

international
November 1997 • No. 294
VIEWPOINT

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• Three essays about the Russian Revolution – by Daniel Bensaid

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Italy

Refounded Communists fumble



Italy's Communist Party has retreated from opposition to the 1998 Finance Law. **Livio Maitan**, a member of the National Leadership, warns that, until it elaborates a strategic alternative, the party will be unable to effectively oppose the centre-left Prodi government

The Refounded Communist Party (PRC) and the centre-left Olive Tree coalition agreed not to attack each other during the 1996 election campaign. The Communists promised that their MPs would not vote against the creation of an Olive Tree-led government, but that their subsequent voting would depend on the government's proposals and behaviour.

But from June 1996 onwards, the Communists started to consider themselves part of the government majority.

This was not conflict-free. The PRC finally accepted a Ministry of Labour plan to legalise temporary work agencies (which the party had always opposed). In return, the Minister promised to finance 100,000 6-12 month contracts for young people, at a monthly salary of 800,000 lira (US\$ 450). Over 2,000 of the PRC's

middle cadre signed a petition demanding that the Communist MPs reject the proposal. In another conflict, the PRC group voted against the government decision to send a military force to Albania. The expedition was only approved thanks to the votes of the centre-right coalition.

But the real trouble started with the debate on the Finance Law for 1998. Before the summer recess, the PRC clearly signalled their dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Prodi's proposals. Though they would not vote against the draft proposals until there was a full debate in parliament.

At the beginning of September, Prodi told PRC leader Fausto Bertinotti that the government would not make the same compromises to the left as in the 1997 Finance Law. Determined to respect the conditions of the Maastricht Treaty on inflation and public sector debt, and join the new European monetary union, the Prodi government wanted to make further budget cuts, including in the pension system. Last year, pensions were removed from the cuts list at the insistence of the PRC.

PRC leaders reacted angrily to the Prime Minister's intransigence. Prodi's refusal to negotiate made matters worse. His real concern was to consolidate his own coalition, and make separate agreements with the trade union confederations.

He hoped that this would leave the PRC without any option but to continue supporting him. Prodi even convinced the unions to worsen pension rights for those who had started work as children, and therefore made sufficient pension contributions before reaching retirement age.

The final Finance Law presented to parliament was less severe than last year. But still unacceptably harsh. And it contained none of the concessions the PRC had asked for.

Prodi falls and rises

This caused a dramatic debate between government representatives and PRC MPs. PRC parliamentary group leader Diliberto said the government had become the instrument of the employers' organisation *Confindustria* and the banks, and was "surrendering to the will of the markets."

The centre-right opposition made signs that they would consider voting for finance legislation in order to prevent any delay to Italy's convergence with France and Germany, and adoption of the single European currency.

With all negotiations blocked, the PRC confirmed that they would vote against the proposed law. On 9 October, Prime Minister Prodi announced his resignation.

This unleashed an unprecedented wave of attacks against the PRC. Politicians,

mayors, and representatives of employers' groups accused the Communists of provoking a political crisis and preventing Italy from integrating with the other EU countries, just when the economy was starting to work properly. The trade unions joined in the witch-hunt.

The PDS daily *L'Unita* became hysterical. Even *El Manifesto*, the newspaper closest to the PRC, urged Bertinotti to withdraw his threat. The party's fax machines and telephones were overwhelmed by threats and insults from people describing themselves as "ordinary citizens" and "workers."

Not since the darkest years of the cold war had Italian Communists faced such a climate. Beyond the manipulation of the PDS and the trade union leaderships, wider factors were at play. Many Italians could not accept that a political force affirm positions which contradict "the consensus" and the supposed imperatives of the market economy, the Maastricht criteria, budget austerity, flexibility, and so on. Other citizens chose the PRC as a scapegoat for their frustrations with the failure of 'their' centre-left government to carry out better policies than their conservative predecessors.

Within 24 hours, the PRC leadership seemed to retreat. On October 10, the Secretariat stated that the party was willing to make a pact with the government for one year, in exchange for modifications in the finance law, and a pledge to reduce the working week from 40 to 35 hours by the year 2000.

After frantic negotiations, agreement was reached. The PRC rejoined the parliamentary majority, and promised to vote for the finance law. Prodi withdrew his resignation, demanding and winning a vote of confidence from the parliament.

With seven of the 47 seats in the PRC National Leadership, the far left played an important role during the crisis, despite the usual disagreements on tactical questions. On 12 October 500 militants attended a Rome meeting where Marco Ferrando and Livio Maitan discussed the crisis in the country and the party. At the 14 October National Leadership meeting, five of the far-left members voted against the Bertinotti-Prodi agreement. Two, Bicciardi and Mazzei, announced their resignation from the Party.

The Olive Tree needed this agreement with the Communists. They had no other choice. New elections might not return them to power. And the PRC could even have gained votes, since the centre-left government had not made any of the reforms demanded by working people.

Prodi comes out of the crisis with his coalition strengthened, and with a guarantee that his finance law will be approved by parliament. He can continue his European integration policies, without major opposition. Since the centre-right opposition block is in crisis, Prodi can even expect to do well in municipal elections later this month.

None of this guarantees stability. Despite favourable short term developments, the socio-economic situation is still delicate. Conflicts are possible at any time.

And Prodi has only at the beginning of his constitutional reform project. Over the next year or two he will have to overcome very deep divisions between the political parties, and in society, to establish any kind of consensus. And the separatist Northern League continues to provoke instability and tension.

In general, however, the Olive Tree coalition has benefited from the crisis. Not so the Refounded Communists. The party's difficulties in defining a strategy towards the centre-left government have again been displayed. There is a clear disagreement within the Party leadership.

At the last National Congress I said that the PRC should not have joined the parliamentary majority and supported Prodi. The government's decisions on socio-economic questions and foreign policy have confirmed what those of us on the left of the PRC had warned.

The Olive Tree components, especially the PRD, have even begun institutional co-operation with the centre-right, through their project to reform Italy's constitution in the direction of a semi-presidential system. And, in defiance of the current constitution, they have agreed to give equal treatment (and state funds) to private and public education.

The Prodi government has stressed that its top priority is to meet the Maastricht criteria and adopt the single European currency.

In this latest confrontation, the PRC has won no significant concessions. We have even accepted the "reform" of some pensions, something we used to oppose.

In exchange, we have not won any serious promise for public sector programmes to attack the terrible unemployment (25-30%) in the poorer Mezzogiorno of southern Italy. This was supposedly a precondition of any agreement with Prodi.

Apart from some cosmetic budget adjustments, PRC leader Bertinotti is presenting Prodi's promise to cut the working week as a great victory for the party. It isn't. Prodi has promised to organise negotiations between employers and unions. There is no mention of protecting salaries during any reduction in hours worked, something the PRC has always seen as essential. The reduction is announced for the year 2001, but by then the EU Stability Pact will be in position, making it almost impossible for countries which have adopted the Euro to change their macro-economic policies. And there is no guarantee that the current government will be in place in four years time anyway!

Without an alternative strategy, and an alternative project, Communist Refoundation is clearly unable to sustain any confrontation with the centre-left majority in the Italian parliament. Seven years after the "refoundation," it is high time to develop such an alternative. ★

contents

europa

- 2 **Refounded Communists fumble**
• Livio Maitan
- 4 **Britain: a whisper from a forgotten nation** • Ceri Evans
- 5 **Britain: Interview with Liverpool dockers**
- 6 **Ex-Yugoslavia: polarisation continues** • Catherine Samary
- 6 **Albania: half victory, half defeat**
• Georges Mitralias
- 8 **Spain: ETA - a view from the left**
• J. Iriarte 'Bikila' and Iosu Perales

Che... Che... Che...

- 11 **A revolutionary life**
- 12 **The year Che was "nowhere"**
• Zbigniew Kowalewski
- 16 **The 4th International and Cuba**
• Livio Maitan
- 19 **Ernesto Guevara, aka 'Che'**
• Paco Ignacio Taibo II
- 20 **"Create two, three... many Vietnams! That is the watchword!"**
• Ernesto "Che" Guevara
- 22 **Four researchers and the legend**
• Janette Habel

the lessons of October 1917

- 24 **Three myths about October 1917**
• Daniel Bensaïd
- 27 **Conditions for the emergence of socialism**
• Catherine Samary
- 30 **Was Lenin right?**
• François Vercammen

americas

- 32 **Puerto Rico: massive protest against privatisation**
• Rafael Bernabe

asia

- 33 **India: Poverty's superstar**
• B. Skanthakumar
- 34 **The other Asia**

regular features

- 35 **conferences**
- 36 **NetWorking** • Internet action

Εκδοτής και διευθυντής: Γιάννης Φελεκής, Ερεσσου 34, 106 81 Αθήνα, τηλ. 3300675. Τυπογράφος: Ιωάννης Κοτσάτος & Σία, Μαρινού Αντίπα 4, 163 46 Ηλιούπολη, τηλ. 9719048. Editor & director: Yannis Felekis, Eressou 34, 106 81 Athens, Greece. Printed by Ioannis Kotsatos & Cia, Marinou Antipa 4, 163 46 Ilioupoli. Distributed by Spartakos, Eressou 34, 106 81 Athens, Greece. *Pour la France, directeur de publication: Jean Malewski, Commission paritaire n° 64324. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors. ISSN: 1294 2925. A monthly analytical review published, under the auspices of the Fourth International, by Presse-Editions-Communications Internationale, — PEI, BP 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France. e-mail <100666.1443@compuserve.com>, fax (+33) 1/43792961. 01/43792960*



In September voters in Wales approved the Labour government's plans for decentralisation. Despite its limited powers, the Welsh Assembly is a step forward for Britain's smallest nation.

Ceri Evans*

Conservative killjoys might suggest that the vote was only a half victory. The September 18 referendum on a Welsh Assembly was won by a margin of about 0.6%. Only 51.3% of the electorate bothered to vote at all. And the new Assembly will not have any powers of taxation

Support for decentralisation was stronger in Scotland. In the 11 September referendum an incredible 74% voted in favour of a Scottish Parliament and 63% in support of tax-varying powers. Indeed, opinion polls taken a few days before the Scottish vote showed that a majority of Scots would vote to give the new Parliament tax-raising powers, fully expecting that the first Scottish administration will increase taxes. In 1979 only 52% voted for a Scottish assembly.

The limits of the Welsh Assembly

The Welsh Assembly is a much weaker body than that offered to Scotland. It will not be able to make laws or raise taxes. It will simply take over control of the existing budget of the Welsh Office, which is the government department currently responsible for Welsh affairs. It will also be able to pass "secondary legislation" in areas approved by the London Parliament. The proposals fall far short of the wide-ranging autonomy that most socialists in Wales would support. But given a choice between the *status quo* and some measure of greater control over our politicians and the state - the need to campaign for a YES vote was clear.

The first results, from North Wales constituencies close to the English border, showed significant majorities against. There was also a large NO vote in the capital Cardiff.

Then the results began to trickle in from the South Wales valley constituencies, Labour's working-class heartland. Neath and Port Talbot voted 2 to 1 in favour, Rhondda by a majority of 15,000 and Caerffili by a majority of 6,000.

A whisper from a forgotten nation

With only one result still to be announced, the NO vote was still short of the winning post. That final result was from Carmarthen, an area which includes important working class areas like Llanelli, the Gwendraeth Valley, Ammanford and Carmarthen town itself. These areas registered a massive 65% in favour, based on a high turn-out, and the YES vote scraped home by a majority of 6,721.

Working class and Welsh speakers

What is most significant about these results is the pattern of support which they reveal. Unlike Scotland, support for a Welsh Assembly is very uneven. It is concentrated in the working class areas which suffered most under 18 years of Tory rule. Contrary to what the NO campaigners claimed, it is not simply linguistically based, since the predominantly English speaking South Wales valleys contributed as much to the victory as did Welsh speaking areas in the North and West. Indeed, Welsh speaking Ynys Mon (Isle of Anglesey) only narrowly voted in favour.

Two areas of Labour support which did register significant NO votes were the capital Cardiff and nearby Newport. This reflects the much lower level of Welsh national consciousness in these areas and, in Cardiff at least, a strong feeling that a Welsh Assembly would be a bloated version of the increasingly unpopular local Labour council.

Another point comes through very clearly in the results. In every one of the areas in which rebel Labour MP's campaigned for a NO vote, or cast doubts on the proposals, the vote was overwhelmingly in favour.

The role of Llew Smith MP is particularly problematic. He is the only member of the left-wing Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs in Wales, and his stand against the Assembly has done a great deal to discredit the Labour left, allowing opponents to lump together all his radical positions as representing "old-style state centralist socialism". This could have particularly damaging consequences for any future socialist campaign against Maastricht and EMU.

Welsh autonomy in Maastricht Europe

Both the Wales Labour Party and the left-nationalist Plaid Cymru have deep illusions about Wales' prospects in a Maastricht Europe. The mythical "Europe of the Regions" is seen as a means of bringing power and prosperity to peripheral regions like Wales. The reality, of course, will be exactly the reverse. However, Llew Smith's stand on the Assembly will make it all the easier for people to dismiss his arguments

against European Monetary Union as emanating simply from a London-centred, British nationalist perspective.

But despite the closeness of the result and the problems for the left, the vote on September 18th was a massive step forward for the people and the politics of Wales. The creation of an Assembly gives socialists an exciting opportunity to reinvigorate and enliven political life in Wales. It will give us an elected body which can be both a forum for debate and a focus for demands and campaigns.

The left agenda for the Assembly

The left must not squander this opportunity by confirming the fears of so many voters that the Assembly is simply about "jobs for the boys". Women must be equally represented in this Assembly and the voice of Black and Asian people must also be heard.

If Wales deserves a full time Assembly it also deserves the full time attention of its Assembly members. Dual-membership, whereby people can be both London MP's, Euro MP's, Lords or local councillors and also members of the Assembly, makes a mockery of the whole process.

Activists within the Wales Labour Party have proposed a number of key points, in relation to the Assembly, which we are confident enjoy broad popular support. We will continue to campaign for an Assembly which:

- Abolishes the vast majority of the quangos (semi-independent government bodies, which blossomed under the Conservatives). Those that remain, such as the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh Tourist Board, must be under tight democratic control.
- Dismantles the huge bureaucracy created by the Conservatives in the Health Service and opposes further hospital closures.
- Ensures that women are equally represented in the Assembly and that black people are fairly represented.
- Assembly members should be paid the average wage of a skilled worker in Wales, in order that they stay in touch with ordinary people.

The narrow YES vote presents an enormous challenge to radicals in the Labour Party, Plaid Cymru and beyond. People voted YES for an Assembly that would break with the past and make a real difference to their lives — the left must fight to make that happen. ★

*Joint YES Campaign Coordinator for Cardiff West Labour Party

Liverpool dockers enter third year of struggle

Our correspondent Glen Voris spoke to Jimmy Nolan (Chair of Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee), shop stewards Billy Jenkins, Herbie Holyhead and to Terry Tighe, shop steward and international solidarity co-ordinator.

• The second anniversary of the dispute is approaching. How are the dockers?

Nolan: We have the same resilience as two years ago even though it has been very difficult. All 500 dockers have stayed with the dispute, except two who died, one of them from a heart attack on the picket line. This shows the tremendous determination that we have to win our full reinstatement. We have been living on £50 (US\$80) per week through donations to the strike fund and this has put an enormous strain on us and our families.

Jenkins: The men and women have developed politically especially about international politics. We get the strength to continue because of the international solidarity. We must repay the commitment of workers who have supported us by continuing the dispute until we win.

• What support has your Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) given?

Nolan: To put it bluntly, zero. However, at the TGWU Biennial Conference in July, nine motions were put forward to support us. The Executive issued their own statement on the need "to preserve the fabric of the union and operate within the constraints of the law" and put this to the vote without debating the nine motions. There was a clear show of hands voting it down. Many delegates refused to sit down and demanded a card vote. The chair lost control of the conference for several minutes and then decided to call for a card vote the next morning.

The next day the Executive lost the vote by 283 to 182. The nine motions were then debated and all adopted. The TGWU leadership are now committed to support our dispute. It was a tremendous victory. We are now waiting for the Executive to meet with us and to discuss the swift conclusion of the dispute.

Jenkins: The TGWU leadership have been a disgrace to trade unionism. They haven't even set up a strike fund for us in the union. They haven't even helped us to build the international support, we've had to do it all ourselves. What we need is concrete support. The TGWU should be using its sponsored Labour MPs to raise the issue of our dispute in parliament to resolve it.

• Has the election of a Labour government in Britain helped in any way?

Nolan: No. In fact they have probably hindered us with false promises. The North West Regional Labour Party said they would organise a meeting of all the local Labour MPs to meet us "some time in the new year" — so they're not really serious. There were rumours that [Labour's Deputy Labour Leader and Transport Minister] John Prescott was going to meet us over a month ago but, we have heard nothing since.

• What type of demands should the labour movement put on the Labour government?

Holyhead: It's very difficult. Tony Blair made it quite clear at the recent Trade Union Congress that "we need a flexible workforce". Nevertheless, we Liverpool Dockers are calling upon the government to use its major share holding (14%) in the Mersey Docks to reinstate the dockers. We are also demanding a call for a public enquiry into the millions of pounds worth of government and European money that has been ploughed into the Mersey Docks over the last 30 years. Three decades of public finance and private abuse.

The most important issue for trade unions in Britain is to demand the repeal of all the anti-union laws that shackle the unions. We have the most repressive and restrictive anti-union laws in the western world — this is why we've had great difficulty in gaining solidarity action in this country.

• The Liverpool Dockers brought about the formation of the first international dockers shop stewards movement. How has this progressed and why is internationalism so important?

Holyhead: The finance given to us by touring various countries has been a big boost — without that, it would have been very difficult to continue the dispute for so long. In all the ports we have visited we've found similar problems of casualisation and privatisation.

Our dispute has brought dockers together internationally. We can now discuss the problems we face and how we can fight together against the multinational companies. There are six major port companies, and they need to be confronted internationally. No one country can win alone.

• What level of support have you gained and is it having an effect?

Tighe: The 3rd International Dockers Day of Action on September 8th exceeded all expectations. It proved that



Liverpool has become a symbol of all dockers who are determined to resist the threats of casual labour, mass sackings, and the deregulation of our industry.

The port of Liverpool is stagnating: there are now 24% less ships sailing into the port than there were two years ago.

The international support has been tremendous. Ports in over 30 countries took part in actions ranging from 24 hour strikes to boycotting ships who deal with the Port of Liverpool. In countries where there are no sea ports, our supporters held demonstrations outside British Consuls and demanded that the Labour government resolve the dispute. Workers in ports round the world are continuing to boycott shipping lines who use the Port of Liverpool on a regular basis.

• Women on the Waterfront have been an important development. What role have they played and how have they helped the dispute?

Holyhead: Women on the Waterfront (WOW) form an integral element of our struggle. They take an active role in picketing the port. They send out delegations to raise funds. And their moral support has strengthened the resolve of their sacked husbands. This has greatly eased tensions in the families. After two years of pickets and poverty, not one family has broken up.

Colonel Gadaffi recently presented WOW with Libya's Humane Merit Award — presented to Nelson Mandela five years ago. WOW received \$50,000 which has been put into the strike fund.

• After two years in struggle, are you any closer to full reinstatement?

No. We are continuing the pressure, and hope there will be more talks. We have rejected offers of reinstatement of 60 dockers and bigger payoffs for the rest.

What we want is a full reinstatement of all the sacked dockers on the same pay and conditions as before, with trade union recognition. We have fought for decades for these conditions and we won't accept anything less. It is up to us to fight for future generations and for our dignity as human beings. ★

Messages of support/correspondence/financial donations should be sent to: Brother Jim Davies, 19 Scorton Road, Liverpool L6 4AS. Please make cheques payable to "Merseyside Shop Stewards Appeal Fund".

Ex-Yugoslavia Polarisation continues

Recent elections in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina hardly indicate the emergence of a progressive alternative.

Catherine Samary

While some resistance to exclusive nationalism was expressed in the Bosnian municipal elections, the rise of Vojislav Seselj's ultra-nationalist Radical Party is a real threat in both countries. The rise of the extreme right Serbian nationalist current testifies to the deep social disintegration of Serbian and Bosnian societies, and the lack of left answers to this central social question.

The hope that Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic was entering the "beginning of the end" of his rule has fallen short with the collapse of the heterogeneous *Zajedno* (Together) coalition of "democratic" opposition forces.

Milosevic still faces serious difficulties. He easily won the election to become President of the Yugoslav Federation (Serbia and Montenegro). But he is confronted with growing resistance to his rule, even among his former socialist partners.

The big issue is privatisation. One strategy is to consolidate a centralised federal state, from where to implement a policy of privatisation. Montenegrin President Momir Bulatovic, campaigning for re-election, is Milosevic's key ally in this strategy. He is opposed in the Montenegrin election by another former "socialist comrade", Milo Djukanovic, who calls for more independence for Montenegro in order to consolidate and control the rhythm of privatisation, to the benefit of the upper class in the junior Republic. His policies are similar to those of the (ex-Communist) new Social Democrats in Slovenia, the richest Republic of ex-Yugoslavia, which now has an Association Agreement with the European Union.

It remains to be seen what position this Montenegrin resistance to Milosevic will take over Kosovo, the Albanian-populated province of Serbia.

The 'ultras' are coming

The main problem in Serbia is the rise of Vojislav Seselj's ultra-nationalist Radical Party. It came second to Milosevic's Socialist Party in parliamentary elections last September, benefiting from the structure of the electoral constituencies, and the divisions and inconsistencies of the "democratic" opposition.

Lacking a qualified majority, Milosevic's party will have to find alliances for the future. This will encourage the division of the opposition. Rumours say that

bargaining began with Vuk Draskovic, the monarchist leader of the Movement of Serbian Renewal. In conflict with the other *Zajedno* leaders, Zoran Djindjic of the Democratic Party and Vesna Pestic of the Civic Alliance, Draskovic decided not to boycott the recent elections.

Rumours also say that his deal with the Socialist party included the destitution of Zoran Djindjic as Mayor of Belgrade, among accusations of financial and political abuses of power.

What is sure is that this crisis, coming just before the second round of the presidential elections, together with the taking over of the pro-opposition radio station *Studio B* by the Socialist Party following the destitution of Djindjic, and finally the repression of street demonstrations in Belgrade all contributed to the very high level of abstentions in the presidential election.

Those who wanted to vote again Milosevic's candidate for the Serbian presi-

dency, Zoran Lilic, could either abstain or vote for Vojislav Seselj. The ultra-nationalist, who rose to fame as the leader of a racist militia during the civil war, received more first round votes than any other candidate. But since less than half of eligible voters participated, a new election will be held within three months. The danger of the truly fascist and centralising policy (threatening Montenegro and Kosovo) that Seselj represents may lead to the mobilisation of the abstentionists in the re-run. Deals between the Socialist Party and part of the opposition could also take place. Or the opposition may again try to form a coalition against Milosevic and Seselj.

