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VIEWPOINT**

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PLAN COLOMBIA: OPERATION WITHOUT ANAESTHETIC

plus

INTERVIEW WITH FARC COMANDANTE

DOSSIER: TROTSKY 60 YEARS ON

PHILIPPINES: NOTES ON THE NATIONAL SITUATION

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For independent politics

SOLIDARITY is endorsing two presidential candidates for the November 2000 election as alternatives to the capitalist parties and the politics of unchecked corporate power.

DAVID McReynolds, the presidential candidate for the Socialist Party USA, is deservedly among the most respected veterans of the U.S. peace movement. A tireless campaigner against militarism and an activist in the gay/lesbian rights struggle as well as a long-time champion of democratic socialist principles, McReynolds will offer the clearest voice for a socialist alternative in this election. At the same time, we feel that Ralph Nader's campaign on the Green Party ticket represents the potential for a big step forward toward a new politics, independent of the capitalist class whose interests reign supreme in this country. Nader is not and makes no claim to be a socialist; but the Greens' vision of an ecological and democratic world ultimately entails an assault on the institutions of capitalism and the forging of a working-class alternative.

Ralph Nader is waging a vigorous campaign in 2000 and this campaign appears promising in two ways. First, his message centers on a powerful critique of the strangulation of democracy by corporate control of the political process, of the media and of all economic institutions, and the extension of corporate power throughout the world under the guise of "globalization." This critique resonates with the anger of the tens of thousands who mobilized in the streets of Seattle and Washington, D.C. against the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. It speaks to millions of workers watching their conditions of life and work deteriorate. This critique also unifies millions concerned with growing inequality and environmental destruction, including the effects of global warming, genetic engineering of food and the loss of biodiversity. All share a common belief that the corporate-dominated political process offers no real solutions.

Second is the development of a "Labor for Nader" movement, an idea endorsed

and promoted by leading figures in the Labor Party. (The Labor Party is a new party, whose founding convention was held in 1996, sponsored by a number of international unions and local labor councils.) While the Labor Party itself is not running candidates, "Labor for Nader" committees would create an organizing vehicle through which labor activists can directly challenge the Democratic Party's stranglehold on working-class electoral loyalties. In endorsing both the McReynolds and Nader campaigns, Solidarity is expressing a view that a socialist alternative to a rotting capitalist system, and a populist-democratic critique of the capitalist parties reaching a potentially wider audience, both have a positive role to play. We also recognize that there are weaknesses that can prevent the Nader campaign from realizing its potential.

Against the capitalist parties

The presidential elections in the year 2000 demonstrate the politics of big business. While George W. Bush poses as an outsider to the Washington beltway politician Al Gore, the fact is that both are second or third-generation politicians with the elite background, resources, contacts and money it takes to organize a mainstream campaign. More than six months before the election date Bush has reported raising \$84 million for his campaign. Gore is close behind with \$74 million. These figures, of course, do not include the unregulated "soft money" that the Democrats and Republicans will raise for the presidential campaign. While in 1996 "soft money" totaled \$262 million, this year campaign watchers expect it to total \$500-750 million. Various proposals to reform campaign financing have gone nowhere because Congress, too, has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo — more than a year before the elections the average congressional incumbent already has stockpiled \$350,000 for his/her next race.

THE outcome of the November presidential elections in the USA remains uncertain. What is certain is that the victor will be a vacuous non-entity in hock to the corporate agenda. We print below a statement by the US socialist organization Solidarity endorsing two candidates with a different agenda, Ralph Nader and David Macreynolds. ★

In any case, corporate funding is the symptom, not the disease. The Democratic and Republican parties are capitalist parties, the political vehicles through which corporate America gets all its welfare from the state, organizes sectors of the population behind corporate interests — including imperialist wars — and promotes various democratic illusions. They are the parties of profit, racism and war. This is why we reject supporting their candidates; a vote for the lesser evil is a vote for the system.

Growing numbers of people today recognize that the government is mostly interested in meeting the needs of the corporations, not enacting legislation in the interests of the ordinary working person. The most significant pieces of legislation passed under the Clinton administration were the North American Free Trade Agreement, the 1996 Crime Bill, an end to welfare and deregulation of the communications industry. Thus the man who wanted to be remembered like FDR, when he first arrived at the White House, will be remembered as the president who completed the Bush agenda.

Despite a "robust" economy, the gap between the rich and the rest of the population is widening and the rate of children living in poverty is rising. But neither Gore nor Bush Jr. talk about how the government could begin to reverse these trends, and given their financial base, why would they?

Meanwhile Patrick Buchanan-whose program is to mobilize white working-class anger against the wrong targets: other nations (especially non-white ones), immigrants, people of color, women who dare to exercise reproductive choice or to be economically independent — is building base in the Reform Party (or what's left of it). In a climate of insecurity and political alienation, the kind of far-right pseudo-

populism represented by Buchanan has the dangerous potential to move from the fringes of politics toward mass appeal.

Independent political action

In the United States, where no big labor party exists and where most top labor movement officials are actively incorporated into the Democratic Party, Solidarity looks for all openings to break the two-party logjam and move in the direction of genuinely independent politics even though each and every one of these efforts faces long odds against success. Even when independent candidates win, they may be intimidated by the power and money of the two-party system. It is clear that we cannot predict which particular opening will ultimately be successful.

Unless we begin to build it, there will never be a party that can represent working people's interests. That's why we have supported the Labor Party and participate in building its membership base and activity. That's why we have supported the Greens in legislative races and the presidential campaigns of Ron Daniels in 1992 and Ralph Nader in 1996 — despite the limitations of those resource-starved campaigns. On the other hand, we are critical of third parties in name only. For example, the Working Families Party that is on the New York state ballot is essentially a second line for the Democratic Party.

Weaknesses of the '96 Nader campaign need not be repeated. In the 2000 elections Nader's core message of resisting corporate capital's assault on democracy and human dignity needs to be inseparably linked to human rights and social justice issues: the criminalization of a generation of youth; the obscenity of the death penalty; the never-ending assault on reproductive choice and abortion rights; the roll-back of affirmative action; foreign wars masked as humanitarian intervention.

Another question facing this campaign is the danger of a nationalist-protectionist response to "globalization," rather than one based on international solidarity. If this campaign is to offer a clear alternative to Bush-Gore and Buchanan, it must not echo the America-First, "American Jobs for American Workers" rhetoric of Buchanan or much of the AFL-CIO leadership. It is not Chinese (or Mexican or Indian or Haitian or African) workers who are driving down the wages and working conditions of working people in this coun-

try. It is the U.S. economic elites — the corporate ruling class — in partnership with the elites of China and elsewhere, who are driving down conditions and rights for workers everywhere.

The Nader campaign is stressing an alliance of blue-collar workers and green opponents of corporate global capitalism. Invoking the message of the Seattle demonstrations against the WTO, Nader introduced an extensive "blue-green" agenda that pointed to core labor rights and environmental safeguards as central issues in his campaign. His campaign will also back single-payer health care reform and other issues that the Labor Party has focused on. This is an important beginning.

Moving forward

We in Solidarity value highly those democratic rights that people in this country do enjoy. But rights are respected under capitalism not because of the sentiments of politicians, but only as long as people are ready to fight for them. That's why we place such an emphasis on building mass movements.

As socialists we believe there are inevitable inherent shortcomings in even the best efforts to "recover" democracy within a capitalist system. The full development of democracy requires a fundamental and revolutionary change in the structure of power, replacing capitalism with workers' control of the economy and democratic planning for human needs, not profit. No electoral campaign can accomplish such a change, which can only be brought about through a powerful revolutionary movement. But this year we see greater opportunities for an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans than there have been for perhaps two decades. This can help us to expand the democratic space that does exist within U.S. society.

Why? The WTO events showed clearly the bipartisan nature of the ruling class's globalization policies and its contempt for ordinary people. Seattle put protest and opposition to the powers-that-be on the map once again, raising the hope that ordinary people can throw a monkey-wrench in the powerbrokers' plans. McReynolds and Nader, each in their own way, will reflect that opposition to the corporate elite, to the business-as-usual candidacies of Gore-Bush and to Buchanan's reactionary populism. ★

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Alex Callinicos

THE blockade was organised under the general slogans of "From Seattle to Melbourne, fight corporate greed!" and "Stand up for global justice and the environment!" The S11 Alliance, the umbrella organisation behind the protest, largely kept its promise to "Shut down the World Economic Forum". As one tired, but elated, picket said in a spirit of friendly internationalist rivalry: "Hey, Seattle! Melbourne's right up there with you!"

It rained, on and off, throughout the three days, sometimes torrentially, and a cold wind blew off Port Phillip Bay, but neither that, nor the brutality of 2,000 police and a small army of security guards, could dampen the enthusiasm of the tens of thousands of protestors. The Forum was effectively blocked off for the duration, and its gatherings sparsely attended. Small wonder that Australia's right-wing Prime Minister, John Howard, looked more than usually petulant, and Microsoft's Bill Gates looked glum. For their part, the protestors enjoyed a huge range of bands, performers, giant puppets and other entertainment that compensated to some degree for the weather and police violence.

Appropriate location

The Forum was held, most appropriately, in the ugly skyscraper tower of the Crown Casino on the Yarra bank: an apt symbol of the corporate cowboys and bribed intellectuals who make up the WEF. Crown's owners include Australia's richest man, Kerry Packer, who recently lost US\$34 million in a single weekend at Las Vegas. Packer will be even further out of pocket after S11. Crown was forced to suspend operations for the duration of the conference, and admits to having lost \$10 million in takings. But more than Crown's profits have taken a hammering. Rumour has it that the WEF organisers are so demoralised that they are considering holding future events by teleconference rather than brave the wrath of a new generation of anti-capitalist campaigners.

The success of the S11 blockade shows that the world-wide upsurge of revulsion against capitalist globalisation that began last year at Seattle is set to continue. Tens of thousands of demonstrators sealed off the conference and effectively disrupted its proceedings. All the entrances to the conference venue were blocked by pickets. Ironically, a four-metre high chain mesh

A stunning success

THE three-day blockade of the Asia-Pacific wing of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Melbourne on September 11, 12 and 13 was a stunning success.

JOHN TULLY

fence erected by the police to keep out protestors also served to keep out WEF guests and personnel, and its metre-high concrete base was convenient for the spray painted slogans of the demonstrators. A number of high-ranking conservative political figures tried to run the gauntlet but turned back. The premier of West Australia, Charles Court, a virulent opponent of Aboriginal land rights, was trapped for an hour in his car by a group of Aborigines. "This is the way you've had us for 200 years," jeered one burly Aborigine at the clearly discomfited politician. "Now you know how it feels."

The S11 blockade culminated in a "victory march" around the central business district, with around 15,000 protesters in a jubilant mood. The blockaders had maintained the pickets around the clock for more than three days, despite massive police brutality and uncertain weather. The march was a gigantic anti-capitalist carnival, with drums, whistles and ear-splitting rap music. However, the shouts of "shame!" from thousands of throats whenever the police were spotted underlined the serious purpose of the marchers and their determination not to be intimidated

Giant banner

A feature of the march was a gigantic banner inscribed with messages of solidarity from individuals and groups (including supporters of the Fourth International) who took part in the blockade. The banner will go to Prague for the S26 protests against the World Trade Organisation there: a symbol of the anti-capitalist internationalism that has taken root around the world since Seattle.

The march wound through the city streets past the offices and shops of such transnational icons as Nike (closed for the duration of S11), McDonalds, the banks, and the Melbourne Stock Exchange; all heavily guarded by riot police. True to his form as an unmitigated liar, deputy police commissioner Neil O'Loughlin insisted

that the marchers would "ransack" the city. Like all of his other ridiculous allegations, it proved baseless.

The blockade was organised by a loose coalition of forces, including socialists, anarchists, trade unionists, environmentalists, indigenous people, church groups and campaigners against Third World debt. The umbrella group, the S11 Alliance, was responsible for the coordination of events, but members of a bewildering number of "affinity groups" essentially did their own organising and came together with others on the days of the protest.

Inspiring

One of the most inspiring aspects of the whole struggle was the relative youth of many of the blockaders. Many thousand high school students attended some or all of the protests, giving fresh hope to older generations of activists that the struggle for a better world will continue. Although reactionary media and political figures attacked S11 for "involving children", these young people refused to be patronised and made it clear that they knew what they were fighting for.

Government and media hypocrisy was shown when many of these young people were bashed by the police - we hear no cries of "child abuse" from moralising newspaper editors and shyster politicians. Dozens were hospitalised after unprovoked attacks by the notorious "Swat Squad", the paramilitary tactical response unit. The police rode their horses into crowds, savagely batoned passive demonstrators, and even stamped on heads in a rampage of violence. In one of the worst instances, the police bashed pickets early in the morning when other gates were unattended. Several hundred police suddenly erupted through the gates, catching a much smaller number of pickets by surprise from the rear, and flailing indiscriminately with their fists, boots and three-foot-long batons.

All in all, several hundred demonstra-

tors were injured, compared with a handful of police. The attack followed demands by WEF officials the day before that the police get tough with the pickets. In another incident, the police turned fire hoses on demonstrators around 3am, with temperatures around 4 degrees Celsius, presumably in order to amuse themselves, as the pickets were sitting down with their backs to the police.

There were also reports that police used capsicum gas spray and many police officers removed their identification badges before assaulting demonstrators. In fact, the police were sometimes so hyped up that they assaulted journalists and damaged their cameras. There is also evidence of plainclothes police acting as provocateurs. The writer's son, a 15-year-old high school student witnessed the arrival of a vanload of provocateurs at one picket. These individuals threw tin cans and other objects at security guards before being warned off by S11 organisers, luckily before the police could arrive to "restore order".

Discipline

It is to their credit that despite police violence, the discipline of the protestors held. S11 had promised that the protest would be non-violent, and the promise was kept. Pickets would link arms or sit down in front of the gates to prevent the so-called "delegates" from entering Crown Casino, but they would not fight back. Injured pickets were thus particularly incensed by the attitude of the Victorian state premier, Steve Bracks, who praised police for their conduct whilst condemning the alleged violence of the pickets. Bracks brought enormous pressure to bear on the leadership of the trade unions to boycott the S11 blockade, but was only partially successful. One of the highlights of the three days was a series of marches on the Casino by thousands of construction and metal workers.

Predictably, the bourgeois media attempted to whip up hysteria in the weeks leading up to S11. They told and retold the big lie that demonstrators had been responsible for the violence last year's demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle. The implication was that the same would happen in Melbourne.

Yet, for all of this hysterical hype, the demonstrators remained uncooperatively

non-violent and the police were able to arrest only 12 people. The non-violent tactics were very successful, however. Hundreds of the so-called "delegates"¹ were unable to get into the conference. Many others, who had arrived earlier, were unable to leave the premises except by helicopter and attendance at meetings was well-down, with TV coverage showing dispirited clumps of suits in echoing halls. It must have rankled for these rich and powerful individuals to have to creep about under massive police protection, bleating about being "held to ransom by unrepresentative minorities".

In fact, it is organisations such as the WEF which are the real minorities, and which act against the interests of the overwhelming majority of people on the planet. Although Forum bigwig Claude Smadja claimed that the WEF has no real power, it is in fact an immensely powerful rich man's club. The WEF is made up of representatives of the richest and most powerful groups in the world. Its members include the CEOs of the top 1000 transnational corporations, besides influential political leaders, tame academics and gurus of neoliberalism, along with representatives of the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, the Asian Development Bank, and the IMF.

Global outlook

It was founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab as the European Management Forum, but was renamed in 1987 "to reflect its increasingly global outlook", according to WEF literature. The WEF's members are divided into a number of areas: media, mining, textiles, pulp and paper, and so on. They include corporations such as Exxon, Chase Manhattan Corp, De Beers Mining, Rio Tinto, Toyota, Western Mining Corporation, Turner International, Royal Dutch Shell, Microsoft, McDonalds, Monsanto, Boeing and Nike. Readers will be aware of the anti-social, even criminal activities of many of these corporations.

The WEF meets annually at the Swiss alpine resort town of Davos. There, amidst the kind of luxury that would seem like science fiction to the huge mass of the dispossessed and the hungry of the world, the WEF makes decisions which affect every citizen of the planet: and without being elected by, or accountable to, anyone save the shareholders, the corporations and the

mega-rich. Contrary to the disingenuous claims of Claude Smadja, the WEF admits that its annual Davos meeting is "now considered the global summit which defines the political, economic and business agenda for the year."

WEF literature also admits that the organisation spurred the launch of the Uruguay Round which led to the replacement of GATT by the World Trade Organisation in 1995. It is also unquestionable that the WEF is instrumental in setting the agenda of the WTO Millennium Round. This latter round of talks aims to renegotiate the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) "with a view to achieving a progressively higher level of liberalisation" of the burgeoning service sector.

Agenda

The WEF's agenda, as the S11 Alliance has pointed out, is: "massive global poverty; ever-increasing inequalities between rich and poor; attacks on workers' wages, conditions, occupational health and safety standards; and widespread environmental and human rights abuses." It is an agenda of unchecked corporate power that quite literally means death for the poorest people on the planet.

It means the plundering of the assets of whole peoples in the name of privatisation and deregulation. It means a winding back of human progress in education and health care for billions of people.

Far from capitalist globalisation being a "rising tide that will lift all boats", it will sink those of the poor and fill those of the rich with more booty than the pirate and slave ships of old. Yet, as the protests in Seattle, Davos, Washington DC, and now Melbourne show, they face stiffening resistance from workers, students, farmers, environmentalists and many others.

This movement is broad, pluralist, democratic, anti-capitalist and internationalist in inspiration. It will prove wrong those bourgeois ideologues such as Francis Fukuyama who proclaimed free-market capitalism as "the end of history". The new generation coming into struggle will not settle for such hollow clichés, but will fight for a better world. Margaret Thatcher be warned: *there is an alternative!* ★

1. The use of the word "delegate" is a corruption of the language in the same way that the neoliberals have hijacked words such as "reform". Delegates are elected representatives and as such accountable. The participants in the forum are unelected and unaccountable. They are the appointees of transnational corporations in the main.

Plan Colombia: operation without anaesthetic

IT amounts to much more than a confrontation between “two political-military states” (the one governed by president Andrés Pastrana, and the other being built by the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Army of The People — henceforth FARC). It is a warlike escalation, supported by the United States. On Wednesday August 23, US President Clinton approved an advance payment of \$1,319 million for Plan Colombia. In reality, he signed a declaration of war and a commitment from imperialism to finance, arm and command that war. The US decision to relaunch a militarist strategy threatens to set the region on fire.

ERNESTO HERRERA

VIETNAM, El Salvador, the Balkans... Sierra Leona. They are not simple metaphors. In Colombia there is a war and any hypothesis comes within the field of the probable. The victims (dead, wounded, kidnapped, disappeared) are counted in the tens of thousands, the “displaced” (in the majority peasants) at almost a million; the country fears one of the worst economic crises of the past century with an unemployment rate of over 20% and with capital fleeing in fright. The human rights organizations denounce a systematic massacre and a paramilitary operation of “social cleansing” on a huge scale. Plan Colombia “Vietnamizes”, definitively, a conflict that has already lasted forty years. During his visit to the city of Cartagena, Bill Clinton said, “Colombia is not Vietnam, and this is not imperialism”. Then what is it?

Model

A number of analysts and diplomats have begun to give an approximate answer: the model being applied is that of Central America in the 1980s and 1990s. In particular El Salvador, where the United States did not send troops but organized the counterinsurgency to defeat the revolutionary process led by the *Frente*

Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). The Salvadoran civil war ended with the peace accord signed between the FMLN and the rightist government of Alfredo Cristiani in January 1992.

However, Colombia is not El Salvador. In that small Central American country, there was an army of 60,000 well-trained soldiers and the FMLN was without strategic backup after the Sandinistas had lost power in Nicaragua. In Colombia, the army (130,000 soldiers, of whom less than 25,000 are deployed in the fight against the guerrillas) faces a powerful enemy made up of more than 20,000 combatants distributed across 70 military fronts that can count on an organized social base of 60,000 people. Simultaneously, both the FARC, and to a lesser extent the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), maintain extensive liberated zones.

Total autonomy

In addition, they finance themselves from sources that allow them millionaire incomes and total political and military autonomy: taxes collected from narcotics traffickers to protect the cocaine cultures, taxes on the oil companies, and the takings from the kidnapping industry. Moreover,

the country covers some 1.2 million square kilometers, has three mountain ranges and borders with Panama, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil. The Amazonian forest is no-man’s land and there the guerrillas can count on a logistic rearguard.

For Eduardo Pizarro, Colombian specialist in military subjects, “If the Colombian war becomes serious, we will finish neither like El Salvador nor like Vietnam but like Sierra Leona, a struggle of all against all” (*Clarín*, Buenos Aires, September 3, 2000). Involving thousands of “armed actors”, the paramilitaries, guerrillas and narcotics traffickers.

Gabriel Marcella, a Colombian strategist who teaches in the Military School of the United States, foresees the “possible Balkanization” of the Andean region if the intervention is not reversed. Even the Pentagon fears that Colombia is a war that cannot be won.

Negotiating card

In any case US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering insists that Plan Colombia, in its military component, is a negotiating card with the FARC. That is, to force the main armed organization to enter the labyrinth of reciprocal concessions. Nevertheless, in an official communiqué on August 23, the command of the FARC said: “As Plan Colombia is also an attempt of US dissuasion directed at the insurgency, we can guarantee that the FARC, supported by the people, is ready to withstand any ultimatum”.

It was presented on October 20, 1999 by Republican senators DeWine, Grassley and Coverdell, before session 106 of the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Congress. Under the name of “Plan for peace, prosperity, and the strengthening of the state”, the original title of draft law S1758 Alliance Act, or Plan Colombia... as it is known in this neck of the woods.

Objective: to associate the internal war of Colombia and the drug trafficking networks of the Andean region as a threat to the United States. How much does it cost? A provisional estimate: \$7,500 million, with 80% of the first payment (\$1,300 million) consisting of military equipment, cooperation in intelligence, training of two new antidrug battalions and two helicopters, Blackhawk and Huey.

“The Plan aims to intervene in three geographic areas: most important would be



the department of the Putumayo, the most conflictual border zone with Ecuador. It is assumed that operating here, in combination with the army, are the paramilitary, extreme right-wing "self-defence" groups, part of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and Bloque 48 of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)".

Supply

Also, "the border province of Sucumbíos (Ecuador) is seen as the region that supplies all these forces. The rest of the military operations would concentrate in the center and the southwest of the country. But in the geopolitical approach of the Pentagon the port of Manta (province of Manabí), located on the Ecuadorian Pacific coast, is the key component of Plan Colombia.

As invasion by land is ruled out for the time being, the tendency is to carry out the intervention by air and sea, as in the last Balkan war. There is then the threat that the base at Manta is something more than "a point of logistical support". And in fact, Plan Colombia has assigned a role to it similar to that enjoyed by the military base at Palmerola (Honduras) in the war against Nicaragua and El Salvador." (Jose Steinsleger, articles in the Quito newspaper *Hoy*).

In a hearing before the Senate, general Charles Wilhelm, head of the Southern Command, explained that the United States sees Manta as "... the suitable site to replace the capacities lost after leaving the Howard airbase (the Panama Canal)". According to Wilhelm, "the importance of Manta is that it is the only site that will

give us the operating range we need to cover all Colombia, all Peru and the cocaine-cultivating areas of Bolivia".

Crisis

On the other hand, the economic and political crisis in Ecuador, with more than 80% of the population mired in poverty, means that any economic aid from outside is seen as manna from heaven. In this sense, of the cheque for \$1,300 million that Clinton presented to the Colombian president Andrés Pastrana, \$47 million is for the "functions of intelligence and monitoring of Ecuador".

"Plan Colombia seeks the isolation of the guerrillas in those zones of the southwest where it is possible to detect them by means of the modern apparatuses of intelligence and to destroy them without need of a land invasion... the agricultural imports of Colombia have increased by 90%, which represents a dramatic blow for employment in the rural areas, where the war is centred. And the exodus has begun of the Colombians who live in the zone towards Ecuador, where day by day hundreds of people are arriving."(ibid)

For Heinz Dieterich Steffan, the level of military intervention by the United States in Colombia is equivalent already, "to that of its intervention in South Vietnam in 1963, in Nicaragua in 1983 and El Salvador in 1984" ("La Telaraña del Imperio" *El Siglo*, Santiago, December 18, 1999). And the country has become the third largest recipient of US military aid, behind Israel and Egypt.

Colombian specialists agree that the approval of the aid package of aid threatens to break the fragile equilibrium of the

peace process. They insist that the Colombian government lacks the administrative and institutional capacity to hand the two million dollars that it will receive every day, and that it is very probable that the drug trafficking will not end, but move to other regions of the country.

Of Marxist origin, the FARC has experienced an impressive growth in recent years. Its military infrastructure has transformed it into a truly mobile army. From "hit and run" operations they have acquired an operational capacity enabling them to maintain prolonged fighting, take towns, resist and strike back hard at the official army. This has given them an effective presence and real power in more than half of the country and led them to define themselves as a "state within a state".

Demilitarized zone

That status was reinforced when, during the peace negotiations with the government of Pastrana, the FARC was able to impose a demilitarized zone (November 1999) of 44,000 square kilometers in the south of the country. There, the FARC constructs its "national project". This is a experience without many antecedents in Latin America.

They have attained something similar to sovereignty, if we define this as absolute authority over a territory. They dictate laws, they administer justice, they assure services, they organize the educational system, and they give support to thousands of coca farmers, who they protect from the antidrug units of the army and the Drugs Enforcement Agency.

The FARC has constructed something very similar to a state. They have a system of independent government, a flourishing economy and a control over the population, although conflicts with the social movements take place.

It is not surprising then that it does not wish to abandon all this in order to integrate itself into a political system and a state that is falling apart and whose legitimacy is at rock bottom. On the other hand, the insurgent organizations maintain the fresh memory of how the integration of the *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (M-19) and the *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación* (FPL) after the previous peace accords ended up: the murder of their main leaders and thousands of militants... and the cooption of a few of them to supervise the massacre.

★ Colombia

In the strategic horizon of the FARC "the conquest of the power for the construction of socialism" remains. If the government of Pastrana wants peace, it will have "to abandon the neoliberal model", to repudiate the external debt and to create a more redistributive economic framework. Such demands are a blow for the oligarchy and difficult to contemplate.

Obviously, the armed revolutionary movement is the political expression of a radical proposal. That raises the destruction of the bourgeois State. The FARC have never lost sight of that objective, and they pursue it through negotiations or by "military means". Peace, then, based on mutual recognition and the balance of powers is impossible unless the creation of a virtual "South Colombia" governed by the FARC is accepted. Faced with this dilemma, the belligerents look to create an asymmetry in the correlation of forces: the Pastrana government through foreign intervention, the FARC by accumulating social and territorial bases, arms and combatants.

Contagion

Fearing the danger of contagion and the consequences for business, the Argentine foreign minister, Adalberto Rodriguez Giavarini could not be more eloquent: "the Colombian conflict complicates the region" (*Clarín*, Buenos Aires 27/8/2000). In particular because "the crisis drives away investors".

The summit of 12 South American presidents which began on August 30 in Brasilia dealt with the themes of regional integration, free trade, relations between the MERCOSUR and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the future of the American Free Trade Area that so much concerns the United States. Agreements and, mainly, declarations of good faith were signed. However, the background was provided by the Colombian crisis, the "democratic fragility" in countries like Ecuador, Peru, and the lorry load of uncertainty that is Plan Colombia.

Brazil has sealed its 1,600 kilometer border with Colombia to prevent possible incursions of guerrillas, paramilitary and narcotics traffickers. In addition, its diplomacy has adopted a critical position towards "foreign interference" in the business of state. The empire, meanwhile, presses forward. Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright traveled with urgency to Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Santiago, Lima and Quito.

