailed.

The third factor is interest rates. As the slump develops, interest rates will tend to fall naturally as the demand for money capital falls away. This will have a beneficial impact on the rate of industrial profit and, in conjunction with the other two factors, will improve the prospects for investment and expansion.
Because of these three factors - capital depreciation, an increase in the rate of exploitation, and naturally falling interest rates in a slump - enterprises will start expanding production again as investment picks up and as demand for products grows, with more workers being employed again. This will lift the economy out of the slump phase of the cycle, and industry will be in the state of growing animation referred to by Marx that occurs before a boom. The cycle will then have come full circle.

The important thing about all this is that the crisis and depression phases of the economic cycle do not occur because something has "gone wrong" with the operation of the capitalist economy. On the contrary, they are in fact an entirely necessary feature of the development of capitalism, serving to rid the system of its more inefficient enterprises where returns on investments are low, and thereby promoting investment and expansion in those enterprises fit enough to survive. Far from being an instance of capitalism "going wrong" in some way, slumps show that capitalism is working normally and in accordance with its own economic laws and mechanisms of development.

STATE PLANNING NO SOLUTION

Crisis and depressions are inevitable features of the capitalist system of production. However, there is one objection that has been put to this. If slumps are caused by disproportions of production leading to short-term falls in the rate of profit and overproduction of commodities for the available market, then surely the answer to capitalism's trade cycle lies in trying to plan production so that disproportionalities and periodic over-expansion do not occur. In other words, if the root cause of economic crises is the anarchy of production, why not institute a bit of planning? Why can't capitalism be planned through cartels or monopolies and through the widespread nationalisation of industry?

There are two basic answers to this objection. The first is that planning capitalism down to every investment decision, every price, every wage and so on is impossible. Planning every aspect of economic activity under some sort of totalitarian state capitalism as has existed in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, simply can't be done. Admittedly, Russia, China, Albania and other countries had a good try, but it is now generally agreed that this did not stop unbalanced growth and overproduction for market demand occurring.

In fact, now that most of the Stalinists have been given the ghost, the last defenders of planned capitalism are to be found, perhaps not surprisingly, in the Trotskyist movement. Here's the Belgian Trotskyist Ernest Mandel writing about the Soviet Union:

"From 1928 onwards growth really was regular and uninterrupted ... unlike the capitalist economy, the USSR has experienced no recession, no crisis of overproduction leading to an absolute fall in production for more than half a century" ("A Theory Which Has Not Withstood the Test of Facts" in *International Socialism* 49, December 1990).

Mandel is looking at Russia through rather rose-tinted spectacles. If we take the period 1966–74, for instance, when a slump was beginning to break out in the West, the difference between growth rates in minimum growth years and maximum growth years averaged 50 per cent in East Germany, 100 per cent in Bulgaria, 130 per cent in Russia and 228 per cent in Poland! So much for steady balanced growth and being able to entirely plan away the capitalist trade cycle.

Apart from the practical difficulties of trying to plan capitalism in the fashion of the former state-capitalist countries, there is another reason why state-capitalist planning can represent no long term solution to the problems of capitalist development.

Although the former state-capitalist economies were unable to escape the capitalist trade cycle, the operation of these economies was different in some respects from the Western-style private enterprise-based capitalism. This was because they were not subject to the direct operation of Marx's law of value. Prices often did not at all reflect the labour value of commodities and inefficient enterprises were not penalised and purged from the system as they are in the West. The process by which a slump serves as a means to future development by eliminating the weakest productive units did not apply.

What tends to happen where there is widespread state capitalism is that inefficient enterprises and productive methods are supported, wastage is tolerated, and new technology in most sectors only gets introduced at a slow pace. In short, the "purging" benefits of a full-blown capitalist slump are lost.

The state intervenes to offset the development of mass unemployment, and does this by directing capital towards inefficient units of production and through planned over-staffing and so on, at the expense of the more efficient sectors of the economy that have to support the inefficient sectors. Thus, there is an attempt to "cheat" the law of value. In the long run, this can only have disastrous consequences for the development and growth of the economy as a whole. Stagnation sets in and, as events have shown, eventually threatens the stability of the political structure and the position of the privileged ruling class. Attempts at planning capitalism's anarchy of production have always ended in disaster, often bloody disaster, and state-run capitalism does not represent a solution to the problems of the capitalist economy - by offsetting some of the worst effects of slumps, it can only make such problems worse in the long run.

PRODUCTION SOLELY FOR USE

As Karl Marx himself realised, the only lasting solution to crises and depressions, and for that matter the other problems that beset the capitalist system, is socialism. Government tinkering and state planning are no answer. A social transformation needs to take place so that production will no longer be carried out for profit and so that articles of wealth will be produced for use and not for sale on the market. We all know through experience that capitalism can't be planned and cannot ensure the well-being of all members of society. Only socialism can do that by removing the
capitalist ownership and control of the means of living and by ensuring that the anarchy of production is removed by the abolition of profits and wages, prices and money.

Production for use without the operation of the market mechanism and the perennial search for profits is the way to solve the problems of economic instability and crises of overproduction. In socialism production can be regulated without any of the destructive effects of capitalist crises and depressions. Any overproduction that occurs will be in relation to real needs and not to the market where needs only count if they are backed up by money. In fact, production for use could make a permanent stockpile of useful materials available, to be tipped up as and when necessary.

Overproduction, should it occur, would not present the same problem for socialism as it does for capitalism. Only a truly perverse society could find periodic over-expansion and overproduction of goods a problem at the same time as millions and millions throughout the world are going without. That is why socialists urge workers to put an end to the anarchic capitalist system of production which has outraged its usefulness for humankind and now stands as a barrier and fetter on future human progress.

READING LIST

Socialist Party publications:
Socialist Standard:
"Crisis, Catastrophe and Mr Strachey", March 1957.
"Further Reflections on Crises", April 1957.

"Why They Want More Unemployed", November 1966.
"Inquest on Keynes", April 1968.
"The Economics of Unemployment", September 1980.

Other Publications
Karl Marx, Capital. Volumes I, especially Part VII.
Karl Marx, Capital. Volume II, especially Part III.
Karl Marx, Capital. Volume III, especially Part III and Part V.
Karl Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, especially Part Two, chapter XVIII.
Ernest Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, Volume I.
Sydney Coontz, Productive Labour and Effective Demand, 1965.

(Cont'd from p. 2)

Next Robert Sekula offers us a new term for ourselves as a political perspective, "liberation socialists." The idea of "liberation socialism" is especially relevant to his article, which calls for a change in our message to workers, one that combines internationalism with our class's thirst for social justice in the broadest sense. Next Laurens Otter comments on DB writers' failure to discuss the collapse of capitalism's eastern branch.

Takeo Shin's letter introduces us to a Japanese contingent of what may be a very broad sense "liberation socialism" worldwide. It is followed by KAS-KOR's announcement of its existence and call for subscriptions. "From Gulf War to Class War," much of which was written by a witness to events in Los Angeles, presents a view of the "uprising" that some of us will dispute. We end this issue with an updated list of periodicals in our political sector (almost three pages) and some short reviews.

FINANCES: The need to pay our annual bulk mailing fee and the falling off of receipts here at P.O. Box 1564 has brought us back into deficit financing.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Thaddeus Maltz $2; Sam Brandon $10; James Garner $7; Robert Blau $10. Total $28. Thank you, comrades.

(Cont'd on p. 13)
Changes in the working class

The article reprinted in DBS55 from Internationalist Perspective attempts to explain the contemporary shift from a capitalism based primarily on national markets and production to a globalized or at least regionalized capitalism, which they have termed the shift from "the formal to the real domination of capital". The author also attempts to categorize and analyze changes in the composition of the working class resulting from this shift.

It is my understanding that the traditional Marxist position on when the "real domination of capital" occurred was in the 19th century, and that the first world war signaled the beginning of decadent capitalism. It's interesting that the IP comrades have proposed that the "real" domination of capital is a contemporary development brought about by technological advances which have made Taylorism obsolete. However, there are several flaws in this proposal.

First, the position puts forth that this shift from nationalistic capitalism to regional/global capitalism has resulted in a decrease in the number of workers employed in industrial production applies only to the "first world" countries of Europe and North America. The comrades fail to recognize that the loss of such jobs in the advanced countries has been countered by a dramatic increase in such employment in the developing countries. A casual glance at the world capitalist economy seems to indicate that there are more people engaged in industrial production than ever before. In these "developing nations", such as Mexico and the countries of Central America, an industrial revolution is taking place as thousands of would-be proletarians are drawn in from the agrarian countryside to seek employment in the newly built (and foreign-owned) factories. Interestingly there is also a shift of service industries to such locations, with the result being a general decrease of employment in the "advanced countries".