Seselj's social basis is among ethnic Serb refugees from Croatia and Bosnia. They are unwelcome in Serbia, where they are concentrated among the poorest part of Serbian society. The drama is increasingly that the extreme right is the only force which has a "social" discourse. The "left", which aspires to integration in the "modern", civilised world, does not share this concern. Like left parties across Eastern Europe, it concentrates on supporting liberal policies and NATO membership, rather than "social demagogy".

Albania

Half victory, half defeat

The Albanian insurrection stopped halfway. Victory has been seized by a "Socialist" party whose first concern is "disarming the armed citizenry".

Georges Mitralias

In late June and early July the dictatorial president Sali Berisha's suffered a crushing electoral defeat, and Fatos Nano's socialists took a majority of seats large enough to enable them to revise the constitution. So, at first glance all is well in a country that, just four months ago, was at the edge of civil war.

The first lesson to draw from these events is clear: struggle pays! President Berisha and his police regime, which seemed unshakable, have been swept aside. The central demand of the Albanian people has been satisfied. The road travelled in only four months is enormous. The Albanian example will not fail to inspire all those — in the Balkans and elsewhere — who face antidemocratic regimes of the same type.

That said, this indisputable popular victory has nonetheless left a bitter taste. First, victory was usurped, seized by those in the elite who got along well with Berisha, his secret police and their "pyramid schemes," and those "oppositionists" who limited their protest to a few calls for

help directed to the European Union and the United States.

The election winners do not intend to satisfy any of the people's other demands (full compensation to the victims of the "pyramid schemes", arrest Berisha and his collaborators, dismantle the repressive apparatuses, etc.) Nothing suggests that those who won the June 29 elections are qualitatively different from yesterday's executioners.

While Berisha sits safe and secure in the new Albanian Parliament, banking establishments like Vefa, enriched by the "pyramids," continue their activities as if nothing had happened. The Nano government has other things to worry about. For Nano, the top priority is "disarming the armed citizenry"! Not disarming bandits, note, but "the armed citizenry"!

It was the armed citizens and their insurrection which obliged Berisha to form the "transitional" government of Socialist Party leader Bashkim Fino. It was armed citizens who freed Fatos Nano from Berisha's jails. It was the armed citizens who resisted repeated attacks and obliged the regime to accede to elections. And it was the armed citizens who voted for the Socialists and their allies on June 29th.

It is as if all this never happened. For Fatos Nano, like for the IMF, the European Union and western editorialists, it was all only "Albania's tribal traditions

Bosnian mixed results

Unlike the Serbian presidential elections, Bosnian municipal voting mobilised a huge proportion of the electorate (including "absentee" participants, who cast votes in their commune of origin, rather than where they live now).

The final results were not known as we went to press, but it seems that those in the *Republika Srpska* (RS) who opposed Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic's SDS voted either for Seselj's Radical Party, or the Socialist party (SP), which supports the president of the *Republika Srpska*, Biljana Plavsic. Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic has succeeded in ensuring that new parliamentary elections will be held in November, as Plavsic has requested.

The implementation of the Dayton agreements is the pre-condition for any international subsidies to re-build the war-torn *Republika Srpska*. As a result, Plavsic, like Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, has decided to collaborate with the western powers in the trial of the most extreme war criminals. This could prove to be an important source of resistance to Seselj.

In Plavsic's stronghold of Banja Luka,

the opposition (mainly the Socialist Party) seems to have won a majority of votes.

Another feature of the elections in the RS is the strong result of the "Coalition for a single and democratic Bosnia," dominated by the SDA of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, a "Bosniak" (Bosnian Muslim), in alliance with Haris Siladjic, whose party split from the SDA, and two smaller parties. Thanks to absentee ballots, the coalition could even win a majority of votes in Srebrenica, ethnically cleansed of its Muslim majority during the war. The coalition seems to be in the lead in most of the municipalities in the Muslim-Croat Federation, including the capital, Sarajevo.

The Coalition's defeat in Tuzla by the multi-ethnic and democratic United List led by Selim Beslagic confirms the popularity of the mayor and his centre-left supporters. But it also reflects the fact that much of the town's refugee population chose to vote in Srebrenica, from where they were expelled.

Another factor to watch was the strong result of the Social Democratic Party, in Sarajevo and elsewhere. It surprised observers by doing better than Beslagic's United List everywhere except Tuzla.

It remains to be seen where to situate



such a party in the broad spectrum of central and East European "social democratic" parties today. But their votes certainly express a popular resistance to nationalist and neo-liberal policies. These results sound like an open criticism of the OSCE policy which, both in Brcko and in Tuzla, made last moment concessions to the local dominant nationalist party (respectively the SDS and HDZ) who wanted to boycott those elections for fear of their own defeat. ★

coming to the surface" when the financial pyramids collapsed!

But the Albanian people's armed insurrection did happen. Despite its (understandable) programmatic limits, its (predictable) democratic illusions and its (excusable) organisational weaknesses, the insurrection established a counter-power, and dominated the Albanian political scene through four long months which made Albania tremble.

Where are the insurgents now? What of their insurrection? At first glance, they have vanished without a trace. Even in the rebellious and suspicious South, Fatos Nano is celebrated as the country's saviour. For the moment, the new government rules as absolute master and there is no obvious discontent.

This is no surprise. The insurrectionary committees were not prepared for such a change in the situation. Having accepted the possibility of a proxy victory over Berisha, the rebelling citizens and National Salvation Committee put their trust in the Socialists who had promised them the earth

(including their defrauded savings). Tired and frightened by Berisha's tension strategy, and the development of uncontrolled Mafia-style armed gangs, in the end they preferred to await solid evidence of the new rulers' capacities. Their national co-ordinating committee met for the last time in Vlore on July 11-12 and adjourned without setting another meeting.

Still, the co-ordination had the time to warn that the Nano government will be judged on its actions. And they affirmed that all the initial demands remained. And significantly, they preferred not to answer the new authorities, who were already demanding that they lay down their arms. With one voice, all Albanians declare even now that will only surrender their arms when they have their money back.

No stabilisation, even the most basic, of the economic situation can be foreseen in the medium term. If we add the Nano government's firm intention to apply the full IMF "reconstruction programme" which plans as a priority "drastic cuts in public spending", then it's not difficult to

The new prime minister and Socialist Party strong man Fatos Nano: "the central axes of our foreign policy will be Albania's joining the European Union and NATO, as well as developing our relations with the United States."



imagine what might happen in this country where unemployment has reached 80% and 40% of the population lives below the absolute poverty line.

The Socialist Party's state of grace can't last forever. Given that the new regime's margin of manoeuvre remains very narrow, despite its total faithfulness to the west, and especially to its patron, the US, much will depend on how hard it will (soon) demand that the "armed citizenry" turn in their guns.

A slide to authoritarianism can't be ruled out: the IMF insists that as an absolute condition for any extension of credit, that the Nano government have total control over all Albanian territory.

But the Albanian people is still on the alert, and could again take to the streets to push through its demands. And the next time, it will doubtless do so with many fewer illusions. ★

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ETA: a view from the left

It is time to abandon the armed struggle in the Basque country, argue former ETA member **José Iriarte "Bikila,"** and **Iosu Perales** of the revolutionary Marxist group Zutik

The kidnapping and assassination of Miguel Angel Blanco, a conservative councillor from the small town of Ermua, sparked massive protest demonstrations against the Basque separatist group ETA. The crowds included an unprecedented mix of supporters and opponents of the death penalty, those in favour and against the Basque struggle, proven democrats and revamped Francoists, and a whole range of good and bad passions.

Moved by weariness with and a desire to put an end to violence, this "civic rebellion" was boosted by the pro-Spanish media. The movement is now being won to the government's authoritarian policies.

Spain's ruling Popular Party, under cover of its own biased interpretation of the popular anti-ETA mobilisation, is taking dangerous authoritarian initiatives. Refusing dialogue and negotiation, it is striving to convert ETA into a strictly criminal problem.

The main responsibility for what is occurring in Euskadi (the Basque country, which straddles northern Spain and South-West France) is held by the political forces that negotiated a less than democratic transition from the Franco dictatorship.

Spanish political forces and society as a whole have still not accepted not only the fact that different nationalities exist within the Spanish state, but also the elementary idea that each nation's sovereignty resides in its own people. The

Spanish constitution does not resolve the national question, and is an affront to Basque national sentiments. "Spain, one and indivisible," buttressed by the army, will always been a source of conflict.

Like it or not, ETA is a political and social phenomenon. It should be considered as such if we wish to find a solution to the conflict that feeds its growth. The solution requires political negotiations that would free prisoners, allow the return of exiles and change the juridical-political framework, in ways to be defined in the negotiation process itself.

The evolution of the conflict

The transition from the Franco dictatorship to "democracy" resulted in tremendous frustration for important sectors of the Basque population. But whereas the Spanish left fell into disillusionment and apathy, the Basque struggle continued.

A large part of Basque society continued to "suffer" an identity crisis vis-a-vis the state. Euskadi also suffered a severe economic crisis, which led to rising social radicalisation and street mobilisations. And the wider population continued to have a strong anti-repression consciousness.

Given these factors, ETA acquired considerable strength and legitimacy, which went far beyond its military capacity, or the weight in society of its political counterpart Herri Batasuna. What counted was ETA's capacity to destabilise the situation, and its ability to tip the balance in specific struggles. ETA became a reference point within and outside Euskadi, even though many militants did not share all its forms of struggle, and even criticised its more problematic aspects. At the root of this legitimacy was ETA's status as a repository of all the anger and broad disapproval of the political reform that resulted from the pact with Francoism.

Despite the perseverance of specific conflicts, these contradictions are now lessening.

Despite our best efforts, the institutions of Euskadi and the Spanish state is achieving consensus approval in important sectors of the population. The conviction that the rule of law, however imperfect, has facilitated the peaceful expression of national demands has gained ground, at the expense of support for a radical break with the status quo, and tolerance of the use of violence.

The conflicts in Eastern Europe, especially the war in former Yugoslavia, has had a negative effect, almost contagious in past years, on the articulation of national

demands against the central government. The state is considered in a more benevolent light, while nationalism is viewed through hypercritical eyes. This has forced moderate nationalists to distance themselves much more from the use of violence.

There is also much greater awareness that traditional formulas for resolving national oppression (self-determination, federation, independence) are more complicated than initially anticipated. And an awareness that due to the ethnic plurality and heterogeneity of the Basque population, there is no unanimity within the national community concerning the right to self-determination.

In addition, the emergence of the Ajuria-enea civic pact [an agreement by the "democratic" parties to marginalise Herri Batasuna, the political wing of the independence movement] reflects a new social division within Basque society. A certain conflict between Euskadi and the central Spanish government is today articulated by all the Basque political parties, including the bourgeois-nationalist Basque National Party (PNV), which controls the regional government. But within the Basque country, there is increasingly a division between "supporters of violence" and "democrats" as some put it, or between "consistent patriots" and the "conglomerate of traitors and pro-Spanish" as others put it.

This coincides with people's weariness with a conflict with no end in sight, a rising death toll, and which generates a climate of confrontation and suffering. Instead of such sentiments being directed against the obstinacy and hard-line approach of the central government, which is truly responsible for what has occurred, the frustration and anger is directed against ETA, which is increasingly viewed as the aggressor.

ETA has reacted in a similar vein, drawing inward, and considering all those aligned with the other side as equally responsible.

Another factor influencing the situation is the different historical period. Movements for social change headed by armed vanguards have been diminishing world-wide. Mexico's EZLN is a new and honourable exceptions. But that group has a conception of armed struggle as an exceptional tactic, subordinated to political strategy. It has little in common with ETA.

In most countries, armed struggle, in the best of cases, is seen as a product of the past to be overcome through negotiations, more than the wave of the future or a strategy for emancipation.

With the weakening of revolutionary expectations and organisations, the context





is clearly unfavourable to a form of struggle that increasingly appears out of focus in relation to its costs and possibilities of success. Particularly because, consciously or unconsciously, ETA is pushed toward actions opposed to those basic humanist conceptions that should be preserved even in armed struggle. Methods which the group previously avoided if possible.

The evolution of ETA

In its long history ETA has employed different strategies, always closely related to its political evolution. Under Franco, their initial strategy, inspired in the Vietnamese and Algerian experiences of "people's war," gave way to a perspective of action-repression-action. The theory was that every armed action would provoke a reaction on the part of the state, in the form of blind and generalised repression. This, it was thought, would spark the population to rebellion, and justify a greater armed action by the movement. As long as the Franco dictatorship was in power, this theory corresponded somewhat to reality. ETA's prestige grew as the regime weakened.

The 1975 transition to "democracy" stopped this dynamic. ETA recognised the limits of its political and military capacities, and decided to seek a negotiated settlement (corresponding, it was argued, to the new bourgeois-democratic stage). In practice, if not in words, the group accepted that the original project of defeating the enemy was no longer realistic.

ETA's new strategy was to continue launching attacks, until the political situation became so unbearable that the Spanish state would be forced to negotiate [with Herri Batasuna and the social movements it leads.]

The political situation in Euskadi remained unstable. Herri Batasuna grew and developed. The strategy continued to have elements of credibility, although it already showed many weak points.

The Algiers talks

By 1987 the social climate had stabilised considerably. Felipe Gonzalez's Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) was governing Spain without major problems, thanks to an economic boom. But Spain's integration into the European union (a top priority for successive governments) seemed threatened by ETA's persistent

activity, and Herri Batasuna's success in the Spanish elections for the European parliament. [They won over 40,000 votes across Spain, with the support of much of the far left.]

Unsuccessful talks between the government and ETA took place in the Algerian capital Algiers. For the first time, both sides made a serious attempt to reach an initial agreement that would open the door to a negotiated settlement. The reasons for breaking off the talks are unclear. Though the fault probably lies with hard line elements within the PSOE, pressured by the state apparatus. But it also seems that the top ETA leadership, unaccustomed to dealing with this type of problem, broke off the talks on a matter of principle.

The failure of the Algiers talks marked the end of a period. The end of ETA's particular conception of negotiations, and the end of the only serious attempt at a negotiated settlement by a Spanish government.

After Algiers, ETA began to concentrate almost exclusively on its military activities. Without being concerned about the effect this would have on its allies and sympathisers elsewhere in the Spanish state – particularly in Catalonia. This support network for the Basque independence movement contracted severely as a new wave of armed actions hardened public opinion. ETA adopted new and more conflictive tactics, such as car bomb attacks aimed at police and security forces, but with side-effects for the civilian population.

The undeclared objective of the group was to generate a mood of weariness in the Spanish population, leading to support for negotiations. The 1987 bombing of the Hipercor supermarket in Catalonia symbolises the most heartless side of this tactic. The effect on the solidarity movement was disastrous.

This campaign was supposed to culminate in 1992, the year of the Barcelona Olympics. But it was cut short by a police swoop which arrested part of the top ETA leadership in Bidart, France. With this move, the Spanish government destabilised ETA's core leadership, to the point where the group no longer hoped to achieve any results in the short term.

ETA's "militarist" negotiating strategy, and widespread disappointment at the breakdown of negotiations, contributed to the emergence of Euskadi's first (anti-ETA) pacifist organisations.

Most of the Basque parliamentary parties resolved to generate a civic front in opposition to ETA. This Ajuria-Enea Pact was more nuanced than the purely repressive policies of the central government. It mentioned the combination of political and police measures, using dialogue as a valid element for conciliation. But, in practice, it strengthened the anti-ETA dynamic.

Previous agreements of this type had been met with popular indifference. This time, the institutional agreement managed to connect with an emerging movement

committed to confront ETA and the Basque national liberation movement in the streets.

The creation of a special police force for the Basque autonomous region (which covers most but not all of the Spanish Basque country) further complicated the relationship between supporters and opponents of the independence movement. The red berets and ski-masks of the *Ertzantza* are a symbol of the contradictory role of the Autonomous Government, led by the bourgeois nationalist Basque National Party (PNV). On the one hand, the PNV is increasingly committed to protecting the stability of the Spanish state. But at the same time, it needs to exert its own power and authority *against* the Spanish government, and demonstrate the importance of the Autonomy Statute which has placed it in power locally.

The *Ertzantza* became the subject of a jurisdictional conflict with the central state, obviously reluctant to surrender control of police and "anti-terrorist" functions to a government led even by 'constitutional' Basque nationalists. This conflict was resolved, and the *Ertzantza* deployed throughout the autonomous territory.

This new Basque police force entered into a calculated and progressively greater confrontation with ETA and the national liberation movement. The autonomous police became intensely hostile toward any type of demonstration of support of ETA and the national liberation movement. This aggressiveness soon became mutual. Militants of the national liberation movement identified the *Ertzantza* not as an expression of Basque sovereignty, but as one more police force at the service of law and order as defined by the state, that is, as a pure and heavy handed army of the Spanish occupation forces.

The problem for ETA was that it now faced the combined action of the central state government, and the Basque autonomous government, led by Basque bourgeois nationalists.

The strategy of tension

With ETA militarily weak, after the blows suffered in the early 1990s, Herri Batasuna tried to adapt to the new ideological situation created by the fall of the Eastern European regimes. For a short period, the national liberation movement enjoyed a certain internal and external openness.

Then the leadership switched to the opposite tactic. Convinced that the state would not cede an inch, and with anti-ETA pacifist tendencies challenging the national liberation movement's virtual monopoly on street demonstrations, ETA again began to prioritise its military activities. Having partially rebuilt its military structures, it extended the range of targets to include political circles, the judicial system and any entity considered to be supporting the state. ETA resumed the style of intervention that had been the object of self-criticism in the 1980s, with

car bombs that caused civilian deaths, and bombs in supermarkets.

The national liberation movement adjusted its stance to comply with the role it had to play in the framework of this new tactic.

The new idea was that there is no better defence than an offensive attack. The military sphere passes before any other consideration. In the framework of this 'strategy of tension', there is no room for subtle nuances. Critical positions must be fought as liquidationist. And when they come from abroad or from forces on the fringes of the movement they wind up being assigned to "the other side of the barricades."

This line required a more closed attitude, and an increase in ideological dogmatism. It led to outbreaks of intolerance toward other opposition sectors, for the simple reason that they carried the blue ribbons of the pacifist movement, or publicly disagreed with ETA.

ETA saw this as part of a philosophy of "national confrontation." But only a minority of Basque society views the conflict in this way. As a result, ETA and the entire national liberation movement retreated into a nationalism of resistance. Other concerns, and social and cultural demands, were relegated in practice to second place, except in the trade union arena [where Herri Batasuna sympathisers have considerable influence.]

The battle to extend the organisation's social influence and break out of the isolation imposed by the Spanish state and the Ajuria-Enea Pact was abandoned in favour of solidifying their own forces. The top priorities became internal cohesion, firmness and permanent activism. From this standpoint, a negotiating strategy came to be considered as not very urgent, given the relationship of forces. It may even have seemed to be a problematic course of action in comparison with the current military line, seen as more "secure" in the long run.

This political line has a certain continuity with previous trajectories. ETA has always moved from one strategy to another, varying the importance of political action, while conserving its fundamental perspective, the defining role of armed struggle.

But the current line clearly implies an important shift in relation to the strategy adopted at the beginning of the 1980s.

ETA is increasingly a minority current. The existence of some tens of thousands of unconditional supporters does not resolve the problem of its growing isolation. With each passing day, the group is less understood, even by those close to the national liberation movement.

Today in Euskadi, there are no ethnic conflicts, nor an extreme class polarisation, nor other conflicts that in the past put very broad sectors of the population in conflict with the state and economic powers.

In addition, society is increasingly



against the use of violence for political reasons, a situation that undoubtedly is related to the manipulation of public opinion, but which is much more closely tied to the new panorama of a lessening of the weight of national factors in Euskadi. But ETA's current dynamic also clashes with values and ideas held by broad sectors of the social left, and with the new social movements, which are favourable to forms of civil disobedience.

We are no longer in a period in which the culture of resistance allowed for armed struggle and weakened the state's response. With a change in the social and cultural panorama, values that feed a given perception of reality also change.

We are in a transitional period, a true cross-roads. The struggle waged by ETA is an echo from previous times. The organisation has not been able to undertake the necessary transformation. Partially as a result of its own limitations, but also because of the intransigent strategy of the central government authorities who push ETA to stick to its guns.

The protagonists of other options, which would allow for other solutions, do not want to or cannot disentangle themselves from the situation.

Promoting negotiations

Our perspective is to enter into direct negotiations to end a situation that has become bogged down, in which no sector of the left benefits in any way. This has nothing to do with extending more or less legitimacy to ETA. Nor does it mean that we believe that the system is so democratic that it deserves political peace.

We are not against violence as an absolute principle. We recognise that there are situations where it is necessary, or at least inevitable.

But we also realise that the really existing tendency of armed struggle is highly negative; it demands an excessive attention from the social and political spheres, and intellectual life. It feeds a armour-plated political culture plagued by dogmatism. It contributes to sectarian thinking. Politically it has lost the battle for public opinion. And even if it could win its objectives, these would be terribly mortgaged to the means used to obtain them.

We say this because we want end to the suffering of many people: prisoners, exiles, families on each side, and victims of both sides. Armed struggle in the present situation only helps solidify a

broad anti-violence front under the political and ideological leadership of the state. And the objectives of the State have never been -and we have no illusions to the contrary- to allow the people of Euskadi the right to freely determine their own destiny.

In fact, as long as the current situation continues, the central authorities, proponents of law-and-order and pro-Spanish options will feel quite comfortable. Even though some of their leaders may be at risk, the political results of the confrontation are in their favour.

It is even possible that ETA, faced with the lack of a better alternative, may feel more or less comfortable in its current position. The organisation is on familiar ground, in control of its immediate milieu. It does not feel itself to be in danger of collapse in the short term, nor does it have to deal with the uncertainty of re-conversion to a new historic period of the struggle.

But the population as a whole is not very well prepared for the strategies of the top chiefs of staff. Sectors of the pro-independence movement are suffering. They feel obliged to close ranks, precisely because of the difficulties facing their increasingly fragmented political project.

We need a new discourse for the Basque struggle against the bourgeois state and neo-liberalism, for the national struggle itself with its emancipatory and internationalist goals, for the fight to preserve the environment, opposition to racism, the war on poverty and exclusion, and the continued efforts to spread the ideas of rebellion and anti-militarism. We must re-learn old lessons and re-adapt to reality.

The renewal of the Basque left is made difficult by an armed struggle tied to ideas, concepts and values born in the period of resistance to the dictatorship. Old customs weigh hard.

We would never say that ending the armed struggle would necessarily bring with it a strengthening or refounding of the social movements and the left in general, in terms of ideas and social weight. Who can tell how things will be tomorrow?

But, although we are conscious of the frenzy that a negotiated solution could spark, we are in favour of such a resolution. We see it as necessary, beyond any a priori balance sheet of gains and losses. We also urge a greater commitment on the part of all those who believe in promoting a civic movement for political negotiation between ETA and the government, to spur an authentic debate on what the democratic resolution to the conflict should look like.

