

Revolutionary Perspectives

Quarterly Magazine of the Communist Workers Organisation

Spain 1936: Myth and Reality



Also in this issue

The Indispensable Engels
Islamic Fundamentalism
Strikes in France
Dayton Peace Accord
US Global Domination
Israel after Rabin

Revolutionary Perspectives (Series 3 No.1)

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Editorial

We cannot begin this new series of *Revolutionary Perspectives* without acknowledging the surprisingly numerous letters we received in praise of our paper *Workers Voice*. No sooner did we decide to replace it as our main publication with *Revolutionary Perspectives* than people from California to Kazakhstan, from Old Scotland to New South Wales wrote to us to say how much they had got from the paper. They congratulated us on the coverage of *Workers Voice* and some even expressed the hope that *Revolutionary Perspectives* will be "at least as good".

It is a pity we did not receive more of this correspondence over the years since we believe that the purpose of a revolutionary paper is to create discussion and stir up opinion. In this sense the success of *RP* also depends on the responses of our readers. Future issues will try to carry on the tradition of *Workers Voice* for taking up correspondence and offering Open Spaces to those who wish to take up issues. Our view is that only the mass of the working class can make the socialist revolution and it is up to revolutionaries to break the passivity which totalitarian capitalism tries to impose on the working class. So get on your arses and write responding to this issue (e-mail address supplied on request).

Given the force of the world-wide attacks on workers and the present numerical weakness of revolutionary internationalist forces we have clearly got a long way to go. However the recent spate of strikes in France and, to a lesser extent in Britain shows that predictions of the demise of the collective producer class are, as they always have been, premature.

Capitalism needs our labour power and it is still in a long and deep crisis. Global growth rates are according to the OECD hardly anything to write home about (they will be virtually stagnant in many leading OECD countries this year, including Britain). The per capita income of the UK has fallen from £43,000 in 1988 to £35,000 in 1994. For the working class the decline has been more drastic since they have taken the brunt of the collapse. More attacks on living standards are already in the pipeline. The evidence of the successes of capitalism over the last two decades is to be seen in the poverty statistics. Since 1979 the number of people in households earning less than the average income increased from 5 to 14.1 millions (of which 4 million are children).

The National Trust owns Quarry Bank Mill, a working textile museum next to Manchester airport. As a monument to the paternalism of the Greg family who owned it it is hardly a place for working class radicalism. But even here the nakedness of exploitation cannot be hidden.

In 1833 a workers at Quarry Bank Mill would have to work 2.5 hours in order to buy

**1 pound of flour
1 pound of potatoes
1 pound of butter
1 quart of milk
1 pound of bread
1 pound of beef**

The exhibition goes on to show that a workers earning £5,500 in 1985 would have to work just 2.25 hours to get the same amount of food. If that doesn't seem like much progress the reports in the fall in the standard of living of the last decade quoted above means that workers today are working longer for the same goods. Whilst the state still offers enough welfare to maintain social control despite the cuts (which have seen those on £75 a week in 1979 now on £62 a week) there is no doubt that we are now back to a situation in which the permanent army of the unemployed exists to depress the wage level. Curiously where there is a labour shortage, as in Singapore, the market doesn't seem to work in favour of the workers. Last September the Singapore Government announced that workers would have to work longer than the retirement age (previously 60) and they would be paid less with fewer benefits and less job security for doing so! This is just to underline that the "market" under decadent capitalism operates according to the dictates of state monopoly capitalism. They only real competition is between states to gain as much surplus value produced elsewhere as possible. This is what we mean by the imperialist stage of capitalism. All the evils of environmental pollution, barbaric war and man-made famines stem from imperialism. The working class is the only force capable on an international level of posing an alternative. *Revolutionary Perspectives* aims to participate in the creation of that alternative - an international party uniting workers across the world to fight for a communist society, a society of free producers without money, exploitation, frontiers, states or standing armies.

France...

The state attacks workers

Strike action has continued in France over the government's proposals to make significant cuts to its welfare and benefits system. On October 10th workers from all five major union confederations and two other unions staged a one-day strike. On November 24th this was repeated, this time including students and many other sectors affected by these and other proposals. Transport workers however went on indefinite strike and brought the country to a halt for weeks. Others such as health workers have struck on a variety of days, even the riot police took some action (halting the handing out of parking tickets - their other job!) on grounds of overwork. It has not been all *fraternité*. Miners in Lorraine fought running battles with riot police as the stoppages went into their third week. Banking, telephones, power and air transport have all been affected by workers' actions. These are the first major strikes since 1986 when similar plans, also under Chirac, were announced. Five million public sector workers are affected by the announced pay-freeze which will remain until 1997 (apart from the rises to come in November). These actions, despite their limitations (of which, see below) demonstrate once again that the capacity of the working class to act collectively has not vanished for ever under the twin blows of the crisis and the capitalist offensive against workers.

Taxing the Patience of the Workers

Juppé, the French Prime Minister is hoping to reduce the burden placed on government finances by the public sector wage bill. This comes to FFr 82 billion, or 40% of the total budget. He is currently hoping to reduce the budget deficit from FFr. 322 billion to 290 billion by 1996 (from 5% to 3% of GDP, £43.39 billion). Beyond this Chirac and Juppé are planning a radical reorganisation of government finances as a whole. Businesses will then have less of a burden on their wage bills in terms of welfare provision, thus adding to their profitability. Juppé is also looking to impose a new 0.5% tax (the so-called *Contribution au Remboursement des Dettes*) on workers over the next 13 years. This, it is hoped, will turn the £33.3 billion social security debts and the annual £8.4 billion annual deficit into a surplus.

In France the trades unions are much more integrated into the state apparatus than in Britain. Although union membership is only at about 8% most of these are in the public sector. Currently welfare benefits are administered jointly between the unions and the state, Force Ouvrière being the most involved. What Juppé hopes for is that these will be phased out and replaced by benefits derived wholly from taxation instead of payroll levies. The unions, particularly FO, CGT and CFDT (the main leftist union confederations), are resisting this change. It would be a major blow against the patronage of the union bosses. Nevertheless all of them, at some time or another before Juppé's announcement, had either welcomed dialogue with the Government or had accepted the need for the new taxes. It was only when the workers' anger at the final proposals was made clear that the unions began to feel threatened by more than loss of control over major areas of finance.

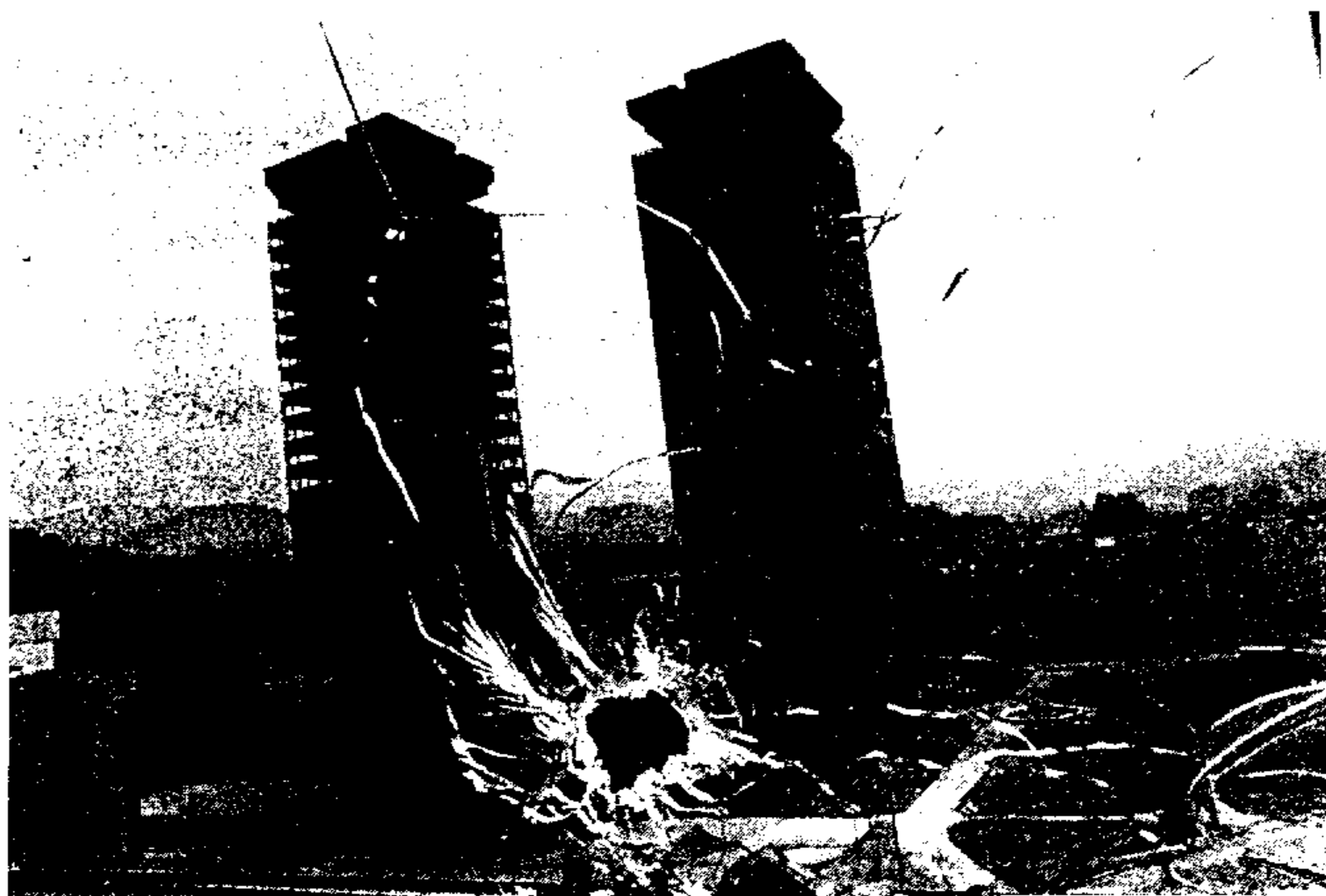
Against the Unions, Against the State

The campaign has been coordinated by the unions throughout. Although some workers took strike action on days the union asked them not to, for the most part the unions have successfully called each section out on different days. They, of course, argue that this is so that the campaign can be sustained and not everyone lose money at the same time. But the other side of this is the fact that it drags the campaign out (and the nearer the Christmas holiday the greater the pressure to accept a deal) and makes the efforts of the workers more fragmented. Here the unions are doing a good job for the state. Who can calculate what might happen if 15 million workers went on all-out strike indefinitely? Certainly not the unions who want to keep everything under control. And the bourgeoisie are so confident that they are going to control the anger of the workers that the Paris Bourse (the Stock Exchange) is actually rising in value.

The French bourgeoisie keep saying that there is "no alternative". This was Thatcher's rallying cry for years but in fact there is no-one presenting an alternative programme. The Socialists and Communists in the National Assembly cannot really argue since they introduced similar taxes in the early 1980s. The unions are aiming to negotiate a deal for themselves by Christmas. For the workers though the alternative is either to fight or pay up. The problem is that fighting means more than just striking against the current policy. It also forces the issue how to fight and what sort of society the working class want. The danger is that the workers are defeated in

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*Sarajevo today as seen
from a hotel window*



After the Balkan War The Imperialist “Peace”

What is arguably the fourth or fifth Balkan War this century (see panel on page 3) has now come to an uneasy armistice. It is likely that it will hold. 60,000 NATO troops should see to that. After over 200,000 deaths the imperialism can claim to have established peace. We say “claimed” because the forces of imperialism have also promoted the war, despite all the hypocrisy about humanitarian aid and peace missions.[1]

But the lie machines of the West are already rewriting the history of the area. In Britain this reached its height with the “much acclaimed” BBC TV series “The Death of Yugoslavia”. The programmes were accompanied by a book of the same name written by Laura Silber (of the Financial Times) and the BBC’s Alan Little. This claims that

The war in Yugoslavia was not the international community’s fault. It was a home-baked cake.

loc cit. Introduction

They go further in saying that the war for Yugoslavia was started by the Serbian ruling class and the responsibility is virtually single-handedly that of one man, Slobodan Milosevic.

A similar view was expounded by Lord

(David) Owen, the failed peace negotiator in the Balkans. In a lecture at Sheffield University in November he portrayed the Southern Slavs as congenital nationalists always eager to cut the throats of the next nationality. For Owen, Milosevic also emerges as the number one baddie in the whole story. This “great man” theory is always a convenient smokescreen for capitalist lick-spittles. The truth is that the causes of the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia tells us more about the capitalist world in general than they want us to know. This is why they are now claiming that the war has local causes whilst it is only “the international community” which has brought peace. Thanks to the United States, civilisation and sanity can once again prevail in ex-Yugoslavia.

All this is so much bollocks. It is true that the break-up of Yugoslavia did have internal causes but this is by no means the whole picture. In the first place it was the world economic crisis which began the process of the destruction of Yugoslavia. A “communist” state which was propped up by Western aid it no longer had a role to play once the Cold War began to wind down in the mid 1980s. With the loss of traditional markets in Eastern Europe after the crisis then collapse of the Soviet Empire the crisis bit deeper still. By 1989-90 inflation had reached 2000% per year

whilst thousands of factories closed throwing 1,400,000 out of work. Unemployment reached 25% of the economically active population. In the same period there were 1,700 strikes involving millions of workers. They were demanding no more than jobs, better working conditions and wage increases to defend their standard of living. Despite these limited enough demands, despite the almost total absence of political demands or a clear working class programme, the Yugoslav bourgeoisie was terrified by the prospect that the working class were resisting. The workers were beginning to understand that Yugoslavia was not a form of self-managed socialism but just as capitalist in its exploitative relations as any other state, East or West.