She looks for support and commitments. However, the governments have their doubts. Things are already complicated enough for these rulers: recessions, anti-neoliberal campaigns, plebiscites against the foreign debt, strikes and popular mobilizations at various levels that threaten their legitimacy. And they do not want the disorder of the "neoliberal order" to be combined with a new wave of anti-imperialism.

Different reactions

Anyway, the reactions are different. Nicaragua has taken advantage of the context to insist on its claim to the archipelago of San Andrés and Providencia, currently under Colombian sovereignty, but where there are continuous secessionist yearnings; Panama, having recovered "sovereignty" over its Canal, does not forget that the De Concini amendment incorporated to the Treaty of Bilateral Neutrality (attached to the Torrijos-Carter treaty) allows Washington "to act against any threat directed against the Canal or the Pacific transit of ships".

That is, the United States can claim the right to a direct intervention in Colombia; Ecuador, in the middle of a pre-insurrectionary climate and a crisis of domination, strengthened its bonds with the United States. It accepted Plan Colombia in exchange for 81.3 million dollars (fight against drugs, improvement of the radar system at the Eloy Alfaro airport) and ceded the base of Manta. Peru for its part intensified the militarization of its border and is associated with the idea of creating a cordon sanitaire around Colombia; Bolivia, which will receive 110 million dollars from Plan Colombia, supports the United States.

Venezuela also has strengthened its borders in a complex situation. Where complex frictions and recurrent incidents coexist they have to do with old quarrels (in the Gulf of Venezuela), recent separatist manifestations in Colombian departments like Norte de Santander and Vichada, and the invasion of hundreds of people fleeing the horrors of the war, taking refuge in Venezuelan localities. At the same time there is a "Bolivarian spirit" between Venezuelan President Chávez and the FARC.

In the more distant areas the panorama does not appear too consistent either. Some Caribbean islands are aligned with Washington, and stand to gain 43.9 million dollars for the modernization of systems of espionage in Aruba and Curacao under Plan Colombia. Cuba plays a discreet role; Fidel Castro has promoted an attitude of dialogue in the ELN, but he has little authority over the FARC.

Mexico has sought to distance itself from Colombia and thus appear before Washington as an ally in the matter of drugs and insurgency (and with the war in Chiapas as a potential factor of instability). As for the Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina and Uruguay) there are still no clear signals.

Whatever, when in the next months Plan Colombia begins to be implemented in full, one will see if the governments possess a real autonomy or are subordinate to the dictates of US imperialism.

The parties of the Sao Paulo Forum, through their Working Group, have already announced their total rejection of Plan Colombia and solidarity with the Colombian people, its social organizations and the insurgent movement.

Time bomb

Diverse NGOs, social and religious movements, have said that the Plan will escalate the armed conflict still more, running the risk of inaugurating another Vietnam, and campaigns and networks of solidarity with the Colombian popular movement are mobilized in their respective countries and developing. Jose Miguel Vivanco, executive director of Human Rights Watch has called Plan Colombia a "time bomb" for human rights. (*El País*, Madrid, July 7, 2000).

Amnesty International, which participated in the "Alternative Table" organized in Madrid in July, has called for a campaign against Plan Colombia, denouncing the use of paramilitarism as a state strategy, and the internal consequences that "will aggravate alarmingly the present humanitarian crisis". (*Amnesty International* No 44, Spanish edition, August-September 2000).

Jose Vicente Rangel, Venezuelan foreign minister says that the Plan "aims if not at the Vietnamization, at least the Colombianization of the region." (*Ansa Agency*, July 7, 2000)

Meanwhile, the powerful

“Plan Colombia means war”

THE following interview with FARC comandante Raúl Reyes was carried out by FERNANDO ROMÁN for the Buenos Aires daily *Página/12*



Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) rejected Plan Colombia and in a public declaration, it affirmed its opposition, “especially when it seems that there will be a direct participation of Ecuadorian forces, without concern for the violence of which the civil population will be victim, fundamentally the indigenous peoples and nationalities”.

Renovation

The background is the renovation of a counterinsurgent strategy of intervention. Like in the Dominican Republic in 1965, Chile in 1973, Nicaragua in 1981-90. The only difference is that Plan Colombia (as in Grenada and Panama) will not happen through a concealed operation. They seek, as James Petras says “to destroy dialogue and the movements that dare to defy the imperial monolith”. (*Plan Colombia and its critics*, Agency ALAI, July 17, 2000)

But in a situation where the dominant classes are shaken by a deep political crisis, of legitimacy, this is accelerated by the brutal effects of the recolonising offensive of multinational capital, Plan Colombia reemphasizes the importance of anti-imperialist struggle.

In a Latin America where broad and radical social resistances are articulating emancipatory alternatives which, albeit still from a defensive perspective, begin to sketch a new political scenario. ★

IT is difficult to enter the zone controlled by the FARC, covering as it does some 44,000 square kilometers. From the airport at Las Delicias, only half an hour’s flight from Bogota, to the FARC camp at San Vicente del Caguán there are only 150 kilometers. The commonest way to get there is by bus, running the risk of an assault or in taxis driven by kamikaze drivers along a road eroded by torrential rains listening to songs played at full blast that recount heroic legends of narcotics traffickers. After passing three roadblocks staffed by soldiers armed to the teeth, and the FARC roadblocks — only distinguishable from the others through their footwear — an immense poster by the side of the road with the faces of Bolivar and Che Guevara tells you that you have arrived in New Colombia, the center of the zone of the peace negotiations between the FARC and the government of Andrés Pastrana.

I meet with commandante Raul Reyes, “chancellor” of the FARC, in his office, built from wood and nylon. In his hands, a book of poems by the Uruguayan Mario Benedetti and resting on his desk his M16 gun. He seems more like a university professor than a guerrilla who has been fighting for decades in the Colombian forest.

■ What is the vision of the FARC as opposed to Plan Colombia?

Plan Colombia is a plan for war. It is a plan that opens the doors wide to the hawks in the United States so that they can have a greater intervention in Colombia’s internal affairs. It is a plan that means pain for the two peoples, both North American and Colombian, bringing the two nations into conflict. For that reason, we call on the international community, the Latin American peoples, so that the US is not allowed to intervene on behalf of the Colombian governing class in the guise of the fight against drug trafficking.

■ What future is there for the peace negotiations with the government after Plan Colombia?

Plan Colombia puts the dialogue at serious risk. We know that even in the government of the United States there are different factions. There is a sector that is against Plan Colombia, that views with great concern the increased presence of US military advisers in Colombia, the airplanes, the helicopters, the sophisticated elements to detect communications that are part of Plan Colombia. These sectors are in the US Congress, the thinking circles of the United States, the US people, who see that Colombia is going to be an experiment for imperialist war. To them also we want to appeal, so that they can affect their own country, their own government, so that Colombia can settle its internal problems without interference from the world powers.

And we have said to the national government in our last meetings with all frankness that we do not accept any commission that comes to control the behavior of the FARC in this area nor anywhere else in Colombia, because we are the insurgency, we are the people in arms, we are an armed organization that rose up against the state, against the injustice of the state. Therefore, it does not recognize any of the laws of the state. For that reason they cannot accept that the FARC is put under their laws because they are not going to accept them. The FARC has every intention of engaging in a dialogue, to look for agreements by means of dialogue for the solution of the problems of our people, of the 18 million Colombians who are unemployed, in poverty and misery. The FARC accepts no kind of pressure, neither external nor internal.

■ What risks does Plan Colombia carry for the region?

THE average age of FARC members is 25. Most of them joined the guerrilla organization between the age of 13 and 15. In Colombia boys begin to work in the field at 7, and 5 years later they are considered as men, can marry and have children. For those who want to escape a destiny of certain poverty, the arrival in town of a column of the FARC, with its combatants who are well fed, literate, armed and above all respected, exerts an incredible fascination. Joining the guerrillas is an option for those who have nothing.

Clad in his impeccable camouflage uniform, a black youth who they call "el negro", 22 years old and 10 years a guerilla, says in a firm voice: "My life is the FARC. Outside, Colombian youth has no future. The only thing that they have left is to work from dawn to dusk, to get drunk in a bar at weekends and get women pregnant. Here if you want you never stop learning and I want to learn to be a revolutionary like Che". ★

Plan Colombia is not about fighting drug trafficking. That story is, in fact, the excuse. It is a plan of extermination against the Colombian population. It is a plan that not only destroys the precarious forms of subsistence that the peasantry has by means of the production of cocaine leaf or the poppy but also contaminates the ecosystem, destroys the water and oxygen resources of the Colombian Amazonia, which has been called the lung of the world. An Amazonia that we share with Brazil, Venezuela, Peru and Ecuador, the heritage of humanity because it is an oxygen laboratory and a rich source of fauna and flora.

■ **How do you see the presence of the United States in the region today?**

As a serious danger to the national sovereignty of Colombians, as a serious risk for the peace dialogue, as a threat to Colombia and the continent because today it is our country and tomorrow it could be any other. The United States is much emboldened since the collapse of the Soviets and looks for war everywhere with any pretext. Today in Colombia it is the pretext of the fight against the drug trafficking, but the United States does not fight the drugs trade in its own country. And in other areas it is the pretext of the fight for human rights, which it does not

respect in its own country either. It is a very great threat because it seeks to intimidate any people or organization who is against its policies. It is what it has done all these years against socialist Cuba and all the peoples that have fought their imperialist policies

■ **Is the launching of the Bolivarian Movement in April of this year an answer to the political and military extension of the United States across the Andean region?**

Plan Colombia not only affects the dignity of the Colombian people but also all the countries of South America, and in particular Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil. It is a very great offensive by the empire against those dependent peoples and the so-called Third World that is in a situation of poverty, exploitation, misery and backwardness as a result of the policies of the United States, that have been applied by the rulers of our country over the last 50 years. That situation of pauperization of Colombian life has now intensified with the application of the economic opening, the neoliberal model, the policies of the IMF and the World Bank. To this we must add the doctrine of national security that has been applied in Colombia where the military have been the best students of the school of torture, disappearance, massacre and murder that the School of the Americas with US instructors has represented. For that reason the responsibility that the United States has in the situation of violence which Colombia and the countries of the area live in is very great. In Colombia there are paramilitary organizations financed by narcotics dedicated to crime, directed, supported and trained by the Colombian military.

With the Bolivarian Movement for the New Colombia, the FARC seeks in the first place to offer the people a different option, of struggle, combat for dignity, life and rights. We consider that the work of our Liberator is unfinished, we have to make it reality and for that we offer the popular masses a different option so that they protest, different from that offered by the Liberal and Conservative parties, distinct also from the armed struggle, different from a clandestine organization, something to which all the people of different political, military, religious, ethnic sectors can join, without any distinction because it exists to defend the heritage of the Colombians, their wealth, dignity, mother

country and national sovereignty. This Bolivarian Movement can go beyond the borders of Colombia and is inspired by the liberating conception of Simon Bolivar and people like San Martin, Martí and so many others that have left us a way for fight for definitive emancipation. The Bolivarian Movement has a big future. It is an alternative that will stop being clandestine once we have managed to unite millions of Colombians to change the destiny of this country and to undertake the construction of the New Colombia, of a Colombia on the road to socialism.

■ **How is the relation with the population in the zones under FARC control?**

As the FARC is a revolutionary political movement with the commitment to fight for the power to rule Colombia, they have taken care to address the problems of people. There are many problems of the people that the government does not address, because in many regions of Colombia the state has no presence except for the army or the police. There is no role for the state except repression, violence, intimidation. The presence of the State should guarantee the protection of the human rights of its inhabitants from cradle to grave. There are no political rights. For that reason we have a long list of Colombians, who are dead, disappeared, dislocated, in exile. The FARC, where it is present, takes on the task of addressing the problems of the people. Thus the people approach the guerrillas and request help in solving problems that are not addressed by the mayors or the governors or the inspectors of police or the politicians, like for example the improvement of the roads, the bridges, the highways, the schools, the health positions or the debts owed to the governmental institutions or the municipal administrations.

■ **The presence of so many youth in the FARC is impressive.**

The guerrilla of the FARC is a young one, the old ones are its national leadership but the *guerrillerada*, from the commandantes at the front down, are under 30. The Central General Staff of the FARC, its highest body, is under 50. Every day they arrive in the ranks of the FARC — more youth, women from the countryside, students from the universities, everywhere. And the percentage of women increases. Today in the FARC we are 40 percent women. ★

Leon Trotsky (1879-1940)

An attempt to explain the 20th century

PRESIDENT of the St Petersburg soviet during the revolution of 1905 then again in October 1917, leader of the revolutionary military committee which organized the insurrection in Petrograd in October 1917, negotiator of the peace of Brest-Litovsk, founder of the Red Army, heated polemicist against Lenin before 1914 then his close collaborator from 1917, combatant against the degeneration of the Russian revolution after 1923, expelled from the Communist party in 1927, deported in 1928, exiled in 1929, assassinated by a Stalinist agent in 1940 in his Mexican exile — the life of Leon Trotsky is mixed up with the fabulous rise of the revolutionary movement at the beginning of the 20th century and its fall which preceded the Second World War.

This dossier, appearing shortly after the 60th anniversary of Trotsky's assassination — a crime denied by its authors and their successors for more than 50 years — deals with some aspects of Trotsky's theoretical legacy. More than a homage — which would certainly be merited — we have attempted to respond to the question of in what respect, sixty years after his death, the theoretical contribution of Trotsky retains relevance.

Theoretician of capitalist contradictions, theoretician and practician of the revolution, Trotsky also analyzed, while doing all he could to avert them, the two most significant defeats of the world workers' movement: the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers' state and the victorious rise of fascism.

Qualified as "prophet" by his biographer Isaac Deutscher because of the impressive number of *a posteriori* verifications of his predictions, Trotsky has above all left an approach to the main historic turning points of the 20th century which renders them intelligible.

This takes on all the more importance today given the social democratic betrayal from 1914 onwards followed by the Stalinist degeneration. The work bequeathed by Trotsky is all the more important for all those who wish to refound the movement for the emancipation of humanity. [J.M.]★



Dossier -Trotsky 60 years on
TROTSKY'S first major contribution to Marxism came in the early years of the century with the development of what came to be known as the theory of permanent revolution. *Michael Löwy* analyzes the continuing relevance of this theory. After his theory had been vindicated by the October 1917 revolution, Trotsky then witnessed the bureaucratic degeneration of that state and attempted to explain it in his book *The Revolution Betrayed*. *Jan Malewski* examines the origins of and validity of Trotsky's analysis of the Stalinized Soviet Union. One of Trotsky's major struggles in the last decade of his life was to alert the German workers' movement to the Nazi threat. *Manuel Kellner* looks at how Trotsky's analysis of fascism developed and its contemporary lessons. Finally, *François Vercammen* analyses Trotsky's conception of the revolutionary party and *J.M. Krivine* examines Trotsky's final struggle to found the Fourth International. Please note that two articles that were to have appeared in this dossier, *Michel Lequenne* on Trotsky and culture and *Luis Pilla Vares* on direct democracy in the south of Brazil have been held over for space reasons and will now appear in the next issue of *IV*. ★

The relevance of permanent revolution

THIS theory has undoubtedly been one of the most significant and innovatory contributions to Marxism made by Trotsky in the 20th century. How did it emerge and what is its meaning today, at the dawn of a new century?

The idea of permanent revolution — initially uniquely related to the Russian problematic — appeared for the first time in the writings of Lev Davidovitch in the course of the revolutionary upheavals of 1905-1906 in Russia. Trotsky's theses on the nature of this revolution constituted a radical rupture with the dominant ideas in the Second International on the subject of the future of Russia. Marx and Engels had not hesitated to suggest, in their preface to the Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto* (1892), that if the Russian revolution gives the signal to a proletarian revolution in the West, and the two complement one another, the existing commonly owned property in Russia could serve as a point of departure for a communist evolution.

Bourgeois democratic

However, after their death, this line of thought — suspected of affinity with Russian Populism — was abandoned. Soon it became a universal premise — almost an article of faith — among “orthodox” Marxists, Russian or European, that the future Russian revolution would necessarily, inevitably, have a strictly bourgeois democratic character: abolition of Tsarism, establishing a democratic republic, suppression of feudal vestiges in the countryside, distribution of land to the peasants. All factions of Russian Social Democracy took this presupposition as their incontrovertible point of departure. If they argued with each other, it was on the different interpretations of the role of the proletariat in this bourgeois revolution, and its class alliances; who should be privileged, the liberal bourgeoisie (Menshevik) or the peasantry (Bolsheviks)?

Trotsky was the first and for many years the only Marxist to question this

THE theory of permanent revolution is not a metaphysical speculation but an attempt to respond to one of the most dramatic questions of our epoch: how to resolve the appalling social problems suffered by the dependent capitalist countries — colonial and semi-colonial in the language of the time. How can they escape pauperisation, dictatorship, oligarchical regimes, foreign domination?

MICHAEL LÖWY

sacrosanct dogma. He was, before 1917, alone in envisaging not only the hegemonic role of the workers' movement in the Russian revolution — a thesis shared also by Parvus, Rosa Luxemburg and, in certain texts, Lenin — but also the possibility of a growing over of the democratic revolution into socialist revolution.

It was during 1905, in a number of articles for the revolutionary press, that Trotsky would formulate for the first time his new doctrine — systematised later in the pamphlet *Results and Prospects* (1906). He was undoubtedly influenced by Parvus, but this latter never went beyond the idea of a workers' government accomplishing a strictly democratic (bourgeois) programme: he wanted to change the locomotive of history but not its rails.¹

Inspiration

The term ‘permanent revolution’ seems to have been inspired in Trotsky by an article by Franz Mehring in the *Neue Zeit* in November 1905; but the sense attributed to it by the German socialist writer was very much less radical and vaguer than that it received in the writings of the Russian revolutionary. Trotsky was alone in daring to suggest, from 1905, the possibility of a revolution accomplishing the socialist tasks — that is the expropriation of the big

capitalists — in Russia, a hypothesis unanimously rejected by the other Russian Marxists as utopian and adventurous.

An attentive study of the roots of Trotsky's political audacity and his theory of permanent revolution shows that his positions were founded on an interpretation of Marxism and the dialectical method which was very distinct from the reigning orthodoxy in the Second International. This can be explained, at least in part, by the influence of Labriola, the first Marxist philosopher studied by the young Trotsky? Labriola's approach, of Hegelian-Marxist inspiration, was the polar opposite of the vulgar positivism and materialism so influential at the time.

Characteristics

Here are some of the distinctive characteristics of the Marxist methodology at work in the writings of the young Trotsky and in his theory of the Russian revolution:

1. Partisan of a dialectical conception of the unity of opposites, Trotsky criticised the rigid separation practiced by the Bolsheviks between the socialist regime of the proletariat and the “democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants” as a “purely formal, logical operation”. In the same way, in an astonishing passage of a polemic against the Menshevik Tscherewanin, he condemns the analytical — that is to say abstract, formal, pre-dialectical — character of his political approach: ‘Tscherewanin constructs his tactics as Spinoza did his ethics: that is to say, geometrically’.²

2. Trotsky explicitly rejects economism, one of the essential traits of Plekhanov's Marxism. This rupture is one of the fundamental methodological presuppositions of the theory of permanent revolution, as shown by this well-known passage from *Results and Prospects*: “To imagine that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country is a prejudice of ‘economic’ materialism simplified to absurdity. This point of view has nothing



Trotsky pictured with Parvus and Leon Deutsch

in common with Marxism".³

3. Trotsky's conception of history is not fatalistic but open: the task of Marxists, he wrote, is "to discover the 'possibilities' of the developing revolution by means of an analysis of its internal mechanism".⁴ The permanent revolution is not a result determined in advance, but an objective possibility, legitimate and realistic, whose accomplishment depends on innumerable subjective factors and unpredictable events.

4. Whereas most Russian Marxists tended, because of their polemic with Populism, to deny any specificity to the Russian social formation, and insisted on the inevitable similarity between the socio-economic development of western Europe and the future of Russia, Trotsky formulated a new dialectical position. Criticising equally the Slavophile particularism of the *Narodniki* and the abstract universalism of the Mensheviks, he developed a concrete analysis which explained simultaneously the specificities of the Russian formation and the impact of the general tendencies of capitalist development on the country.

Unique

It is the combination of all these methodological innovations which made *Results and Prospects* — the famous pamphlet written by Trotsky in prison in 1906 — a unique text. Starting from a study of combined and uneven development (the term does not yet appear) in Russia — which had as its result a weak and half-foreign bourgeoisie, and a modern and exceptionally concentrated proletariat — he came to the conclusion that only the workers' movement, supported by the peasantry, could accomplish the democratic revolution in Russia, by overthrowing the

autocracy and the power of the landowners.

In reality, this perspective of a workers' government in Russia was shared by other Russian Marxists — notably Parvus. The radical novelty of the theory of permanent revolution was situated less in its definition of the class nature of the future Russian revolution than in its conception of its historic tasks. Trotsky's decisive contribution was the idea that the Russian revolution could transcend the limits of a profound democratic transformation and begin to take anti-capitalist measures with a clearly socialist content.

Iconoclastic

His principal argument to justify this iconoclastic hypothesis was quite simply that "the political domination of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic enslavement". Why should the proletariat, once in power, and controlling the means of coercion, continue to tolerate capitalist exploitation? Even if it wished initially to limit itself to a minimum programme, it would be led, by the very logic of its position, to take collectivist measures. That said, Trotsky was also convinced that, without the extension of the revolution to western Europe, the Russian proletariat would face difficulty in holding power for a long time.

The events of 1917 dramatically confirmed Trotsky's basic predictions of 12 years earlier. The inability of the bourgeois parties and their allies on the moderate wing of the workers' movement to respond to the revolutionary aspirations of the peasantry, and the desire for peace of the people, created the conditions for a radicalisation of the revolutionary movement from February to October. What were

called "the democratic tasks" were carried out, so far as the peasantry were concerned, only after the victory of the soviets.⁵

But once in power, the revolutionaries of October were not able to limit themselves to simply democratic reforms; the dynamic of the class struggle obliged them to take explicitly socialist measures. Indeed, confronted with the economic boycott of the possessing classes and the growing threat of a general paralysis of production, the Bolsheviks and their allies were forced — much sooner than anticipated — to expropriate capital: in June 1918, the Council of Commissars of the People decreed the socialisation of the main branches of industry.

In other words: the revolution of 1917 had seen a process of uninterrupted revolutionary development from its 'bourgeois-democratic' phase (unfinished) of February until its 'proletarian-socialist' phase which began in October. With the support of the peasantry, the Soviets combined democratic measures (the agrarian revolution) with socialist measures (the expropriation of the bourgeoisie), opening a 'non-capitalist road', a period of transition to socialism. But the Bolshevik party was able to take the leadership of this gigantic social movement that 'shook the world' only thanks to the radical strategic reorientation initiated by Lenin in April 1917, according to a perspective fairly close to that of permanent revolution. Useless to add that Trotsky, in his role as president of the Petrograd soviet, leader of the Bolshevik party and founder of the Red Army, had himself played a determinant role in the socialist 'growing over' of the October revolution.

Controversy

There remains the controversial question of the international extension of the revolution: did events confirm the conditional prediction of Trotsky — without revolution in Europe, was proletarian power in Russia doomed? Yes and no. Workers' democracy in Russia did not survive the defeat of the European revolution (in 1919-23); but its decline did not lead, as Trotsky thought in 1906, to a restoration of capitalism (this would only take place much later, after 1991) but an unforeseen development: the replacement of workers' power by the dictatorship of a bureaucratic layer originating from the workers' move-

ment itself.

In the second half of the 1920s Trotsky elaborated, in the course of heated political and theoretical confrontations with Stalinism, the international implications of the theory of the permanent revolution. His thought was catalysed by the dramatic explosion of the class struggle in China in 1925-27, just as the first had been stimulated by the Russian revolution of 1905.

In the book *Permanent revolution* (1928) Trotsky for the first time presented his theses on the dynamic of the social revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries (to employ the terminology of the time) in a systematic manner, as a theory which was valid on the world scale. It amounted first to a polemic against the disastrous Chinese policy of the Stalinised Comintern, which wished to impose on the Chinese communists the doctrine of the revolution by stages — the bourgeois democratic revolution as separate historical stage — and alliance with the national bourgeoisie, represented by the Kuomintang of Chiang-Kai-Shek. Trotsky insisted that in China as in Tsarist Russia the bourgeoisie, feeling itself threatened by the socialist workers' movement, could no longer play a consequent revolutionary and anti-imperialist role: it was only the proletariat, in alliance with the peasantry, which could fulfil the democratic programme, agrarian and national, in an uninterrupted process of 'growing over' of the democratic into the socialist revolution.

Combined and uneven

The theoretical foundation of this analysis is undoubtedly the law of combined and uneven development, already implicit in the writings of 1906 or in the polemics of 1928, but formulated for the first time in explicit fashion in his *History of the Russian revolution* (1930). It allowed Trotsky to transcend the evolutionist conception of history which makes it a succession of rigid and predetermined stages, and to elaborate a dialectical interpretation of the historic process, which integrates the inequality of rhythm — the 'backward' countries constrained from advancing — and 'combined development', in the sense of the rapprochement of the distinct phases and the amalgam of archaic forms with the more modern.

From this approach flowed decisive strategic and political conclusions: the fusion/articulation of the most advanced

socio-economic conditions with the most backward is the structural foundation of the fusion or combination of the democratic and socialist tasks in a process of permanent revolution. To present the problem another way, one of the principal political consequences of combined and uneven development is the inevitable persistence of unresolved democratic tasks in the peripheral capitalist countries.

Vulgar

Rejecting the vulgar evolutionism of the Stalinist doctrine of revolution by stages, Trotsky stresses, in *Permanent revolution*, that there could not be, in China and the other 'Oriental' countries — Latin America or Africa were as yet outside his field of interest — a separate and complete democratic stage, in some way a necessary historic precursor to a second stage of a socialist type. The only authentic revolutionary forces are the proletariat and the peasantry, and once they had taken power, the democratic revolution, in the course of its development, becomes directly transformed into the socialist revolution and thus becomes a permanent revolution.⁶

From the point of view of metaphysical and abstract logic, it is perhaps possible to distinguish two separate stages, but in the real logic of the revolutionary process they would combine organically in a dialectic.⁷ As Trotsky wrote in his preface to Harold Isaacs' book on China, "revolutions, as has been said more than once, have a logic of their own. But this is not the logic of Aristotle, and even less the pragmatic demilogic of 'common sense'. It is the higher function of thought: the logic of development and its contradictions, i.e. the dialectic".⁸

The principal limitation of Trotsky's analysis is of a "sociological" rather than strategic nature: to consider the peasantry uniquely as a "support" of the revolutionary proletariat and as class of "small proprietors" whose horizon did not go beyond democratic demands. He had trouble in accepting, for example, a Chinese Red Army composed in its great majority of peasants. His error — like that of most Russian and European Marxists — was to adopt, without critical examination, Marx's analysis (in the *18th Brumaire*) of the French peasantry as an atomised and petty bourgeois class and to apply it to colonial and semi-colonial nations with very different characteristics. However, in

one of his last writings, *Three conceptions of the Russian revolution* (1939) he argued that the Marxist appreciation of the peasantry as a non-socialist class had never had an "absolute and immutable" character.

The theory of the permanent revolution has been verified twice in the course of the history of the 20th century. On the one hand, by the disasters resulting from stageism, from the blind application, by the Communist parties in the dependent countries, of the Stalinist doctrine of the revolution by stages and the bloc with the national bourgeoisie, from Spain in 1936 to Indonesia in 1965 or Chile in 1973.