The idea of "synchronous" and "non-synchronous" seemed undeveloped. Synchronous with what? With technological developments? This seemed to be the idea. There seems to be no indication that, for now, the high-tech, research and development activities will relocate outside the advanced nations. But there also seems to be no indication that this will be in any way a "growth sector", or that it will ever constitute a significant sector of the working class. It seems far more likely that this grouping will develop as a class unto itself, a technocratic class separate from the working class and closely tied to the capitalists.

While those employed in education, health care and public services may once have been labeled petty bourgeois, there is ample evidence that this was as much a result of Marx's obsession with the industrial proletariat as the sole agent of revolution as any objective analysis of their economic condition or social position. They have always been a part of the working class and were only "misfired" by Marx and his followers, much as the comrade form IP has "misfired" the emerging industrial proletariat of the Third World.

If the situation in the advanced countries is one of decreasing employment in general, it is also characterized by the fragmentation of the working class. The growth sectors of the 1980s, the service industries, have traditionally been largely excluded from analysis in the class struggle. Particularly among clerical workers, there is an overall tendency to reject identification with the working class. The militancy currently being displayed by workers in the health care field indicates that there is certainly hope in the service sector, but the realization of this hope will require education and agitation as well as organization. Class consciousness and solidarity are what is lacking in today's working class.

The increased unemployment and under-employment in advanced capitalist countries is mirrored by increased low-wage employment in the developing countries. Social and environmental decomposition are the results. The globalization of capital means the globalization of poverty, bringing working and living conditions to a universally low level. For the working class this means that workers in the advanced countries seem to be perpetually on the defensive and workers in the developing countries seem to be perpetually on the offensive. Lack of international coordination offers no chance for workers in either area to advance or rest.

The bankruptcy of social services (such as education) is certainly indicative of a particular trend within capital. However, it does not in any way indicate the emergence of the "collective worker", but rather the social decomposition of capitalism and the resulting fragmentation of the working class. It is an offensive campaign, a punishment campaign aimed at the collective impoverishment of all workers.

A truly internationalist perspective regarding changes within the working class must be examined on a global scale and should not succumb to capitalist propaganda regarding the future of workers in the advanced countries. Capitalists have promised that the loss of manufacturing jobs will be made up in increased high-tech employment. For a brief period in the mid-1980s this seemed feasible. Recent events in Silicon Valley indicate otherwise. High-tech employment has peaked and is already in decline in the advanced countries, as is all other
DEATH OF ANARCHISM

Larry Gambone wanted my opinion of the review of Pszisko Jacobs' book "A New Anarchist Movement?" from Paad en Gedachte. (How does Paad en Gedachte translate into English by the way?) I had a hard time following the author's train of thought. I guess he's saying he agrees that anarchism as a mass movement is dead, but that he disagrees with Pszisko Jacobs about why this is so. Jacobs is apparently saying anarchism has always been a movement of intellectuals isolated from the masses, but that today this is even more so than in the past. Exactly how the author of the review's opinion differs from Jacobs', I couldn't follow.

My humble opinion is that workers today are less militant and less group oriented in general. I think it's partly due to the tradeoffs that were made by the labor movement to achieve the gains we enjoy today, which changed the weapons of class warfare from strikes and plant occupations to litigation. (Someone pointed out that Solidarity tactics would not be tolerated in the U.S.; they weren't tolerated in Poland either, and a lot of workers were killed during strikes.) I think it's also partly due to a break down of communities and the modern transient work force. Many people relocate to find work. It's every man or woman for themselves, and workers make an informal cost-benefit analysis: Will I be better off sticking my neck out helping organize a union, or will I be better off as a company man or company woman? Most of them, having never experienced successful solidarity, play it safe and keep their heads down. Most workers are intimidated and are unwilling to risk their careers for a movement that may not be able to protect them.

I agree that the anarchist movement is out ahead of the general population in its opinions. This is usually the case with social movements. If you would have told someone 100 years ago that some day most employers would have to pay for insurance to cover workers injured on the job, that employers would be required to pay into an unemployment insurance fund, that they would be required to pay a minimum wage and pay time and a half for hours in excess of 40 a week, that birth control would be legal, that women would have access to work, divorce and legal abortions, that African-Americans could sue in court if they felt they had been racially discriminated against, or that schools would be at least nominally desegregated and that children would not be forced to pray in school, they would have called you a utopian dreamer (or worse). So even if our ideas about non-hierarchical self-management, a cooperative and environmentally responsible economy, and no government sound utopian today, perhaps they will not always sound so eccentric. We also have to appreciate and pay homage to the gains that have been made by many diverse social movements. If only these movements could work together instead of being so fragmented! What ties them together is a demand for more human rights.

Anarchism as an organized mass movement may be dormant, but if
society continues the general trend towards more human rights, then the masses will continue to move towards anarchism. I only wish they were consciously moving in that direction; it would speed things up a lot. Ed Stamm, PO Box 1402, Lawrence KS 66044 11/12/92

Dear DB:

Regarding Larry Gamstone’s multifaceted critique (DB 56) of my comments regarding the relative concerns for taxes deducted from pay checks as opposed to “surplus value” confiscated by employers, I could care less by which means and in what amounts, the robbery occurs or, for that matter, what happens to it when it leaves. I care very much, however, when it leaves in such great amounts and percentages of the whole as to make it impossible for the less fortunate of us to survive and makes it impossible for workers, who comprise, far and away the vast majority of the consumer market, to buy back the product of their labor and results in a repetitious climbing out of the last recession and sliding into the next one about every five years. That there have been nine (9, count ‘em) recessions since World War II, is directly attributable to this very same SV, so called.

In no way did I suggest that taxes, generally, or the advancing rate of taxation, should be approved or applauded. My main point was to illustrate that the former, while objectionable, was far the lesser of evils when compared to SV. Also, it has been my experience that 90 percent (or more) of the body politic is unaware that such a thing as SV exists. On the contrary, most of us know about taxes and the extent to which it impacts our lives. That is, even if we can’t do anything about it, we are aware of its insidious effects.

The sage advice to simply ignore or change the circumstances of our lives neglects to consider that over half of our population do not possess the economic reserves to afford such independence. They are forced through intimidation to accept the vestigial remains of the wage system regardless of their individual dispositions or preferences. “Revolution in daily life” doesn’t even rate the status of an idle dream for impoverished millions who don’t know how to even have the financial resources to pull it off.

One more point: Don’t be too quick to assume that “evils that are sufferable” are going to remain so changeable and tolerable as they are or have been. Indications are mounting that these proportions just may increase in direct relation to the amounts represented by a combination of national debt, bank debt, corporate debt and consumer installment debt which, when added to the deficits created by trade imbalances, misappropriations and other aspects of “hocus-pocus accounting” will one day explode in a way that will make us all wish we had never heard of capitalism or its poisonous surplus value. Perhaps Mr. Gamstone’s super-resourcefulness will insulate him from the worst of such a calamity. On the other hand, maybe not.

Yours For Socialism

[Signature]
Dear Editor,

It was rather ironic that Laurens Otter's article 'Two's Company' (reprinted in DB56) on the Socialist Party of Great Britain should, on its original appearance in the anarchist Freedom magazine, have been situated next to another piece entitled 'The Rubbishing of Socialism', for that is precisely at the time what it seemed to amount to. That impression was confirmed on second reading in the DB, as were your own cautionary remarks on the "questionable history" contained in the article.

Given its long, interesting and occasionally turbulent political life, it is not surprising that the SPGB should have engendered more than a few myths about itself, but it has to be said that Mr Otter's article periodically climbed to heights of fiction rarely before reached. From the bizarre statements about the Party's foundation to the claim that the SPGB became a 1920's version of the ICC, then through to the assertion that before the Second World War the Party was involved in the pacifist movement, the article was such a series of blunders and/or untruths that I have frankly been left wondering whether the writer actually had much accurate knowledge of the SPGB worth imparting.

The various errors are too numerous to deal with in a mere letter, but one point does need urgent clarification. It is stated that the SPGB has now split into a 'majority' and a 'minority' group because the minority group has been "resurrecting the insistance (more or less unknown in SPGB literature since the mid 1950's) that the party's aim is to take over government."

In reality, the so-called 'minority' group, consisting of less than one twentieth of the membership, was expelled from the SPGB after a Party Poll in 1991 for persistent and wilful undemocratic behaviour. Any perceived dispute about the Party's conception of socialist revolution simply didn't enter into it, and the SPGB's position on the subject is quite clear (even though some readers of DB may well disagree with it). Far from attempting to form a government over class society, the Party states:

It is necessary for a socialist working class to gain political control, but only for the purpose of dispossessing the capitalist class and opening the way for the community as a whole to take over the means of production and distribution and democratically use them for the good of all. The State, with its coercive machinery will be dismantled as its function - the custodian of private property - will have disappeared. New social institutions of administration based on the new social conditions will be democratically formed.

This quotation sums up what is, and always has been, the SPGB position. It can be found in the Party's pamphlet Socialist Principles Explained, published in 1975, and which is given to all applicants for membership.