The political pressure from the West following the collapse of the Eastern bloc added to the sense of crisis inside the Yugoslav Communist Party. Faced with the loss of power and influence, the various national sections of the Communist Party now spawned nationalist leaders. Where they did not (as in Croatia) they were pushed aside by ex-communists like Tudjman, or Islamic oppositionists like Izetbegovic in Bosnia.

The first nationalist upsurge was that of the ethnic Albanian ruling class in Kosovo who wanted to secede from Serbia. Under Tito's 1974 Constitution Kosovo became an autonomous region of Serbia. Now the Kosovan ruling class wanted to become the seventh Yugoslav Republic (which would have given them a militia and a national bank). This was clearly a first step on the road to complete separation from Serbia. Kosovo also only had a 10% Serb minority some of whom now began to leave Kosovo. There were now mass Serbian demonstrations in the capital Kosovo Polje against "Kosovan oppression". The fact that the Serbian ruling class has always claimed its historic roots lie on Kosovo made it easier for them to whip up Serb nationalism. This posed a problem for the leaders of the Serbian Communist Party and the Yugoslav leadership. Milosevic, a long time Communist bureaucrat simply saw that it was the only way the old apparatus could hold on to power. By turning himself into the spokesman of Serb nationalism he rapidly became undisputed leader of Serbia. This however did not automatically mean the break-up of Yugoslavia. For that we have to look elsewhere.

Germany's "Drang nach Osten"

To be precise we must look to Germany. Slovenia and Croatia, Yugoslavia's two most northern republics, had always looked north ever since the days when both had

been part of the Austrian Empire. The two richest provinces of Yugoslavia (and the ones which suffered the most from the collapse of Yugoslavia's old markets) their rulers began to look for a way to break from Yugoslavia. It is no accident that they turned to Germany. In 1991 speaking German became fashionable in Slovenia as the Youth League proposed to fly fly Nazi symbols on Tito's birthday [2].

During Slovenia's ten day "war" with the Yugoslav Army (the JNA) Hans Dietrich Genscher, the then German Foreign Minister was in constant communication with the Slovene leaders. When the Slovenes attacked the JNA he took a train down to Ljubljana to denounce the atrocities of the JNA (who, held back by the Serbian leaders, had suffered the only losses!). This ensured that Britain and Italy also stepped in with their support and meant that Slovenia could happily leave the Yugoslav Federation. At this time the German Government of Chancellor Kohl was determined to reassert Germany's place in Europe. Germany was the most powerful state in the new European Union which had just come into being in 1991. With re-unification with East Germany also completed the traditional German imperialist *drang nach Osten* (drive to the East) could begin. The second beneficiaries of this new aggressiveness were the Croat nationalists. They were led by an ex-communist General Franjo Tudjman who had spent time in Yugoslav jails for supporting some aspects of the Croat fascist state created by the Nazis in World War Two. The Croats had pushed for independence when they got the committed support of Germany, even though they had not made the necessary preparations for it.

In December 1991 when the Carrington peace plan to divide up Yugoslavia had every chance of success it was the intervention of the Kohl Government on behalf of Croatia which led to a renewal of hostilities. The Kohl Government now bounced the rest of the EU into recognising Croatia. At the EC Foreign Ministers meeting in December 1991 Carrington warned that

if they recognised Croatia and Slovenia then they would have to ask all the others whether they wanted their independence. And that if they asked the Bosnians whether they wanted their independence, they inevitably would have to say yes, and this would mean a civil war [in Bosnia].

Quoted in *The Death of Yugoslavia* p.220

The British, whose public position was to maintain the integrity of Yugoslavia did

Imperialism in the Balkans

1908 Austria declares Bosnia- Herzegovina part of its Empire to the fury of the Serbian monarchy. Russia opposed this but Germany supported Austria and the Russians were isolated.

1912 The First Balkan War
Egged on by Russia the Balkan League (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece against Turkey was founded. They fought to get the Turks out of Macedonia (virtually their last European possession). Turkey was defeated "a disaster for Austria-Hungary" (David Thomson). Albania came into existence on the demand of Austria and Britain by the Treaty of London.

1913 The Second Balkan War
The Bulgarians were deprived of most of their gains in the First Balkan war when they were attacked by a combination of Greece, Serbia, Rumania. The Treaty of Bucharest meant that Bulgaria gave up land to all her neighbours. It drove Bulgaria into the German camp.

1914 June 28th The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir to the Austrian throne) in Sarajevo by Serb nationalists demanding union with Bosnia. A month later Austria attacked Serbia with German support. Russia

(supported by Britain and France) came to the aid of Serbia and the Third Balkan war became an outright imperialist war with all the Balkan states following their imperialist masters (Bulgaria and Turkey fought with Germany, Rumania and Serbia with Russia).

1915 The secret Treaty of London offered Italy parts of the Dalmatian coast (now in Croatia) for joining the war against Austria

1919 The establishment of Yugoslavia at the Peace of Paris under the Serbian Karadzegevic dynasty. This became a monarchist dictatorship in 1929 tied to France and Britain.

1941 Germany invaded Yugoslavia and overran it in a fortnight. A puppet regime was set up in Croatia under the Ustashe (fascist) leader, Ante Pavelic. In occupied Serbia monarchists (Chetniks) fought Communists (partisans) as often as they did the Germans.

1944-5 The Red Army arrives in Yugoslavia allowing Tito (now backed by Britain too) to take over and establish the Peoples Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

1990 The outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia.

not even send its Foreign Minister to the Brussels meeting to argue against the Germans and all the others folded to German pressure rather than see a split so early in the life of the EU. The EU Foreign Ministers followed the German diktat and Carrington's prophecy was proved right. Any talk of foreign intervention in Yugoslavia to maintain peace was just so much lies. Now every step in the so-called peace process was a move amongst both the local and international gangsters as they manoeuvred in their own interests.

War Against the Working Class

With the declaration of Bosnian independence (in April 1992) the inevitable civil war that Carrington predicted began. It was war which was to claim 250,000 lives, the vast majority of them women and children. This is no small point. War is the ultimate attack of the bourgeoisie on the working class. Before this war was launched the Yugoslav working class was militantly fighting for its own living standards. The bourgeoisie had to find some way of disciplining the workers.

Nationalist ideology was at first surprisingly unsuccessful despite the nationalists' control of the media. Workers never universally followed the flags of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. It was a conflict imposed upon them by a minority of ruling class politicians desperate to hang on to power. Young workers on all sides have evaded conscription in this Balkan War and some conflicts have been started only through the provocations of local politicians (it was some of Tudjman's own ministers who had started the war in

Slavonia. They had to personally carry out a mortar attack on the JNA barracks in Sisak since they could not find a Croat militia to do it for them). The local Croat police chief who tried to prevent their murderous intentions was himself later murdered. Whenever Yugsolavs have managed to talk to western newsmen away from the ears of the militia (of all sides) they have denounced the war and stated that it was being forced on them by the various ruling elites.

None of this is noted by our British Trotskyists groups. Obsessed with the formulae of their founder they search to find which side is the most progressive in the conflict. Some unreconstructed pseudo-Stalinists, like *Socialist Outlook*, conclude that we should support the Serbs because the attacks by the West on Serbia is the first line of attack on the USSR. No-one seems to have told them that the USSR no longer exists! Even groups which adopted a position that the war between Serbia and Croatia had got nothing to do with the working class revealed that this was not due to any working class standpoint. As soon as the war spread to Bosnia the likes of *Workers Power* abandoned their flimsy identification with the working class and called for support for Bosnia (on the dubious grounds that workers were still working together there.). What they did not see was that they were calling for support for Izetbegovic's national state. This is already taking military action against its own working class and is ensuring that ethnic or religious differences are exploited to the full.

The class position is that in this era of

imperialism "the workers have no country". The more the bourgeoisie everywhere tries to impose a nationalist agenda the more we have to assert the internationalist policy of the working class. The working class of South Slavdom have no interest in massacring each other in the name of some local warlord. They do have an interest in working together to overthrow the system which has spawned this disaster in the first place. Whilst a kind of peace may be imposed under the guns of 60,000 NATO troops the various national bourgeoisies and their imperialist backers will still be manoeuvring for maximum advantage. In doing so they will try to draw workers into their bloody conflicts by playing the nationalist card but as we have seen already the chief victims of the last four years fighting have been the

working class. Do we need further evidence of the need for proletarian internationalism and an international party of the working class to unite our struggles?

Notes

1. For our earlier analyses see back issues of *Workers Voice* (70 pence including p&p), in particular, issues number 78 and 79. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party to which the CWO is affiliated produced a second statement on the war after the NATO bombings in October. This is available from the group address (send SAE).
2. The pop group *Laibach* (the German version of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia) who strutted on stage in Nazi uniforms became something of an icon for Slovene nationalism at this period.

Pax Americana The Global Domination of the USA

Coming so soon after US triumphs in the Middle East and Northern Ireland the Dayton peace accord underlines the immense power of the USA. The "New World Order" conjured up by George Bush in 1990 seems now to have come into being. Now that the Bosnians, the Serbians, the Croats and above all their various European masters have been bombed to the peace table by US (sorry, NATO) jets it is unquestionably an American order. However it is not without its stresses and strains.

The USSR collapsed because it could no longer fund an arms race on a stagnant economy. By the same token the end of the Cold War left the USA with the biggest peacetime debts in history. The USA had already been screaming at its NATO partners for years to try to get them to pay more for the defence of Europe. Once the USSR collapsed the USA began to review its real interests. The first of these was to reassert control over the Middle East. The USSR had been almost totally absent from the region. Even Syria, its most reliable ally had been in negotiations with the USA since 1982 (and helped re-establish peace in Lebanon for US imperialism). The new threat came from Iraq.

Iraq had been armed and supported by the CIA and encouraged to attack the USA's number one enemy in the region, Iran in 1980. It was a decade which bled Iraq white and its leadership had nothing to

show for it at the end. The possibility of retaking Kuwait (hived off from Iraq by the British between the wars) seemed a cheap solution and the Iraqi ruling class believed that the US had agreed to this. The invasion of Kuwait was a challenge which the US could not ignore. It was essential that the US maintain control of world oil prices (see *Workers Voice* 54). It was also essential that the whole world should recognise that the Cold War was over and the US would not hesitate to act decisively to meet any challenge to its global authority. Communists did not need to wait until the retreating Iraqi army was barbecued in their tens of thousands to know that the new imperialist order would not be a great deal different from the previous one. With Iraq reduced to rubble and its people facing ruin there could be no mistaking the US message.

The US ruling class however also wanted to ensure that the budget deficit, a p;product of the Cold War, would be reduced. The debts of the US hang like an albatross around their necks. This debt is not sustainable in the long term and something has to be done about it sooner or later. The 'sooner' idea of the US is to try to dominate the world's arms sales. Although arms production creates no new value for capitalism as a whole (since they cannot be eaten or consumed and they don't get used to produce other goods) selling arms to others means that their surplus value can end up in the coffers of

the arms sellers and they pay the costs of the unproductive expenditure. It is not surprising therefore to hear that the US is freezing most of its old NATO allies out of lucrative arms and building contracts in the Gulf (and this after getting the Saudi, German and Japanese ruling classes to stump up cash to pay for the Gulf War). All over the globe US arms sales are leaping to fill the gap left by the collapse of the USSR. The demonstrations of US air power in both Baghdad and Bosnia were excellent promotionals for this trade (why buy Mirage when you can get a Phantom?). As the graph shows US arms sales are not only at the expense of the USSR but also at the expense of its NATO allies.

Which brings us back to Bosnia. The initial US response was to leave the collapse of Yugoslavia to its European allies. The US assumed that they would not only share US perceptions about the need to keep Yugoslavia together but that they would all have a united policy on this. But this illusion was rudely shattered when

declared. The consequence of these manoeuvres was a quarter of a million civilians were killed. The US was at first stunned by the German effort to carve out its own niche in ex-Yugoslavia. German policy had, in act made a nonsense of the tacit support the US has given to the Franco-British line of appeasing the Serbs. However all this time a major rethink was going on inside the White House and the Pentagon.

We have already analysed (in *Workers Voice* 79) how the US completely undermined all the UN resolutions (secretly arming the Bosnian Government for a start) in order to impose a solution suitable to itself. After Germany had destroyed the basis for Yugoslavia the US had to reappraise its policy. The conclusion was that Yugoslavia, like Humpty Dumpty, could not be put back together again. The policy that emerged was stunning in its cynicism. The US would now cooperate with Germany to rearm and train the Croatian Army provided the Croats formed a loose dual state with the Bosnians. The Croats accepted this and US aid flowed faster. US propaganda now highlighted Serb atrocities at places like Srebrenica whilst US Generals even planned the Krajina campaign. In addition NATO air strikes would be used to destroy Serb artillery (the main strength of the Bosnian Serbs). Holbrook, the US negotiator, was also sent to Belgrade to do a deal with Milosevic (who was desperate to have sanctions on Serbia lifted). Milosevic was, in any case disillusioned by the disloyalty of his former protégés the Bosnian Serb leaders, Karadzic and Mladic. He agreed not to support the Krajina Serbs in the event of a Croatian attack. This would allow the Croats to retake territory which Milosevic realised was, in any event, too isolated to be defended. The Dayton agreement was already agreed by Milosevic before he left Belgrade. The problem was to get the Bosnians to accept it. The new statelet of Bosnia would only be semi-autonomous of Belgrade. This was not what Izetbegovic had thought of when he proclaimed Bosnia's separation from Yugoslavia. But what else could the Bosnian ruling class do? With the promise of US economic and military aid and no other ally in view it takes no special insight to see why the Bosnians were forced to sign.