Military victories have been Pyrrhic, and incapable of avoiding outbursts of new conflicts. The only road forward for left forces that seek long-term solutions is a strategy of negotiation and not confrontation. ★

A revolutionary life

1928-45 An Argentine youth

Ernesto Guevara was born in Rosario, Argentina. Because of his chronic asthma, his parents move the family to Alta Gracia in the Cordoba mountains. In 1937, his father founds a Committee of Support for the Spanish Republic. In 1944 the Guevaras move to Buenos Aires



1945-56 Studies and discoveries

Ernesto studies medicine, graduating in 1953, after interrupting his studies for a seven month trip to discover Latin America. As soon as he graduates, he leaves Argentina again, and arrives in Guatemala to experience the democratic upsurge under the Arbenz government. He meets his first wife, Hilda Gadea, and, in July 1955, Fidel Castro. The Cuban recruits Guevara as doctor for his expedition to liberate Cuba from the Batista dictatorship.

In March 1956, Ernesto becomes a father. He boasts to his mother that Hilda is "the of Mao Zedung!" Three months later Guevara, Fidel and the other Cuban rebels are arrested by the Mexican authorities, but released after two months.

1957-58 With Fidel in the Cuban guerrilla struggle

On 2 September 1956, the Granma touches Cuban soil, carrying 82 rebel fighters. Ambushed and disoriented, only 22 men make it to the Sierra Maestra, where Fidel establishes their base. After a series of successes, Che leads a second column of guerrillas out of the mountains in August 1958. His 148-strong group heads for central Cuba, and takes the strategically important town of Santa Clara on 30 December 1958. With Havana paralysed by a general strike, the Batista dictatorship crumbles. Che and his troops enter the capital in victory on 2 January 1959.



1959-65 Comrade minister

Awarded Cuban citizenship, 'Che' Guevara plays a central role in the transformation of Cuban society. In October 1959 he supervises the agrarian reform. One month later, he is appointed president of the national bank. In February 1961 he becomes Minister of Industry. Fidel Castro proclaims the "socialist character of the Cuban revolution."

During this period, Guevara has

three children with Aleida March, his companion from the Sierra Maestra: Aleidita, Celia and Camillo.

He travels extensively, making several visits to Algeria's radical leader Ben Bella, and participating in the Cuban delegation to the commemoration of the 47th anniversary of Russia's October revolution. On 24 February 1965 he criticises the policies of the USSR at a conference in Algiers.



1965-66 The year Che was "nowhere"

He leaves Cuba in total secrecy in March 1965, abandoning all official responsibilities and renouncing his Cuban citizenship. On October 3rd Fidel Castro publicises his farewell letter. Che tries to aid the Congolese rebel movement, but is eventually forced to leave the country.

1966-67 The final "battle cry against imperialism"

In November 1966 Che arrives in Bolivia, at the head of a small guerrilla force. They are quickly surrounded by a large force of army troops. The expected support from the local Communist Party does not come. The conditions of the isolated guerrillas become more and more desperate. On 8 October 1967 Che is wounded and captured, as are most of his band. The following day he is executed, on the orders of the Bolivian president and his CIA advisors.

He is 39 years old. He has been politically active for only thirteen years.★

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Εκδοτής και διευθυντής: Γιάννης Φελεκis, Ερεσσού 34, 106 81 Αθήνα, τηλ. 3300675. Τυπογράφος: Ιωάννης Κοτσάτος & Σία, Μαρину Αντίπα 4, 163 46 Ηλιούπολη, τηλ. 9719048. Editor and director: Yannis Felekis, Eressou 34, 106 81 Athens, Greece. Printed by Ioannis Kotsatos & Cia, Marinou Antipa 4, 163 46 Ilioupoli, Greece, tel. (30) 01/9719048. Distributed by Spartakos, Eressou 34, 106 81 Athens, Greece, tel.(30) 01/3300675. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors. ISSN: 1294 2925. A monthly analytical review published, under the auspices of the Fourth International, by Presse-Editions-Communications Internationale, — PECEI, BP 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France. e-mail <100666.1443@compuserve.com>, fax (+33) 1/43792961. 01/43792960, Pour la France, directeur de publication: Jean Malewski. Commission paritaire n°64324.

The year Che was “nowhere”

In 1965, after leaving Cuba and before surfacing in Bolivia, Ernesto Guevara took part in an unsuccessful armed struggle against the neo-colonial regime in the Congo (Zaire) as leader of a contingent of 125 black Cubans.

Zbigniew Kowalewski

“Victory is a great source of positive experiences, but so is defeat”, he later wrote. In particular the defeat of “foreigners who have risked their lives in unknown terrain... to which they are attached only by the bonds of proletarian internationalism, thus launching a means of struggle unprecedented in the history of wars of liberation.”

Che's presence in the Congo was acknowledged by the Cuban authorities several years after his death, but without providing many details. It remained until recently a blank chapter in his biography. Gabriel Garcia Marquez offered a few specifics on the occasion of the arrival of Cuban troops in Angola,¹ and Carlos Moore has given many more, although he utilised sources that are often unreliable.² The history of the Cuban expedition in the Congo was only recently reconstructed by the Mexican writer Paco Ignacio Taibo II, based on the testimony of Che's comrades in arms.³

The events that took place in the former Belgian Congo in the 18 months following its achievement of independence in June, 1960, formed one of the great dramas of the period of de-colonisation in Africa. The stakes were enormous: the whole question of whether the independence of the colonial countries would open up a permanent process of national democratic and socialist revolution or end in the victory of neo-colonialism was decided in the Congo.

Belgian military intervention, the secession of the rich mining province of Katanga (Shaba) orchestrated by the Belgian colonialists, the UN military intervention, the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba who had supported a unified and truly independent state, the war of the Luba people against the white mercenary-backed Katangan regime, then the final fall, in January, 1962, of the nationalist government — none of these were decisive. The Congolese revolution was always capable of reviving.

Insurrections

The new Congolese political elite began to break up as soon as independence was proclaimed. The split climaxed in

1963 when the right wing drove the left from the state apparatus. The left, which considered itself nationalist and *lumumbist*, took advantage of the overthrow of the puppet regime in the former French Congo (“Congo-Brazzaville” as opposed to “Congo-Kinshasa,” later known as Zaire). They established a *Conseil National de Libération* (National Council of Liberation — CNL) there in October, 1963. A second base was established in Burundi, one of Congo's western neighbours.

In Burundi the CNL forged an alliance with the Burundi Tutsi party, the nationalists of the *Unité pour le Progrès National* [Union for National Progress UPRONA] and the *Union Nationale Rwandaise* [Rwandan National Union — UNAR] which was the party of the Tutsi refugees after the “Hutu revolution” that began the genocidal process in Rwanda.

But the CNL in exile was not the only nationalist centre. Pierre Mulele, a former minister in the Lumumba government, had established another guerrilla base in Kwilu province, in the west of the country. Mulele had undergone a period of political and military training in the People's Republic of China. In January, 1964, a mass insurrection erupted in Kwilu under Mulele's leadership, independent of the CNL.

In April, 1964, another insurrection broke out in Kivu, organised by Gaston Soumialot, president of the eastern sector of the CNL. The insurgents quickly seized the towns of Uvira and Fizi while failing to take Bukavu. From Kivu, the insurrection spread to North Katanga whose capital Albertville (Kalemie) was for two and a half months in the hands of the *Armée Populaire de Libération* [Popular Liberation Army — APL]. The APL was supported by the *Armée Populaire de Libération Rwandaise* [Rwanda Popular Liberation Army — APLR], which was formed among the masses of Tutsi refugees.

In July and August, under the command of Nicolas Olonga, the AOL took the provinces of Maniema (capital, Kindu), Sankara (capital, Lodja) and finally, the Eastern Province. The Eastern provincial capital, Stanleyville, became the provisional capital of the People's Republic of the Congo. Christopher Gbenye, leader of the most opportunist, most right wing component of the nationalist movement, proclaimed himself President and Prime Minister.⁴

The strike force of the uprising in the East was built from the youth of the *Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba* [National Congolese Movement-Lumumba — MNC-L] and other

nationalist parties. The Belgian sociologist Benoit Verhaegen characterised the social nature of this force as follows: “Youth between 16 and 22-25 were predominant; there was also a certain number even younger, including children. The greater part of these youth came from villages and provincial towns. In reality, these were students without schools, those excluded from the school system, the young unemployed. For them, the hope born with independence was definitively broken. They alone had nothing to lose, and left behind neither wives, nor houses, nor fields to engage in the revolutionary war. They were marginal in relation to all social structures: of family, school, city, work or age group.”

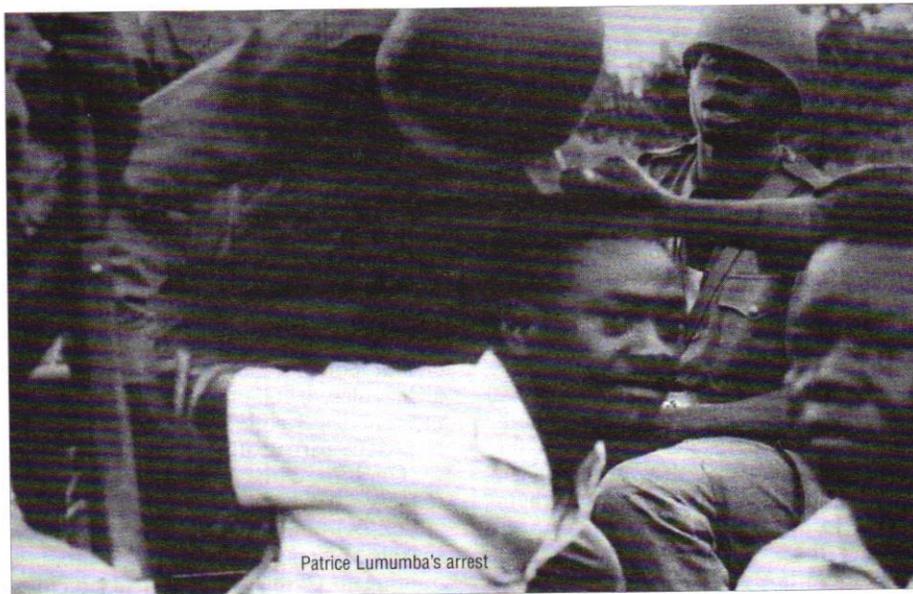
The destructive acts, the violence and atrocities committed by these youth are to be explained in part by their largely declassed character, but also by the fact that their revolutionary impulses remained frustrated. Their actions were directed against the entirety of the political structure and social forces of the neo-colonial regime and especially against the alliance of the new state bureaucracy with imperialism and the traditional leadership.

But the nationalist petit bourgeoisie who led the uprising in the East only aspired to expel the current personnel of the state apparatus and take their positions, or at least force them to share these positions. The numerous, often public executions of military personnel, policemen and state functionaries were not accompanied by the destruction of the neo-colonial power, either state-based or traditional. The command of the APL and the leaders of the CNL ascended to the new organs of power with the help of sectors of the bureaucracy who had been separated from the state apparatus, and of those traditional leaders who declared their allegiance.

On the other hand, the young combatants of the nationalist parties and the liberation army were not let into the structures of the rebel power and they expressed themselves in their own manner: erratic, arbitrary and “anarchic”.

“The fundamental difference between the rebellion in Kwilu and those in the East of the country lay in its revolutionary radicalism,” writes Verhaegen. “The *mulelist* leadership in Kwilu intended to destroy the very bases of the existing social, political and economic order and to reconstruct a new society. It is undoubtedly only in the case of Kwilu that the term ‘revolution’ can be used in place of ‘rebellion.’”

The leaders of the uprising all called themselves revolutionary nationalists, but in the nationalist movement of the times, few elements were really revolutionaries.



Patrice Lumumba's arrest

It was above all in Mulele that the revolutionary spirit prevailed: their very radical nationalism expressed the conviction that real national independence would not be possible without a break from capitalism.

In the East, the insurgents were not controlled by any political or even military organisation. Not only at the beginning, when they lacked firearms, but even after they were bolstered by the governmental army or received significant modern weaponry from abroad, they wielded almost exclusively lances, machetes, sticks, bows and arrows or bicycle chains. They were convinced that magic rituals of immunity, bearing of amulets and generous consumption of hemp would render them invulnerable to bullets, grenades and bombs.

At first, these rituals represented a forceful weapon, insofar as the government soldiers also believed in the efficacy of the rebels' magic, and retreated or dispersed before the attacks of the unarmed insurgents. But when the enemy passed over to a counter-offensive, it proved to be a double-edged sword: the insurgents were shot down, not knowing how to use their rifles.

In addition, an entire hierarchy of medicine men had been established and incorporated into the APL. Their rituals were at the same time combatants' initiation rites and admission to the APL, which gave this army the character of a secret society separate from the masses of the civilian population.

Internationalisation

In July, 1964, central state power was seized by Moïse Tshombé, the Katanga secessionist. He immediately invited in Belgian officers to restructure the army and ordered the recruitment of his old friends: white mercenaries, especially South African, Rhodesian and German. From the United States, he obtained an air force piloted by counter-revolutionary Cuban exiles. Increasingly severe aerial attacks sowed terror and death among the civilian population and shook the insur-

gents' whole system of magic immunity.

The leaders of the uprising responded by ordering that citizens of NATO states be taken as hostages and executed if bomb attacks continued. In fact, few hostages were executed, but in November, 1964, under the pretext of putting an end to the "widespread massacre of whites," the American Air Force, taking off from a British base, parachuted elite Belgian forces to Stanleyville.

The open internationalisation of the civil war in the Congo and the massacre of thousands of Congolese civilians at Stanleyville by the Belgian parachutists detonated a powerful anti-imperialist wave in Africa and elsewhere. The governments of Algeria and the United Arab Republic announced their support, including sending of arms, to the Congolese insurgents and called for other African states to follow their example. At the United Nations General Assembly, the imperialist powers were under such forceful attack that the bourgeois press accused the delegates of the African states of "racism against the white man."

As Cuban representative, Che Guevara launched an appeal before the General Assembly "to all free men to be ready to avenge the crime committed in the Congo in the name of defence of the white race." Following consultations in New York with Abdul Rahman Babu, leader of the revolution in Zanzibar and minister in the united government of Tanzania, and with Malcolm X, the African American nationalist leader, Che left for Africa. He was convinced of the necessity of a counter-internationalisation of the civil war in the Congo from the side of the anti-imperialist forces.

Several African governments, including Algeria, Congo-Brazzaville and Tanzania, gave their approval to Cuban military involvement, which had been requested by Congolese nationalists. According to the testimony gathered by Carlos Moore, Guevara investigated in Africa "the possible role Cuba could come to play in the struggle against colonialism,

imperialism, and white supremacy on the black continent," and inquired into "how Africans would react to an internationalist brigade made up of black Cubans and black Americans fighting alongside liberation movements in Africa."

In Dar-es-Salaam, Guevara reached an accord with Gaston Soumialot and Laurent-Désiré Kabila on sending arms and a group of Cuban military advisors to the Congo. Kabila had by 1960 already led the struggle of the youth of the Luba people against the Katanga police force. From the launching of the uprising, he was one of the principal leaders of the CNL-East, as part of its left wing. He commanded the battle front along the shores of Lake Tanganyika, extending to the province of Kivu in North Katanga.

A tricontinental strategy

Guevara's plan flowed from his strategy of tricontinental revolution, which he proclaimed openly two years later in launching the slogan "Create two, three, many Vietnams." With a force of combatants not only from the Congo but also from other African countries, the Cuban soldiers and Che himself were to construct, in the course of guerrilla war, the backbone of the mobile strategic force of the Congolese and Panafrikan revolution. Gradually, as it grew, the guerrilla legion would give rise to others, progressively opening other battle fronts, in the Congo and elsewhere on the continent. The main blow of the revolutionary African forces would be directed against the white racist power bloc, whose principal base was the South African apartheid regime.

Che hoped that the military experience of the small Cuban brigade in the Congo would allow a selection from its ranks toward the creation of another column, which would later be established in Latin America under Guevara's command. Thus the rise of the African revolution would be followed by the launching of the revolution on the Latin American continent.

In Guevara's eyes Africa held certain strategic advantages over Latin America, since it was "further from the United States and has at its disposal greater logistical possibilities (USSR, China, United Arab Republic, Algeria)." ⁵ Of course, Latin American already had movements which were inspired by the Cuban revolution. But the political conditions for the victory of a strategy of continental revolution were not favourable. For example, at the end of his stay in Africa, Guevara conveyed to the leadership of the Venezuelan Communist Party his intention to participate in the guerrilla struggle which they led. Their reaction was negative: one shouldn't internationalise the struggle.

In mid-March, 1965, Guevara obtained a full approval from Fidel Castro for his political project. The assassination of Malcolm X in February of that year had obliged him to abandon the idea of relying on African American combatants. He took command of a military contingent com-

posed of black Cubans and, on April 2, left Cuba.

He left with Fidel his famous letter of farewell, announcing to the Cuban people that "other lands of the earth will lay claim to the contribution of my modest efforts." In this letter, he explained that it was a matter of "accomplishing the most sacred of duties: to struggle against imperialism everywhere it exists." On 24 April 1965 he entered the Congo across Lake Tanganyika.

Down to earth

Three days earlier, the leaders of the Congolese revolt had formed a Supreme Revolutionary Council (*Conseil supreme de la Revolution*). The President was Gaston Soumialot, with Laurent-Desire Kabila as Vice-President.

The eastern rebellion had been in retreat since November 1964. The rebel forces were seeking refuge in the neighbouring countries, and units of white mercenaries were helping the army to seal the border to keep them out. All the rebel leaders, and all the field commanders had already left the country. This did not prevent Kabila from distributing a report "on the situation at the front," claiming that "The war constantly brings victories to the young popular army, which is acquiring considerable experiences which are preparing it for the final assault. In the current phase of our revolutionary war, things progress as they did at the beginning of the insurrection. Our combats are usually offensive. Our forces have the initiative, while the phantoms are beginning to tire of being constantly forced into defensive positions."

He also claimed that, in the liberated regions, the level of mass political and military organisation was constantly growing, in a process where social relations were being radically transformed. "The insurrection has blocked the bourgeois right from acquiring property... it shows everyone that it is more rational and completely natural that the means of production should remain communal property."⁶

Anyone reading Kabila's report could think that the national democratic revolution was not only progressing solidly along the shores of Lake Tanganyika, but that it was already taking a socialist direction. They would be completely wrong. There were no mass organisations. There wasn't even a political leadership of the rebel forces. All there was were a few thousand armed fighters, operating in autonomous guerrilla units. They were not subordinate to the Central Command of the Front, which only existed on paper.

The guerrillas camped "in well-chosen spots from a tactical point of view, on high hills, difficult to get to," Che noted. But they did not move. They did not take offensive action, and relied instead on the passivity of the enemy army. "The Popular

Liberation Army was a parasitic force. It did not work, it did not train and it did not struggle. It demands, sometimes extremely harshly, that the local population feed and work for it." What most shocked Che and the Cubans was the violence with which the Congolese rebels treated the peasants, and their atrocious treatment of prisoners of war.

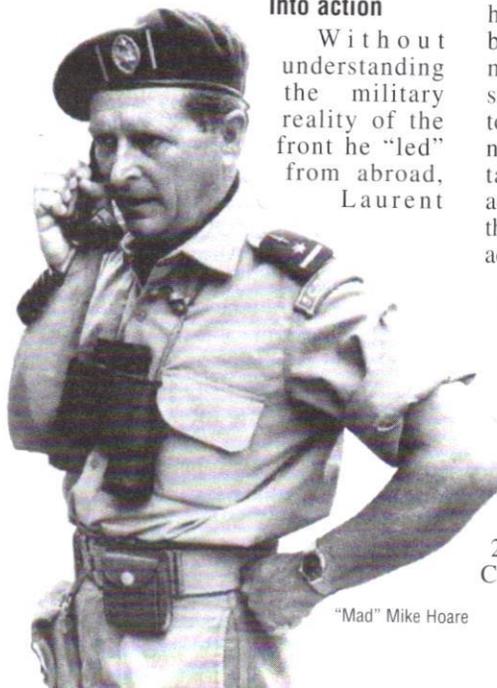
"The biggest problem with the Congolese is that they don't know how to shoot," Che wrote. "This causes an enormous wastage of ammunition. This is where we have to start." Although both sides were increasingly armed with foreign-supplied firearms, magic and "immunity" charms were just as important as at the beginning of the struggle. Even the rebel commanders, even those who considered themselves to be Marxists, explained to the Cubans that for them the enemy aeroplanes "do not count, because they have *dawa*, medicine which makes them invulnerable to bullets... The most politically advanced say that it is a natural material force and that, as dialectical materialists, they recognise the power of *dawa*," wrote Guevara.

Only one Congolese leader, Leonard Mitudidi, supported the Cuban attempt to create a genuine military front. Trained in China, and part of Mulele's team, Mitudidi knew that the rebellion lacked political leadership. Convinced that it was necessary to centralise, and to impose a united front on the rival nationalist factions, he played an important role in the construction of the Revolutionary Supreme Council, of which he was a member.

In early June, shortly after being named Chief of the General Staff of the Front, he drowned while crossing the lake. It was an irreplaceable loss. "We have lost the only efficient man in this guerrilla movement," Che commented. One week later, there was a second blow, international this time. The Algerian army had overthrown Ben Bella, breaking Cuba's radical alliance with Algeria.

Into action

Without understanding the military reality of the front he "led" from abroad, Laurent



"Mad" Mike Hoare

Kabila ordered the capture of Albertville. Guevara protested: the town could only be taken at the culmination of a guerrilla struggle which would sap the morale of the government's army, destroy its communications, weaken its reinforcements, and wipe out its forward posts. Very reluctantly, he accepted Kabila's second instructions, imposing a more modest, but still extremely risky objective. A Cuban-Rwandan force was to attack Front de Force, the main government forward position, near the Bendera hydroelectric power station. It was defended by a Congolese battalion and a hundred white mercenaries. Kabila forbid Guevara from personally participating in the attack.

On June 29th, a Rwandan battalion stiffened by 43 Cubans carried out the attack. Although the rebel commander Joseph Mudandi had undergone military training in China, his men had precious little training or experience. The attack collapsed, as the Rwandan soldiers fled in all directions. A second, mixed unit, supposed to ambush the reinforcements from Albertville, mistakenly attacked a nearby special forces training school. The Cuban commander Norberto Pío Pichardo, three other Cubans and at least 14 Rwandans died.

Finally, Kabila arrived, and apparently began re-building the liberation movement. He agitated the peasant masses and the combatants, trying to raise their morale, impose discipline, and organise defensive work round the base, target practice and so on. But after only five days, he left the country again. He did not return. "We cannot pretend that the situation is good," Guevara wrote in August. "The leaders of the movement spend most of their time abroad. There is almost no organising work, since the middle cadre do not work, in fact do not know what work is, and since no-one has confidence in them."

Split between various units, the Cubans tried to instruct the Congolese and Rwandan fighters in basic guerrilla tactics, to organise them more efficiently, and to harden them for combat. Slowly, they began to see results. There were more and more successful small ambushes. But, since they were spread over a large territory, the small number of Cubans could not form the core of a mobile force undertaking even the most modest military actions. proved impossible to bring more than 30-40 Cubans together for any single action.