If the writer of 'Two's Company' had been more concerned with accurately analysing contemporary events in The Socialist Party than concocting fiction about its past he might have noticed that the real reason for the 'minority group's' expulsion was their evident contempt for political democracy (both inside and outside the SPGB) and the related issue of their attitude to reforms. For underpinning this tiny group's sectarianism and undemocratic practice has been their apparent inability to make the distinction between opposing all reformism (the attempt to win support and
power on the basis of reform programmes) and opposing all individual reforms. To them, supporting and welcoming the efforts of the working class to gain necessary political and trade union freedoms - as the SPGB does - is evidence of reformism. They claim this even though the SPGB never gives support to pro-capitalist political organisations who may profess support for democratic and trade union rights for the working class, and even though the SPGB only seeks support for itself on the basis of its socialist aims and has no reform programme. Indeed, one of the most notable examples of the undemocratic practice of the 'minority group' prior to their expulsion from the SPGB was the publication and distribution of a leaflet which falsely claimed that the SPGB actually opposes pro-democracy efforts by workers (principally, at the time, the struggle of workers in Eastern Europe for basic political and civil liberties).

Unfortunately for them, the SPGB made the vital distinction between opposing all reformism and all individual reforms as long ago as 1910/11 when a small group, refusing to accept that the SPGB could in any circumstances support any type of reform whatsoever, even reforms clearly in the interests of the socialist movement itself and the working class at large, left the Party in the view that the SPGB had violated the principle of 'No Compromise' with the capitalist class. This group, around an SPGB founder member called Harry Martin, eventually emerged as the tiny Socialist Propaganda League, which continued in existence until sometime just after the Second World War.

Though the expelled former members of the SPGB no doubt like to see themselves as modern day Fitzgeralds and Andersons, making the same kind of break with reformism that the SPGB founder members did in 1904 when they left the Social Democratic Federation, the sad truth is that the miniscule Socialist Propaganda League is the nearest thing to a predecessor that they have, and they are almost certainly destined to repeat the SPL's harmless irrelevance and descent into obscurity.

Yours for Socialism,

Dave Perrin

(Cont'd from p. 8)

October 22, 1992 (per bank) $36.42

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December 20, 1992

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Fraternally submitted, Frank Girard
Of all the little critters scurrying about the face of this earth, no less than a Mr. Otter raises the question about an irreconcilability between the working class liberating itself and seizing the machinery of government. He also charges that such a historically unprecedented event would constitute a transitional government. Such an ominous phrase brings to mind the horrid theories of Lenin. His logic leaks.

First off, there is no way the working class can organize itself to serve its own interest as long as the capitalist class has an organized government to harness the working class. (Incidentally the task of the working class for a prosperous future is to organize itself, not disorganize itself into a condition of a massive disjointed power vacuum, as anarchists seem to think.) Then the tool of government must be wrested from the hands of the capitalist class or all attempts at liberation will end in futile disaster. You just can’t walk off and declare yourself “liberated.” You will either be restricted to pockets of impoverishment, a la the North American Indigenous Peoples, or you will be the target of a civil war, a la the Kurds in Northern Iraq. Government has to be dealt with; it just can’t be ignored. From this objective fact comes an anarchist delusion, the idea that scrapping government equals freedom. All you have to do is chunk government and everyone will go their merry way, free as a breeze. Lebanon of the 80s and Somalia of today are startling proofs that there is more to winning the class struggle than just abolishing government. In both instances no government had any effective control over millions of people for a prolonged period of time and these same governmentless millions remained just as oppressed and as fucked over as ever by the ravages of poverty and war.

The key to winning the class struggle is to mobilize an overwhelming majority of the population to seize government so that socialism can be enacted by the same said majority. The democratic process is the best way to determine if enough people are ready to join in and make socialism feasible and to strip the tool of government from the hands of the capitalist class. With the armed forces under the control of the working class representatives in all levels of government, those forces for the preservation of class rule cannot be used against the working class.

There is no contradiction between the working class liberating itself and electing representatives to act on its own behalf and gain political power. A member of the Socialist Party in Great Britain taking a seat in Parliament or a member of the World Socialist Party in the United States taking a seat in Congress will be a representative of the working class to enact working class interest. A socialist representative will be instructed by their working class constituency on how to vote on each issue. If that socialist representative does not vote as instructed, then the working class constituency will simply vote that representative out of power. What is wrong with the working class having political power? It is Mr. Otter’s implication that the working class can liberate itself by remaining politically powerless. That is the contradiction, not the World Socialist Movement’s assertion that the working class will liberate itself by obtaining political power. The leak in Mr. Otter’s logic is that he obviously has no understanding of representative democracy. But then how much can one really expect from an anarchist?
Let us say that the working class elects a majority of the socialist representatives to congresses and parliaments the world over. (Such a feat is believed to be impossible, but I am convinced that humans are rational and I will live to see the day.) Will the planet Earth be ruled by "transitional governments" as the wiley Otter claims? No. Those governments will have lost their class identity and immediately be transformed into a tool of the working class to enact socialism. The capitalist features of this government will be lopped off.

(boarder patrols, tax assessors, armed forces, etc.) Some function will remain intact: weather bureau, transportation services, armed forces converted to non-violent functions, etc. This conversion period is known to Marxists as the dictatorship of the proletariat, not a transitional government. For outside government, in the real world, people will be freely satisfying all their needs. Ownership rights will become null and void without each and every property deed being struck down in a court of law.

By electing a majority to government, overwhelmingly so, the same majority will agree to a new social contract, one of free access and democratic control of the earth's resources, as opposed to the restricted access and monetary control of the earth's resources as is now the case. New democratic processes will come into being; some will undoubtedly be centered in what was the governments of the capitalist era and will become merely administrative centers for a socialist society to enact its will. With such political power, the new society can come into being in less than a week's time. This makes Lenin's concept of a transition government obsolete, as well as the equally conservative notion of anarchism. Like representative democracy, socialist revolution is a bold and empowering concept beyond Mr. Otter's fuzzy gaze.

Yours for socialism,

W.J. Lawrimore (P.O. Box 1052, Lithonia, GA 30052)

P.S. I will comment on my English comrades' split in a future letter to the DB. Our long-toothed friend has got that all wrong as well.
SOCIALISM substitutes industrial democracy for industrial oligarchy, social possession of industry (and the services) for class possession of these requisites for life—in short, emancipates Labor from wage servitude. But the working class will not be handed its freedom!

Preparation for Socialism starts with working class education on the De Leonist program for working class unification on both the political and economic fields—on the political field to secure society’s mandate for Socialism, on the economic field in a nationwide, integrally-organized Socialist Industrial Union to implement that mandate by immediately banishing the capitalist class from industry and instanter commencing production and distribution according to need.

The working class act of taking possession of industry is a revolutionary act; it is the culmination of socialist education for a classless social order. But all is not said when that is said.

The De Leonist Societies of the U.S. and Canada stand upon De Leon’s dictum that "The program of revolution is revolution." However, there are some who under De Leonist colors propagate a belief that the program of revolution is not revolution alone but an admixture of revolution and "immediate demands." They are Revisionists.

The revisionist breakaway from the De Leonist position points up two opposing views on how working class unification can occur. De Leonism holds that if requisite numbers of the proletariat unite to embody Socialist Industrial Representation and Administration they will do so only in the eleventh hour—only if impelled by the throes of a wholesale collapse of the old social order. Revisionism holds that the requisite Socialist Industrial Union can come into being through revolutionary metamorphosis of a chrysalis of wage unionism grown to national dimensions. To wit:

"As they build, the SIUs [sic!] would fight day-to-day battles against the capitalist class, including the use of strikes, but their broader organization and solidarity would make strikes more effective. And ultimately, they would employ a different tactic. When a sufficiently large majority of the working class is organized into SIUs, they would be able to effect the change from capitalism to socialism." (The People, September 5, 1992.)

Of the two scenarios, the revisionist is far and away the most outwardly attractive—would workers not jump for joy at the promise of "something new" to help them through a capitalist crunch? Nevertheless De Leonism stresses that "the union principle" (ibid.) upon which to rear a revolutionary structure is not organization for amelioration of conditions (with Socialism "ultimately") but education for a forced march straight to the goal.

Moreover, possible organization of "broader" unions having both an immediate mission—and ultimate mission when "sufficiently large"—assumes there will be an extended period of time for such development. But we are at the end, not the beginning, of the century! Experience and overripe Capitalism have long discredited this gradualist assumption! Not only does wageism’s competition for jobs and fear of job loss militate against the solidarity needed for organization on a "broader" scale
but standing unalterably against piecemeal unification is a wall that the working class can neither scale nor break through. That wall is the State!

The matter of the State is a matter the revisionist program appears to discount. The State is a ruling class organ and as such cannot be expected to dispense even-handed justice in the struggle between classes! What of it? The capitalist must have profit to remain a capitalist; but profit is unpaid labor, hence the more "effective" the strike the less profit can the capitalist squeeze out of the worker. Accordingly, the capitalist State has developed a formidable array of legalese to keep Labor divided! By what logic, therefore, does The People imply that the State would allow the evolution of "broad" unions?