The use of NATO and the bombings of the Serbs reasserted US global supremacy. British, French and German rulers have been forced to flounder along in the wake of the US trying desperately to salvage what they can for their own interests. For the time being there is no doubt that the arbiter of global interests, the USA, has no rivals. The establishment of "peace" in

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The Principal Arms Sellers

	% world share	
	1990	1995
United States	34.5	55
Russia (USSR)	33.9	3.9
France	7.2	3.2
Germany	5.4	14.6
UK	4.9	7.3
China	4.0	5.5

Germany bulldozed the European Community ministers into recognising the breakaway states of Slovenia and Croatia (see article in this issue). The US itself, embarrassed by its less than successful roles in Haiti and Somalia hoped to allow others to do the fighting and dying to preserve a world fit for US exploitation. But the splits between the pro-Serbian British and French ruling class and the pro-Croatian German state soon became obvious. Whilst the British and French basically prevented any serious attacks on the Serbs in Bosnia the Germans were secretly re-arming the Croats through Hungary. Croat ministers had gone to Budapest to buy arms (which came from the old German Democratic Republic) even before Croatian independence was

After Rabin: Imperialism Still Dictates the "Peace Process"

The recent assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin highlights the deep divisions in the Israeli ruling class over the issue of the "peace process". Whilst Rabin's killer was a member of a tiny organisation of religious fanatics, the ideology which fuelled the assassin is much the same as that espoused by the constitutional right in Israeli politics, namely the Likud Party.

The West Bank

The question if the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967 is particularly controversial for the Israeli ruling class. For the right wing, the existence of the ancient biblical Jewish lands of Judea and Samaria, which lie within the West Bank, provided a mythical ideological argument to retain the West Bank firmly under Israeli control. This argument conceals more plausible material concerns such as security, as the West Bank protrudes deeply into the territory constituted by Israel's original borders. From an economic point of view the West Bank is significant. It borders the Jordan which is the chief water resource of the area and it contains a large subterranean water table which is crucial to Israeli industry and agriculture. The possibility of handing back parts of it to the Palestinians has only been possible because of the new and total domination of Israel's godfather in the region the USA.

In government the Likud sought to inextricably link the West Bank to Israel by encouraging the growth of Jewish settlements. This was regarded as preferable to outright annexation which would have created 1 million disaffected Arab citizens and potentially threatened the Jewish majority in the Zionist state. Now the Jewish settlers constitute the most virulent exponents of anti-Arab racism and Zionist militarism. Despite their limited numbers the settlers are the most vociferous and militant opponents of the U.S. brokered peace deal between Rabin and PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat.

The importance of Rabin was that he understood that the post cold war situation fundamentally affected Israel's significance in the "New World Order". As ambassador to Washington in the early 1970s, Rabin promoted Israel to the Nixon regime as America's best ally against

Russian ambitions. After the collapse of Russian imperialism in the Middle East the USA has sought to wind up tiresome local conflicts which serve no purpose within a now undisputed sphere of influence. This is a factor which Israel (largely dependent upon US aid) could only ignore at its peril. It was for purely material and pragmatic reasons that Rabin (the ex-army Chief of Staff, who took part in the "ethnic cleansing" of the Palestinians at the dawn of Israel in 1947-8. He also masterminded Israel's military conquests of 1967 and as defence minister in the 1980s ordered the brutal repression of the Intifada) became a reluctant advocate of a deal with the Palestinians. The likelihood of the West Bank being used as a springboard for an Arab military attack on Israel has been largely reduced as Israel has concluded a peace treaty with the bordering state of Jordan and is taking steps towards a rapprochement with Syria. An enfeebled and impoverished zone of Palestinian autonomy or even an independent state within on the West Bank is unlikely to cause any more of a security problem than the current sporadic terrorist incursions.

Some bourgeois commentators have made much exaggerated claims for the significance of Rabin's death. Concerns of civil war amongst the Jewish population have no material substance. The settlers who have the most to lose in the peace process, number only about 20,000 out of a population of 5 millions. Above all however is the fact that the difference between the ultra-right and the left wings of capital is merely one of degree. All factions of the Israeli ruling class are staunch defenders of the Zionist state, a state which was forged under the aegis of imperialism in 1948 by expelling substantial numbers of the indigenous Arab population. It has to be remembered that, at the present time the Israeli Labour Party has not dismantled a single Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

The Future for the Working Class

Whilst the ultra-right may become a more coherent terrorist nuisance (there is clear evidence that Rabin's killer was linked to certain factions of Shin Bet, the internal Israeli secret police) they are too

The Indispensable Engels

Friedrich Engels, life-long friend and collaborator of Karl Marx, died on the 5th August 1895. It is 100 years since the working class lost one of its greatest fighters, and the co-founder of revolutionary communism, .

Without Engels there would have been no Marxism, no Marxist movement. From the launching of the Communist League in 1847, to the founding of the International Workingmen's Association (the 1st International) in 1864, through to the setting up of the 2nd International in 1889 - to name but the most familiar political landmarks - the contribution of Engels was indispensable.

During periods of reflux, as in our own contemporary historical experience, it was Engels, despite separations from Marx and the dissolution of organisations, who placed himself at the centre of the struggle. It was he who maintained the vital work of the fraction through a mass of correspondence. After the death of Marx in 1883 it was Engels who lived and breathed the "party spirit", a continuity of organisational principles and experience transmitted right up to the Third International and thence to the historical present to the only tradition that embodies this political patrimony: the Communist Left.

Engels' prosecution of the theoretical struggle, which in the "final analysis" cannot be separated from the political, stands as equal testimony to his stature. Over a century after their formulation, his ideas remain today a ferment of discussion and dissension. From a *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* in 1844, the work which opened Marx's eyes to the fundamental nature of capitalist economy, to the co-authorship of the *Communist Manifesto*, from the early works jointly undertaken with Marx in response to the Young Hegelians, *The Holy Family*, *The German Ideology* through to the works of his later years, *Anti-Duhring*, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, *The Dialectics of Nature*, from his material and intellectual assistance to Marx in the drafting of *Capital* to his numerous pamphlets and polemical pieces popularising the doctrines of revolutionary communism, Engel's intellectual energies were tirelessly devoted to the emancipation of the proletariat.

This article is not a hagiography. We shall

leave the armchair specialists of academic marxism to pick over the bones of chronological data etc. The "definitive biography" of Engels will only be written in the pages of the class struggle itself. We shall focus instead on a defence of Engels' revolutionary Marxism, in an attempt to restore a reputation derogated by what has become an orthodoxy of professional defamation.

The Origins of 'Anti-Engelsism'

The emergence of a new undefeated generation of the proletariat during the reconstruction period after the 2nd World War, in the absence of the necessary subjective conditions for the political reconstitution of the class, saw the rise of various species of left radicalism. The early signs of crisis in the new accumulation cycle, the first cracks in the Cold War consensus, the growth of CND and the New Left, opposition to the Vietnam War - these were some of the conditions which radicalised new layers of the intelligentsia and inevitably at the same time generated a new interest in the ideas of Marxism.

This process led to a greater questioning of some of the more obvious inanities of reformism, and of the dead weight of the ideological monolith of Stalinism. Consequently critics began to search the writings of the founders of Marxism for the seeds of Stalinism and the failures of reformism, a process that fuelled the expansion of academic Marxism. This coincided with the wider availability of Marx's early 'humanist' writings. A new consensus began to emerge about the nature of Engels' thought. That this was the outcome of a thorough-going idealist method - an issue space prevents us from further exploring here - did not mean that it was any less 'influential'.

The dominant tone of the period emphasised philosophical and cultural analysis often in reaction to the crude reductionism of Stalinism and the anti-theoretical bent of reformism. The marxicologists of the New Left however, proved congenitally incapable of superceding these phenomena. To presume that reductionism or pragmatism in theory led to, much less 'caused' Stalinism or reformism, is to pursue the blindfold of an idealist method *tout court*.

Once this logic was accepted it was not

long before intellectual lines of inheritance are scoured to find the thinker who first introduced such erroneous ideas into the movement. The search for 'original sin' had begun.

The Critics

One of the first studies to systematically assert a cleavage between Marx's ideas and those of Engels was George Lichtheim's *Marxism: an Historical and Critical Study*, (Routledge, 1961). Lichtheim insisted that in Marx's vision "critical thought was validated by revolutionary action", but in Engels' scheme "there now appeared a cast iron system of 'laws' from which the inevitability of socialism could be deduced with almost mathematical certainty." [1]

Engels was supposed to have broken with Marx when he argued that "historical evolution is an aspect of general (natural) evolution and basically subject to the same 'laws'". Marx had taken from Hegel the importance of self-conscious activity in the making of history. In contrast, what really "fascinated Engels" was "Hegel's determinism: his ability to make it appear that nature and history followed a pre-ordained course." [2]

Lichtheim's book rehearses many of the themes that were to become familiar in a series of works published over the next twenty years: that Engels replaced Marx's notion of conscious activity with an empiricist notion of science, that he mistakenly extended Marxism so that it covered the natural as well as the social world in a manner analogous to the scheme of Darwinian evolution; and that these deterministic and reductionist formulations inevitably led him, at the end of his life, to endorse a reformist political practice on the part of the German Social Democratic Party.

Lichtheim inaugurated what was to become a pronounced tendency characteristic of what was to become known as 'Western Marxism': anti-Engelsism. Alfred Schmidt's *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 1962, argued that

where Engels passed beyond Marx's conception of the relation between nature and social history, he relapsed into a dogmatic metaphysic" [3]

Schmidt believed that where Marx saw ideas formed in interaction with the material world, Engels saw only a crude reflection of the external world in the brains of human beings, a vulgar 'copy theory of consciousness'.

By 1969 Lucio Colletti could question almost in passing:

How far this distortion of Marx's

thought by Kautsky and Plekhanov... was already prepared, if only in embryo, in some aspects of Engels' work and how in general the search for the most general laws of development in nature and history made these attempts a preconstitution of the contamination with Hegelianism and Darwinism." [4].

He went on to argue that Engels' influence on leaders of the Second International was partly a result of the place given in Engels' work to philosophical-cosmological development i.e. the 'philosophy of nature', in other words the 'extension' of historical materialism into "dialectical materialism".

According to Colletti, "dialectical materialism" is a crude misunderstanding of which Engels alone was guilty. Under the illusion that he was founding a superior form of materialism, Engels supposedly reproduced, in a banalised form, the 'dialectic of matter', already present in its entirety in Hegel - quite unaware of the anti-materialist function that Hegel had explicitly assigned to it.

From Engels there supposedly sprang a pseudo-Marxist tradition encompassing all of Marxism. The Lenin of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* who in the first part of *Marxism and Hegel* (1958), was still partially exonerated, by the second part (1968), was fully implicated in the indictment. So-called Western Marxism, from Korsch and the early Lukacs down to Marcuse, despite its anti-materialist and anti-Engels polemic, also supposedly betrays its line of descent from Engels' fallacious Marxism.

By the early 70's the pattern was fully established - Engels was the villain. It did not seem to matter what political or theoretical position a writer set out from - the neo-Kantianism of Colletti, the humanism of Schmidt, the Althusserianism of New Left review - the destination was always the same: Engels was the root of whatever was wrong with Marxism. A flood of publications by Levine, Carver, Coulter, Jordan, Gunn et al, to name but a few, saw this tendency congeal into a virtual orthodoxy.

The Unity of Thought of Marx and Engels

The standpoint that there was a fundamental cleavage in the thought of Marx and Engels ignores the palpable reality, the recorded evidence of a lifelong partnership. Overcoming the elementary biographical facts of the two most famous lives in the history of the communist movement requires considerable distortion.

tion. Only the crudest methods of idealism could encompass such a feat: only a pre-conceived end can pervert the empirical data in order to sustain such a fixed idea.

For Carver: "the intellectual relationship between the two living men, was very much the story of what they accomplished independently". After Marx's death "Engels moved into an all powerful role", in which he "invented dialectics and reconstructed Marx's life and works accord-



Engels in 1845 aged 25

ingly".[5] Levine even more strikingly demonstrates the reactionary logic of the idealist method when he poses the question of

why basic intellectual differences between the two men did not come to the surface as tangible and real, articulated and acknowledged dispute.
[6]

The idea that Marx and Engels developed along separate theoretical paths finds no support in the biographical evidence. A cursory glance at the latter bears this out.

In the 1840's both men arrived at what was to become known as the historical materialist view of the world, and in several important instances it was Engels who led the way. The entire content of the joint work, the *Communist Manifesto*, was first outlined by Engels in *Principles of Communism*. Marx was still extracting himself from the coils of Hegelian philosophy when Engels wrote his *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*. This was to provide the crucial impetus for Marx's 40 year immersion in economic analyses, and was also the immediate inspiration for Marx's transition to a fully materialist class analysis, a process recorded in his

Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844.

Having arrived at a common outlook, Marx and Engels co-authored two key works which elaborated their views, *The Holy Family* and *The German Ideology*. They struggled together to win the organisation they were both involved in, the League of the Just, to their ideas, transforming it into the Communist League. In 1848 a series of bourgeois revolutions broke out across Europe. Marx and Engels actively took part, in order to contribute to the emergence of conditions which would promote the political and economic development of the proletariat.