Failure

At the end of September, Guevara insisted: most of the Cubans would form a new, independent column, along with selected Congolese and Rwandan fighters. It was to be "a striking force, and a model." He declined Fidel Castro's offer to send another 200 Cuban soldiers, insisting that the Congolese revolution must be above all



Mulelist fighters, 1966

African and Belgian mercenaries, and commanded by the bloodthirsty Mike Hoare, was not primarily due to their military superiority, but rather to the hesitations of those who, instead of being at the head of those fighting and risking their lives of the liberation of their country, made war calmly from a town where they faced no danger, and could enjoy all the pleasures of urban life. From where, they determined "strategy," without being strategists. Like Laurent Kabila, who's command centre was in a well-furnished apartment in Kigoma, Tanzania, or Masengo, the Chief of the General Staff. A man for whom we can find no evidence of ever having genuinely directed any action against the imperialist troops on the eastern front."

The Cuban leadership assured that it was "disposed to stand alongside those who are ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for the revolutionary victory, provided that they prove by their acts their consciousness of revolutionary duty... in a direct, definitive struggle with imperialism. A struggle with only two outcomes: victory or death."⁹

Notes

1. G. García Márquez, «Operación Carlota», *Tricontinental* #53, 1977.
2. C. Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa*, University of California, Los Angeles 1988.
3. P. I. Taibo II, F. Escobar, F. Guerra, *El año en que estuvimos en ninguna parte*, Editorial J. Mortiz, Mexico

- 1994, and P. I. Taibo II, *Ernesto Guevara, tambien conocido como El Che*, Editorial J. Mortiz, Mexico 1996. See also R. Gott, "Che Guevara and the Congo", *New Left Review* #220, 1996.
4. B. Verhaegen, *Rebellions au Congo*, 2 volumes, CRISP — IRES, Bruxelles — Leopoldville/Kinshasa 1966, 1969; H. Weiss, B. Verhaegen (eds.), "Les rebellions dans l'Est du Zaïre (1964-1967)", *Les Cahiers du CEDAF* (Brussels) #7/8, 1986; C. Cocquery-Vidrovitch, A. Forest, H. Weiss (eds.), *Rebellions-revolution au Zaïre 1963-1965*, 2 volumes, L'Harmattan, Paris 1987. For a Stalinist-Maoist analysis, see *Pierre Mulele ou la seconde vie de Patrice Lumumba*, EPO, Antwerp, 1985.
5. "Statement of C. R. Bustos to Bolivian soldiers," in A. Saucedo Parada, *No disparen... soy el Che*, Editorial Oriente, Santa Cruz 1987, p. 63.
6. H. Vargas, "Cuando el PCV rechazó al Che: Entrevista con Douglas Bravo y Francisco Prada", *Dí* (Mexico) #66, 1982, p. 40.
7. R. I. Lukale, "Les progres du peuple congolais en armes", *La Voix du Peuple* (Brussels) #14, 1965, p. 14.
8. In September 1968, Pierre Mulele surrendered to troops of the Mobutu dictatorship, and was assassinated by them in an atrocious manner.
9. A. Zapata, "En defense de Lumumba", weekly round-up, *Granma* #8, 1969, p. 12.

the work of the Congolese. Otherwise, he explained, "we risk committing some very expensive mistakes, in the name of internationalism."

In October, Moïse Tshombe was overturned, and army leader Joseph-Desire Mobutu became the new regime strongman. The presidents of the neighbouring countries began pressing for "national reconciliation." The withdrawal of the white mercenaries and the Cuban advisors was to be part of a "non-intervention" pact.

On the ground, the Cubans were increasingly surrounded, strategically and tactically, by "Mad" Mike Hoare's mercenaries. In one attack Che had to flee from a rebel camp as the South Africans overran it.

On 17 November 1965, the outer circle of defence of the central rebel base was broken. Che admitted defeat and, four days later, crossed lake Tanganyika with the surviving Cubans.

This was not the end of Cuba's commitment to the Congo rebels. For several years, Cuba tried to establish contact with Pierre Muele, who led the remainder of his Kwilu rebel movement. In June 1976, the Cuban-backed Bataillon Patrice Lumumba left Brazzaville, led by the Congolese revolutionary Thomas Mukwidi. It never met up with Muele's troops, and disappeared without trace.⁸

Evaluation

In 1969, the Cuban leadership published its evaluation of the defeat in the Congo. Though they were silent about the presence of Che Guevara and the Cubans. "The failure to resist the offensive of Tshombe's troops, supported by South

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Che

The Fourth International and Cuba

The thirtieth anniversary of Ernesto "Che" Guevara's death has been marked by an outpouring of publications. Shameless consumerist exploitation is mixed with the rebirth of a myth. But as **Livio Maitan** recalls, during his life, Guevara was a controversial figure in the workers' and anti-imperialist movements.

For most Latin American Communist Parties, Che was the symbolic target of their polemics around the ideas and positions of the Cuban Revolution. For most Communist leaders, Guevara was at best a left deviationist, at worst an irresponsible adventurer. Chinese leaders went so far as to ban any mention of his Bolivian experiences, or even his death.

The Fourth International, on the other hand, identified with and supported much of what made Che so unpopular with the leaders of the Communist movements.

Immediately after the overthrow of Batista, *Quatrième Internationale*, our theoretical journal, used its first issue of 1959 to present the victory of Fidel Castro's movement as one of the most important events of the anti-colonial revolutionary struggle. In September, an editorial note in the magazine analysed the first months of the new regime, stressing the unfinished nature of the revolution and the radical character of the measures already adopted, such as agrarian reform.

In July 1960 we wrote:

"the Cuban revolution ... after the progress it has already made, has essentially gone beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy in passing new laws which attack the very structure of the capitalist order."

At that time, our articles reflected the fact that, first, we did not have enough factual knowledge (especially on the role Che played as a guerrilla leader), and second, did not yet fully comprehend the unique dynamic or nature of Castroism. It was primarily the expropriations of October 1960 which led us to adopt this analysis and to build on it for the next World Congress, scheduled for January 1961, where we introduced a resolution bluntly stating that "Cuba has ceased to be a capitalist state and has become, for all intents and purposes, a workers' state." We also emphasised the development of the revolutionary leadership:

"The Fidelista leadership was born as a Jacobin team characterised by petty bourgeois social composition and non-pro-

letarian ideology, but from its birth it has forged links first with the peasant masses and then, especially after taking power, with the mass of the proletariat. In a situation such as Cuba's and in the current international context, this leadership must become increasingly receptive to the powerful influence of these two social groups. It must free itself from the petty bourgeois and even conservative elements with which it has made temporary common cause and instead find a way to move ahead empirically and boldly following the logic of permanent revolution as it goes far beyond its original goals."

A few months earlier, despite the opposition of various communist parties and of the Cuban Stalinists, Trotskyist militants from five countries (Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay) had taken part in the first congress of Latin American Youth, held in Havana, where they offered "unconditional support for the Cuban Revolution".

In the following years, our organisations and our publications praised the most important decisions of the Cuban revolutionaries. In April 1962 *Quatrième Internationale* published the entire text of the second Havana declaration, writing in the editorial that: "not since the first years of the 3rd International has the revolutionary movement heard such a loud, passionate voice". Three months later, another editorial was dedicated to the dismissal of Anibal Escalante, denounced by Castro as a supporter of bureaucratic tendencies and actions.

It was on this occasion that the



magazine first highlighted Che's role. The review paid special attention to a speech he gave at the end of April in which he insisted on the importance of Cuba as an example for all of Latin America but also did not hesitate to criticise the growing gap between the leaders and the masses ("it seems like we speak two different languages").

That same year, the Fourth International called for solidarity with Cuba around the Missile Crisis and criticised Khrushchev's decision to pull out the missiles without consulting the Cubans.

Though we did not condemn the Soviet leaders for "not pushing the game of brinkmanship to the breaking point, which at a certain moment was very possible... Outbreak of a nuclear war is not in the interests of the workers' states or of the international proletarian movement... Nor is it in the interests of a socialist Cuba" (*Quatrième Internationale*, December 1962).

In 1963, our World Congress returned to the Cuban question with renewed vigour, viewing the Cuban revolution as an inspiration and motor for the rise of a revolutionary movement throughout Latin America. The document titled "The Theoretical and Political Bases for a Reunification" pointed out, among other things, that "the appearance of a workers' state in Cuba - whose form is not yet fixed - is of particular interest because the revolution which occurred there was brought about under a leadership totally free of the Stalinist taint. The evolution of the July 26th Movement towards revolutionary Marxism provides a model which can now serve as an example for a whole series of other countries".

This convergence around the question of the Cuban Revolution by both the International Secretariat and groups linked to the American SWP was one of the bases of the reunification of the Fourth International, approved by that Congress. (*Quatrième Internationale*, Third trimester, 1963).

But it was the years from 1964 to 1967 during which the Fourth International and its sections deeply identified themselves with the Cuban Revolution and especially with Che's struggle. In 1964, a major economic debate opened in Cuba under the auspices of Guevara, then Minister of Industry. Ernest Mandel took part in this debate in person during one visit, and also through a contribution which appeared in the journal *Nuestra industria*. His commentaries and his analysis were also expressed in an article in *Quatrième Internationale*, "The Law of Value, Workers' Self Management, and Investment in Workers' State Economies."

At that time, no one, in Cuba or elsewhere, suspected that Che's time in Cuba was at an end, or that 1965 would be marked by his departure for places as yet unknown. We had no more knowledge of this than others and therefore we limited ourselves to a few hypotheses. In a sober and prescient article ('A new Field of Battle for Che Guevara', *World Outlook* #30, 1965) Joe Hansen first reviewed the Latin American and world context, and especially the counterrevolutionary *coup d'état* in Brazil and the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam. He

Che

then advanced a theory which would later be confirmed: "It would seem justifiable to surmise that the Kosygin-Brezhnev team lodged a stiff protest in Havana over Guevara's revolutionary declarations in African and certain criticisms that have come to their attention..."

"What happened between Castro and Guevara, of course, we do not know. The top Cuban revolutionists, in their inner circle, have spoken frankly and often heatedly, since they first constituted their team, on every problem they faced. This occasion was most likely no exception." (The whole world now knows that a long meeting between the two leaders took place the moment Che returned to Havana).

"It is possible that the incident has made the dilemma faced by the Cuban revolutionists all the more clear," Hansen wrote. "They have decided to do all in their power, including making painful concessions, to preserve their strong ties to the USSR. On the other hand, they know that Moscow's policy of "peaceful coexistence" constitutes a grave and permanent danger for their revolution. The Cuban revolution must receive support from new revolutions, especially in the Western Hemisphere, if it is not to suffer eventual defeat. This fundamental need is the crux of Cuban policies *vis-à-vis* Latin America..."

"To Guevara above all," Hansen continued, "it must therefore seem that extraordinary efforts must be made to overcome the setbacks, to reverse the effect of the defeat in Brazil, to move more energetically than every before to achieve another victory, to bolster the defence of the Cuban Revolution by advancing the world socialist revolution at any point where an opportunity might be found or created. Is it so extraordinary to conceive a revolutionist like Guevara dedicating himself to personal responsibility in such a course? There is nothing of 'revolutionary romanticism' in it at all. It is the same dedication to a great cause that made him a socialist in the first place, and which gives meaning to existence for every revolutionary socialist in the world today..."

"In any case, the central problem facing the Cuban revolution, and Guevara's involvement in it, is clear enough. As partisans of their revolution, we can only wish the Cubans well in their heroic efforts to safeguard its conquests and to strengthen their beleaguered fortress."

Throughout the first months of 1967, the various sections of the Fourth International publicised Che's message to the Tricontinental meeting, with whatever means they had at their disposal. Michael Löwy's comments exemplify our understanding of Che and our feelings at the time:

"In this explosive and incisive document, Che develops the following themes:

1) Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, is a world system, and must be



defeated in a broad, prolonged global struggle;

2) in order to struggle against the common enemy of the human race, US imperialism, socialist countries and their supporters must unite their efforts, despite differences. The current form these differences take is a weakness, but the necessary unity will come about in the end, because enemy blows will put pressure on all;

3) in this enormous struggle, the historic task of third world peoples is to eliminate imperialism's basis of subsistence in underdeveloped countries which today lie in absolute dependence, to remove its source of profits and raw materials and its markets for goods produced in the industrialised centres;

4) today, we need a global strategy for war against imperialism, one capable of materially helping the localised vanguard of the world proletariat: Vietnam. That is, we need to create two, three, many Vietnams to force imperialism to spread out its forces (M. Löwy, *The Thought of Che Guevara*, Maspero Press, 1970, pp. 108-109)."

Meanwhile, an editorial in the July issue of *Quatrième Internationale* stated that: "In Latin America, all vanguard militants are responding to Che Guevara's call. In many countries there are already small guerrilla *focos* (nuclei)... Latin American vanguard militants will soon find ways of organising and mounting actions which will strengthen and spread the armed conflicts which have begun on this continent."

As soon as the existence of a guerrilla movement led by Che in Bolivia was known, the Fourth International expressed its solidarity for his efforts. This was particularly evident in the Bolivian section, whose militants, though facing harsh repression, did not hide their desire to identify themselves with Che's movement, politically and organisationally. Before his arrest, the secretary of the POR, Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso, wrote an appeal which says, among other things: "We wholeheartedly salute the guerrillas of Nancahuazu! They are a call to arms. This is not a crazy adventure. Nor is it the mechanical and artificial transfer of the Cuban guerrilla experience. It has emerged in Bolivia as the natural culmination of the country's internal political process. The armed struggle is not alien to the Bolivian people. On the contrary, it represents the conclusion which the people have drawn from the present objective reality." (*World*

Outlook #26, 1967)

That summer, a meeting of the Organisation of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) was held in Cuba, which ended with the adoption of a 20 point resolution reaffirming the principles of Marxism and Leninism and explaining clearly that "armed revolutionary struggle is the basic path of revolution in Latin America." Joe Hansen, at that time a leader of the American SWP and the Fourth International, was present at the meeting. He wrote that "both conclusions — the hemispheric dimensions of the struggle and the need for taking up arms in order to assure a socialist outcome — were supported in speeches and resolutions which resonated throughout the world. The attitude was symbolised in a striking manner by two huge portraits, one of Simon Bolívar, the



Liberator, and the other of Che Guevara, placed side by side" (*Quatrième Internationale*, November-December, 1967). According to Hansen, the meeting had overcome the uncertainties and ambiguities resulting from the Tricontinental meeting in 1966, and moreover, had tolerated no discrimination.

Solidarity with the Cuban revolution and with the guerrilla movement led by Che did not deter the Fourth International from putting forth its own analysis of the Latin American situation and outlining its own conception of revolutionary struggle. In July, *Quatrième Internationale* published my own systematic critique of Régis Debray's book *Revolution within the Revolution?* published in Havana but distributed throughout Latin America and supposed to reflect the Cuban position on armed struggle.

Thirty years later, it is still difficult to understand why Cuban leaders encouraged Debray, someone whose ignorance about Latin America was vast, to pursue such a strange politico-literary undertaking. Why did they endorse an effort which, as was foreseeable, would immediately provoke virulent criticisms among Latin American revolutionary circles and which, in many ways, contradicted a document presented by the Cuban delegation just after the OLAS meeting?

The Fourth International, for its own part, while supporting the attitude of the Bolivian Trotskyists in favour of Che's guerrilla strategy, said: "In our opinion, the discussion in progress within the Latin American revolutionary movement will be

useful and productive insofar as it focuses on analysing specific situations in certain countries rather than on drawing generalisations which are as vague as they are enticing.

"It is precisely the originality of the Cuban experience - in many respects it took all tendencies in the international working class movement by surprise - which should counsel avoidance of rigid schemas, especially in connection with the concrete forms and stages of the revolutionary process." (*International Socialist Review*, September-October 1967)

The announcement of Che's assassination caused great pain and a feeling of revolt among all revolutionary Marxist militants. Underground Bolivian militants expressed this in a letter which appeared in *World Outlook* #36, 1967 "The assassination of Che Guevara is a heavy blow to the Bolivian guerrilla struggle. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that guerrilla war, in Bolivia as in any other country in which it arises, has deep national and world-economic causes. It is the duty of revolutionists in Bolivia and Latin America, as the Bolivian POR sees it, to back the present guerrilla struggle, strengthen it, break it out of isolation, link up with the mass movement in the cities and the mines, and bring in the peasantry as a fighting force."

The same issue of the magazine published a message from the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International, as an editorial. The central passage read: "Taking power made Guevara more faithful than ever to his communist ideals... he struggled for the New Man, a truly new human being who would have nothing in common with the caricature which dominates bureaucratic societies. Deeply committed to the international character of socialist revolution, he reminded the "wealthy" workers' states of their duty to those who were not."

In France, the newly founded Young Revolutionary Communists (JCR) organised a Paris meeting in memory of Che: 1,700 people attended. [The group, led by students expelled from the Communist Party, later formed the core of the French section of the 4th International.]

Finally, the publication of Che's Bolivian journal a year later brings us to a consideration of the defeat of the guerrilla movement, and its causes. From that point on, we could ask legitimate questions like the following: "Was the almost complete isolation of the *foco* (nucleus) inevitable? Was the prolonged breakoff of all liaison with the towns inevitable? Was it objectively impossible to recruit a few dozen additional fighters in time?" (*World Outlook* #28, 1968). We answered these questions in that article by noting that Bolivian revolutionaries had responded in the negative. Historians returned to the questions, and still debate it, but it hard to deny that, if Che was condemned to tragic isolation and if available forces could not relieve him, the major responsibility lies at

the door of the network controlled by the pro-Moscow Communist Party, hostile to Che's efforts from the beginning.²

In April 1969, at the 9th World Congress of the Fourth International, a resolution on Latin America was adopted which attempted to draw the lessons of the Bolivian experience and other armed struggles on the continent. That resolution "particularly honoured the memory of comrade Ernesto Che Guevara, a symbol of the new generation of intrepid revolutionaries all round the world."³ ★

Notes

1) This proposal was adopted by a majority of the International Secretariat, against the opposition of two representatives of the Posadist current, Adolfo Gilly and Albert Sendic, who later changed their minds as the Congress continued. Sendic wrote an analysis of the Cuban workers' state in the November issue of *Quatrième Internationale*.

Internationale of the following year, under the pseudonym A. Ortiz. The text adopted by the Congress was published separately in the first issue of *Quatrième Internationale* in 1961. In that same issue, the chapter on Cuba which it replaced was accidentally kept as part of the general resolution on the colonial revolution. The positions taken by the Posadist current — so called because its leader, an Argentinean of Italian ancestry named Homero Cristali, used the pseudonym J. Posadas — after its break with the Fourth International, and especially in 1965 and 1966 when it held that Che had been assassinated by Fidel, undoubtedly contributed to hardening Fidel, and to a much lesser extent, Che, against expressing openly any agreement with our movement or with Trotskyism in general.

2) These problems were discussed in greater depth in my article "From guerrilla warfare to people's war? The Mystified Self-criticism of Regis Debray". *Quatrième Internationale*, Spring, 1975.

3) *Quatrième Internationale*, May 1969. The question of guerrilla struggle was discussed at length in the resolution mentioned above in 1969 and revisited in the form of self-criticism during the 1975 and 1979 World Congresses.

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Che

Ernesto Guevara, also known as *Che*

Paco Ignacio Taibo II is an adviser to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, leader of Mexico's Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) and Mayor-elect of Mexico City. He is also the author of a biography of Che Guevara (reviewed on p.19)



I Myths are by their very nature eternal, resisting the flow of time. They move in a space of half truths. They include simple and more complex versions of themselves, and they can be summed up in a few words or spun out as tales over a thousand and one nights.

True myths cross class lines, going from a peasant hearth to a cafe table at a university. They don't always tell the same story. Beyond the core message, versions are different and the moral of the story may change. Myths tend to be embellished: in the mouth of the teller, the hours of an operation lengthen, an improbable smile is sworn to, phrases are carefully constructed. Magic accompanies myths.

Myths are social property. They exist to help us build utopias on a small scale, to create lives of saints, images, common references, styles of action and morals, in order to make these real.

II Ernesto Guevara died thirty years ago.

We know today that he was captured accidentally while he lay recovering from a wound to his right leg, his gun out of commission, accompanied by Willi Cubas, who shouted at the soldiers that "This is Che and you'd better treat him with respect!"

It has been told and retold how he was taken to the small hamlet of Higuera, locked up in a room attached to the local school, next to the dead bodies of his two comrades; how during a long afternoon and a longer night he spoke briefly with many soldiers, with the local teacher to whom he mentioned that a word on the blackboard was mis-spelled; how he was humiliated by a non-commissioned officer who tried to pull his beard and who he fended off with a kick.

We know that he spent the night in this room sitting on the ground and that the wife of the telegrapher offered him some soup, that he was given one of his pipes and that he took apart an *Astorga* cigarette to smoke its tobacco.

We know that on that morning of October 8th, a CIA agent introduced himself to Che and that Che insulted him. We know that this agent, of Cuban origins, photographed Che's journal outside the

house of the telegrapher and sent a coded message to Santa Cruz which was immediately transmitted to Washington. With little margin of error, we can reassemble the list of Bolivian generals who decided to kill him (Ovando, Torres, Lafuente, Belmonte Ardiles, Vásquez Sempertegui, Barrientos), and we even know the text of the message that gave Colonel Zenteno the order to murder him: "Greet papa."

We have eyewitness accounts for each hour Che spent in that room, dozens of telegrams and radiograms sent from Higuera, about conversations, about how Che looked; we even know the photo that Rodriguez, the Cuban from the CIA took of him the morning of October 9th – a mane of matted hair, a sort of bitter desolation on his face, his beard dirty, his eyes shrunken by exhaustion and fatigue); we even know the reactions of the White House, the intelligence memorandums of the CIA, Ambassador Henderson's reports, the notes he sent Lyndon Johnson.

We know the name of sergeant Mario Terán and why and how, around noon that morning of October 9th, 1967, he entered the school and discharged a machine-gun round in answer to the phrase that almost thirty years later we attribute to Che: "Shoot, coward, you are only going to kill a man."

("When I arrived, Che was sitting on the bench. Seeing me he said: you've come to kill me. I didn't dare fire and the man said to me then: 'Shoot, coward, you are only going to kill a man'. So I stepped backwards, towards the doorsill, I closed my eyes and I fired the first round. Che fell on the floor, his legs broken, he was crumpled up and began to lose a lot of blood. I recovered my spirits and fired the second round which hit him in one arm, the shoulder, and the heart.")

We know that they promised Terán a watch and a trip to West Point as a reward for the execution, promises they never honoured.

III Today they still tell in Cochabamba, in Bolivia, how "at night, Che Guevara, with Coco Peredo at his side, rides by on horseback, on big mules, on gigantic mules, Mauser in hand, all the way past Peñones, Arenales and Lajas, Los Sitanos, Loma Larga and Piraymirí, up to Valle Grande".

A teenage friend of mine tells me that he has placed a poster of Che in the bathroom of his house so that his father, who is a Deputy of a reactionary party in Mexico, will see Che in the morning when he shaves, and cut himself.

Travelling through the mountainous Mexican region of Guerrero a year ago, I saw hundreds of images of Che painted on white houses all along the road. Underneath each was the cryptic notation *IxI*. A friend told me that it was a message for the police: "For each peasant killed, a policeman executed." There had been many massacres in the region and there was an atmosphere of high social tension. It would explode later. Che became involved, even as a cartoon character carrying a terrible message.