But suppose for the sake of argument that the State did turn a blind eye to the proposed "broad" union-building--would the presumed increased "effectiveness" enable workers to drive a hard bargain with their employers? Even here the cards are stacked against Labor: The People merely forgets what a hard-pressed capitalist outfit can do for itself--such as turn a strike into a lockout, hire scabs, instal labor-displacing technology, or pull up stakes and move to a more profit-oriented environment!

De Leonism builds for victory, not defeat! The revisionist pap that The People propagates is not the stuff from which revolutions are made. For one thing it makes the fatal mistake of underestimating the ability of the capitalist class to thwart a bit by bit fielding of "broader" unions; for another, far from helping workers break free from their conservative, status quo mindset, thence to class-consciousness and preparation for the revolutionary goal, its support of wage unionism can only help further inure them to their wage slave condition.

Where lessons in Socialist Industrial Union-building are to be had, none is more pivotal to eventual success than the hard-won lesson of the I.W.W., and here, none has conveyed the essence of the matter more cogently than Olive Johnson, who with De Leon witnessed the rise and fall of this "socialist" industrial organization. For instance:

"My own position has already been made clear in 1909 in an Open Letter to the American Proletariat, of which De Leon unqualifiedly approved....I said in the Open Letter of 1909:

"All true Socialists hailed the advent of the I.W.W. The revolutionary forces were amalgamating within its folds and it looked for a moment as if Socialist unity of action would be accomplished by the force of logic. All Socialists recognized, more or less clearly, in the I.W.W. the necessary nucleus of the future Industrial Republic. Personal prejudices for a time cleared away and it looked most favorable for a speedy comprehension of revolutionary precepts. But the struggle the I.W.W. passed through during its short existence and the fiasco it now presents demonstrates one point beyond all doubt. A Revolutionary Industrial Union cannot be organized with an uneducated, conservative, or simply rebelliously discontented proletariat. The hope of the revolutionists in the I.W.W. was to get the workers into touch with the movement and then to educate them. It proved a complete failure as in the nature of things it had to fail. The leaders of the American Federation can control the membership and run it to the tune of bossism because the Federation is organized upon a capitalist basis and the ring controls the masses after the order of a class
Government. But the [Socialist] Industrial Union must be democratic in its essence. If a nucleus of revolutionists attempt to control the union it becomes bossism, even if that control is in the direction of good. The end does not, cannot, justify the means because any semblance of bossism paralyzes the very purpose of the organization. On the other hand, if the organization remains democratic, if the control of affairs is entirely given over to an uneducated, conservative mass, it loses at once its revolutionary purpose and character. The very aim and object of the organization is defeated. The only alternative remains that the wage workers must be educated in Socialism before they can be organized upon [Socialist] industrial lines. The revolution cannot be cheated into becoming Socialist. The task before the Socialists is gigantic but it is the only road open." (From Johnson's report as Weekly People editor to the SLP of America's 16th National Convention, 1924.)

"When the workers move to the Industrial Union, they must of necessity move as a mass, as a force large enough to be irresistible, both to attacks from labor fakers and from the employers themselves. When they move, they must move as a revolutionary force, not as a reform force. Reforms, immediate demands, will spell death. More work, better work, more wages or shorter hours must be the goal, but the ownership and control of industry. No union group of untutored workers can ever be held together long enough—if no immediate benefits are procured—for the revolutionary idea to be inculcated. The idea must precede the union. In other words, the revolutionary union must already exist in the workers' minds before it is put on paper or gathered in the shape of an organization." (From the 1935 pamphlet "Industrial Unionism," by Olive M. Johnson.)

A Socialist Industrial Union does not concede capitalist right of possession of industrial property, hence does not bargain with the capitalist class. On the contrary, an integrally-organized SIU is a national weld of revolutionary thought in an industrial form designed to dispossess the said class and conduct production for the benefit of all.

The only meaningful "something now" that moribund Capitalism can afford the working class is more poverty and unemployment. So what can workers do "in the meantime"? They can busy themselves on the political field by spreading the De Leonist program for the abolition of the wages system and the rearing of a Socialist Industrial Commonwealth.

"In the first place, the same hand that reaches out the 'palliative' to the wronged, reaches out the 'palliation' to the wrong. The two acts are inseparable. The latter is an inevitable consequence of the former. Request a little, when you have a right to the whole, and your request, whatever declaratory rhetoric or abstract scientific verbiage it be accompanied with, works a subscription to the principle that wrongs you. Worse yet: the 'palliative' may or may not—and more frequently yes than otherwise—be wholly visionary; the 'palliation,' however, is ever tangible, tangible to feeling as to sight; no visioneriness there. The palliative, accordingly, ever steels the wrong that is palliatedon." --Daniel De Leon

As capitalism reels in the whirlwind of the greatest economic depression since the 1930s, conditions may be ripening for revolution. Still, few workers seem to be conscious of the root cause of their economic ills or the best remedy. Unlike the 1930s, today there is no highly visible example to illustrate the socialist alternative. Communist Chinese society seems so alien to western minds as to be invisible. Americans are wary of the oppression and misery associated with communism. Liberation socialists can gain support only if they keep specific liberating goals central to their revolutionary program. Workers want to know what the post-revolutionary world will be like. Will there be social justice for all? Social justice is the universal goal of all oppressed and exploited people.

Early forms of capitalism were predominately versions of state nationalism and international market imperialism. At the risk of oversimplification, but in the interest of brevity, it may be said that after those early forms came under attack by various struggles for social justice, new forms of capitalism were manufactured in an effort to avoid impending collapse and revolution. The capitalists too, read Marx and sought to alter their future and avoid Marxist predictions. In some sense they succeeded.

Thus liberal democratic capitalism was born in order to give workers, at minimum, a feeling of autonomy while still denying them control of and benefit from their surplus value. The ruling class compromised, if only tacitly, with the progressives, and consented to some immediate demands. It was a shrewd and necessary development.

An improved lifestyle and an end to the misery of subsistence wages were central premises of the early union movement. Those personal and human needs defined social justice for union leaders like Samuel Gompers, who in 1893 questioned:

What does labor want? We want more school houses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more constant work and less crime; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge."

Now that progressive unionism and the socialist alternatives are no longer perceived as a threat, liberal democratic principles have been repudiated and discarded. The dominant form of capitalism is once again a free-market international imperialism. Single multinational cartels exercise control over several nation-states at a time and play worker nationalities against each other in global competition designed to rape workers and their environment and pillage profits to the ends of the earth. One single-issue group here seems to gain at the expense of another racial or regional group there. In the end, cash accumulates in the coffers of the ruling class.

But the contradictions inherent in the system can not be repudiated. Capitalism cannot survive if it eliminates or impoverishes workers, the ultimate source of wealth. The shape of the crisis is clear to many; the solution is obscured by a fog of mystification. Some pundits call for a return to protectionism which is a return to nationalist state capitalism. Others see progressive internationalism, a return to concessions to immediate demands, as the salvation of capitalism.

It is important in this debate to offer workers social justice through socialist internationalism. The mass of workers, poorly educated in the fine points of political economy, don't want more obscure rhetoric. Some of them still believe they can gain happiness
through ownership of consumable commodities. Will they turn from the bankrupt free market to the promises of old-fashioned progressive liberalism like they have in the past?

Progressivism is good. Socialism is better. Instead of looting tennis shoes and VCRs, workers should seize the means of production. Most will only realize that if they can envision what socialism will bring them.

What is social justice? Don't those words express the prosperity, freedom and pleasure that follow from retention of surplus value? Geoffrey Barraclough put the question of social justice central to the international appeal of communism:

At the heart of communism, its driving force both for Marx and also for Lenin, was a deeply ethical concern for social justice, for equality between man and man in the sense of non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, and class. Marx and Lenin spoke for one country against others, but in the name of oppressed groups and classes all over the world, and this universality was beyond doubt a main factor in ensuring their influence.

For me, that concept defines the very nature of internationalism and distinguishes it from the goals of nationalism.

To my eyes, Red, Green and Black are the primary colors, and each political hue is necessary to paint a world of life and truth and avoid a monochromatic mendacity. Green politics, of whatever shade, has the potential to cooperate with complementary political colors. However, the movement must transcend bourgeois concerns and address the social problems of south Los Angeles. What is needed is not another single-issue group or the proliferation of identity politics, but an internationalism that embraces all identities and addresses all issues.

I believe this can be accomplished without diluting the revolutionary message, without setting faction against faction, and without putting an end to criticism. Critical theory is a driving force of the dialectic. Not every solution will automatically fall into place with the success of revolution. The theoretical basis to solve social problems needs continual development. Let us develop socialist internationalism.