The start of Marx's exile in England and Engels' life in Manchester inevitably altered the pattern of their joint work, establishing a new political and intellectual division of labour between them. In the long gestation of *Capital*, Engels was Marx's constant adviser, either in their almost daily exchange of letters or in discussion during visits. Constant collaboration continued at every stage of the writing of *Capital* up to and including the reading of the proofs which Marx largely entrusted to Engels. Marx insisted "your satisfaction up to now is more important to me than anything the rest of the world may say of it". At the end of it we are left in no doubt as to the nature of his debt to Engels:

Without you I would never have been able to bring the work to completion, and I assure you, it has always weighed on my conscience like an Alp that you have dissipated your splendid energy and let it rust on commercial matters, principally on my account, and into the bargain, still had to participate vicariously in all my minor troubles. [7]

Levine argues that Marx's death left Engels free to "publish his distorted version of Marxism". But even the chronology of publication which Levine gives undermines his own argument. *Anti-Duhring* was not only published during Marx's lifetime, the whole project was Marx's idea, Marx himself writing one of the chapters for it. Are we to understand that Marx is supposed to have been a witness to the decimation of his philosophy by his closest friend without batting an eyelash, that he apparently never felt the need to dissociate himself from a 'metaphysical construction' that was the 'antithesis' of his own thought!

Socialism, Utopian and Scientific was extracted from *Anti-Duhring* and also published before Marx's death. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* appeared after Marx's death, but was composed by Engels using ethnographical

notebooks Marx himself had written. *Ludwig Feuerbach* was published after Marx's death, but as if to stress the continuity of its ideas with the views of their early writings, Engels published Marx's newly discovered *Theses on Feuerbach* as an appendix. Obviously he saw no contradiction between the 'humanist' young Marx and the 'determinist' older Engels.

An extract from a letter by Paul Lafargue, husband of Laura Marx, perhaps conveys better than any historical retrospect, the true tenor and substance of their unique relationship:

Engels was, so to speak, a member of the Marx family. Marx's daughters called him their second father. He was Marx's alter ego...

... From their youth they developed together and parallel to each other, lived in intimate fellowship of ideas and feelings and shared the same revolutionary agitation... But after the defeat of the 1848 revolution, Engels had to go to Manchester, while Marx was to remain in London. Even so, they continued their common intellectual life by writing to each other almost daily...

As soon as Engels was able to free himself from his work he hurried from Manchester to London, where he set up home only ten minutes away from his dear Marx. From 1870 to the death of his friend, not a day went by but the two men saw each other, sometimes at one's house, sometimes at the other's...

Marx appreciated Engels' opinion more than anybody else's, for Engels was the man he considered capable of being his collaborator. For him Engels was his whole audience. No effort could have been too great for Marx to convince Engels and win him over to his idea. For instance I have seen him read whole volumes over and over to find the fact he needed to change Engels' opinion on some secondary point... It was a triumph for Marx to bring Engels round to his opinion.

Marx was proud of Engels. He took pleasure in enumerating to me all his moral and intellectual qualities... He admired the versatility of his knowledge and was alarmed that the slightest thing should befall him.[8]

Vulgar Critique of a "Vulgar Materialist"

Colletti, like Schmidt and Fetscher[9],

maintains that Engels ventured into a useless and negative operation when, under the spell of the very vulgar materialism he sought to oppose, he attempted to enlarge Marx's historical materialism into 'cosmic' dimensions. Briefly, the argument is as follows: Marx's great achievement, at oncegnoseological[10] and socio-political, was to have understood that through their labour human beings enter into social relationships with nature. Consequently there is no knowledge that is not a function of humanity's transformation of nature. Having attained this revolutionary insight, superior in object, method and idea to all previous philosophy, why should one regress back to a philosophy of 'nature in itself'?

A closer look, however, reveals that such an opinion is misconceived both theoretically and historically. It fails to take proper account of the changed philosophic-scientific setting in post 1850 Europe, compared to the era in which the young Marx formulated his criticisms of Feuerbach. Although a Moleschott or a Buchner was inferior to a Feuerbach from a purely philosophic standpoint, nevertheless their materialism had many more links to the natural sciences than had Feuerbach's essentially naturalistic humanism.

The former were not satisfied merely with asserting the primacy of the sensuous over the conceptual or with turning theology into anthropology. They were to search for an explanation of sensuousness - as well as intelligence and morality - in biological terms. The objection raised by Marx against Feuerbach, that the latter overlooked the 'active side' was still valid, but it appeared insufficient and over general, since the claim of the new materialism (as well as of 18th century French materialism) was to explain even this active side in scientific terms i.e. as a complex of 'material' processes obeying certain laws.

It is important to acknowledge that the claim was correct, even if the subsequent execution of the plan was simplistic and crude. These crudities were the result primarily of two factors: 1) the reduction of human cultural, moral and political behaviour to biological activities without any *mediation*, and thus a failure to take account of the 'second nature' which labour confers on human beings within the animal realm, to which they still continue to belong; 2) the understanding of social inequalities and injustices as 'ills' to be cured by science, and thus a thoroughgoing failure to recognise the necessity of class struggle and thence an omission of any analysis of the class position of scientists themselves and how this conditions their

theoretical output.

A reply to these one-sided intellectual developments should have been given *within the framework of materialism* and not merely as a revindication of the subjective element. This became all the more important after Darwin's great discovery gave rise to a second wave of materialism, which overtook the old conception of nature as an 'eternal cycle' (e.g. still shared by Moleschott) and which demonstrated that historicity was not a characteristic peculiar to humanity.

Among other things, evolutionism posed again the question of the existence of nature before humanity, of the origin of humankind and its future disappearance. To what extent would the 'second nature' established with the appearance of labour and what might be called a 'third nature' developed with the advent of communism, be able to push back the biological limits of humankind? These were questions raised by a philosophy which, however crude and reactionary it may have been in other respects, threw new light on the objective reality of humanity's situation as revealed by scientific research. This in itself was a powerful antidote to anthropocentrism.

Contemporaneous with this current of thought in the middle and late 19th century, was that of a degenerated empiricism, which tended towards agnosticism but was not above flirting with religion. What was to become the 'reaction against positivism', an idealist renaissance that flourished with the onset of decadence at the beginning of the 20th century, was already germinating within positivism itself.[12]

It was within this complex situation that the so-called cosmological development of Marxism took place. However, it is important to state that this did not represent an impulsive direction undertaken by Engels, but rather an objective politico-theoretical necessity. Any serious examination of the differences between the two founders of Marxism would require to begin not with facile contrasts between the philosophic profundity of the one and the alleged superficiality of the other, but rather on the division of labour established between them, itself a product of limits imposed by their specific historical situation. It was Engels, during this period, who took on the tasks of polemicising with contemporary culture, while Marx concentrated all of his energies on a single great opus, *Capital*.

To regard Engels writings on the natural sciences as merely a banalised repetition of Hegel's philosophy of nature, or as a partial capitulation to vulgar materialism, is to overlook a fundamental feature of these

writings: the polemic against the negative aspects of positivism. These negative qualities had on the one hand tended to become "an empiricism which as far as possible forbids thought" and on the other, the claim of German vulgar materialism to "apply the nature theory to society and to reform socialism" [13] It is too simplistic to say that Engels rejected, in the name of the Hegelian dialectic, 'real materialism' i.e. the modern science of the day, as a form of metaphysics.

It is true that the Hegelian dialectic - even 'turned on its head' or 'extracted from its mystical shell' - was an inappropriate instrument for correcting the shortcomings of either vulgar materialism or agnostic empiricism, as Colletti has indicated. However it is mistaken to present this rejection of the Hegelian dialectic in terms of counter-posing a Marx who used it in a singularly valid way in the human sciences to an Engels who was so mis-directed as to apply it to the natural sciences.

In relation to Hegel, both Marx and Engels were in fundamental agreement. Both were convinced that a materialist re-interpretation of the dialectic would require 1) that it be treated as a law or body of laws that have an objective existence - and not as laws of thought in relation to which objective reality is only a phenomenal projection; 2) that the existence of these laws in reality through empirical means, without doing violence to reality in order to make it agree with pre-established laws. The difficulty for them - as for us today - lay in the detailed execution of the second task.

If the use of the dialectic appears more sharply delineated, e.g. on "the negation of the negation", than in any of Marx's texts, this can perhaps be explained by the fact that the use of logical procedures originating within the historico-human sciences created greater problems when applied to the natural sciences. In so far as the natural sciences were, and still are, more advanced along the path of scientific precision, the unsatisfactory character of statements not formulated in quantitative terms is sharpened. It should be noted in passing that Marx himself was not at all hostile to the idea of a dialectics of nature. It is a well known fact that he gave a small example of it in a note to the chapter on the 'Rate and Amount of Surplus Value' in Book 1 of *Capital*; and in a letter to Engels he stated he was convinced that

Hegel's discovery - the law of merely quantitative changes turning into qualitative changes - holds good alike in history and natural science.

A statement such as this rules out the possibility that Marx was only engaged in

a 'flirtation' with the dialectic or are we to assume, as the anti-Engels camp maintain, that Marx allowed himself to be 'led astray by Engels'?

Engels and Reformism

A common accusation is that Engels' 'mechanical materialism' resulted in a reformist strategy which increasingly came to dominate the German SPD and the 2nd International of which it was a part. If socialism is 'inevitable', why endanger its progress by revolutionary adventures; why not wait for its inevitable progress to register in parliamentary majorities? These were formulations typical of what became known as 'revisionism' and are directly affiliated to theories of Engels' rigid and sclerotic *objectivism*. That they have any connection to the thought or overall political perspectives of Engels, is the result of selective quotation and distortion.

The seeds of this insinuation can in fact be traced to an argument first raised by Marx in a speech he gave in Amsterdam following the Hague conference of the 1st International where he said it might be possible, in England for instance, that "workers can achieve their goals through peaceful means". The weight of interpretation given to this quote is premised on a wilful neglect of Marx's general analyses of the Paris Commune, where he insisted that workers must "smash the state machine" and inaugurate the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Later, in a similar vein, detractors latched on to Engels' preface to the first English translation of *Capital*, where Engels returned to Marx's remark that

in Europe at least, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected by peaceful and legal means.

However Engels goes on to add a crucial qualification:

He (Marx) certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit without a 'pro-slavery rebellion' to the peaceful and legal revolution.

The full meaning of Engels' statement is therefore that, even if the working class in England were to attain power peacefully, they would then have to defend it by means of a revolutionary civil war.

Is it possible that the rise of revisionism was abetted by Engels' famous introduction to *The Class Struggles in France*, in which he expressed, shortly before his death, a pessimistic judgement on the possibility of armed insurrection in the cities, and ascribed a positive value to the electoral victories of the German Social Democratic Party?

The important point here - and one conveniently omitted by those intent on implicating Engels in the sins of revisionism - is that Engels' *Introduction* had to be censored at various crucial points in order to meet with the approval of the German Social-Democratic leaders. Engels regarded these passages as essential to his argument as can be seen in his letter to Lafargue on 3rd April 1895:

... Liebknecht has just played me a fine trick. He has taken from my introduction to Marx's articles on France 1848-50 everything that could serve his purpose in support of peaceful and anti-violent tactics at any price... But I preach those tactics only for the Germany of today and even then with many reservations.

And elsewhere in similar vein in a bitter letter of protest to Kautsky, then editor of the SPD paper, *Neue Zeit*:

To my astonishment I see today in Vorwärts an extract from my Introduction, printed without my knowledge and trimmed in such a way as to make me appear a peace-loving worshipper of legality at any price. So much the better that the whole thing is to appear now in Neue Zeit so that this disgraceful impression will be wiped out.

Contrary then to the allegations, the *Introduction* does not at all assign to the proletariat the goal of a peaceful conquest of power by electoral means. Rather, the objective is the growth of the party under legal circumstances, so that it is then able to confront from a position of strength the inevitable final showdown, which comes when the bourgeoisie itself abandons the field of peaceful compromise.

Conditions of Theoretical Production

The process whereby knowledge is formed depends on the conditions of production of scientific conceptions and ideas in general. These conditions in turn are linked to the general conditions of production. The mode of production not only applies practically what science elaborates theoretically: it also has a great influence on the manner in which ideas and sciences are elaborated. Just as the capitalist division of labour imposes an extreme specialisation in all areas concerned with production, it also imposes an extreme specialisation, a further division of labour, in the area of the formation of ideas, and especially in the area of science.

The ruling class is capable of making a synthesis in the field of science as long as it doesn't have a direct effect on its mode

of exploitation. As soon as it touches on this, it unconsciously distorts reality. In the spheres of history, economics, sociology, in the 'human sciences' in general, it can only arrive at an incomplete synthesis. When concentrating on practical application and scientific investigation it is essentially materialist. However any attempt at a total synthesis - since it is impelled for reasons unknown to it, to hide its own existence - results in the ideology of philosophical idealism.

Only the scientific socialists, beginning with Marx, were able to make a synthesis of the sciences in relation to human social development. this synthesis was in fact the necessary point of departure for their revolutionary critique. The development of

ences and the philosophies that emerged from them. Whether either Engels or Lenin committed this or that theoretical error, whether on occasion they were over-schematic or lapsed into philosophical positions analogous to the bourgeois materialists of the past, is not the essential criterion on which they should be judged; it is rather, in their general activity, on their political orientation in relation to the prosecution of the class struggle. The real point is to understand how and why they situated themselves on the terrain of praxis of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*.

