



communist review

THEORY AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY No 36 SPRING 2002 £1.50



In the belly of the beast

War and History

MARY DAVIS

The imperialist war – issues for discussion

ANDREW MURRAY

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SAM WEBB

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THEORY AND DISCUSSION
JOURNAL OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY
NUMBER 36 SPRING 2002
ISSN 1474-9246

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Editorial

War and history

The events of September 11th 2001 may prove equal in status in historical significance to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28th 1914. Both events were the sparks, which ignited imperialist wars – respectively, World War One 1914-18 and the current so-called war against terrorism (2001-?). But ‘sparks’ should not be confused with causes, and causes are often hidden in propagandist justifications. For those, (supported by the entire ideological apparatus of the state), who willfully elevate form over content and blur reality with illusion, the contrast of two unconnected events and their association with common cause, will be unacceptable to the point of offensiveness. How could one draw a comparison of the bestiality of the WTO massacre with the death of one member of the Austro-Hungarian royal family? How could anyone question the justice of the democratic ‘free’ world waging a war against the forces of evil? But more than this, how could the motives of the defenders of freedom be reduced to imperialist avarice?

Andrew Murray’s article refreshingly analyses the current war from a standpoint far removed from the propagandist moralism of the Bush/Blair rhetoric. To understand the essence of social phenomena stripped bare of the veil of appearance is not the sole prerogative of marxists. However, marxist methods and insights into the inner workings of capitalism, give those who use it in a creative way, a major advantage over those who implicitly accept the various forms of capitalist ideology. In short, historical materialism as method of analysis has a major advantage over a historical idealism. Thus to argue that World War One was fought over Serbia is to discount the previous 30 years of conflict between the European powers as they fought to divide and re-divide the world between them. What was their purpose? To believe the ideology of the day means accepting that the colonising countries (chief among them Britain), were agents of civilisation liberating the dark continents from savagery. Hardly a credible argument given the enormous economic benefits of colonies to their white conquerors. In the same way we asked to believe that the present attack on Afghanistan (and who knows where else?) is to root out terrorism from the world. Thus we are

expected to ignore the change in the balance of world forces since the collapse of the socialist countries and the repositioning of the US in oil rich areas previously outside her ‘sphere of influence’.

Blair, as a latter-day Disraeli, now stalks the world stage not solely as Bush’s supine puppet, but also in a vainglorious attempt to safeguard remaining British interests. Public private partnership now becomes an even more vital plank of new labour policy, as the promises of increased investment in public services are even less likely to come from a public purse drained by the cost of war. Thus it becomes apparent that the defence of the public sector is linked directly to defence spending. In the past, irrefutable cases made to extend or defend an aspect of publicly funded provision have been met with the stock response; ‘where will the money come from?’ The left has been made to look naive and foolish for not understanding such great affairs of state. However it is clear that the public purse (and its capacity to borrow) is far from empty when it comes to financing war and weaponry.

The anti-war movement is gaining ground in this country – it still has a long way to go in the US. It is thus refreshing that US communists working ‘in the belly of the beast’ are active and well-organised as the second part of Sam Webb’s article shows. Ideologues in both countries have embarked on an all-out offensive to equate American interests with those of the ‘free’ world. They are supported by willing accomplices in intellectual circles, who conflate anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism in an attempt to discredit the left¹ and to atone (in the case of Independent columnist David Aaronovitch and others) for their radical student pasts in an effort to adjust to the New Labour climate.

In this issue we are also printing the second part of Kenny Coyle’s article on revolutionary strategy and tactics. (The first part appeared in no.34). Book reviews and cultural features will, we hope, be a regular feature in Communist Review in the future – the contributions of Martin Levy and John Callow in this edition start the process.

MARY DAVIS

Note: 1 See for example C.Christie, US Hate: A Designer Prejudice for our Times THES, 18/1/02



The Imperialist War Issues for discussion

Andrew Murray

The imperialist war launched in the aftermath of the attacks on New York and Washington on September 11 is now poised between phases. The military aggression against Afghanistan is all but over, with thousands of lives lost and the government of that impoverished country replaced. The US government is making it clear that this is far from the end of the matter and that further military action in the “war on terrorism” is envisaged. By the time this is read, attacks may have been launched against Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia or elsewhere.

What is clear is that this is a war which will not and cannot come to an early end. The assault on Afghanistan is simply an episode in what has become an endless war fought by imperialism against the peoples of the world. Since 1991, when the collapse of the Soviet Union made imperialism's victory in the Cold War definitive, there has been one war after another launched by the great powers – the Gulf War, the Balkans War, the resumed bombardment of Iraq, Plan Colombia, the occupation of Sierra Leone and so on. Now we have the “war on terrorism”, a war without inherent boundaries or limitations.

This situation presents new challenges to the working class of the world and to peace movements everywhere, particularly in Britain, a country in the forefront of the violent imposition of this new order upon the world. In this article, I shall look at some of the issues of strategic importance arising out of the international situation and avoid repeating points concerning the character of the present conflict which have already been explored in the *Morning Star* and the other material produced by the Communist Party since September 11.

Imperialist Strategy

The Communist Party has correctly characterised the conflict as an “imperialist war”, a position which sets our analysis apart from much of the left and ultra-left, including sections opposed to the war but who nevertheless are reluctant to draw the conclusion that it is a war inescapably rooted in the prevailing power relationships in the contemporary world.

However, imperialist wars come in all shapes and sizes, as any study of twentieth century history will establish. They can range from global conflicts involving the slaughter of millions, to colonial wars, to peripheral or proxy clashes to, in the case of an attack on a socialist country, counter-revolutionary wars. Sometimes they can mix all or any of the above. Where does the present “endless war (1991-?)” fit in?

The collapse of world socialism in 1989-91, which represented the retreat for an as yet indeterminate but certainly temporary period of the working class from positions of strategic state power, created important new possibilities (and problems) for imperialism. Two fundamental issues arose for settlement.

The first is the drive of imperialism as a whole to impose undivided control over the entire world under circumstances in which anti-imperialist, democratic and other progressive forces have suffered an historic reverse. This is the clearest common thread running through the last decade of conflict.

The second is establishing a new balance of power between the imperialist powers themselves, in expressing and containing their rivalries and competing desire for a share of this lucrative world order. The first issue is, by analogy, the attempt to make every mouth in the world drink cola, the second to decide how much shall be Coke, how much Pepsi, and how much other suppliers.

Both factors underlie almost every twist in the endless war. The Pentagon understood this early on. Its first strategic document produced after 1991 could hardly have been clearer. This called for the world to be centred on the “benevolent domination of one power” (no prizes for guessing which), but one which must, in the course of sustaining its hegemony, “account for the interests of advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order.”

The then-director of the CIA, William Webster, expressed the same idea of unity-in-struggle for imperialism when he observed that “our political and military allies are also our economic competitors”. This thinking has informed all recent US administrations. Under Clinton, it found one expression – the US seeking to place itself at the head of a coalition of its allies in imposing their will on the world, even if the particular issue at stake was of marginal importance to the US ruling class itself. The intervention in Somalia and the war against Yugoslavia in 1999 were examples of this. This was a relatively cheap way of maintaining US hegemony over all the major capitalist powers by appearing to put itself at the service of the struggle for their collective interests.

George Bush's administration has taken a different course – not “isolationism”, which is not remotely an option for any government in Washington – but “unilateralism”, an assertion of the interests of US monopoly capitalism first and



foremost, with an indifference to the views of its allies\competitors where they do not coincide with those prevailing in the White House and Wall Street.

Before September 11, this unilateralism threatened the unity of the G7 bloc of the big powers. On the one hand, the Bush administration was gung ho for its “star wars” programme, a major boost for US arms monopolies which threatened to start a new arms race and was bitterly opposed by most European powers. On the other, the European Union was developing its plans for its own military arm separate from NATO in the face of thinly-veiled hostility from Washington. On both issues, it needs to be noted, the Blair government was adopting a temporising position, trying to reconcile its desire to be “at the heart” of big business Europe while also maintaining its Robin posture to George Bush’s Batman. There was little doubt, however, that Blair would go with Washington if push really came to shove, illustrating, if further proof were needed, where the most potent threat to the British people’s sovereignty comes from.

The destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York rewrote the script. An ignorant and reactionary US President appointed to his office by his daddy’s friends in the Supreme Court was able to recast himself as a world leader with a mandate for unlimited revenge. However, the “unilateral” strategy has remained preponderant. The war against Afghanistan has been conducted according to US designs alone. Bush and his sidekicks Rumsfeld and Cheney have not bothered to hide their contempt for any “multilateral” notions of consensus-forming or pursuing a UN-inspired agenda of “nation-building”.

Early in the conflict the pro-Washington liberals and social democrats were hailing the efforts to build a coalition to attack Afghanistan as indication that Bush had seen the light. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every other country in the coalition was presented with a stark “with us or against us” choice, with little doubt being left that making the wrong decision would entail consequences. British and other military involvement was clearly of cosmetic, or at best diplomatic, value only. And Washington has made it clear time and again that it will decide for itself who will be attacked next and when.

With its allies/competitors flapping helplessly in its wake, the US government has used the war crisis to establish forward positions of its own. It has extended its influence deep into former Soviet central Asia, establishing military bases in a number of states at least one of which, in Kyrgyzstan, looks like becoming permanent. This will help US interests get a head start in the struggle to access the considerable oil and gas reserves in the region.

As a writer in *The Guardian* observed (January 16 2002): “The United States is engaged in a strategic power grab in Central Asia of epic proportions. In previous eras, this sort of expansionism would have been called colonialism or imperialism”.

This also opens up the prospect of both forming a

profitable alliance with the reborn Russian imperialism, now also interested in seeing mineral and energy reserves under its strategic control finding their way to the world market, and of further encircling China, seen as a long-term threat to US hegemony in east Asia.

On the same day as the article in *The Guardian* quoted above appeared, a report in the *Daily Telegraph* noted that the US was sending troops to the Philippines, purportedly to assist the Manila government fight Muslim guerrillas. A Washington-based diplomat was reported as saying that “the Americans have been desperate to get back into the Philippines since their armed forces were kicked out of the Clark and Subic Bay bases in 1992.”

The first definitive consequence of this latest phase of war is that it has been used to reassert US power over its allies, strengthen the US position in relation to real and potential rivals and give a further display to all interested parties of the overpowering might of the US military. It is fairly clear, however, that this is simply accelerating the development of a number of countervailing factors which will ultimately do more than take the shine off the US victory over the peasants of Afghanistan.

Russian opinion is divided over the new support for US aggression. Certainly, a US move into Central Asia is pregnant with possibilities of further conflict. And China must be studying this new network of bases from the Philippines to Kyrgyzstan with alarm.

Nor is it likely that the removal of the Taliban will bring stability to Afghanistan. Resentments will accumulate afresh against the US and Britain throughout the Middle East, the more so when it becomes clear that the entirely cosmetic talk of doing the right thing by the Palestinians was just so much humbug used to win support for the war in its more difficult phases.

As with every imperialist war, the ending of one is merely the preparation for the next.

Military-Political Tactics

The war has displayed a further refinement of the military and political tactics employed by the imperialists to advance their interests. As in the Gulf and Balkans wars, the decisive element has been the unrestrained use of air power and missile bombardment. It is not too much to say that the US Air Force has replaced the strategic nuclear missile force as the main arm of the US military.

It is an area in which the US enjoys a decisive advantage, not merely over the Taliban government of Afghanistan, but everyone. Both the ability of the US military-industrial complex to integrate technical advances rapidly into the air force, and the fact that the US has the wherewithal to maintain an extremely expensive bomber fleet have now opened up such a gap that the capacity of other powers like Britain and France to even co-operate effectively with the US military has been called into question. There is no question of the air defence systems of any recent US targets being capable of



even remotely troubling the Pentagon's pilots or curbing in any way a strategy of mass high-altitude bombardment of devastating effect.

Clearly, the US air force has been able to spread sufficient destruction and terror in Iraq, Yugoslavia and now Afghanistan as to allow Washington to achieve its immediate objectives without the commitment of large-scale land forces, which is both still more expensive and much more politically fraught, since it carries with it the possibility of a deeply unpopular casualty count.

However, the air force has not achieved all this by itself. Even the most terrible air bombardment is not likely to effect a change of regime on its own. Local allies able to carry forward the fight on the ground are another minimum requirement. The Kosovan Liberation Army fulfilled this function in Yugoslavia, and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. In the case of Yugoslavia, it was actually a combination of economic sanctions against a war-ravaged country and blatant political pressure by the US which finally forced Milosevic from power via an election which could scarcely be described as free or fair. In Iraq Saddam Hussein remains, of course, in power to this day.

Both the KLA and the Northern Alliance are creations of imperialism – in the case of the latter, originally forged in the course of the anti-Soviet war launched by the US with Pakistani help from 1978 onwards. However, they undoubtedly drew strength from internal weaknesses in the respective regimes they confronted. The obscure and misogynist Taliban government proved particularly brittle when placed under pressure.

The advantage of the existence of these groups for the US and Britain is that they allow the dangerous fighting to be undertaken by expendable locals and, if successful, they allow the change of regime to appear an internal matter, and imperialism can take charge through the cheap and politically-presentable means of a puppet (or at least pliable) indigenous government, rather than going to the expense and political bother of a direct military occupation.

The obvious conclusion from this is that regimes which lack internal unity and mass support are particularly vulnerable to the new military-political tactics of imperialism. Their efficacy against a genuinely popular government has yet to be tested, so, while it would be foolish in the extreme to underestimate imperialism's over-weening military power, it is not omnipotent or unchallengeable.

However, a new tactical question has been raised for the peace and working-class movements in Britain and elsewhere by this strategy. To what extent should support be given to anti-popular regimes in the interests of anti-imperialism? This issue seldom arose in sharp form in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s. National liberation movements and anti-imperialist governments were either under Communist leadership or that of the secular nationalistic left. Many regimes were aligned with the working-class on a world scale through close

ties with the USSR. Sometimes such regimes vacillated or switched sides, but there was never any basic political difficulty in supporting all and any anti-imperialist forces. The general national liberation movement was seen as one of the three allied trends working for social progress in the world, alongside the socialist community and the working-class in the advanced capitalist countries.

This problem arises today in part as a consequence of the success of imperialism, in cooperation with its local supporters, in crushing the secular and democratic left. It also arises from the failure of bourgeois nationalism to solve the urgent social and national problems faced by their peoples, in the Middle East above all. These circumstances have led many peoples to turn to other forces, including some claiming religious (or even divine) inspiration, to some degree or another.

Of course, the regimes targeted by the US and Britain in the course of the endless war cannot all be casually lumped in together. Saddam Hussein's Iraq is a dictatorship of a particularly brutal nature, which was once supported by imperialism. The murder of democrats, Communists and all opponents of Saddam's clique is common place. Yet Saddam stands, with whatever degree of sincerity, for resistance to the attempt to impose a new imperialist settlement throughout the Middle East, and he has become skilled at articulating the demands of the Arab masses.

The Yugoslav regime cannot remotely be characterised in such a harsh manner, although ironically it proved harder to mobilise left and liberal opinion against the Balkans War than against either the Gulf or Afghan wars. Certainly, Milosevic had manipulated nationalism to some degree throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, and this nationalism was one of several internal factors which assisted German imperialism to realise its plan to dismember Yugoslavia. But the crimes imputed to him were vastly exaggerated and in some cases were a response to the campaign of terror launched by the German-financed KLA.

The Taliban, despite gaining some credit for imposing a more stable and predictable government in Afghanistan in place of the bandit warlordism of the factions now describing themselves as the Northern Alliance, oppressed the Afghan people (women above all) with a coercive mixture of a primitive reading of Islam and Pashtun rural codes. It showed little or no interest in economic development or promoting social well-being.

So in all cases Communists and other progressives might wish for different regimes to have existed in the "target" countries to some extent or other. However, I would argue that this is not the main issue to confront. We need to start from a different point.

Our founding principle must be opposition to imperialism, which is an expression of the class interests of the bourgeoisie of the major powers, Britain included. Their desire to control the whole



world poses the gravest dangers to humanity, and they are, of course, perfectly happy to sustain still less desirable regimes if it suits the interests of their controlling monopolies.

This could hardly have been made clearer than by Tony Blair when Time magazine pressed him on why he was not more forthright in condemning violations of the rights of women and religious minorities in Saudi Arabia (December 10 2001): "I'm not going to get in the business of attacking the Saudi system", he said. But you attack the Taliban, his interviewers pointed out. "Yes, but we're in conflict with the Taliban regime," the Prime Minister replied, "I don't think it's very helpful for us to tell the Saudis how they should live."

For imperialists, values are clearly contingent on the co-operativeness of the regime in question with global big business.

Secondly, we need to be clear on the continuing importance of the right of peoples to govern their own affairs and, unless they commit aggression or otherwise break international law, to do so without external interference. We should reject categorically the idea of Tony Blair or anyone else setting themselves up as an international moral arbiter, deciding which regimes are legitimate.