Predict

On the other hand, because this theory, such as it was formulated from 1906, has largely allowed us to predict, explain and shed light on the revolutions of the 20th century, which have all been 'permanent' revolutions in the peripheral countries. What happened in Russia, China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam or Cuba has corresponded, in its broad outlines to Trotsky's central idea: the possibility of combined and uninterrupted revolution — democratic and socialist — in a country of peripheral capitalism, dependent or colonial. The fact that, overall, the leaders of the revolutionary movements after October 1917 have not recognised the 'permanent' character of these latter (with some exceptions, like Ernesto Che Guevara), or have only done it *a posteriori* and employing a different terminology, takes nothing away from this historically effective relation.

The other dimension of the theory which has been confirmed — above all in its negative form — is the concept of permanent revolution in opposition to the Stalinist doctrine of socialism in one country. Trotsky's view that socialism can only exist on a world scale, that a revolution in a peripheral country could only begin the transition to socialism, and that a socialist society worthy of the name could not be constructed inside the national limits of a single country, has been verified by the inglorious demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. Certainly things did not happen as he had hoped — anti-bureaucratic political revolution — but the failure of the Soviet bureaucratic experience is not least a confirmation of his main hypothesis.

The theory of permanent revolution does not just allow us to make sense of the great social revolutions of the 20th centu-

ry; it remains of a surprising relevance at the dawn of the 21st century. Why?

First, because in the great majority of the countries of peripheral capitalism — whether it be in the Middle East, Asia, Africa or in Latin America — the tasks of a true democratic revolution have not been fulfilled: according to the case, democratisation — and secularisation! — of the state, liberation from the imperial grip, the social exclusion of the poor majority, or the solution of the agrarian question remain on the agenda. Dependence has taken on new forms, but these are no less brutal and constraining than those of the past: the dictatorship of the IMF, the World Bank and soon the WTO over the indebted countries — that is to say practically all the countries of the South — through the mechanism of neoliberal ‘adjustment’ plans and Draconian conditions for payment of the foreign debt. One can say that, in many respects, the power exerted by these institutions of the global financial system — in the service of the imperialist powers in general and the USA in particular — over the economic, social and political life of these countries is still more direct, authoritarian and total than that of the old neo-colonial system.

Complex

The revolution in these countries can only, then, be a complex and articulated combination between these democratic demands and the overthrow of capitalism. Today as yesterday, the revolutionary transformations which are on the agenda in the societies at the periphery of the system are not identical with those of the countries of the centre. A social revolution in India could not be, from the point of view of its programme, strategy and motor forces, a pure ‘workers’ revolution’ as in England. The decisive political role — certainly not envisaged by Trotsky! — played in many countries today by the indigenous and peasant movements (the FZLN in Mexico, the Brazilian MST, the CONAIE in Ecuador) shows the importance and social explosiveness of the agrarian question, and its close link with national liberation.

One cannot imagine, for example, a social revolution in Brazil which did not take in hand the effective democratisation of the state, national liberation, radical agrarian reform, the search for a road of autonomous economic development, orientated towards the social needs of the

majority. And vice-versa: only a social — that is to say anti-capitalist — revolution can fulfil this democratic programme, in a process of ‘uninterrupted’ social transformation.

In the struggle of the countries of the South against neoliberal globalization, against the world financial institutions, against the inhumanity of the foreign debt system, against the imposition by the IMF of ‘adjustment’ policies with dramatic social consequences, the national question regains a burning relevance.

Illusions

In this context, one sees a new flourishing — with or without the participation of the parties of Stalinist origin — of illusions of a nationalist type on the possibility of a ‘national development’ (capitalist), of a vigorous policy of promotion of national industry (capitalist), of a strategic alliance with the nationalist military, or again a vast coalition of all the classes supporting an ‘independent economic path’, turned towards the internal market. The theory of permanent revolution allows us — while giving a decisive place to the aspirations for national liberation and the fight against new forms of imperialist domination — to go beyond this kind of illusion in keeping a hold on the inseparability of the national democratic and socialist struggles in a single historic movement.

In many countries of peripheral capitalism — as well as in the ex-USSR and the countries of eastern Europe — the national question is also taking a new, particularly disturbing, form: bloody inter-ethnic conflicts, inter-communal, inter-religious, promoted by reactionary, often fascist-type, forces, whether manipulated by the western empires or not. There again, only a socialist/internationalist revolution can break the infernal cycle of murders and reprisals, community vendettas, by proposing genuinely democratic federal or confederal solutions, which guarantee the



Trotsky arriving in Petrograd, 1917

national rights of minorities and create conditions for the unity of workers of all nations. This goes in particular for Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans.

For Trotsky, whatever the profound social contradictions of the dependant countries, the revolution is never ‘inevitable’, the ‘necessary’ product of the crisis of capitalism or the aggravation of poverty. All that one can advance is a conditional proposition: as an authentic socialist/democratic revolution — in a ‘permanent’ process — has not taken place, it is unlikely that the countries of the South, the nations of peripheral capitalism can begin to carry a solution to the ‘Biblical’ (the expression comes from Ernest Mandel) problems which afflict them: poverty, misery, unemployment, crying social inequalities, ethnic discriminations, lack of water and bread, imperialist domination, oligarchical regimes and monopolisation of the land by the latifundistas.★

* Michael Löwy is the author of many studies, in particular *Combined and Uneven Development* (Verso, London, 1983).

1. On the differences between Parvus and Trotsky, see Alain Brossat, *Aux origines de la révolution permanente : la pensée politique du jeune Trotsky*, Paris, Maspero, 1974. On the convergences and divergences between Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky, see the remarkable book by Norman Geras, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*, London, New Left Books, 1976.

2. Trotsky, *1905*, Penguin, London, 1973.

3. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, in *The Permanent Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1969, p. 63.

4. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, op. cit., p. 36.

5. As Lenin would later write, “it was the Bolsheviks... who, thanks to the victory of the proletarian revolution, helped the peasants to lead the bourgeois democratic revolution to the end”.

6. L. Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, op. cit.

7. Ibid.

8. L. Trotsky, preface to *The Tragedy of The Chinese Revolution*, Harold Isaacs, Secker and Warburg, London, 1938.

LENIN himself, shortly before his death, had seen better than Trotsky the danger represented by both the bureaucratic deformations of the Soviet state and the concentration of administrative powers extended in the secretariat of the party and in the hands of the first secretary, Stalin. But the remedy he proposed then — the setting up of a higher body of control by the merger of the central control commission with the Workers and Peasants Inspection — smacked of administrative, “bureaucratic” even, methods of struggle against bureaucracy.¹

As late as the end of 1924, after the death of Lenin, when he was himself victim of the maneuvers of the bureaucratic troika (Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin, — the first two would revolt against Stalin a year later), Trotsky did not hesitate to justify repression in the name of an erroneous conception of the party: “If it proved, even after the elimination of misunderstandings, of partial errors, of tendentious interpretations and so on, that nonetheless two different lines exist, there would be obviously no question of passing over such an important circumstance in silence. The party is obliged, whatever the efforts and the strict measures that this demands, to assure the unity of its revolutionary method, its political line, its traditions — the unity of Leninism. In this case it would be wrong to disavow the use of “repression”, as some comrades have (while at the same time accusing me of pursuing a special, non-Bolshevik line)...

If it is proved in fact that a line of Trotskyism was being implemented against the line of Leninism, that would mean that we had moved to a commencement of struggle between different class tendencies. In this case, explanations would be pointless. The proletarian party protects itself by purging itself.”²

Unforeseen

The years of civil war against the White armies, supported by the imperialist interventions, created an unforeseen situation: an isolated revolutionary regime, an industry destroyed in a country menaced by famine, whereas the Russian working class had been decimated on the battlefield, fleeing from the starving towns to the countryside, absorbed in the state apparatus (there were 2,552,000 industrial workers in 1913, in 1921-22 there were only 1,243,000³ and, moreover, to a significant

Analyzing the society of the disconcerting lie

TROTSKY was not the first critic of the bureaucratic deformations of the Soviet Union. Well before him anarchists who had supported the Russian revolution (for example Emma Goldman) and Bolsheviks (for example the “Democratic Centralism” group in 1919, the Workers’ Opposition in 1920, the Workers’ Group of the Russian CP led by G.I. Miasnikov in 1923, the Workers’ Truth group in 1922) had opposed the authoritarianism of the new state apparatus and the suppression of formal guarantees of democracy.

JAN MALEWSKI*

extent, these were not the same people). The political parties present in the soviets in 1917 — the Mensheviks, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the anarchists — had, in the course of the civil war, opposed the Bolshevik regime and been banned. From March 1919, Lenin notes lucidly and bitterly that “the soviets, which were by nature organs of government by the workers, are indeed only organs of government for the workers by the most advanced layer of the proletariat, but not by the toiling masses”.⁴ And the most advanced layer at this stage was the Bolshevik party, itself on the path to bureaucratization.

Undeniable

It is undeniable that the exceptional measures taken by the Bolshevik leadership in the course of the civil war facilitated the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution. Trotsky explicitly recognized it, writing: “The dictatorship of the Bolshevik party proved one of the most powerful instruments of progress in history. But here too, in the words of the poet, “Reason becomes unreason, kindness a pest.”⁵ The prohibition of oppositional parties brought after it the prohibition of factions. The prohibition of factions ended in a prohibition to think otherwise than the infallible leaders. The police-manufactured monolithism of the party resulted in a bureaucratic impunity which has become

the source of all kinds of wantonness and corruption.”⁶

But it is undeniable also that the Bolshevik party, even enjoying an immense legitimacy from the role it had played in the revolutionary process, would not have been able, supposing it had wished to (an easy supposition for the opponents of Bolshevism), to empty a blooming soviet democracy of its content if this latter had not been shaken first by the conditions of civil war, destruction, famine, blockade — in short by the isolation of a revolution in a particularly backward country.

Contribution

The historic contribution of Trotsky — and those who fought alongside him in the Left Opposition — is to have presented an overall analysis of the degeneration of the Russian revolution, to have deciphered “the disconcerting lie”,⁷ preserving thus the possibility of a historic understanding of the struggle for emancipation. If Trotsky was not the first to engage in the struggle against the rising bureaucratization, if his first combats were above all directed against the political line of the “troika” and if he then continued to consider the bureaucracy as an epiphenomenon, the fruit of political errors by the party, he was the first (with Christian Rakovsky)⁸ to elaborate an overall analysis of the degeneration, to present both its monstrosity —



Images from the Russian civil war

he did not hesitate to qualify the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy from the mid-1930s as “totalitarian” — and its historic weakness and parasitic character, which meant its domination could only be temporary.

And the collapse of the states originating (directly or not) from the degeneration of the Russian revolution, if it took place later than Trotsky envisaged in his last writings (marked by the perspective — the hope — of a war-revolution), has essentially confirmed his predictions.⁹

As a militant and a talented revolutionary propagandist, Trotsky naturally emphasized the perspective of the antibureaucratic revolution and feared above all else a bourgeois counter-revolution. It is then to these two hypotheses that he devoted a great part of his writings. He had however — more than his detractors have wished to admit — envisaged a temporary stabilization of the Soviet bureaucracy. His main work of analysis of Soviet society, *The Revolution Betrayed*, is filled with indications of this.

Thus, analyzing the Stakhanovite movement (a competition among workers to surpass individual norms which Trotsky characterized rightly as boiling down to

“the intensification of work and even the prolongation of the working day” which the Stalinists had the cheek to characterize as a “new” attitude towards work), he wrote: “‘All economy’, said Marx, — and that means all human struggle with nature at all stages of civilization — ‘comes down in the last analysis to an economy of time.’ Reduced to its primary basis, history is nothing but a struggle for an economy of working time. Socialism could not be justified by the abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of time than is guaranteed by capitalism. Without the realization of this condition, the mere removal of exploitation would be but a dramatic episode without a future. The first historical experiment in the application of socialist methods has revealed the great possibilities contained in them. But the Soviet economy is still far from learning to make use of time, that most precious raw material of culture. The imported technique, the chief implement for the economy of time, still fails to produce on the Soviet soil those results which are normal in its capitalist fatherlands”.¹⁰ Nearly 40 years later, during the installation of the production lines under Fiat license at Togliattigrad, two times as many

workers were needed than in Turin to produce a Lada, the Soviet version of the Fiat 124 (and Fiat’s lines in Turin at the beginning of the 1970s were not characterized by the highest productivity in the car industry).

When he wrote these lines, in 1936, Trotsky was broadly cut off for more than three years from the militants of the Left Opposition in the USSR: Hitler’s seizure of power, which put an end to the activity of the center of the Russian Opposition organized in Berlin by Trotsky’s son, Leon Sedov, the strengthening of repression against the militants of the deported and imprisoned Russian Opposition and the rise in the terror in Russia from 1930, brutally interrupted the very rich debate on the degeneration of the USSR.¹¹ *The Revolution Betrayed* constitutes in some way a conclusion of this debate and Trotsky tried to integrate here the contributions of all the opposition currents very numerous in the deportee circles, to the point that oppositionist Boris M. Yeltsin had said that it was “the GPU which makes our unity”.¹²

Schemas

From the end of the 1920s the Russian revolutionaries (and it should be said that the very great majority of the surviving militants of October 1917 found themselves, sooner or later, in opposition to Stalin), confronted with the monstrous degeneration of their work, envisaged several possible schemas of analysis of this “social formation which had no precedent and no analogy”.¹³ Thus Christian Rakovsky, one of the main leaders of the Opposition, who Trotsky had enormous respect for, wrote in August 1928 in a letter to G.N. Valentinov, former editor of the trade union daily *Trud* and a deportee like him: “When a class takes power, it is a part of itself which becomes the agent of this power. It is thus that the bureaucracy emerges. In a socialist state where capitalist accumulation is forbidden to the members of the ruling party, differentiation is initially functional and then becomes social. I think here of the social situation of a Communist who disposes of an automobile, a good apartment, a regular holiday, who is close to the maximum salary authorized by the party, a situation very different from that of the Communist who works in the coalmines... The function has modified the organ itself, that is the psy-



Trotsky with Lenin and Kamenev

chology of those who are charged with the various tasks of leadership in the administration and the state economy, has changed to the point that, not only objectively, but subjectively, not only materially but morally, they have ceased to be part of this very working class... The bureaucracy of the soviets and the party is a new fact. We are not talking about isolated cases, problems in the conduct of individual comrades, but of a new social category to which it will be necessary to devote a whole treatise."¹⁴

Declaration

Two years later, in April 1930, in a declaration of the Opposition whose draft he had edited, Rakovsky completed his analysis thus: "From a proletarian state with bureaucratic deformations — as Lenin defined the political form of our state — we are in the process of passing to a bureaucratic state with proletarian Communist remnants. Under our eyes a big governing class is being formed with its own internal divisions, which grows thought a prudent cooption, direct or indirect (bureaucratic promotion, fictitious elections). What unites this original class is a form, also original, of private property, namely the possession of state power. "The bureaucracy owns the state as its private property" wrote Marx."¹⁵

Trotsky did not take up in his theses the idea of an "original class" advanced by Rakovsky — an idea which met with some reticence among the deported oppositionists — but he drew very widely from it in his analyses.

The debate among the deported oppositionists, their declarations and proclamations, involves the concrete analysis of what was happening in the USSR. The debates concerned in the first place the analysis of the 5 year plan, the accelerated industrialization, the forced collectivization in the countryside, and so on, in short the Stalinist "zigzags". The oppositionists tried (with very much clairvoyance!) to analyze the consequences of these and to propose an alternative to a policy which they saw as suicidal from the point of view of the potential of soviet development. Thus this debate, anchored in reality, is very different from the disputes over the "nature of the USSR" which marked the history of the communist antistalinist movement from the rupture of James Burnham with Trotsky in 1940, disputes marked by a poor knowledge of Soviet reality — because of the liquidation of the Russian Opposition by Stalin and the Stalinist closure of the USSR — and hence much more academic or reflecting the incredible ideological pressure exerted on the weak ranks of the revolutionaries.

Autonomy

"In our analysis, we have above all avoided doing violence to dynamic social formations which have had no precedent and have no analogies" wrote Trotsky.¹⁶ And, without taking up Rakovsky's analysis entirely, he did insist on the particular character of this leading layer, with a greater social autonomy than all the state bureaucracies which had preceded it in

other social formations: "In no other regime has a bureaucracy ever achieved such a degree of independence... The Soviet bureaucracy has risen above a class which is hardly emerging from destitution and darkness, and has no tradition of dominion or command... In this sense we cannot deny that it is something more than a bureaucracy. It is in the full sense of the word the sole privileged and commanding stratum in the Soviet society. Insisting on the fact that having politically expropriated the proletariat, the Stalinist bureaucracy has not created the social base for its domination under the form of particular conditions of ownership and that "the principal means of production are in the hands of the state", he writes also "the state, so to speak, "belongs" to the bureaucracy. If these as yet wholly new relations should solidify, become the norm and be legalized, whether with or without resistance from the workers, they would, in the long run, lead to a complete liquidation of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution".¹⁷

Envisaging the possibilities by which history might at some undetermined point in the future settle the social character of the USSR — and privileging in this framework the two hypotheses of overthrow of the Soviet ruling caste: that of a victory of "a revolutionary party having all the attributes of the old Bolshevism, enriched moreover by the world experience of the recent period" and that of a bourgeois party (which "would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats", he added) — he described a third hypothesis: "Let us assume to take a third variant — that neither a revolutionary nor a counterrevolutionary party seizes power. The bureaucracy continues at the head of the state. Even under these conditions social relations will not jell. We cannot count upon the bureaucracy's peacefully and voluntarily renouncing itself in behalf of socialist equality. If at the present time, notwithstanding the too obvious inconveniences of such an operation, it has considered it possible to introduce ranks and decorations, it must inevitably in future stages seek supports for itself in property relations. One may argue that the big bureaucrat cares little what are the prevailing forms of property, provided only they guarantee him the necessary income. This argument ignores not only the instability of the bureaucrat's own rights, but also the question of his descendants. The new cult

of the family has not fallen out of the clouds. Privileges have only half their worth, if they cannot be transmitted to one's children. But the right of testament is inseparable from the right of property. It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class."¹⁸ And concludes from this that one can return to the preceding hypothesis, that of a victory of the counter-revolution.

It would be more than 30 years before this third hypothesis of Trotsky began to realize itself in the USSR and in the countries of the Soviet bloc. There is no doubt that Trotsky in 1936 would have ruled out such a lengthy period. In very numerous positions taken in the course of the last years of his life he had predicted that the war which began in 1939 — and which he had predicted, in the midst of the Hitler-Stalin pact, that there would be a war between soviet Russia and Nazi Germany — would conclude with the triumph of the revolution proletarian in the west, which would be a formidable encouragement to the anti-bureaucratic revolution in the USSR, or by the defeat of the proletariat and the liquidation of the surviving conquests of October in Russia.

Unforeseen

The course of history has taken an unforeseen road: despite an intensity of social conflict never before witnessed (millions of deaths and unprecedented destruction!), the relationship of forces between the classes on a world scale was stabilized at Yalta by the efforts of Stalin, head of the Soviet bureaucracy, Roosevelt and Churchill, spokespersons for Allied imperialism. As counterpart to its aid in muzzling the working class movements in Europe (Greece, Italy, France and Germany in the first place) and its tolerance towards the Francoist dictatorship in Spain, the Soviet bureaucracy was benefited from imperialist tolerance towards its territorial gains in central and eastern Europe - an enlarged version of the secret accords signed with Hitler which accorded to Stalin the western part of Belarus and Ukraine (then Polish) as well as the Baltic states in 1939.

It is legitimate to pose the question of whether the analyses that Trotsky has left contain elements which can help us to

interpret such phenomena and also why - putting aside the "revolutionary impatience" which would have characterized him — he waited until his last writings to predict that which the Second World War would conclude, like the first, with revolutionary upsurges in the main belligerent countries, above all Germany and the USSR.

We have said, without in any way downplaying Trotsky's contribution, that his analysis in *The Revolution Betrayed* was largely the fruit of a long debate which had involved some hundreds of Russian Marxists who had been deported by Stalin at the end of the 1920s or had passed into clandestinity. In the mid-1930s Trotsky's relation with the intellectual elite of the Bolshevik party had been definitively broken: the Soviet Left Opposition had been massacred and its last analyses, confiscated by the Stalinists, have not been passed down to us (maybe they are still stored in some coffers of Putin's political police).

Correspondence

Indeed Trotsky's correspondence with the clandestine or deported Russian oppositionists not only contributed to the richness of his thought, but also provided him with information on the state of mind of the masses, the crises in the apparatus, the economic situation, in short all that which was indispensable to the concrete analysis of a concrete situation and that the Soviet press, muzzled by Stalin from the beginning of the 1930s, could no longer provide.¹⁹

However, the definition of the USSR presented by Trotsky in the conclusion of the chapter entitled "Social Relations in the USSR" in the *Revolution Betrayed* contains a series of concepts which explain both the author's error in prediction and the outcome of the war. Trotsky wrote: The Soviet Union is a contradictory society halfway between capitalism and socialism, in which: (a) the productive forces are still far from adequate to give the state properly a socialist character; (b) the tendency toward primitive accumulation created by want breaks out through innumerable pores of the planned economy; (c) norms of distribution preserving a bourgeois character lie at the basis of a new differentiation of society; (d) the economic growth, while slowly bettering the situation of the toilers, promotes a swift formation of privileged strata; (e) exploiting the social

antagonisms, a bureaucracy has converted itself into an uncontrolled caste alien to socialism; (f) the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses; (g) a further development of the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism; (h) on the road to capitalism the counterrevolution would have to break the resistance of the workers; (i) on the road to socialism the workers would have to overthrow the bureaucracy. In the last analysis, the question will be decided by a struggle of living social forces, both on the national and the world arena."²⁰

This conceptual definition — which Trotsky, anticipating the criticisms of those who preferred the categorical formulae, presents as "vague" — is very precise and each concept employed is used scientifically, after discussions and lengthy reflection.

a) In introducing a differentiation between "statisation" and "socialization" Trotsky wrote: "In order to become social, private property must as inevitably pass through the state stage as the caterpillar in order to become a butterfly must pass through the pupal stage. But the pupa is not a butterfly. Myriads of pupae perish without ever becoming butterflies."²¹ And to explain that state property only becomes social with the withering of the former, that is to the extent that the state withdraws from production, making way for the free association of producers. As long as it is state authority — constraint — which governs production and interferes in the free choice of the producers, that is as long as the insufficiency of the productive forces imposes economic choices other than those decided by the producers themselves, the "old crap" of which Marx spoke returns unceasingly under the form of bureaucratic and alienated labour. And the Stalinist slogan "the cadres decide everything" was nothing other than a demonstration of the phenomenon.

Synthesis

b) c) and d) Trotsky synthesizes here something he had analyzed already in 1932 in his famous article "The Soviet economy in danger"²² and which was moreover at the centre of the debates of the Russian Left Opposition from Bukharin's break with Stalin and the Stalinist turn towards accelerated industrialization and forced

★ Dossier

collectivization.²³

He then criticized, following Rakovsky, the unrestrained accumulation which did not take into account the necessities of providing for the depreciation of fixed capital, condemning productivity to stagnation and holding back innovation in industry. And he summed up the bureaucratic aspiration to a deformed form of economic development.

e) For Trotsky the bureaucracy, a layer of working class origin, without becoming a class, autonomises itself in relation to its class origin, becoming uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) and should be overthrown, as he reaffirms in i). In short, without being a dominant class, the soviet bureaucracy has several characteristics of such a class, but without the legitimacy of its domination. Thus it was not capable of forging for itself a dominant ideology and had to rely on the ersatz falsified Marxism that became “Marxism-Leninism” in its Stalinist version. This absence of legitimacy of domination — which Stalinist or post-Stalinist ideology is still unable to provide — is only the manifestation of its parasitic role inside the society that it dominates.

f) The CPSU is no longer a proletarian party. The “governing party” has betrayed its class and should be overthrown. Already in September 1935, in an article, Trotsky had said: “it would be pure folly to believe that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union can be reformed and regenerated today. It is impossible to force a bureaucratic machine which is essentially there to maintain the proletariat in a vice to serve the interests of this proletariat.”²⁴ In a 1939 article Trotsky, summing up with some tables of statistics the discontinuity between the Bolshevik party and that of Stalin, concluded: “Stalinism is a not an organic development from Bolshevism, but is a bloody negation of it.”²⁵ Already in 1930 the declaration of the Left Opposition on the 16th Congress of the CPSU left no illusions on the links between the party and the workers: “The leadership of the party has discredited the party and the trade unions in the eyes of the working masses. Neither the first, nor the second, have been able to assure to the proletariat a defense against the bureaucrats. On the contrary, the party and the unions seem to support the bureaucrats against the workers.”²⁶

There is then no doubt that in 1936



Trotsky as seen by a reactionary cartoonist

Trotsky knew perfectly well that the Soviet proletariat was deprived of any form of self-organization.

Surprising

The affirmation that the “social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses” — which is reaffirmed from another angle in h), where it is a question of workers’ resistance having to be broken by an eventual capitalist restoration — appears then surprising.

Socialist consciousness is indeed in no way a spontaneous consciousness emerging through the experience of struggle alone. To survive in the course of periods of downturn — and the 1930s were such a period of downturn in the USSR in terms of the working class and its consciousness — it must be materialized inside a revolutionary organization. In 1936 such an organization no longer existed in the USSR. The several thousand organized left oppositionists were in the camps and Stalin was not slow to liquidate them.

What is more, the massive liquidation of any trace of the former proletariat had begun. The real scale of the Stalinist repression of the 1930-1956 period is still unknown. David Rousset estimates that between 7 and 8 million people, of whom 1 million were members of the party and

young Communists, were executed between 1935 and 1941.²⁷ It is necessary to add to this some tens of millions who were deported to the camps. The result of the repression and the extensive Stalinist industrialization (largely reliant on the use of deportee labour) was to constitute a new working class, which did not have the experience of its predecessors, a class of peasant extraction, subject to inhuman conditions of life and of work, to an omnipresent repression, hence totally atomized.

Let us add again that the deportations continued during the war. How then can we imagine that “the social revolution” could survive “in the consciousness of the toiling masses”? There is here, undeniably, an error by Trotsky, which he would undoubtedly have corrected if he had been able to revise his forecast on the outcome of the war.

Totalitarian

Trotsky had not hesitated to qualify the Stalinist dictatorship as totalitarian. He had denounced the historic falsifications of Stalin. He had devoted a good part of his last years to denouncing the fraudulent trials and the breadth of the repression. But in his lifetime it was difficult to imagine the monstrous scale of the deportations and assassinations, the inhuman reality of the Stalinist gulag, the deportation of entire peoples, the tens and tens of millions of victims.

The effect of the Stalinist terror was to deprive the Soviet workers of the capacity to imagine another socialism than that qualified officially as “actually existing”, or to renew the tradition of collective action and mass self-organization. In this sense Stalinist totalitarianism like Nazi totalitarianism succeeded in breaking the working class.

“It [the October Revolution] has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution”, Trotsky wrote in the *Revolution Betrayed*.²⁷ Some years later the bureaucracy had succeeded in extinguishing the living force of the proletariat, liquidating its conscious elements, giving world capitalism a second breath and allowing it to drive back the assaults of the world revolution.

The perspective of political revolution — an objective for action and not a prediction — formulated by Trotsky was not realized. Moreover, if there were some revolutionary situations in the countries of the eastern bloc (Poland and Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, again Poland in 1980-1981), in the USSR none of these crises attained a comparable level of workers' self-organization. Stalinist terror in the USSR has lasted a very much longer time, extirpating from the society not only all forms of working class organization but all memory of such an organization. From 1930 to 1954-55 a joke, a question, a thought expressed in too loud a voice could send a Soviet worker to deportation. Fifteen years is the time of maturation of a generation. An experience that marks the future of a society. In none of the countries of the Soviet bloc did the bureaucratic societies experience such terror during so many years. That is why some oral workers' traditions, even if imperfect, could emerge when the bureaucratic domination went through crises, and fed the experiences of self-organization.