An attempt to integrate scientific developments into a more overall understanding centred around the practical realisation of the social revolution, the basis for all real progress; this was the motivating principle of the praxis of Engels and Lenin.

The workers' movement is identified by its particular revolutionary existence within capitalism i.e. through its struggle. Consequently the development of its knowledge has a dual aspect, dependent on progress made towards real liberation of the proletariat. On the one hand it is political, involved with immediate and burning issues. On the other it is theoretical and scientific, evolving more slowly and, up until now mainly in periods of reflux in the history of class struggle.

Thus differences about political work are posed first in programmes, then in practical application, in day-to-day activity. The evolution of these differences reflects the general evolution of society, the evolution of classes, their methods of struggle, their ideologies, theories and political practice.

In contrast to this, the scientific dialectic in the purely philosophical sphere doesn't develop in the immediate way of the practical, political class struggle. Its dialectic is much more removed, intermittent, without apparent links either to local or wider social milieu - not unlike, for example the development of the natural sciences at the end of feudalism and the beginning of capitalism.

The more the sphere of knowledge is immediately connected to practical application, the easier it is to mark its progress. On the other hand, the more one is dealing with attempts at a wider synthesis the harder it is to elucidate the dialectic, because such a synthesis depends on laws of such a complexity and deriving from so many diverse factors, that it is practically impossible for us today to realistically tackle such studies.

This essay is merely a contribution towards clearing the ground for such efforts.



Engels in 1893

knowledge in the workers' movement thus involves seeing the theoretical development of the sciences as its own acquisition, the starting point and motive for Engels' confrontation with 'the philosophy of nature'.

Engels, like Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, had to deal with matters in which he was no specialist. Moreover, after Marx's death, he could do this only during the odd moments left him by the immense work of editing and publishing *Capital* and by the even larger political and organisational tasks that confronted him. The preface to the second edition of *Anti-Duhring* shows that he was aware of the risks and the fact that he failed to complete *The Dialectics of Nature* confirms this. Nevertheless it was impossible to avoid confronting the natural sci-

A large part of the resurrection of the Communist Left tradition in the UK has necessarily devolved around the spade work of political archaeology and the re-articulation of the fundamentals of Marxist economic theory. In the face of the longest counter-revolution in the history of the workers' movement, where the voice of Marxism was all but extinguished, this has been an indispensable task consuming the best energies of comrades over a period of two decades.

Within the context of these pressing practical-political requirements it has been impossible for us to address other issues. Given that the leitmotif of most of 20th century 'Western Marxism' has revolved around philosophical and cultural analyses, we hope to be able to turn our attention to some of the questions raised therein in the forthcoming pages of this journal.

Anti-Engelsism, we have contended, is essentially a peculiar species of idealism. It can be traced to a neo-idealist renaissance that began to emerge towards the beginning of the century, a shift that involved an increasingly radical *anti-objectivism*. Although its point of departure were real and serious problems in the epistemology of the sciences, in the contingent historical context in which this crisis arose, this was used to reassert a mythological freedom and creativity of 'man', a new subjectiv-

ism-voluntarism, that ignored the real conditioning to which actual human beings were subject.

Although Engels offers us no ready made solutions to any of these complicated problems, as in so many important ways he was the point of our origin politically, in the confrontation of these theoretical questions, he is the point of our departure. A.S.

Notes

1. Lichtheim p.238
2. *ibid* p.253
3. Schmidt p.55
4. *ibid*.
5. *From Rousseau to Lenin* p.26
6. Carver *Marx and Engels: the Intellectual Relationship*
7. Levine *The Tragic Deception: Marx contra Engels*
8. Marx and Engels: *Selected Correspondence*
9. Irving Fetscher *Marx and Marxism*
10. i.e as a contribution to the philosophy of knowledge [Ed]
11. Moleschott (1822-93) German physiologist and philosopher who interspersed materialism and Hegelian idealism.
12. Sebastiano Timpanaro *On Materialism* NLB
13. *The Dialectics of Nature* p.153; p.85.

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Pax Americana

Ireland, in the Middle East and in Bosnia are all at the behest of the imperialist interests of the USA. Never in history has one state been so powerful. But history never stands still. The economic crisis which has led to global stagnation for twenty years has left its mark on the USA. The mountains of debt can only be bailed out by getting foreigners to buy more and more US bonds. The US economy is so dependent on arms sales (see table above) that further war is actually in its economic interests (irrespective of its need to continually reassert its supremacy). Thus the new world order, far from being a new era of peace is in fact the opposite. New conflicts and new wars are all that capitalism has to offer. In this respect Pax Americana is like Pax Romana. Unless the peace is on US terms there will be further conflict. Now that the European powers have been humiliated separately we cannot discount the prospect of a real European alliance emerging which would no longer play the US' tune. But that is as yet some way off. At the moment there is no arguing about the current domination of US power in almost every important area of the planet. JD

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After Rabin: Imperialism Still Controls the Peace Process

marginalised to constitute a substantial threat to the Israeli state (Shin Bet officers are now undergoing a purge). The new Prime Minister Shimon Peres is the real architect of the "peace process" on the Israeli side so that it is likely to be irreversible even if the Likud should win the next election. For the mainstream bourgeoisie the Zionist project has been completed. With the US less likely to continue its past generous subsidies the Zionists have to find a more stable means to settle the Palestinian question. This is their rationale for the peace process. The Palestinian bourgeoisie no longer have any serious imperialist backers and so engaging in a peace process which might gain them a tiny statelet as the start of further gains is better than nothing. For both Palestinian and Israeli ruling classes this would allow them the space and the time to concentrate upon the real business of exploiting the working class. It will be the workers on both sides of the divide who will pay the inevitable costs of the reconstruction of the area. PBD



Review article

The Lessons of the Spanish Civil War

A Review of *Land and Freedom*

Director: Ken Loach

Ken Loach is the only film-maker today producing anything remotely concerned with the reality of working class life. His *Family Life* of over twenty years ago has been more recently followed by *Riff Raff* and *Raining Stones*, films portraying graphically (if a little sentimentally) the growing poverty and lumpenisation of sections of the working class in Thatcherite Britain.

In *Land and Freedom* his subject matter and his purposes are different. The film starts off in Liverpool (where else could a Loach film start?) and ends there. It starts with the death of David Carr, an old man on his way to hospital in an ambulance in the company of his grand-daughter and wife. The grand-daughter then goes through his things and discovers a suitcase full of Spanish Civil War mementos, including letters from Dave to his then girlfriend in Liverpool. The reading of these leads us into the inevitable flashback to 1936.

If this sounds a bit hackneyed it is because it is, well, a bit ... hackneyed. However it is mercifully short and we are soon with the young Dave in a Communist Party meeting in Liverpool in 1936. You can tell it is a Communist Party meeting because the Spanish speaker at the meeting never once refers to the working class or the class struggle. His appeal is for those present to support "democracy", "freedom-loving people" or "the Popular Front". This introductory spiel also portrays Franco as a Fascist (with a capital "F"). Historically this is inaccurate as Franco was a Catholic traditionalist who actually marginalised the real Fascist movement, the Falange, on

the Nationalist side. However such an identification was historically made by the Stalinists (and the POUMists, Trotskyists and Anarchists), the better to conjure up support for the fight for "democracy", so we can still say that the film credibly portrays the ideologies of the time. However it is around the issue of the anti-fascist fight that the whole debate about this film has to take place. More of that later; let's return to our hero.

Dave is so inspired with the justice of the Spanish workers' cause that he decides to enlist in the militias as some young unemployed men did in the 1930s. Dave is not an Eton toff like George Orwell or the other great chroniclers of the Spanish Civil War who have wandered across the pages of history rewriting it as they went. Dave is a straightforward, card-carrying member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Typically a product of the British working class, he is impatient of theory but eager to act. This helps to explain why he ends up walking into Spain from France in order to join the first militia he meets. This is an international militia run by the P.O.U.M. (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) or Workers Party of Marxist Unification.

Ken Loach does not tell us once what the POUM stood for. He doesn't tell us that the POUM leadership supported the Popular Front Government led by bourgeois Republicans (alongside the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and the tiny Spanish Communist Party (PCE)). He doesn't tell us that the POUM was actually in the Catalan Government (alongside Catalan bourgeois nationalists and the Anarchists of the CNT-FAI) which nominally ran the militias in the part of Spain where Dave found himself, the Aragon Front. He does not tell us that the Trotsky had also broken with the POUM over their alliance with the forces of the bourgeoisie in 1933. When the Basque Country under the Basque Nationalist Party was given its autonomy in October 1936 the POUM supported it as "a moment in the struggle against fascism and for a new society".

What the film does tell us is that the members of the POUM militia thought they were part of a revolution in 1936. In fact the POUM leaders (Joaquin Maurin, murdered by Franco, and Andres Nin, murdered directly on Stalin's orders) actually took part in the disarming of the very revolution that Ken Loach considered to be ongoing in 1937.

The Sorry Course of Anti-fascism in Spain

The facts are these. In 1931 the Spanish monarchy was overthrown and the Second Republic set up. It was widely loathed by substantial sections of the traditional Spanish ruling class. Landowners, Catholics, Army officers formed a reactionary hard core which never accepted the Republic. In 1934 due to mass abstention on the part of the working class the Right won the elections. Once they got control of the Republic the Right came to accept it. But in February 1936 a Popular Front Government was elected in Spain led by bourgeois Republicans but with the participation of the PSOE and PCE and the support of the anarchist CNT-FAI and the POUM. For the Spanish reactionaries who led the Republican armies this was too much and they began to plot to overthrow the republic. The *pronunciamiento* (coup) was launched on July 18th 1936.

At this point the bourgeois Republican Government hesitated. Some wanted to do a deal with the Army and certainly most of them agreed that it was not a good idea to release arms to the working class. In the streets, especially in Barcelona, a spontaneous insurrection took place, in which the pent up fury of decades of exploitation of the Spanish working masses was unleashed. Generals who were caught were shot. Churches were burned, priests killed and all kinds of attacks on bourgeois property were carried out in Republican-held areas (these however were more than matched by the systematic slaughter of working class militants in the Nationalist zone). When the Giral Government refused to give them arms the workers attacked the barracks and arsenals. Some put themselves under the command of one or other of the trades union federations (the syndicalist CNT and the socialist led UGT) but the vast majority of the actions took place outside the control of political parties and the unions (despite the fact that 25% of all males over 15 were union members). In places where these organisations did not arm the workers or the workers were slow to seize arms for themselves the Nationalist were able to take over (as in Seville).

In economic terms the workers were soon faced with what to do when landowners and capitalists abandoned their property to run off to Nationalist zones. The solution was to take over the factories and the land. In Aragon the land in many villages was collectivised. All this gave the appearance of a profound revolution but in fact it turned, as the film shows but does not explain, into a grand illusion.

What really happened was that the Catalan Government of Luis Companys, a bourgeois radical, merely legitimised all the actions of the workers including the setting up of armed militias. The CNT-FAI anarchists actually joined the Government and supported the bourgeois state ("the most transcendental day in our history" recorded their paper *Solidaridad Obrera* in 1936). For their part, the POUM leaders talked as if the working class had already won

In Catalonia the dictatorship of the proletariat already exists...

We were part of a profound social revolution in Spain; our revolution was deeper than that which swept through Russia in 1917

Andres Nin, *Revolucion Espanol* quoted in "The War in Spain" *Bilan*, January 1937.

Nin was deluding himself. Even worse he deluded the working class in Spain. It was true that the workers, especially in Barcelona who had taken the lead in defeating the supporters of Franco in the zones where they acted unhesitatingly. They not only defeated the reactionary army but in the first week after July 18th 1936 they also posed a threat to the domination of the bourgeois government of the Republic. As they rose against the Francoists they also demanded wage increases, a 36 hour week and the expropriation of the factories. But these demands were soon channelled into the fight against fascism and the temporary threat to the Republic ended. Who ended this threat? Not the workers but their so-called representatives in the POUM and the CNT-FAI. They called for the necessary order and for support for the bourgeois Republic. Any revolution which does not destroy the bourgeois state is ultimately doomed. And this was where the Spanish workers failed. Instead of seizing the state they were brought to support it. By abandoning their own strike actions and joining the militias that abandoned the working class strongholds in the towns the workers were disarmed. Once the idea of a civil war between two conventional and bourgeois armies is accepted the working class is lost. From July 1936, under the slogan of "fighting the fascists", the Republic began the slow but unstoppable process of regaining control over the working class.

As the organ of the Communist Left of the time wrote in in January 1937 (i.e. before the final defeat of the POUM in May 1937)

Very quickly the initial class strike was transformed into a war. It was a war which set worker against worker and peasant against peasant, under the exclusive control of the bourgeoisie, of Franco and Azaña (President of the Republic after November 1936 - CWO), whose power was dissipated but not destroyed.

Bilan (translated and published in RP5 First Series)

Preparation for Catastrophe

The POUM far from leading the revolution thus prepared the ground for its final crushing. The tragedy for its members was that this was the fruit of supporting the Popular Front. The Popular Front was not an idea dreamed up to unite "the left" against fascism as some of the more innocent still believe. The Popular Front



*"Until victory or death"
POUM propaganda for
the capitalist Republic.
There is no talk of
revolution here.*

was an invention of Stalinism. It was first announced to a shocked world in November 1935 at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International by Georgi Dimitrov, its General Secretary. As everyone knows the Communist International had been nothing but a tool of USSR foreign policy for many years. This policy like all other Comintern policies was forged in the Kremlin. Members of the various Communist Parties now heard that the Socialist Party that they had been slagging off as "a twin of the fascists" was now, after all, working class and they should seek not only alliances with the Socialists but also with all "progressive" parties (which did not rule out conservative parties in some countries).