Fraternally, ROBERT SEKULA

*Bernard Mandel, Samuel Gompers: A Biography (1963) p.64

**Geoffrey Barraclough, An Introduction to Contemporary History (1964) p.206

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW ADDRESS: Readers of Organized Thoughts will wish to know that Mike Lepore's E-mail address is now mleapore@mcmail.

PAMPHLET SERIES: The Kate Sharpley Library announces a series of low cost anarchist pamphlets. Send for their list to KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1 3XX England.
In the last D.B., the ex-Bolshevik group criticised D.B. for not having taken a position on the collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. Frank Giraud - I would have thought rightly - commented that the fact that no one had bothered to comment on this probably stemmed from the fact that no one thought it necessary to discuss it in D.B. (my emphasis.)

There is the danger that this will be misrepresented to suggest total disinterest. So I think it is necessary to spell out that the reason why there is no need to discuss the fall of Stalinism, in D.B., is that it is assumed that all readers of D.B. are agreed that the Soviet Union was a class society, (there might be debate as to whether the term state capitalist or bureaucratic collectivist was the most apt description,) & that therefore, in class terms there has neither been a revolution, nor a counter-revolution.

No doubt most D.B. writers also write in other papers with wider circulations which reach people who do not necessarily share this assumption. Indeed there might be some purely academic interest in finding out exactly what proportion of D.B. writers have elsewhere written articles on this subject.

Moreover, if one such writer might say why he did not consider the subject merited D.B. attention, (in fact I tore up an article I wrote on it,) not only might one assume that all D.B. readers accept that neither revolution nor counter-revolution has occurred in the ex-USSR; but all D.B. readers are probably also agreed that Stalinism had been so successful in usurping the socialist title, that it was inevitable that the same of the working class would think that they were overthrowing socialism, and there was no possibility that the upsurge of popular anger would lead to a socialist revolution.

In the Thirties - however inadequate the Bolshevist-Leninist programme of opposition to Stalinism was - it was possible to envisage that the bureaucracy would be overthrown by a world revolutionary upsurge. This didn't happen, & by the Fifties, only those who were deliberately blind could have still believed in that programme; East Berlin, Vorkuta, Budapest saw million workers' risings, but they were not waged on a clear-cut class basis, but instead were fought under the banner of socialist democracy; the struggles of Montogomery, (Ala.) & the anti-imperialist but nationalist struggles that were then seen in the West, were equally not parts of a discernible, worldwide, class movement.

The upsurge that was apparent in the West, in the Third World, and in the Eastern European satellite states, in the Sixties, & Seventies, was also mostly under cross-class "democratic" slogans, though there were certainly signs of independent class activity. But since then there has been a decade in which popular resistance in the West has declined, when the Third World has been beaten into line by the main imperial powers.
Dear Comrades

We are very glad that we can send you our first English-language materials this time.

Now the myth of "Soviet socialism", which dominated the 20th century world, has finally collapsed. While it provides a great chance for revolutionary lefts to spread their influence, it also has meant the end of socialism itself for the majority of the working class. The case for the ex-USSR regime has been the most controversial subject for the lefts all over the world. And it has distinguished revolutionary lefts from those who represent the vulgar pseudo "Marxism", Stalinists.

The Soviet Union was no way a socialist society -- this would be an agreement among us the revolutionary lefts. But then what would it have been? A workers' state? State capitalist? We can put any label on it. But the crucial point is that we have to dialectically see the inner "development" of the Soviet society. The birth and death of the Stalinist Russia was no way an accident of history. The revolutionary state born in the 1917 Revolution inevitably developed and transformed itself to its opposite, according to the law of dialectics (and in our analysis this law should also be regarded as that of capitalism). We think that these are the points of which today's revolutionary socialists should first be confirmed.

"Stalinism has finally died" -- Yes, as a regime. However, not as an ideology. The lefts will continuously have to fight Stalinism as an ideology in order to win a successful advance in our struggle for socialism. It is for this purpose for us to send you our materials this time. We hope that they could help your further study on Stalinism.

In addition, unfortunately, Japanese revolutionary socialist movement has been historically isolated from those of the rest of the world. In this sense, as well, we are very glad if our enclosed documents could help your study on Japan and the socialist movement there, and if this could be a beginning for a substantial international solidarity in the future.

We welcome any of your contributions and critiques on the documents. We appreciate if you would agree to our intention. We would also be grateful if you could send us any documents for exchange.

In solidarity

Takeo Shin
for the Socialist Workers Party (Japan)

c/o Mrs. Yoko'o
8-12-2-409
Higashisuna Koto-ku
Tokyo Japan
Dear Friends,

We are the Workers Movement Information Center, KAS-KOR. Our center has been in existence since 1990 and today we are the only organization in the former Soviet Union which collects and distributes information about the workers and independent trade union movements, offers consultation services to workers organizations and new unions and organizes conferences and seminars for activists from the workers movement. We put out a weekly information bulletin about the events going on in the workers movement in our country; through this we have managed to organize a series of defense actions. At present we send out the bulletin for free to workers activists and organizations on the territory of the former Soviet Union. And every week we have a half hour long radio show on Russian radio’s first channel called “Workers Movement Chronicle”.

We also put out a monthly information digest in English, Spanish and French. For now it is the only publication on workers issues published in Moscow and distributed in the West.

Due to ever increasing postal rates we can’t send out material abroad for free, however we guarantee that our digest, as well as the other material that we publish, will be of great interest to you and will help give you an objective view of the workers movement in our country.

Please send money, along with a note marked “KAS-KOR DIGEST” to the following bank account in Paris

CREDIT LYONNAIS
739 98HA depots 215 569L
AGENCE Paris - DAUMESNIL - 456
2, PLACE FELIX-EBOUE, 75012 PARIS

Please fill out the subscription form below and send it to:
KAS-KOR INFORMATION CENTER
P.O. Box 16
Moscow 129642
Russia

KAS-KOR Digest is an 8-page, 8 1/4 by 8 inch periodical packed with information about workers’ struggles in the former USSR. Its purpose is clearly information rather political. The brief articles detail efforts of workers in the former republics to resist the state and privatization and to organize into independent unions.

A one-year (12 issues) subscription to KAS-KOR Digest is $30. Besides the printed copy, available in English, French, and Spanish, readers can get it by fax (give fax number) and by electronic mail (give e-mail address). “All money from subscriptions to KAS-KOR Digest go to the center’s projects. By subscribing, you are helping the development of the independent workers movement in Russia!”
FROM THE GULF WAR TO THE CLASS WAR

There’s a difference between frustration with the law and direct assaults upon our legal system.
George Bush, 3 May 92.

The Los Angeles riot was the biggest in American history. There were of course negative aspects. But fighting between members of the working class dropped during the riot and has subsequently stayed low, despite the best efforts of the police. The rebellion saved lives. Initially, the media were so floored by the uprisings, they produced a wealth of evidence that they were examples of class struggle. Subsequently, they have been trying to make out it was all race.

In a racist society, class struggle often takes an apparently racial form. For example, if a particular ethnic group run the grocers’ stores in poor areas, they are likely to be the first to be attacked. The fact that some rioters express their hatred of being ripped off in racial terms should be opposed, but does not invalidate the basic class nature of the struggle. As Willie Brown, a prominent Democratic Party politician in the State Assembly, and no friend of the class war, put it in the SF Examiner: “For the first time in American history, many of the demonstrations, and much of the violence and crime, especially the looting, was multiracial - blacks, whites, Hispanics and Asians were all involved.” The press all expressed horror that black people burnt down ‘their own’ neighborhoods. But the working class has no neighborhood. These ‘communities’ are always divided up into shopkeepers and proletarians: two classes with irreconcilable interests. The rioters expressed that antagonism against all the talk of neighborhoods and communities, and a black lefty councillor had his office burned down. The old ploy of 1965, ‘Black Owned’, didn’t work. Capitalist enterprises of all races were attacked. Unlike the ’65 Watts revolt, the riots spread over a wide area of LA. More than 5,500 buildings were burned. People shot at police stations. Seventeen government buildings were destroyed. The Los Angeles Times building was attacked and partially looted.

The riot stopped short of a full-scale insurrection. Shortage of guns was certainly not the problem, and probably not absence of organization. The police were easily overwhelmed, and the military did not appear until the rioting had abated. Gang members with megaphones tried to turn the uprising into a war against the rich. “We should burn down their neighbourhoods, not ours. We’re going to take it to Hollywood and Beverly Hills” - man with megaphone, London Independent, 3 May. A few blocks from the mansions of the rich, burnt-out stores testify to how close the riot came to attacking the enemy class directly. But such an attack would have been repelled by police, crack army units, and the rich themselves. Perhaps the rioters realized that the time had not yet come. Class organization needs to develop a lot further before this happens.

“On Sunset Boulevard on Thursday evening, I watched children with mobile phones coordinate the movements of their gangs with the arrival of police and fire trucks, warning looters when police were on their way”. London Guardian, 2 May. The organization which is normally associated with drugs was used by the proletariat to its own ends.