Defeats

Nonetheless, the revolutionary crises in the east — Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia — all ended in defeats of the mass movement. The minority revolutionary Marxist tradition, which survived and even grew in the capitalist countries, did not regain its footing in any significant manner, despite the efforts in this direction, in the USSR and its satellites. In the absence of a "a revolutionary party having all the attributes of the old Bolshevism, enriched moreover by the world experience of the recent period" mass mobilizations have not succeeded in overthrowing the bureaucracy.

They have however weakened it, indicating to it that it was time to attempt to recycle itself before a self-organized movement on the scale of Solidarnosc ripened in Russia, benefiting from Gorbachev's liberalization. This latter had opened the road to some experiences of self-organization of which the miners' strike of 1990 was the summit, for the first time on such a scale since the beginning of the Stalinist terror.

The "democratic" counter-revolution of Boris Yeltsin, which was the culmination of a process launched by Stalinism, did not come up against the resistance of

the Russian proletariat. Identifying the socialist perspective with the Stalinist and then Brezhnevite years, idealizing capitalist consumer society, seeing "their" factories as above all places of alienated labour, Soviet workers observed passively the establishment of a capitalist restorationist state and the maneuvers of the oligarchs to carve themselves out pieces of state property.

The oligarchic mafias confirmed once more the old adage "property is theft". But as capitalist profit needs rules, thus a state capable of imposing them on all including on the capitalists, the new strong man in the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin, meeting with oligarchs in July 2000, proposed to wipe the slate clean over past thefts of state property — qualified precisely as primitive accumulation of capital by one of the participants at the meeting — so as finally be able to protect private property. The third hypothesis of Trotsky, that of a historic defeat of the Russian revolution, is in the process of being realized before our eyes. It could once again give a new breath to world capitalism. ★



torship" — and mentioned in the correspondence of the oppositionists. These manuscripts have disappeared with their author. Might they exist still in the archives of the NKVD-KGB-FSB?

9. David Rousset, in his very remarkable account *La société éclatée* (Grasset, 1973), which contains in particular an innovative analysis of the role of Gulag slave labour in the stabilization of Stalinism and a pertinent analysis of Khrushchev's "de-Stalinisation" and its limits, concludes that the USSR became "a bureaucratic society of state capitalism". Commenting on Trotsky's analysis, he writes: "The value of a theoretical concept in social sciences is established, as in all the other sciences, by its power of elucidation verified by experience. Experience has confirmed neither of Trotsky's two predictions". (p. 191)

In 1973 the argument could seem strong. However, in social science the time factor can depend on a very great number of parameters and the lifespan of a doomed social formation can largely exceed that of the human beings who seek to understand it and overthrow it.

10. L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit.

11. The *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* published a taste of this very rich debate in 1980 in numbers 6 and 7.

12. According to a letter written to Trotsky by Victor Serge a little after his liberation, in May 1936. Quoted by Pierre Broué, *Les trotskistes en Union soviétique*, *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* n° 6; p. 55.

Note that Boris M Yeltsin, leader of the Trotskyist clandestine center in Moscow, is no relation to his quasi homonym who finished off Stalin's counter-revolutionary work.

13. L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*; op. cit.

14. This letter was published a number of times by the Fourth International under the title "The professional dangers of power". I quote here from the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*; n° 18, 1984, pp. 83-89.

15. Declaration on the 16th congress of the CPSU, signed by Kh. Rakovsky, V. Kossior, N. Mouralov and V. Kasparova, dated April 1930. This text has been reproduced in the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, n° 6, pp. 97-98.

16. L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit.

17. op. cit.

18. op. cit.

19. Note in this respect that an event of huge scale — the death from hunger of six million people in the Ukraine in 1932-1933 — could be camouflaged by this press!

20. L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit.

21. Op. cit.

22. See L. Trotsky, *Writings 1932* (Pathfinder, New York).

23. See note 8, The British review *Critique* (number 13) has published an excellent dossier under the title "Economics of the Left Opposition".

24. L. Trotsky, *The police apparatus of Stalinism*.

25. L. Trotsky, *The antibureaucratic struggle in the USSR*.

26. Signed by K. Rakovsky, V.V. Kossior, N.I. Mouralov and V.S. Kasparova (all then deported), published in French in the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* n° 6, 1980.

27. D. Rousset, *La société éclatée*, op. cit. p. 352.

* Jan Malewski is a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

1. On this topic see Moshe Lewin's book, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, Pluto Press, London.

2. The quote is from a draft response by Trotsky to those who, after the appearance of his book 1917, launched a campaign seeking to oppose so-called "Trotskyism" to "Leninism" (Trotsky mentions lucidly that it required the death of Lenin for this term to appear!).

Trotsky is then in the position of the accused, which did not stop him from calling for "repression" and "purgés" where the accusations had a real basis, in the name of the unity of the ruling party. This text was published for the first time by Pierre Broué in *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, n° 34, June 1988.

3. See Salomon Schwartz, *Les Ouvriers en Union soviétique*, Marcel Rivière, 1956, pp. 20-21.

4. Lenin, *Sotchinienia* (collected works, Russian edition) volume 38, p. 170.

5. "Vernunft wird Unsinn, Wohltat Plage".

6. L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, tr. Max Eastman, 1937. All quotes from the version on the Leon Trotsky Archive website.

7. The expression comes from Anton Ciliga, Yugoslav left oppositionist, freed in 1935 and expelled from the USSR.

8. Christian Rakovsky, who was, after the deportation of Trotsky to Turkey, the principal spokesperson of the Opposition in the USSR, had written a letter to G.N. Valentino in 1928, a first attempt to analyze this unexpected phenomenon.

According to Pierre Broué (*Cahiers Leon Trotsky* n° 6, 1980, p. 39), Rakovsky pursued his work in prison and the titles of his works are known — "The laws of socialist accumulation during the "centrist" period of the dictatorship of the proletariat" and "The laws of development of the socialist dicta-

Understanding fascism in order to fight it

IN a political-functional sense this reflects a legitimate need: the fight against the relativisation of the Nazi crimes. The systematic comparison of these latter with other historic crimes is indeed typical of modern German bourgeois ideology and was introduced aggressively into the debate by 'historical revisionism' (which goes still further, explaining the excesses of Nazi barbarism as a 'reaction' to the Stalinist ['Communist'] crimes). In truth, when one thinks of the dangers to envisage for a possible future, it is necessary to admit that the thesis of 'singularity' tends to weaken sensitivities: the truth is that this 'singularity' could not only be equaled but even surpassed.

Means of destruction

The reason is simple. In comparison with the years 1933-1945, the means of destruction have increased tenfold. The heritage of the cold war and the arms race, still growing, opens the way to the objective possibility of rapid self-destruction of all humanity. The Hitlerite regime did not possess the atomic bomb (but it came near to it). With the means such a regime would dispose of today, the result could be a historic catastrophe of such dimensions that even the terrible misdeeds of the Nazi regime could be reduced to a prelude.

In his remarkable introduction to a new edition of Trotsky's writings on Germany (*Schriften über Deutschland*),¹ Ernest Mandel wrote in 1969: "Under the conditions of a predominantly prosperous and conservative petty bourgeoisie, neofascism has no objective possibility of winning a broad mass base. Wealthy property owners don't fight street battles with revolutionary workers or radical students. They prefer to call the police and provide them with better weapons to 'take care of unrest'." And, some lines further on, he explains that some changes in economic development can transform all that and that it is very probable (given the contradictions of contemporary capitalism) that such changes would happen in the future.

In this respect, where are we today, for

SINCE the incorporation of the GDR in 1990, there has been in Germany a debate in the scattered ranks of the left intelligentsia on the specificity of the Nazi regime and the singularity of its crimes. A number of authors stress above all the consciously organized genocide of the Jewish population in Europe.

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example in Europe? In several countries there are political parties or movements of the far right (whether fascist, post-fascist, proto-fascist, populist) which already have a mass electoral base, and in these same countries and in others there is a growth of organized far right militancy, the preparation of armed terrorism by far right nuclei, racist attacks and anti-Semitic provocations committed by people influenced by the far right.

Balkans

There have been the wars in the Balkans with their waves of violence of "ethnic" motivation. There has been mass unemployment for some years, and it is only partially reducing, even during a period of conjunctural economic upturn. There are more and more poor, excluded, including the dispossessed originating from the middle layers. To add to this there is increased atomization in the workplace and leisure and a new layer of people are formally 'entrepreneurs', even if they have only their labour power (more or less qualified) to sell.

The attempt to understand the nature of historic fascism, to debate the different approaches to the phenomenon and the means to fight it is in no way academic today. It amounts to a past with a multitude of links to the present. The possibility of drawing lessons for the future — with all the prudence necessary, in that history

never repeats itself exactly — cannot then be denied. And Trotsky's motivation was very rational: to understand fascism, Nazism in its social, political and historic context, to understand it in order better to fight it, to stop it from seizing power, to destroy it with all its roots.

Germany and the struggle against the Hitlerite danger are at the centre of Trotsky's preoccupations before the coming to power of the Nazis in 1933. The origin of the movement being Italy, the application of this notion to the Nazi movement is explained in part by the proclaimed affinity of the NSDAP itself to the original fascism and above all by the objective similarity of the social and political nature. Mussolini's seizure of power not only signified the installation of a very repressive regime abolishing elementary democratic rights, but also the physical destruction of the workers' movement, its parties, trade unions and all its independent associations. Fascist propaganda mythologised a renaissance of a national glory situated far in the past; its symbolism alluded to the ancient Roman Empire.

Terrorism

Fascism was a mass movement which, during the period of its ascension to power, combined street terrorism, attacking organizations of the left and the workers' movement and its demonstrations, firing the 'Houses of the People' and so on with participation in the official political game, finally establishing a totalitarian dictatorship excluding all self-organization from below and nearly all public criticism. Fascism, in order to create a broad popular base for itself, practiced a 'social' demagoguery appealing to 'anticapitalist' or 'anti-rich' resentments, but as a regime it did not attack the foundations of the capitalist economy, acting in conformity with the interests of the bourgeoisie as dominant social class and "forgetting" that it had promised, not to finish with the capitalists, but to force them to take into account the interests of the workers.

After the First World War there was a

mass revolutionary movement in Italy, leading to a wave of factory occupations by workers in revolt in Turin in September 1920. Afterwards came a downturn in the autonomous activity of the exploited and oppressed. In this atmosphere fascism developed as a new form of political reaction. In October 1922, Mussolini took power. From November 5 to December 5 1922, the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (CI) met, first in Petrograd then in Moscow, and discussed among other subjects the fascist phenomenon, after the debate on "tactics" (the workers' united front and the slogan of the workers' government being at the centre of the preoccupations).

New phenomenon

It was a historically new political phenomenon. But Radek, speaking in the name of the executive, explained the petty bourgeois social base of fascism, resting first of all on a layer of the nationalist "middle classes", disappointed by the outcome of the war and full of resentments, originating in the crisis of the traditional bourgeois parties and institutions, its demagogic character and the fact that its seizure of power had been a consequence of the incapacity of the workers' movement and above all the Italian Socialist Party, based on the mass movement of the postwar period, to itself take power and overthrow capitalism.

In conclusion, Radek said: "The fascists are the petty bourgeoisie who arrive in power supported by the bourgeoisie and who will be forced to apply, not the programme of the petty bourgeoisie, but that of capitalism... And precisely that which constitutes fascism's strength will be also the reason for its death, because it has become a petty bourgeois party, it disposes of this broad front, with which it has fought us. But because it is a big petty bourgeois party, it cannot put into practice the policy of Italian capital without unleashing big revolts in its own camps". The analysis was lucid, but the outlook too optimistic, underestimating the possibilities for the fascist leadership, once in power, to control and drive back its own social base.

After Radek's speech, the Italian Communist leader Bordiga gave a precise description of the history and nature of the fascist movement and explained how it had been able to win after the socialist move-



United front could have stopped Nazis

ment had shown its incapacity to overthrow the established order: "The consequence of these faults were a total change of the sentiments of the bourgeoisie and other classes. The proletariat was divided and demoralized... One can say that the Italian bourgeoisie in 1919 and the first half of 1920 was more or less accommodated to the idea of seeing the victory of the revolution.

The middle class and the petty bourgeoisie tended to play a passive role, not following the big bourgeoisie, but following the proletariat which was ready to triumph... When the middle class saw that the Socialist Party was not capable of organizing itself in a manner that would allow it to take the heights, it articulated its discontent; it lost little by little the confidence it had in the proletariat and swung towards the opposite side. It was at this moment that the bourgeoisie passed onto the offensive".

Incapacity

Bordiga also stressed the incapacity of the Socialist Party to win over the small peasantry that aspired to own a little cultivable land, which offered an important social base to the fascists. "Fascism bases itself on the general situation, on the growing discontent each day of all the petty bourgeois layers, small traders, small landowners, veterans, ex-officers, who were disappointed by their situation and idealized what they had during the war... Fascism rallied all the demobilized elements who had not found their place in society after the war, and used to its ends their fighting experience."

The analysis was the same as that of Radek, but Bordiga had a tendency to ignore the substantial difference between the fascist regime and bourgeois democracy, identified as a simple 'system of lies', and explained that fascism would not abolish all democratic liberties and even that 'fascism will be liberal and democratic'.²

With this debate, the Communist International began the analysis and comprehension of the fascist phenomenon, albeit with some serious underestimations. However, after the victory of the Stalinist faction inside the Russian party and the CI, certain weaknesses of appreciation typical of Bordiga, who represented an ultraleft current which was fairly weak in the world Communist movement, were taken up and 'deepened' by the Stalinized leadership.

Leon Trotsky, assassinated on the order of Stalin in 1940, was not able to analyze fascism and above all its terrible German version after the end of the Hitlerite Third Reich. Given this, he had been very clairvoyant as to the danger and the dimension of the catastrophe, and moreover also very sensitive to the difference between the Italian original and the German copy. Well before the implementation of the genocide, he had understood that the pseudo-zoological 'materialism', racism and extremely aggressive anti-Semitism of the Nazis had a menacing specificity.

"On the plane of politics, racism is a vapid and bombastic variety of chauvinism in alliance with phrenology. As the ruined nobility sought solace in the gentility of its blood, so the pauperized petty bourgeoisie befuddles itself with fairy tales concerning the special superiorities of its race."³

Threats

There was another sizeable difference between the Italian and German variants of fascism: imperialist Germany was capable of creating the material bases to launch and lead a world war against the other imperialist states and against the USSR — which implied the possibility of the bloody implementation of the black dreams of "Mein Kampf".

Italy, in the material and military domains, had not this possibility of playing a role on the first level. It was then normal, after the conquest of power by Italian fascism and in the period of the rise of the Nazi movement, to concentrate on the German case, while trying to draw from

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the lessons of the Italian experience, which had already cost the life of the organized workers' movement.

Trotsky's contribution is firmly in the Marxist fashion of approaching the problem of fascism, that is situating it in the framework of a critical approach to capitalist class society in its imperialist stage and its structural economic, social and political crisis. The bourgeois ideologues, sometimes unconsciously, have had an interest in denying the link between the capitalist system and the domination of the bourgeois class on the one hand and on the other, the rise of the fascist movement and the exercise of power by the fascist regimes. The bourgeois ideologues focus on partial aspects of the behavior of the fascist leaderships and movements, which represent their affinity with other anti-democratic, violent and repressive policies.

Trotsky had called the Stalinist regime "totalitarian"⁴ well before this notion was fashionable, but he emphasized the importance of the social base of the Stalinist bureaucracy, different from that of the Nazis, which led to a whole catalogue of differences as to the mechanisms of power, the dynamic of foreign policy and the methods of struggle to be employed against the respective regimes. The essence of the 'theory of totalitarianism' of the ideologues of the bourgeoisie is summed up in the simplistic equation 'brown equals red', fascism, Nazism, Francoism, Communism (identified with Stalinism), all as more or less the same thing, to be opposed by the values and virtues of bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

False

It is naturally false to identify communism, the aspiration to the socialist revolution and thus the emancipation of the proletariat as the lever for a universal emancipation, to Stalinism which oppresses self-organization and emancipation and which is largely the result of the weak economic development and isolation of the Soviet Union. But it is also false to identify the Stalinism with fascism, forgetting that under Stalin, the capitalist market did not reign in the means of production and that the bourgeoisie was no longer the dominant class in society but a beaten class, disintegrated and almost destroyed.

The German bourgeois ideologues

deny the pro-capitalist character of the regime of the Nazis. There are some "Marxist" analyses which are too mechanical and thus not very convincing: one fine day the capitalists get together around a round table and decide to put in place a fascist regime. Hitler and the NSDAP being the best (and the nastiest) candidates, it is them that are helped into power. And afterwards — the propagandist postcards of Heartfield popularized this vision of things — one had Hitler, the slave of big capital, a marionette in the service of Krupp, Thyssen, Flick, the Deutsche Bank, IG Farben and so on.

Of course, things did not happen like that. The historian Ernst Nolte thinks that the true nature of Nazism is situated in human nature. In the last analysis, it is clear: without human beings, no fascism. Opium makes us sleep because of its soporific qualities. But Hitler, to take power, needed the support or at least the tolerance of big capital and some summits of the apparatus of the civil and military state. And the bourgeoisie, among other motives of an economic and expansionist character, could not see any other way out of the crisis of its system of political representation.

Domination

In normal times, as Trotsky explained very well, the bourgeoisie prefers the parliamentary democratic system as a system which assures its domination. This system renders possible the integration of the top of the leaderships of the mass workers' organizations, which reinforces considerably the legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of a great part of the population. But in times of exacerbation of the structural crisis of the system, things change. The bourgeoisie fears the revolts, which could challenge its power, the liberal and moderate conservative political representatives lose their credibility.

What is more, sometimes (in Germany this was the case), the bourgeoisie aspires to war to enlarge the terrain providing it with resources and its markets. The bourgeoisie seeks then a massive new social force, capable of combating and destroying the organized workers' movement, allowing a historic victory for the capitalists in the area of wages and social rights, allowing a spectacular increase in the rate of exploitation (the rate of surplus-value) and with this a reversal of the tendency to the lowering of the rate of profit. An analy-

sis of the empirical material on Hitler's Third Reich shows quite conclusively not only that the general interests of big capital were well served, but also that the big capitalists remained very influential inside the regime, even in consideration of their particular interests.

Ernest Mandel, in the work quoted, gives two examples: in the middle of the war, in 1940, the Flick trust negotiated the price for its new grenades with the representative of the state apparatus dominated by the leadership of the NSDAP. These latter had calculated that a price of 24 Reichsmark (RM) for each would include a "justified profit" for the trust. Flick demanded 39.25 RM. The 'compromise', quickly arrived at, was 37 RM!

In 1942, the same trust demanded the acquisition of a steel making enterprise constructed with public finances by the Nazi state. On March 31 of that year, the real value of it was evaluated at 9.8 million RM, the nominal value only 3.6 millions. Flick bought the firm at the nominal price! It is very important to note that the Nazis did not even bring the arms industry into state ownership. The general tendency of their economic policy was rather privatization than nationalization.

That said, it is clear that the installation of a fascist regime — and thus also of the Nazi regime — implies a political dispossession of the bourgeoisie. It is something forgotten by the simplistic 'Marxists', and it is an omission exploited by the bourgeois ideologues. This delegation of power includes enormous risks, and that is why Hitler had to persuade the magnates of industry, banks and the army that the social-demagogic part of his programme would not be carried out — but the aggressive imperialist and revanchist policy that he advocated was welcomed by the said gentlemen. It is indeed adventurist and very irresponsible to bet on a 'horse' with an ideology of the style of "Mein Kampf". But such was the state of mind of the German bourgeoisie.

Consciousness

In the second place, Trotsky's contribution reflects the level of political consciousness inside the leadership of the world Communist movement before its grave deformation and bureaucratic degeneration. Even today, what is called 'Trotskyist' represents very often simply the general level of analysis and program-



Anti-Semitic poster of Trotsky from Russian civil war

matic identity of the Communist International and Bolshevism in the lifetime of Lenin or until the Fourth World Congress of the Third International. Afterwards, the debates, analyses and positions were systematically deformed by the pragmatic considerations of struggles inside the bureaucratic apparatus and the little leading clique of this apparatus. Hence, the level had fallen very rapidly. Trotsky took as point of departure the debate on Italian fascism at the Fourth Congress of the CI and was thus well armed to understand the dual nature of the fascist movement: its social base of ‘petty bourgeois counter-revolutionary despair’ and the bourgeois nature of the essence of its politics as ‘last card’ of the German capitalist-imperialist system in crisis.

Already the Italian social-democrat leaders (like Zibordj or Turati) explained the victory of fascism by the ‘extremist’ and ‘philo-Bolshevik’ excesses of the Communists and workers in struggle. They had ‘frightened’ the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie and had thus driven them straight into the arms of the movement of

Mussolini. The Belgian social-democratic theorist Hendrik de Man would draw a similar balance sheet of Hitler’s victory, and when there was a wave of workers’ mobilizations in Belgium and a growing will to organise a general strike in 1935, the social-democratic leadership under his influence did everything to restrain it — which created the conditions for the growth of the Belgian fascist movement the following year.

Golden mean

The German social-democratic leadership pursued a policy of the ‘golden mean’. It wanted to simultaneously combat the ‘two extremes’, that of the left (the Communist Party) and that of the right (the organizations of the far right like the *Stahlhelm* and Nazism), basing itself on the police and legal apparatus of the bourgeois state. Contrary to what some vulgarisers believe Trotsky did not argue there was an equidistance vis-à-vis the SPD on the one hand and the KPD led by Thaelmann on the other. If he held the offi-

cial policy of the KPD responsible for the lack of a real struggle against the Nazis, and the capitulation without a fight in 1933, it was because it had facilitated the dirty work of the social-democracy, which was primarily responsible for this terrible defeat of the workers’ movement.

Trotsky explained the concrete role of the social-democracy inside capitalist society and its bourgeois democratic regime. Starting from the support given by the SPD to the war of ‘its’ bourgeoisie in 1914, the SPD was no longer an open party for a revolutionary alternative (although a Marxist phraseology remained still in force for a long time). After the war, in 1918-19, the leadership of the SPD played a key role in saving the bourgeoisie from the masses in revolt and the workers and soldiers organized in autonomous councils and thus potential alternative organs of power to the bourgeois state.

The SPD obstructed the seizure of power by the councils, in which it had a majority, and organized the bloody counter-revolution in collaboration with the army and the repressive apparatus of the state. To justify this *a posteriori*, the social-democratic theoreticians claimed that the ‘objective situation was not ripe’ for a socialist revolution. But in 1918-19 the same people claimed that the ‘socialist republic’ was already a fact.

Parliamentary regime

The result was the installation of a parliamentary regime and the legal installation of significant democratic and social gains: the general right to vote including for women, the 8 hour working day and so on. But the result was also the preservation of the domination of the capitalist class and the state apparatus inherited from the Wilhelmian Empire, the establishment of a network of paramilitary ultra-reactionary forces formed by the same pre-fascist ‘Freikorps’ that the leadership of the SPD under Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske had set up against the ‘Spartakists’, the workers’ vanguard and the radicalized masses. Of course, all these ‘partners’ remained sworn enemies not only of the Communism of the Spartakusbund, but also of the workers’ movement as a whole, including the SPD and the trade unions under the social-democratic influence.

After 1919, there were still several phases of rise of the mass movement challenging the capitalist regime, beginning

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with the 'lost revolution' (as Trotsky in any case believed) of 1923. In the years preceding 1933, the very fact of the rise of the Nazi movement was a proof that the outcome of the big social conflicts would not take place in the routine of the parliamentary system. For the rise of a movement of the fascist type signifies an atmosphere of prolonged civil war. The fascist gangs attacked physically, and it was necessary to defend oneself.

The structural crisis of the system and the exasperation of the broad masses found no alternative credible response on the part of the political leadership of the majority current in the workers' movement, for the SPD feared struggles which could 'go too far' and challenge a system to which it was linked by the symbiosis of its bureaucratic layer with the thousand and one institutions of the parliamentary system.

Network

The SPD and the workers' movement influenced and led by it was not only the relationship between a political leadership and an electorate, it disposed of a broad network of organized forces, anchored deeply in the workers' towns, including organisations of combat like the 'Reichsbanner'. The SPD, fearing above all the loss of its organizational gains, would have been able to appeal effectively for struggle — and there was the positive experience of the 'Kapp Putsch', a reactionary coup d'état beaten by a general strike. But the other side of the coin was the radicalisation produced by this experience, creating a broad left current alongside of social-democracy, which knew also that in Bolshevik Russia, its Menshevik homologue had lost its influence and was even oppressed by the Communist government.

Trotsky explained that the idea of 'saving the organisation' without mobilization or struggle was an illusion. The SPD participated in the repression of the Communists with the means of the police apparatus of the state, but, here again, these 'partners' hated the social-democrats and the trade unions of the ADGB with a fierce and primitive class hatred.

The SPD continued to bet on the electoral card and the perspective of a conjunctural economic upturn to be able to combat unemployment and thus the demoralisation of a part of the working class. But even if such a conjunctural

upturn was not ruled out, there remained the structural crisis, including that of the institutions. In the area of social struggles, the 'moderation' of the SPD only reinforced despair, and despair translated itself politically in the strengthening of the movement of the far right and the Nazis. Even electorally, one had the impression that the SPD, co-responsible for all the growing miseries of the system, would be crushed sooner or later between the "two extremes", the KPD and the NSDAP.

Only Otto Bauer, the recognised leader of Austrian social democracy, had a clear analysis of the fascist danger, fairly close to that of Trotsky: the declassing of a whole petty bourgeois layer by the war and economic crisis led it to break with bourgeois parliamentary democracy; the bourgeoisie's desire to escape its economic crisis through a radical cut in wages and a massive dismantling of social gains, and in order to do this, dismantle the organizational gains of the workers' movement; the necessity of this latter preparing for a physical confrontation by its own means of workers self-organisation.

It is this attitude that led to the heroic struggle of the 'Schutzbund' in February 1934. This orientation was good, but it lacked a perspective of transitional struggle in the area of economic and social demands — thus an overall alternative response to the structural crisis of the system.

Third period

Starting from 1929, the leadership of the KPD applied the policy of the so-called "Third period", which was an ultra-sectarian policy towards the SPD. Trotsky and the Left Opposition concentrated their criticisms on this because, for them, a policy appropriate to the demands of the situation led by the revolutionary party, a party with a considerable mass influence, would have the chance of reversing the situation, defeating "national socialism" and overthrowing the bourgeois regime.

The origin of the notion of the "Third period" (of capitalism after the First World War) is a little nebulous. When Bukharin introduced it at the 6th Congress of the CI in 1928 (officially in the name of the Executive and of the Soviet delegation), nobody was too sure what it meant. He said that the "philosophy" of the Third period was "to stress that the stabilisation of capitalism would have a certain dura-

tion". But starting from the tenth plenary session of the Executive of the CI (from July 3 to 19, 1929), the meaning of the expression "Third period" was changed into its opposite.

In the meantime Stalin and his faction had beaten through administrative measures the "right" current in the party (led by Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky) and were ready to bring the other parties of the CI into line. Stalin used the term "Third period" for his own ends. At the latest starting from the tenth plenary session of the executive, there were no longer any genuine political discussions in the CI — all content was artificially put to the service of the internal struggle and of bureaucratic control of the organisation.

Zigzag

The objective of the tenth plenary session was to defeat and expel the "right" ("the friends of Bukharin") in the parties of the CI, after the Left Opposition ("the friends of Trotsky") had already been expelled. But the resulting political line was an ultra left and ultrasectarian "zigzag" which would have heavy consequences, above all in Germany.

The CI, and thus the KPD, abandoned the tactic of the workers' united front, saying that it was necessary to limit themselves to the "united front from below".