It is also the case that the only sure way towards social progress and democracy is that which springs from within the struggles of the peoples of the country concerned themselves. Of course, the USA has devoted much time and treasure to destroying just such forces in the past. But it remains true that the only durable progressive regimes are those which rest on the power of their own people and not those which are externally imposed. Non-interference and respect for sovereignty offers the best opportunity, in general, for such progress to develop.

This does not remove the obligation on us to offer solidarity to those struggling to replace repressive regimes, even those regimes which are resisting imperialism at one time or another. But the highest responsibility of Communists must always be to oppose their own ruling class, something which is trebly important when that class is as much an international bandit as ours is. The key link today is clearly opposition to the policies of Blair and Bush, more than those of Saddam Hussein or Islamism.

Those who seek to justify these wars by reference to the allegedly undesirable nature of the governments in place are, moreover, promoting one or other of the fashionable ideologies which have emerged in Western academia since the end of the Cold War. One is Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" theory, which amounts to the assertion that all countries must sooner or later end up as liberal capitalist regimes, giving those states which are already embodying this ideal the authority to impose it elsewhere, since they are merely giving history a helpful shove.

The other, still more reactionary, is Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilisations" thesis, which holds that conflict between different "civilisations" – mainly the western and the Islamic – are the

inevitable way of the future. Either and both of these have been implicitly prayed in aid by those seeking to justify the various episodes of the endless war. Both, in their different ways, justify the status quo in the new world order and support the drive by the USA and its allies to bring those with different values to heel and remake every country in their own image.

The left needs to respond by reasserting its own vision of social development, leading with many twists and turns to a common human civilisation within which both solidarity and tolerance of difference will play a part, and the right of all peoples to find their own way forward towards it.

Religious fundamentalism

It is argued, however, that religious – specifically Islamic – fundamentalism is antithetical to this aim, and that liberal capitalism would indeed be preferable to theocracy.

In my view, this confuses form and content. The question of religious fundamentalism, or any politics expressed in religious terms, is a contingent one, and this is pretty clearly so in the world today. It is hundreds of years since peoples anywhere fought over the merits of different forms of god-worship, and even then class interests lurked behind the slogans of the pious.

Today, all forms of religious politics articulate clear class positions. This is not to deny the mobilising force of religious belief, nor that there is such a thing as "fundamentalism" – indeed, importing a fundamental reading of religious texts into political practice serves several purposes common to different movements.

For one thing, it sustains authoritarian solutions to social problems, since there is, by definition, no arguing with the word of God as written down and those who interpret it on Earth. It also sustains the imposition of a strong code of moral behaviour, since the regulation of such has formed part of the stock-in-trade of most organised religions.

All fundamentalisms tend towards misogyny as well, relegating women to the margins of social life. In this respect, however, they merely articulate and reinforce secular trends rooted in class society.

In so far as one can speak of religious fundamentalism in general, therefore, it is a reactionary force in the world. However, these common features leave most of the more important questions about any particular religious-based political movement unanswered. For that, one must study each movement in concrete terms.

The most dangerous religious fundamentalists active as a political force in the world today are surely the conservative Christians in the USA. Hugely well-organised and wealthy, they represent a constant reactionary pressure in US politics, advocating repression of various kinds at home and aggressive imperialism abroad. The religious right's main slogans, however, show the marginal role that actual textual fundamentalism plays in their political movement. The right to own guns or to pay



no taxes has no more to do with any reading of the Bible than forcing women to wear burkas has to do with the Koran. Political Christian fundamentalism in the USA is simply an expression of reactionary bourgeois interests seeking a mass base through a religious presentation of its programme.

Muslim fundamentalism is similarly contingent. For example, in the late 1970s, Islamist leaders played a major part in the overthrow of the pro-imperialist dictator the Shah of Iran. At the very same time, Islamic forces little different in theological terms were being organised by the USA into a fighting force to overthrow the progressive government in Afghanistan and obstruct any modernisation there.

In Iran, the Islamic Republic has evolved into a national bourgeois regime, having repressed working-class forces there. In Afghanistan, those forces claiming Islamic inspiration have remained, without exception, puppets of one foreign power or another. Throughout the Middle East and the Islamic world one can see a similar diversity. Islamic politics does not, of itself, necessarily lead in a pro- or anti-imperialist direction.

As argued above, it has filled a vacuum created by the repression and/or shortcomings of the secular, democratic and nationalistic left. In the case of Communists, the key word is repression. Following world war two the USA, often with British involvement intervened in one place after another (sometimes using Islamic forces as an agency) to destroy the Communist movement, leaving religious fundamentalism to pick up the thread of opposition to imperialism, in its own language. What imperialism has not been able to do is reconcile the peoples of the region to external domination.

Al-Qaeda should be analysed in this light. It is a political organisation using religious slogans, although its stated programme, which our media is careful to ignore, can be easily fulfilled in this world without reference to the hereafter. It seeks, through its own statements, the liberation of Palestine, a halt to the continuing Anglo-American attack on Iraq and a general end to western domination of the Arab and Muslim worlds, above all the withdrawal of the US military presence from Saudi Arabia. It condemns US and British support for the corrupt regimes of the Gulf.

Its roots are in elements of the Saudi ruling class who wish to be free of domination by imperialism, a message that has found an echo in other countries of the region. In politics, it represents a form of bourgeois anti-imperialism which seeks the support of the masses through the use of popular slogans and seeks to confront the USA above all through unconventional military means, broadly though not entirely terroristic. Its policies, which are not of course original to Al-Qaeda, undoubtedly command more support than its tactics, although the latter do have a large number of enthusiasts.

This is in no sense to justify the attacks of September 11 which, in terms of civilian lives lost,

were awful events. But there is no point in treating bin Laden and his followers simply as religious fanatics (even though that may perhaps be the self-image of some al-Qaeda fighters). They are a real, mass expression, of contradictions existing in today's world, of which the most potent is the contradiction by imperialism and the oppressed peoples.

For the working-class to re-win the leadership of the struggle for human liberation – which is the only ultimate guarantee of that struggle's success – careful note must be taken of the reasons for the appeal of Islamist forces, while rejecting both the religious form that appeal takes (particularly its women-hating elements) and the terrorist tactics sometimes followed, which relegate the masses to the role of spectators admiring the deeds of a handful of "heroes".

Lessons for British politics

The main concern of British Communists is, obviously, to do all we can to ensure that the working-class movement in our country plays a full part in that worldwide struggle for emancipation. The war has exposed once more the profound division within our movement between, on the one hand, an increasingly blind and rabid pro-imperialism combined with a reformism now all-but devoid of reforms and, on the other, an emerging mass movement of opposition both to war and New Labour.

The role of Blair and his clique needs no elaboration here. Four wars in four years speaks for itself. But it behoves us to remember that Blair is not merely British Prime Minister, he is also the leader of the British labour movement to all intents and purposes. In this war, as in most of his other policies, he has also been able to count on the support of the bulk of the leadership of the trade union movement as well. In that sense, the labour movement has lined up with the continuing aggression of the "war on terrorism", reflecting the continuing death-grip of social democratic thinking.

Yet at the same time, and despite the lack of support from the main mass organisations of the working class, the trade unions, the anti-war movement in Britain has been the largest in any country in Europe, outside of Italy and Greece. It has represented the largest anti-war movement since the days of the Vietnam War, more than thirty years ago, a war in which Britain was not a direct combatant. The main pillars have been the political left (the SWP, the Communist Party, Morning Star, elements of the Labour left), CND and other traditional peace organisations and the Muslim community. Liberals, Greens and Plaid Cymru have also played an important part. It should also be noted that some unions have opposed the war (ASLEF, NATFHE, RMT, TSSA, CWU) and that tens of thousands of ordinary trade unionists have taken part in demonstrations, albeit not mobilised by their unions.



The movement has also had a depth of political understanding regarding the world today which is new. The great CND-led demonstrations of the 1980s against Cruise and Trident were certainly larger. However, once one moved beyond the immediate question of the use and deployment of nuclear weapons, there was little agreement on the main questions of world politics, above all the nature of the USA and the role of the Soviet Union. Today, there is a more profound understanding of imperialism and the new world order, even if different terms are sometimes used. Connections are made between the war, global capitalism, the situation in Palestine, world debt, economic crisis and so on.

This helps lay the foundation for a far more profound challenge to new Labour politics than might have been expected. The main weakness remains the trade unions. Actually halting the war and British participation in it is scarcely conceivable without mass action by the organised working class (short of some unforeseeable military disaster). The inability of anti-war forces to make a breakthrough even in such traditionally left unions as the T&G and Unison is sobering.

On the other hand, it would have been difficult to imagine mobilising an anti-war demonstration of

100,000 people twenty years ago without the trade unions playing a leading role. People's anger will find a way out, even if the organisations which have long given expression to it no longer do so. Here again we seem to be moving into new territory. Certainly, the experience of the anti-war movement reinforces the view that trade union politics is at a crossroads. Continued acquiescence in new Labour rule could, coming on top of the multiple defeats of the Tory years, end in the marginalisation of trade unions as politically mobilising forces, particularly among the young. Yet without trade union involvement, it is very hard to move beyond protest (however broad and dynamic) to concrete victories which can rebuild working class confidence. Here is an absolutely critical area for Communist work.

Above all, the war has highlighted the urgency of removing the Blair clique from the leadership of the labour movement. His role as chief diplomat and coalition-organiser of the war has brought shame on our movement. New Labour is more clearly than ever the enemy of the best aspirations of the working class and of world peace. In the breadth and strength of the anti-war movement we can see the first mustering of the forces which will accomplish this task. ★



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In the Belly of the Beast part 2

US Communists Speak Out

The following is the second part of the **keynote address** delivered by **Sam Webb, national chair, CPUSA** to the **Communist Party of USA 27th National Convention** on JULY 6, 2001. Part one was printed in CR no.35

The party in today's conditions

Our nation is at a crossroads. One road leads to political reaction and the other to democratic renewal and social progress. Which one our nation takes is not preordained by some iron logic of history. Objective processes that we have to answer at this Convention is: will the communists respond to the new political challenges? Will we think afresh and bring our strategic and tactical know-how to the labor and people's movement? Will we build the Party, Young Communist League, and People's Weekly World among the working class and its organized sector in the course of these struggles? And will our motto upon leaving this Convention be, "Steady as she goes," or will our motto be, "Lift the anchor, all hands on deck, double time mates, put the sail to the winds, and stay the course until victory is won"?

Recently we have gone to great lengths to extend and deepen our ties to mass struggles and broad people's movements. Obviously we should do everything to continue and expand this policy. Mass struggle is the ground floor of communist politics. Separate from such struggles, communists turn into empty shells.

Every member, every leader, every club, every commission, and every collective body must connect in one way or another to the emerging movements against the extreme right and the transnational corporations.

We need a party that breathes and gains sustenance from mass struggles. If communists have any addiction, it should be to fighting the right danger. Apart from going to the movies, cooking ribs and hotdogs at family and neighborhood get-togethers, spending quality time with our partners and children, and drinking cold beer on a hot day, communists should be singularly concerned with the struggles against the Bush administration.

To these struggles we should bring our energy and experience, but also a willingness to listen to and learn from our coalition partners.

We also have to develop flexible forms of

organization and struggle that draw workers in our workplace or neighborhood into the battle against the right danger. People enter struggle on many different levels and our tactics have to take that into account.

We must also have a nose for what issue will activate working people at the grassroots and how to interrelate that with struggles against Bush and the right danger

We have to appreciate the fluid character of today's struggles as well. We say, for example, that the most advanced demand of the center is the basis for left center unity. I see no reason to change that formulation. In fact to do so would be a sectarian mistake that would in the end lead to our political isolation.

But I would amend this concept this way – left center unity is a struggle concept. It changes under the impact of changing objective conditions and mass thinking.

In California, the demand of the center in the labor movement is increasingly for public control over the energy complex, while in the steelworkers union, some center forces support the takeover of LTV and other bankrupt steel corporations under eminent domain laws.

Thus, we have to be careful not to get caught lagging behind shifts in mass moods and thinking. At the same time, we have to better interconnect left initiatives with immediate issues of struggle, broad forms of left center unity, and the overall struggle of defeating the extreme right and their corporate supporters.

We must skillfully combine our immediate strategic task with our longer-range goals. Needless to say, it is more easily accomplished in meetings of like-minded communists than in the context of developing movements of diverse class and social forces. But even among communists, we still don't quite have it right, although we are getting there. So without trying to answer this question in any definitive way, I want to briefly say a few words about our strategic line.

The defeat of the extreme right and its



transnational corporate backers will result not only in a receding of the right danger but also objectively weaken the transnational corporations as a whole. This is not appreciated fully in our Party.

I could imagine a number of different scenarios issuing from a successful struggle against the ultra right, but which one is more likely, it seems to me, will depend on the scope and intensity of the class struggle that goes on. And that is something that we can't foresee at this moment.

In any event, the defeat of the right will set the stage for a more direct assault on transnational capital and the political parties that speak on their behalf. But even in this event, we will have to look for forms of organization and struggle that will give political cohesion to what will be a very complicated process. One essential task is the formation of an anti-transnational people's party and government.

A key priority task is to enroll more workers in the Party at a much quicker pace. The working class is the main class force in the struggle against the right danger, much like it was in the anti-fascist front in the 1930s. Because of its location in the political economy of US capitalism and its objective interests, our nation's multiracial, multinational working class and its organized sector have a revolutionary potential that no other class or strata have.

Its mission at this moment is to join with and unite every potential ally to defeat right wing political reaction. At later stages, its leading role continues, but under different conditions and with new tasks.

For these reasons, we should constantly deepen and extend our ties and connections to the working class and trade union movement. And in the course of this, we should take initiatives to bring workers into our Party.

And while we want to recruit among all sections of the working class and people, a special focus should be on trade unionists. Trade unionists bring unique political insights, organizational stability, and plain old common sense to our Party and the people's struggles. I'm not sure if this idea is adequately appreciated.

To recruit workers at an accelerated pace will take some changes in our Party at every level. For the moment, however, I want to concentrate on the clubs.

Our clubs have to be better rooted in the struggles of a neighborhood or workplace. In this regard we have a long way to go.

At the same time, clubs should not be insular in their political outlook, education or mass relations. They should have horizontal relations with other clubs and other organizations, in addition to vertical relations with the district leadership. Clubs and club leaders, for example, should consider meeting with their counterparts at the city or county level, probably on an ad hoc basis.

Clubs should also have avenues to interact with the national leadership and vice versa. In other

words the clubs should have organic and electronic ties to the Party on different levels as well as with the broader people's movement in their community.

Our clubs vary in size, experience, mass relations, the setting in which they are located, and so on. We should avoid a one-size-fits-all prescription for the structure and function of a club. It is simplistic to think that the South Chicago club and the Albuquerque club will function in the same way.

The transformation of clubs into centers of struggle and mass recruiters of workers is a process that will take time and on-going assistance from other levels of the Party. But I would add two cautionary notes.

First, having traveled to many districts during the past year, I think it is fair to say that we have some outstanding clubs, but no district is a model for the rest of the Party to imitate. And, second, while we should do much more to assist the clubs, we have to be careful not to suffocate them.

Club leaders and members have to be allowed political space to grow, to think independently on political questions. If we don't allow for that, club members and club leadership will not develop politically.

Our clubs must not only be a place where members come to get their marching orders, to put it crudely, but first and foremost a place where they get a first rate political education and a rewarding social experience. Otherwise we will not retain and develop new and old members.

I would like to suggest that this Convention urge the incoming National Committee to explore some new ways to build the Party in communities like Harlem, South Chicago, East Los Angeles, and Detroit. The building of mass clubs in such areas would strengthen both the racial and class composition of the Party and root us in communities that have a major bearing on city, state, and national politics.

In addition we have to take a fresh look at rebuilding the Party in the South. It's politically necessary and there's great interest in the Party in that region of the country.

Let's face it – we are too small in relation to the new scope of the movement. For whatever reason, we took our eye off building a bigger Party as an integral part of our mass work. Maybe the Internet recruiting gave us a false sense that there is no overriding pressure to bring our coalition partners into the Party. Maybe there were other reasons.

In any event, how to change this situation is a question that this Convention has to grapple with. Probably we won't come up with a fully satisfactory answer, but we should use the next three days to get the conversation started.

One thing that I suspect we will conclude is that recruiting has to be a conscious and planned process. Even where we are connected to mass struggles, are a mass presence, and enjoy the support of broader forces, recruiting labor and



people's activists into the Party, as well as building the People's Weekly World, Political Affairs, and the Young Communist League, has to be organized.

Perhaps at a later stage of struggle mass activists will spontaneously join the Party, but for now that isn't the case. Thus, we have to painstakingly work at enlarging the size of the Party.

But it's well worth the effort. Enlarging our Party among mass activists would give a real shot in the arm to struggles on every front. Of course, the building of a bigger Party is closely connected to making our Party more accessible, transparent, and mass in its style; it's closely connected to reaching a much bigger audience with the help of the new communication technologies, and it's closely connected to giving the Party a modern feel and image.