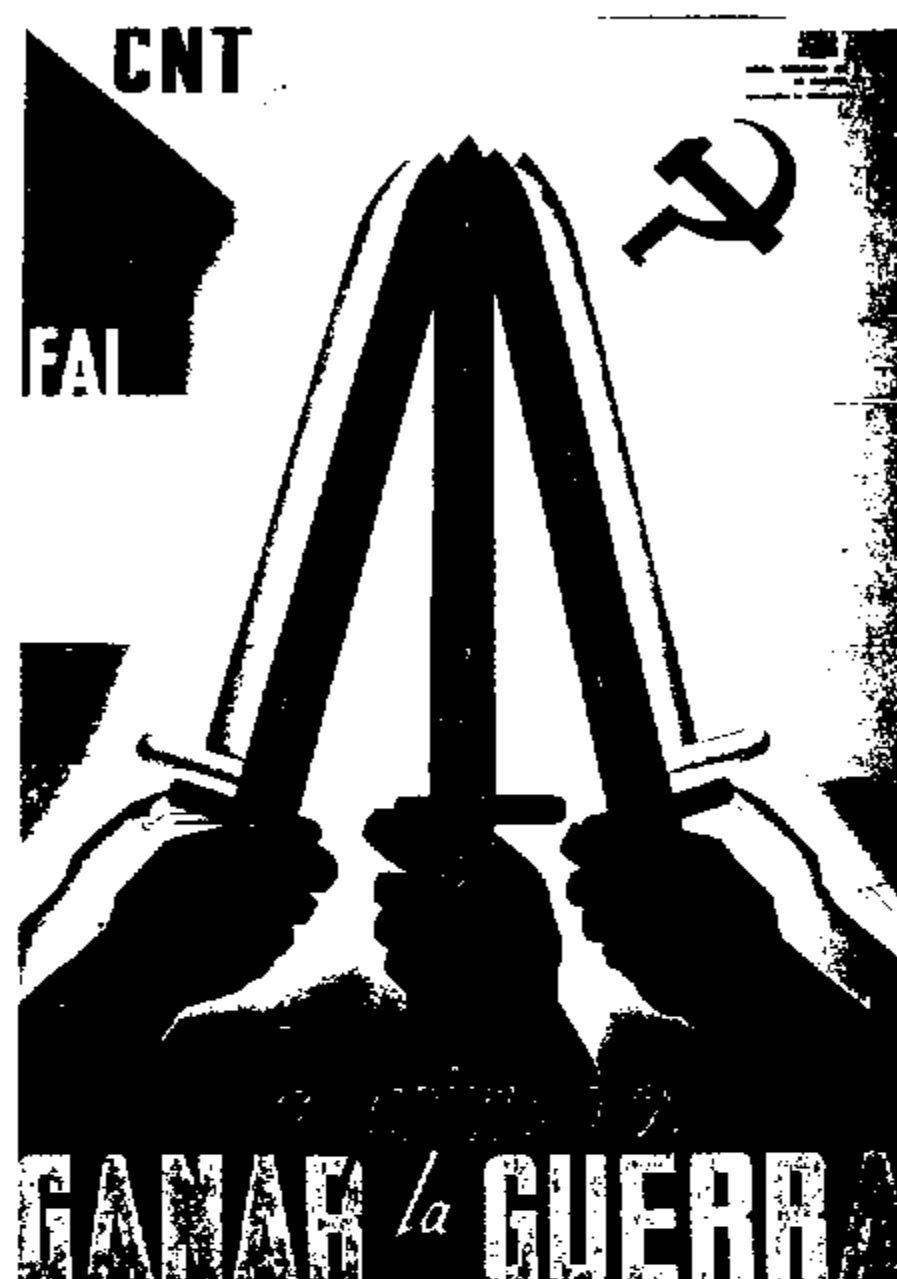
As usual the reason for this international shift was to do with the defence of "socialism in one country". By 1935 Stalin recognised that Hitler's main military target was the USSR. He needed allies fast

but the French and British bourgeoisies were not interested (in fact they rather liked the way fascism had dealt with the workers in Central Europe and would have been delighted had Hitler attacked the USSR). In order to put pressure on them through their electorates the anti-fascist Popular Front was dreamed up. By its call for "defence of democracy" it not only obscured the bourgeois class character of this particular form of government it also provided the ideology for mobilising millions in the Second World War. But before that particular tragedy was visited upon the European working class the Spanish working class had their own Calvary to climb.

In fact only in France and Spain did Popular Front governments get elected. By supporting the Popular Front as if it was a guardian of revolution (and not of the capitalist state) the POUM helped to contribute to the disaster which engulfed itself and the Spanish working class. Once the revolution had been suppressed the working class was forced to fight in a conventional war. The class war was turned into an imperialist war. It was the exact opposite of Lenin's slogan in the First World War. On the Nationalist side Germany and Italy used the war to train troops (the bombing of Guernica in the Basque country was a cold-blooded rehearsal that led to the finale in Hiroshima) and Germany reaped the reward of getting Spanish mineral deposits as a reward.

On the Republican side only Mexico openly sided with the Republic (strange that the legally recognised government of Spain got so little international support!) but the secret paymaster was Stalin. This had an enormous effect on what happened on the Republican side. The Stalinists (who numbered a few thousand in 1936 and were much smaller than the POUM) grew because they had control of the arms supply (a fact well-illustrated in the film). They also grew because they won the support of peasant proprietors who hated and feared collectivisation, particularly in the Valencia region. Stalinist support for petty bourgeois producers is also well illustrated in the film. Gradually through their infiltration of the Socialist Party the Stalinists come to be the real rulers in Republican Spain (and Stalin got the Spanish gold reserves as a nice payoff). By May 1937 they controlled the Army and the Secret Police (the S.I.M.) and the days of the other organisations were numbered.

To once again return to our wandering hero, Dave had been wounded and goes to Barcelona where he joins the Stalinised, regular Republican Army. He ends up taking part in the attack on the CNT-held Barcelona Telephone Exchange but this



The Popular Front in pictures. Here the joint Anarchist/Stalinist poster calls on workers to remember that the "the first thing is to win the war". Leftist ideology of all types is still telling us that we should support anti-fascism for democracy.

(in an almost comic but somehow believable scene), causes him to confront what he is doing. When he hears an English voice from the Anarchist side (although Loach never actually tells us that they are anarchists!) he shouts over to ask him why he is fighting on the other side. The reply is a question asking him why he is fighting with the Stalinists. Dave's honest response ("Fuck knows!") is the beginning of his abandonment of the Communist Party. He tears up his Party card and returns to the Aragon Front to fight with his real comrades in the POUM. What Ken Loach doesn't tell us is that the POUM leadership have abandoned their militants. Having ordered them to

withdraw from the barricades and from the streets and to resume work..

it went on to insist that they were still uniting all organisations ready to fight for the total destruction of fascism.

La Batalla (quoted in Bilan)

And all this at the very time when the Stalinist press was denouncing the POUM as a Francoist organisation!

By the time Dave rejoins his comrades changes have taken place. The women have been told they cannot fight but have to cook and be nurses. Arms are in even shorter supply and there is no further support from HQ. Earlier Dave had asked his comrades

The Communist Party was set up for the revolution. Why would it want to end it?

The most coherent reply comes from the Frenchman, Bernard who tells him that the ideas of the Party have become so diluted that they mean nothing. Now the Communist Party represents the hopes of one imperialism (by which he meant the USSR).

Soon the reality of that imperialism is on them when they are surrounded and disarmed by Republican troops led by Stalinists and the leading POUM militants are taken off to be interrogated in the S.I.M. prisons before they are shot. Dave himself is under threat of arrest and is forced to escape from Spain.

This all sounds depressing and in reality it is. But Ken Loach doesn't want us to take a despairing message from the film. The final Spanish scene is the funeral of Blanca, Dave's Spanish lover in which Dave picks

up some of the soil of Aragon. The film ends with that soil of Aragon being poured into Dave's Liverpool grave by his granddaughter who also reads out a William Morris poem and organises the relatives into clenched-fist salutes. The message is that she carries on the dream of revolutionary change.

The Guardian reported on September 29th this year that *Land and Freedom* is playing to packed audiences of young Spaniards who for the first time, twenty years after the death of Franco are getting to hear the truth about their history for their first time. It is not surprising that they know so little. In a poll conducted by the Spanish paper *Cambio 16* in 1983 77% of the population either were not born or were too young to remember the war whilst only 7% actually claimed to have taken part.[1] Twelve years later the gap between these figures can only have increased.

Given the mass shootings Franco carried out as he took over this is not surprising but we should add to that the deaths inflicted by Stalin. The murder of Nizkor and the suppression of the POUM brought Stalin's purges outside the USSR for the first time. These purges were largely led by "Ercoli" otherwise known in history as Palmiro Togliatti, the Stalin-appointed General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). It was not the end of his butchery, as our comrades of the Internationalist Communist Party discovered in 1945 [2]. Nor was the event of May 1937 the defeat of the Spanish revolution. As we have tried to show here, this occurred in the early days of July 1936.

We hope young people everywhere do find the film's message that revolutionary change is both necessary and possible, inspiring. Spain has now been a so-called democracy for twenty years. For more than half of that time it has been ruled by the so-called Socialist Party. It has the highest unemployment in Western Europe today and most of the young, however well-educated can only find the most precarious of livings. The working class in Spain has not been silent over that period and some of its struggles have reminded us of the revolutionary aspirations of the past.

However if revolutionary change is to take place in the future we have to learn the real lessons of the Spanish events. We have to understand the full historical truth about why the revolution failed and that it was because the organisations which the working class put its trust in, all came to prefer support for the democratic state to the social revolution. The political heirs of the POUM, as well as the Trotskyists, the anarchists and the Stalinists still peddle the basic message of class collaboration in

their various anti-fascist movements. Failure to draw this lesson is a bit like Dave's refusal to believe that the Communist Party was the butcher of revolutionary workers.

In 1930s Spain it would have been difficult for the Spanish workers to have made a revolution on their own given the fact that the great defeat of the post-war revolutionary wave still hung over the international working class. This defeat had transformed former revolutionaries into Stalinist hacks and helps to explain why the capitalists on both sides in the Spanish Civil War were so successful. What the events in Spain tell us is that the only war for the working class is class war. This means against all bourgeois factions whatever their political claims to be based on the working class. In saying this we are only repeating what the Communist Left have been arguing for 70 years. Never before have our arguments appeared so correct or necessary if we are to build a truly independent movement of the work-

ing class.(3

Jock

Notes

1. "El Horror Que No Se Olvida" (The Unforgettable Horror) *Cambio 16 Extra* 19-26 September 1983.
2. For more on the murders of comrades Acquaviva and Atti by the Stalinist PCI see "What do workers commemorate from 1945?" *Workers Voice* 78 and "Il processo di formazione e nascita del Partito Comunista Internazionale" in Quaderni di BC (available from our Italian comrades' address, £3 plus postage). The Stalinists also went on to the next logical step after anti-fascism and became the loyal supporters of the Italian Republic after 1946.
3. Next year is the sixtieth anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War and *Revolutionary Perspectives* will dedicate its summer issue to a fuller analysis of the event. This will also look at the split in the Communist Left at this time over the right way to fight for a working class perspective in such a bourgeois slaughter house.

French Strikes

continued from page 3

this stalemate without gaining a real understanding of the issue.

Meanwhile Juppé and Chirac are clear in their aim that they want to take France into monetary union with the EU (and therefore the debts of SNCF (the railways) and the welfare system must be lowered. If they succeed the policy of the restructuring of the French economy will continue apace, and the shedding of jobs as state-owned concerns are privatised or deregulated, will continue. Workers need to recognise that this crisis-ridden system cannot do anything else but make them pay. The alternative of out and out class struggle requires that workers not only don't leave the organisation of their own struggles to the capitalist intentions of the unions but also that they adopt a clear goal - the destruction of the capitalist system and the inauguration of an economic and social order based on socialist (and not state capitalist) principles.

In 1968 ten million workers went on strike and received enormous pay awards to get them back to work. Today the development of the economic crisis means that state cannot afford such concessions. But one thing is similar to 1968. For all the talk of revolution then and the lack of it now there was no clear working class programme then and there is no working class programme now. Until workers re-discover the communist programme these

mass actions can continue without posing a real threat to the system. However one important point that should not be lost is that the actions in France (and to a lesser degree in British car factories, and the postal service here) gives the lie to those who are once again arguing that the working class as a producing class should be written off and that the real struggles are elsewhere (roads, animals, environment). Only at the point where capital and labour meet and fight can we even begin the process of challenging the state and the capitalist mode of production. Single issue movements (however working class some of the participants) are ultimately all recuperable by capitalism and are in fact a new form of reformism. They fragment rather than unite class action and they certainly don't lead to any questioning of the state (on the contrary they tend to look to it as an arbiter against multinationals etc). Those elements who denigrate the class struggle in favour of these single issue movements are objectively and literally counter-revolutionary. The French working class, in common with the rest of the international working class, may have a long way to go but they have once again shown us a glimpse of the real road to revolution.