IV It is indisputable that his image is associated with the idea of rebellion, but it goes much further than that. In these days of political travesty, where principles become diluted, where everything depends on what is possible, compromise, and *realpolitik*, Che embodies the perseverance of ideas, real, stubborn opinions, the simple, just idea that politics is nothing more than distilled ethics.

Che is also style, irreverence, and detachment in the face of power, the sustained struggle against bureaucracy. Che is a sense of irony about oneself and a brutal demand on the self; never to demand from another what one is not ready to do oneself. It's a message of outrageous egalitarianism, quasi-monastic, respect for the outcast, the dignity of the sacrifice.

V I grew up in a generation which covered romanticism in a layer of rationalism – varnishing, without ever trying to eliminate it. A generation which saw a Neanderthal Marxism impose ideas like "demystification", and proscribe words like "adventurer" and "vagabond". I am perfectly aware that demystifying Che, re-humanising him in a literary sense (the only sense I know) and minutely detailing his history, all contributes to a re-mythification, and I haven't avoided it. I believe in the right to myths.

I also know that talking about Che helps us to reclaim other political rights: the right to romanticism, to adventure, and to a vagabond sense. I believe that it is time to reclaim them, in their best sense, their ultimate sense in which we all demand that we see the world through the eyes of "others", those who have no rights and who suffer abuse their whole lives; to take the part of people on the margins, the disinherited, the lepers, the poor, the miserable, the least of the least. ★



che Create two, three... many Vietnams, that is the watchword!

"It is the hour of the furnace, and the light is all that can be seen."

— José Martí

What is the role that we, the exploited of the world, must play?

The people of three continents are watching and learning a lesson for themselves in Vietnam. Since the imperialists are using the threat of war to blackmail humanity, the correct response is not to fear war. Attack hard and without letup at every point of confrontation. That must be the general tactic of the peoples.

But in those places where this miserable peace that we endure has not been broken, what shall our task be?

To liberate ourselves at any price.

The world panorama is one of great complexity. The task of winning liberation still lies ahead, even for some countries of old Europe, sufficiently developed to experience all the contradictions of capitalism, but so weak that they can no longer follow the course of imperialism or embark on that road. In those countries the contradiction will become explosive in the coming years. But their problems, and hence their solutions, are different from those facing our dependent and economically backward peoples.

The fundamental field of imperialist exploitation covers the three backward continents — Latin America, Asia and Africa. Each country has its own characteristics, but the continent, as a whole, have their own as well.

In Latin America...

Latin America constitutes a more or less homogeneous whole, and in almost its entire territory US monopoly capital holds absolute primacy. The puppet — or in the best of cases — weak and timid governments are unable to resist the orders of the Yankee master. The United States has reached virtually the pinnacle of its political and economic domination. There is little room left for it to advance; any changes in the situation could turn into a step backward from its primacy. Its policy is to maintain its conquests. The course of action is reduced at the present time to the brutal use of force to prevent liberation movements of any kind.

Behind the slogan "We will not permit another Cuba" hides the possibility of cowardly acts of aggression they can get away with — such as the one against the Dominican Republic¹ or, before that, the massacre in Panama and the clear warning that Yankee troops are ready to intervene anywhere in Latin America where a

change in the established order endangers their interests. This policy enjoys almost absolute impunity. The Organisation of American States (OAS) is a convenient mask, no matter how discredited it is. The United Nation's ineffectiveness borders on the ridiculous or the tragic. The armies of all the countries of Latin America are ready to intervene to crush their own people. What has been formed, in fact, is the International of Crime and Betrayal.

On the other hand, the indigenous bourgeoisies have lost all capacity to oppose imperialism — if they ever had any — and are only dragged along behind it like a caboose. There are no other alternatives. Either a socialist revolution or a caricature of revolution. [...]

In Latin America, the struggle is going on arms in hand in Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia, and the first outbreaks are already beginning in Brazil. Other centres of resistance have appeared and been extinguished. But almost all the countries of the continent are ripe for a struggle of the kind that, to be triumphant, cannot settle for anything less than the establishment of a government of a socialist nature. [...]

...and world-wide

We must definitely keep in mind that imperialism is a world system, the final stage of capitalism, and that it must be beaten in a great world-wide confrontation. The strategic objective of that struggle must be the destruction of imperialism.

The contribution that falls to us, the exploited and backward of the world, is to eliminate the foundations sustaining imperialism: our oppressed nations, from which capital, raw materials, and cheap labour (both workers and technicians) are extracted, and to which new capital (tools of domination) arms, and all kinds of goods are exported, sinking us into absolute dependence. The fundamental element of that strategic objective, then, will be the real liberation of the peoples, a liberation that will be the result of armed struggle in the majority of cases, and that, in Latin America, will almost unflinchingly turn into a socialist revolution.

In focusing on the destruction of imperialism, it is necessary to identify its head, which is none other than the United States of North America.

We must carry out a task of a general kind, the tactical aim of which is to draw the enemy out of his environment, compelling him to fight in places where his living habits clash with existing conditions. The adversary must not be underestimated: the US soldier has technical ability and is backed by means of such

In April 1965 Guevara left Cuba to lend his leadership abilities as guerrilla commander to revolutionary struggles in other parts of the world — from the Congo to Bolivia. He left the following message

magnitude as to make him formidable. What he lacks essentially is the ideological motivation which his most hated rivals of today – the Vietnamese soldiers – have to the highest degree. We will be able to triumph over this army only to the extent that we succeed in undermining its morale. And this is done by inflicting defeats on it and causing it repeated sufferings.

Suffering and sacrifice

But this brief outline for victories entails immense suffering by the peoples – sacrifices that must be demanded starting right now, in the light of day, and that will perhaps be less painful than those they would have to endure if we constantly avoided battle in an effort to get others to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for us.

Clearly, the last country to free itself will very probably do so without an armed struggle, and its people will be spared the suffering of a long war as cruel as imperialist war are. But it may be impossible to avoid this struggle or its effects in a conflict of world-wide character, and the suffering may be as much or greater. We cannot predict the future, but we must never give way to the cowardly temptation to be the standard-bearers of a people who yearn for freedom but renounce the struggle that goes with it, and who wait as if expecting it to come as the crumbs of victory.

It is absolutely correct to avoid any needless sacrifice. That is why it is important to be clear on the real possibilities that dependent Latin America has to free itself in a peaceful way. For us the answer to this question is clear: now may or may not be the right moment to start the struggle, but we can have no illusions, nor do we have a right to believe, that freedom can be won without a fight.

And the battles will not be mere street fights with stones against tear gas, nor peaceful general strikes. Nor will it be the struggle of an infuriated people that destroys the repressive apparatus of the ruling oligarchies in two or three days. It will be a long, bloody struggle in which the front will be in guerrilla refuges in the cities, in the homes of the combatants (where the repression will go seeking easy victims among their families), among the massacred peasant population, in the towns or cities destroyed by the enemy's bombs.

We are being pushed into this struggle. It cannot be remedied other than by preparing for it and deciding to undertake it.

[...] And let us develop genuine proletarian internationalism, with international proletarian armies. Let the flag under which we fight be the sacred cause of the liberation of humanity, so that to die under the colours of Vietnam, Venezuela, Guatemala, Laos, Guinea, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil – to mention only the current scenes of armed struggle – will be equally glorious and desirable for a Latin American, and Asian, an African and even a European

Every drop of blood spilled in a land under whose flag one was not born is experience gathered by the survivor to be applied later in the struggle for liberation of one's own country. And every people that liberates itself is a step in the battle for the liberation of one's own people.

It is time to moderate our disputes and place everything at the service of the struggle.

The Sino-Soviet split

That big controversies are agitating the world that is struggling for freedom, all of us know.² We cannot hide it. That these controversies have acquired a character and a sharpness that make dialogue and reconciliation appear extremely difficult, if not impossible, we know that too. To seek ways to initiate a dialogue avoided by those in dispute is a useless task.

But the enemy is there, it strikes day after day and threatens new blows, and these blows will unite us today, tomorrow, or the next day. Whoever understands this first and prepares this necessary unity will win the peoples' gratitude.

In view of the virulence and intransigence with which each side argues its case, we, the dispossessed, cannot agree with either way these differences are expressed, even when we agree with some of the positions of one or the other side, or when we agree more with the positions of one or the other side. In this time of struggle, the way in which the current difference have been aired is a weakness. But given the situation, it is an illusion to think that the matter can be resolved through words. History will either sweep away these disputes or pass its final judgement on them.

In our world in struggle, everything related to disputes around tactics and methods of action for the attainment of limited objectives must be analysed with the respect due to the opinions of the others. As for the great strategic objective – the total destruction of imperialism by means of struggle – on that we must be intransigent.

A long, cruel war

Let us sum up as follows our aspirations for victory. Destruction of imperialism by means of eliminating its strongest bulwark: the imperialist domination of the United States of North America. To take as a tactical line the gradual liberation of our peoples, one by one or in groups, involving the enemy in a difficult struggle outside his terrain, destroying his bases of support, that is, his dependent territories.

This means a long war. And, we repeat once again, a cruel war. Let no-one deceive himself when he sets out to begin, and let no-one hesitate to begin out of fear of the results it can bring upon his own people. It is almost the only hope for victory.

We cannot evade the call of the hour. Vietnam teaches us this with its permanent lesson in heroism, its tragic daily lesson of

struggle and death in order to gain the final victory.

Over there, the soldiers of imperialism encounter the discomforts of those who, accustomed to the standard of living that the United States boasts, have to confront a hostile land; the insecurity of those who cannot move without feeling that they are stepping on enemy territory; death for those who go outside fortified compounds; the permanent hostility of the entire population. All this is provoking repercussions inside the United States. It is leading to the appearance of a factor that was attenuated by imperialism at full strength: the class struggle inside its own territory.

How close and bright would the future appear if two, three, many Vietnams flowered on the face of the globe, with their quota of death and their immense tragedies, with their daily heroism, with their repeated blows against imperialism, forcing it to disperse its forces under the lash of the growing hatred of the peoples of the world!

And if we were all capable of uniting in order to give our blows greater solidity and certainty, so that the aid of all kinds to the peoples in struggle was even more effective – how great the future would be, and how near.

Forward to victory

If we, on a small point on the map of the world, fulfil our duty and place at the disposal of the struggle whatever little we are able to give – our lives, our sacrifice – it can happen that one of these days we will draw our last breath on a bit of earth not our own, yet already ours, watered with our blood.

Let it be known that we have measured the scope of our acts and that we consider ourselves no more than a part of the great army of the proletariat. But we feel proud at having learned from the Cuban revolution and from its great main leader the great lesson to be drawn from its position in this part of the world: "Of what difference are the dangers to a man or a people, or the sacrifices they make, when what is at stake is the destiny of humanity?"

Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism and a call for the unity of the peoples against the great enemy of the human race: the United States of North America.

Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome if our battle cry has reached even one receptive ear, if another hand reaches out to take up our arms, and other men come forward to join in our funeral dirge with the rattling of machine guns and with new cries of battle and victory. ★

This undated message was addressed to the "Tricontinental" Organisation of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL), established after a January 1966 conference in Havana. It was published on 16 April 1967 in a special inaugural edition of *Tricontinental* magazine. Extracts chosen by Penny Duggan. © Pathfinder/Pacific and Asia, 1987

Notes
1. In April 1965 tens of thousands of US troops invaded the Dominican Republic to crush a popular uprising
2. Reference to the Sino-soviet split

Four researchers and the legend

Four biographers, two Mexican, one American, and one French, try to capture a unique personality, and a personal history that, 30 years later, has still not revealed all its mysteries.

Janette Habel

- Che: Ernesto Guevara, une légende du siècle

by Pierre Kalfon
Paris, Seuil éd., 628 p., 148 F

- Ernesto Guevara, también conocido como el Che

by Paco Ignacio Taibo II

- La vida en rojo

Jorje I. Castañeda
Buenos Aires, Espasa, 1997, 450 p.

- Che Guevara, a revolutionary life

Jon Lee Anderson
London, Bantam Press, 1997, 814 p.

How can one write a biography of Ernesto "Che" Guevara without also writing the history of the Cuban revolution? When, how and why did the tragedy emerge? And why the Che myth? In different ways, these four biographers have provided the answers of historians. But Cuban history is still misty. Many of Guevara's writings, particularly those produced after he left Cuba, are still unknown. The events in 1964-65 that fixed Guevara's tragic destiny are still classified as Cuban state secrets.

It is hard to reconstruct the 1960s, looking backward from the end of the century. The Sino-Soviet split, and the role that the Stalinist Soviet Union played in

the world were only just beginning to be perceived by the left.

After the collapse of the USSR, tongues have loosened, and mouths have opened. The partial opening of archives in Moscow and Washington helped Anderson and Castañeda. Anderson also benefited from the support of Aleida March, Guevara's companion, and from his long period of residence in Cuba.

The guerrilla fighter

Che Guevara swept down from the Sierra Maestra mountains bathed in tremendous prestige. An Argentine, he had come to fight for the liberation of a foreign land, where he had demonstrated exceptional military and political skills. Taibo II skilfully recreates the guerrilla warfare campaign in the Escambray region, and the fall of Santa Clara, which provoked the collapse of the Batista regime. The Argentine strategist's forces surrounded the town, and took it. Che had never set foot there before. His success was the result of the unity that he had been able to impose on the various rebel organisations in Las Villas province. Che proved to be a talented negotiator, despite being a foreigner, and given that the "26 July" movement was divided to the point where the Revolutionary Directory had split.

Che was a strategist, an ideologue and a political leader. An intellectual and a man of action. Heterodox, heretical, non-conformist, and irreverent.

He gathered the lessons of his military victories in a short book, *Guerrilla Warfare*. His ideas bear little resemblance to the caricature of guerrilla *focos* (nuclei) that they acquired later on. Nevertheless, his arguments are the product of a specific experience, in a social formation where the land question was key. "In underdeveloped Latin America, the countryside must be the fundamental terrain of the armed struggle," he wrote.

Pierre Kalfon provides details how Guevara created a liberated territory in the Sierra Maestra, with a "field hospital," school, the *El Cubano Libre* newspaper, and Radio Rebelde. "Little by little, the *gaujiros* (peasants) overcame their fear and began to join the rebels. As the initially urban guerrilla group became more and more peasant-based, the peasants

became more and more willing to become guerrillas," Kalfon explains (p. 212).

Che underplayed the importance of urban struggles, and did not trust urban leaders. All four biographers agree that Guevara's distrust of the leaders of the 26 July Movement (M-26-7) was political. The right-wing of the rebel movement was strongly represented there. Guevara violently denounced the opportunism of M-26-7 leaders, and pushed for the concentration of power in the hands of Fidel Castro. By doing so, he underestimated the fundamental role the urban support networks in Santiago had played, under the leadership of

Frank Pais, ever since the landing of the Granma. The guerrilla group had been decimated shortly after landing on the island in December 1956, and only survived thanks to aid from the urban network. Dozens of new reinforcements arrived to join Fidel's group in the first few weeks of 1957. Later, when Che took a small group of guerrillas to Bolivia, there would be no such aid from the towns.

Even in the mountains, the Che legend was already spreading. He read Goethe, Victor Hugo, and Pablo Neruda. "He is feared, because he is a demanding and rigorous commander, but he is also respected, because he is fair, and accepts no privileges" (Kalfon, p. 207). In 1960, *Time* magazine presented him as the "brain" of the revolution (Kalfon, p. 293). After the rebels took power, Che's political role was indeed decisive, as Castro confirmed: "Che was, from a theoretical point of view, much better educated than I. He was a more advanced revolutionary than I" (Castañeda p. 113).

The intellectual journey

All four biographies trace Guevara's early intellectual development in a similar way. We now know, for example, how the impact of the Bolivian and Guatemalan revolutions pushed him towards Marxism, even though he never joined a Communist party.

In the Sierra Maestra, he came closer to the pre-revolutionary Popular Socialist Party (PSP), the Cuban CP, recognising it as a potential ally against the right wing of the M-26-7. He linked up with Raul Castro, who had been educated in the Communist Youth. But the PSP tried to

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Populism in Latin America

Adolfo Gilly, Helena Hirata, Carlos M. Vilas and the PRT (Argentina) [40 pages]

◆ £2/\$3.50/20FF. Cheque payable to P. Rousset, IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 Amsterdam, Netherlands.

che

win hegemony in the new party Fidel was trying to build. With the M-26-7 weakened and divided, the old Stalinists thought their hour had come, and occupied the key posts in the new party. "Some old cadre started to occupy management positions, and enjoy various privileges: pretty secretaries, Cadillacs, and air conditioning. They got used to their new lifestyle very quickly. They preferred to keep the doors closed, so that the air conditioning would work better, leaving the Cuban heat outside where the workers waited," commented Guevara. Castañeda shows how this sectarianism would affect Che's later judgement on the Soviet Union.

Guevara gradually distanced himself from the Soviet model, as the result of what he saw and heard during his trips to the USSR and Central Europe. After the Cuban missile crisis, he was furious at the way the Soviet Union had so nonchalantly violated Cuban sovereignty. His indignation grew stronger when, responsible for Cuba's economic affairs, he was confronted with Moscow commercial practices: arrogant and incompetent bureaucrats, and a desire for hegemony.

The ethics of power

Being in power while Cuba was forced to make dramatic economic choices in response to the break with Washington changed the relationship between Che and his comrades from the Sierra. As a minister, Guevara was austere, frugal, disciplined and driven by ethical concerns about how to exercise power. Many of his comrades did not share this outlook. His iconoclast personality and non-conformism, prominent in Jon Lee Anderson's account, shocked Cuba's apprentice bureaucrats.

"The Argentine," some said, "is a drag". An irritation. His leadership methods were very different from those of Fidel, as Anderson illustrates. His intransigence made things awkward. He had little taste for diplomacy, in the sense of *realpolitik* and opportunism. Castañeda has a psychological "explanation" – apparently, asthmatics detest ambivalent situations!

The tensions become more visible in 1962, as the economic problems emerge. Guevara's rigor leads him to make harsh judgements about the economy. He denounces a "crisis of production" which Fidel immediately denies (Castañeda, p. 272). Guevara is the only leader to stand his ground against Fidel. He insisted on the importance of a public debate on the priorities and strategy of economic development.

Here all four authors offer simplistic explanations. They fail to understand what Guevara was actually suggesting, and present his plan as either unconscious totalitarianism or unworkable voluntarism. Castañeda calls it "fundamentalism." Taibo says Che is the prisoner of "neanderthal Marxism!"

Guevara's ideas are certainly not free of errors. He was constantly modifying and developing his arguments. But what was essential was not the debate about the law of value. Che was engaged in a radical critique of bureaucratic socialism, and searching for an alternative model. Che's "new man" (actually more a new leader) is an inaccurate sketch – what he was working towards was an ethical and humanist conception of power.

But Che's views were ignored. Cuba's increasing co-operation with the Soviet Union made his position increasingly shaky. He was accused of Maoism (the Sino-Soviet split was at its height) and Trotskyism. Castañeda reports that Che's Russian-Spanish interpreter was actually a KGB agent assigned to spy on him.

In his Algiers speech, Che called into question the true nature of Soviet relations with the Third World. The rupture is confirmed. "Che now knew that he was a handicap to Fidel in his relationship with the Soviets," writes Anderson (p. 677). He had to leave.

The Bolivian mousetrap

Why, and in what conditions did Che choose first the Congo, then Bolivia? What led to his death? Kalfon, Anderson

and Castañeda converge in their explanations. After researching the Soviet and U.S. archives, Castañeda is an authority on the relationship between Havana and Moscow. Anderson has had access to important Cuban sources. He claims it was Fidel who chose the Congo, as a less delicate destination than Latin America. After all, the USSR supported the Congolese rebels [while Latin American Communist parties were mostly opposed to Che's call for new armed struggles].

After the failure of the Congo expedition, it was again Fidel who organised the Bolivian project, with the "support" (which would prove fatal) of local CP leader Mario Monje. Anderson's account (p. 677) is based on an important source, the then unpublished diary of Harry "Pombo" Villegas, Che's bodyguard and one of his closest comrades. Official Cuban sources still claim it was Che himself who made the choice.

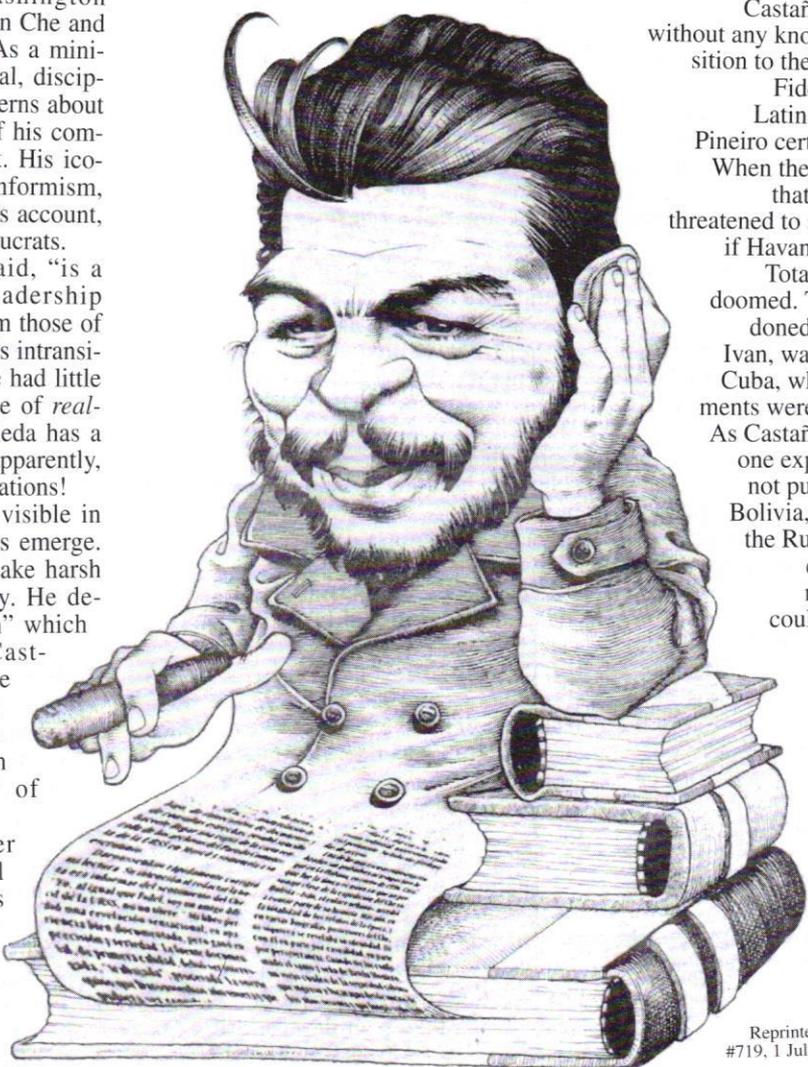
In any case, Bolivia proved to be a real mousetrap. The support promised by Monje did not materialise. The Bolivian CP leader later denied having made any agreement with Castro, but why believe him? The urban support network in Bolivia was quickly dismantled by the CIA. According to Castañeda, it had been infiltrated from the beginning.