There should be nothing mysterious about our Party and its positions. We have nothing to hide. We're a legal political party and we should act accordingly. It's time for the Communist Party to come out into the full glow of day. In doing so, we will be creating a better climate for people to work with as well as join us.

With regard to our Party's structure, we have to make some radical shifts at the national and district level to improve our work at every level of the Party. The old structure isn't always suited to our present situation.

One urgent task is to establish an Education Commission that will develop a system of Party education at every level of our structure. In general, we have to streamline and renovate, as well as further democratize our Party's structure.

Bill of rights socialism

The purpose of the pre-Convention period is to discuss the tough questions, that is, questions that are complex and resist easy answers. The subject of socialism falls into this category in my judgment.

That there are differences surrounding socialism within our own ranks is hardly surprising. During moments of sea change in world and domestic politics, the traditional explanations that go unchallenged during less turbulent times inevitably come under close scrutiny.

One of the liveliest discussions during the pre-Convention period revolved around the question of Bill of Rights socialism. Most comrades find it a useful concept, but not everyone. Some comrades have grave concerns with the concept and phrase "Bill of Rights socialism."

The main ones are: First, it suggests that socialism in our country will be different and better than elsewhere. Second, it hints at a constitutionalist, non-struggle path to socialism. Third, it has rings of American exceptionalism. Fourth, it implies that the former socialist countries were undemocratic. Finally, it makes invisible the general features common to every socialist society.

I can see why these might be concerns, but only in

an abstract sense. Generally speaking, I don't think that we project the concept in this way. I see the term of Bill of Rights Socialism in a different way.

But before indicating my thinking, I would like to say that we sometimes overuse a phrase or slogan to the point where it becomes clichéd and a substitute for serious reflection on the matter at hand. That was the fate of "the Communist plus," which acquired multiple meanings and turned into a substitute for thinking through the complexity of the class struggle.

We should not turn Bill of Rights socialism into a new mantra brought out for every occasion when we discuss socialism. If we are going to win the American people to socialism, it will take more than slogans no matter how politically imaginative they may be. Telescoping and popularizing the essence of a phenomenon in the form of a slogan is important, but it is no substitute for convincing arguments.

Moreover, we should not get into an exhausting contest over a phrase, because I am of the opinion that it is but a reflection of two larger questions, namely our attitude toward democracy and the path to socialism.

The struggle for democracy is a theoretical and political cornerstone of revolutionary Marxism. It is a thread that weaves through Lenin's writings.

It would be a mistake of monumental proportions for us to thumb our noses at the struggle for economic and political reforms, to turn aside from the struggle for democracy. The struggle for democracy is more than a way to mark time until millions of people are ready for socialism.

First of all, the winning of democratic gains and reforms makes a world of difference in the everyday life of the exploited and oppressed.

Second, in the course of the struggle to win democratic rights, the working class and its allies gain in confidence, unity, and political understanding to the point where higher forms of struggle become feasible. Needless to say, there is nothing preordained about this process. But one thing is for sure; it can't be bypassed in the name of higher political tasks. Any attempt to do so would risk the Party's political isolation.

At this moment the main form of the class struggle is against the extreme right. Some comrades however, see the struggle against the right danger and for democracy as a detour, a delaying action that postpones more revolutionary tasks. This view stems from an underestimation of the right danger as well as an attitude that the struggle for democracy is a distinct and separate sphere of struggle, somehow divorced from the class struggle.

This is a mistake. There is no "pure" class struggle. Every class struggle has a democratic aspect to it and every democratic struggle has a class aspect to it. But I would go further and say that the struggle for democratic rights is at the heart of the class struggle.

Consider for a moment what labor is fighting for



LTV workers are fighting for the right to a job and pension. The airline workers are fighting for the right to negotiate a contract without outside pressure from the Bush administration. Millions of low-income workers are fighting for the right to a living wage. And the new labor movement is fighting for the right to organize.

Or let me come at the question from a different angle – aren't the struggles for civil rights, for women's rights, for peace, for protection of the environment, for gay rights, and so on, essential elements in securing working class and all people's unity.

Without a consistent struggle for democracy, the working class will find itself separated from its allies and unable to play its leading role. We can't fully address this question at this Convention, but I believe it is a question that we have to revisit following the Convention. How we settle this matter will go a long way in determining our growth and influence in the period ahead.

Which leads me to the issue of Bill of Rights socialism. To win the American people to socialism its image and content have to be thoroughly democratic. If it appears otherwise then the American people will sign off on the socialist alternative.

The people of our country much like other countries are very sensitive to the issue of democracy. We have a long democratic tradition, in large measure because of the initiative and vigilance of the people themselves. And that remains true today.

Furthermore, rightly or wrongly – and I believe it is a bit of both – their image of 20th century socialism is that it was undemocratic. If this is so then we have to address this issue. More specifically, we have to elaborate in greater detail our vision of socialism USA. We have to discuss in greater depth the experience of socialism in the 20th century. And we have to go into some questions of theory.

With regard to the latter, it is not enough to say that socialist democracy is inherently many more times more democratic than even the most democratic capitalist country.

To be sure, socialism creates the best conditions for democracy to flourish, but the process of deepening and extending democracy is by no means automatic. Instead, it has to be a concern of the ruling parties and the people's organizations to develop democratic forms and practices that fit the specific political landscape in which they are building socialism.

With regard to finding a path to socialism, every country has to find its own specific path. This doesn't mean that socialism doesn't possess some common general features, but it does mean, to paraphrase Lenin, that we have to correctly modify and concretely apply them to the concrete conditions, which we find in our own country.

Socialism will be different from country to

country. In each country it will have its own peculiar features. It will adapt itself to the concrete political, economic, and cultural circumstances and traditions at hand. Lenin once wrote:

"All nations will arrive at socialism – this is inevitable, but all will do so in not the same way, each will contribute something of its own to some form of democracy, to some variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the varying rate of socialist transformations in the different aspects of social life. There is nothing more primitive from the viewpoint of theory or more ridiculous from the standpoint of practice, than to paint, 'in the name of historical materialism,' this aspect of the future in monotonous grey." (A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism)

This is a profound observation. And we should ponder its meaning. I can't imagine winning tens of millions of people to socialism in our country – and remember socialism is a movement of the majority in the interests of the immense majority – without a proper attitude toward democracy, our democratic traditions, and the democratic nature of socialism. This is part of our path to socialism.

A sneering attitude, even a one-sided attitude toward democracy will turn off our nation's exploited and oppressed people. Their lives have been bound up with the struggle for democratic rights. So any vision of socialism that demeans the democratic struggle or suggests that democracy automatically springs from socialism much like night follows day will get a short hearing from the American people.

Conclusion

Comrades, it would probably be rhetorical inflation to say that we have a date with destiny or that history is calling us at this hour. But I do think it is fair to say that this Convention and what we do following it can make history.

Seventy years ago our country and its working class were staring a depression in the face and Hitler's hordes were on the verge of seizing power in Germany.

These events presented an awesome responsibility to our Party, not to mention the world movement. Either we could adjust our policies and meet the challenge head on or we could travel down the road of political irrelevance. As we know, we chose the former path and in doing so dramatically gained in size and influence.

Today circumstances are different, but our country is at a crossroads again. And a choice has to be made. Either we join with millions in the struggle against the extreme right and its transnational backers or we shrink from the challenge at hand. I'm confident that the 27th Convention of our glorious Party will choose to fight the right and in doing so greatly enlarge the size and influence of the Party.

It takes a fight to win! An injury to one is an injury to all! Si se puede! ★





Leon Trotsky in his uniform as Commissar for War pictured alongside Lenin in Moscow

Russian Revolution

Debates on Strategy and Tactics II

by Kenny Coyle

“...a Soviet state, openly and frankly tells the people the truth and declares that it is the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry”¹

In the first part of this double article, I looked at the Bolshevik Party’s strategy of the “revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” (RDDPP). This was based on Lenin’s concept of “uninterrupted revolution”, which sought to connect the democratic revolution against Tsarist autocracy with the socialist revolution.

We saw how Lenin’s book *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* outlined the basis for an alliance in Russia between the working class and the peasantry, in which the working class would play the leading role, to carry through the democratic revolution against feudalism and autocracy and pave the way for the transition to socialism.

We likewise saw how many comrades in the socialist movement, influenced by Leon Trotsky’s theory of Permanent Revolution, either simply misunderstand or are forced to distort the pre-1917 Bolshevik strategy in order to promote Trotsky’s conceptions of the nature of the Russian revolutionary process instead.

I Did Lenin become a Trotskyist?

Lenin’s distance from the theory of Permanent Revolution before 1917 is not a matter of dispute. But was the Bolshevik leader “converted to Trotskyism” during 1917 itself? Specifically, did Lenin entirely abandon his previous strategy following the February Revolution of 1917, which formally deposed the Tsar and established the Provisional Government? Did such crucial works as *Letters from Afar* and *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution (The April Theses)* signify a shift away from the RDDPP to Trotsky’s perspective of Permanent Revolution?

Modern Trotskyists certainly believe so. Socialist Appeal’s Allan Woods, for example, writes of his mentor’s powers of prophecy:

“Trotsky’s ‘crime’ consisted in the fact that he had foreseen all of this long before the events unfolded. In 1917, the theory of the Permanent Revolution was proved to be correct by the events themselves.”²

However, if Trotsky had already so accurately predicted the victory of the October Revolution of 1917 in 1905 or 1906, why did this prediction not come true in September 1917, or February 1917, or 1906 for that matter? We are left to ask: what was the balance of forces in October 1917; in what respects was it similar to 1905 and how did it differ?

THEORY AND PRACTICE



This highlights a key difference in method between Lenin and Trotsky. The answers are not to be found in the predictions of some revolutionary clairvoyant but in carefully analysing the specific and shifting balance of class forces domestically and internationally.

Lenin's "conversion" in *The April Theses* to Trotsky's Permanent Revolution is even credited by the SWP's Alex Callinicos with Trotsky's decision to join the Bolsheviks.

*"As many 'Old Bolsheviks' complained. Lenin's April Theses were tantamount to 'Trotskyism'. The Bolsheviks effective acceptance of the theory of permanent revolution helps explain Trotsky's decision to join the party in the summer of 1917."*³

Some Trotskyist misinterpretations have even presented the pre-*April Theses* Lenin as some sort of proponent of "democracy in one country".

This is the British group Workers Power's twist on the re-orientation of the Bolshevik Party after *The April Theses*:

*"the programme of the Russian Revolution could no longer be conceived in terms of a national and democratic revolution but instead as a component of the international revolution against capitalism itself."*⁴

and again that *The April Theses* saw the Bolsheviks:

*"breaking with a view of the Russian Revolution as an isolated national event, the Party now fought for the Russian workers to stand in the vanguard of the international revolution."*⁵

This is a ludicrous distortion. Certainly Lenin's analysis of imperialism, which was developed during the First World War, sharpened the international dimension of the Bolsheviks' struggle. But, at least as early as his 1905 work *Two Tactics*, Lenin underlined that a successful democratic revolution would "last but not least – carry the revolutionary conflagration into Europe" and "the significance of such a victory for the future development of Russia and of the whole world will be immense".⁶ Hardly an "isolated national event".

Before we look at *The April Theses* themselves, we

must emphasise one thing. There is no reference in any of Lenin's writings or speeches to indicate this "conversion to Trotskyism." As a political leader, Lenin was rarely afraid to be self-critical and admit his mistakes. Where he underwent a major change of heart, where he rethought his positions he always explained this in great detail. *The April Theses* do indeed represent a rethink, but not the one presented in Trotskyist literature.⁷

Indeed, such is the paucity of evidence that Trotsky refers to just a single article written in a Bolshevik journal by himself in September 1917, where he used the term 'Permanent Revolution'.

*"A permanent revolution versus a permanent slaughter: that is the struggle, in which the stake is the future of man.' This was published in the central organ of our party on September 7, and later reissued as a separate pamphlet. Why did my present critics keep silent then about my heretical slogan of permanent revolution? Where were they? Some, like Stalin, were waiting cautiously, peering about them. Others, like Zinoviev, were hiding under the table. But the more important question is: How could Lenin have tolerated my heretical propaganda in silence? In questions of theory he recognised no such thing as indifference or indulgence; how did he happen to allow the preaching of 'Trotskyism' in the central organ of the party?"*⁸

He triumphantly recalls this episode but it is unclear why. Is he suggesting that this implied a Bolshevik seal of approval, in which case we return to why the term did not appear frequently elsewhere. More simply, why leave it to Trotsky? Why did Lenin not feel the need to incorporate it into the new Bolshevik programme for example. And, despite the Trotskyist insistence on supporting only the resolutions of the first four congresses of the Communist International, why did neither the term nor the concept find its way into those documents? In not one single speech or article following the 1917 Revolution did Lenin confess a "conversion" to Permanent Revolution.

It simply seems that having agreed on the essential points of action, namely the overthrow of the Provisional Government by the Soviets, there was little need to censor 'off-message' formulations.

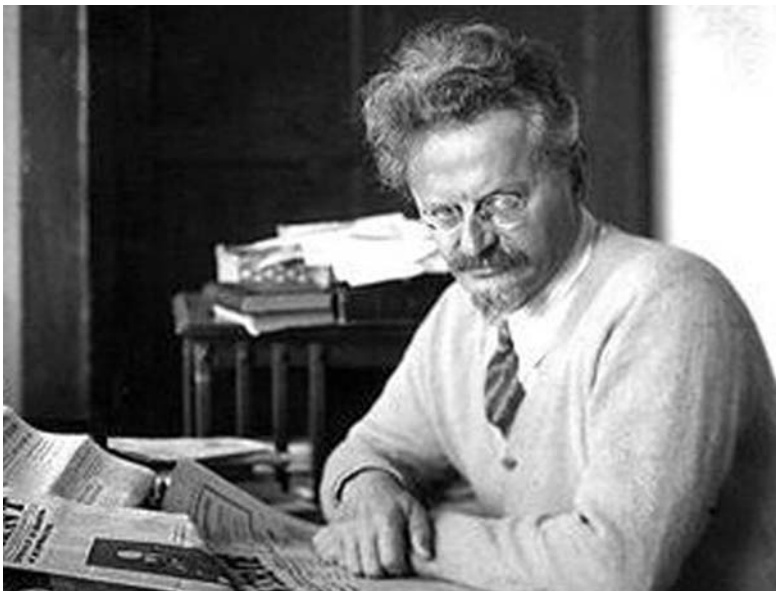
2 Novy Mir and the Letters from Afar

In a note to his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky quoted a number of his articles published in early 1917 in the US-based Russian socialist periodical *Novy Mir* and claimed:

*"It is hardly necessary to demonstrate that in the above extended excerpts from popular articles to be read by workers, the same view of the development of the revolution is expounded as that which found expression in Lenin's Theses of April 4."*⁹

Taking his cue from Trotsky, Allan Woods refers to the apparent convergence of Lenin's and Trotsky's views in the early months of 1917 before Lenin drafted *The April Theses*, namely through Trotsky's

Leon Trotsky in his study in Mexico



Novy Mir articles and Lenin's *Letters from Afar*, written in March 1917. If, indeed, there was a period when Lenin moved from traditional Bolshevism to Trotskyism, surely this provides the trail. Woods claims:

"Only in October 1917 was the superiority of Trotsky's Marxist method demonstrated. At the outbreak of the February revolution Lenin was in Switzerland and Trotsky was in New York. Although they were very far from the revolution, and from each other, they drew the same conclusions. Trotsky's articles in Novy Mir and Lenin's Letters from Afar are practically identical as far as the fundamental questions concerning the revolution are concerned: the attitude toward the peasantry and the liberal bourgeoisie, the Provisional Government and the world revolution."

This is rather strange, for Lenin's *Letters from Afar* contain explicit references to the RDDPP, or more exactly a "revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasantry". For example, in the *Third Letter From Afar*, Lenin asked:

"Has the proletariat of Russia shed its blood only in order to receive fine promises of political democratic reforms and nothing more? Can it be that it will not demand, and secure, that every toiler should forthwith see and feel some improvement in his life? That every family should have bread? That every child should have a bottle of good milk and that not a single adult in a rich family should dare take extra milk until children are provided for? That the palaces and rich apartments abandoned by the tsar and the aristocracy should not remain vacant, but provide shelter for the homeless and the destitute? Who can carry out these measures except a people's militia, to which women must belong equally with men?"

These measures do not yet constitute socialism. They concern the distribution of consumption, not the reorganisation of production. They would not yet constitute the "dictatorship of the proletariat", only the "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry". *It is not a matter of finding a theoretical classification. We would be committing a great mistake if we attempted to force the complete, urgent, rapidly developing practical tasks of the revolution into the Procrustean bed of narrowly conceived 'theory' instead of regarding theory primarily and predominantly as a guide to action."*

[My emphasis]

Lenin saw the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasantry as a state quite different from an ordinary bourgeois-democratic state. For example, it rested on a working-class militia, an element that might more usually be categorised as belonging to a proletarian socialist revolution but which was already emerging within the democratic stage. This is, of course, perfectly in

line with Lenin's remarks in *Two Tactics* that the Russian Revolution would inevitably see a certain interweaving of the two processes.