There was then no longer an appeal to common action with the SPD as a whole, but only appeals to common action to the members of the SPD, ignoring the leadership. But it did not stop there. The CI and the KPD denounced the SPD as being a "social-fascist" party to be fought in the same way as the fascists. Thus even unity from below was no longer sought. The social democrats became the "main enemy".

In the *Rote Fahne*, the central organ of the KPD, one could read that it was necessary to combat the "social-fascists" everywhere, combat the "little Noskes, Zörgiebels and Scheidemanns" in the factories, the schools and even the kindergartens! In the trade unions, the KPD pursued the same logic: it was the "RGO line", the line of "revolutionary opposition" in the mass trade unions of the ADGB, with a split perspective (since the "social-fascists" led these unions with majority support). Thus, the militants of the KPD quickly cut themselves off from the workers' vanguard.



The KPD became a party capable of attracting a mass of youth, unemployed and diverse radicalised elements, as sympathisers and as electorate, but it lost its possibility of rooting itself in the factories and its real capacity of initiative towards the militants of the SPD active in the factories and in the unions.

National liberation

On the other hand, the KPD, to the extent that the Nazis became stronger and more menacing, began to “copy” their style of intervention and propaganda. It even began to take the same line as them in certain areas, above all in the denunciation of the winners of the First World War and the campaign against the treaty of Versailles and against “reparations”: the KPD proclaimed itself for “national liberation” (!). In August 1931 the Nazis campaigned for a “brown referendum” and for the resignation of the SPD minority government of Prussia. The KPD supported this demand, calling the referendum “red” instead of “brown”!

The underestimation of the real fascist danger was systematic. Parliamentary democracy, military dictatorship or fascist regime — it didn’t matter much as in any case these are all versions of the same bourgeois state, and the alternative to all that was the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist revolution which was on the agenda. The authoritarian regimes of Papen, Brüning, Schleicher (pre-Bonapartist or Bonapartist in the analyses of Trotsky) were already forms of “fascism” (when the SPD in government was already “social-fascism”, why not...).

It did not take into account the specific contradiction of fascism, which takes its exceptional force from the fact that it constitutes a movement of enragés “from below”, ready for anything, including blind generalised terror. The official line of

the KPD culminated in the slogan “after Hitler, us!”. The leadership of the KPD had no longer even the project of defeating the Nazis, of preventing them from seizing power.

It said that Hitler in government would quickly lose credibility. It was then a real capitulation “without a fight” which was being prepared, not only on the part of the SPD but also that of the KPD, although with the latter the capitulation was camouflaged by a muscular verbal radicalism.

Against this course, Trotsky defended and understood the old gains of the political analyses of the CI and the lessons of the Italian experience. All the articles and pamphlets by Trotsky and the Left Opposition read today as rare examples of clairvoyance, good political sense and theoretical coherence.

The Stalinists denounced Trotsky in their German press and the International as “fascist” (!) because they favoured joint action with the SPD. Trotsky was, of course, a sworn enemy of the bourgeois state, even under its republican-democratic form. But for him, the form of government is of great importance for the workers’ movement as a whole, including for its revolutionary component.

Democratic rights

What had to be defended was not the “the Republic” as such, rather the democratic rights which give the working class possibilities of organising and acting, and above all the “islands of workers’ democracy” inside the bourgeois parliamentary democratic republic: the multitude of forms of self-organisation represented by the trade unions, the parties, the mutual, cultural, associative organisations. It is not about abstract ideals: the possibility of organising, meeting, acting implies some material bases, some meeting places.

The historic vocation of a fascist mass movement which mobilises the despair of the uprooted petty-bourgeois layers and can draw with it a great number of down and outs, is precisely to destroy these material bases and destroy the workers’ movement in its entirety, to stop the working class from acting collectively, from defending its interests, including its imme-

diate and elementary interests.

The taking of power by such a movement (concretely by the Nazis), signified in the eyes of Trotsky and the International Left Opposition a historic defeat for the working class.

The revolutionary party should appeal to the SPD in its entirety and exert a maximum pressure on the leadership to arrive at joint action against the fascist enemy, for even if the leadership of the SPD wished in no way to break the power of the bourgeoisie and fight for a socialist republic, even if its policy is deliberately counter-revolutionary, the SPD as party and workers’ movement dominated by it are materially linked to the democratic-parliamentary form of the capitalist system.

Mortal danger

Fascism is then a mortal danger for them as for the revolutionary part of the workers’ movement. And to the extent that the revolutionary party succeeds in drawing the SPD into unitary anti-fascist defence struggles but also socio-economic struggles, it can create a different political climate in the whole country. If the mass base of fascism sees the workers’ movement unite and act seriously it can quickly be shaken — the petty bourgeois, above all, likes to bet on the “winning horse”, as Trotsky explained. The country approached the dénouement of its terrible systemic crisis — either the victory of the Nazis, the destruction of the workers’ movement, barbarism, and at the end of the day war, above all against the USSR, or socialist revolution.

But the socialist revolution will not come through making propaganda for socialism. It is necessary to win the majority of the working class, which can draw in the majority of the nation and one can only win it by responding to its elementary needs (starting with the need for self-defence), and doing everything to make it act as a class.

The Left Opposition was not the only Communist current criticising the official line of the KPD. The so-called Right Opposition, led by Brandler and Thalheimer (the KPO), was also opposed to the line of “social fascism” and argued for a policy of the united workers’ front as well as for the abandonment of the sectarian line in general and in the mass trade unions in particular. Why did the Right Opposition and the Left Opposition, both

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banned and slandered in the party, not work together?

To Trotsky, from the point of view of method, the international position was the basis for the national position. The KPD, even after Stalin's break with Bukharin and the 'right', thought there was no real alternative to the policy of the Russian party (including the repression of the Left Opposition!) and the CI, whereas its judgment of the policy of the German party led by Thaelmann/Stalin was that it led to catastrophe! Since for any Marxist (and for any clear-sighted observer) the outcome in Germany was the key for the future of the international situation, it did not amount to a very coherent position.

Besides the SPD and the KPD, who were the two workers' parties of a mass character, there were also some little independent organisations, above all the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei (SAP), born from a left split in the SPD at the end of 1931, with some thousands of members. The SAP was not only favourable to the workers' united front, but took it up as its favourite theme, and since this was even more true of the Vereinigte Linke Opposition (VLO, the name of the Left Opposition in Germany), one can ask why Trotsky and the VLO did not seek to broaden their forces and their audience by joining with the SAP or entering it. Trotsky did not favour "entry" in the KPD and the SPD.

The SPD was a party linked to the system, member of the yellow Second International, he explained, and the KPD was the revolutionary party, member of the red Third International, even if this party and this International are very badly led. But so long as they are not lost to the revolutionary cause by their practice and in the eyes of the broad masses (like the SPD and the Second International in 1914), it is necessary to situate in their camp and work to correct their policy and replace their leadership.

Propaganda

The SAP, as a small organisation outside of the two big mass parties, said Trotsky, could not claim a special place inside the united front to be built. The propaganda for the workers' united front is not the same thing as the policy of the workers' united front. The SAP had no clear response on the key questions: imminence of the revolution or not, liaison



between defence against fascism and counter-offensive or not, perspective of proletarian seizure of power to overcome the crisis of the system or not. In these conditions, propaganda for the united front becomes attractive, but void of content.

Since the VLO had only around 600 members in 1932 one could ask if it was able to do anything but propaganda. Its approach, to remain turned towards the KPD, persuade its militants that it was necessary to change the policy and the leadership, did not seem very realistic given the relationship of forces, above all if one takes into account the systematic calumnies in the KPD press.

Happily there are some examples (exceptional, of course) of a beginning of implementation of the ideas of Trotsky and the Left Opposition which validate at least partially the course followed, for they show that, if this line had been able to be imposed more widely, the seizure of power by Hitler without unitary combat of the workers' movement would not have taken place.⁵

In Bruchsal, a small town in Bade (in the south west of Germany), the VLO had its strongest town section, well implanted among rank and file trades unionists, the unemployed and in the workers' sports associations. It even had some representatives on the local council. The official KPD did not exist in the town. At the end of 1931, the section succeeded in establishing a "committee of action" bringing together the local trade union confederation of the ADGB, the "League of victims of the war and of work", the SPD and the VLO.

This committee could mobilise some 1,500 workers "against the lowering of wages and the imminent threat of the terror of the fascists in government". At the

national elections of July 1932, the SPD in Bruchsal obtained 500 votes, whereas the VLO obtained 1,000 for the KPD list. The VLO passed from 50 members in autumn 1931 to around 100 in spring 1932.

Example

Another enlightening example took place in Oranienburg, to the north of Berlin, in the region of Brandenburg. There, at the beginning of 1932, the leader of the "League of struggle against fascism" was expelled from the KPD with 56 of his partisans. Under the influence of Trotsky's writings, they made contact with the VLO and joined it. For May 1 1932, at their initiative, there was the project of a joint SPD-KPD-VLO demonstration, which the official KPD sabotaged.

But the KPD was forced to make a public self-criticism, and it returned to a unitary committee ("workers' struggle committee"). This committee organised groups of protection against fascists, a "proletarian-unitary" list of parents of schoolchildren and ensured the organisational preparation of elections of trade union delegates in the workplaces.

The impact of this example was such that it was taken up in a more or less similar fashion in the neighbouring communes, among others in Sachsenhausen and Zehlendorf. The climate created by this kind of practice is incompatible with a fascist hegemony and at the same time, as shown by the electoral results in Bruchsal, this unitary line of march creates the conditions necessary to break the hegemony of the social-democracy in the workers movement (and to counteract the sectarianism of other forces...).

The official leadership of the KPD from Stalinization until the terrible defeat of 1933, despite some superficial turns, was absolutely not capable of learning from living experience. The NSDAP enjoyed its first great electoral success on the occasion of the communal elections of December 1929 in Prussia. In March 1930, the predominantly social-democratic Müller government was replaced by the government of Heinrich Brüning (of the Catholic "Zentrum" party), governing by decree.

On September 14 1930 elections for the Reichstag (parliament) were held. The KPD obtained 4.6 million votes (up by 1.3 million compared to the elections of May 1928), the SPD 8.64 million (down 0.6

million) and the NSDAP 6.4 million (up 5.6 million). The tendency was clear: the SPD, party of the “golden mean” wishing to save the Republic of Weimar, and practicing “tolerance” towards the minority government of the Catholic “centre”, was under strong pressure from the two “extreme” parties. But the rate of electoral growth of the Communist party was much weaker than that of the Nazi party.

Thus even these simple electoral figures show a serious danger and the necessity of well thought out political initiatives to isolate and combat the Nazis. In May 1932 a government was formed under von Papen, a very reactionary monarchist linked to Hindenburg. This government organised a coup to eliminate the Prussian social-democratic government of Severing in July.

Tendencies

The November 6 1932 elections for the Reichstag gave the following results: KPD nearly 6 million votes, SPD 7.25 million, NSDAP 11.75 million. The same tendencies were reinforced then. On December 2, 1932, the government of general Schleicher, the head of the Reichswehr (army) was formed. It was the last attempt of the traditional reactionary/conservative milieu to find an alternative to a government led by Hitler. But on January 30, 1933, Hindenburg named Hitler as chancellor of a coalition government of the extreme right. This same marshal Hindenburg had won the presidential elections in March and April 1932. It should be recalled that the SPD, in the second round, had called for a vote for him as the “lesser evil” in comparison with Hitler!

And the leadership of the KPD, for whom the governments had already been more or less fascist for some time, did not yet even understand the danger when Hitler became chancellor. The SPD gave no signal for combat under the pretext that the Hitler government was “constitutional” and legal. The KPD thought that the Hitler government would quickly lose its mass base because it could not realise its demagogic social promises.

After the Reichstag fire and the beginning of the persecution of the Communists, in March 1933 new elections gave 4.8 million votes for the KPD, 7.1 million for the SPD, and 17.2 million for the NSDAP. The time of the true dictatorship of the fascist type had begun. It was the beginning of the

end of the organised workers’ movement of a mass character, in Germany and later elsewhere. But according to the central committee of the KPD — Thaelmann was already imprisoned by the Nazis — these elections “were not a victory for fascism”!

Turning the tide

For Trotsky, there was a chance of turning the tide until the last moment, even at the beginning of 1933. And it is clearly established that the mass of social-democratic workers were ready to fight and awaited the signal from their leadership. The organisations under social-democratic leadership could not only organise a truly general strike, but under the names of the “Reichsbanner” and “Eiserne Front” there were mass combat organisations. The KPD was very strongly isolated from the rank and file of social democracy. Moreover, it had already begun to build “revolutionary trade unions” outside of the ADGB and had become a “party of the unemployed” rather than a “party of workers”. Its calling alone for a general strike would not have been effective.

But the will to act together had become very strong at the base, so a call by the leaderships, even at the last minute, would have aroused a formidable mobilisation, including the great majority of employees and unemployed, the poor, the marginalized, with a great attraction even for a part of the radicalised petty bourgeoisie and certainly for a very great part of the youth.

In the SPD, formally, there was a democratic functioning. But in truth, it was a bureaucratic apparatus which led the party in a very authoritarian manner. Education in discipline has a purpose: the will to act effectively. The problem begins when the militants are no longer capable of taking initiatives in an autonomous manner, even when they are persuaded that their very existence is at stake.

In the KPD, “Bolshevisation” (in truth Stalinization) had made ravages. There were no more internal debates with a real confrontation of ideas. The leadership was not incapable of learning, even if its leader, Thaelmann, was not known for an excessive intellectual capacity. It was the totally undemocratic regime that it had imposed in the party in the image of the Russian party under Stalin which meant it no longer had the means to learn.

The expulsion of all those who criticised the leadership or proposed alterna-

tives had transformed democratic centralism into a bureaucratic “centralism” and an element vital to a revolutionary party had been lost: the capacity to elaborate its political line by taking into account living experiences and the capacities of analysis of its militants.

It is only after the beginning of the massive repression when the leaderships of the SPD and ADGB were still trying to preserve a form of legal organisation through opportunist manoeuvres with Hitler’s government that the CI and KPD called on social-democracy to joint action. But it was a “propagandist” appeal, without real attempt to arrive at an agreement. The “united front” between the militants of the SPD and KPD was only realised... in the Nazi concentration camps.

Even after the defeat, the CI was not capable of changing line. The presidium of the executive of the CI declared in April 1933 that the line of the KPD under Thaelmann’s leadership had been “completely correct”, that Hitler would not be in power for long, and so on. The 13th plenary session of the CI executive (November/December 1933!) repeated this judgement. Kuusinen said in the “discussion”: “Trotsky has written that there has been a “catastrophe”... But the overwhelming majority of the labouring masses of Germany think completely otherwise...”.

After this official “balance sheet” of the CI was in now way contradicted in the sections outside of Russia and Germany, Trotsky drew the conclusion that the capitulation without struggle before Hitler and the defeat without sincere balance sheet marked the end of the Communist International as revolutionary factor. The Left Opposition could no longer consider itself as a faction (albeit expelled) of the Stalinized official Communist movement. It was only from this moment that Trotsky and his followers proclaimed the necessity of building a new revolutionary International, the Fourth.

Popular Front

It was only at the 7th congress of the CI in 1935 that the “correct line” of combat against fascism was changed. The era of the policy of the “Popular Front” began. Now, all of a sudden, the united front against fascism became the “correct line”. But it was a united front not merely with the whole of social-democracy, but also with the “democratic” or “progressive” or

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“antifascist” component of the bourgeoisie!

The united front in its “Popular Front” version means, at the end of the day, the submission of the social-democratic and Communist parties to the demands of the bourgeois parties and the self-limitation of the workers demands, meaning that it was out of the question to attack private property.

Yet, at certain moments of the struggle, above all if it takes the form of a prolonged civil war as in Spain, victory can only be assured by measures of expropriation of the big capitalists and/or big landowners. Defeat comes then not from the fact that the united front is not realized, but from the fact that at a certain stage of the process, the road to the resolution of the conflict in favour of the antifascist camp is barred by a too great respect for private property.

But there is also a “theoretical” link between the ultra left phase and the turn towards the policy of the Popular Front which often escapes those who praise the wisdom of the latter: this link is the impoverishment of the comprehension and the definition of the phenomenon of fascism itself.

Mass base

Already in the “third period”, the definition of fascism was that it amounted simply to the “terrorist dictatorship of finance capital”. The distinguishing aspect of a fascist dictatorship from a “classic” military or Bonapartist dictatorship, the mass base in the petty-bourgeoisie, which had already been understood in the CI in 1922, had been completely “forgotten”. This led to a complete theoretical disarmament vis-à-vis the real fascist danger.

In 1935, the famous definition of the 7th congress of the Stalinized CI, formulated by Dimitrov, was virtually the same. It was a dictatorship “of the most reactionary, the most chauvinist etc. component” of financial capital. But now, the political finality was to justify a front so broad that it divided the bourgeoisie in two and isolates its “most reactionary, aggressive etc.” sectors. Indeed, the necessity of neutralising or attracting the petty bourgeoisie implies a working class in action for its own interests, not halting like cowards before the doors of the capitalist tabernacle: this approach is excluded by the policy of the Popular Front.

Trotsky's definition of fascism is rooted in the tradition of thought prevalent in the CI before its Stalinization. He writes for example: “Fascism is not merely a system of reprisals, of brutal force and of police terror. Fascism is a particular governmental system based on the uprooting of all elements of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society. The task of fascism lies not only in destroying the Communist vanguard but in holding the entire class in a state of forced disunity. To this end the physical annihilation of the most revolutionary section of the workers does not suffice. It is also necessary to smash all independent and voluntary organizations, to demolish all the defensive bulwarks of the proletariat, and to uproot whatever has been achieved during three quarters of a century by the Social Democracy and the trade unions.”⁶

“Fascism is a specific means of mobilising and organising the petty bourgeoisie in the social interests of finance capital.”⁷

After the seizure of power, Trotsky explains, there is necessarily a reflux of the fascist mass movement. Social demagoguery cannot be transformed into real “anticapitalist” measures. The fascist regime “bureaucratizes itself” in some fashion and can become a form of specific Bonapartist dictatorship (the Francoist regime in its final years can be characterised thus).

But the taking of power on a wave of mobilisations, pushed by a mass movement, has consequences. First, because the leaders are in the image of the phantasms they evoke in the soul of the enraged petty bourgeois. Second, because a repression is much more complete and “totalitarian” when it rests above all on a network of informers in every corner and recess of society.

Against the Stalinist simplifiers, the aspect of the mass character of fascism as movement of the desperate had to be stressed. Against the liberal bourgeois ideologues and most social-democrats, Trotsky stressed the function of fascism in the class struggle, for the physical destruction of the workers' movement allows a historic victory to the bourgeoisie in the area of wages, social protection, the capacity to launch itself into warlike adventures. It can ratchet up the rate of exploitation of



wage-earners, and at the same time enlarge the global field of action of imperialist capital in a given country.

There is then little point in “combating” fascism by moralising about violence and so on while swearing fealty to the values of capitalist, democratic and liberal society. If there is already a dangerous fascist movement, it means the system is in crisis, and that only a radical alternative can attract the masses, above all the youth. This means that one is not far from a situation of civil war and that it is necessary to prepare, basing oneself on the interests of the working class, which is alone capable of destroying a movement made up of what Trotsky called “human dust”.

The last card

Trotsky was conscious of the fact that formulae like “combat organisation of the bourgeoisie” should not be interpreted in a mechanical manner. It was not about decisions taken at some “round table”. The Mussolinis and Hitlers were not “waiters” receiving “orders” from the bourgeoisie. Trotsky knew that fascism is only the “last card” for the bourgeoisie. The fascist movement develops from below.

From a certain moment, the bourgeoisie can decide to tolerate the fascist seizure of power, and a part of the bourgeoisie can support or coorganise this seizure of power, and the bourgeoisie as a whole can cooperate with a regime which substantially weakens wage-earners vis-à-vis the employers. But the bourgeoisie, so doing, confides political power to a personnel which dispossesses the entire nation politically, and thus also the bourgeoisie.

And in the months preceding the dénouement, it has no guarantee that fascism will emerge victorious from the conflict. In Germany, the big bourgeoisie was afraid that the coming to power of Hitler would unleash a generalised civil war and that the proletariat could emerge victorious. That is why Hitler was truly the "very last card": all the others had been tried before.

The comprehension of the fascist phenomenon shown by Trotsky included also the aspects of "mass psychology", of desperate elements allying themselves to a barbarous cause. The fascist ideology is a conglomerate of resentments and allusions to a distant past. In the eyes of a modernist rationalism, it includes very many archaic elements. There is the phantasm of the heroic warrior rather more compatible with bows, arrows and axes than with machine guns, canons and tanks.

There is the ideal of the pioneering peasant organically linked to the land that he cultivates which does not go well with an industrialised society in which the town dominates the country. There is a cult of race and/or the nation which denies the supranational reality created by the world capitalist market. There is a cult of patriarchy and the family which holds to the image of an idealised past and which does not fit comfortably with the crisis of the family structure and traditional roles engendered by industrialised capitalist society.

Trotsky explained it by a social reality that should not be identified with a pure model of capitalism, but seen rather as a society governed by the capitalist mode of production, in which all kinds of phenomena inherited from bygone forms of societies survive, which is itself full of archaisms and can then at any moment bring to the surface phenomena which seem very outdated.

Above all in periods of crisis and turbulence, with "normal" securities and stabilities shaken, the search for points of support, images projected, heroes from the past, is typical. Fascism systematically replaces rational political action by the direction of phantasms with the deliberate goal (articulated openly by Hitler in "Mein Kampf") of manipulating people.

The first lesson to draw from it is to in no way copy it. We must defend a style of action and political communication which targets the capacities of rational judgement of interests, of ends and means to choose in relation to the ends and the obstacles

which oppose them.

At the beginning of this presentation we saw that the debate on fascism and the contribution of Trotsky to its understanding is not only of historic interest. There are also incorrect appreciations still current today that Trotsky fought against. One of them is "pan-fascism", which sees "fascism" in each act of repression, in each group or party of the far right or in each police state or military dictatorship, even in the poor countries. To see fascism everywhere is to repeat a grave error of the KPD before 1933: one underestimates the real danger. In Turkey for example, many organisations of the far left opposed to the Kemalist regime believing themselves to be fighting a real fascist dictatorship. In truth the real fascism ("grey") had its rise still to come.

Fascisation

In Germany (and in other countries), in the 1970s, some far left groups like the *Kommunistische Bund (KB)* borrowed the notion of "fascisation" from the old Stalinist arsenal and thought that the bourgeois parliamentary regime could, little by little, with the help of reinforcements of the executive and the adoption of repressive legislation, become transformed into a fascist regime. To sound a false alarm means, among others, that nobody will listen when the real alarm sounds.

Trotsky would probably not have liked talk of "Trotsky's theory of fascism". There is not really a theory specific to Trotsky, but rather a reflexive and political continuity of Trotsky with the Communist movement before its Stalinization. It is not really a codified theory, but rather a coherent ensemble of political analyses, political interventions and generalisations useful to the understanding and combating better fascism.

If we wish to use the heritage of Trotsky in this area for our antifascist struggle today, some caveats should be entered:

■ some aspects of reality have changed significantly. Today the degree of activity and organisation (and armament!) of members of the traditional big left parties, above all social-democracy, is much weaker than in the time of Trotsky.

■ Society as a whole has greatly changed. There are new forms of atomisation in the workplace and beyond. The "traditional" working class no longer has

the same weight among wage-earners in the broad sense of the word.

■ There is once more great poverty and misery, even in the rich countries. But the poverty of a working class family, unemployed or not, at the time of the Weimar Republic was all the same entirely another thing than what exists today; and the despair of the demobilised sub-officer, ready to fight in the street against the "reds", is not yet equalled by the sentiments of the majority of those who vote for Le Pen for example.

■ Trotsky's slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat or fascist dictatorship!" which seemed so justified in the 1930s should not lead us to systematically organise our thought and thus our agitation in opposed simple alternatives. Very often, the concrete historic outcome is a third unforeseen variant.

For Trotsky, a real policy of the united front could only be a policy of real political-practical initiatives, of small scale unity in action, of the task of convincing the members of a reformist party: are you ready to act together with us in the sense of immediate common interests or not?

The efficient implementation of a united front is moreover not possible on the basis simply of the general principle. One is forced to respond to changing concrete situations. There is then also a useful heritage from Trotsky in combating false "orthodoxies" (even "Trotskyist" ones): there is no way to escape the necessity of reflecting each time anew on the dynamic of a given situation and on the initiatives to take.

Except that, without taking on the experiences and the best politico-theoretical elaborations of the past, it is still more difficult. It is then very important to study Trotsky's writings on Germany and discuss parallels and differences with the problems posed to us today. ★

* Manuel Kellner writes for the bimonthly *SoZ-Sozialistische Zeitung*.

1. Translated into English as *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1971.

2. Pierre Frank, *Histoire de l'Internationale communiste*, Éditions la brèche, 1979, volume 1, pp 215-234.

3. "What is National Socialism?" June 1933, in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 404.

4. Trotsky had already used this expression in 1936 in *The Revolution Betrayed*: "The regime had become "totalitarian" in character several years before this word arrived from Germany".

5. Wolfgang Alles, *Zur Politik und Geschichte der deutschen Trotskisten ab 1930*, Frankfurt, ISP Verlag, 1987.

6. "What Next?" in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 144

7. "Bonapartism and Fascism", in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 441

The question of the party: Trotsky's weak point

TROTSKY made an inestimable contribution to the preservation and development of revolutionary Marxism in the first half of the 20th century, both by his militant activity and by his analyses.

FRANÇOIS VERCAMMEN*

THIS contribution embraces a vast terrain stretching from the comprehension of particular societies (Tsarist Russia, a young imperialism, the bureaucratic post-capitalist society in the USSR), immense socio-political phenomena (for example fascism, the social-democratic and Stalinist degeneration of the workers' movement, the complex processes of the class struggle, the revolution in the Third World), as well as a development of the programmatic, strategic, tactical and organizational perspectives of the workers' movement. In this vast ensemble, his weak point is the problem of the party.

Weakness

This weakness is in part linked to his trajectory as a militant. Trotsky did not have the capacity (1903-1917) or the opportunity (after 1917) to participate directly in the construction of a revolutionary party, in its main aspects (beyond general analyses and perspectives), namely the elaboration and the implementation of a political line and concrete tactics, a collective work inside a central leadership, the construction of a political-organizational apparatus, work in common with other cadres and militants; and more generally the implementation of an internal dialectic which prioritizes the experience of party militants in the elaboration of the line. Between 1903 and 1917, having broken with Lenin, he did not try to organize a current or a party (confining himself to an activity as journalist and orator).

When he joined the Bolshevik party in June 1917, it was to immediately join its central leadership (June 1917): the ques-

tion was no longer building a party, but leading a self-organized mass movement towards the conquest of political power.

Then he defended the revolution in the civil war, creating and leading the Red Army. At the head of the Third International (1919) he helped Lenin to transform the ex-social-democratic and anarcho-syndicalist leaders through the specific experience of the Bolshevik party which had been capable of overthrowing the bourgeoisie.

It was only when he was expelled from the CP, expelled from the USSR and hunted across the planet by Stalin's police apparatus, that he developed the best synthesis of revolutionary strategy of the period 1903-1922.¹ In his new militant situation, preparing and founding the Fourth International, through postal communication and occasional visits from his partisans, Trotsky turned his attention to building often small and marginalized organizations. He spared neither time nor energy in educating them in all the concrete aspects.

Recomposition

But, in reality, this was not about the construction of independent parties with social implantation, but participation in a political recomposition where the "Trotskyists" tried to salvage a part of the workers' movement (social-democratic, but above all Stalinist) and to advance "quickly" towards a revolutionary party. This history and the personal trajectory which underlay it generated a very particular political-intellectual heritage, which can be explored from two angles: what was Trotsky's thinking on the construction of

the revolutionary party, beyond a general principal conception, and how have the succeeding Trotskyist generations grasped it and applied it in practice?