CDE/JD

Islamic Fundamentalism - A Capitalist Ideology



It is not surprising that the effects of the world crisis lead people to seek desperate solutions to the dire situations in which they find themselves. It is easy to understand how they become embroiled in a reactionary response like religious fundamentalism. Christian, Hindu and Islamic fundamentalists are all cashing in on the poverty, insecurity and social fragmentation that the capitalist crisis has created. With the collapse of Stalinism (so-called "communism") and the daily deprivations of capitalism before their eyes it is not surprising that many opt for a force which claims to provide a 'third way' out of the crisis. By claiming to be something new or different yet extremely familiar, it is understandable that the universal, easy and quick answers of Islam are taken up.

In Britain this has meant the rise of such movements as *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Liberation Party). Its posters have been seen from Bradford to Birmingham, and major meetings have been held from Essex to the North. Recently such groupings held a major rally in London to promote conversion to Islam and its political extensions. A similar organisation, the Islamic Foundation, were the animators of the demonstrations against Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*, and its public burning. This is an organisation intimately linked to the Pakistani Jamaat Islami and Afghan and Kashmiri groups. These groupings are now said to be making huge inroads into British mosques and have taken over most of the muslim societies in Universities.

In an interview to the *Guardian* (7th February 1994) a Birmingham muslim had this to say:

No matter how much I want to be British, I never will be because of my brown skin. I used to see everything as blacks versus whites, but now I see the struggle as muslims against non-muslims.

Islamicist politics is providing an ideology giving muslims, many of them working class, an identity and a series of easy answers to the situation in which they find themselves - the oppressed victims of racism, as well as exploited, and seemingly with little hope in these

times of crisis. Other political forms, the left in particular, is seen as having failed them. Unemployment in Britain is highest amongst Asians and racism is still endemic to the UK, no matter how much law this capitalist country might put onto the statute book.

The reactionary and divisive politics of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* are illustrated in the following quotes from its leaflets:

The idea of a democratic society is deceptive, dangerous and unworkable. The party [ie., Hizb ut-Tahrir] considers it is haram [forbidden] to establish or participate in parties which call for capitalism, socialism, secularism, nationalism or any religion other than Islam.

We are surrounded by a sea of kafr [unbelief]. Kafr thoughts, practices and kafr systems of life....

The muslim umma [community] has been seduced, tricked and subverted into a disastrous friendship with the kafr...so that our anthropological distinctness has been submerged and eradicated until all that is allowed to remain is a romantic appraisal of our islamic past in museums of mankind and other Jew-designated mortuaries of wisdom.

These ideas have not suddenly appeared from nowhere and for no reason. The crisis of capitalism and its effects felt throughout the world, muslim countries as well as countries with a sizeable muslim community, can be seen to have no small part in the rise of this political form.

Political Islam

In 1928 the Muslim Brotherhood was formed by the Egyptian teacher Hassan al-Banna. Its political basis can be seen from these quotes from its 'Credo':

5. I believe that a Muslim has the duty to revive the glory of Islam by promoting the renaissance of its peoples and by restoring its legislation. I believe that the flag of Islam should dominate all mankind, and that it is the duty of every Muslim to educate the world in the rules of Islam. I promise to struggle as long as I live to achieve this goal

and to sacrifice all I have to this mission.

6. I believe that all Muslims form a single nation, united by the Islamic faith...

7. I believe that the secret of the Muslims' backwardness is their estrangement from the religion, and the basis of that reform should be a return to the precepts and judgements of Islam....

Islam founds the state on principles of justice, establishes government in terms of clearly defined rights and allows each member of the various classes his due...

....ever since the Oriental nations foresook the teachings of Islam and attempted to substitute others which they believed would help solve their problems, they have been caught in a morass of uncertainty and have suffered bitter defeats; the price for deviation has been high...

The gulf that political and social events have opened up between the Muslims and their faith is wide...[they] are at war with their faith; they break their own sword and freely hand a dagger to those who would bring them down, by cooperating with those who seek to demolish the religion which is the very foundation of their regimes and the source of their strength....

There is a firm belief in the class system. In the Umma, or community of Islam, class society is simply accepted as a natural order. The politics of the Brotherhood is one of domination seeking not only to regain domination of Arab and other muslim countries but then to take it further, against the domination of alien political ideas and those who sponsor them. The domination of the muslim world by unbelieving foreigners is seen to be reversible only by a return to the principles of Islam.

The Failures of State Capitalism in the Middle East

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood attempted to gain power and to pursue its aims of an Islamic state through its growing contacts with the 'Free Officers Movement' led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. He had been told by one of their number to gain as much sway as possible within the armed forces to complement the growing influence of the Brotherhood within the unions and the wider working class, urban and rural. One of the main points of contact between the Officers and the Brotherhood was Anwar al-Sadat, later to be killed by an islamist. The Free Officers

came to power in 1952 using the help of the Brotherhood. Rather than adopt the policy of a move towards an islamic state they used the slogan - '*Religion is for God and the nation is for all*'. In 1954 the new regime attempted to gain control of the movement from within, they failed and after an attempt on the life of Nasser, the Brotherhood was repressed, six of their leaders being executed.

The Brotherhood expressed the political and economic aspirations of sections of the petty bourgeoisie attempting to gain an element of power through the support of the largely rural poor. But the army, through Nasser, expressed the desire to move from the restraints of the past and to become more aligned with the cycle of accumulation going on within the world, seeing the Egyptian bourgeoisie as unable to fully exploit the potential of the Egyptian economy particularly in the face of foreign domination of the economy. Nasser, and latterly his Arab Socialist Union (later the National Democratic Front or Party), followed a largely state capitalist programme. Politically, pan-arabism and Egyptian nationalism sat well within that political economic process. Similarly, Syria and Iraq saw the rise of Ba'athism [1], a union of Michel Aflaq's arab nationalism[2] and Akram Hourani's state capitalism. By 1963 Syria had become an essentially military led state, the civilian branch of the Ba'ath being sidelined. Ba'athism and Nasserism vied for the political leadership of the Arab world for some years, combining state capitalism and arab nationalism alongside a marginal inclusion of mentions of islam and anti-communism. Ba'athism had three aims:

- 1. The Arab homeland is an indivisible political and economic unit, and it is impossible for any one of the Arab countries fully to realise the requirements of its life in isolation from any other Arab country.*
- 2. The Arab nation is a cultural unity, and all of the differences existing between its sons are accidental and spurious and will pass away with the awakening of Arab consciousness.*
- 3. The Arab homeland is for the Arabs and they alone have the right to manage its affairs, dispose of its wealth, and direct its destinies.*

The attitude towards communism was expressed thus:

We represent the Arab spirit against materialistic communism...which strangles both the human being's freedom and his ethical values.

Both Ba'athism and Nasserism can be thought of not so much as Islamicist as Arabist political forms. Islam was used as

a cultural flavouring to the political ideology of these formations, giving the populations a feel that the state capitalism of such countries as Egypt and Syria were their own, Arab state capitalisms, rather than the convenient political economic form for the military led bourgeois control of the countries. The dominance of the military is an indication of the relative weakness of the bourgeoisies in these countries, the military supplying the core of power around which the state capitalist body politic could be organised.

The state capitalism of regimes such as Nasserist Egypt failed in its overall objectives. Between 1952 and 1971 the domestic economy expanded just over 3.3 times whereas income per head increased only by just over 2 times[3]. The effective decline was the result of a population expanding faster than the economy. But there were other problems. From 1967 to 1973 expenditure on arms went up 6 times in pursuit of the war with Israel. In addition, although Nasser had attempted to bring in reforms of the economy there were still bourgeois and bureaucratic interests acting as brakes on growth.

In 1970 Nasser died and Sadat came to power. He was to introduce the policy of *Infitah*, 'the open door', whereby foreign capital was welcomed, the state sector (which had been large) was to be reformed and the political and economic alignment of Egypt was to move from close ties with the USSR (to which state it had mortgaged its cotton crop for forty years!) towards the US and its reactionary clients in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and the like).

Islam and Imperialism

The position Egypt found within wider imperialist relations, though, was not seriously altered by the Nasserist Arab nationalist postures, merely taking Egypt from the orbit of one imperialist power bloc, the US-UK, partially into another, the USSR, to return to the US fold under Sadat. Under Mubarak the benefits of that closeness with the US can be measured by the \$4 billion per year in US aid.

Elsewhere the relationship between Islam and imperialism is not the simple matter many might think. The US, in particular, may brand islamist movements and islamic governments as dangerous or terrorist but that is not a uniform state of affairs. Thus, Sudan and Iran are seen as enemies, as are such organisations as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and so on. But the US (and the UK) actively aids the FIS in Algeria as part of its imperialist competition with France. Pakistan under Zia ul-Haq moved towards *shariah* law and other islamic social measures and was firmly

within the US bloc. It was downgraded because of its attempts at an independent nuclear policy but after Zia's convenient murder it was readmitted to the fold under Benazir Bhutto. Iran following a similar nuclear policy has been ostracised, having a trade embargo placed upon it (see *Workers Voice* 79). Saudi Arabia is one of the firmest and most favoured of US allies yet its ruling elite use the Wahabbi sect and its 'fundamentalism' as the state ideology[4]. Throughout the world the relationship between Islam and imperialism has little if anything to do with Islam as a religious or political force. There may be statements from major imperialist powers along the lines of Islamicism as a new 'evil', but such assertions only serve to cover what are relations driven by the needs of imperialist interests.

Islamicists from Nasser to Sadat

In the 60s the Muslim Brotherhood had achieved a considerable size, especially in those supporting rather than belonging to the organisation. However, the attempt to gain at least some power as a political movement through its support of the Free Officers (5) had been stopped and the Brotherhood crushed. A new tactic was adopted, a move towards tactics of propaganda and education, giving birth to the '*takfir wal hegirah*' (anathema and withdrawal) strategy. This was to give birth to a number of different political offspring. On the one hand it gave rise to the groups adhering to a hard-line approach, eventually spawning the Gama'a al-Islamiyah, the current major islamist terrorist grouping in Egypt. Sadat was assassinated by islamists such as these. He had always been close to the Brotherhood from the early days of the Free Officers and brought it into parliament under cover of other parties. This was not only an expression of his own closeness to the Egyptian right wing but also an attempt to buy off the islamist constituency. He had done so after 1977 when, under pressure of the burgeoning crisis, he had nearly been toppled as its effects bit deeply into the Egyptian economy. Rather than quieten things, the increase in the islamic tone and content of laws strengthened the islamists, both moderate and extreme.

In addition, there was the application of the strategy of withdrawal, whereby the supporters of the Brotherhood began the building of an economic power base. By 1988 500 islamic enterprises, often small, had total assets of \$8 billion. In May 1988 there was a mass withdrawal from state banks. Investment organisations such as ar-Rayyan and as-Sa'ad, had assets of \$4 billion and \$3.2 billion respectively (the financial bubble of the 80s was later to

burst under such promises as a 25% return on investment).

The power of such organisations as the Muslim Brotherhood stems from the inability of the state to answer the economic needs and the political aspirations of the population as a whole, let alone the urban and rural workers. The heirs of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, like Nasser before them, have always resisted the expansion of the political base. Each attempt to bring in new support for the NDF by allowing potential opponents either into the ruling party or its 'loyal' opposition has ended in a tragedy for it. Any expansion in the political base with a route to even limited political expression has always come close to an overthrow of the ruling elite, the armed forces and its bourgeois allies.

Gama'a has grown because the Brotherhood has been seen as tainted by both moderation and too close a relationship with the power structure, even though it seems that current attempts by the Brotherhood to reenter parliament will be blocked yet again. So the Gama'a grows the way the Brotherhood once did. It recruits its cadres from the huge numbers of graduates who are unemployed and then gains rank-and-file support from the incredibly poor rural proletariat, the labourers and the like. As the IMF decreed state withdrawal from benefits and services given to the destitute the Gama'a stepped in to give minimal support. Unemployment is at least 17.5% of the labour force. For Gama'a 'Islam is the solution'. One farcical notion being that a much needed housing programme will be

Pahlavi regime was repressive and exploitative. The regime certainly managed to alienate large sections of the population. Support for it was limited, only certain sections of the intelligentsia, professions and bourgeoisie could be counted upon. Ranged against it were the small working class, the unemployed, and a variety of elements of the middle classes.

The history of enmity between the Pahlavi regime and one section of the *ulama* was long. This section of the clergy represented the older entrenched social system, having been powerful through their control of the legal and educational frameworks. This control was continually attacked under both Shahs (Reza Pahlavi, an army officer, seized power as Shah in 1921). They were also prosperous, for example being large landowners in certain areas (Azerbaijan and Isfahan). Part of the Pahlavi's modernisation involved such measures as the 1959 Land reform which threatened to break up the large estates of the *ulama* and redistribute them amongst the peasants. With the 1963 'White Revolution' measures which included such things as a national Literacy Corps and women's suffrage, these set the seal on greater antagonisms between the Pahlavi's and the traditionalists now led by Khomeini.

The foundation in 1971 of the Religious Corps and the Religious Propaganda Department, seeking to substitute state agencies for the *ulama*, these antagonisms developed further. What should be remembered, though, is that not all of the *ulama* belonged to this tendency. There were those who managed to reach an accommodation with the regime. The most

To some Allah has given more than to others. Those on whom he has bestowed his bounty deny their slaves an equal share in their possessions. (The Koran)



Guns 'n roses: stage managed women's demonstration in Khomeini's Tehran

financed out of savings on the police budget because in the paradise of the Islamic state there will be no crime.