3 The April Theses

Let us take a look at "The *April Theses*" themselves, which are central to the controversy. The fullest version can be found in *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*. Here, I offer a shorter summary. Of particular interest are Theses 2 and 8

[1] *No support for the continuation of the imperialist war.*

[2] *"The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is passing from the first stage of the revolution – which owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie – to its second stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants."*

[3] *"No support for the Provisional Government".*

[4] *Recognition that the Bolsheviks represented a minority within the soviets, still dominated by petty bourgeois parties, but that criticism of it should be accompanied by demands that the entire state power should be transferred to the Soviets.*

[5] *For a Soviet not a parliamentary republic.*

[6] *An agrarian revolution, nationalisation of all land and confiscation of large estates.*

[7] *Amalgamation of banks into a central national bank, under the control of the Soviets*

[8] *"It is not our immediate task to 'introduce' socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies."*

[9] *Party tasks, the calling of a congress and the alteration of the party programme.*

[10] *"A new international."*¹⁰

NEW FEATURES

Clearly, *The April Theses* did represent a shift in Bolshevik policy, but did it involve a wholesale repudiation of the party's previous strategy or was it a modification, an update of that very strategy?

The years 1905 and 1917 were separated by more than pages on a calendar. Marxist political strategy involves, as Lenin famously put it, "the concrete analysis of the concrete situation". It is not some sort of buried time-capsule that needs only to be unearthed to reveal an eternal truth. Dogmatism of this sort gives no insight into the development of events over time.

As we will see Lenin in no sense abandoned the RDDPP strategy but modified and honed it in the light of rapidly changing circumstances.

Now we need to identify these new features of political life in Russia in 1917.

4 The Role of the Imperialist War

While the bourgeois Provisional Government was intent on maintaining Russian participation in the First World War, the Bolsheviks were insistent on



ending the slaughter. Only Soviet power could guarantee this.

Lenin described the First World War as a special factor that had transformed all previously held perspectives, as “an all-powerful stage manager” and “a mighty accelerator” of the Russian revolutionary process. In his *Letters from Afar*, Lenin stressed the general correctness of the longstanding Bolshevik strategy. Yet he nonetheless touched upon one remarkable and absolutely unpredicted feature.

“The motive forces of the revolution were defined by us quite correctly. Events have justified our old Bolshevik premises, but the trouble with us is that comrades have wished to remain ‘old’ Bolsheviks. Mass movement had been confined to the proletariat and the peasantry. The West-European bourgeoisie had always been opposed to revolution. Such was the situation to which we had been accustomed. But things turned out differently. The imperialist war split the European bourgeoisie, and this created a situation where the Anglo-French capitalists, for imperialist reasons, became supporters of a Russian revolution. The British capitalists actually entered into a conspiracy with Guchkov, [Provisional Government Minister of War] Milyukov, and the high commanding officers of the army. The Anglo-French capitalists sided with the revolution. The European newspapers report many instances of British and French emissaries making trips to have talks with ‘revolutionaries’ like Guchkov. The revolution has thus gained an unexpected ally. As a result, the revolution has turned out to be different from what anyone expected. We have found allies not only in the Russian bourgeoisie but also among the Anglo-French capitalists.”¹¹

Inter-imperialist rivalry generated by the First World War had therefore created a quite unprecedented “alliance” of forces to carry out and support the February 1917 revolution.

There was a second result.

“The imperialist war was bound, with objective inevitability, immensely to accelerate and intensify to an unprecedented degree the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie; it was bound to turn into a civil war between the hostile classes.”

For the Soviets, ending the war was a critical task.

“Only such a government, of ‘such’ a class composition (‘revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’) and such organs of government (‘proletarian militia’) will be capable of successfully carrying out the extremely difficult and absolutely urgent chief task of the moment, namely: to achieve peace.”¹²

5 What was the February Revolution?

As Lenin had feared, the leadership of the anti-Tsarist revolution had been monopolised by

bourgeois-reformist forces rather than the working class. The February revolution was chronically feeble, unable to carry through a profound social transformation because of its leadership. However, some Trotskyist writers have gone further, apparently denying that the February Revolution marked change of any great significance.

“It is true that in order to convince his old comrades, Lenin used some ambiguous formulas which later enable his epigones to claim that there had, after all, been two stages in the Russian Revolution: the stage of February 1917, in which the autocracy was overthrown and a bourgeois-democratic republic was established; and the stage of October 1917, in which the working class conquered political power. But it is utterly misleading to invoke these ambiguous formulas in arguing that Lenin continued to reject the theory of permanent revolution.”¹³

By focusing only on the incomplete and partial nature of the February Revolution, the prolific Trotskyist leader, the late Ernest Mandel, gives a quite false impression. Lenin was quite clear the February revolution had completed the transfer of political power to the bourgeoisie, the essential element of any bourgeois revolution. Indeed, this was made explicit in *The April Theses*:

“State power in Russia has passed into the hands of a new class, namely the bourgeoisie and the landowners who had become bourgeois. To this extent the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia is completed.”¹⁴

Mandel’s bewilderment is the result of the inability to accept a fundamental truth, namely that long before April 1917 Lenin had expected the Russian bourgeoisie to sell short an anti-Tsarist revolution. The Bolsheviks had fully expected that the bourgeoisie would seek an accommodation with the landlords and possibly with Tsarism itself in the shape of a constitutional monarchy.

Mandel continued:

“In no way can one seriously maintain that the February Revolution realised the historic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, principally a land reform. Had that really been done, the October Revolution could never have triumphed, for the working class would have been isolated from the majority of the nation. The victory of October was only possible because, just as Trotsky had foreseen, it was only the victorious proletariat which was capable of distributing the land to the peasant. On that firm material base – and on it alone – was it possible for the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry to be established in a workers’ state.”¹⁵

But, of course, Lenin had never expected the bourgeoisie to carry out its “own” revolution consistently, particularly in regard to land reform, that was precisely why he argued for the RDDPP.

Mandel elsewhere listed the “historic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution”, which were to: *“overthrow absolutism and autocracy, establish general democratic freedoms, universal franchise,*



unfettered development of parties and unions, eliminate remnants of feudalism, unify the internal market, end dependence on foreign capital and solve question of minority nationalities.”¹⁶

Yet we can ask in which bourgeois-democratic states today do such things exist? Has the question of minority nationalities been satisfactorily solved in Spain or within the British Isles? Precisely where does the bourgeoisie allow the “unfettered development” of trade unions? Even Switzerland, a society often cited by Lenin as the epitome of bourgeois democracy, only granted the universal franchise, ie female suffrage in the late 1960s.

Faced with a utopian shopping list, the Trotskyist left draws sectarian conclusions. Since a full democratic revolution is impossible as long as capitalism continues to exist, only a socialist revolution can resolve these “historic tasks”. Since, working on a general truism, the working class is the only consistent and long-term revolutionary force, the possibility of working with inconsistent and temporary allies is underestimated.

This puts the cart before the horse. Revolutions in underdeveloped countries in the 20th century, such as China, Cuba and Vietnam, suggests that the path to socialist development has rather depended on the ability of Marxists to link up with and eventually lead, non-socialist forces in broad democratic struggles and anti-imperialist revolutions, without prematurely imposing a socialist programme as a precondition for unity.

6 Dual Power

The situation following the formal overthrow of Tsarism was that a bourgeois state co-existed with another embryonic state form, the workers’ and peasants’ Soviets. There was an unprecedented dual power, “an interlocking of two dictatorships”. This was absolutely unforeseen, even by the Marxist Nostradamus, Trotsky.

Lenin argued that for the Bolsheviks to stick rigidly to old slogans and perspectives in a new situation, which was throwing up such unprecedented and unforeseen phenomena, was unacceptable. In a landmark article, *Dual Power*, Lenin wrote:

“The highly remarkable feature of our revolution is that it has brought about a dual power. This fact must be grasped first and foremost: unless it is understood, we cannot advance. We must know how to supplement and amend old ‘formulas’, for example, those of Bolshevism, for while they have been found to be correct on the whole, their concrete realisation has turned out to be different. Nobody previously thought, or could have thought, of a dual power.

“What is this dual power? Alongside the Provisional Government, the government of the bourgeoisie, another government has arisen, so far weak and incipient, but undoubtedly a government that actually exists and is growing – the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.

“What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasants (in s13-2 iers’ uniforms). What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship, ie, a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and not on a law enacted by a centralised state power.”¹⁷

Such an unstable situation as Dual Power could not last long, hence the urgency with which Lenin sought to shake up the Bolshevik ranks:

“the Petrograd Soviet of Soldiers’ and Workers’ Deputies, which, as everything goes to show, enjoys the confidence of most of the local Soviets, is voluntarily transferring state power to the bourgeoisie and its Provisional Government...

“This remarkable feature, unparalleled in history in such a form, has led to the interlocking of two dictatorships: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (for the government of Lvov and Co. is a dictatorship, ie, a power based not on the law, not on the previously expressed will of the people, but on seizure by force, accomplished by a definite class, namely, the bourgeoisie) and the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies).

“There is not the slightest doubt that such an ‘interlocking’ cannot last long. Two powers cannot exist in a state. One of them is bound to pass away; and the entire Russian bourgeoisie is already trying its hardest everywhere and in every way to keep out and weaken the Soviets, to reduce them to nought, and to establish the undivided power of the bourgeoisie.”

7 The Provisional Government – Revolutionary or Counter-revolutionary?

The 1905-era Bolshevik slogan had been for a Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG). In 1917 this was replaced by “All Power to the Soviets”. This was because the Provisional Government, initially headed by Prince Lvov and later Kerensky, represented a bourgeois-reformist line, rather than the consistently revolutionary line the Bolsheviks had advocated.

The Provisional Government was in no sense a Provisional Revolutionary Government or even a step on the road to the RDDPP. It was a coalition of the capitalists and the large landowners. Lenin described the Provisional Government as:

“representatives of the new class that has risen to political power in Russia, the class of capitalist landlords and bourgeoisie which has long been ruling our country economically, and which during the Revolution of 1905, the counter-revolutionary period of 1907-14, and finally – and with especial rapidity – the war period of 1914-17, was quick to organise itself politically, taking over control of the local government bodies, public education, congresses of various types, the Duma, the war industries committees etc. This new class was already ‘almost



completely' in power by 1917, and therefore it needed only the first blows to bring Tsarism to the ground and clear the way for the bourgeoisie."

As we saw in the first part of this article, Lenin had insisted in the *Two Tactics* that a working-class party could not rule out taking part in a Provisional Revolutionary Government to replace the Tsarist autocracy. Such abstention could allow the liberal bourgeoisie unchallenged leadership and permit it to slow the revolutionary process.

However, taking this general possibility to be valid in the period immediately after February 1917, some sections of the Bolshevik leadership, including Stalin, adopted a compromising attitude for a time toward the Provisional Government.

8 Lenin against the 'Old' Bolsheviks

The new orientation outlined by Lenin was not wholly welcomed at first by some veteran Bolshevik leaders. The key Petrograd committee of the party initially voted 13-2 against *The April Theses*.

During the inner-party debate, the 'Old Bolshevik' Lev Kamenev said of *The April Theses*:

*"As for the general scheme of comrade Lenin, it seems to us unacceptable in that it starts from the assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is ended, and counts upon an immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution."*¹⁸

To an extent, the "Old Bolshevik" arguments echoed those of Trotskyism. They shared an abstract checklist of goals to be achieved by the bourgeois-democratic revolution rather than recognise the essential fact, the transfer of state power to the bourgeoisie. They also stressed those factors which separated the democratic from the socialist phases of the revolutionary process rather than, as Lenin did, seek to identify the connections.

For the "Old Bolsheviks" in April 1917, this meant the central task was still the creation of the RDDPP, even though, as Lenin pointed out, it was under their noses, in the shape of the Soviets.

"The bourgeois revolution in Russia is completed insofar as power has come into the hands of the bourgeoisie. Here the "old Bolsheviks" argue: "It is not completed — for there is no dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." But the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is that very dictatorship."

Lenin stressed that the bourgeois-democratic revolution had not only been completed in essence but that the revolutionary process in Russia had already moved beyond its traditional limits:

"The dual power merely expresses a transitional phase in the revolution's development, when it has gone farther than the ordinary bourgeois-democratic revolution, but has not yet reached a 'pure' dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."

9 Class character of the Soviets

If the Provisional Government represented the power of the capitalists and the landlords, what

was the class character of the Soviets?

Ernest Mandel argued:

*"After his April 1917 Theses Lenin never again used the formula 'democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants'" (why?) but referred many times to the Russian revolution as establishing or having established the dictatorship of the proletariat (the power of the soviets)."*¹⁹

The Trotskyist position then is two-fold, the Soviets represented a solely working-class power, a proletarian dictatorship and, in recognising this, Lenin then dropped his formula of the RDDPP.

Is this true?

Frankly, no. In fact, Lenin had written that:

*"The Russian Revolution of March 1917 not only swept away the whole Tsarist monarchy, not only transferred the entire power to the bourgeoisie, but also moved close towards the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. The Petrograd and the other, the local, Soviets constitute precisely such a dictatorship (that is a power resting not on law but directly on the force of the armed masses of the population), a dictatorship precisely of the above-mentioned classes."*²⁰

What the Bolshevik leader abandoned was the use of the RDDPP as an abstract slogan. Why? Because the RDDPP now existed in reality.

*"The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" has already become a reality** in the Russian revolution, for this "formula" envisages only a relation of classes, and not a concrete political institution implementing this relation, this co-operation.*

"The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies — there you have the "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" already accomplished in reality.

*This formula is already antiquated. Events have moved it from the realm of formulas into the realm of reality, clothed it with flesh and bone, concretised it and thereby modified it. (**In a certain form and to a certain extent).*

Lenin recognised that the RDDPP slogan was no longer entirely adequate, not because it had been left behind by events but rather the opposite, precisely because it had come into existence. To retain this formula when the Soviets (the RDDPP in "flesh and bone") were dominated by reformists ceding power to the bourgeoisie and when the bourgeois-democratic revolution had essentially already occurred, even if in an unforeseen form, was to fail to take the revolutionary process forward. It was for this reason that Lenin came into conflict with a section of "Old Bolsheviks".

Lenin outlined precisely why it was necessary to amend the old formula:

"The Soviet is the implementation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the soldiers; among the latter the majority are peasants. It is therefore a dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. But this "dictatorship" has entered into an agreement with the bourgeoisie. And this is



where the 'old' Bolshevism needs revising. The situation that has arisen shows that the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry is interlocked with the power of the bourgeoisie. An amazingly unique situation."²¹

Given that this speech was given to such a crucial forum as the Petrograd City conference and was part of Lenin's campaign to win the Bolshevik ranks for his new orientation, it is astonishing to see how this is ignored by Trotskyist commentators.

10 Developments within the Peasantry

The minor reforms of the Provisional Government had failed to satisfy the needs of the mass of the peasantry, but a small minority of richer peasants, who had least to gain from further agrarian reform, were supportive of the Provisional Government. So Lenin, increasingly referred to the "revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasantry".

The February Revolution had sped up the differentiation of various strata within the peasantry. Again, as we saw in the first part of this article, this was a process entirely compatible with the original Bolshevik strategy and was welcomed by Lenin since it encouraged the semi-proletarian rural population to look toward the urban working class as its closest ally.

Nonetheless, since the richer part of the peasantry was following the leadership of the bourgeoisie and the mass of the peasantry was confused, it was essential for the working class to differentiate itself politically from the petty-bourgeoisie. Such a demarcation would avoid creating illusions among the working class and ultimately provide a clearer pole of attraction to the mass of the peasantry as events helped clarify the nature of the Provisional Government.

Taking their cue from Trotsky himself, modern exponents of Permanent Revolution argued that Lenin's RDDPP was disproved since his strategy was to form a coalition between the Bolsheviks, representing the working class, and a revolutionary peasant party. No such peasant party emerged in 1917, they argue, so the RDDPP was made redundant.