Castañeda claims Che left Cuba without any knowledge of Monje's opposition to the guerrilla project (p.413).

Fidel, and Cuban CP head of Latin American affairs Manuel Pineiro certainly did know, however. When the Soviet Union discovered that Che was in Bolivia, they threatened to suspend their aid to Cuba if Havana intervened to save him.

Totally isolated, Guevara was doomed. The guerrillas were abandoned, their only liaison agent, Ivan, was recalled from La Paz to Cuba, where Guevara's reinforcements were prevented from leaving. As Castañeda argues, how else can one explain why the Cubans did not publicise Che's presence in Bolivia, since the Americans and the Russians already knew. It is easy to imagine the international mobilisation that could have been organised to save Ernesto Guevara

Thirty years later. Che is still shrouded in mystery, in plots and in silences. But the man emerges above all this, as an austere comedian, a lucid dreamer and a methodical rebel. Not as a cultural icon, but a breaker of icons. ★



Reprinted from *La Quinzaine littéraire* #719, 1 July 1997

The lessons of October 1917

The Russian revolution has defined and shaped the 20th century. Saving it from forgetfulness and historical manipulation is essential if we are to preserve the revolutionary option for our own futures.

The pre-packaged ideology of the system we live under is using this 80th anniversary to spread its own version of October 1917. We asked **Daniel Bensaid** to rebut the three central myths of this historical revisionism.

Rather than a revolution, October 1917 was a plot, a coup d'état imposed by the Bolsheviks. Their authoritarian conception of social organisation benefited the new elite, not the people

The revolution was not the result of a conspiracy, but an explosion of the accumulated contradictions of the autocratic and conservative tsarist regime, towards the end of the first World War. Russia was a blocked society, a perfect example of "combined and uneven development." The country was simultaneously the centre of an empire, and dependent on the imperialist powers and their capital. Russia's industry was among the most concentrated and advanced in the world, but the countryside still had feudal traits. Serfdom had been abolished less than 50 years earlier. Russia was a great power, but dependent on the West for technology and finance.

Attempts at reform were quickly blocked by the conservative oligarchy, the obstinate Tsar, and the hesitation of a bourgeoisie terrified by the newly born working class.

Russia's democratic revolution could only be carried out by the "third estate". Unlike pre-revolutionary France, the most dynamic element in this revolutionary force was the small modern proletariat.

This is why "Holy Mother Russia" was recognised as the "weak link" in the imperialist chain. The first World War was to light the powder-keg.

The revolutionary process between February and October 1917 clearly shows that this was no minority conspiracy of professional agitators, but the accelerated assimilation of political experience on a mass scale. The metamorphosis of consciousness. The balance of forces shifted astoundingly quickly.

In his magisterial work, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky analysed this radicalisation in minute detail. The Bolsheviks only formed 13% of delegates to the June 1917 Congress of Soviets. But after the events of July and Kornilov's attempted coup, support for Lenin's party grew rapidly. By October, they boasted 45-60% of delegates to the Soviets.

The insurrection was the result of a year-long struggle, in which the spirit of the plebeian masses was always to the left of the political parties. Including the Bolsheviks, who were divided over whether it was the right moment for an insurrection.

This ripeness explains why the October insurrection was so much less violent than similar events in more recent years. Most of the victims identified by bourgeois historians were actually killed during the civil war, which broke out in 1918. With Britain and France supporting the reactionary forces with troops and material.

Revolutions reflect the desire for transformation from below, meeting the deepest aspirations of the people, not the execution of some elite plot. October 1917 was such a revolution. The laws approved in the first year of the new regime testify to the radical transformation of social, property and power relations. As John Reed showed, in *Ten days which shook the world*, change came quicker than expected and, sometimes, quicker than would have been desirable.

Daily life was transformed, as in any authentic revolution. In Odessa, the students imposed a new history syllabus on their teachers. In Petrograd, workers obliged their employers to learn "the worker-based system of rights". In some schools, the youngest pupils demanded boxing lessons, so as to be able to protect themselves against older children, and have a greater influence.

Few people at the time mourned the disappearance of the last Tsar and his despotic regime.

This initial revolutionary élan lasted throughout the 1920s, despite the shortages and cultural backwardness. It can be seen in the pioneering attempts to transform the Russian way of life: educational and pedagogical reforms; new legislation on the family; utopian urban planning; innovative graphic design and cinema.

The presence of this élan explains the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the painful transformation during the inter-war years, where revolutionary hope mixed and clashed with bureaucratic repression. No country in the world has experienced such a transformation. Under the bureaucratic whip, the urban popula-

tion swelled from 18% of the population in 1926 to 33% in 1939. Thirty million peasants moved to the cities. During the first five year plan, the urban population grew by 44%, as much as between 1897 and 1926. The salaried workforce grew from 10 to 22 million. This massive "ruralisation" of the towns required a massive literacy and basic education programme, but also the militarised imposition of labour discipline.

This huge transformation was accompanied by the rebirth of nationalism, a new careerism, and the growing phenomenon of bureaucratic conformism. In this upside-down period, writes Moshe Lewin, Russia was virtually a "classless society," in that all the classes were still unformed, and fused together. (Moshe Lewin, *La formation de l'Union soviétique*, Gallimard 1985).

The totalitarian development and results of the Russian revolution were "programmed" in the original idea or "passion" of revolution

Some people explain the Stalinist degeneration as the result of the evil basis of human nature. Our uncontrollable lust for power can take various forms, even disguising itself as the quest for the happiness of the people 'despite themselves'.

Stalinism does reflect a more general tendency to bureaucratisation, observable in all modern societies. This tendency is nourished by the social division of labour into manual and intellectual, and by the "professional dangers of power" which this generates.

But we also need to examine the concrete situation, to identify the roots and supports of the "Stalinist phenomenon."

The speed and depth of the bureaucratisation in the new soviet system was the product of terrible destruction, shortage, cultural backwardness, and the absence of democratic traditions.

From the beginning, the revolution had both a wide and a narrow social base. Wide because based on a worker-peasant alliance, which constituted the overwhelming majority of society. And narrow because the small working class was quickly decimated by the first world war, and the civil war. Soldiers, who played a key role in 1917 through their radical soviets, were mainly conscripted peasants, aroused by the call for peace and demobilisation.

Very soon it was the summit which imposed its will on the base of the movement, rather than the other way round. This led to a substitutionist dynamic: the Party substitutes itself for the people; the bureaucracy substitutes itself for the party; the man 'in the right place at the right

time' substitutes himself for the collective leadership.

This substitutionism is made easier by the creation of a new bureaucracy, combining the servants of the previous order, and the quickly trained representatives of the new regime.

In the Party itself, the few thousand Bolshevik veterans of the October revolution were overwhelmed by the inflow of hundreds of thousands of new members, including, of course, careerists and recycled elements of the old regime.

Lenin's own *Last Testament* shows his anguished recognition of this sorry state of affairs. The revolution concerned the masses and the myriad nations of the Russian empire, but all Lenin can do to influence the future is to weigh the positive and negative qualities of a handful of leaders. Everything seems to depend on them.

Although social factors and historical circumstance played an important role in the growing power of the Stalinist bureaucracy, this does not mean that ideas and theories had no importance. The confusion, since the taking of power, between the state, the Party and the class, in the name of the perishing away of the state, and the disappearance of the contradictions within the population, favoured the statisation of society, rather than the socialisation of state functions.

It takes time to learn democracy. Time and energy. And the rhythms are not the same as those of economic reform. The 'easy way' is to subordinate the organs of popular power to an enlightened tutor, the Party. And to replace the principle of election, control and recall of officials by their appointment by the Party. This began as early as 1918. This logic culminated with the suppression of political pluralism and political liberties, and the domination of power over rights.

The slide was not just the result of manipulation from above. It was sometimes the result of a demand from below, a desire for order and tranquillity after the sufferings of war, civil war, shortages and exhaustion. Democratic controversies, political agitation, and constant appeals for responsibility irritated, without seeming to solve the problems.

According to Marc Ferro, there were two authoritarian elements at the beginning of the revolution, "a democratic-authoritarian one at the base, and a centralist-authoritarian one at the top. By 1939, there was only one left."

For Ferro, it was virtually settled by the beginning of 1919, with the decline or control over the district and factory committees. The Philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe calls Bolshevism "counter-



revolutionary, from 1920-21 onwards". In other words, before the Kronstadt incident. (see *Revue Lignes* #31, May 1997).

This is a central question. Obviously, our response is not to mechanically oppose the glorious twenties to the dark thirties, so as to oppose "Leninism under Lenin" to Leninism under Stalin, as if nothing had started to go bad in the USSR before the Georgian consolidated his control.

Of course bureaucratisation began almost immediately after the revolution. Of course the Cheka secret police existed under Lenin, with its own "policeman" dynamic. Of course there were political prisoners. The Solovki prison islands were functioning from the end of the civil war. And, of course, there was no real plurality of political parties. Free speech was limited. And after the 1921 10th Party

congress, democratic rights even within the party were restricted.

All this is true. But it does not "prove" that Leninism led to the Stalinist terror.

The bureaucratic counterrevolution in Russia was not a simple event, to which we can fix a date. It was the result of a series of choices, confrontations and events. Our subsequent precise analysis of these years is not motivated by a desire to fix "the day it happened", but by our concern with identifying the political tasks, and strategic options that would have led to a different future.

There is not just a contrast between Russia's domestic and foreign policies in the early 20s and the terrible 30s, but an irreducible discontinuity.

We do not deny that authoritarian tendencies had begun to grow well before Stalin came to power. Obsessed with the

★ The lessons of October 1917

very real "main enemy", imperialist aggression and capitalist restoration, the Bolshevik leaders ignored and underestimated the "secondary enemy" of bureaucracy. In the end, it was this enemy which undermined and eventually consumed them.

Such a scenario was difficult to imagine at the time. There were no historical precedents. It was some time before we could understand and interpret what was going wrong, and draw the consequences. So although Lenin understood the significance of the Kronstadt crisis, and launched a profound political reorientation, it was only much later, in *The Revolution Betrayed* that Trotsky established the principle of political pluralism, based on the heterogeneity of the proletariat, including after the seizure of power.

Most of the great studies of the Soviet Union and the Bolshevik party reveal most clearly that, within the narrow dialectic of rupture and continuity, the 1930s were a central moment. Much rupture, and little continuity. Tens of millions of famine deaths, deportations, and victims of trials and purges. The fact that this violence was necessary to bring the system to the "victors' congress" of 1934 shows how strong the revolutionary heritage must have been, and how difficult it was to overcome it.

This was a counter-revolution. The repressive measures involved were more massive, more visible, and more painful than the worrying authoritarian measures imposed at the height of the civil war. This counter-revolution was felt in all spheres of life. In economic policy it meant forced collectivisation and the massive extension of the Gulag prison-camp economy. In foreign policy it meant hindering the revolutionary dynamic in China, Germany and Spain. It had a terrible impact on cultural policy, and on daily life (what Trotsky described as the "household Thermidor").

The revolution was condemned to degenerate, because it was "premature." The Bolsheviks refused to accept that the "objective conditions" for going beyond capitalism were not present

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, a growing number of Marxists (mainly in the Anglo-Saxon countries) have been attracted to the idea that the Russian revolution was doomed from the start, because it came too soon.

This was, of course, claimed at the time, by the Mensheviks and by Kautsky. Blood, tears and ruins could have been avoided, he wrote in 1921, "if the Bolsheviks had possessed the Menshevik sense of limiting themselves to what was possible. Self-limitation is what distinguishes the master player." (*Von der Demokratie zur Staat-sklaverei*, 1923, Berlin, Freiheit).

This says a lot about Kautsky. He polemicalises against the notion of an avant-garde party, but imagines some master-

player party, which educates and explains, and keeps the march and rhythm of history within the boundaries it has established. As if struggles and revolutions did not have their own logic.

Once you seek to 'self-limit' struggles wherever they emerge, it is but a short step to aligning yourself with the established order. No longer "self-limiting" the objectives of the Party, but limiting the aspirations of the masses. Looking back, the real "master players" of "self-limitation" were Ebert and Noske, the social democrats who ordered the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and crushed the workers' soviets in Bavaria.

This kind of argument imagines history to be a regulated, ordered succession of predictable events. It reeks of the historical determinism of which Marxists have often been accused, where the base determines the superstructure. It ignores the difference between history and destiny. Real history is full of events which suggest a range of possible futures, some clearer and more probable than others.

Those who made the Russian revolution did not see it as a solitary adventure,

but as the first part of a European and world revolution. The German revolution and the Spanish civil war were not predestined. Neither was their failure. Nor were the fascist victories in Italy and Germany. Nor was the Chinese revolution.

Saying that the Russian revolution was premature is like passing judgement from a historical tribunal. It is more useful to try to understand the internal logic of the conflict, and the opposing political forces. Defeats are not proof of error or fault, any more than victories are proof of just cause. There is no Last Judgement.

At each key moment of those turbulent years (NEP, forced collectivisation, the Spanish civil war, the Nazi victory in Germany) there were possible alternatives. Understanding this is what makes the past understandable, and what enables us to draw lessons for the future. ★

For further reading try Alfred Rosmer, *Lenin's Moscow*, Pluto Press, London, 1971, 253 pp., Marcel Liebman's *Leninism under Lenin*, Jonathon Cape Ltd., 1975, pb. Merlin Press, London, 1980, 477 pp., Pierre Broué's *L'Histoire du parti bolchevik*, Moshe Lewin's, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, Monthly Review Press, and the works of E.H. Carr, Tony Cliff, and David Rousset.

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The economic debates of the 1920s

Conditions for the emergence of socialism

The controversial economic policies which followed the Russian revolution are rich in lessons. They represented the first fundamental confrontation between Marxists and the reality of economic transformation.

Similar questions will have to be asked by any peripheral country which wants to break with the dictatorship of the capitalist market.

Catherine Samary

The Mensheviks considered the Bolsheviks to be "voluntarists," for violating the "laws" of history, for going beyond the necessary bourgeois revolution in Russia. The unjustified October revolution, in Menshevik thought, is the fundamental cause of the Stalinist degeneration. Only ('normal' non-voluntarist and democratic?) capitalist development could have created the necessary conditions (adequate level of productive forces?) for a socialist transformation.

History is very short on convincing examples of this argument. Where are the peripheral countries which have overcome their underdevelopment through Menshevik-style reformist capitalism? In fact, 20th century history has revealed the fragility of the social reforms of even the most advanced capitalist countries.

And in any case, the room for manoeuvre of some third world countries, and the social gains of the decades after World War II, are in a large part the consequences of the October revolution. The Marshall plan for reconstruction in Western Europe, the massive aid imperialism poured into South Korea, and Keynesian policies in the advanced capitalist countries were all imposed, in a statist, voluntarist way, by the capitalist elite, in response to their fear of communism. Only new fears of this type, only a new international balance of forces more favourable to the workers, will reverse the current return of capitalism to its "natural," savage form.

Bolshevik "voluntarism."

Was October 1917 a real revolution, with a social dynamic, or just a Bolshevik *putsch*, an avant-gardist attempt to speed up history? According to the non-Bolshevik historian Marc Ferro, "the October insurrection... replaced the old state apparatus, which had remained in place under Kerenski, with a whole constellation of committees and *soviets* which had exer-

cised part of state power, but had not dared, or had not been able to assume full power. The October insurrection legitimised them. It liberated the impressive energy of these thousands of committees and other popular bodies... It was the *soviets* which held power in society. Not so much the Congress of *Soviets*, the supreme body which met for only a few days, to approve the key measures (dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, etc.) but the multitude of local *soviets* and committees of all kinds." (Marc Ferro, *Des soviets au communisme bureaucratique*, Collection Archives, 1980, p.137)

This formidable energy from below could only come from the profoundly oppressive character of the old regime. From the hostility and sabotage of the dominant classes in response to the masses who only asked to live better, and in dignity. From the people's direct experience of repressive violence, not just under the Tsar, but from the new "bourgeois democracy." A violence reflecting Kerenski's social immobilism. According to Ferro, all this is what ensured the osmosis of a growing social radicalism and popular absolutism with the Bolsheviks' intransigence and political absolutism.

"The radicalisation of the masses can be explained by the uselessness of government policies. The government (which, since May, included socialists) introduced, under claims of necessity, procedures for conciliation between the popular and ruling classes. Far from modifying the established order, the negotiations served to perpetuate and consolidate it (p.137)... In town and countryside, [popular absolutism] expressed a certainty, a faith in a social regime based on justice and equality. The *muzhiks* (peasants) only planned to collectivise the land which the landlord was not cultivating, and the forests. The landlords' refusal led them to begin the equitable division of land... in proportion to the number of mouths to feed in each household... when the response was again negative, anger and violence replace the people's goodwill... The same happened in the towns. Workers demanded less inhuman living conditions. It was the brutal and crafty refusals of the owners which led to their expropriation, and, after October 1917, revenge against the bourgeoisie.

Politically, there was a shift after July 1917, when the "democracy" identified itself with the regime, using the army against the popular masses. Kornilov's *putsch* marks an irreversible shift. Kerenski opposes Kornilov, but is seen more as his rival than his enemy. By not taking measures against [Kornilov's] asso-

ciates, he becomes identified with the enemies of a real social revolution. From now on, those who oppose the slogan "all power to the *soviets*" are considered enemies of the *soviets*, even when, like the Mensheviks or the Social Revolutionaries, they participated in the *soviets*." (p.164-5)



It is easy to say (but hard to show) that there was a bourgeois democratic alternative to Bolshevik power. The terribly destructive victory over the White (counter-revolutionary) armies shows the depth of popular resistance, though it also brought a disastrous heritage and the methods of war communism. We must recognise the context in which these developments took place, and not look at them out of context.

While the New Economic Policy and the debates at that time do reveal a number of errors and problems, they do not confirm the accusation of "Bolshevik voluntarism."

Acceptance of the market

The reintroduction of market mechanisms in 1921 was initially presented and explained as a "retreat" from the vision of a planned society, without money or market, based on, and deepening, the *étatist* methods of war communism. Nevertheless, the necessity of the market was quickly integrated into theoretical and programmatic debates on the "transition to socialism." It was no longer confined to short-term or specifically Russian analysis. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky wrote that "the utopian hopes of war communists were, later, subjected to severe and often just criticism."

These utopian visions were often nourished by hopes of an imminent revolutionary victory in the advanced capitalist countries of western Europe. Though Trotsky also wrote that "even in this happy, hypothetical situation, one would have had to abandon the distribution of goods by the state, and go back to commercial methods... Normalising the economic relationship with the countryside was without a doubt the most important, and most difficult task of the New Economic Policy. Experience quickly showed

★ The lessons of October 1917

that industry itself, although socialised, needed the methods of monetary calculation which had been elaborated under capitalism."

This is just one example of the evolution of soviet Marxist thought, as a result of the NEP experience. The essential debates between the Bolsheviks took place within a shared perspective of a "transition to socialism" which was not at all the same as the "socialism without markets" which had been proposed during the war communism period.

There were many choices to be made, and many characteristics of this transformation had to be defined and analysed. What kind of agrarian policy and industrialisation? At what rhythm, with what kind of class alliances? What should be the role of the co-operative and private property sectors? What links and conflicts between plan and market? What price and credit policies were needed to meet the development objectives? What relationship to develop with the world capitalist system? How to incorporate capitalist knowledge and capital itself into a strategy of socialist development?

Different economic "laws"

These questions were part of the debates of the Left Opposition, and of the great (public) controversy between Bukarin and Preobrazhensky in the 1920s. Preobrazhensky stressed what was an essential and general characteristic of the conditions for the emergence of socialism: the existence of a struggle to the death between different criteria of economic efficiency: the "law of value," imposed mainly through the world capitalist market, was in conflict with socialist goals. Recognising this conflict did not mean necessarily suppressing market mechanisms, nor adopting a policy of autarky. On the contrary, he called for "maximising" or "optimising" relations with world capitalism. While arguing against Bukarin's naive, non-conflictive vision of market relationships in the context facing Russia at that time, Preobrazhensky stressed the importance of state control of foreign trade, to protect the choices made for the development of the domestic economy against the criteria of the world market, represented in the prices, so as not to become an "agricultural semi-colony of world capitalism."

"If we applied world prices to the USSR," he wrote, prophetically, "two thirds of our industry would be eliminated because of... its non-essential nature within the global division of labour on a capitalist basis."

Preobrazhensky also stressed the importance of planned industrialisation, to ensure greater agricultural productivity, and to ensure that the peasants found attractive products to buy with their income from crop sales. Rather less convincingly, Preobrazhensky attempted to identify a "law of primitive socialist accumulation," analogous with the mechanisms by which

capitalism first developed. According to Preobrazhensky, it was necessary to ensure industrialisation by a massive transfer of surplus value from petty bourgeois agriculture. The left opposition did not take up this argument.

Preobrazhensky had put his finger on the gap between the socialist project of the October revolution, and the material and social base it possessed. He tried to reduce this gap by a productivist logic which undermined the worker-peasant alliance in this peripheral country. He also fell into a "scientific" conception of planning, in which the workers' state (the Party?) was somehow all-knowing. This is doubtless the reason why, unlike the Left Opposition (which did not adopt his ideas on "primitive socialist accumulation"), Preobrazhensky identified with Stalin's forced industrialisation at the end of the 1920s, on the basis of the forced collectivisation of agriculture.

Once a country breaks from the rule of profit, there is no more a "law" of agrarian policy than of industrialisation. But there are real constraints. Including the socio-political consolidation of the social base of the new regime in a heavily agricultural country. The Left Opposition disagreed with Bukarin, who called for "socialism at tortoise speed," based on encouraging the peasants to "get rich." The Left Opposition called instead for a plan of industrialisation, ensuring the material and technical base of a modern agricultural system, based on the poor and middle peasants.

In *La formation du système soviétique*, Moshe Lewin shows how the objectives of tractor production were not applied, strangling any kind of efficient co-operative logic. He also showed that the better-off peasants (often considered part of the "kulak" group) were far from being "capitalists." But they were essential for supplying the agricultural market, since the great majority of rural communities functioned in a self-sufficient way, without producing an agricultural surplus for the towns... Moshe Lewin shows that accumulated errors in agrarian policy (the low price of wheat did not encourage its production or sale, and there were not enough industrial products to exchange for the agricultural surplus, particularly tractors) contributed to the "cereals crisis."

In other words, there was nothing "inevitable" or organically "pre-determined" about the Stalinist move towards forced collectivisation, which ended in economic catastrophe... Given the accumulated backwardness of industry, Trotsky argued, "the collective farms were organised using tools which are only really suitable for small plots." In such conditions, he noted, accelerated collectivisation "becomes an adventure." It was to "liquidate" not only the "kulaks" but a large layer of better-off peasants. And with them soviet agriculture.