Islamicist Politics in Iran

The overthrow of the Shah in 1979 put Islam on the world political map. The

well known of them being such figures as Shariatmadari.

Prior to the revolution, following the attempted levelling of shanty towns around Tehran and the violent opposition to that attack, the mujahidin (ayatollahs etc.), made a call to all sections of society, from

the richest to the poorest, to oppose the regime. These ayatollahs were led by Khomeini but he was known only to a few within Iran. This was bolstered by what some have described as anti-imperialism, in reality simply anti-western ideas, criticising the regime for its US alliance and its implicit support for Israel, as well as the 'foreign domination' of the economy. The mosque held sway among large sections of the population. The city workers were often newly urbanised, drawn from rural workers educated in the Islamic schools, the rural areas being dominated by the mullahs. Similarly the middle classes were only partly secularised, deep influence continued through the mosque. In some cases radical movements arose such as the *Sazman-i Mujahidin-i Khalq*, mainly middle class students, having politics based in Islam (although radically reinterpreted) and leftism.

A male shall inherit twice as much as a female....Your wives shall inherit one quarter of your estate if you die childless. If you leave children, they shall inherit one eighth....If any of your women commit fornication, call in four witnesses from among yourselves against them; if they testify to their guilt confine them to their houses till death overtakes them...
(The Koran)

Major participants in the overthrow of the Shah did not initially include the *ulama*. They may have provided much of the framework of discontent but not active leadership within those events. The initial impetus came from the various Mujahidin, Fedayin, Kurds. It was mass demonstrations and the strike by oil workers which led the Shah to leave the country in the tender care of Bakhtiar, the Prime Minister. Only later, did the *ulama* using the opportunities provided by events, oppose the continued pressure of the fedayin and the independent movement of the masses. They organised the IRP (Islamic Republican Party), closely linked to what was later called the Pasdaran-i Inqilab (Revolutionary Guards), armed and instructed through the mosques. In addition, others drawn from the ranks of the urban and rural poor and unemployed, were known as *hizbollahis*, from the slogan '*hezb fagat hezbollah*' - no party but God's party, '*rahbar fagat Rohollah*' - no leader but Rohollah (Khomeini).

The provisional government comprised Bazargan as Prime Minister, representing the modernising wing, and the mullahs led by Beheshti. This was set up after secret negotiations had been held involving Bazargan, the army generals, Beheshti and Brzezinski of the USA.

Once the IRP had been established in power such organisations as the Mujahidin could be dispensed with. Thus from 1980 onwards they, and others who posed a threat to the *ulama*, and Khomeini in particular, became the victims of the Pasdaran. 'Justice' was served up in an horrific way by ayatollahs such as Khomeini, Iran's own Judge Jeffries - known as the 'catstrangler' [6]. It was not uncommon for children and, for example, teenage Mujahidin girls to be hanged from

lampposts.

The first to go were the liberals of Bazargan's National Front, the grouping backed by the USA. Then in 1981, after a period of tension between the Mujahidin and the Islamicists the term *monafegin* (splitters or hypocrites) was applied to them, gun battles occurred between the Pasdaran and the Mujahidin, their leader Rajavi left the country. Lajevardi, a former shop-keeper was employed as a prosecutor to deal with them

Even if a 12 year old is found participating in an armed demonstration, he will be shot. The age does not matter.

Mussavi-Tabrizi, an ayatollah was part of the team

they will not be allowed to go to jail...they will be tried in the streets...sentenced to death the same evening and executed.

They were quickly broken by the combined power of the various arms of the solidifying Islamicist state. The *Tudeh*, close supporters of the *ulama*, were the last in this line of former allies to be destroyed in the consolidation of power. They were decimated in 1983 after British Intelligence handed over a list of Soviet agents within this 'official' communist party.

At each stage the Majlis split, with a 'liberal' wing opposed by the *ulama*. The mujahidin had originally supported Khomeini and then Banisadr. The *Tudeh*, and the Fedayin (majority faction) supported the *ulama* in the split with Banisadr, only to become an opposition to the *ulama* at a later date.

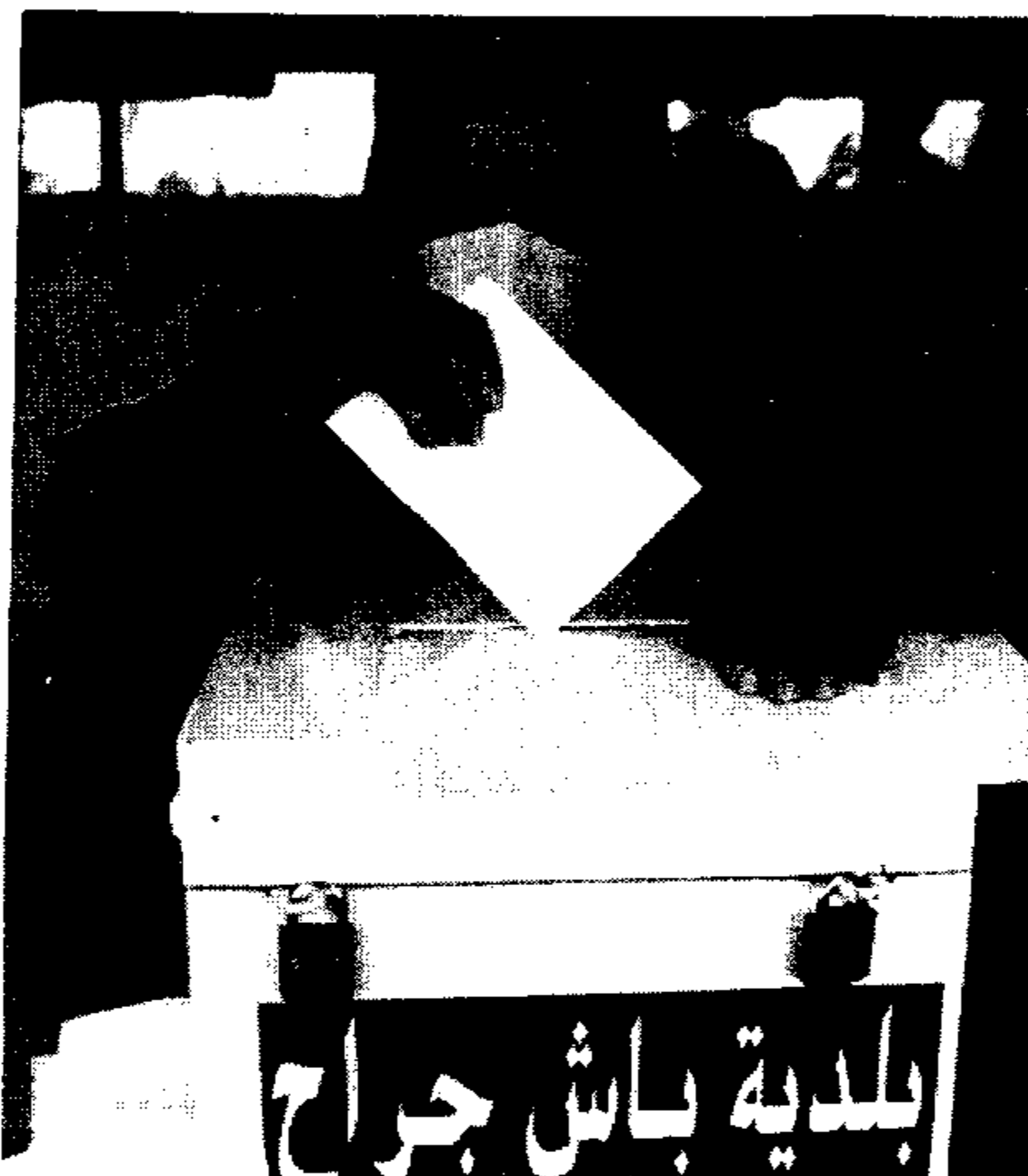
The March of Islam

Everywhere the origins of Islamicist political movements are the same. In Egypt the Brotherhood began from a framework of teachers, clergy and other middle class elements. They gained a following among the urban and rural workers on the back of poverty and the resentment of foreign domination of both the economy and the body politic. They organised through the religious schools, universities, poor relief agencies, even the labour movement. Their attempt to gain power and achieve a state based on the Koran through an alliance with the Nasserists failed, leading to the destruction of the movement. Its remnants were to be bought off by Sadat, leaving the field free for the formation of the Gama'a.

Algeria - The FIS

The FIS and the GIA in Algeria have certainly learnt from this and their own experience. There has been little or no

truck with compromise. Over 40,000 have died in this bloody civil war. It is clear, though that it is a war which cannot be won. Its only certainty is the self-destruction of both the military led governmental faction and the *ulama* led opposition. There have been offers of peace and power-sharing. In the winter of 1993-4, offers were made by the government of FIS control of certain ministries in a united government (but not defence, foreign relations and the interior) on condition that the President is named by the military and terrorism is abandoned. In January 1994 FIS boycotted the conference called to discuss these matters. Zeroual, the military leader, was then named President and responded by promising an eradication of terrorism but also that the door would remain open to dialogue. That summer a second attempt was made, with the release



Both the FIS and the Algerian Government are capitalists backed by imperialism

of two FIS leaders, Madani and Benhadj, into house arrest as some negotiations were undertaken.

By the end of October these had broken down, the two were re-arrested and Zeroual spoke on TV of the extermination of terrorists. Then in June 1995 it came to light that secret talks had been held about FIS being allowed to take part in Presidential elections in November. By July these were said to have broken down through FIS intransigence. The islamists seem to have taken the lesson from Egypt that no compromise is possible, that complete power is the only route, as in Iran. But the success of Zeroual in getting a respectable electoral turnout in the November elections has meant that they will have to rethink that strategy.

Neither East nor West

Islamicist politics presents itself as a 'third way' in political terms, that it is revolutionary in opposition to capitalism, socialism, and nationalism. It is nothing of the sort. It is and will remain reactionary and capitalist. It presents no challenge to class society. On the contrary it thrives on offering equality only after death. It represents no alternative system of production. On the contrary multi-nationals are more than happy to do business with those regimes which are wholly or partly Islamic. They see the advantage of dealing with regimes which keep firm control of the working class, and offers up an ideology which diverts them from their own interests.

Similarly the bourgeoisies in many countries have used islamic ideology as a position to fall back on as state capitalism fails in the current crisis of world capitalism. Here we can see Islam as what it is - an ideology for the bourgeoisie, for the interests of that class, but promoted within the working class to stop them looking towards their real material interests. The Islamicists may point to the Koran and its prohibition of usury as some sort of proof of its anti-capitalist nature, but wealth and poverty are conditions written into the Koran (see side panels). In an obvious way we can point to the mullah millionaires in Iran, the princes of Saud, the corruption of Sudan and the financial dealings of the Egyptian Brotherhood to belie that notion.

Within the world as a whole Islam is in no way a political form independent of imperialism. As we have shown here the Islamic Republic in Iran was originally assisted by the USA and later got material assistance from British Intelligence. In Algeria the FIS has only been able to sustain its campaign of armed resistance thanks to the support of the same two powers who are themselves aiming at undermining the domination of French imperialism in North Africa.

The plight of women has been clearly outlined above, far from being granted some special respect, all they gain is position of codified inferiority legislated by the Koran itself. The shit about defending female dignity through medieval dress codes belongs to the Dark Ages. For workers Islam is no different to any other capitalist ideology. Poverty is a matter of divine will and the poor, being numerous, are not only consigned to poverty but are also intended for the slaughter of the battlefield.

Marxism has something quite different to say on these matters. The class structure of

Let the rich man spend according to his wealth, and the poor man according to what Allah has given him.
(The Koran)

society has nothing whatsoever to do with divine design. It is the product of history. The exploitation of workers is not sanctioned by something otherworldly but is the result of the operation of capital, the capitalist system and the class at the head of that - the bourgeoisie. The central contradiction of this society is not a war of black against white, nor of muslim against non-muslim. It is the class war. Only the ultimate victory of the working class will banish the poverty, the famines and the wars of capitalism. When these are finally buried so will the religious fundamentalism which feeds on them.
Clastre

Notes

1. Ba'ath meaning Renaissance or Resurgence.
2. Aflaq: "Islam in its pure truth sprang up in the heart of Arabism and it gave the finest expression of the genius [of Arabism], and it marched with its history and it mixed with Arabism in its most glorious roles, so it is impossible for there to be a clash between nationalism and religion for nationalism is its likeness, springing from the heart and issuing from the will of God, and the two walk together embracing especially if the religion represents the genius of nationalism and mixes with its nature."
3. Figures calculated from the IMF 1982 yearbook, quoted in 'Power and stability in the Middle East', ed. Berch Berberoglu.
4. Saudi Arabian sources have recently criticised the costs of the alliance with the US, complaining of the enforced buying of arms, effectively aiding the continuance of the US arms sector, troubled by the depression of arms sales and the precariousness of the US economy as a whole. Also Saudi conservative and radical clerics alike have rounded upon the Saudi regime for its 'sham' fundamentalism, particularly the ruling families false morality, visiting and enjoying the 'fleshpots' of the decadent west, while a different law rules at home.
5. The Nasserist movement had the hopes of a wide variety of political formations pinned to it. Not only did the Brotherhood have hopes, the Egyptian Communist Party dissolved itself in support of it. The British had originally supported the Brotherhood to counter the effect of the ECP in middle class students.
6. "human rights mean that unsuitable individuals should be liquidated so that others can live free..."
"those who are against killing have no place in islam..."

See also

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