Ernest Mandel outlined his critical view of Lenin's RDDPP:

"In terms of political practice, this would involve a revolutionary leadership (government) in which a working-class party would enter into a coalition with a revolutionary peasant party, the famous 'democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants', different from both a proletarian dictatorship and a bourgeois dictatorship."²²

In another work, Mandel even located the nub of the differences between Lenin and Trotsky in that:

"Trotsky rejected the idea that the peasantry could form a political party, a political force, that was truly independent, both of the bourgeois and proletariat. Yet, willy-nilly, a government must be composed of political parties or of groups acting as de facto parties."²³

This assumption regarding a peasant party is

entirely baseless. One remark from Lenin will illustrate just how Mandel, following on directly from Trotsky himself, distorted the Bolshevik view. This is Lenin writing a full eight years before the October Revolution:

"Trotsky's major mistake is that he ignores the bourgeois character of the revolution and has no clear conception of the transition from this revolution to the socialist revolution. This major mistake leads to those mistakes on side issues which Comrade Martov repeats when he quotes a couple of them with sympathy and approval. Not to leave matters in the confused state to which Comrade Martov has reduced them by his exposition, we shall at least expose the fallacy of those arguments of Trotsky which have won the approval of Comrade Martov. A coalition of the proletariat and the peasantry 'presupposes either that the peasantry will come under the sway of one of the existing bourgeois parties, or that it will form a powerful independent party'. This is obviously untrue both from the standpoint of general theory and from that of the experience of the Russian revolution. A 'coalition' of classes does not at all presuppose either the existence of any particular powerful party, or parties in general. This is only confusing classes with parties. A 'coalition' of the specified classes does not in the least imply either that one of the existing bourgeois parties will establish its sway over the peasantry or that the peasants should form a powerful independent party! Theoretically this is clear because, first, the peasants do not lend themselves very well to party organisation; and because, secondly, the formation of peasant parties is an extremely difficult and lengthy process in a bourgeois revolution, so that a 'powerful independent' party may emerge only towards the end of the revolution. The experience of the Russian revolution shows that 'coalitions' of the proletariat and the peasantry were formed scores and hundreds of times, in the most diverse forms, without any 'powerful independent party' of the peasantry."²⁴

However, if Bolshevik strategy was not at all dependent on a peasant party, the fact is that the Bolsheviks did indeed form a coalition with the left-wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party (S-Rs). In October 1917, seven posts in the new multi-party Soviet government were allocated to the Left S-Rs. Yet, according to Mandel: "one has to resort to extraordinary acrobatics to portray the Left-SRs as a 'peasant party'."²⁵

Whatever his gymnastic abilities, Lenin viewed the Left S-Rs rather differently. Writing in late 1919, he analysed the election results to the Constituent Assembly held after the Soviet Revolution:

"it is evident that during the Constituent Assembly elections the Bolsheviks were the party of the proletariat and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the party of the peasantry. In the purely peasant districts, Great-Russian (Volga-Black Earth, Siberia, East-Urals) and Ukrainian,



the Socialist-Revolutionaries polled 62-77%. In the industrial centres the Bolsheviks had a majority over the Socialist-Revolutionaries.”²⁶

Lenin also mentioned that the Bolsheviks had allied themselves with “the most radical, most revolutionary of the bourgeois-democratic ideologists of the peasantry, those who stood closest to the proletariat, namely, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, to carry out what was in effect the nationalisation of the land”.

The Left-SRs later split as the class differentiation among the peasantry intensified further, the left-wing fusing with the Bolsheviks.

II Interweaving of democratic and socialist elements and the transitional measures

After February 1917, Russia was no longer a Tsarist autocracy. While the Provisional Government had failed to deliver a deep-going revolution involving agrarian reform and significant advances for the working class, nonetheless, it had finalised the bourgeoisie’s conquest of state power. Inevitably, a revolution directed against a bourgeois state, rather than a state founded on “medievalism”, could not but include certain anti-capitalist elements even if it did not mean the immediate introduction of socialism.

Lenin had already laid the ground for this in *Two Tactics*, when he asked rhetorically “can it be denied that individual, particular elements of the two revolutions [democratic and socialist] become interwoven in history?”).

However, Mandel apparently believed that the Bolshevik strategy implied that:

“the state emerging from that dictatorship (or revolutionary government) would be a bourgeois state, and the economy developing out of the victorious revolution would be a capitalist economy.”²⁷

Mandel oversimplifies and therefore confuses the issue. The bourgeois character of the revolution was determined not by the needs of the bourgeoisie, which was after all to be excluded

from state power, but by the necessity for the small working class to cement a durable political alliance with the bulk of the Russian population, the peasantry and, after February 1917, specifically the poor peasantry. Lenin noted:

“It is the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry in general that reveals the bourgeois character of the revolution, for the peasantry in general are small producers who exist on the basis of commodity production.”

Mandel, however, rejected the RDDPP’s “revisionist formula of a ‘two-class government’”²⁸

At the heart of this hostility, as we have seen before, is a relatively unsophisticated analysis of the Russian peasantry, failing to see the long-term possibilities of alliance. Many Trotskyists tended to view the peasant only in terms of their interests in land ownership and private property. They underestimated the importance of substantial semi-proletarian elements within the poorer peasantry. Lenin grasped this trend more firmly than Trotsky did and saw how it provided a link between the two classes.

Mandel’s implication that the RDDPP would only result in a run-of-the-mill capitalist economy, is quite wide of the mark.

It is true that Lenin modified his views somewhat between 1905 and 1917. In 1905, a democratic revolution could perhaps have counted on a smoother, more gradual process of economic development. By 1917, with the host of special factors we have already noted, the embryonic socialist elements had to play a far greater role since the Russian bourgeoisie was not merely hindering a deep-going transformation, it was actively bringing the country to ruin.

As if anticipating Mandel’s argument, Lenin had stressed that:

“The Soviets must take power not for the purpose of building an ordinary bourgeois republic, nor for the purpose of making a direct transition to socialism. This cannot be. What, then, is the purpose? The Soviets must take power in order to make the first concrete steps towards this transition, steps that can and should be made.”

Outlining the kind of steps he had in mind, in a speech to the 7th All-Russian Bolshevik Conference (April 29, 1917) Lenin asked delegates to support practical measures to connect the immediate democratic and longer-term socialist tasks.

“This is a bourgeois revolution, it is therefore useless to speak of socialism,’ say our opponents. But we say just the opposite: ‘Since the bourgeoisie cannot find a way out of the present situation, the revolution is bound to go on.’ We must not confine ourselves to democratic phrases; we must make the situation clear to the masses, and indicate a number of practical measures to them, namely, they must take over the syndicates – control them through the Soviets, etc. When all such measures are carried out, Russia will be standing with one foot in socialism. Our economic programme must show a way out of the debacle – this is what should guide our actions.”

In relation to the peasants Lenin urged: *“Nationalisation of the land, though being a bourgeois measure, implies freedom for the class struggle and freedom of land tenure from all non-bourgeois adjuncts to the greatest possible degree conceivable in a capitalist society. Moreover, nationalisation of the land, representing as it does the abolition of private ownership of land, would, in effect, deal such a powerful blow to private ownership of all the*

Trotsky returns from exile after the February Revolution of 1917



means of production in general that the party of the proletariat must facilitate such a reform in every possible way.²⁹

Elsewhere, while rejecting simplistic demands for immediate socialism, Lenin had stressed:

“Under no circumstances can the party of the proletariat set itself the aim of ‘introducing’ socialism in a country of small peasants so long as the overwhelming majority of the population has not come to realise the need for a socialist revolution.

“But only bourgeois sophists, hiding behind ‘near-Marxist’ catchwords can deduce from this truth a justification of the policy of postponing immediate revolutionary measures, the time for which is fully ripe; measures which have been frequently resorted to during the war by a number of bourgeois states, and which are absolutely indispensable in order to combat impending total economic disorganisation and famine.

Here we see how Lenin understood the dialectical development of the Russian revolution. The Bolsheviks were proposing a programme of mainly ‘bourgeois’ measures, in the economic sense, but carried out with a special twist by the working class and poor peasants. This was a series of demands that could prove compatible with capitalism in other times or places but which in the concrete conditions of Russia at the time would undermine the political and economic power of the bourgeoisie and prise open a way to socialism.

12 Lenin against ‘leftism’

It was critical for the success of the revolutionary process, Lenin felt, to prevent the working class from isolating itself from the peasantry.

He therefore had to demarcate Bolshevik strategy from “leftist” strategies that, while correctly concentrating on the working class, dangerously failed to appreciate the key role of the mass of peasants. Having been wrongly accused of “Trotskyism” by some conservative “Old Bolshevik” comrades, Lenin hit back.

During the inner-party debate, Lenin had defended *The April Theses* precisely by stressing its distance from the concepts of Permanent Revolution. In his speech to the crucial Petrograd city conference of the Bolshevik Party in April 1917, we have the most explicit reference possible contradicting Lenin’s “conversion” to Trotskyism with an implicit dig at Trotsky, rejecting a slogan closely, if not entirely accurately, associated with the doctrine of Permanent Revolution:

“Trotskyism: ‘No tsar, but a workers’ government.’ This is wrong. A petty bourgeoisie exists, and it cannot be dismissed. But it is in two parts. The poorer of the two is with the working class.”³⁰

Returning to the same theme at the Bolshevik All-Russia Conference held in May (new calendar), Lenin wound up the debate on the *Report on the Current Situation*. Speaking to the assembled Bolshevik cadres, Lenin again emphasised the



Lenin during April 1917, a key turning point for Bolshevik strategy

critical necessity of winning the petty bourgeoisie over as revolutionary allies.

“If we said, ‘No Tsar, but a dictatorship of the proletariat’, well, this would have meant skipping over the petty bourgeoisie. But what we are saying is – help the revolution through the Soviets. We must not lapse into reformism. We are fighting to win, not to lose.”³¹

It was because of the practical physical alliance embodied in the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies that Lenin had described the Soviets as a “peasant-proletarian democratic republic”.³² In other words, the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry made flesh.

13 The question of ‘stages’

There are unfortunately still Marxists who fail to understand the importance of the “series of transitions, of transitional stages”, in understanding the Russian Revolution itself and other 20th century revolutionary struggles.

Most surprising, perhaps, is the idea that Russia entirely leapt over its bourgeois revolution. Workers Fight, the British co-thinkers of the French group Lutte Ouvriere, which now has members of the European Parliament, has argued that:

“In 1917, Lenin’s Bolshevik revolution was victorious while using a historical short-cut in the overwhelmingly peasant-dominated Russia. Permanent Revolution meant that under the leadership of a young highly concentrated proletariat, it was possible to bypass the stage of the bourgeois revolution.”³³

Ironically, this remarkable perspective was first advanced by the “renegade” Karl Kautsky, which brought Lenin’s stinging response:

“The Bolsheviks remained loyal to Marxism and never tried (in spite of Kautsky, who, without a shadow of evidence, accuses us of doing so) to ‘skip’ the bourgeois-democratic revolution.”

However, the Trotskyist movement has generated more sophisticated misinterpretations. A comrade of Mandel’s, the writer Michael Löwy, has written:

“The events of 1917 dramatically confirmed Trotsky’s basic predictions of 12 years earlier. The inability of the bourgeois parties and their allies



*on the moderate wing of the workers' movement to respond to the revolutionary aspirations of the peasantry, and the desire for peace of the people, created the conditions for a radicalisation of the revolutionary movement from February to October. What were called 'the democratic tasks' were carried out, so far as the peasantry were concerned, only after the victory of the soviets."*³⁴

Lowy's point is well taken, if we remember Lenin's remarks that the Soviets represented the class interests of both the proletariat and *poor peasants*. But such a formulation returns us to the initial problem, Lenin had never expected the "democratic tasks" to be fulfilled by the bourgeoisie but by the working class in alliance with the peasantry, or later its poorer majority.

Lowy continues:

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

Lowy rather undermines his own argument. For if the Soviet Revolution began its socialisation only in June 1918, what was it doing before? Concentrating on the democratic tasks, perhaps? Lowy is also right to suggest that the socialisation of the economy was more rapid than the Bolsheviks expected. But how so, if they had adopted Trotsky's Permanent Revolution where, in Mandel's words, the proletariat:

"cannot limit itself solely to implementing the revolutionary-democratic tasks of the revolution; it must simultaneously begin to resolve the socialist tasks (not all of them and not instantly of course, but at least some of them)".
(My emphasis)³⁵

While the time between October 1917 and June 1918 is not long, and as Lowy notes this process was telescoped by events, we nonetheless see a definite, distinct series of stages.

"In other words: the revolution of 1917 had seen a process of uninterrupted revolutionary development from its 'bourgeois-democratic' phase (unfinished) of February until its 'proletarian-socialist' phase which began in October. With the support of the peasantry, the Soviets combined democratic measures (the agrarian revolution) with socialist measures (the expropriation of the bourgeoisie), opening a 'non-capitalist road', a period of transition to socialism. But the Bolshevik party was able to take the leadership of this gigantic social movement that 'shook the world' only thanks to the radical strategic reorientation initiated by Lenin in April 1917, according to a perspective

fairly close to that of permanent revolution."

Lowy's interpretation is misleading on several levels.

Trotskyist writers have sometimes sought to colonise the concept of "uninterrupted revolution" – the growing over or transformation of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution – and to pass this off as being the same as Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution.

However, Lenin's theory of uninterrupted revolution is based on clarifying the distinction between the democratic and socialist phases of the revolutionary process on the one hand, while examining and identifying their interconnections to move from one to the other. The question of the speed with which this process is completed is impossible to fix in advance.

Permanent Revolution's central premise, on the other hand, is that no separate democratic stage is possible, only a full-blooded proletarian dictatorship can complete the democratic tasks.

Second, only after having first secured the peasantry's support in the democratic phase was it possible for the Russian revolution to move on to the 'proletarian-socialist phase'.

Among the very first acts of the Soviet government in 1917 was the agrarian revolution, the Decree on Land, socialisation of industry only followed later, the two were not simultaneous. The exact timing of the beginning of the openly socialist phase is certainly open to debate but mid to late 1918 would seem to be the consensus.

But as Lowy correctly notes, the expropriation of the Russian bourgeoisie took place several months after the October Revolution, quicker than the Bolsheviks expected and too quickly.

With the benefit of hindsight, Lenin argued that the Bolsheviks had moved too hastily in advancing to the socialist phase. Speaking to political educationalists at the beginning of the New Economic Policy, Lenin was critical of the series of measures begun in 1918, usually referred to as "War Communism":

"Brief experience convinced us that that line was wrong, that it ran counter to what we had previously written about the transition from capitalism to socialism, namely, that it would be impossible to bypass the period of socialist accounting and control in approaching even the lower stage of communism. Ever since 1917, when the problem of taking power arose and the Bolsheviks explained it to the whole people, our theoretical literature has been definitely stressing the necessity for a prolonged, complex transition through socialist accounting and control from capitalist society (and the less developed it is the longer the transition will take) to even one of the approaches to communist society."

Two South African Trotskyists associated with the Committee for a Workers International (the grouping associated with the pre-split British Militant Tendency now divided into the Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal group) have argued that:



“Lenin’s retrospective summary of the processes in 1917-18 confirms the fact that there was not a ‘democratic’ revolution followed by a ‘socialist revolution, but one revolution, a permanent revolution, in which it was necessary for the working class to take state power to accomplish even the democratic tasks.”³⁶

These writers again counterpose entirely separate democratic and socialist revolutions, rather than seeing distinct but intimately interconnected stages in an uninterrupted revolutionary process. Incomplete and partial as it was in terms of social gains, the February Revolution did accomplish some democratic tasks. Lenin repeatedly noted the wide democratic political freedoms enjoyed by the working class in Russia in 1917, quite superior to those of the other belligerent nations.

What was Lenin’s real retrospective summary?

12 Lenin’s summing up

In the year following October 1917, the revolutionary process deepened and quickened. In his stinging response to criticisms by the Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, Lenin took the opportunity to point out the fundamental continuity of Bolshevik strategy through the revolutions of 1905, February 1917 and October 1917

“The proletariat must carry through the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the end, not allowing itself to be ‘bound’ by the reformism of the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks formulated the alignment of class forces in the bourgeois revolution as follows: the proletariat, joining to itself the peasantry, will neutralise the liberal bourgeoisie and utterly destroy the monarchy, medievalism and landlordism.

“...Further, the Bolsheviks then added, the proletariat will join to itself the entire semi-proletariat (all the toilers and exploited), will neutralise the middle peasantry and overthrow the bourgeoisie; this will be a socialist revolution, as distinct from a bourgeois-democratic revolution. (See my pamphlet Two Tactics, published in 1905 and reprinted in Twelve Years, St. Petersburg, 1907.)³⁷

Lenin’s reference to *Two Tactics* is rather convincing proof that far from having abandoned that strategy, the Bolshevik leader considered it to have stood the test of time. He did, however, draw attention to the tactical modifications of the RDDP adopted by the Bolsheviks in April 1917.

‘Yes, our revolution is a bourgeois revolution so long as we march with the peasantry as a whole. This has been as clear as clear can be to us, we have said it hundreds and thousands of times since 1905, and we have never attempted to skip this necessary stage of the historical process or abolish it by decrees. Kautsky’s efforts to ‘expose’ us on this point merely expose his own confusion of mind and his fear to recall what he wrote in 1905, when he was not yet a renegade.

“But beginning with April 1917, long before the

October Revolution, that is, long before we assumed power, we publicly declared and explained to the people: the revolution cannot now stop at this stage, for the country has marched forward, capitalism has advanced, ruin has reached unprecedented dimensions, which (whether one likes it or not) will demand steps forward, to Socialism. For there is no other way of advancing, of saving the country which is exhausted by war, and of alleviating the sufferings of the toilers and exploited.