After drawing up a formal truce based on the Camp David agreement, the Crips and the Bloods signed a deal with the National Korean-American Grocers’ Association to employ and train gang members, some in management positions. However, not much has come of this. After the Watts rebellion of 1965, there was still room for reform. A black bourgeoisie was created. Now, this is no longer possible. The state of California is bankrupt, and the federal government is not into giving money to the poor. On the contrary. The August/September welfare checks will be down on the previous ones. The last traditional blue collar auto plant in LA shut in August. Rubber, steel and auto have now all gone. A program known as “Weed n’ Seed” is what is on offer. The Weed part is to get the cops to sell drugs, and arrest people who buy them, then offer them immunity in return for informing. This threat is difficult to resist because of the draconian drug laws, which include imprisonment for a first offence and seizure of all your assets. The Seed part is to introduce “Free Enterprise Zones”, wherein there are no safety or pollution laws, no minimum wage, etc. These enclaves of Third World exploitation are already being built. This is what the bourgeoisie has to offer behind the "rebuild LA" rhetoric.
"The rebellion was community. It was liberation" woman from South Central.

We have done what we can to find out more about what happened and what has happened since. This is some of the information we got from our few contacts in the L.A. area. The rebellion started among black people, spread immediately to involve Latinos in South Central (which is about 42% Latino) and Pico Union, and then brought in unemployed white workers from Hollywood in the north to Long Beach in the south and Venice in the west. East L.A. was only spared because of a massive show of force by the Sherriff’s Department. Everybody came out onto the streets. There was an unprecedented feeling of togetherness. Liquor stores were looted. Before the stores were torched, people got out hoses to defend their houses against the danger of fires spreading. Old people were evacuated. This was a family occasion. Carloads of people turned up at a clothing factory, and men, women and children loaded up and drove off. There were two days of continuous looting, involving thousands of people, mostly black and Latino, with a few white people. The police were nowhere to be seen - "there were no arrests in my area". Essential items were redistributed, otherwise some people would have had nothing. As far as the beating of truck driver Reginald Denny goes, some of the people who beat him had just defended a 15-year old against being beaten by the police. This of course is not being mentioned in the media.

Since the rebellion, young men who have spent their whole lives unable to visit the next street because it is on another gang’s territory can now do so. "As a woman, I feel much safer on the streets". Welfare mothers from 4 different areas have come together to fight the welfare cuts. This is a remarkable new development. When these women demonstrate outside welfare offices, the ruling class knows that behind them stand over 100,000 insurgents. The number of participants is definitely into 6 figures. We know this because there were around 11,000 arrests (5,000 blacks, 5,500 Latinos, 600 whites) and the vast majority of rioters and looters were able to get away scot-free. There has been a downturn in the drive-by gang shootings which plagued the area. Of those killed during the uprising, most were not even participants, they were simply bystanders murdered by the police. Police assassinations have started again. There were much worse incidents, for example, in Compton, police killed two suspects on their knees in cold blood. The police are desperately trying to undermine the gang truce. They need the working class of South Central shooting each other.

There are two theories why the media repeatedly showed the Rodney King video. One is that the ruling class as a whole wanted to provoke a riot in order to justify repression. A more plausible explanation is that forces within the ruling class, opposed to Daryl Gates wanted to generate support for a law which would enable the mayor to control the LAPD Chief. Either way, they got more than they bargained for.

Defendants campaigns are in a terrible state. There is no coordinated campaign based on defending all those arrested. The campaigns which do exist are concerned with particular defendants, or particular aspects of repression, e.g. racism. Liberal lawyers have refused to defend rioters, and concentrated on those arrested on peaceful demos. Anyone in the USA who claims to be a revolutionary should be involved in trying to defend imprisoned insurgents. Failure to do so immensely weakens the struggle, as we discovered during the miners’ strike in Britain during 1984/85. Plea bargaining was used by the state a lot. Those arrested were told they could either plead guilty and be let free with a felony conviction, or wait in prison for a trial. Many took
the former option, which means continual police harassment. Others pleaded guilty because this would result in six months in a county jail, rather than risk the possibility of being found guilty and being exposed to the horrors of a federal penitentiary.

The political significance of the LA uprising can perhaps best be gauged by comparing the riot in San Francisco, which was the second biggest in the country. If this riot had happened without any uprising in LA, it would have been by far the most important in California since the sixties. But the LA uprising put it completely in the shade. In SF, on April 30th, more than a hundred stores were looted and trashed in the downtown area of Market Street. Most of the yuppie shops in the financial district were trashed, and the rich scumbag lair of Nob Hill was invaded and cars smashed up. One of the main hotels had its windows smashed by a gang of youths chanting "The rich must die!". These actions were echoed across the Bay in Oakland and Berkeley.

MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

A comrade in the Bay area describes the events: "I sat up late that night listening to the news reports and call-in talk shows on the radio. Everyone was hysterical. Everyone but a few white simians condemned the not-guilty verdict. But as far as the rioting was concerned, most people I heard, of all colors, and mostly working-class, were concerned with how to stop the violence, with the idea that destruction and appropriation of property is morally wrong, and that we should pray for peace. As the uprising progressed, however, I heard more and more voices declare that their only regret was that "we are doing it to ourselves...we ought to be going into the rich areas!" Throughout the next few days and continuing the vile American tradition, issues of race and class were confused, juggled, mistaken, manipulated, and recuperated on a vast scale. But the media and political circus found it difficult to paint this rebellion in racial terms only. It was so clearly multiracial, so definitively a working-class insurrection in the inner cities that it really has eluded attempts at being characterized as purely racial conflict. Even certain politicians and media creeps were caught admitting that this was CLASS WAR.

At 6:45 I arrived at the State Building. There was a crowd of maybe 300. Speakers were ranting about racism and injustice. Suddenly, from all corners of the gathering, 30 or so very young mostly black and Hispanic youth came charging out of the crowd, down Fell Street toward the Financial District, shouting and roaring and smashing windows. I followed them immediately, as did everyone. It was happening. I now know what is meant by the phrase, 'vanguard of the proletariat'.

Odd bits of construction material on the sidewalks were instantly put to proper use, deposited through shattered glass into the Government offices lining the street. I picked up a 2x4 length of wood and chucked it, screaming "Burn baby burn!". All the young hooligans at the the forefront of the assault had zealously given themselves over to the task of destruction, joy mixed with nervous fear. I was one of the first whites to join them. I recall making eye contact and trying to demonstrate my positive agreement and collusion in their actions. These were young men in Raiders jackets and basketball hats, street youth brought up by "Fuck tha Police" rap culture and the worsening urban conditions of the 80s. They looked hurriedly around as they saw us others not of their crowd or culture join them enthusiastically...and within minutes all social barriers seemed to melt away in the attack on our enemies. Unfortunately, I was soon to be well acquainted with a treacherous element of law-abiding idiots who proved to be enemies within.

The march continued. Several blocks later, the pig scum attempted a diversionary tactic by parking about twenty men along a wall that the march was passing. They were hailed with abuse, but it was here where I first experienced that complacency, that hesitation that our law-enforced life in this society conditions in us. We had this line of cops surrounded. Sure, they were screamed and hissed at, and occasionally whacked with a stick or stone, but how were they able to intimidate us, who completely outnumbered them, into not kicking the shit out of them?

Soon we were on Market Street, the main drag through the Financial/Shopping District. Blocking our path was a thin nervous line of blue. They stopped us for 10 minutes or so, as we teased and poked them with kicks and verbal abuse. Our comrades to the left were invading around them, and before long we were all cutting through and they were shunted to the side. They were left behind as the proletarian army advanced down Commodity-Spectacle Boulevard whooping and revelling in the attack. Two blocks later I came upon a jewelry store which had already taken a great deal of damage. A few of us, 1 and probably almost all blacks, mainly older, stood there pondering the possibilities. Occasional shouts of "The cops are coming!" made us hesitate, but it became obvious that we were safe. The marching crowd seemed to have doubled in size since we began - the street and sidewalks were full
of people. I saw that the main window on the shop was unhinged and only hanging by its top. Picking up a corner, I began to carefully pull it out. I paused and scanned around at a distant cry of "Police!". But it was nothing... behind me a deep, black voice joyfully urged, "Pull it down, white boy, pull it down!" - and I tore the thing onto the pavement. Crash! All around me people rushed into the window, scooping up the goodies.

As I watched the looting a man came up near me and began taking photographs. I approached him, and politely suggested that we shouldn't take pictures because the police might use them to identify people. "But they're looting!!" he responded incredulously... I was hurt. Here I stood, confronted with the very real claws of the leftist counter-revolution. I had given him the benefit of the doubt, hoping against na""ve hope that we were all class-conscious revolutionaries in action. I tried to get some support from the looters against this enemy-within, but no one was listening. My confrontation with this vigilante cop heated up quickly and it looked like he was about to throw a punch when some guys came up from the crowd to break up the fight: "Let's fight them, not ourselves!" they implored... "But he's taking pictures of looters in order to turn them into the police!!" I insisted. Like an angelic chorus of choir-boys, these 'alternative' looking students, or whoever they were, all announced in harmony, "THAT'S OK, WE'RE AGAINST LOOTING HERE!!" speaking for the mob as if they were its appointed moral guardians. You can imagine the demoralizing blow such an encounter could wield. I was alone in the crowd. The looters, my only hope for support, were apparently not concerned for such "political" matters, just wanting to get out with their jewelry scooping as fast as they could. I was helpless. Enraged, I flipped the petty-cops a FUCK YOU salute and struck off for more successful endeavors.