The answer is not simple. For Trotsky was the man of the revolutionary moments of this century and the mass leader, rather than a "party man" who organized collective work through the ups and downs of the political conjuncture.

What appears on all the evidence to have been "over-determinant" is the battle to the death waged by Stalinism to discredit and kill "Trotskyism", starting with Trotsky himself. The "anti-Bolshevik" past of the pre-1917 period weighed very heavily in the balance. Trotsky's explanations as to his relationship with Lenin are in general forced and uneasy. On the one hand, he did not cease to recognize in an emphatic manner his debt, indeed his subordination to Lenin. He thus voluntarily undervalued his own militant and political contribution when he co-led the party, the revolution and the International (between 1917 and 1922-24).

But on the other hand, he tends also to reduce the width and depth of his political divergences with Lenin before 1917: and with reason, for this is precisely the period when Lenin trained and organized his "middle cadres", including a certain Joseph Stalin. One can say that Trotsky, in his line of self-defense against Stalin's assaults, had two strong elements. Firstly, he maintains, but in the manner of a note, that there had been "three conceptions of the Russian revolution": Menshevik, Bolshevik and his own — the permanent revolution. And that this last was the correct one.

Significance

At the same time, he limits the political significance of it: he explains that he never tried, before 1917, to constitute a specific platform inside the Russian social democratic party (reunified after 1905) on such a strategic programmatic question; and he would protest vigorously against Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin when they reopened the debate on the subject (as a diversionary maneuver) in autumn 1924, that is after the death of Lenin.

But at the same time Trotsky considered that the divergence on the permanent revolution (opposed to Lenin's formula of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry") explained the drift of

the Bolshevik party in February-March 1917, when the leadership of the Bolshevik party on the ground in Petrograd (Kamenev-Stalin) rallied to the bourgeois government which emerged from the first phase of the revolution. Secondly, if he admitted that, since 1917, the centralization of the party was a very important element, he considered that the "committee men" (the leaders of the committees, in other words the middle cadres) were a danger for the party, enemies of democracy, authoritarian, a real incarnation of the tendency to "substitute" the party for the working class.

Drift

The two elements together are, in Trotsky's eyes, the cause of "the drift" that the Bolshevik party experienced in February 1917 and the reason why it had to undergo a radical change in its programme and the composition of his leadership. If that had succeeded, it was through the dialectic between the action of Lenin, who imposed a new programme,² and the Bolshevik worker militants, who carried into the party the revolutionary spirit of the worker masses.

Trotsky believed that his own error could be summed up as the under-estimation of the centralization of the party, which related to the nature of the party and his attempt to gather all the currents in the same party ("conciliationism") under the impact of a revolutionary upsurge.

The Fourth International during Trotsky's life, and the Trotskyist current since then, have based themselves on this history. This has had a series of positive and negative consequences. The main positive consequence, a real gain for the international revolutionary movement, has been the development of the strategy of the permanent revolution, entirely validated by the positive and negative experiences of the revolutions in the so-called Third World, and on another level, by the problematic of "socialism in one country", which is the ideological basis of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The main negative consequence is the incomprehension of the reasons which allowed Lenin to build, in the period from 1905 to 1914, a party which had succeeded in crossing the stage of initial accumulation of cadres and had become a party, still a minority one, but already socially implanted and capable of influencing cer-



The young Trotsky

tain mass sectors of the working class and the urban intelligentsia. (that is, it had precisely resolved the problem that has bedeviled revolutionary Marxists since the political-organizational monopoly of social democracy and Stalinism in the workers' movement began to break up in some countries in imperialist Europe in the years 1965-68). There is a clear necessity for a reorganization of the historiography of the period 1895-1914, with a reevaluation of the key sequences, and a reevaluation of the policy of Trotsky and Lenin in this period.

Indubitable

From a practical point of view, the conclusion is indubitable: at the moment where, in July-August 1914 (the "forgotten revolution") the Bolshevik party led the insurrectional general strike in Petrograd and Moscow and became the majority current in the working class in those cities, Trotsky was a war journalist in the Balkans, isolated in the Party and cut off from the workers' movement in Russia. It was the culminating point of the respective political and organizational choices that the main leaders of the revolution of October had made.

It was Lenin's determination to attach himself "to the real movement" in Russia

combined with a succession of complex socio-political conjunctures which fashioned and rooted the Bolshevik party in (urban) Russian society. It is the policy of Lenin which was determinant and not his "conception of the party" such as it is commonly understood (democratic centralism, the general programme).

It was the political weakness of Trotsky which was at the base of his defeat at the level of the organization. One can sum it up in the following manner: before 1917, his extraordinary capacity to grasp the significant general tendencies of the era and to draw strategic perspectives did not allow him to develop a revolutionary policy (and he was unable or unwilling to create a militant collective). His weakness on the party is located in this framework.³ On Trotsky's side, two men and two events had a determinant influence in the short period from 1902-1905: Parvus and Axelrod; the second congress of the social democratic party in 1903 and the first Russian revolution (1905).

Neophyte

Trotsky met Lenin in 1902. He was 23, Lenin 32. Trotsky was a neophyte, bursting with militant energy and talent, a convinced Marxist (it was in prison that he had learned a particularly vibrant and dialectical "basic Marxism" through reading the Italian philosopher Antonio Labriola) but with a limited experience. Organiser of a clandestine workers' circle in the provinces, arrested, imprisoned, then sent into exile in Siberia, he escaped and joined the circle of leaders in Western Europe. Lenin was already a hardened militant.

He had organized the real founding congress of the (revolutionary) social democracy and was convinced that he should take the head of it. The young Trotsky entered into politics at this level in 1902, joining the social-democratic leadership in London. Abroad, he made the acquaintance of two Marxist leaders who would have a significant but contradictory influence on him: Axelrod, who he met in 1902, and, in 1904, Parvus, "one of the most important Marxists of the turn of the century".⁴

This latter would open the way to the theory of permanent revolution by developing a strategic perspective which was unthinkable for the Marxism of the time: the taking of power by the working class was possible in a country as backward as

Russia. From 1895-96, before Rosa Luxemburg, Parvus had already conceived "the mass political strike" as the key element of the workers' strategy. He had predicted that a Russo-Japanese war would be probable (it would take place in 1903-04) and that, through the war-revolution dialectic, Russia could carry the proletariat to power as vanguard of the international socialist revolution.

All this was framed by an international vision of the transformations in capitalism announcing the advent of imperialism. In August 1904, Trotsky still remained in the strategic framework of Russian social democracy: "Only a free Russia of the future, where we will be obliged to play the role of opposition party and not of government, will allow us to develop to the limit the struggle of the proletariat."⁵ In January 1905, Parvus crossed the Rubicon: "the revolution could bring a democratic workers' government to power".⁶

Conclusion

In 1906, after the 1905 revolution Trotsky⁷ pushed the conclusion to the end: this working class, coming to power with the support of the mass of the peasantry, would be led to transgress the limits of capitalism and embark on the socialist revolution. Adding immediately: "without the direct state support of the European proletariat, the working class in Russia could not remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a durable socialist dictatorship". The embryo of the theory of permanent revolution was thus posed.

If the role of Parvus is well known and appreciated, the same is not true of the other major influence on Trotsky: Boris Axelrod. This latter played no positive role in traditional "Trotskyist" historiography. But it was nonetheless him who influenced Trotsky's choices and concrete political positions the most and for the longest time. In 1898 Axelrod produced two documents which launched the strategic debate after the big strikes of 1895-96. They would have a considerable impact on all the leading cadres of Russian (revolutionary) social democracy, notably Trotsky and Lenin (though they would draw different political conclusions according to the political-theoretical framework already acquired)

Axelrod belonged with Plekhanov to the first Marxist generation, which had been involved in revolutionary Populism

and constituted the first Marxist nucleus in Russia. His text starts from some notes: the breadth of the strikes of 1895-96 and the defeat of the attempts to stabilize a social-democratic organization; the danger of an "economist" or "pure syndicalist" falling back on the immediate demands of the workers and thus "resignation" before the fight against the Tsarist dictatorship.

Then he refers to the old analyses of the Populists of Tchernychevsky and Marx⁸ concerning the specificities of the Tsarist social formation. And he puts forward a political perspective⁹: if industrialization takes place under the régime of Tsarist despotism, that would stop the formation of a coherent and active working class, and would bar the way towards a workers' movement in the European style.

Indeed, Axelrod was also a eulogist, in the best tradition of Marx himself, of the self-activity of the working class as indispensable lever to its organization and its socialist consciousness. For this latter to emerge it is necessary then to defeat "Asiatism". For Axelrod, this "civilizing" task falls historically to the (liberal) bourgeoisie. The strategic conclusion is not clearly drawn. But the door is open to a support, indeed a collaboration with this bourgeoisie and a strategy of revolution in two stages (it is in fact the still unconscious embryo of Menshevism which appears here and becomes a consistent strategy after 1905).

Creativity

Trotsky and Lenin were very impressed by the creativity of this respectable leader who seduced them also by his human aspect (with Trotsky, this factor played a political role in his realignment at the Congress of 1903). But they drew from it very different conclusions.¹⁰ Trotsky, already educated in this sense by Labriola, absorbed deeply this idea of the primacy of the autonomy of the proletariat (during his stay with Axelrod in London in 1902-03).

His polemical book against Lenin, *Our political tasks*, poor and erroneous as it is on the political and organizational level, is one of the first examples of a Russian Marxist text which takes this theme as its central axis. If he accepts the idea of the role of the peasantry (which Parvus rejected, but which Lenin defended from 1901: another element of the permanent revolution emerges here) he remains indecisive and confused (even after 1905) on the

question of electoral support to the liberal bourgeoisie. The other wing of Axelrod's approach that Trotsky assimilated was the European perspective of the Russian workers' movement. Trotsky was never a Menshevik in the political-programmatic sense of the term. But the Menshevik organization was unquestionably more open to political debates and an internal dialectic than the Bolshevik current (which became a party in 1912).

Europeanism, the role of the working class, its self-activity and its self-organization, the dynamic of the revolution: here is the hard core of what Trotsky acquired in the course of these three years. Two key events, but of a very different order, also intervened in his development: the second congress of the RSDLP (summer 1903) and the first Russian revolution (January-December 1905).

Trotsky entered this congress as a heated protagonist of centralism, the dictatorship of the leadership over the party and "distrust towards rank-and-file organization". He came out of it as an opponent of centralism, of Bonapartism, of the dictatorship of the intellectuals over the working class, of substitutionism, and so on.

Psychodrama

This congress ended with a split and a psychodrama. The unity at the summit broke. The reasons are not clear. The cause does not reside obviously in a programmatic disagreement, nor in the famous rule of the statutes determining who was a member (in 1906, during the reunification, a compromise was quickly reached). It was rather a crisis of growth, linked to the passage from an artisanal and familial party to a party that was professional from every point of view (organization, apparatus, slogans, political line, programme) in relating to every aspect of the revolution (big student and peasant mobilizations, then workers strikes).

To undertake such a transformation of the party, the question of leadership becomes decisive. Lenin, who wanted a leadership that led, proposed Plekhanov, and ditched Axelrod and Zassoulitch. Trotsky revolted against Lenin. Moreover, he found the concepts to express it in *Our Political Tasks*. It was a merciless polemic against Lenin, where Trotsky gathered all the fragments of analysis that circulated in the left political and intellectual milieus

and gave them a concentrated force.

His behavior at the Congress had shown his political immaturity. The pamphlet confirmed it while highlighting his capacities for analysis. However, the polemic is totally impertinent: he has manifestly not understood what Lenin wanted to do (Trotsky recognized this afterwards).

In 1905 the proletariat had marked its extraordinary combativity and its radicalism with the election of democratically designated workers' councils. Moreover, the soviet (in fact Trotsky himself) succeeded in imposing unity between the three revolutionary parties: the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries (the successors of the "Narodniks" [Populists]).

Moreover, Trotsky and Parvus, situated in the Menshevik current, succeeded in drawing in (by action, speeches and a daily presence) the majority of militants and a part of the leadership (but not Axelrod, Plekhanov and Martov) on their political position. Trotsky would have this model of the social and organizational dynamic in his head (until 1914), without really theorizing it however. The post-revolution would strengthen his anti-Lenin analyses and prejudices, until the moment where the divergences between the left wing (Bolshevik) and the right wing became clearer and crystallized.

Separation

If Menshevism kept a globally revolutionary orientation until 1910-11, the upsurge of struggles, instead of bringing the two wings of the party closer together, on the contrary led to definitive separation on the basis of a political orientation faced with the social and political problems of the moment: parliamentarism, class alliances, immediate demands of the workers, type of trade union organization, agrarian reform, the place of democratic demands. At this moment it was apparent that the Mensheviks had built a legal workers' movement that was no longer ready to confront Tsarism.

It was a disaster for the left Mensheviks (Martov). It was also a disaster for Trotsky.¹¹ In fact, it was the result of a disastrous political choice, which placed him in the Menshevik current and made him accept their conception of the party, without supporting their programme. Until 1914, he would remain blind before his mentor Axelrod: "It is true that the differ-



ences between [the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks] in this matter is very considerable: while the anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism have already become fully apparent, those of Bolshevism are likely to become a serious threat only in the event of victory" he wrote in 1906.¹²

He had already abandoned the idea of the vanguard party in favor of a broad party and had theorized it in his work *Our tasks*. This time, the concept is introduced by Axelrod in a context of grave political downturn, under different forms: the workers' Congress (on the model of the Belgian workers' party of the time, bringing together workers' leagues, trade unions, mutual associations, youth groups and so on) and the subordination of the clandestine party to the legal party.

Weakness

Trotsky's weakness on the Party, before 1917, formed part of his semi-spontaneist conception of politics in general.

Firstly, it sullied his initial version of "permanent revolution". Partisan (like all the Russian Marxists) of a revolution supported by a majority, Trotsky did not underestimate, contrary to Stalinist legend, the role of the revolutionary peasantry in a predominantly rural country. What preoccupied him was to emphasize the unavailability of the final phase of the revolutionary process when this latter passes to "the socialist dictatorship" thanks to the social

and ideological strength of the proletariat. But how this majoritarian force could organize itself did not preoccupy him at this time.¹³

In 1906 and the years that followed, he satisfied himself with two theoretical generalizations which translated above all the prejudices of European Marxism at the time (post-Marx): historically, the countryside follows the town, and the peasantry the proletariat (industrial, urbanized); at the same time, the peasantry is incapable of following an autonomous political line and creating an independent organization (it follows either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat).

Analysis

The result is that he hardly concerned himself with a close analysis of the Russian peasantry, the diversity of its conditions of work, its "spontaneous" demands, its actually existing organizations, and so on. Thus, Trotsky made no contribution during the Fourth congress of the ("reunified") RSDLP in 1906, where agrarian reform was discussed.¹⁴

If he did not go as far as his mentor, Parvus, who attributed to the peasantry the role "of augmenting the chaos in the country" in the revolutionary process, Trotsky did not seek, unlike Lenin, the construction of a real workers and peasants alliance, with all its demands. By its abstract character, the theory proved a veritable political trap for Trotsky. For, against all expectations, a Tsarism which had been presumed "immobile" profited from the defeat of the proletariat in 1906 to launch a surprising self-reform with the birth of a parliamentary system, an agrarian reform, a certain trade union liberty, the first social laws (insurance).

It all fell through, but meanwhile it would shake up political and social life. Trotsky had neither an organizational instrument to intervene, nor a political project to face a new situation, when his political line had been developed on the basis of a tumultuous rise of the popular masses.¹⁵

Secondly, any history of the workers' soviets born out of three waves of general strike in 1905 had revealed two important facts: the birth of a new, superior, form of the workers' movement, which founds the unity of the class, organizes its political power and expresses to a scale without precedent in history its self-emancipatory

★ Dossier

aspirations. On the other hand, the negligence and sectarianism of the leaders of the different revolutionary parties on the ground, whose political horizon was confined by their organizational conservatism/sectarianism.

The Bolshevik cadres of Petrograd saw a competing workers' organization and wished to impose on it (by a vote) the (maximum) programme of their Party. The Mensheviks wished to put into practice the line (of Axelrod) of the "workers' congress" which would mean both the fusion of the three socialist parties who were members of the Second International (Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries), and bringing into the framework of the party (as in the British Labour Party or the Belgian POB) every kind of workers' organization (parties, unions, cooperatives, youth, women, gymnasts, mutual associations, cultural clubs). Trotsky (and some others like Parvus, Pannekoek) took on board the political scale of the workers' councils. He drew from it a conclusion of steel (which he would call later his "social fatalism"): the working masses are in advance of the parties and capable of imposing their will on them thanks to their spontaneous radicalism.

Conviction

This dual note would influence in a determinant manner his opinion on and his behavior in the Party until 1917. One cannot say that he possessed, after 1905, a real conviction on the subject. His vision of the class struggle in Russia, past and future, did not henceforth need a defined and strong role for the Party. Opposed more than ever to the Bolshevik current, which reorganized itself, he chose to place himself in the Menshevik current. And this despite the striking fact that Bolshevism showed itself the most radical current in the RSDLP.

At the 5th congress of the Party (London, May 1907), Trotsky voted with Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin in favor of the resolution which included "the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry", against the whole of the Menshevik delegation. He did not break however with these latter. But that did not stop him being simultaneously in agreement (albeit with reticence) with Axelrod for the transformation of the Party into a "workers'

Congress", legal and open to all the workers' organizations.

Trotsky was not blind to the opportunist instincts of the Menshevik current. He stuck to his spontaneist belief that a new revolutionary upsurge would impel everyone to reconstitute a unified party. Meanwhile his anti-Bolshevik sectarianism acquired a visceral character: he sees in this current backwardness and "Asiatic" primitivism and predicted its anti-revolutionary evolution.

On the other hand, the Menshevik current incarnated the European future of the coming revolution. It was in the political-cultural ambiance of this current with its debates, pluralism and more human relations that Trotsky found himself truly in his element. His choices seemed even more justified in that Axelrod and Plekhanov worked in concert with Kautsky, at the time still uncontested revolutionary leader of the Second International. A new revolution (in 1917) would be needed for the experience of Lenin's party to incontestably assert its authority, including to Trotsky.¹⁶ ★

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1. See in particular *The First Five Years of the Communist International* and *The Communist International after Lenin*.
2. That of the permanent revolution: see Lenin, *April Theses*.
3. Few authors from the Trotskyist milieu have noticed this. Among the rare ones to do so are Alain Brossat, *Aux origines de la révolution permanente*, Maspero, Paris 1974, and Tony Cliff, *Trotsky, volume 1: Towards October*, London 1998, Bookmarks. Ernest Mandel, who defends Lenin against Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg on the question of the party, does so from the party/vanguard/self-organization angle, see *Trotsky as alternative*, Verso Books, London 1995.
4. According to Trotsky in his autobiography, *My Life*.
5. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*.
6. Preface to Trotsky's pamphlet, *Towards January 9th*.
7. See Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*.
8. See his *Letters to Vera Zassoulitch*, 1881.
9. An analysis which plunged Lenin into a political-existential crisis. See the remarkable analysis in Claudio Segio Ingerflom, *Le citoyen impossible, Les racines russes du léninisme*, Payot, Paris 1988.
10. So far as Lenin is concerned, see my article *Le périmètre de la pensée révolutionnaire chez Lenin*, in *Politique la Revue*, n° 6, 1997.
11. See Geoffrey Swain, *Russian Social democracy and the Legal Labour Movement 1906-14*, McMillan, London 1983.
12. *Our Differences*, in Trotsky, *1905*, Penguin, London, 1971, p. 332.
13. *Results and Prospects* (1906). He would return to this theme later, in his completed formulation based on the experience of the Chinese revolution in 1926-28.
14. A truly historic congress because it broke with the Europeanism which predominated inside the Socialist-Marxist workers' movement. Not until the congresses of the Chinese CP in the 1930s would such analytical and prepositional heights be reached on this question.
15. On the process of political apprenticeship of the main protagonists, see chapters 5-6 of T. Shanin's brilliant *Russia 1905-07: Revolution as a moment of truth*, McMillan, London.
16. In June 1917, when the Bolshevik Party was already the majority current in the big cities, Trotsky demanded that Lenin, who had asked him to join the party and come directly onto its leadership, abandon the Bolshevik name!

Trotsky's final struggle

MORE than 60 years after it was founded, the Fourth International remains very weak numerically. At a time of triumphant "globalization", however, it remains the only existing International.

JEAN-MICHEL KRIVINE*

IN their 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels showed that Capital could only develop by eliminating national borders, and that the struggles of workers (those who only have their labour power to sell) had to respond accordingly. We are currently seeing a deepening of this tendency. While international movements against the effects of capitalist globalization have finally appeared on the scene — against the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, and for the cancellation of the Third-World debt — the Fourth International is the only political organization that exists in a number of countries and is therefore able to carry out a collective analysis of the world situation and formulate demands in keeping with the need to put an end to capitalism.

In a number of countries, there have been revolutionary parties much bigger and much more rooted than the local section of the Fourth International. Most have vanished. To survive into the long term, an organization needs a vision that goes beyond its own national borders. It needs the broader context that can only come from ongoing exchange and debate with revolutionary organizations in other countries. Only an International that constantly deals with the difficulties of its different sections is in a position to help them move

forward.

In the early days the Left Opposition was not international. The “Bolshevik-Leninist faction” was only active within the Communist Party of the USSR. Although it had contacts with individuals and groups outside the country, it alone decided its political line. The Left Opposition was formed in 1923 in the USSR; party members gathered around Trotsky in opposition to Stalin’s positions. In December 1922, Lenin suffered a stroke soon after Stalin was made general secretary of the party. During a period of some 80 days — in what became known as “Lenin’s last struggle” — he managed to wage a struggle against the rising bureaucracy, with Trotsky’s support. But in March 1923 a relapse sidelined Lenin from political activity; the triumph of the Stalinist apparatus was assured.

Internationalism

From the start, the Left Opposition stood out for its internationalism. With the defeat of the German revolution in October 1923, the turn of the world situation led the Opposition to focus and take positions on international matters as much as on the “Russian question”.

The year 1923 brought to a close the period of revolutionary crisis that had shaken Europe for five years. A new phase of reversals began for the working-class movement.

The defeat of the revolution in a number of places (especially Hungary and Germany) created widespread disappointment in the USSR. The working-class movement was demoralized and became passive. Its best elements had either been killed during the civil war or had been given a leadership role in the state and in the economy and tended towards bureaucratization. The Opposition argued in favour of a “new course” — the title of a collection of Trotsky’s articles from this period — to fight the bureaucratization of the party and state. It argued against the zig-zags in economic policy. At first, economic policy was heavily weighted in favour of the kulaks (rich peasants) and “nepmen” (those who had grown rich thanks to the New Economic Policy inaugurated in 1921); then there was a sudden and brutal turn in 1928 towards forced collectivization of the land and the breakneck development of heavy industry.

Internationally, the Opposition

denounced the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee — which brought together the heads of British and Soviet trade unions — for abandoning British miners who had gone on strike for several months in 1926. It harshly criticized Comintern (Communist International) support to the Kuomintang (party of the Chinese commercial and industrial bourgeoisie), which went on to carry out full-scale massacres of Chinese communists between 1925 and 1927.

In the area of theory, these differences were summed up in the conflict between two approaches: “socialism in a single country” and “permanent revolution”. After Lenin’s death, Stalin said it was perfectly feasible to build socialism in a single backward and isolated country, simultaneously building confidence among the main capitalist powers. The Opposition argued that this was a suicidal illusion and that the only way the Russian Revolution could survive was by contributing to revolutionary developments elsewhere in the world and especially in the industrialized countries. This latter position had been the position of the entire Bolshevik Party while Lenin was alive.

Platform

In the *Platform of the Left Opposition*, written in 1927 — during the short time Zinoviev had joined the Opposition — a number of concrete proposals were put forward with the 15th Party congress in mind. The Platform called for limits on the growth in the number and wealth of kulaks in the countryside; for the development of agricultural cooperatives (kolkhozes and sovkhozes); and especially for the defense of the state monopoly on foreign trade. At the same time, the great-Russian chauvinism of the state apparatus is severely criti-



cized and a number of suggestions are made to restore “genuine internal democracy in the party, as in Lenin’s time” (although, strangely, no call is made for restoring the right to form tendencies in the party).

The *Platform* also looked at the international situation. The Opposition argued that the imperialists were preparing a war against the USSR and that “anyone not in favour of defending the USSR is, without possible exception, a traitor to the world proletariat.” However, this “defense of the land of the Soviets” could only take place by calling on workers of other countries to overthrow their bourgeoisie, and not by seeking friendly relations with hostile ruling classes. The aborted Chinese revolution was used as an example of what shouldn’t be done.

At the 15th party congress of 1927, Stalin called upon the Opposition to “capitulate fully and unconditionally on both the political and organizational level.” The Zinoviev current threw in the towel. The longtime members of the Opposition rejected the ultimatum and were excluded from the party and then deported. In 1928, Trotsky was banished to Alma Ata (Almaty) in Kazakhstan. In 1929, Trotsky was deported to the Turkish island of Prinkipo.

A number of Trotsky’s allies — Radek, Smilga, Preobrazhenski — gave in to

Stalin when they felt he had adopted the ideas of the Opposition (five-year plan, collectivization of agriculture) in response to peasant refusal to deliver their wheat. In fact, Stalin implemented a caricature of the Opposition program and this had devastating consequences — millions of famine-related deaths. The Russian Bolshevik Leninist faction found itself totally isolated.

While capitalism was going through its worst ever economic crisis, Trotsky was trying to set up an international Bolshevik-Leninist faction to rectify the course of the Komintern. The world over, millions of workers were losing their jobs while the USSR appeared to be developing smoothly thanks to the implementation of the five-year plan. Arguing, from 1928 onwards, that the revolution was on the agenda everywhere in the world, the Comintern claimed that a “third period” had begun — the first period being the revolutionary upsurge until 1923, the second being the phase of reversals between 1923 and 1928.

Invasion

The Comintern argued that the USSR faced imminent invasion and pursued an extremely sectarian policy — saying, for example, that Social Democrats were the twin brothers of the fascists. According to Stalin, the Social Democrats were “social fascists” with whom no united action was possible (except with the rank and file). Exploiting the tragic division of the German working-class movement, Hitler took power in January 1933 through entirely legal channels. German Communists and Social Democrats were the first ones sent off to the Nazi concentration camps — including Communist leader Ernst Thaelmann who had earlier declared that one shouldn’t “miss the Social-Democratic forest for the National Socialist [Nazi] tree”.

At that time, there were three currents in the Soviet party and in the International. There was a “rightist” current represented in the USSR by leaders such as Bukharin, Rykov, Smirnov, Kalinin (who expected a great deal from the middle peasantry) and Tomsky (representing the interests of upper-level state officials). In Germany, this current was represented by Brandler, who had played a central role in the failure of the 1923 revolution. After having more or less supported this rightist current until 1928, Stalin abruptly broke the alliance

when the turn was made to large-scale collectivization and rapid industrialization.

There was a “centrist” Stalinist faction around Stalin, Molotov, Mikoyan and Kirov. This current was in charge of the Party, the trade unions and the state. It also ran the Comintern (through Manouilsky and Dimitrov), which merely implements the line decided by the Stalinist faction.

Expulsion

The Left Opposition around Trotsky and Rakovsky was only organized on an international level after Trotsky’s expulsion in 1929. It set itself the task of defending communist principles within the Comintern and organizing a team of cadres. In 1929, a small group formed around Alfred Rosmer in France — the Ligue Communiste, which published the weekly paper *La Vérité* (“the truth”). They put out the call for the first Conference of Bolshevik-Leninists, which was held in Paris in April 1930 and nominated an International Secretariat. This was the founding event of the international movement which would immediately be labelled “Trotskyite” by its enemies — a label which it was never able to shake off.