“Things have turned out just as we said they would. The course taken by the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. First, with the “whole” of the peasantry against the monarchy, against the landlords, against the medieval regime (and to that extent, the revolution remains bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). Then, with the poor peasants, with the semi-proletarians, with all the exploited, against capitalism, including the rural rich, the kulaks, the profiteers, and to that extent the revolution becomes a socialist one. To attempt to raise an artificial Chinese Wall between the first and second, to separate them by anything else than the degree of preparedness of the proletariat and the degree of its unity with the poor peasants, means monstrously to distort Marxism, to vulgarise it, to substitute liberalism in its place.”³⁸

Such a summary is in direct contradiction to the interpretation of our South African commentators.

In the same work, Lenin pinpointed the moment when the Russian Revolution moved from the completion of the democratic stage to a fully socialist one. As opposed to Lowy, he did not see it simply as a question of the socialisation of industry:

“The victorious Bolshevik revolution meant the end of vacillation, it meant the complete destruction of the monarchy and of landlordism (which had not been destroyed before the October Revolution). We carried the bourgeois revolution to its conclusion. The peasantry supported us as a whole. Its antagonism to the socialist proletariat could not reveal itself all at once. The Soviets united the peasantry in general. The class divisions among the peasantry had not yet matured, had not yet come into the open.

“That process took place in the summer and autumn of 1918. The Czechoslovak counter-revolutionary mutiny roused the kulaks. A wave of kulak revolts swept over Russia. The poor peasantry learned, not from books or newspapers, but from life itself that its interests



Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, a target of Lenin’s criticism on the stages of the revolution



were irreconcilably antagonistic to those of the kulaks, the rich, the rural bourgeoisie.”

Unlike Lowy’s oversimplifications, Lenin saw a two-speed revolutionary process at work, with a faster tempo in the urban areas where bourgeois-proletarian conflict was most marked and a slower one in the countryside:

“A year after the proletarian revolution in the capitals, and under its influence and with its assistance, the proletarian revolution began in the remote rural districts, and this has finally consolidated the power of the Soviets and Bolshevism, and has finally proved that there is no force within the country that can withstand it. Having completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution in conjunction with the peasantry as a whole, the Russian proletariat passed on definitely to the socialist revolution when it succeeded in splitting the rural population, in winning over the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, and in uniting them against the kulaks and the bourgeoisie, including the peasant bourgeoisie.

This is as clear an exposition of the uninterrupted process of the Russian revolution as it is possible to get. Lenin clearly demarcated the two major stages of the revolution:

“If the Bolshevik proletariat had tried at once, in October-November 1917, without waiting for the class differentiation in the rural districts, without being able to prepare for it and bring it about, to “decree” a civil war or the “introduction of Socialism” in the rural districts, had tried to do without a temporary bloc with the peasants in general, without making a number of concessions to the middle peasants, etc., that would have been a Blanquist distortion of Marxism, an attempt of the minority to impose its will upon the majority; it would have been a theoretical absurdity, revealing a failure to understand that a general peasant revolution is still a bourgeois revolution, and that without a series of transitions, of transitional stages, it cannot be transformed into a socialist revolution in a backward country.”³⁹

We can see that in this uninterrupted revolutionary process, Lenin distinguished the primary tasks and also identified the potential class allies that characterised each stage. But what sets apart Lenin’s real programme from various mutilated Trotskyist interpretations, is how he sought to find the links between these stages.

CONCLUSION

In general, Trotskyist interpretations tend to fix the bourgeois-democratic

revolution and socialist revolutions as mutually exclusive and even opposing categories. Lenin, on the contrary, grasped how their differing elements overlapped and interlocked. His own writings and formulations reflect this, sometimes solely stressing the proletarian and socialist elements contained in the October 1917 revolution, since these represented the decisive long-term trends, while in others stressing the key role of the peasantry. In *The Third International and its Place in History*, he offered this analysis about the uniqueness of the Russian Revolution.

“Russia’s backwardness merged in a peculiar way the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landowners. That is what we started from in October 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily then if we had not. As long ago as 1856, Marx spoke, in reference to Prussia; of the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war. From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Thirdly, the 1905 revolution contributed enormously to the political education of the worker and peasant masses, because it familiarised their vanguard with ‘the last word’ of socialism in the West and also because of the revolutionary action of the masses. Without such a ‘dress rehearsal’ as we had in 1905, the revolutions of 1917 – both the bourgeois, February revolution, and the proletarian, October revolution – would have been impossible. Fourthly, Russia’s geographical conditions permitted her to hold out longer than other countries could have done against the superior military strength of the capitalist, advanced countries. Fifthly, the specific attitude of the proletariat towards the peasantry facilitated the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist revolution, made it easier for the urban proletarians to influence the semi-proletarian, poorer sections of the rural working people. Sixthly, long schooling in strike action and the experience of the European mass working-class movement facilitated the emergence – in a profound and rapidly intensifying revolutionary situation – of such a unique form of proletarian revolutionary organisation as the Soviets.”⁴⁰

The richness of Lenin’s political thought derived from his ability to constantly reappraise the conditions of political struggle and his refusal to be content with general or abstract formulas. The “concrete analysis of the concrete situation” was the guiding principle of his intellectual efforts, a rejection of dry, doctrinaire thinking.

For these reasons, revisiting these crucial historical issues of political strategy, the question of class alliances, the nature of state power and the interrelationship of democratic and socialist demands hammered out in the heat of the Russian Revolution retain an enduring relevance. ★

Lenin disguised and in hiding after the “July Days” of 1917



Notes:

1. Lenin *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, FLP, PEKING 1972, page 101
2. "In Memory of Leon Trotsky", Alan Woods, *Socialist Appeal*, January 2000
3. *Trotskyism*, Alex Callinicos, p9. Open University Press. In fact, the Bolsheviks were vigorously promoting a policy of regrouping all the anti-war Marxist internationalists. This included not only Trotsky's Inter-Regional Organisation but also the anti-war Mensheviks grouped around Julius Martov. A fact that is awkwardly passed over in most Trotskyist literature is that Lenin's overtures for unity with the Inter-Regional Organisation were initially blocked by Trotsky himself. At a May 1917 meeting of the Inter-Regional Organisation, Lenin offered Trotsky and other leaders positions in the Bolshevik Party. Trotsky initially refused to join, saying: "I cannot call myself a Bolshevik." Instead he advocated a "fusion". This was despite the huge disparity in forces. Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Inter-Regional Organisation was limited to small districts in Petrograd. Isaac Deutscher's sympathetic biography of Trotsky, *The Prophet Armed*, attributes Trotsky's initial reluctance to accept the Bolshevik offer as being due to Trotsky's wounded personal pride. No wonder, then, that Trotsky's own autobiography *My Life* skates quickly over the period from his arrival in Petrograd to the July Days, without any detailed mention of this pre-Bolshevik period.
4. *The Road to Red October; The Bolsheviks and Working Class Power*, Workers Power, 1987, p9
5. *The Road to Red October; The Bolsheviks and Working Class Power*, Workers Power, 1987, p10
6. *Two Tactics*, pp52-53
7. The only recorded acceptance by Lenin of Trotsky's position is given by Trotsky himself, in his autobiography *My Life*, where he quotes from the last letter written to him by a devoted follower Adolf Joffe, just before he took his own life. Leaving aside Joffe's disturbed state of mind, apparently exacerbated by a denial of adequate medical attention, there are obvious problems in accepting this story. First, why did Joffe only mention this to Trotsky in a private letter written hours before his suicide and not at more politically critical times? Second, why did Lenin never tell or write to Trotsky directly? Third, why was the doctrine of Permanent Revolution never incorporated in the basic documents of the Bolshevik Party or Communist International? These basic objections cast grave doubt on the plausibility of this explanation.
8. *My Life*, Chapter XXVIII, "Trotskyism' in 1917"
9. *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky, cited in "Perspectives on the Russian revolution from New York (LD Trotsky)", an English translation of the *Novy Mir* articles by Ian D Thatcher and James D White, *Journal of Trotsky Studies*, p95, No1 1993. However, both the introduction to these translations and a separate piece by James D White in the same issue, "Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution", disprove Trotsky's claims that he and Lenin were expressing identical views by comparing the relevant texts. Also, by highlighting the Old Bolsheviks' distance from Lenin, Trotsky ignored other elements in the Bolshevik Party closer to Lenin's views, thereby suggesting that Trotsky alone was a true follower of Lenin's path, a critical claim in the post-1924 inner-party struggles.
10. Lenin *Selected Works*, Vol 2 p29-33
11. "The Petrograd City Conference of the RSDLP (Bolsheviks)" April 14-22 (April 27-May 5), 1917. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964 Vol. 24, pp. 141-142.
12. "Fifth Letter: The Tasks Involved in the Building of the Revolutionary Proletarian State"
13. *Trotsky: A study in the dynamic of his thought*, Ernest Mandel, NLB, London 1979P20
14. Lenin *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*
15. *Trotsky: A study in the dynamic of his thought*, Ernest Mandel, NLB, London 1979P20
16. *Trotsky: A study in the dynamic of his thought* Ernest Mandel, NLB, London 1979Pp11-12
17. Lenin "The Dual Power", *Collected Works* Volume 24, p38, pp38-41, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964.
18. Quoted in *The Road to Red October; The Bolsheviks and Working Class Power*, Workers Power 1987, p10
19. Ernest Mandel, "In Defence of the Permanent Revolution", *International Viewpoint* no.32, June 13, 1983, P4. This is simply false in fact as well as interpretation as the quote in note 20 shows.
20. Lenin *Selected Works* Vol 2 p40
21. "The Petrograd City Conference of the RSDLP (Bolsheviks)" April 14-22 (April 27-May 5), 1917. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964 Vol. 24, pp. 142-143.
22. *Trotsky: A study in the dynamic of his thought*, Ernest Mandel, NLB, London 1979 pp15-16
23. Ernest Mandel, "In Defence of the Permanent Revolution", *International Viewpoint* no.32, p4, June 13, 1983
24. Lenin "The Aim of the Proletarian Struggle in Our Revolution", Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1963 Vol. 15, pp370-71
25. Ernest Mandel, In Defence of the Permanent Revolution, *International Viewpoint* no.32, June 13, 1983P4
26. Lenin "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat". Published in December 1919 From V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965 Vol. 30, pp. 253-75. These elections were held after the S-Rs had split into left and right factions but the party list presented to the electorate was undivided
27. *Trotsky: A study in the dynamic of his thought*, Ernest Mandel, NLB, London 1979 pp15-16
28. Ernest Mandel, "In Defence of the Permanent Revolution", *International Viewpoint* no.32, June 13, 1983 p4. One wonders what Mandel would have made of Lenin's statement made following the Soviet seizure of power: "Comrades, the workers' and peasants' revolution, about the necessity of which the Bolsheviks have always spoken, has been accomplished. What is the significance of this workers' and peasants' revolution? Its significance is, first of all, that we shall have a Soviet government, our own organ of power, in which the bourgeoisie will have no share whatsoever." From "Report On The Tasks Of The Soviet Power Meeting Of The Petrograd Soviet Of Workers' And Soldiers' Deputies" October 25 (November 7), 1917. First Published: *Izvestia* No. 207, October 26, 1917. Lenin's *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Volume 26, 1972, pp. 239-241.
29. Vladimir Lenin "Seventh All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP(B) Resolution on the Agrarian Question"
30. "The Petrograd City Conference of the RSDLP (Bolsheviks)" April 14-22 (April 27-May 5), 1917. From V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964 Vol. 24, pp. 150. In fact, the "No Tsar, but a workers government" slogan was coined initially by Alexander Parvus, a one-time Social-Democrat who greatly influenced Trotsky. However, Trotsky's and Parvus's interpretations of Permanent Revolution were not entirely the same. Nonetheless, the slogan was widely understood as referring to Trotsky's theory. Later Trotskyist writers have sought to portray the connection of this slogan to Trotsky's Permanent Revolution as "traditional Stalinist lies" (see Alex Callinicos, "Their Trotskyism and Ours" in *International Socialism Journal* no. 82, p134. Fascinating, then, that Lenin seems to be its originator at precisely the moment when he was apparently embracing Trotskyism!
31. "Report on the Current Situation" Lenin *Selected Works* Vol2 p80
32. Lenin *Selected Works* 2 p118
33. "Fifty years after the foundation of the Fourth International – What perspectives for internationalist revolutionaries today?" *Class Struggle* No 25 – Mar 1999. Workers' Fight – Britain
34. Michael Löwy, "The relevance of permanent revolution", *International Viewpoint* October 2000
35. Ernest Mandel, "In Defence of the Permanent Revolution", *International Viewpoint* no.32, June 13, 1983. p4
36. *The Legacy of Leon Trotsky*, p15 by Richard Monroe and Phillip Masters, Inqaba ya Basebenzi.
37. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, 1972, pp90-91
38. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, 1972, page 98
39. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, G 1972, page 104
40. Lenin "The Third International and its Place in History". *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965 Vol. 29, pp. 310-311.



Against Fascism and War



Gusta and Julius Fucik, c.1938

The Struggle and Sacrifice of Gusta Fucikova

John Callow

iron tyranny of Hitler's legions and exhibited almost super-human courage in surviving the very worst of their barbarities, to emerge – despite her personal grief – in order to proclaim an enduring message of hope and inspiration to the peoples of the World.

If in the winter of 1986-7, one had risen early and gone out into the streets of Prague, then one might have seen the small, dignified, figure of an old lady carefully threading her way to work, choosing the best path through the obstacles of snow and ice which completely covered the cobbles over the city's medieval bridges. Though in her eighties, her hair was still dark and her eyes remained as bright as ever, alert points of light: by turns playful or reflective, but always the testament to her continued vigour, and to the enduring clarity of her intelligence and vision. Some mornings might see her checking the copy of the numerous articles that she wrote on education, peace and women's issues for a succession of Prague journals and newspapers; others might necessitate her or to act as a tour guide for the parties of children and Young Pioneers sent to Czechoslovakia on exchanges from the countries of the developing world or the other Socialist nations, while on those occasions when she was called to greet diplomats and foreign dignitaries, her slight frame was almost weighed down by the decorations lavished upon her for her courage, and devotion to the twin causes of Peace and Disarmament¹. Over lunch, at the restaurant of the *World Marxist Review* in Thakurova Street, her conversation still appeared animated and visitors "would hear ripples of laughter [emanating] from [her regular] table under the high window". Yet, though "she brightened with each encounter as she passed along the tables or in the corridors ... To a degree those around her were the people of the new day and she rather of yesterday". Presaging the disintegration of the Socialist state which was to come: even though "the daily workers at the establishment recognised her instantly, others of a more recent generation on the staff were less responsive, more distant [and] perhaps she was sensitive to this"². In these days of collective amnesia, when the legacy of the European Communist parties in combating fascism is distorted, derided, or largely ignored, it is timely to recall the struggle of one, single woman – ordinary, yet remarkable – who stood against the

Born Augustina Kodericova, in the village of Ostredok, near Benesov, on 28 August 1903, she was the daughter and granddaughter of farmers, whose ancestors had worked the fields of southern Bohemia since time immemorial. Though her father was well known and respected in the local community, her upbringing was far from happy or carefree, and she later commented that she had never experienced "a childhood like other children". Her mother had died when she was barely eighteen months old, and her elder sister gave up the unequal struggle for life, at the age of only 6 months, a victim of the poverty and malnourishment endemic in the harsh countryside, and regional backwaters of the ailing Austro-Hungarian Empire. With a young family to raise her father quickly remarried, but his new bride showed nothing but ill-disguised contempt for her step-children. Indeed Gusta would later write that she "was disgusted by us", and it was not long before the children went their separate ways. Forced to work, in order to support herself through grade school, Gusta bid a tearful farewell to a father whom she no longer respected or trusted and set off for a new life in Prague, equipped only with a tightly wrapped bundle containing a new dress and a meagre lunch for the journey³. The capital of the new Czechoslovakian state, fashioned by the allied powers out of the ruins of the defeated and dismembered Empire, attracted and repelled her in almost equal measure. In particular, the plight of the wounded and disabled soldiers who thronged the streets deeply moved her and brought home to her the futility, pathos and suffering of war. Amid the chaos, she took a job in a department store but, unfortunately, it did not pay well. "I was a lodger", she recalled in her memoirs, "[but] the only place I was able to find in which to sleep was a bathroom [and] I lived from day to day". However, from her savings, she paid her way through her high-school courses and attended the Straka Commercial Academy. Her contemporaries remembered her as a frail girl, with a passion for literature and for the theatre, and she soon made the acquaintance of



Julius Fucik: another familiar figure from the lecture halls, cafes and student debating societies⁴. At the time, neither believed their encounter to have been significant – for they were both committed to other lovers – but their shared political values and literary interests drew them ever closer together.