The march had left Market Street, and headed north toward Nob Hill and some other shopping areas. Half a block up an undercover police car was mired inside the crowd, nonchalantly communicating on his radio. I jumped into action. "Hey! It's a pig! Let's get him!" I entreated to the protesters, on whose skin every color in San Francisco seemed represented. Nobody listened. Everyone appeared to ignore me. I looked from face to face, searching frantically for signs of solidarity. Nothing. The cop was making his way to the rear of the crowd. I gave up on seeking support, started kicking at the back of the car out of desperation. It is not everyday that such opportunities avail themselves. But again, nonviolent moral sentiment in the crowd reared its stupid head. "We don't want any of that around here," yelled a big black woman, surrounded by supporters. "Well, I do!" I retorted. "No, you get out of here - this is our day." Her stern glare spoke of deeply held beliefs. So did mine. "That's a racist comment!" And she completed the discussion's degeneration. "No, you're a racist!" No one else in her group, 3 or 4 black men, said a word. As in LA, black churches throughout the SF Bay Area attempted to gather people together into a strictly pacified, grovelling, doggie position. As in LA and elsewhere, they had little success...

The next day there were the mass arrests of about 650 people who were coming to the announced demonstration at 24th and Mission streets... I was among them. We were held for 36 hours and it would've been longer if it weren't for the political rivalry between the liberal city council (who called off the state of emergency - the first since the 1906 earthquake) and the law-and-order mayor, Frank Jordan. The police chief, Richard Hongisto, had also been a mayoral candidate, on the ultra-liberal ticket. One of his first (and last, it was to emerge) acts was the May 1st counter-revolution. It was quite amusing to hear the complaints of the liberal-activist crowd in jail: 'I voted for Hongisto!' There was much talk among the prisoners of the prospects for revolution. Most were totally supportive of notting and looting.

In San Jose, students looted and attacked police cruisers with rocks and bottles. Police were shot at by youths rioting in Tampa, Florida, and in Las Vegas rioters burned a state parole and probation office and shot at police, who just managed to save the casino area from the anger of the mob. Armed confrontations between police and local people continued for the next 18 days. In Seattle, a burning vehicle was pushed into police ranks, the
interstate highway was closed for 2 hours, and there was loads of looting, smashing and burning. Similar events occurred in Atlanta, where tear gas failed to stop the rioters. There were smaller riots in numerous locations across the nation. At a march in New Brunswick of 1,000 people on 1 May a truck driver plowed through a crowd, but quickly retreated as a large angry crowd quickly materialized. It is possible that the attack on the truck driver in L.A. was sparked off by a similar provocation.

Until the uprising, under the law in California the state had to arraign suspects within 72 hours of arrest or let them go. The California State Assembly voted unanimously to "temporarily" extend the arraignment period. The bill was flown on a National Guard airplane to be signed by State Supreme Court Justice Malcolm Lucas. This is the epiphany of democracy in action. In a democracy, the ruling class and their hired orchestras of lackeys brag that the difference between a democracy and a more open form of despotism is that under democracy there are rules that limit the degree to which our rulers can screw us. But when the rules don't work, they show how meaningless they are by changing them.

THE FIRE LAST TIME

The first major uprising of the 1960's was the Watts riot in L.A. in 1965. Hundreds of buildings were burned down by angry black proletarians. It was not simply a question of race, as the Situationist International wrote in December 1965:

"This was not a racial conflict; the rioters left alone the whites that were in their path, attacking only the white policemen; conversely, black solidarity did not extend to black store-owners or even to black cardrivers. Even Martin Luther King had to admit in Paris last October that the riots did not fall within the limits of his speciality: 'They were not race riots,' he said, 'they were class riots.'"

Another major uprising occurred in Detroit in 1967, and in 1968, as the Vietnam-centred crisis of US capitalism reached its climax, the assassination of Martin Luther King became the pretext for a massive wave of riots across the country (he was no longer around to stop them). Tanks had to be used to quell the uprisings. Twenty years later, the proletariat in the USA had been crushed by the Reagan years of immiseration, bans on strikes, racism and atomization. The Vietnam syndrome had apparently been overcome.

That has now changed for the time being. The phrase "class war" was widely used by the insurgents. This was a momentous reassertion of class against the US bourgeoisie's attempt to bury class awareness under the myth that the market and democracy are the end of history. However, it will take more than a few riots to overcome the massive defeat the working class in the US has suffered since the sixties.

(Cont'd from p. 32)

define the USSR and the People's Republic of China as a type of
capitalist states..."

The platform, divided in six chapters with numbered
paragraphe, describes in Chapter 4 its "fundamental concept" of
socialism: "2/ The aim of the SWP is to abolish the private ownership
of all means of production in society--factories, machines, means of
transport, land and others--to put them into joint social ownership
and to plan, organise and execute the social productive process...
"Socialism is the abolition of classes, therefore the state, in the
original sense...will also wither away." The references elsewhere
to "proletarian power (or state)" imply a "left Leninist" orientation
resembling that of the International Communist Current and similar
groups. No price is given for these pamphlets. We suggest that
interested readers send $5 for the three to Takeo Shin, c/o Mrs.
Yoko'o, 6-12-2-408, Higashisuna Koto-ku, Tokyo Japan.

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PERIODICAL LIST

Below is what is meant to be an exhaustive list of English language periodicals which seem to be in the general area of libertarian socialism (although some publishers—and some readers as well—might question inclusion of particular periodicals). The bracketed characterization of the political views of each is tentative and open to negotiation. Any reader who is interested in obtaining a sample copy of any of these might write to the periodical and enclose a dollar bill.

AGAINST SLEEP AND NIGHTMARE, PO Box 3305, Oakland, CA 94609; irregular [Situationist].
A INFOS: BULLETIN OF INFORMATION FROM FRANCE, BELGIUM, GERMANY, NETHERLANDS, GREECE, AND PORTUGAL, Humeurs Noires, F.A., BP 79, F-59370 Mons en Baroeul, France; irreg. [anarchist].
ANARCHY, C.A.L., PO Box 1440, Columbia, MO 65205; quarterly [anarchist].
ANARCHIST STUDIES, White Horse Press, Stroud, Isle of Harris, Scotland PA83 3UD; bi-annual, [anarcho-academic].
ANY TIME NOW, Affinity Place, Argenta, B.C. Canada V0G 1B0; quarterly [anarcho-pacifist].

BAYOU LA ROSE, PO Box 5464, Tacoma, WA 98405; quarterly [anarchist].
BRICK, PO Box 1153, Russellville, AL 35653; irreg. [anarchist].
CIRCULAR LETTER, Motiva Forlag, Postboks 330 Valerenga N-0610, Oslo 6 Norway; irreg. [councilist].
CLASS WAR, PO Box 772, Bristol BS9 1EG, England; irreg. [anarchist].
COMMUNISM, B.P. 54, 1060 Brussels 31, Belgium; irreg. [left leninist].
COMMUNIST BULLETIN, Box CBG, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS1 6DT, England; irreg. [left Leninist].
COUNTER-INFORMATION, P/H C.I., c/o 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh, EH1, Scotland; quarterly [politics unclear].
DELEONIST SOCIETY BULLETIN, P.O. Box 944, Station F, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 2N8; bimonthly [DeLeonist].
DISCUSSION BULLETIN, PO Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501; bimonthly [libertarian socialist].
ECCHANGES, BM Box 91, London WC1 N3XX, England; irreg. [councilist].
EWIU NEWS AND COMMENTS, c/o IWW, 1385 Market St #204, San Francisco, CA 94103; bimonthly [industrial unionist/syndicalist].
FIFTH ESTATE, 4632 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48201; quarterly [anarchist].
FLUX. Box A, The Rainbow Centre, 180 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham, England; irreg. [libertarian socialist].
FREEDOM, Angel Alley, 86b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. England; fortnightly [anarchist].
FREE SOCIETY, c/o Youth Greens, PO Box 7293, Minneapolis, MN 55407; irreg. [left green].
FREEZINE, P.O. Box 1485, Troy, NY 12180; quarterly [anarchist].
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, Education Workers Newsletter, c/o WSA, PO Box 43400, San Francisco, CA 94104; irreg. [syndicalist].
GREATES DEPRESSION ERA NEWSLETTER, PO Box 578842, Chicago, IL 60687; monthly [left Leninist].
GREEN PERSPECTIVES, PO Box 111, Burlington, VT 05402; irreg. [libertarian municipalism/social ecology].
GREEN REVOLUTION, c/o T. Bishop, P.O. Box 645, Bristol BS99 5HO, England; [left green].
HERE AND NOW, PO Box 109, Leeds LS5 3AA, West Yorkshire, England; irreg. [libertarian socialist].
IDEAS & ACTION, PO Box 48400, San Francisco, CA 94140; annual [syndicalist].
INDUSTRIAL WORKER, 1095 Market St. #204, San Francisco, CA 94104: monthly [industrial unionist/syndicalist].