Democracy was a decisive and a difficult question, in the hostile context of civil war. The extraordinary measures

taken by the Bolsheviks in this hostile environment should not be confused with their crystallisation in "real socialism" under Stalin.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the ban on fractions and parties, and the suppression of the *Duma* (parliament) favoured the Stalinist degeneration. Nor were all the Bolsheviks' exceptional measures true emergencies. They had no experience of socialist democracy, and there was little theoretical discussion of the role of the "rule of law" after taking power. Today, it is easy to see how the concept of "workers' democracy", the "good version" of the dictatorship of the proletariat) is perverse and limited.

Obviously, there has to be an economic "dictatorship," against the rule of profit, the domination of capital, and liberties which depend on money. This kind of dictatorship seeks to repress and prevent the private ownership of the major means of production and finance, and ensure respect for the rights of the workers to control production, and to promote the satisfaction of the plan.

But the workers are not the only ones who should have the right to organisation and expression. (Who would decide who is a proletarian and who is not?). There must be the confrontation of ideas, including the ideas of those who are hostile to socialism. The political repression of those who take up arms against the socialist project is another matter. So is the prosecution of sexist and racist expression. This political repression must be the result of a public debate and public control over the means and goals of the restrictions imposed.

Without universal, individual liberties, collective rights are quickly perverted. Though citizenship is abstract, unequal, without collective rights, possibly linked to a right of veto on specific questions, making it necessary to have procedures and institutions for dealing with conflicts (women's oppression, national questions, struggles for workers' emancipation).

Obviously, this implies many problems, and requires more complex answers than Marxists at that time realised. The key seems to be finding mechanisms not to suppress conflicts, but to widen the horizons of the debate, to bring into discussion actually existing forms of oppression and injustice and unsatisfied needs, which are expressing themselves directly or indirectly through the conflicts.

"Socialising" both plan and market

It is also necessary to "socialise" the plan and the market. To stimulate all associative forms which make it possible to evaluate services (health, education, culture, public transport...) and goods (consumer groups and associations). Only democracy, in forms still to be invented, will make it possible to correct the perverse, unseen side-effects of the means chosen to satisfy social needs. Democracy is the "regulator," the "feed-back" which

will make it possible to reduce the gap between goals and results, and avoid a dogmatic defence of the methods used. In other words, democracy must penetrate all spheres of daily life, wherever collective evaluations can contribute to the efficient satisfaction of social needs.

What kind of self-management?

When the revolution started, many factory committees in Russia were struggling against the capitalists for greater workers control over production. The Bolsheviks obviously supported, and won the support of these committees. But they found that the management of factories without the capitalists was very complicated. Lenin initially talked of "state capitalism," controlled by a the workers' state. He was very concerned by the lack of qualifications of those promoted into management positions, and the potentially disastrous consequences of decentralising management decisions to the level of each self-managed enterprise.

Many writers have discussed the difficulties of maintaining activity and mobilisation after the peak of a revolutionary period. Marco Ferro goes further. He demonstrates that, against the warnings of the Workers Opposition and anarchist self-management currents, the Bolsheviks tried deliberately to "domesticate," and partially break-up working class initiative, in favour of a process, a logic in which the party substituted itself for the class.

This is a real problem, but it has to be viewed in connection with the economic problems which had to be solved, and which required a macro-economic development plan. But what democracy to accompany this plan? And what mechanisms should the plan contain? In 1936, Trotsky made the following criticisms of administrative methods,

"The plan should be adapted and regulated by two levers: a political lever, created by the real participation of the interested masses in management, which cannot be imagined without soviet democracy, and a financial lever, the result of the effective verification of *a priori* calculations through a general equivalent. This is impossible without a stable monetary system... The transitional period as a whole requires not the reduction of commodity circulation, but its maximum extension. (p.487)

The October revolution, and the Bolsheviks, were not prepared for these questions. They had no experience, and had not thought about them... Even today, we are far from possessing complete answers. But we do have the benefit of hindsight and experience, including the development and crisis of the Yugoslav self-management system... We know about the costs of the command economy.

It is one thing to say that workers have a right to consultation, and a priority voice (because of their particular knowledge), and quite another to say that, having rejected the bureaucratic plan, the free

self-management of the workers can only be individual and local quickly reaches a dead-end. Why should workers be "attached" to "their" enterprise, and only that enterprise, for their whole lives? Could we ensure full employment, and carry out socially progressive transformations of certain enterprises and sectors, in the interest of working conditions and social needs, only at the level of one enterprise or sector? Obviously not. It will be necessary to find mechanisms of regulation which the workers and consumers concerned can control, at the level which is most effective. Local and regional structures will almost certainly be the most important, but only if there is also a higher level of co-ordination, working to reduce the inequalities between richer and poorer regions and countries...

Computerisation is making it easier and easier to combine macro-economic resource management and setting of priorities with a decentralisation of management decisions... It can also facilitate non-market initiatives, by facilitating the expression of needs, and matching them with responses proposing to satisfy them. In other words, computerisation can facilitate the prevision of needs, and bring producers and suppliers together. Technology is making it easier and easier to organise debates on the major choices, which will support a democratic form of planning. [...]

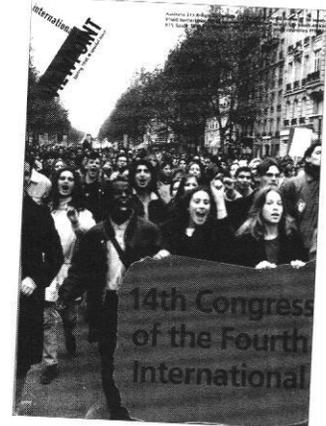
Learning from October 1917

The October revolution is not a model. The concepts it generated, like "revolutionary crisis" and "dual power" are still relevant. But it was clearly easier to organise "against" (or in a perspective of taking power) than to establish institutions "for" managing public affairs. Popular control, clearly, is the bridge between the two phases. It is a non-dogmatic way of testing alliances and social compromises in terms of their compatibility with the programme of satisfaction of social needs which the mass movement has elaborated.

The Russian tsarist context did not permit a "dialectic of partial contests." Indeed, there was no trap of reformist management of capitalism for the radicals to fall into. The class antagonisms were too sharp. That made it easier to develop the revolutionary dynamic. But it didn't facilitate the management of the new society... The emergence of a socialist alternative implies learning to resist capitalism from within, with the new logic of the new system germinating inside the resistance, without getting caught up in the old system. It requires new, non-state institutions which can ensure democratic control over public services, the restructuring of the labour market, and regional co-operation between countries. These will be the decisive pillars of the new force for a new society. These structures will bring together workers, intellectuals and actors in the social movements, as we have seen in France since the massive

public sector strike of December 1995.

The "transition to socialism" needs to be re-thought in the light of the failure of successive revolutionary ruptures, and their bureaucratic degeneration, and the failure of "realist" reformism to avoid being caught up in the management of capitalism. We need to study the internal and external conditions for anti-capitalist struggle, and the necessary resources for the emancipatory socialist project, in an internationalist and historic framework. ★



Transformation and regroupment

The collapse of Stalinism and the continuing capitalist crisis has contradictory effects. Myths and illusions connected to the restoration of capitalism in the post-Stalinist societies have dissipated, faced with the actually existing market economy. But reactions to the socio-economic crisis all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a world-wide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

Regroupments of forces determined to learn the lessons of the historical abomination that was Stalinism and to continue, against the winds and the tides, to fight against capitalism are being realised in a number of countries.

In all the countries where such possibilities exist, the organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the re-groupment process. We consider this as an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale. At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in re-groupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism & Stalinism. ★

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Was Lenin right?

Any debate on the Russian revolution eventually touches on Lenin's conception of the revolutionary party.

François Vercammen

Anti-revolutionaries of all types see a socialist revolution as a *coup d'état*. To ward off any hint of social transformation, they also need to discredit those responsible for the revolutionary "plot".

In their own way, they show that, just as all radical critique of capitalism sooner or later turns to Marx, anti-capitalist action cannot ignore Lenin if it wants to be effective.

Social conditions in Russia at that time were so far removed from the situation in the West today that they should discourage all blind adoption of Bolshevik strategies. But there is clearly a universal component to the Russian experience. That revolution confirmed the capacity of the exploited and oppressed class(es) to emancipate themselves. Indeed, self-emancipation was the most important single concrete element of the Russian revolution.

Self-organisation in the mass struggle, particularly during the period of dual power, gave way to self-organisation during the seizure of power, and then to something quite different, self-management by the formerly oppressed classes through the new state.

So what is the role of the Party during and within this self-emancipation process? Some say that self-emancipation is by definition totally spontaneous, an "immaculate conception", not requiring any actually existing workers' organisation. In this analysis, the Party as a body distinct from the movement, with its higher than average level of consciousness, stronger than average level of organisation, and relatively autonomous capacity to take initiatives, became an obstacle to self-emancipation.

But how can one "judge" the self-emancipatory dynamic? Who gets to do the judging? How can one unravel the real dialectic which comes to exist between all the forms of self-activity in the working class and society?

Marc Ferro, who dislikes all parties, has a definition of self-organisation which excludes most of the council movement. He only approves of the local (factory and district) soviets, and not those which "centralised" or which contained sociological or political elements from outside like intellectuals or political parties. (See *Naissance et effondrement du régime communiste en Russie*, published by Livre de poche, 1997).

In fact, this is a challenge to the legiti-

macy of taking power at all, since this precise moment of activity absolutely requires the initiative of a revolutionary organisation like a party: a very centralised and homogenous structure, capable of neutralising the violent reaction of the repressive state apparatus. Those who try to imagine an alternative scenario, in which soviets could take power without a party like, in the Russian context, the Bolsheviks, are unconvincing. (See C. Read, *From Tsar to Soviets*, London, UCL Press, 1997)

The Russian revolution did not contradict Marx's saying about "the emancipation of the workers". Indeed, the revolution gave it a concrete form for the first time, integrating the role of the Party (or parties). Obviously there were problems. Not just with the party, but concerning the struggling popular masses. The concrete dialectic between these two factors did not depend solely on the Party's desire for autonomy. The Party was heavily conditioned by the subordinate classes' level of political consciousness, militant energy, and cultural capacity for self-management. This was proved by the whole cycle of the Russian revolution, from 1895 to 1922.

Lenin: A Party for the revolution

At the beginning of the 20th century, for the first time in history, a "Marxist" party set itself the objective of leading the popular masses towards the revolutionary conquest of political power on the basis of their own activity. This was a real innovation, breaking with the "parliamentarist" substitutionism of the increasingly reformist social democratic movement and the "populist" substitutionism of the Social Revolutionaries.

The contradictions in all European societies began to multiply and intensify at the end of the 19th century. Analysing this new reality, a new Marxist programme began to take shape. Among the contributors were Parvus, Kautsky, Plekhanov, Axelrod, Hilferding, Luxemburg, Trotsky, Pannekoek, Bauer, Bukharin and Lenin.

Lenin and his comrades were the first to import this understanding into a party which was ready to meet the challenge of revolution. This success has been recognised by enemies, fellow travellers, and militants around the world. Many militants have tried to understand Lenin's concept of the Party, and apply it, more or less sensibly, in their own countries. They have projected their hopes onto Lenin's conception of the party, as set out in *What Is to Be Done?*

This work was originally published as a series of articles in *Iskra* (Spark) and as

a brochure in 1902. It had a great influence on the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party. Lenin was trying to convince the militants of the party's local committees that they needed new strategies if they were to survive the tsarist repression. This meant abandoning their 'artisanal' political habits, and centralising their activity through a new newspaper aimed at an all-Russian audience. This implied a centralised political and practical leadership.

The practical aspect of Lenin's proposals met with enormous sympathy among the militants. At last someone had suggested a solution to the endless arrests of militants and the dismantling of party organisations. And this practical proposal was based on a political perspective: a revolution in the foreseeable future. Centralising the party was one way of preparing the insurrection.

Until Leninist ideas fell out of favour recently, *What Is to Be Done?* has been served up with a wide variety of sauces. Its influence on revolutionaries is rather strange, considering that the brochure had hardly been published when it was overtaken and marginalised by the 1905 revolution. In April of that year, Lenin himself withdrew its most controversial components. Later, he denied that the work had any general theoretical implications. He opposed republishing it for use in political education.

After 95 years of debate, two elements of *What Is to Be Done?* stand out.

First, the necessity for a centralised party. To this day, anti-revolutionary currents have seen this as the "original sin" of "Leninism".

Lenin's arguments were initially accepted as obvious, given the repressive conditions. But in the difficult 1903 founding congress of the Russian party, Lenin became the target of outrageous polemics, in which he was accused of ultra-centralism, Bonapartism, "substitutionism", and individual dictatorship. Trotsky and Luxemburg were his most virulent and eloquent critics. They tried to back up their opposition to Lenin with historical and analytical arguments.

The second "essential" argument of *What Is to Be Done?* was the need for the Party to introduce class (socialist and political) consciousness "from the outside". Again, Lenin's argument was initially accepted unanimously. Lenin himself even invoked the (at that time unchallenged) legitimacy of Karl Kautsky, "Pope" of the International, for his arguments.

Lenin quickly responded to his critics on both these points. He told Luxemburg that the kind of centralisation he was proposing corresponded to the elementary

criteria of any organisation, such as the subordination of lower organs to higher ones, and the need for everyone to apply the decisions of the majority after debate and voting. *What Is to Be Done?* had simply made a distinction between a few general principles of organisation like these and the specific practical organisation of work, which, Lenin argued, would depend on the concrete situation.

He admitted that he had “bent the stick too far the other way” in stressing the importance of the “outside” introduction of political and socialist consciousness by the party. This was part of his polemic with what he called “economism”, a conception in which economic struggles would spontaneously lead to anti-tsarist political struggles and “trade-unionist” class consciousness would develop into revolutionary consciousness. (See the preface to *In Twelve Years*, 1907).

Influenced by this virulent debate, and by the lessons of the 1905 revolution, Lenin began to develop a new conception of the Party, less motivated by the desire to innovate, compared with the German social democrats, than by the desire to meet the challenge of the coming revolution. Recognising the persistent failure to build the Party in Russia, Lenin stressed the importance of meeting all the practical conditions for success in this field. He made a thorough analysis not just of practical and organisational questions but also of the “backwardness” of Russian society and the working class (mainly through his discussions with “old man” Axelrod). His sharpening awareness of the approach of revolution since 1890 only fed Lenin’s vision, so radically opposed to fatalism or spontaneism where the role of the Party (its programme, activity and organisation) was concerned.

This desire to lead (in the Party, and in the Party’s relationship with the class) carried the seeds of the future theorisation of the “vanguard party”. Lenin’s conception conflicted directly with that of Luxemburg, who argued in *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy* that “in fact, social democracy is the movement of the working class itself, rather than something linked to the organisation of the class”.

Beyond *What Is to Be Done?*

Lenin took the Bolsheviks through four stages of construction in the years culminating in 1917. The Bolshevik faction (formed in 1903) became the Bolshevik Party in 1912.

Each stage reflected specific political and organisational experiences, which influenced and shaped Lenin’s thinking. The first moment was defined by the 1905 revolution. This affirmed not only the role of the working class as vanguard of the anti-tsarist revolution, but also its potential for spontaneous self-organisation. Not that this rendered the leading role of the Party unnecessary. Lenin had understood the limits of spontaneity.

The result was, for the first time, a clearer conception of the Party and its dialectical relationship with the class, in terms of both consciousness and organisation. The hierarchical rules which prevented workers from joining were challenged.

Overwhelmed by a working class “in revolt”, the Party became in effect an organisation of cadres, open to any worker with a minimum consciousness and activism. Lenin pushed in this direction, against the opposition of the middle cadres, the “professional revolutionaries”, who quoted *What Is to Be Done?* against him!

The 1905 revolution has been seen by historians as the “dress rehearsal” for 1917. It marked the consciousness and the imagination of those who were adult at the time. For the Party, it had a volatile effect: boosting the number of members from 500-2000 in 1904 to 70,000 in 1906, a membership which was to almost completely evaporate by 1910.

This, combined with the factional atmosphere of 1907-1914, has blinded many commentators, who have concentrated on 1905 and 1917. But the “calm” period in-between is a time of attempted reforms from above (symbolised by Stolypin) and the semi-revolutionary crisis of 1913-14.

This is when the Bolshevik Party acquired its definitive shape, thanks to more articulate and thoughtful political activity, within the emerging civil society. For the first time, the Party won majority influence within the labour movement, in the trade unions and strike committees.

Leninism against ultra-leftism

Between 1906 and 1912, Lenin went through an intense learning process. The unthinkable seemed to be happening. The beginnings of parliamentary democracy allowed the Liberal Party to win elections. And the regime attempted agrarian reform. This did not reinforce tsarism, but allowed the emergence of autonomous peasant organisations, both on the parliamentary and “trade union” fronts.

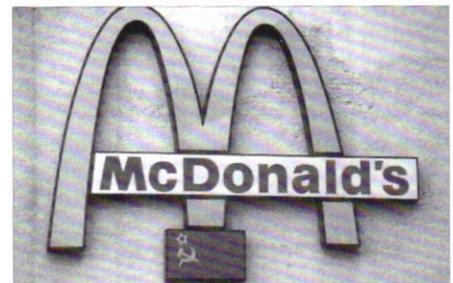
In the towns, the labour movement won its legal existence. Lenin turned his back on his own previous analysis and political line. He did not hesitate to go against the orthodoxy of the party and his own faction: he urged participation in fraudulent elections for an emasculated parliament; parliamentary work in a dictatorial system; an orientation towards the poorer peasants; *rapprochement* with the “labourites” and “Social Revolutionaries” -- his old enemies; united action with the Mensheviks and “rightist” currents on specific issues; joining the legal trade unions, and a democratic tendency struggle; recognition of the nationality question; and the beginnings of women’s work.

It is rarely stressed, but Leninism was forged in the struggle against ultra-leftism, which was very present among the peasants and in the intelligentsia (the

Social Revolutionaries and the Maximalists), as well as in the Party itself. Ultra-leftism threatened to paralyse the Party’s intervention in the “real movement”, and prevent it from being present in the active centres of political life.

Radical as it was, Bolshevism was never the most left-wing of the major currents of the Russian mass movement.

In 1913-14, the failure of the timid reforms provoked the beginnings of a revolution. But unlike in 1905 (and 1917), the upsurge did not begin with a labour explosion which affected all of society, including the revolutionaries. Instead, the Bolshevik Party won the minds of the growing student and labour movement and pushed it towards general strike. In Petrograd in August 1914, this became an insurrection.



The activity of the Party was the determining factor, before and during the confrontation. This was the real test of its leadership capacity, its political capability (“the line”) and its practical capacity in organising mass work “on the ground.”

Still underground, the Party developed intense agitational work for a platform of demands including the eight-hour day, confiscation of the lands of the aristocracy, trade union rights, universal social security paid for by the bosses and the state, and democratic elections to a sovereign, constituent assembly. This looked a lot like a “transitional” approach!

The *legal* parliamentary fraction played an important role, as did the trade union fractions. The Mensheviks, obsessed by their *rapprochement* with the liberals, not only opposed the strikes, but argued against the “excessively radical” demands. In six months, Menshevism was judged and crushed in the forum of workers’ democracy: in the trade unions and the strike committees.

In other words, from the Party’s point of view, the “dress rehearsal” was not 1905, but this general strike and insurrection in the capital.

By the end of 1913, the Bolshevik party had made its breakthrough on the ground.

The apparently smooth convergence between the Party and the movement in 1917 was not the result of chance. It was the culmination of a cycle of organisation, political reflection and activism which had brought the Party to the heart of the working class and which, in 1917, carried it into the leadership of the state. ★

Puerto Rico Massive protest against privatisation

A massive one-day strike against privatisation shook the United States' Caribbean colony of Puerto Rico on October 1st

Rafael Bernabe

Almost 100,000 demonstrators (from a total population of only 3.7 million) gathered in front of the Capitol building. This is the largest mobilisation in the history of Puerto Rico, and the most enthusiastic.

The *Paro* was supported by all three labour federations on the island.¹ It closed most public schools and the University of Puerto Rico, while spurring mass absenteeism in many other public sector institutions. Some private businesses closed, and San Juan's major avenues were paralysed by the endless caravans of cars and trucks transporting demonstrators.

As in 1990, the upsurge in organisation and militancy was provoked by the attempt to privatise the Puerto Rico Telephone Company.

The PRTC is a profitable concern. It holds a monopoly on local telephone service, and nets \$100 million in yearly profits. This subsidises other government operations, such as the public radio and TV stations. It is thus easier for telephone workers to link their struggle for job and income security with the concerns of most people as consumers, or as workers in other subsidised areas.

There is a solid and widespread feeling that state-owned telecom enterprises can be more efficient than the private sector. Hardly anybody who remembers the pre-nationalisation service of ITT supports privatisation.

The market price of the PRTC is estimated at US\$3.2 billion. It could only be bought by a major telecommunications multinational. So the struggle against the privatisation of the PRTC thus brings together working class, consumer and national aspirations in a mixture that has twice proven to be highly flammable. The main slogan of the *Paro* campaign, *Puerto Rico no se vende* means both that 'Puerto Rico is not for sale' and that 'Puerto Rico cannot be bought-off'.

Resistance to the privatisation of the PRTC has crossed party lines. The *Paro Nacional* of 1990 was carried out against the then ruling *Partido Popular Democrático* (which favours the island's existing status as a U.S. colony), while the 1997 stoppage was directed against the *Partido Nuevo Progresista* (which favours annexation of Puerto Rico as a U.S. state).

This summer's opposition to privatisation was enhanced by the closing of the

Fajardo regional hospital, which had been under private administration. The closure threw more than 200 workers out of work and has seriously affected health services in the eastern part of the island.

Old or new structures?

Despite widespread support, organising the movement against privatisation has been a complex and often conflictive process. The *Paro Nacional* of 1990 was called by the *Comité de Organizaciones Sindicales* (COS) which in the 1980s had brought together most of the island's trade unions. For special campaigns (such as those against the scuttling of Puerto Rico's labour laws in 1995) the COS opened its doors to other groups.

This time round, some union leaders and sectors argued that the movement should be led by a new kind of structure that could truly incorporate other organisations opposing privatisation.

The resulting *Comité Amplio Contra la Privatización* (Broad Committee Against Privatisation) is made up of 27 organisations representing labour, political currents, and student, environmental, religious and women's concerns.

The idea to form the Broad Committee came from a radical coalition of major unions and federations and the island's Socialist Front

Regional committees

One of the major criticisms many of these militants had of the COS was its inability to insure the continuity of the Regional Committees after the 1990 *Paro*. And sure enough, it was the 11 new Regional Committees, along with the most active individual unions that prepared the *Paro Nacional* of October 1, organising simultaneous activities all over the island.

Alongside the initiatives of the *Comité Amplio*, several unions have carried out their own activities. The CGT Teachers Federation has continued its protests against the government's new educational policies, which include the use of textbooks in English, even where classes are in Spanish, and "importing" English teachers from the United States. The Teacher's Federation also organised regional caravans advising parents not to send their children to school on the day of the *Paro Nacional*.

The University wakes-up

The campaign against privatisation also coincided with a new wave of activism in the University of Puerto Rico. The UPR has a long tradition of labour and student struggles, but had been relatively quiet in recent years. Nevertheless, on September 10 a general assembly of al-



most 2,000 students (the largest in over five years) approved a resolution opposing the privatisation of the PRTC and supporting the *Paro Nacional*. The day before the *Paro Nacional*, the newly formed Student Front Against Privatisation organised the First Youth Festival Against Privatisation and in Solidarity with the Working People. It was a major success, with close to 2,000 students participating.