Both were active in the fledgling Czechoslovakian Communist Party (CPCz), which Gusta joined in 1924, and in the lulls between distributing Socialist literature or writing college essays, the pair would sometimes take “the first trams that came and [go] no matter where”, often heading out into the countryside, wandering through the vastness of the surrounding forests or else exploring the winding streets of Prague’s old town. As the pair drew closer together, Gusta was surprised to discover that she had begun to look forward to Julius’ impromptu visits and to their unplanned excursions, as being the highlights of her week. When they narrowly missed each other on the steps of the student lodgings which crowded the Letna district of town, she finally acknowledged a sense of disappointment and the true strength of her feelings for the youth with “the posture of an athlete”, whose glittering “grey eyes had a dreamy but serious look”, and whose mouth “was always ready for a word or for a sorrow-less and happy laughter”⁵. Theirs was to be a relationship based upon mutual respect, love and a deep devotion to the cause of Socialism. The more she read and studied, the more Gusta discovered that her confidence grew and that the memories of a bitter childhood faded. She was no longer hesitant in speaking her mind, and developed into a powerful orator, a familiar sight at political meetings and rallies, where she consistently championed the rights of women and of organised labour. Joining the staff of *Rude Pravo* (Red Law), the organ of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, her skill in languages and forceful literary style soon made her invaluable to the Socialist and progressive press, and from 1936-39 she worked as the full-time translator for the paper’s editorial office. Having visited the Soviet Union for the first time, in 1931, she was overwhelmed by the enormous commitment shown by the young state to universal education and health care, and returned home anxious to publicise its achievements. However, having enthusiastically supported the strikes of the mid-1930s and raised funds for the democratic government of Spain, her energies came increasingly to be deployed in providing a fundamental critique of the fascist movement and in warning her fellow-countrymen of its hungry, and lethal, menaces.

The decision of Julius and Gusta to marry in 1938, against the background of the betrayal of the Munich accord, was rich in symbolism: a defiant pledge of their faith in the future, at a time when the politicians of the bourgeois establishment were scuttling into the shadows or hurrying to proclaim that it was “business as usual”, albeit under a different master. Fucik, himself – clad in greatcoat and boots – had shouldered a rifle and joined the general mobilisation of September 1938, while Gusta had helped to organise the huge public demonstrations and the general strike that had compelled Benes’s government to act, at last⁶. However, the surprise capitulation of the ruling elites

spelled not only the outlawing of the Communist Party, and the closure of its legal presses, in October 1938, but also the total dismemberment of the Czechoslovakian state: resulting in the creation of a fascist Slovakian republic, annexations of territories by Poland and Hungary, and the establishment of a puppet – Nazi – “Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia”, which was effectively administered from Berlin⁷. If the Fuciks’ beloved Czechoslovakia had vanished overnight from the map of Europe, then it is no surprise to note that, during the following months, Gusta and her partner were both to be found actively assisting in the establishment of an underground press, and in the covert writing and the illegal distribution of *Rude Pravo*.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939, and the withdrawal of the Comintern’s support for the United Front, hit the couple hard. They retired to a summer cottage – owned by Julius’s family – in southern Bohemia, and concentrated upon producing historical, literary and feminist criticism, which implicitly linked the struggles of the past to their present fight against the forces of collaboration, fascism and foreign aggression⁸. Already on the Nazi “Wanted” lists, the couple decided to briefly separate, to move houses and to change their identities. Their return to Prague came not a moment too soon, as the Gestapo raided the home of Julius’s parents in Plzen – narrowly missing him – and as the central leadership of the resistance movement (the UVOD) was destroyed after a series of lightning arrests. In February 1941, almost the entire leadership of the CPCz was seized, but by April, a fresh Central Committee – including Fucik, as the head of press and propaganda – had been chosen and quickly regrouped, in order to rebuild the Party’s shattered influence⁹. As part of the resistance movement, Gusta spent the following weeks and months moving from safe house to safe house – often at no more than a moment’s notice – continually writing, speaking and distributing illegal tracts and pamphlets to the shop and factory workers of Prague. However, the appointment, on 27 September 1941, of Reinhard Heydrich as Vice Reichs Protector ushered in a new campaign, which was to be unrivalled in its use of brutality and terror. Heydrich had already been recommended, by Himmler to Hitler, in chilling terms as one “who knows neither charity nor mercy. Even murdering children will be a pleasant duty to him”, and his bloody – if thankfully brief – record as the military ruler of the Czech lands was to entirely vindicate this clinical and utterly immoral assessment of his pathological delight in torture and mass murder¹⁰. His arrival in Prague was heralded by the declaration of a state of martial law, which saw hundreds of resistance fighters executed and thousands deported to the concentration camps. As the net closed in around Julius and Gusta, they continued to organise resistance operations from their city centre flat, posing all the while as the eminently “respectable”, and woolly-minded, Professor Horak and his thoroughly non-political wife. May Day celebrations offered the Party the chance to publicise the successes of the Red Army and to show that, despite grievous losses, the struggle against



fascism was not hopeless. Thus, a mimeo typed leaflet proclaiming that help was at hand, and that the Swastika would be ultimately encircled and crushed, was hastily produced. On the night of 24 April 1942, Julius hurried to a routine meeting with members of a resistance cell, in the Pankrac district of the city, in order to discuss the preparations to mark the first of May. Tragically – having missed their initial target that night – the Gestapo, in a raid that was both random and opportunistic, stormed the flat and arrested both Fucik and his companions¹¹. While he was being badly beaten and conveyed to the infamous II-A1, anti-Communist department situated on the 4th floor of Petschek Palace, Gusta was sleeping fitfully at home. At midnight, the incessant ringing of the bell awakened her and, after discarding the copies of *Rude Pravo* out of a upstairs window, she opened up the door to the waiting Gestapo men¹².

At three o'clock, on the morning of 25 April 1942, she was pushed into an interrogation room, where she saw her husband, bloody and bruised. Fucik, himself, described the scene and testified to his wife's courage: "I swallow blood that she shan't see ... though it's pretty useless, I admit – blood's flowing from every inch of my face, even from the tips of my fingers, 'Do you know him?' – 'No!' – She said that, and not even by a look did she betray her horror. The darling! She kept her word never to admit she knew me, even though now it was already useless ... They have taken her away. I have said goodbye to her with the most cheerful look I could manage. Perhaps it wasn't even cheerful. I don't know"¹³. Unable to break the lovers' resolve, the Gestapo held Gusta in solitary confinement for more than a month, before attempting to use her to in order to undermine the iron resolve of her husband. Julius recorded that "They called her in ... 'Persuade him,' the chief of the department told her ... 'to be sensible. If he won't think of himself, at least let him think of you. You have an hour to think it over. If he still remains obstinate, you will both be shot tonight. Both of you. She caressed me with her eyes and answered simply: 'That's no threat to me, commissar, that's my last wish. If you execute him, execute me as well!'"¹⁴.

Imprisoned only one floor below her husband, in Pankrac prison, Gusta would later write of her husband that "he secretly wrote in prison in conditions more difficult than those prevailing in the battle-field in the midst of grenade and bomb explosions", yet her own struggle for survival and continued political activity was to prove no less heroic¹⁵. On 19 May 1943, she was transported "to Poland 'for work'". Her husband, however, was under no illusions that this was effectively a death sentence, and confided that: "She has perhaps a few weeks of life left, perhaps two or three months", before the scourge of typhoid claimed her¹⁶. Never once, as she was transferred, first to the camp of Terezin, and then onwards beyond the wire of Ravensbruck, did her spirits falter or her belief in the Socialist future desert her. Indeed as one of her fellow prisoners in the concentration camp recalled: "Some cells of brave women, already experienced in illegal work did not give up. They came closer together and their unity encouraged

others. A sort of 'Ravensbruck solidarity' was painfully built and developed and it endured while [Gusta and all of] these women remained alive"¹⁷.

During her days in the camp, rumours filtered through to her, from fellow prisoners, that her husband had been moved to Berlin and condemned to death before a Nazi tribunal. However, earlier tales – that he had died under interrogation, or had committed suicide – had proved false, and the thin sliver of hope that Julius might have miraculously survived his ordeals, remained open to her. After the liberation of Ravensbruck in 1945, she joined the long river of refugees and former internees that flooded Europe's highways, and threaded her way back to Czechoslovakia to begin the search for her husband. It did not take long for her to learn the awful truth: Julius Fucik had, as she had feared, been transferred to Berlin and executed at Plotensee jail on 8 September, 1943¹⁸. Yet, even though the men of the Gestapo had sacked Fucik's library and burned his writings, he had still managed to achieve one last and miraculous victory; and one that would ensure that his voice would never again be silenced. "I arranged a meeting with this warder", she recalled, "who had brought paper and pencil to my husband's cell ... [and] step by step I collected the material written by Julius Fucik in his Pankrac prison ... which had been hidden in various places with various people"¹⁹. One can only imagine the profound mixture of grief and pride which must have assailed Gusta as she reconstructed her husband's last writings, from the 160 thin scraps of paper that had been smuggled out of the jail by the indomitable warder, Kolinsky. Each numbered page yielded to her a fresh revelation; of the manner of Fucik's continued resistance to Fascism; of his unyielding devotion to the Communist cause; of his belief in the triumph of an egalitarian society free from war and racial hatred; and of his unshakeable pride in her conduct during their last meetings. Weaving together a coherent narrative from the individual pieces, Gusta had – by September 1945 – already reconstructed the manuscript and prepared it for publication.

The appearance of *The Report from the Gallows*, at the close of the year, not only set the seal upon Fucik's literary and political achievements, but also served as a rousing – and authentic – call for all of humanity to safeguard their inalienable rights, and to ensure that fascism would never again raise its bestial head. It is little wonder, therefore, that during a visit to Czechoslovakia in 1972, Fidel Castro would emphasise – in both his public speeches and in his private conversations with Gusta – that the *Report* inspired everyone who read it: "in order to strengthen their spirit when face to face with the danger of struggle" and that Fucik's legacy was "enshrined in every victory of our age"²⁰. As the progressive world took the book to its heart, and it was reprinted in no less than 38 Czech and 320 foreign language editions, the author's widow assumed the mantle of the leading protector and propagator of Fucik's vast literary output. Serving as the editor of the State Publishing House for Political Literature in Prague, from 1945-67, she oversaw the production of Julius's Collected Works, a remarkable



testament to her love for her husband and their shared ideals, which grew from the originally projected five volumes into twelve authoritative and thoroughly comprehensive tomes²¹.

This did not mean, however, that Gusta was prepared to simply enshrine the past. The twin causes of Socialism and anti-fascism were more than just slogans and the products of intellectual idealism, they needed to be fought for and secured in the present. Consequently, Gusta played an energetic part in the workers councils and strikes that ushered in the February Revolution in 1948, and was one of the founder members of the Czechoslovak Committee of the Defenders of Peace, which was set up in the following year. Subsequently, she divided her time between her literary endeavours and the international peace and women's movements. She was the head of the Czechoslovakian Union of Women and served it – as the honorary Chair – up until the time of her death²². At times her memories did, indeed, press heavily upon her. It could not have been an easy matter to have seen her husband's image constantly reproduced on everything from stamps and posters to school textbooks²³. More disturbing to her was the bitter and mean-spirited attack launched upon her husband's reputation by Miroslava Filipkova, a young "reformist" Party member, at the beginning of 1968²⁴. Using arguments already rehearsed by the Czech émigré community, and the U.S. sponsored "Radio Free Europe" – subsequently to be expounded upon by Vaclav Havel in 1989 – Filipkova attempted to decry Fucik as a "false hero"²⁵. The fascist menace was not so great, it was argued: Fucik's struggle was no more than a display of self-obsessed histrionics, and the advances of the Soviet Army were just as threatening as the Wehrmacht had ever been. Though Gusta had certainly welcomed the move by the Party's leadership to re-invigorate its contacts with its grass-roots support and to refine, and democratise, its methods of work: she saw clearly the dangers inherent in accepting the Trojan Horse, of a pernicious ideologically driven and – ultimately – wholly destructive form of historical revisionism. As the CPCz was rent asunder by internal dissent and discord, she argued – in terms far more clear-sighted and pertinent than many of her contemporaries – for unity and for the continued adherence to a common, Socialist programme. She could neither bear the revisionist distortion of her husband's message, nor accept the re-imposition of the free market economics upon the Czechoslovakian state. Consequently, she devoted her energies to mounting both a vigorous counter-attack upon Filipkova's slanders and a defence of Socialist theory, before – at last – being compelled to agree with Brecht's tragic conclusion that it was better to have Socialism with tanks than no Socialism at all.

Her latter years were distinguished by her sustained attempts to repair the damage inflicted upon the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, to inspire the younger generation with her fiery sense of idealism, and by her – sadly unheeded – calls for comprehensive nuclear disarmament. In 1980, she was elected honorary President of the World Peace

Council and – despite a welter of other pressing commitments, hectic publishing schedules and failing health – proved herself, over the next seven years, to be an effective, creative and principled force for change. She died on 25 March 1987, and was accorded a funeral which was every bit as simple, and as quietly dignified, as had been her life. In the words of her friend, Eva Roule: "She entered the Communist movement with all the sincerity of her youthful years and the many years that followed. She faced the greatest trauma that the movement ever endured in the confrontation with the Nazis. She bore a deep private tragedy. Yet she remained unshaken in her ideas and her high-mindedness. Such women should never be forgotten by honest people everywhere"²⁶. These final sentiments are ones with which we can all gladly and wholeheartedly concur. ★

Notes:

1. By 1987 she had been awarded no less than eleven separate decorations: from the Czech Peace Prize, in 1955, and the World Peace Council Gold Medal in 1963, to Star of Friendship between Nations, from the GDR in 1973. See: J. Stroynowski (ed), *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries of Europe*, (Munich, FDR, 1989), Vol.III p.325.
2. Letters to the present author, from Bill and Mary Somerset, 18 & 31 May 2000. I am extremely grateful to them for sharing their reminiscences of Gusta Fucikova with me. Similarly, without the constant help and splendid advice of Marie Sulkova and Eva Roule, in the Czech Republic, this article would have been impossible in its present form. I am profoundly in their debt for their unstinting and enthusiastic contributions.
3. G. Fucikova, *Mein Leben mit Julius Fucik*, (Berlin, 1976), pp.106-108.
4. E. Roule, *Gusta Fucikova*, MS (Prague, 2000), p.2.
5. Fucikova, op.cit. p.104.
6. G. Fucikova, *Julius Fucik*, (Prague, 1955), pp.19-20.
7. F. Kavka, *An Outline of Czechoslovak History*, (Prague, 1960), pp.126-129.
8. See: J. Fucik, "An Open Letter to Dr. Goebbels (Autumn 1940)" in J. Fucik, *Reporter of Revolution*, ed. Z. Horeni (Prague, 1983), pp.106-111.
9. Fucikova, op.cit. (1955), pp.20-23
10. P. Steiner, *The Deserts of Bohemia. Czech Fiction in its Social Context*, (Ithaca & London, 2000), p.96.
11. See also, Gusta's able introduction to her husband's study of "Bozena Nemcova, the Militant" in volume IV of L. Stoll & G. Fucikova (eds), *Dilo Julia Fucika*, (Prague, 1954).
12. Institute of Marxism-Leninism (Editorial Committee), *An Outline History of the CPCz*, (Prague, 1980), p.181.
13. Heydrich was subsequently assassinated on 27 May 1942.
14. V. Andriyanov & Z. Hrabica, "The Heroes of 'Notes from the Gallows'" in *New Times*, no.33 (1980), pp.27-30.
15. J. Fucik, *Report from the Gallows*, (Prague, 2000), pp.17-21.
16. Fucikova, op.cit. (1976), pp.555-558.
17. *Report from the Gallows*, p.22.
18. *Report from the Gallows*, p.74.
19. G. Fucikova (ed), *Julius Fucik ve fotografii*, (Julius Fucik in Photographs: Prague, 1977), p.28.
20. *Report from the Gallows*, p.72.
21. Roule, op.cit. p.4.
22. *Report from the Gallows*, p.12.
23. Ibid.
24. *Report from the Gallows*, op.cit. pp.154-55.
25. L. Stoll & G. Fucikova (eds), *Dilo Julia Fucika*, 12 vols. (Prague, 1951-63).
26. Anon., "Gusta Fucikova – n'est plus (Gusta Fucikova is no more)", *Femmes*, No.3 (1987).
27. Gusta, herself, was thoroughly over-sentimentalised in a Soviet melodrama produced in Leningrad, in 1953, and almost reduced to the status of a fairytale character. See: Leningradskii Teatr im Leninskogo Komsomola, *On the Life of Julius Fucik*, (Moscow, 1953), pp.21 & 35.
28. M. Filipkova, "Fucik" in *Mlady Svet - The Young World* – (1968), pp.9-12.
29. E. Hostovsky, *The Communist Idol. Julius Fucik and his Generation*, (New York, 1953).
30. Roule, op.cit. p.7.



The Death of Uncle Joe

John Callow

Alison Macleod, *The Death of Uncle Joe*,
Merlin Press: Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1997, 269 pp.
ISBN 085036 467 1.

Today, no blue council plaque denotes the site of the old Communist Party headquarters on King Street. Instead, a designer clothes store – “Tzar” – acts as a Mecca for the young and fashionable tourists and shoppers who crowd into the plaza at Covent Garden. In a similarly ironic statement, beloved in all probability by Postmodernists – though almost certainly by no one else – the shell of the former *Daily Worker* building in Farringdon now provides a home, in shiny chrome and steel, for the “Yo! Sushi” Bar. The symbolism of the much touted, and allegedly final, triumph of the market and mammon over the forces of Socialism and popular politics could not find a more forcefully and poignant statement. While professional historians and journalists dissect and for the most part – with the generous benefits of hindsight – excoriate its memory and achievements, the legacy of the CPGB continues to excite great controversy and to sustain much heated debate¹.