INSTEAD OF A MAGAZINE, PO Box 433, Willimantic, CT 06226: quarterly [personal anarchist].

INTERNATIONALISM, PO Box 288, New York, NY 10018: bimonthly [left Leninist].

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE, [without mentioning name] 551 Valley Rd. #131, Montclair, NJ 07043: quarterly [left Leninist].

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW, PO Box 288, New York, NY 10018 or BM Box 869, London WClN 3XX, England: quarterly [left Leninist].

KAMINIST KRANTI, c/o Bhupendra Singh, 679 Jawahar Colony, Faridabad - 121001, India: irreg. [theoretical marxist].

KAS-KOR DIGEST, P.O. Box 15, Moscow 123642, Russia: irreg [? Labor information].

LEFT GREEN NOTES, PO Box 293, Monte Rio, CA 95462: irreg [left green].

LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW, PO Box 2824, Champaign, IL 61825: biannual [syndicalist].

LOVE & PAGE, PO Box 3, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012: monthly [anarchist].

THE MATCH, PO Box 3488, Tucson, AZ 85722: irreg. [personal anarchist].

MIDNIGHT NOTES, Box 204, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130: irreg. [autonomist].

THE MEANDER QUARTERLY, PO Box 14073, Minneapolis, MN 55414: quarterly [evolutionary anarchist].

NEW UNIONIST, 621 W. Lake St., #210, Minneapolis, MN 55408: monthly [DeLeonist].

NEW SYSTEM, P.O. Box 711, Red Bank, NJ 07701: quarterly [DeLeonist].

ORGANISE!, P.O. Box 5, Derry, Ireland, BT48 9JL: quarterly [anarchist].

ORGANISE!, c/o 84B Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX, England: irreg. [anarchist].

ORGANIZED THOUGHTS, RR#1 Box 347L, Stamfordville, NY 12581: or melopore@msn.com: irreg [DeLeonist]. (Note new address)

THE POSTAL HARDHITTER, P.O. Box 152, Minneapolis, MN 55458: irreg. [industrial unionist].

PRACTICAL ANARCHY, 18 M. Butler St. #2, Madison, WI 53703: irreg [personal anarchist].

THE PEOPLE, 914 Industrial Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94303: fortnightly [DeLeonist].

PROCESSED WORLD, 44 Sutter St., #1829, San Francisco, CA 94104: irreg. [anarchist].

REBEL WORKER, PO Box 82, Broadway 2007, Sydney, Australia: monthly [syndicalist].


REGENERATION, PO Box 24115, St. Louis, MO 63130: quarterly [left Leninist].

SINews, 131 Spencer Place, Chapeltown, Leeds, LS7 4DV England: irreg. [syndicalist].

SMILE, PO Box 3502, Madison, WI 53704: irreg. [situationist].

SOCIAL ANARCHISM, 2743 Maryland ave., Baltimore, MD 21218: irreg [anarchist-academic].

SOCIALIST STANDARD, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN, England: monthly [world socialist].

SOCIALIST STUDIES, 71 Ashburne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB, England: irreg. [world socialist].

SOCIETY AND NATURE, PO Box 637, Littleton, CO 80160: three times per year [academic social ecology].
SOLIDARITY, c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E6 2KA, England; quarterly [libertarian socialist].
THE SPANNER, BM Sprenger, London WC1N 3XX, England; irregular [libertarian socialist].
SUBVERSTON, Dept. 10, 1 Newton St., Manchester M1 1NW, England; irregular [councilist].
SYNDICALIST BULLETIN, PO Box 102, Hull, England; irregular [syndicalist].
WILDCAT, BM CAt, London WC1N 3XX England or PO Box 3305 Oakland, CA 94609; quarterly [left Leninist].
WILDCAT, PO Box 40485, San Francisco, CA 94140; monthly [industrial unionist].
WORKERS’ INFO-RAG, PM c/o Zimasdad Press, GP0 Box 1255, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028; irregular [situationist].
WORKERS SOLIDARITY, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland; quarterly [anarchist].
WORKERS SOLIDARITY, P.O. Box 40400, San Francisco, CA 94140; bimonthly [syndicalist--WSA/IWA].
WORKERS’ VOICE, BM Box CWO, London WC1N 3XX, England; monthly [left Leninist].
WORLD REVOLUTION, BM Box 889, London WC1N 3XX, England; monthly [left Leninist].
WORLD SOCIALIST REVIEW, PO Box 405, Boston, MA 02272; irregular [world socialist].

SHORT REVIEWS

NEW SYSTEM. New System, published quarterly by the Industrial Union Party (IUP), replaces the larger and less frequently published Socialist Republic. The first eight-page issue, Fall 1992, contains articles on the 1992 presidential campaign, a review of the book Four Hours in My Lair, an article on art and politics, and information on the IUP and its publications. A four issue sub is $4 from Industrial Union Party, P.O. Box 711, Red bank, NJ 07701.

GREEN REVOLUTION. Issue 3 of QR, which describes itself as “A revolutionary newspaper working for ecological survival, human liberation, and direct action,” says, “Consumer-capitalism is destroying the earth and cannot meet human needs,” “Capitalism turns people into commodities...,” “The ecological crisis demands a revolutionary perspective,” and “Change cannot come from above.” This issue contains an interview with Janet Biehl, an article critical of deep ecology, several articles on the theme of this issue, “Women and Revolution,” as well as letters and reviews. 16 pages quarterly, L4 ($8?) for ten issues from T. Bishop, PO Box 845, Bristol BS99 5HO, England.

GOODBYE TO THE UNIONS: A CONTROVERSY ABOUT AUTONOMOUS CLASS STRUGGLE. This pamphlet carries the texts of a debate on the subject of unions between the councilist Cajo Breidel, who writes for the Dutch paper Daad en Gedachte, and Davis Douglass, a British miners’ union functionary, who read an English language summary of Breidel’s book Autonomous Class Struggle in Great Britain, interpreted it correctly as an attack on business unionism, especially the miners’ union, and waxed wrath, as they say. It contains an introduction by Henri Simon of Echanges et Mouvement, a more accurate summary by Breidel, Douglass’s “Some Thoughts as I Read the Pamphlet...” Breidel’s answer, and an article, “Rise and Decline of the Shop Stewards
Movement as a Mediating Force" by Theo Sander. The major point of the pamphlet is that conventional unionism has failed to promote the interests of workers even in its minimal objective: maintaining their standard of living. 43 pages, 90p ($3) from Exchange et Mouvement, BM Box 91, London WC1 3XX, England.

LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION. M. Lenin. This is a recent reprint of the July 1918 British Socialist Party’s publication. According to the introduction, “The RSISLP [British Section International Socialist Labor Party], the RSP, and the Tait Memorial Fund were unable, on account of lack of funds, to print the three articles written by Lenin in the blazing heat of the Revolution and immediately published as LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION but suppressed afterwards.” Besides the 27-page pamphlet with the introduction by the BSP, this reprint contains the publishers’ four-page introduction, one part of which is headed, “SLP and the Russian Revolution.” L2 ($4) from the Tait–Foulis Fund, 4 Oak St., Leedy LS27 7G6, England.

THE THEORY OF STATE CAPITALISM: FROM THE STALIN REGIME TO LIBERALIZATION (81pp); THE THEORY OF STATE CAPITALISM WITHOUT SUBSTANCE AS CAPITALISM: A MARXIST CRITIQUE OF TONY CLIFF’S ‘THEORY OF BUREAUCRATIC STATE CAPITALISM’ (18pp); and PLATFORM OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY (JAPAN) (16pp). These are the three documents mentioned in Takeo Shin’s letter on page 22. All are printed as 8 1/2 by 5 1/2 pamphlets and were sent to DB from England together with the covering letter. They apparently represent the first large-scale effort by the Socialist Workers Party (Japan) (SWPJ) to reach English language speakers. The titles of the first two pamphlets seem to speak for themselves. This short review will concentrate on the Platform.

From the Preface: “Founded on May 5th, 1984, the SWP has a long ‘prehistory’ dating from the Hungarian anti-Stalinist struggle in 1956 and the 1960 anti-AMCO campaign (against the Japan-US Security treaty). The SWP has sharp differences with both the existing left parties (The Communist Party of Japan [JCP] and the Social Democratic Party of Japan [JSDP] and the ‘new left’ groups....Specifically we

(Cont’d on p. 26)