The international Left Opposition sought to rectify the political course of the Communist International and the Soviet state. Its main positions were:

- * Defense of the USSR, still seen as a workers state given its economic infrastructure, even though the political system would have to be thoroughly transformed. In this sense, the Opposition was “reformist”.

- * Fight for the united front against fascism. From 1930 onwards, Trotsky showed exceptional foresight with respect to the Nazi threat and the suicidal policy the Komintern imposed on the German CP.

- * Struggle for a rectification of the Communist International, many of whose members remained genuine revolutionaries.

In response to the coming to power of Hitler in Germany — a historic defeat for the proletariat — Trotsky argued that the project of winning back the Communist International was no longer relevant. Indeed, the Komintern continued to justify its mad policy of calling the Social Democrats “social fascists” — a policy which paved the way for Nazi victory. The time had come for a new International.

The main features of the international situation were the historic defeat in Germany, the misleadership given by Stalinist leaders to workers’ struggles in France and Spain, and the Stalinist mass terror and liquidation of the Bolshevik old guard in the USSR. Hitler took power in Germany. In January 1933, President Hindenburg named him chancellor of the Reich. Soon after, repression was unleashed against the German working-class movement. Trotsky declared, “The German working class will rise again — Stalinism never!”

Popular Front governments came to power in France and Spain in 1936. In France, an attempted reactionary coup on February 6, 1934 had provoked a firm response from the working class, leading to unity in action between French Communists and Socialists. A joint electoral platform was drawn up by the two parties, but the CP subsequently insisted that the main party of the bourgeoisie, the Radical Party, should be a part of the alliance. The Popular Front election victory unleashed a massive social movement, with two million workers occupying their workplaces. While Trotsky wrote that “the French revolution has begun” and the left Socialist Marceau Pivert proclaimed that “everything is possible!”, the main Communist leader Maurice Thorez declared that “one has to know how to end a strike”. Unfortunately, the influence of the CP was far greater than that of the small groups of the Left Opposition and the strike was brought to a close. Things could have gone much further otherwise.

Rebellion

In Spain the left’s electoral victory in February 1936 led to the July military rebellion and a civil war which ended in the victory of Franco, supported by Hitler and Mussolini, while the Popular Front government in France and the British respected the principle of “non-intervention” and the Stalinists, while arming the “republican” camp, imposed on it a political self-limitation and unleashed a ferocious repression against the anarchist and left communist oppositionists.

In the USSR the assassination of Kirov, the head of the party in Leningrad, marked the beginning to the mass terror of which the three trials in Moscow were only the most visible part. In 1934 Trotsky’s old

companion Rakovsky capitulated (in circumstances which remain unclear) which did not stop him from being later arrested in January 1937, sentenced, deported and finally executed in 1941.

The capitulation of the German CP before Hitler was considered by Trotsky as a historic test; this CP was no longer reformable and neither was the Comintern. The change of orientation would take place in several stages between 1933 and 1935. Starting from March 1933 the Opposition believed that the German CP was no longer reformable but still hoped for some healthy reactions from other CPs after the German catastrophe.

As nothing happened, in the course of the summer of 1933 came a new change of line – the CI was no longer reformable and it was necessary to build a new revolutionary international and new revolutionary parties in every country.

Political revolution

Finally, in 1935 it was clearly established that the road of reform was insufficient in the USSR and that a genuine political revolution was needed to overthrow the bureaucracy while conserving the state property inherited from the October Revolution.

The construction of a new international – the Fourth – could only be envisaged on the basis of the greatest firmness of principles combined with the greatest flexibility of organization.

These principles are laid down in a number of documents, notably in the Declaration of Four signed in August 1933 by the International Communist League and 3 sympathetic organizations, 2 Dutch and 1 German. It was on the basis of these principles that the three main struggles were led:

Against the policy of Popular Fronts, particularly in Spain and in France. This was inaugurated in 1934 by a Stalin at last worried by the Nazi triumph and led the CPs to pass from an outrageous sectarianism (the struggle against the social fascists) to an unbridled opportunism (the union of all good republicans). This was the first great experience of the class collaboration of the Stalinists.

Against centrism, that is the tendency to seek accommodation between a reformist policy and a revolutionary one. Different groups were thus characterized in France, Spain, Holland, Sweden, Poland

and German émigré groups. But it was with Nin and Maurin, the Spanish founders of the Marxist Party of Workers' Unity (POUM), that the discussion was the sharpest given their equivocal position on the Popular Front.

Against the Stalinist terror and the Moscow trials, denounced notably by Trotsky and his son, exiled with his father, in their *Red Book* on the Moscow trials.

Entryism

After Moscow's abandonment of its ultra-sectarian policy in 1934 and the rapid development of workers' parties in several countries, Trotsky concluded it was necessary to keep contact with the most combative elements of the working class and he proposed the tactic of "entryism" in the socialist organizations. The Bolshevik-Leninists would temporarily lose their organizational independence while continuing to be organized as a faction. In France entryism was employed in the main social democratic party, the SFIO, in September and October 1934. It allowed the renewal of the ranks of the organization, notably through recruitment from the Socialist youth. The leadership expelled the Trotskyist faction at the end of 1935, before the Popular Front. The French section, reduced and isolated, was prey to internal struggles and intertwined political differences and personal conflicts (on the one hand Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank, on the other Pierre Naville and Jean Rous) which gave birth to several micro-organizations which only reunified at the end of the Second World War. Entryism was also carried out with good results in Belgium and the USA.

In June 1936 the first international conference for the Fourth International was held in Paris (officially in Geneva, for security reasons). The International Communist League became the Movement for the Fourth International.

After the Stalinist purges in the USSR, when the revolution was practically crushed in Spain and the great powers had capitulated before Hitler in signing the Munich accords, the conference which was to found the Fourth International met in a Paris suburb. It was held in secret, the plenary assembly only lasted one day and 11 sections were represented (France, USA, Italy, Great Britain, Holland, Greece, Brazil, USSR, Poland, Belgium and Germany.) The major text adopted was the

Transitional Programme drawn up by Trotsky. It demonstrated how to develop working class consciousness, starting from immediate demands and putting forward a series of demands which make sense to the proletariat but are unacceptable for the bourgeoisie.

It also adopted a number of resolutions as well as some quite rigid statutes; corresponding to this pre-war epoch the "world party of socialist revolution" should be centralized and very disciplined.

The most controversial point was certainly the question of whether it was timely to proclaim the Fourth International: three delegates were firmly opposed, the two Polish delegates (Stefan Lamed and Hersch Mendel) as well as Yvan Craipeau, representing the French minority. They argued that in a period of setbacks it was very risky to proclaim the birth of a new international and thus compromise the idea. The three previous internationals had been set up at a time when the proletariat was on the offensive and from their beginnings had several parties which were influential in their countries. The other delegates were not convinced and followed Trotsky's proposals to found the Fourth International, given the immense difficulties presented by the inevitable arrival of a new world war.

Emergency

In May 1940, when France was invaded, an emergency conference of the Fourth International was held in New York because of a profound crisis within the US section – a minority around James Burnham and Max Schachtman considered that after the Soviet-German pact it was necessary to abandon defence of the USSR. During this conference the first attempt to assassinate Trotsky before his murder on August 20, 1940 took place.

This rapid overview shows the difficulties faced by those few militants who, before the war, devoted their lives to the revolutionary cause and would face not only the repression of the bourgeois state, but also the physical violence of the Stalinists. The international that they founded is still living. Certainly the conditions are not the same, the Fourth International only considers itself as one of the components of a future mass revolutionary international, but its experience and its theoretical conceptions will make an invaluable contribution. ★

Victory for Haitian workers

S.O.M.L. (Sendika Ouvriye Marnier Lapostolle), the labor organization representing some 300 workers toiling at the Marnier-Lapostolle plantation in the North of Haiti, finally obtained some results after nearly one year of struggle.

BATAY OUVRIYE

On July 25, 2000, Grand Marnier's local manager, Mr. Daniel ZEPHIR, members of the Executive Committee representing the workers on the orange plantation and representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor signed a formal document in which they laid down some provisions for a minimal change regarding working conditions and wages starting as of July 31, 2000.

Struggle

These results were obtained largely due to the unwavering struggle of the unionized agricultural laborers of the Marnier-Lapostolle plantation as well as the international solidarity campaign on their behalf. As a matter of fact Grand Marnier backed down after a long period of stalling and blocking the negotiation process. Without any consideration for the difficult situation of the workers, Daniel Zephir left the talks and went to France for his summer vacation. However his stay in France coincided with the relaunching of a letter campaign in support of the workers by solidarity organizations, unions in Europe.

In less than a week, Zephir had to rush back to the plantation and informed the workers and officials of the Labor Department, with a letter from Grand Marnier stating that he had received formal instructions to conclude this round of negotiations.

The letter says the following: "Conscious of the economic and social role it plays in Haiti, the SPML (Societe des Produits Marnier Lapostolle) gives mandate to Mr. Zephir to re-open the negotiations". The company offered 86 Gdes. per day for the daily laborers; 7 Gdes per case for the orange pickers with the additional guarantee that they will be

assisted by a second person, paid by management. This other worker will collect the oranges from the ground as the picker drops them from the trees; and 25 gourdes per case for the orange cutters, with the assurance that the 2 worker-team would be maintained as before. Thus, the negotiations reopened and the workers won some of their overdue demands.

Steadfast

The Union's position was steadfast. Given the fact that: 1) their original demands were quite modest and though did not expect such ferocious resistance from Grand Marnier's management. Therefore they were not going to give up anything without a fight.

2) their salary demands dated back nearly one year ago. And the yearly inflation rate was up from 12 to 15% eating away further their purchasing power. Their demand was merely a small wage adjustment, not a salary hike.

In their meetings they have decided that they will not budge on their initial salary demands. This position was endorsed by every worker of the plantation, and was put before Daniel Zephir since August of last year. When through the Department of Labor, he had asked to speak to all the workers, apart from the executive committee. Again and again, the workers' response was unanimous that they would not accept less than 100 gourdes for day laborers, 25 and 7.5 gourdes per case for the pickers and cutters respectively.

The final round of negotiations regarding salaries was held at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor office on July 25th and both parties concluded on these terms: Day laborers: Will earn 95 gourdes per day, (\$US 4.75). This constitutes a

55% raise over the miserable 52 gourdes (\$US 2.60) they were earning previously. However, it is important to note that only a small number of workers are daily wage earners on the plantation. Most of them are working on a piece rate basis such as the orange pickers, cutters and graters.

Orange Pickers: Will earn 7.25 gourdes per case (\$US 0.36), a 57% raise over their previous 4.10 G. This negotiation lasted almost as long as the previous one. And shocking as it is, Zephir begged the workers to accept a reduction of 0.25 gourdes from their initial demands (meaning one penny off each case).

Orange Cutters: As was mentioned above, Grand Marnier accepted this groups' initial demand as is presented, (i.e. 25 gourdes per case or \$US 1.25). This implies that a 2-worker-team making a number of 5 cases a day will earn \$US 6.25 or \$US 3.12 each.

Orange Graters: Due to the length of this negotiation talks, it was agreed that more discussions about specific wages will be done after the opening of the coming working season.

An important aspect must be disclosed concerning Grand Marnier's official letter. It says the following: "these salaries should be reviewed in the future, according to economic changes"... and the "company (SPML) intends to continue the process of improving working conditions and will work toward changing the material conditions and existence of the plantation personnel".

Fight

Given the limited gains won for the coming season and the statements made by the company itself, the Union is already geared up to fight for its Year 2000-2001 agenda. Being the victims of this situation, the workers are resolute to fight for a solution to this problem for improving their working conditions and material existence as Grand Marnier management proclaims it in their letter.

Much more is needed to be done. Workers at the Marnier-Lapostolle orange plantation, while acknowledging the growing solidarity movement in support of their struggle to win basic demands from the management, will continue to count on your militant solidarity for the continuation of the campaign. The long struggle against the exploitation of all workers of the world continues...★

Some notes on the national situation

THIS is the first of the three parts of *Some Notes on the National Situation* by the Revolutionary Workers' Party of the Philippines (RPMP). This was delivered in August 2000 by a representative of the RPMP Leadership in the last National RPMP Youth and Students Conference somewhere in the Visayas. The document has been shortened for space reasons.

THE Philippines today is seriously plagued by economic and political crisis. These two have symbiotically affected each other causing the intensification of the crisis by the day. The economic situation has been very bleak, seeing no light at the end of the tunnel, until the end of the year. The Mindanao crisis has been playing a major role in the intensification of the national crisis. The handling of the Estrada Administration of the situation has even caused more problems than a short or long term solution.

There has never been a time in the country's history (except in the last days of the dictatorship) that considerable numbers of the ruling class have acted as one in questioning the capacity of a current Administration to effectively govern. Even the church hierarchy (both the Catholic and the Protestant) has been consistently raising questions and more and more resistance in the methods of Estrada in handling the affairs of the nation, especially the Mindanao problem. Obviously, the US policy makers have been on guard on the causes and effects of the continuous thinning out of the support of the masses to the Estrada Administration.

Meanwhile, the broadest section of the masses, especially the workers, peasants, semi-proletariat and even the rank and file of the private and public servants have been the hardest hit by such a crisis. The impact of the program of globalization making the government more and more helpless and more repressive, has caused a continuing increase in unemployment and underemployment (contractualization, subcontractualization....) Land conversions have continuously displaced the peasants and the agricultural workers adding to the number of millions of

reserved labor force and creating a situation of vulnerability of exploitation by the employers.

The converging effects of globalization policies on privatization, liberalization and de-regularization have caused the continuous trade deficit, devaluation of the country's currency and increase in the rate of inflation. The economic fundamentals which made the country withstand the Asian Financial Crisis in the second half of 1997 have been weakened by the mismanagement. Such a phenomenon has made the Philippine economy one of the weakest in East Asia.

The current situation in the country provides an excellent opportunity for all progressive and revolutionary groups and Parties to be with the masses in their struggle for social reforms. A genuine revolutionary group or Party can provide correct political leadership on the mass struggle, the direction of which is to further weaken the machineries of the reactionary state and its main patron, the US imperialist.

The present condition in the country is favorable for raising the democratic and anti-imperialist struggle into a higher level. The role of the working class, the peoples and the other sectors within and outside the country should be defined. Their capacity to lead and influence the direction of the struggle should be built up. Strong linkages to genuine international movement should be strengthened as well.

Some Trends in the Economic and Political Development of the Country

Two years after Estrada was elected into the presidency, there has been no clear, coherent and comprehensive program on economic development in the

country. His slogans from day one up to the present of providing food security, shelter, job security and livelihood have remained in words. These are evident in the July 24, 2000 State of the Nation Address where Estrada again for the second time repeated the same slogans, this time packaging them in the Mindanao context e.g. making Mindanao the food basket of the country, having a fresh start from Mindanao, etc.

The economy is currently mismanaged from top to bottom. Almost all the cronies during the Marcos period are back to power regaining/reclaiming their lost or sequestered businesses and opportunities. Today, they have not only got back their businesses and wealth, they have even expanded them, thanks to Estrada's presidency. These neo-cronies have already monopolized almost all the vital industries in the country from plastic, food and beverages, real estate, communication, water and electricity and transportation to banking. They have even dared to manipulate the stock market through inside trading but they did it without finesse so that they were exposed immediately. (The case of Best World Resources where close friends of Estrada were involved in the manipulation of the stock market in the country.) Such blatant economic mismanagement of the economy has been the main reason for the big decrease of the investment inflow. As of June this year, investment was worth US\$500 million only compared to \$1 billion worth in the same period last year. At the end of the first week of August 2000, the investment inflow decreased up to seventy percent (70%) – US\$300 millions – the lowest in the year. This means that the investors (foreign and local) have lost their confidence of fair play in our stock market.

Locally, this phenomenon makes the other members of the ruling elite not favored by Estrada and even the church hierarchy to cry foul: "the playing field in business is not level". Even international institutions controlled by the capitalists like the ADB and World Bank have criticized the Estrada administration for not providing a climate for fair business dealing hence not attracting new business players in the country. Moreover, in the study made by the above mentioned banks, it shows that in the Philippines, the gap between the rich and the poor has been widening. Concretely, the same study says that in the Philippines 15 families control

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55% of the country's businesses.

Globalization policies such as deregulation, privatization and liberalization have created excellent opportunities for these families to expand their businesses to all types/sector of business almost without limit thus putting the small and medium industries out of the game. Almost all of them have even expanded beyond the national boundaries without a problem with a little help from their friend in the presidency.

Downtrending of economy

There is a continuous downtrending of the economy as shown in the following indicators:

Gross National Product (GNP) – The government has been targeting a 4.5% growth for this year. As of July 2000 the so-called economic experts of the Estrada Administration have been saying that the maximum that the country's GNP this year will be at 3.9%. Considering the almost 2% annual growth rate of the country's population and the big role played by the exported human resources in the economy, the so-called 3.9% GNP growth rate will mean almost nothing. In real terms, this means an almost zero growth rate of the Philippine's economy this year.

The current currency exchange (between the peso and the dollar) fluctuates between Php44.60 to Php45.50 to a dollar. Economic analysts are saying that before the end of the year (2000) the exchange rate will go nearer to Php50.00 to a dollar.

The government attributes this to the following reasons:

Capital outflow has been heavy because higher interest rate in other countries are becoming attractive.

Devaluation of the currency attracts more foreign investors.

It encourages more remittances from overseas Filipino contract workers to their families for the much needed dollars.

In real terms, the continuous devaluation of the peso means an automatic allocation from the annual budget to the payment of a bigger interest of the debt instead of allocating more on social services and peoples' welfare.

In concrete terms of economic activities, the devaluation of the pesos against the dollar means increase in the prices of imported materials for production. This is worst because almost all the manufac-



Demonstration against the war in Mindanao

turing enterprises in the country are dependent on the imported raw materials in doing their businesses. Higher prices of goods produced locally can only be the option of these small and medium enterprises or actually they can close shops. The first option will always put the local businesses at the mercy of the foreign competitors which can always have a lower price and the second option will trigger a domino effect which means an increase in unemployment.

Inflation and unemployment

The inflation rate has been steadily increasing, based on the conservative estimate of the government. The inflation rate as of July 2000 is 4.3% compared to 3.9% last July of 1999. The bases used by the government for the increase of the inflation rate do not yet include the effects caused by continuous or monthly increase of prices of the petroleum products and the impact of the devaluation of the pesos against the dollar.

The purchasing power of the peso has been decreasing rapidly. In less than a year's time it decreased into almost five centavos which means that a product worth Php100.00 last year costs Php105.00 this year. Worst still is that almost all the prices of basic goods have increased while the basic salaries of the workers from both the urban and rural areas have not increased at all. It is estimated that the country's inflation rate will reach double digits before the end of the year because of the abovementioned reasons. As of the month of July

2000, the unemployment rate has reached 13.9% and it is still increasing by the day.

In the more than 30 million labor force in the country, almost 14% of these are unemployed or almost seven millions of the working age do not have work. At the rate where the small and medium businesses are closing shop and the onesided employment policies of globalization, the number of unemployed will surely increase. Added to this is half a million labor force from the rank of the students and the out of school youth who have reached the employable age.

Since only a small number of this new labor force can be absorbed by the country's economy, they add to the unemployment and become part of the available reserve force of the country who become potential victims of exploitation of employers within and outside the country.

Moreover, as of the first week of August, there are more than ten thousand workers who have been on strike because of unfair labor practices of the employers who are usually favored by the Government and the Philippine military. The above-mentioned workers were later on laid off by their companies. Presently, 22% of the labor force is underemployed, which means that they work on rotation, undertimed and therefore underpaid. More than 30% of the total population of the country is classified as living below the poverty line. This refers to those who can not afford the basic necessities of life, e.g. food, shelter, clothes, health, etc.

This means that out of the more than 70 million of the country's population, almost

18 million of the are living in a subhuman condition. In fact in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) 57.9% of the people are living miserably or below the poverty line.

It is therefore, not circumstantial that it is in this region where there is an ongoing war between the Government and the MILF and other revolutionary groups. Obviously, there are socio-economic reasons for the revolutionary groups or the MILF to easily thrive in the region. However, instead of addressing the problems, the government opted for an all out war.

As of July 2000, the country's budgetary deficit has reached 67 billions of pesos which already exceeded the Php60 billions set by the IMF/WB as a limit or as manageable. The extra (surplus) expenses are incurred by the government to finance its total war policy in Mindanao or to be exact in the area of ARMM – the highest percentage of people living below the poverty line. Billions of pesos have also been lost by the government thru widespread graft and corruption. In fact, even government officials themselves are admitted that between 10 – 20% of the total government budget was lost because of the graft and corruption practices within the government.

Estrada's style of government

Estrada's methods and styles of governance is best described as a combination of the traditional political patronage before the Martial Law period (pre 1972) and the authoritarian Marcos style. Almost unlimited favors are given to those who are supportive of his presidency and his projects. He can even lend the institution of his office for his friends' benefits. In return, his friends (read as cronies) will do almost anything to please their patron. Oftentimes, the President understands the national interests as the interests of his cronies. However, those who dare to cross those path or oppose his projects will suffer the consequence. Even those who did not support his presidency in 1998 elections are still made to suffer the consequence of their act. This means that if you are in business, chances are, you are going to lose your business or if you are in politics, your province or constituencies will suffer as well.

Estrada's styles of governance is too personalistic. He wants to get things done

“hands on”. He does not need a political party as a partner in governance. He wants to show especially to the masses that he is personally with them through thick and thin. That's why when he declared the all out war policies in Mindanao, he was there, wearing a fatigue uniform with his soldiers. Now, he wants to be there in Mindanao to personally see that rehabilitation and development works are implemented. This can have positive points but as in the concrete events, whenever he is not around, his men and women cannot do anything.

People who are both identified and not identified with the camp of the Estrada Administration have been floating/entering ideas that the current administration cannot possibly finish his term due to the convergence of events – the economic crisis has become uncontrollable, the Mindanao problem has intensified and the international situation provides excellent conditions for Estrada's ouster.

The Role of the Mindanao Crisis

In the second State of the Nation Address of the President last July 24, 2000, the war in Mindanao and its development had occupied almost thirty (30%) percent of the President's prepared speech. In fact, he promised to have a fresh start of his second year of Presidency in Mindanao. It is believed that Estrada's popular rating improved because of his all out war policy in Mindanao.

However, the current phase of war in Mindanao mainly between the AFP and the MILF can be in the long term detrimental to the country's political and economic situation in general. It can drain the already scarce and depleted resources of the government by not only engaging in very unproductive military expenditures but also very destructive military adventures.

History has proven many times that the solution of the Mindanao problem cannot be military but must involve a comprehensive political settlement between the Moro people led by the MILF and the government of the Republic of the Philippines. The settlement includes the concrete answer to the right to self-determination of this minority nationality which will be mutually discussed and agreed upon by both parties and the peoples of Mindanao.

The “all out war” policy of the Estrada Administration against the MILF has put

him in a political quick sand – where the more he moves, the more he sinks deeper. The AFP's conquest of the main camp of the MILF, Camp Abubakar, has definitely not ended the war in Mindanao, unless the main objective of the “all out war” of President Estrada is just conquering all the MILF camps and not defeating their cause.

Currently, it has been the MILF dictating the phase and the terms of war, having converted itself into a highly mobile guerilla force. This has resulted in heavy casualties for the AFP.

Paramilitary revival

The AFP strength will be spread out thinly and cannot maintain its clearing or occupying of so many areas at the same time. That's why the Estrada administration is trying its best to revive the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU). These kind of paramilitary units have been banned for a long time because of their rampant human rights violation against the civilian populace. Now, these militarist generals of Estrada have been creating a situation in Mindanao to justify the revival of the CAFGUs like blaming the MILFs for all the attacks against the civilians without even bothering to conduct or wait for the results of the investigation.

President Estrada is planning to station thirty five thousand (35,000) of the CAFGUs in Mindanao. Their role is to maintain certain areas against the attack of the MILF. According to Estrada and his generals, using the CAFGUs is the cheapest way to continue his all out war. The biggest irony of it all is that the government and the AFP propagandists has been bragging about the already defeated, demoralized, splintered and leaderless MILF after the capture of the main camp (Abubakar). And yet, the same propagandists within the direct intervention of President Estrada, are moving heaven and hell to get the congress's approval to act on it. They have recruited and deployed several thousand CAFGUs in Mindanao.

Opposition to the revival of CAFGUs has been widespread coming from the legislators (opposition parties), the church, human rights movements and the business sectors. Estrada's response to them are more harassments tagging them as MILF supporters and therefore to be arrested and persecuted.

The shadows of a fascist regime are

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already falling upon the peoples of Mindanao. We expect to have more on this in the coming months, especially when the Special or Emergency Power which Estrada has been asking from the Congress is approved. In fact, one has only to look at what had happened last July 24, 2000 during the peoples' demonstration and protests against the State of Nation Address of the President. The demonstrators were dispersed in a very fascist manner as if the country is under a martial rule. Leaders were arrested and many of the demonstrators were physically assaulted by the police.

The current handling of the Mindanao crisis has concretely shown or exposed the different factions within the Estrada Administration having completely different methods and approaches. They have completely disagreed on dealing with the MILF (at least at the initial stage – up to the last quarter of 1999) in particular and the handling of peace and development in general. Totally disregarding historical events and lessons, the military approach has prevailed in solving the non-military problems of Mindanao.

The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) has a historical and important role with the MNLF and the Bangsa Moro struggle. In fact, it (OIC) identified its foreign policies and projects with it. In the recent OIC – IFMC (International Foreign Ministers' Conference) in Kuala Lumpur last July 2000, it warned both the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the MILF to stop the war in Mindanao. This started the internationalization of the struggle of the Moro led by the MILF.

All out war

The "all out war" approach of the Estrada's administration against the MILF and which in a later stage it also declared against the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army (after the peace talks had bogged down) has been a recycled "total war" approach of the Aquino Regime.

The AFP has mobilized more than five divisions (out of the total eight divisions which the country has) of the Army, all of the marines (3 to 4 brigades), the elite scout rangers and all the PNP already deployed in the regions affected and more than 20,000 CAFGUs of the total 35,000 they plan to deploy in Mindanao. As of

July 2000, the AFP has already released more than 20,000 high powered firearms/rifles to the civilians, mostly Christian vigilantes.

More heavy weaponry is expected to be deployed in Mindanao with the US\$110 million dollar military loan which Estrada had begged from his US sponsors on the last Presidential working visit to the USA.

The MILF has deployed more than four divisions of the BIAF in the Central Mindanao area. This is still excluding their armed militias or the Internal Security Force which are deployed in all municipalities they have influenced. At present, these big formations have been regrouped into smaller formations in order to be highly mobile while effectively conducting their guerilla warfare. When the fall or capture of their main Camp (Abubakr) became imminent, they transferred their valuable military hardware and equipment into far and safer grounds. In fact, they only left a token force to delay the final assault on the main Camp.

The government has been spending (on average) twenty million pesos daily on its war efforts against the MILF. This means that since March up to June this year, the government had already spent almost Php2.5 billions, bigger than the annual budget of some departments. Now, it has been pressuring the Congress to augment its (military) budget by another Php1.4 billion.

In contrast, the MILF/BIAF has only their firm commitment and religious obligation to answer the call of JIHAD – the "Holy" War to defend their Homeland. Their five years' plan for consolidation, expansion and self-reliant efforts in foods, logistics, finance and military hardware has been paying off. These efforts had been boosted by the arrival of three shiploads of high caliber weapons (machine guns and mortars).