Each year the Puerto Rico independence movement commemorates the *Grito de Lares* insurrection against Spanish rule on September 23, 1868. This year, the *Lares* celebration was used to further agitate in preparation for the October 1st stoppage. *Puerto Rico no se vende* was the most popular chant.

The socialist left has played a major and leading role. Most of the new student leaders are either in or close to the Socialist Front.² So are leading members of several unions and of the regional committees. The Front is an official member of the *Comité Amplio*, which is leading the anti-privatisation campaign.³

The Front has emphasised the need to develop strong regional committees — sufficiently centralised to carry out co-ordinated actions and flexible enough to develop their own autonomous initiatives-, the need to incorporate the rank and file in all union discussions and mobilisations, as well as the need to look beyond the *Paro Nacional*.

The main challenge is to keep the existing organising efforts going. In 1990 the *Paro Nacional*, combined with the recession, did prevent the privatisation of the PRTC. But then there was followed by a period of demobilisation. The government hopes the situation will turn out similarly in 1997. It is our task to prove them wrong. ★

A longer version of this article was published in the November-December issue of the US magazine *Against the Current*

1. The Concilio General de Trabajadores (CGT), the Central Puertorriqueña de Trabajadores (CPT) and the AFL-CIO unions in Puerto Rico.
2. It includes the Puerto Rican section of the Fourth International.
3. Two other parties, the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño and the Nuevo Movimiento Independentista are also members.

Poverty's Superstar

Mother Teresa's death was somewhat overshadowed by that of Diana Windsor a few days before. But it was still an event for media-orchestrated mourning on the passing of a living saint.

B. Skanthakumar

Any speculation that her Order of Nuns would, with Mother Teresa now gone, finally join the present century (even in its twilight days) is unfounded. The new Mother Superior, Sister Nirmala, promises no change. "The poor must bear poverty in the right way," she told journalists. "They should accept poverty with the stoicism displayed by the nuns of the Missionaries of Charity; they should not moan and groan but be content with whatever little the Lord has given them."

The Indian Government insisted on a state funeral with full military honours usually reserved for the head of state, and her body was displayed for public viewing for six days.

Mother Teresa loved the poor. She loved them so much she never asked how they become poor nor challenged the causes of their poverty. She dedicated her life to relieving, but never eradicating, their condition. But at least she was doing something.

Mother Teresa cared for the dying and destitute in her clinics. She never asked whether they ought to have been in a hospital instead, receiving surgical or medical treatment. The curable and the incurable were all the same to her and only the fortunate received pain-killers. But at least she was doing something.

Forgive the rich, they know not what they do

Mother Teresa had great compassion. In 1984 in Bhopal, the leak of MIC gas at the Union Carbide plant caused 2,500 deaths. Tens of thousands were blinded and hundreds of thousands became afflicted with respiratory ailments. The 'angel of mercy' was soon on the scene (she enjoyed free air and rail travel within India). Her first words to the survivors and their families were "Forgive, Forgive, Forgive". But at least she was doing something.

Mother Teresa was above politics. She was so apolitical she never inquired about source of a donation, or the means by which she received it. She never suspected the character of the individuals and regimes who flew her around the world in their private jets, feted her in their palaces and decorated her with their awards. The

Duvaliers in Haiti, Robert Maxwell in Britain, the Hoxha regime in Albania were all beneficiaries of her benedictions. But at least she was doing something.

Mother Teresa loved sinners. She loved them so much that when a crook named Charles Keating was brought before a court on charges of defrauding U.S. small investors in the savings and loans scandals of the 1980s, she sent a personal plea for clemency to the trial judge. Keating had donated over a million U.S. dollars to her Order and loaned her his jet on occasion. But at least she was doing something.



The myth

Why was this Christian missionary tolerated and even encouraged by the central government in predominantly Hindu India? And by successive West Bengal governments (her headquarters were in Calcutta) dominated by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)?

The answer is simple. She confirmed their perception that nothing could be done to remove the scourge of poverty, the epidemic of disease and malnutrition, the malady of hopelessness and helplessness. Only the symptoms could be managed.

For the Indian elite, all this is the fault of the poor themselves. Bad *karma* — actions in their past lives — contributed to their fate in the present one. This Hindu doctrine, which induces fatalism and apathy among its adherents, conveniently obscures the failure of this rotten system to improve the life-chances of the majority.

This Hindu fatalism fitted well with Teresa's own Catholic fundamentalist world view, a philosophy resonating with medieval notions exalting suffering and pain as redeeming past sins and leading to the tortuous path to Heaven where true reward would follow. This is instead of looking to create a better society in this life and on this earth.

Reactionary themes

But why was Mother Teresa propelled into superstardom outside India? In his superb polemic *The Missionary Position* (Verso: London 1995), Christopher Hitchens argues that the rich world likes to believe that "someone, somewhere is doing something for the Third World. [T]he great white hope meets the great black hole; the mission to the heathen blends with the comforting myth of Florence Nightingale."

Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" spoke about the 'civilising responsibility' of colonialism to its "new caught, sullen peoples/ Half-devil and Half-child." Missionaries like Mother Teresa followed the flag and were intimately bound up in that enterprise.

Mother Teresa went even further. She founded her own multinational, the Missionaries of Charity, operating more than 500 institutions in over one hundred countries and with 4,000 nuns and 40,000 lay workers. In doing so, she was as Hitchens notes, serving the "sponsor and the donor, and not the needs of the downtrodden. Helpless infants, abandoned derelicts, lepers and the terminally ill are the raw material for demonstrations of compassion."

The Vatican quickly recognised the value of the publicity she generated for her work and herself. The present Pope John Paul II, saw her as an ambassador for his own fundamentalist views on reproductive rights and gay sexuality.

In 1979 when Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, she used that platform to announce that "abortion is the worst evil, and the greatest enemy of peace."

For a saint like Teresa, the tragedy of 250,000 women world-wide dying each year from unsafe and unsupervised 'backstreet' abortions, and the denial of the right of women to control their own bodies pale in significance to the devil's work: contraception and abortion.

In 1971 the Pakistani army embarked on the mass rape of Bangladeshi women during the war of liberation. Many became pregnant. Mother Teresa admonished those women not to choose to abort the foetus. This would be an evil "equal to or worse" than the rape itself, she said.

Meanwhile her San Francisco franchise for gay men with AIDS mirrors the spartan monastic regime of her outlets elsewhere, with Christian teaching substituting for painkillers. She herself called AIDS "just retribution for improper sexual conduct," according to Hitchens. A view which is not dissimilar to the Vatican's own sophisticated thinking on the matter.

Her much praised homes in India are run with 19th century ideas and instruments. Prayer and Christian comfort are available in generous doses. Even where medication, hospitalisation and surgical intervention would be more appropriate and save more lives.

Behind the hypocrisy, scandal

Proper health care easily could have been afforded with the hundreds of millions of dollars that she received, and which collect interest in bank accounts or are spent on sacramental ornaments instead.

The financial dealings of the Order are

veiled in secrecy and its income and expenditure neither accountable to the residents of her homes nor its staff and members.

A former lay volunteer at one of her Bombay homes said that in his many years of experience working for Mother Teresa's organisation and observing its standard of care for the sick, "there are cases where there are only two possible descriptions: criminal neglect and criminal assault."

Mother Teresa herself died in a private hospital, with a personal physician and a team of specialists by her bedside and

round-the-clock care. Indeed, whenever she fell ill on one of her excursions abroad she was immediately booked into a private hospital. The best and most expensive care was off limits to the poor in her care. But it did no harm to Teresa's soul.

Mother Teresa symbolised the odious belief that the poor are objects for our charity and not subjects for their own liberation. She never asked why people are poor and oppressed, because she believed it to be inevitable.

She accepted it as part of the natural order and encouraged others to do the same. But she was doing something. ★

Cambodia's crisis

The uneasy Coalition government, in power in Cambodia since the UN-run elections in 1993, was severely shaken when intense fighting broke out in the capital, Phnom Penh on 5 July. In the wake of the fighting, between troops loyal to each of the two prime ministers, widespread looting destroyed machinery and equipment in the airport and many hospitals, businesses and factories. Though the situation has now normalised, the government estimates that 40,000 people have lost their jobs in manufacturing and tourism.

Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, from the Cambodian Peoples Party, said that the fighting was a response to moves by Prince Ranariddh to increase his military forces in the capital, and his secret negotiations with the *Khmer Rouge*. The CPP had been able to take decisive action due to deep splits within the royalist bloc. Both sides accuse the other of manoeuvres to undermine the national elections set for 28 May 1998.

Former first Prime Minister, Prince Ranariddh, remains outside the country. Royalist Secretary of State for the Interior, Ho Sok and other political opponents of second Prime Minister Hun Sen were killed during the week of fighting; others are in hiding.

Military operations by forces supporting Ranariddh, in conjunction with remaining *Khmer Rouge* forces, have largely been contained by the Cambodian Armed Forces. 25,000 Cambodians fled to Thailand to escape the fighting.

Responding to calls by Ranariddh, the US has ensured that Cambodia's seat in the UN remains vacant. Membership of ASEAN has also been delayed. Cambodia relies on international aid of approximately US\$460 million per year, about half its national budget. Aid from Germany, USA and the World Bank/IMF has been suspended. Larger donors, such as Japan (which provides over \$100 million), France and Australia are maintaining their aid, and retiring Australian Ambassador Tony Kevin has spoken out in support of Hun Sen.

The National Assembly re-convened on 28 July, with 97 of the 120 members

elected in 1993, including 40 of the 58 FUNCINPEC members and 6 of the 10 Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party members. 15 representatives are in exile. Most FUNCINPEC parliamentarians voted to elect Foreign Minister Ung Huot as party leader and first Prime Minister, replacing Ranariddh, widely regarded as incompetent. Ung Huot is an Australian citizen, politically close to that country's conservative government.

Although protesting his son's ouster, and publicly repeating his request to abdicate, King Sihanouk has returned to Cambodia.

All opposition newspapers disappeared after the fighting on 5 July, but after pleas by Hun Sen, ten resumed publication. *Prayuth (The Fight)* was suspended for 30 days under the 1996 Press Law, for exaggerating the government casualties.

Civil war may break out, before or after the elections. While many may be alarmed at Hun Sen's sometimes brutal exercise of power, very few Cambodians hope that the Ranariddh and *Khmer Rouge* forces will keep fighting.

For the international labour movement the key question is to what extent workers' rights can be advanced under the constraints of this reshaped coalition government.

The Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC, which emerged after garment factory strikes in December), is no longer active; their president Ou Mary has fled the country, and her chief supporter, Khmer Nation Party leader Sam Rainsy, also fears to return to Cambodia.

On the other hand, legal recognition has been accorded to 18 factory unions, 11 with the Cambodian Union Federation, supported by the Sar Kheng wing of the CP, 5 garment and cement factory unions with the Cambodian Federation of Trade Unions, supported since the 80s by Hun Sen and other CPP politicians, and 2 are independent unions that have received support from the Asia-America Free Labour Institute. The Cambodian Labour Organisation, an NGO with links to the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party is also functioning, though party leader Son Sann has left the country. [KD] ★

The other Asia



Hong Kong IMF protest

Two hundred protesters rallied outside the September 21st meeting of the IMF and WB, writes Lau Yu Fan. The protest was organised by Solidarity against the IMF/WB, a broad grouping of trade unions, NGOs, socialist organisations, students unions.

Despite its limited size, organisers say it has been "is the first time for more than 15 years that a leftist issue could attract this kind of support."

For more than a decade, leftist ideas seemed dead in Hong Kong. But with the sharp increase in poverty and unemployment, more discontent can be heard.

The coalition was a new way of working for the Hong Kong left. Most participating organisations intend to continue their co-operation. One of their first tasks is to call for the release of four demonstrators charged with attacking and obstructing the police. ★

The 14th International Youth Festival in Cuba

Ideas on Social change

The XIV International Festival of Youth and Students in Cuba reaffirmed socialism as the only possible form of society that benefits all of humanity.

Mónica Gaona Romero

Young students, workers, lesbians, religious activists, feminists, and militants from other mass movements affirmed that there is a socialist alternative to neo-liberalism, which would enable us to achieve a life that is just, peaceful and truly human. The exchange of experiences of the effects of neo-liberalism in the different countries of the participants demonstrated that the effects have been uniformly devastating for the people, and that the only solution for the economic, political and social problems is the radical overthrow of capitalist society.

The desire of youth for the transformation of a world which offers no future profoundly contradicts all those governments which daily preach exploitative and polarising policies — policies which have been imposed world-wide with the complicity of the principal international financial centres: the IMF, the World Bank, and the Bank of International Settlements.

Along with the participation of thousands of youth from around the world, the presence and active participation of the socialist left had a positive effect. One of the emotional highlights of the meeting was the presentation of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo from Argentina. A defiant contrast with Joaquín Sabina's song in which he remembers the thousands of disappeared with the words: "Forgetfulness exists... on arriving at the Plaza de Mayo, I fell to tears and started to shout 'Where are you?'..."

On this occasion, the shouts of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were the cries of hope: "The dream of the Revolution is alive. Our sons and our daughters gave their lives for the revolution. Their dreams and hopes were based on Marxism, and on the beautiful example of the Cuban Revolution and the passionate internationalism of Che Guevara. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo know that this hope is not dead. We know that 'the death of ideology' is a lie".

The US delegation is worth mentioning, not only because they had to defy the prohibition imposed by their government which made it impossible to travel to Cuba legally, but also because 849 delegates came to Havana. The biggest delegation, which consistently attacked imperialism and neo-liberalism, came from the country whose successive

governments have blockaded Cuba for more than 35 years.

The US delegation included important numbers of members of minority groups: Chicanos, *Mexicanos*, Latin Americans of all types, blacks, Asians — all participants in the struggles which have been developing in various cities for human rights and national self-determination, among others.

Attendance at this important meeting against neo-liberalism more than doubled the pre-conference registration. Just on the first day there were 3,000 more participants than had been anticipated. As a result, the co-ordination of transportation and scheduling of the different workshops and Festival activities had to be changed on the spot. The infrastructure had been prepared for only 5,000 participants, but more than 11,330 delegates came.

The topics discussed included: lack of democracy and respect for human rights; intolerance; the intervention of big business, especially in the third world; poverty, which is increasing all over the world; the segregation of ethnic minorities; the resurgence of neo-fascism; xenophobia; unemployment; lack of access to education and health care.

Responding to the women question

Unfortunately, the time and space allotted to each of the panels was, in the end, insufficient for an adequate development of the different discussions. To take just one example: the room dedicated to the discussion of the situation of young women in the world was, if not the smallest, then at least one of the smallest. This was not due to any lack of participation, since a large number of truly youth-

ful women couldn't participate in the discussion due to the lack of space.

There were various other surprises in this discussion. In the first place, the composition of the Cuban delegation — all women over 40 years old. One of these women took charge of chairing the co-ordinating panel, and another, who was a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba, read a document which tried to show "the realities of young women in Cuba." The central theme of the paper was that Cuban women have full equality, and that there are numerous laws that assure their well being. Machismo, easily noticeable in the country, was not questioned. The relation of public to private life was not mentioned. In this respect, the women of Cuba continue to face great disadvantages.

The festival confirmed that the remaining Worker's States still have some of their old vices. The North Korean delegation was certainly youthful, but the speech that they gave had absolutely nothing to do with their way of life. Not the slightest admission that, although their society proclaims itself communist, the population is rigorously controlled. In the women's meetings, North Korean delegates centred their speech on their great leader, the "principal guide" who has shown them "the light, and the path of life" and has "aided them to be good and better women every day". And with this, they wanted us to believe that their living conditions and development were good and equal. It was clear, however, that none of the North Korean women present played an important or decision-making role either in the Communist Party or in their communities.

A lively debate was provoked by one of the delegates from Barbados, who argued that prostitution must be tolerated, since men have to satisfy their "biological necessities", but it is desirable that their future wives be virgins at the time of marriage. Most other delegates accepted that,

Greeting from Fourth International Youth

To the 14th International Youth Festival

Comrades,

We are 500 young people from 15 European countries gathered in France at the fourteenth annual International Youth Camp of the Fourth International.

Our organisations of revolutionary youth share with the Fourth International a long tradition of solidarity with the Cuban people and their popular revolution.

We are active in the campaigns and movements against the criminal imperialist blockade of Cuba and in defence of the Revolution.

Our Camp this year had a major rally to mark the 30th anniversary of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's death and to celebrate

his life and legacy. 'Che' symbolises for us as for young people all over the world the virtues and example of being a revolutionary today. His courage and audacity, his deep feeling for the oppressed and exploited, his internationalism and anti-imperialism are our values too.

In our struggles in defence of democratic rights and against compulsory military service, for a decent education and standard of living and against a Europe of austerity and unemployment we commend these values to young people all over the world.

Viva the Cuban revolution!
Viva the Fourth International!
Forward to victory! ★

★ conferences

insofar as the evils of capitalism are not eradicated, prostitution cannot be eliminated, but refused to legitimise the sex trade or pose the problem in terms of male "necessities" and female "purity."

The current fashion of being anti-party was evident throughout the discussions. The majority of women spoke of a transformation of society to attain equity, although many still spoke of equality of the sexes. But almost no one spoke of the types of organisation that would be necessary to carry out such a change. The proposals were ambiguous, along the lines of "a women's organisation which would fight for women's demands and a better quality of life."

One Swedish delegate did stress the need for women to participate in political parties. She said that the fight for women's rights had to be carried out within a democratic-centralist organisation with a programme and a plan, where, doubtlessly, women's rights would be supported. She admitted the difficulties of this approach, including the need to confront some backward comrades, but argued that this is the only way of transforming society so that women would be taken into account. This approach was supported by some of the delegates, above all those who were members of political parties.

The discussions on Trotskyism also provoked considerable interest. Cuban and Mexican comrades discussed their analysis of the key moments of the development of the Cuban revolution, and the participation of Trotskyists at all stages of modern Cuban history. There was particular interest in the themes of the exchange

of ideas between Ernest Mandel and Che Guevara over Cuba's economic strategy, during the period when Che was Minister of Industry.

Cuban youth excluded

Those delegates who came to Cuba hoping to be in contact with Cuban youth were severely disappointed.

Young Cubans are unhappy. Many resent or regret many of the measures which the government has been obliged to take in response to the economic blockade. Like the exclusion of Cubans from certain tourist sites, or the existence of hospitals reserved for foreigners. Young people also complain about elements of corruption in the education system. The public transport system is overloaded, a privileged bureaucracy imposes an exaggerated level of minute administrative controls over daily life, and so on. Disillusionment with the revolution is growing.

Conclusions

Nevertheless, the festival did stress the need to construct an alternative to the present society, with its barbarian system of capitalist development. There is no doubt that the alternative is some form of democratic socialism with a human face. This general perspective received wide support at the festival. The resistance of Cuban women and men reinforces this alternative, and inspired all the foreign participants to work for social change in their own countries.

Delegates returned home with one of the slogans of the Mothers of the Plaza de May ringing in their ears. "The dream of Revolution is still vivid." ★

coming soon

Ernest Mandel Study Centre: Symposium on the Russian revolution

Co-organised with Espaces Marx, a pluralistic Marxist research foundation linked to the French Communist Party, the research centres of Paris VIII and Dijon universities and journals including *La Pensée* and *Critique communiste*. The symposium will take place at Université Paris VIII on November 14-16.

This event is likely to be one of the major international gatherings of Marxists scholars and thinkers held in recent years. Scheduled participants include Samir Amin, Daniel Bensaid, Robin Blackburn, Samuel Farber, Marc Ferro, Janette Habel, Boris Kagarlitsky, Paul Leblanc, V.P. Volobuyev, and C. Weil.

Simultaneous translation into English, French and Russian. Registration fee: FF100 for individuals, FF200 if sponsored by an institution, FF50 for students and unemployed. Accommodation in 2 or 3-bed rooms costs FF50 (\$9) per night

To register, write to *Espaces Marx* (64 Bd Blanqui, 75013 Paris, France), attaching a check for the registration fee, plus accommodation if needed (specify which nights). The check will be kept as a deposit and returned to you against payment in French cash on arrival. Meals will be paid on the spot

Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference Sydney, Australia, April 1998

Organised by the Asia Pacific Institute for Democratisation and Development. See advertisement in September magazine.

The Institute also welcomes applications to present papers at the conference, and suggest specific themes for discussion under the general framework of supporting democratisation, self-determination and social justice and opposing the neo-liberal austerity offensive.

Contact: Dr Helen Jarvis, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, (SILAS) University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052 Australia. Or Email to: apiaustralia@peg.apc.org. Or fax to: 02-96901381

Net



Working

Going Dutch

The joint website of *Rood* and *Grenzeloos*, the Flemish and Netherlands publications of Fourth International supporters. Links in English to Belgium's Ernest Mandel Foundation, and other Fourth International websites

www.cyberking.be/tuzla

<http://titan.glo.be/geudens>

Avanti!

The Revolutionaer Sozialistischer Bund/IV. Internationale is now on the Internet. English language materials will be added soon.

www.geocities.com/capitolhill/lobby/1204

Green Left anniversary

The 300th issue of Australia's Green Left Weekly will be published on December 3rd. When the paper was launched almost seven years ago, write co-editors Lisa Macdonald and Pip Hinman, no-one could be sure that such an alternative publication would survive. The fact that it has not only survived but grown — in size (from 24 to 32 pages), in geographical spread and in the number of people contributing articles, photographs, cartoons, sales efforts, money and encouragement — is cause for pride and celebration. We are especially proud of our firm presence on the Internet (www.peg.apc.org/~greenleft) that has given us an international audience of regular, committed readers and supporters.

Special two-year Supporters' Subscriptions cost A\$300. For more information write to: PO Box 394, Broadway, NSW, Australia. <greenleft@peg.apc.org>

Labour Left Briefing

The October issue includes an interview with Britain's veteran left leader Tony Benn.

<llb@gn.apc.org>, PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU
www.labournet.org.uk/llb/

Grenzeloos #40

(in Dutch) The September issue looks at the policies of the social democratic/ liberal government and the electoral programme of the Dutch Green Left.

Socialistisk Information #112

In Danish. The October issue focuses on the November 18th local elections. A socialist councillor looks back at four years of activities • Young Rebel candidates explain why they are running • Once again, politicians try to win local council seats by attacking refugees and immigrants • Local politicians are eager to hand public services over to private operators, but the public remains reluctant.

Published by Socialistisk Arbejderparti (SAP), Danish section of the Fourth International. New address:
socinf@inet.uni2.dk

Bandera Roja

(in Spanish) The September issue includes a range of materials on Puerto Rico's independence movement, labour and student struggles, and a report on Puerto Rican participation in the 14th World Youth Festival in Cuba. The main article is on the campaign to privatise the US colony's energy utility.

<info@bandera.org>

Viento Sur #33

(in Spanish) Daniel Raventós asks why analytical Marxism is doing so well, when Marxism as a political movement is doing so badly.