In terms of military strategies, the AFP has been prepared/trained directly by the US (thru the VFA or Visiting Forces Agreement) to confront the BIAF in a conventional (positional) warfare. Thus, the actual planting of the Philippine Flag after they "capture" an MILF/BIAF is more than symbolic. It has been an integral part of such strategy.

In the actual field battle – the US thru its agents provide the AFP with satellite photos of the camps and the movements of the MILF/BIAF. And every platoon leader of the main force of the AFP has a GPS

(Global Positioning System) to guide their movements and directions.

On the other hand, in guerilla warfare, there is no defined battle ground or front or camps. The guerilla selects the time and place of its attack and surely the satellite will have to produce hundreds of photos to monitor the movements of the guerilla. As early as the first quarter of this year, the MILF/BIAF has decided to change its strategy from positional/conventional to highly mobile guerilla warfare. Their slogan of "victory or martyrdom" has been practiced not in defending their camps but in defending their cause and the whole areas of the Bangsamoro.

The role of the OIC

Now, the battlefield of the ongoing war between the AFP and the MILF/BIAF has been expanded onto the international front. The positive attention given by the latest ICFM of the OIC in Kuala Lumpur has implicitly put the MILF into a belligerent status and equal to that of the GRP.

The seemingly joint efforts of the GRP delegation and the MNLF led by Governor Nur Misuari have maybe delayed the formal process of recognition of the MILF as observer in the OIC. The OIC resolution of 1977 (also in Kuala Lumpur) stated that it recognizes the MNLF as the sole and legitimate representative of the Moro people. Since then, the MNLF sits as an observer in all the OIC meetings. The OIC is obligated to consummate this process with the MNLF. Its decision (July 2000) of sending a Committee of Six plus two to observe and assess the peace agreement signed by the GRP and the MNLF in 1996 will be part of such a process.

The move of Estrada in setting the deadline for peace talks with the MILF last June 30, 2000 will now be best understood by the abovementioned events. First, to pre-empt MILF's positioning in the July OIC's meeting. Second, to please and solidify his hold and influence on the militarist faction of his administration in order to remove the basis of the deadline of the US Imperialist in September. And thirdly, to consummate the first and second points, he pursued his July-August working visit to the USA to personally assure the US policymakers that he can handle the situation in the country and in Mindanao in particular.

He needed the "all out war" to weaken the MILF in its bargaining position in the

OIC. But above all he needed the all out war to increase his popularity net rating because at the early state the government propagandists were successful in packaging the MILF as the "bad guy".

At present, Estrada wants this situation to continue because he lays down three impossible conditions to continue the peace talks with the MILF. First, the MILF will drop its secessionist bid. Second, the MILF will stop all its atrocities and criminal activities. And third, the MILF will lay down their arms.

With these conditions and directives, one can't help but think whether Estrada knows what he is talking or he does not want the peace talks to continue because he now begins to believe the lines of his own propaganda – that the MILF is already a spent force.

The "Muslim-Christian" conflict

The intensification of the so-called "Muslim-Christian" conflict can easily be traced to the overt and covert activities instigated by the psy ops machineries of the AFP. Recently, a series of ambushes and massacres were inflicted on the Christians in Mindanao and the AFP is always quick to pinpoint the MILF as the perpetrators. The usual reason they give is that they were done by the Moro-Muslims and therefore they must be MILF. And what usually follows is that the Christians want arms to protect themselves from the Moro. And the government is always ready and benevolent to provide them with arms.

And as a result of this kind of packaging, one can see that in almost all the towns of Mindanao (aside from the above mentioned governor's province) the Christians have organized and armed themselves against the so-called enemy – the MILF.

The re-appearance of the Abu Sayyaf almost at the time when Estrada and his generals have started their "all out war" in Mindanao was not accidental. Aside from the instrumental role of the agents of the AFP in the founding of this extremist and terrorist group, it has been playing a direct and active role in creating an anti-Moro/Muslim sentiment among Christians. Thus again justifying the arming of themselves to protect themselves against the Moro.

Initially, the AFP and its handlers of propaganda machineries had been successful in packaging and projecting that the

Abu Sayyaf and the MILF are not dissimilar. Now, that this scheme has been exposed, the Abu Sayyaf has been concentrating on anti-social activities like kidnapping for ransom. They have been successful in this activity in projecting themselves not only nationally but also internationally and reaping a harvest of more than two hundred million pesos.

The kidnappings of the Abu Sayyaf have indeed contributed a lot in the deterioration of the national economy and therefore lead one to think whether their AFP handlers have lost their control over this extremist and criminal group or these are still part of the whole plan to project the unreasonableness of the Moro people to the whole world.

The kidnappings have been done with total impunity and ransoms have been paid openly, although it seems that only the government negotiators do not know about the ransom. Kidnappings have been done in different stages with different sets of people involved in the process. The process includes a part of negotiation, keeping the hostages, liaisoning, etc. Ransom money is divided based on the participation of local government officials and military in the whole process is not impossible as shown in the past, they too get their own share of the ransom money.

The handling of the Abu Sayyaf and its kidnapping activities, is a reflection of how the Estrada Administration is governing or managing the affairs of the country. Graft and Corruption do not select the place and kind and time within the present government.

Peace initiatives

The proliferation of peace initiatives and movements in and outside Mindanao have in the main, neutralized to a certain degree, the intrigues and animosities among and between the Muslims and the Christians. Problems have been experienced on the level of establishing genuine broad alliance among the different political groups.

But in the main, the RPMP leadership in Mindanao has provided political leadership in these initiatives and movements. Even the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) has never genuinely initiated (at least in the early stage) a comprehensive plan for peace mobilizations aside from the media offensives that they have been doing. With regards to other

political groups, some of them have shown a strong tendency of using the situation for money making activities.

As things stand now, the Estrada Administration is facing converging problems heightened by the Mindanao situation. He has been under pressure from within and outside the government and even by his patron to decisively face the problems and take an honorable exit in Mindanao. His signing of Executive Order 261, creating the Mindanao Coordinating Committee has met strong opposition from within his group and more so from his critics.

The more he makes a smokescreen of fast tracking economic development, the more he is exposed in his real intent in Mindanao and the manner in which he handles the issues of peace and development. He does not need an emergency power to fast track or hasten development in any part of the country. Even if his intention is to bypass former President Ramos and Misuari's SPCPD, he can do this more effectively when he does not expose himself.

This month, the OIC will send a Committee of six plus two to do the fact finding mission on how the 1996 Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the GRP has fared. Definitely, the agenda on the MILF will not be excluded from this fact finding mission. The MILF leadership is proposing that the next round of peace talks will be held in a neutral country which was rejected immediately by the GRP representatives.

The MILF made mention about the government's harassments and crackdown as reason for insisting that the peace talks will be held outside the country. The GRP tries to project an image of being on top of the situation in the talks and wants to issue a safe conduct pass to the MILF negotiators. At present, the GRP has not responded to the no pre-conditioned peace talks put forward by the MILF. It is a political stand still.

Meanwhile, the international initiatives of the MILF have been reaping a bountiful harvest. The implicit belligerent status accorded it by the IFCM-OIC in Kuala Lumpur will surely be maximized. Based on this, the MILF can even set up a government in exile in any of the friendly members of the powerful OIC. When this happens, the problems faced by the Estrada Administration will be worse than those faced by the Marcos dictatorship. ★

Indigenous struggles in Southeast Asia

INDIGENOUS peoples in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines form a substantial number of the population.

SYED HUSIN ALI*

IN Burma, a third of her 40 million people is made up of a number of indigenous groups. By contrast, Thailand has only about 550,000 indigenous people and Philippines has about 4.5 million. Malaysia, which is made up of a population of about 22 million, has around 1.8 million (less than 9 percent). Peninsular Malaysia probably has the smallest number; with only about 100,000, while the number is much bigger in East Malaysia, i.e. about 860,000 in Sabah and around 839,000 in Sarawak. The number is not available for Indonesia, where the situation is more complicated insofar as trying to distinguish the indigenous people from others, which are often considered as minority sub-ethnic groups. For example, are the Aceh, Bugis and Madura people to be categorised as indigenous or sub-ethnic groups?

The indigenous groups in each country are normally referred to as a single category by a common name. In the Philippines they are known as "Tribal Filipino", while in Thailand the term "Chao Khao" (hill tribes) has been used for more than three decades. Similarly, in Malaysia they have been called "Orang Asli" or lately "Orang Asal" (Aboriginal People). But each category in every country is inevitably made up of many different types or groups of indigenous communities, which are often distinguished or distinguishable from one another by others as well as by themselves on the basis of their differences in origin, language and culture.

The indigenous people are often historically recognised as the original or first inhabitants of the country that they settle. They have been influenced by different waves of people who have immigrated to

or colonised their land. They have often been driven into the jungles in the hinterland or the hills. As a result, sections of them continue to this day to practice different forms of subsistence economy. They are close to the land, which is not only the primary source of their livelihood, but also forms an important basis of their culture, belief and also autonomous existence. But there are also other sections that have moved to the plains and learnt modern methods of agriculture, planting subsistence or commercial crops. As a result they have been drawn into and affected by the cash economy. Yet others have been driven away from their traditional land by colonisers or capitalists looking for profits from mining, plantations and commerce, and also by recent development activities of the state.

Two forces

There seems to be two types of forces acting on the indigenous communities, which we may describe as the centripetal and centrifugal. The opposite effects of these two forces can be seen among many indigenous people in various countries. The centripetal force tends to draw the indigenous community closer towards, or even into, the wider national or state structure. Economic, political, administrative, educational, social and religious changes tend to encompass or bring the indigenous communities closer to the rest of the population. In other words, the centripetal force has the effect of integrating or assimilating the indigenous communities into the national or state organisation. Some may see this as a natural process of development or state formation.

On the other hand, the same factors of change and process of development may not be accepted or resented by some indigenous groups or sections among them. This is especially so when those changes or development appear to be forced from above by the ruling elite in the state, and consequently cause what are perceived as disastrous effects on the indigenous people, such as undermining their economic resources and livelihood, and threatening their culture and religion. The indigenous people tend to resist these changes, some of which are considered to be undesirable onslaught on them by the state or national organisations. All these can be deemed as constituting the centrifugal forces which tend to draw away the indigenous communities from the state or national structure and, in fact, sometimes lead them towards demanding autonomy or separation.

Manifestations

We can identify different manifestations of the political effects and activities among the indigenous peoples resulting from these changes and development, especially those brought about from above, as follows:

(a) Armed or peaceful struggle to oppose the state and to demand a separate state or autonomy;

(b) Extra-legal actions to resist certain government development projects and encroachments by commercial groups on traditional territories;

(c) Formation of political parties to participate in the electoral political process in order to oppose government policies detrimental to the indigenous people and promote their general interests and welfare; and

(d) Cooperation with the power elite by participating in government, administration and political parties, in order to share power, protect interests of the indigenous peoples or even individuals.

In these political manifestations or activities, there are three observable tendencies. Firstly, the tendency to operate alone or independently as an indigenous group, without cooperating with other groups, either from among other indigenous groups or from the mainstream social groups in the country.

Secondly, to cooperate by forming alliances, coalitions or fronts with other indigenous groups or with mainstream



social groups, for purpose of strengthening their political position and bargaining power. Thirdly, the tendency for some groups to split up or divide owing to different political interests and orientations or even religious beliefs.

Armed struggles for separation or autonomy are still being carried out in Indonesia, Burma and the Philippines. In Indonesia, the struggles have existed for a long time in Aceh, East Timor and West Papua/Irian Jaya. In West Papua it is led by the Free Papua Movement (OPM). In the second half of the sixties and in 1977-78 there were intense conflicts between the Indonesian army and the OPM. Now the struggle is taking a non-violent turn.

Although there has been a change in the central government, which is now more democratic, OPM is nowhere near achieving its aim of gaining freedom for Papua. Traditional land belonging to the indigenous people continue to be ravaged by logging or mining companies, without paying any compensation.

East Timor, with a population of about 750,000 people, is divided into more than 30 distinct ethnolinguistic groups, with one language, Tatum, serving as lingua franca. When the Portuguese practically abandoned East Timor, the Indonesian military, with the cooperation of the leadership of two pro-integrationist parties, UDT and APODETI, occupied the ex-colony in 1975. Freedom fighters, led by Fretilin, mounted the struggle against the cruel and repressive Indonesian military rule. This struggle united almost all the people, except for those who supported the military regime.

The antagonism towards the rulers in Jakarta was further intensified among sections of the Christian populace in East Timor because they regarded the centre of power in Jakarta as being predominantly Muslim. Nevertheless, the East Timor liberation struggle was fundamentally a non-religious struggle supported by the majority. The Indonesians, as well as the Americans and Australians, were interested in East Timor mainly because of its wealth in natural resources, particularly petroleum.

Struggle in Aceh

Now that the East Timor struggle for independence is almost over, Aceh is beginning to take centre stage. But it is not getting as much international attention as East Timor did.

Although Aceh, as part of Indonesia, has been independent for more than half a decade, yet a large section of the people there consider themselves to be internally colonised by Jakarta. Much of the wealth from the natural resources of Aceh benefits mainly the powerful in Jakarta. At the same time during the 1988-98 there have been more than 7,000 reported cases of human rights violations by the Indonesian army, including 5,000 killings, in Aceh. These events coincided roughly with that period when armed insurrection in Aceh was being stepped up. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) which is leading the insurrection was formed in 1976. In Aceh, where more than 98 percent of the population is Muslim, Islam constitutes a very strong moving force among the majority of people. A large number of strict Muslims considered the previous military regime in Jakarta as being unIslamic, if not heretical. They may have difficulties now since a respected Muslim leader leads the government and the military role has been much reduced. Further, GAM itself is facing leadership and organisational problems.

In Burma, there has been a long history of military power and legal force being used to control and dominate the various indigenous communities. This ignited the struggle for increased autonomy from the centre, with each of the indigenous group, like the Shan, Rakhina and Kayin, having its own insurgent movement. The central leadership since the early sixties seemed to have carried out all kinds of strategies that could only cause dissatisfaction and restlessness among the indigenous peoples.

Among these were: to usurp political, economic and social power of the indigenous peoples; to forcefully regroup them into fenced "strategic hamlets"; and to carry out policies or programmes that resulted in internal colonisation and ethnocide. In order to strengthen their struggle the indigenous peoples formed a front in 1976, which later joined the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Political organisations associated with the Arakan (ALP), Chin (CNF), Karen (KNU), Kachin (KIO), Kayan (KNLP), Lahu (LNO), Mon (NMSP) and Wu (WNO) were in the NDF. These are political parties, but since under the military regime there is no electoral process and repression has been severe, they are forced to resort to armed struggle. The objective of this front is not to form a separate or autonomous state for each indigenous community, but "to establish a genuine Federated States of Burma including a Burman State based on equality, liberty, social progress and right of self-determination." In spite of the democracy protests of 1988 and the great electoral victory of the NLD over the SLORC military regime a couple of years later, the generals refused to concede power. Instead they detained hundreds of the victorious NLD leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Thousands of students, monks and politicians fled to indigenous territories controlled by the NDF. They formed a Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) to continue waging armed struggle to achieve the above objective.

The Philippines

In the case of the Philippines, although many indigenous groups have been involved in armed struggle against the central government, it is the Moro movement in the south that appears to enjoy the lime-light. The Moros have been Muslims since the 13th century. Although the Spaniards managed to colonise the Philippines, it was not successful in subjugating Mindanao, which still has a big Muslim population. Much later, the Americans succeeded in doing so. The Americans recognised the Moro people as "distinct from the Filipino and treated them as wards". They opened the islands to capitalist ventures in plantation and commerce. While some Muslim factions welcomed and cooperated with the American colonial enterprise, others who felt deprived and humiliated by it

★ Southeast Asia

joined the forces of liberation. After the Americans left, the struggle continued, but this time against the power at the centre.

In 1968 the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) was formed and together with it Moro national consciousness was manifested in the open. The Philippines armed forces were involved in terrorising and evicting Moros from their ancestral land. At the same time together with some fanatical Christian groups, they carried out "search and destroy" operations. MIM was led by traditional Muslim leaders who were suspicious of the expanding Christian influence in Mindanao, and so their struggle was influenced by religion. Three years later, the MNLF was formed under the leadership of Nur Misuari. This was a leftist nationalist movement, which quickly launched a militant liberation struggle for the setting up of Moroland (Bangsamoro).

A breakaway group set up the Moro Islamic Liberation Movement (MILF), as the MNLF was beginning to negotiate with the centre for autonomy. After the autonomous state of Mindanao was established with Misuari as head, the MILF gained greater support for its armed movement to form an Islamic state in southern Philippines. Presently, it has a contender in the form of the smaller Abu Sayyaf group, which has been in the news lately. Now, the Islamic element is very much in the fore in the struggle against the central ruling elite, which is perceived to be dominated by Christians. This is the reverse of the situation in East Timor.

The Malay situation

Malaysia is not devoid of the tradition of armed struggle, for it had its share especially following the advent of Portuguese and British colonial rule in the early sixteenth and late nineteenth century respectively. In the nineteen fifties and sixties, after the declaration of Emergency and the banning of political parties and unions which were fighting for independence through legal means, there was an armed insurrection largely by Chinese (but also with some Malay and Indian participation), led by the Communist Party.

Owing to the pressure from the British military, helped by the local police and military forces, made up largely of Malays, as well as troops from other British colonies, the insurrectionists had to withdraw into the jungles. There they managed



to get support from groups of Orang Asli.

To break the insurrection, the colonial government carried out a strategy of resettling these indigenous peoples into a number of confined areas around what were called "forts" or "posts". They continued to be neglected, exploited and poor. To win their hearts and minds, in 1961 the government officially introduced the term Orang Asli to refer to them collectively. At the same time an Aboriginal Peoples Act was enacted purportedly with the objective of guaranteeing them some rights. An Orang Asli Affairs Department (JHEOA) was formed presumably to "protect" the Orang Asli as its "wards".

A development strategy was initially devised to give them land for agriculture and also to provide services to improve their health and education. Later, the policy of integration was introduced, which was actually aimed at assimilating them into the mainstream Malay social group and culture. It also included proselytising programmes among the Orang Asli and schooling their children to convert them to Islam. Politically, they were given the right to vote.

Although the development efforts carried out under the JHEAO had some positive results, yet the Orang Asli did not consider them satisfactory. Not enough land was given to them. In fact, ironically, various companies and the government transgressed more and more of their ancestral land areas, with all types of projects. The state is always perceived as protecting the interests of big capital whenever there are conflicts or issues involving the takeover of traditional land. As a result, a good number of Orang Asli communities have been forcibly displaced or evicted from their land.

Measures to alleviate poverty and government allocations for the same have always been negligible. In fact, at present more than three-fourths of the Orang Asli are still living below poverty line, about

five times the national average.

Power

Politics is about power, which history has shown can be achieved through the bullet or the ballot. In the above general survey, we see that indigenous peoples in Asia have or are still experiencing both. Different conditions have given rise to different situations. It appears that the more undemocratic and repressive the central power; the more revolutionary the forms of struggle against it become. There are armed struggles still being waged by indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia, to liberate themselves and to change their political environment within a separate state or as part of the existing but transformed political entity. There are also extra-legal forms of resistance, protracted or sporadic, planned or spontaneous, to fight against political and economic measures taken by the government or big business groups, which affect the livelihood of the indigenous peoples as well as undermine their cultural and spiritual lives. At the same time the indigenous peoples also have the experience of political processes that involve elections and political parties. In Sabah and Sarawak, they have their own parties and participate in elections regularly.

Indigenous politics is not all about majority-minority or rich-poor relationships only. What move people, including the indigenous peoples, are not merely common political and economic interests. Equally strong are the forces related to their shared beliefs and values. These common interests and shared values can have centripetal effect to unite them within their own group and also across various, racial, ethnic or indigenous boundaries. But, of course, any attempt by any ruling elite to force, in a dictatorial and undemocratic manner, any sectarian interest or value, will only cause the centrifugal effect, resulting in disunity and disintegration. All these can determine the nature of politics generally, not just electoral politics, among the indigenous people. ★

This is an edited version of a much longer paper presented at a Workshop on Indigenous Peoples' Experience with Electoral and Party Politics, in Sabah, East Malaysia, 14-16 July 2000.

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Unquenched spirit

THE following review of "The Legacy of Ernest Mandel" (ed. Gilbert Achcar, Verso, £30) first appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* of August 18, 2000. Its author is a leading member of the British Socialist Workers' Party.

ALEX CALLINICOS

ERNEST Mandel belonged to what Gilbert Achcar calls an 'increasingly endangered species', the 'theoreticians of militant Marxism'. Mandel, who died in 1995 in his early seventies, was for fifty years the dominant figure in the Fourth International, Trotsky's official heirs. He evokes a now largely defunct world – that of the leftist Jewish intellectual who spurns not only conventional disciplinary boundaries but also the academy itself, preferring to practise Marxism as a full-time political activist.

This world was destroyed by Hitler and Stalin. Mandel himself nearly fell victim to the Holocaust. In a vivid interview appended to this collection he recalls how as a 'crazy youth' active in the Trotskyist resistance during the German occupation of his native Belgium, he was arrested three times. Mandel escaped from a prison camp in Germany by shinning over the fence and managed to talk the gamekeeper who recaptured him out of shooting him on the spot.

The mature Mandel was a master of words as well. Fluent in half a dozen languages and immensely widely read, he was a powerful orator. May 1968 marked his heyday, producing a mass audience for versions of Marxism critical of Moscow's orthodoxies. During the most violent confrontation between students and riot police in Paris, Mandel mounted a barricade in the Latin Quarter, and, watching his own car burning, exclaimed: 'Ah! Comme c'est beau! C'est la Révolution!'

Robin Blackburn observes: 'Perhaps more than any other single person he was the educator of the new generation recruited to Marxism and revolutionary politics by the student revolts of the sixties, especially in Europe and the Americas.' Mandel tirelessly and skilfully defended his version of Trotskyism in print and at

the podium. Even in old age he was a formidable debater. Blackburn recalls a frail Mandel demolishing the then Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, in 1991.

Mandel was more, however, than a pamphleteer and controversialist. He devoted considerable effort to developing Marxist political economy, notably in *Marxist Economic Theory* (1962) and *Late Capitalism* (1972). The latter work represents his most important intellectual contribution, an attempt to integrate an orthodox Marxist theory of the business cycle, in which crises reflect the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, with the idea, first developed by Nikolai Kondratieff in the early 1920s, that capitalism undergoes 'long waves' of expansion and decline. Mandel contended that the end of the 1960s represented the beginning of a downward wave.

Critical examination

Rightly, *Late Capitalism* receives much attention in this collection (which is based on papers delivered at a seminar in 1996). Michel Husson subjects the book's main theoretical propositions to sympathetic but critical examination. In a tantalizing piece Francisco Louçã argues that Mandel's version of long wave theory pioneered what he calls the 'complexity approach' in political economy. This conceives capitalism as liable to sudden and catastrophic changes that cannot be modelled by the linear equations used by conventional economists.

Mandel's contribution as a Marxist economist is thus well represented in this collection: aside from Husson's and Louçã's pieces, Catherine Samary critically reviews Mandel's debate in the 1980s with Alec Nove, in which he vigorously rebutted the idea – now more or less unchallengeable orthodoxy among left-wing economists – that the only viable alternative to capitalism is market socialism. Yet the collection avoids, as Achcar puts it in his editorial introduction, 'any judgement on the political and organizational choices through which he attempted to translate his Marxist convictions'.

This is an odd decision. First, it is so at odds with Mandel's own insistence on the unity of theory and practice as one of the most basic axioms of Marxism. Secondly, as leader of the Fourth International he was famously prone to sweeping and (from his perspective) optimistic predictions – of

global economic slump after the Second World War, revolution in Western Europe during the 1970s, and the transformation of the Soviet Union (which he persisted in calling a 'degenerated workers' state') into a socialist democracy in the late 1980s. Any serious assessment of Mandel's Marxism would have to trace the relationship between these erroneous political judgements and the basic structure of his theoretical beliefs.

At the same time, Mandel's optimism is his most attractive quality. It helped save him as a 'crazy youth' in Nazi Germany and still motivated his passionate rejection of capitalism in old age. It was, as Michael Löwy observes, deep-seated, 'a sort of anthropological optimism'. The young Marx's 'categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which the human being is a debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being' corresponds, Mandel claimed, to 'the inextinguishable spark of revolt against inequality, exploitation, injustice and oppression, which lights up again and again in the human race'. It is indeed rooted in 'our anthropological nature' – in the fact that we walk upright and co-operate socially. From a long historical perspective Mandel was confident of ultimate victory.

Norman Geras objects that this optimism made Mandel insensitive to the dark side of history. In a stimulating analysis of his writings on the Holocaust, Geras argues that Mandel tended not to face up to the singularity of the Shoah, treating it as merely the most extreme case of capitalist barbarism. This reflected a failure to confront what Mandel formally acknowledged, the human potential for destruction. Geras also reproaches him also for his adherence to a 'universalist ethic shorn of any special concern for the sufferings of one's own'. To me, however, Mandel's universalism – and its implication that the Nazis' murder of the Jews concerns us all – seems a welcome corrective to the obsession with identity that so blights contemporary culture. ★

To order "The Legacy of Ernest Mandel" at a discount price:

- From Britain, please send a cheque for £12.00 made out to "Socialist Outlook" to PO Box 1109, London N4 1AX.

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ON October 17th, World Poverty Day, 200 women representing the World March for Women will be received at the United Nations in New York, highlighting the special importance that the fight against poverty has for women worldwide. Women, in all sectors of the world represent the majority of the poor, and the increasing number of women-headed households - created by war, migration as well as marriage failure - risk trapping more and more children into a spiral of poverty. However this initiative will represent far, far more than those women able to be in New York and the fight against poverty alone. Since the Women's Federation of Quebec (Fédération des Femmes de Québec) launched their call in 1995 the World March of Women against poverty and violence against women has become an international series of initiatives based on a platform of demands which go far beyond these first two essential challenges to the discrimination and oppression from which women suffer today.

At the international preparatory meeting in October 1998, 140 women from 60 countries adopted a more developed platform based on three goals:

- promotion of equality between women and men;
- stimulating a large movement of women's groups around the world;
- denouncing patriarchy and capitalism and its current neo-liberalism form, proposing alternative solutions based on equality and justice.

This same meeting also defined the way in which the movement was to be organised: led by women, and leadership shared equally through all regions of the world while respecting and valuing the differences that exist between different cultures, noting also that the March is a pacifist action. Over all the continents a broad variety of women's organisations has come together in support of the march. The collaboration between these organisations, feminist groups, NGOs, indeed even government representatives, has not always been easy. Questions of fundamental importance for example in relation to sexuality and fertility control remain points of divergence. Nevertheless the World March has become a Symbol of the global resistance to neo-liberalism and its specific effects on women.

Capitalist globalisation deepens inequalities between the advanced capitalist and developing countries, and between different sections of the workforce and population in these countries. Thus as the inequality between young and old, those in casualised jobs and stable employment, immigrant and indigenous populations grows, so does the difference between women and men in combination with all these other factors of inequality.

The importance of the World March is that it has made women and women's demands a specific factor in the resistance to this capitalist globalisation and thus in turn strengthens the movement also represented by the anti-globalisation initiatives which passing from Seattle to Geneva to Porto Alegre next January are a sign of a reactivation of social movements which had been almost absent from the scene for much of the 1990s.

In August of this year groups of women in 157 countries were participating in different initiatives running from International Women's Day March 8 to the high point around October 17th. Coordinating committees had been constituted in 101 countries from Australia to Pakistan, from El Salvador to Brazil, from Togo to Benin, from France to the United States. While we can count on success for the different initiatives including the European March in Brussels on October 14th and the march in Washington on October 15th the real challenge ahead of us is to build a real worldwide coordination that will continue after October, ensuring a feminist presence in future anti-globalisation initiatives. [PD] ★

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