This volume of memoirs arises directly out of the knowledge and experience of the collapse of the Socialist states in Eastern Europe in 1989, and the humiliating implosions and wilful self-destruction of the CPGB in the decade leading up to 1991. As the Soviet divisions began their humbling retreat, statues toppled and émigrés returned, to plunder nationalised assets, the author dug out her old notes, made in haste during the period from 1956-7 and set about fashioning them into a coherent narrative, chronicling what she passionately believes to have been the beginning of the end, with the unravelling of Stalin’s personality cult and the revelations of Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech”².

The result is an invaluable, highly partisan and stridently opinionated, inside account of the post-war history of the CPGB and of the power struggles and personalities which shaped the editorial policy of the *Daily Worker* during those years. Future researchers will doubtless have much to applaud Alison Macleod for, in setting down her memories and impressions of verbatim conversations held between Party leaders, *Daily Worker* journalists and political activists at critical junctures.

While her own journey – from dedicated Communist to fiery apostate – provides both a warm human dimension to an otherwise unrelentingly bleak story and an interesting study in personal psychology, it is her description of the inner turmoil that engulfed the British Party as a result of CPSU’s re-evaluation of Stalin, at the 20th Party Congress, which is most useful³. Similarly, her dramatic and apocalyptic vision of the outbreak of the counter-revolution in Hungary provides a vivid testimony to the hard choices faced by British Communists after 1956, and to the inability of the leadership to continue to harness the ability of creative – and dissenting – voices, such as that of the late, great, E.P. Thompson⁴.

It is unfortunate, however, that this book is so thoroughly shot through with the bitterness born out of disillusionment. Invectives fly thick and fast, but lose their impact when deployed as a blanket barrage⁵. None of the leaders of the CPGB emerges with much credit. Bill Rust is a cold ideologue, Palme Dutt is a derisory and duplicitous figure, while Harry Pollitt is reduced to a Northern music hall caricature: a bullying Lancastrian drunk, cursed by a decidedly funny regional accent and by markedly homophobic tendencies⁶. Ordinary Party members are the dupes and stooges of the Kremlin, while within the ranks of the Comintern, Dimitrov – “the Lion of Leipzig” – is reduced to the status of a burly Stalinist “henchman”, his bravery in the dock all but forgotten. In the same fashion, Marshal Rokossovsky – who not only survived internment after the purges of the late 1930s, but went on to prove himself as one of the most resourceful and heroic of soldiers in the breaking of the Nazi war machine – is little more than a cipher: “the Soviet brass hat who remembered his Polish origins when Stalin wanted someone to run Poland”⁷. Quite where this leaves the spirit of Socialist Internationalism is neither here nor there. Moreover, the book’s general premise is in keeping with the revisionism and relativism championed by such authors as Robert Conquest and Orlando Figes, and fully concurs with Professor Pelling’s thesis – formed in the crucible of the Cold War – that it would have been far better for the British Labour Movement if the CPGB had never existed at all⁸.

In many respects this is surprising as the British Communist Party has far less to upbraid itself for than the majority of its European counterparts. Save for its pitiful end, the CPGB was free from show trials, dangerous splits and inexplicable – whirlwind – purges. It acted as a conduit for both information and resources for those activists engaged in the fight against the Apartheid regime in South Africa, championed calls for national self-determination at a time – from the 1920s to the 1960s – when the



existence of the British Empire went largely unquestioned by the main political parties, and selflessly provided aid for the peoples of Spain, Cuba and Vietnam, when engaged in struggle. However, the hair shirt worn by a convert to a new faith has burnt and scratched deeply, and from the prose of Andre Gide to Douglas Hyde, former Communists have violently rejected all that they once loved⁹. This naturally creates a political vacuum, which benefits – at times intentionally – the forces of conservatism, and of political and religious reaction. In many respects, Macleod is kicking at a door that is already wide open, the grand edifice of the Stalin myth having crumbled as surely as the monuments raised to honour his name. While the political force of Stalinism lies buried as deeply as the fragments of his effigy, consigned long ago to the waters of the Vltava, the multinationals and the warmongers of the West continue unimpeded in their headlong march. As British pensioners starve and their Russian counterparts freeze; as Fascism rears its ugly head in our northern mill towns and as racist gangs attack and terrify Czech gypsies, it is worth recalling the distant echoes of the battle on Cable Street, the planting of the scarlet banner upon the Reichstag roof, and the stalwart defence of the Cuban shore. Though it is instructive to be aware of the pitfalls of the past, to allow a crippling and at times misplaced sense of guilt to derail and to utterly paralyse the Marxist experiment is to play directly into hands of the money men, Murdoch's polluting media and the rapacious hands of both the Blairite minions – who preen and strut in the courts of capital – and the hard-right nationalists, those men accustomed to privilege and power, who have latterly regrouped around Iain Duncan Smith. The Left – as a whole – has now to decide whether to concede upon this crucial point, and whether to haul down the Red flag, once and for all, or to let its folds, though tattered and torn remain free to stream defiantly “like a thunderstorm against the wind”. ★

Notes:

1 See, for example, Francis Beckett's slick and slap-dash account: *Enemy Within, the rise and fall of the British Communist Party*, (London, 1995), & Willie Thompson's Eurocommunist apologia: *The Good Old Cause, British Communism, 1920-1991* (London, 1992), which attempts to pull down a final curtain upon class-based politics.

2 Macleod, op.cit. p.i.

3 Macleod, op.cit. pp.50-63 & 70-3.

4 Macleod, op.cit. pp.127-51.

5 Macleod, op.cit. pp.13, 42, 52, 78, 90, 96, 212 & 217.

6 Macleod, op.cit. pp.28, 46-7, 50, 52, 66, 74, 86 & 96.

7 Macleod, op.cit. pp.7 & 82.

8 R. Conquest, *Stalin, Breaker of Nations*, (London, 1991); O. Figes, *A Peoples' Tragedy, the Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*, (London, 1996); & H. Pelling, *The British Communist Party*, (London, 1958).

9 A. Gide, *The God that Failed*, (London, 1950) & D. Hyde, *I Believed*, (London, 1950).

It is notable that Hyde's critiques of the CPGB, *Daily Worker*, J.R. Campbell and Georgi Dimitrov are couched in almost identical terms to those of Macleod. See: Hyde, op.cit. pp.79-90 130-42, 247 & 250-1. It is interesting that Macleod treats the unedifying political reputation of the Gerry Healey far more kindly, op.cit. pp.74 & 250.

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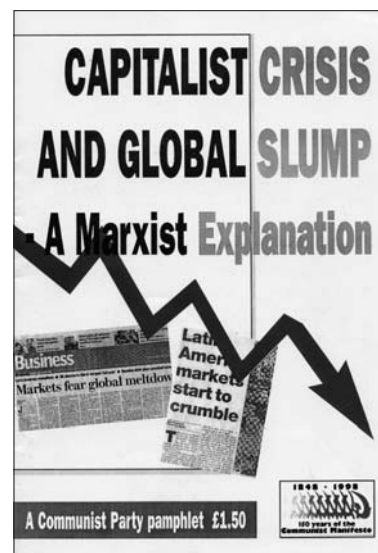
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Jorge Amado

Voice of the Brazilian People

Juan Camey

Jorge Amado, the great Brazilian novelist, died on 6 August 2001, aged 89. Although Amado's *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* and *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* are known in Britain, the bulk of his output – and indeed his communist background – remains largely hidden. The following appreciation was published in the French communist paper *l'Humanité* on 8 August 2001. Translation, editing and compiling of additional notes are by **Martin Levy**

CULTURE

Jorge Amado's life's work was dedicated to bringing to life the revolts, oppression, sensuality and mysticism of the mixed-race people of Bahia, his native state in north-eastern Brazil. Although nominated several times for the Nobel Prize for Literature, he never won it – a fact which does not enhance the Prize's reputation.

After his first book, *Carnival*, written in 1931 at the age of 19, he published *Cacao*, a very beautiful novel in which he describes the rural proletariat of the big estates, men and women bound in servitude, almost turned into animals, and for whom nothing but debt-slavery lies in wait. Amado gives their coarse and limited language full space, but it sounds just right, when compared with the Portuguese-type rhetoric used by the local landed gentry. Whether the rural poor are black, mulatto or native American, their despotic masters inspire in them only a cold hatred. To become rich is no solution for these poor people: exploitation would still continue. And the novel finishes with the discovery of two fundamental ideas: class consciousness and class struggle, in a Brazil about to undergo the transformation from the Middle Ages to the modern epoch, to capitalism.

Amado spent many of his formative years in Salvador de Bahia, the state capital (sometimes known as Bahia de Todos os Santos, or simply Bahia). Plunging himself into the society of the poor people there, he found a complex popular identity – in many ways the identity of Brazil – deriving from native Americans, Portuguese settlers, blacks and mixed-race people, all coagulated into difficult class relations. This provided a rich source of material for his novels, where those class relations are denounced, particularly his celebrated trilogy: *Jubiabá* (1935), *Sea of Death* (1936) and *Captains of the Sands* (1937).

The first of these, *Jubiabá*, tells the story of the apprenticeship to life of Antônio Balduino, a poor black street-urchin in the city of Salvador. "Free in the old city with its huge houses, he has dominated it and become its owner. The men who pass don't

realise this, of course ... Perhaps even Antônio Balduino himself doesn't know it." But, like Amado, he knows the city better than anyone, and, at the head of his band of young scoundrels, enjoys possession of it in his own fashion. At the house of Jubiabá, the old *obá* or medicine man, Antônio assists with *macumbas*, ritual sorcery ceremonies of African origin. Like all the exploited people of the port, he is fascinated by "the road towards home", the sea – a metaphor perhaps for death.

A boxer, tobacco plantation worker, circus artist, and a great lover of women, storytelling, fêtes, and street-fights, Balduino loves a woman who is inaccessible to him, the white Lindinalva who ultimately – through reverse of fortune – becomes a prostitute of the lowest level. On her deathbed, Balduino promises to look after her young son and, to do this, he becomes a docker in the port. That enables him to leave his state of mind as a man of primary reactions – although imbued with a sort of innocence – in order to participate in a general strike which shakes Bahia. The black giant discovers solidarity, takes the measure of the force of united workers, "and for him it is like a second birth."

This outcome, perhaps a little too optimistic, didactic – "militant" if you like – but which does not depend on any old "socialist realism", presages that of *Captains of the Sands*. This novel concerns some 100 abandoned children who sleep in an old warehouse in the port, live in full freedom, get up to all sorts of tricks and obey only their leader, Pedro Bala. They are the product of the poverty of the city. Left to themselves, they try to survive, and to gain a little tenderness. A former worker, the priest José Pedro, representing the church of the poor, gives them friendship, attempts to help them, but attracts the indignant condemnation of his superiors and of the wealthy. Pedro undertakes to Don'Aninha, the protectress of the band, to recover an effigy of Ogun the saint which the police seized in a *candomblé*, or Afro-Brazilian religious ceremony. In the sea, the spirits Yemanjá and Xangô discharge their anger. And Pedro, thanks to his audacity, succeeds in his enterprise. Then the spirit Omulu sends smallpox into the city, and only the vaccinated whites can escape it.

Perhaps this work, in which certain themes of earlier novels are again found, sins by a certain schematicism? Perhaps Amado lets go occasionally at his great skill as a story-teller? One will not be astonished that Pedro, son of a docker killed in a strike, participates powerfully at the head of his band in a general strike and, anxious to change the destiny of the poor, ends by joining the Party!

The novels of which we have spoken are characterised by a fundamental realism, without



concession, and are not exempt from touches of crude naturalism. A degree of lyricism lifts certain passages. Jorge Amado carries the popular language spoken in Brazil to the height of literary style. On the plane of ideas, what dominates is the care to denounce exploitation and the poverty of the poor, and to open a path to hope. Religious syncretism is constantly underlined, and the love of Brazil, melting pot of races and of different cultures, magnifies the total.

With *Sea of Death*, the social considerations are not evaded but form the background. Amado, a man of the interior of the country, dedicates this work to the sea. His hero, Guma, owns a *saveiro*, the “Valente”, a small frail craft with which he engages in coastal trade. Guma is strong and courageous. One stormy day he saves a ship by guiding it across the bar. In a period of crisis he finds himself compelled to engage in contraband in order to pay for his boat. However, by the will of Yemanjá, the goddess with 5 names – the sixth, by syncretism, being Mary – the sailors seem resigned to an inescapable destiny, death at sea.

According to the old myths of Yoruban origin, this is what Yemanjá wants. She is at one and the same time wife and mother, and she draws her chosen ones to the bottom of the sea, towards the mysterious lands of Aiocà. Legends, sambas, songs of the blind and of the blacks accompany chapters full of lyricism. The distressing destiny of the *saveiros* contrasts with their wish to love and to live, and this gives tension to the novel.

After the “Revolution of 1930” the dictator Getulio Vargas defended the interests of North American imperialism. In the period up to his suicide in 1954, Brazil was to know some painful periods of repression, in which the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), the most steadfast and resolute opponent of the dictator, was the greatest victim. Mercilessly, its leaders, militants and intellectuals were pursued, imprisoned and tortured. One can read about this in Amado’s *The Knight of Hope* (1942), an epic fresco on the life of PCB leader Luis Carlos Prestes, and in *The Vaults of Liberty* (1954), a historic novel in three volumes.

Living in Salvador, Amado was already a politically committed novelist and a member of the PCB. In line with the highs and lows of political events, he was firstly forced into exile in Argentina and Uruguay (1941-2), then elected federal deputy of the state of São Paulo (1945), represented the PCB in the Constituent Assembly (1946), and then exiled again in Paris (1948-50) and Prague (1951-2), where he became a leader of the international peace movement. In 1951 he received the Lenin Prize for Literature.

“All my work is born,” Amado once said, “of the need to support the people against their exploiters, to be on the side of liberty and to defend the rights of man against the permanent violation of which they are the object.” Despite this, he left the Communist Party in 1955. “Of course, I have been sectarian, like the others. But that never

corresponded to my true nature, which always pushed me towards broadmindedness. Since this experience, it has been impossible for me to remain inside a closed framework. That does not mean that I have abandoned my convictions ... I have always remained faithful to the people, to the ideal of liberty and social progress, to democratic socialism and to my conception of the role of the writer. And I never transformed myself into an adversary of the Brazilian Communist Party, even when certain of its leaders (who are now no longer there) attacked me.”

1958 saw the publication of Amado’s most successful novel, *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*. The action takes place in Ilhéus, a coastal town in the State of Bahia, in 1925 – *i.e.* after the bloody struggles for possession of the land which Amado relates in *The Violent Land* (1944). Cacao cultivation is enriching the town, and it is becoming modernised. The writer evokes with much verve, and not without irony and humour, the inhabitants, their conversations, their activities, their mentality and the tough law of the milieu, their rivalries, their ambitions and their cares.

Thus Nacib the Arab, owner of the Vesuvius Bar, is desperately looking for a cook. And who should appear but Gabriela, a magnificent mulatto woman, driven from the interior – like so many others – by the drought and the “colonels” (see the accompanying “Literary and Political Timeline”). Scent of clove, complexion of cinnamon, Gabriela is soon to become Nacib’s mistress, but is also a “daily temptation and intoxicating presence for the notables and masters of the earth” who frequent his establishment.

Gabriela, true daughter of the people, doesn’t worry about prejudices and ignores the demands of feudal honour. Sensual, a free spirit, she gives herself to whomever pleases her, to whomever proves to be good to her – Nacib, for example. Nacib comes to love her and marries her, but in her innocence she is unfaithful to him. However he doesn’t sacrifice her to the barbarous law of honour with which the novel starts – the murder by an aggrieved husband, one of the “colonels”, of his wife and her lover. Nacib contents himself with having the marriage annulled, and ends up taking her back later. Truly, the story of Gabriela is fully integrated into “the chronicle of a town in the state of Bahia”, Ilhéus, written with precision and good humour, in the rejection of any idea of a primal struggle between good and evil.

And Amado was to raise high the banners of other mulatto women, symbols of popular Brazil, in *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* (1966), *Tereza Batista: Home from the Wars* (1972), his greater success, and above all perhaps in *Tieta of Agreste* (1977), where the narrator, in the introduction and after the fashion of a fairground showman, promises mountains and marvels, and announces the ingredients of a superb melodrama. One thinks of the literature of gossip, newspaper serials, popular ballads. And the reader is not deceived, so



great are Amado's powers of invention and his capacity to create space between plausibility and extravagance where humour can lodge, this subtle, deeply poetic doubt which weakens objections. For in the story of Tieta (Antonietta) – ostensibly a very wealthy “widow” but in fact the Madam of a deluxe brothel in São Paulo and a former prostitute herself – back in Agreste, the miserable little town of her birth, Amado does not rely entirely on his usual colourful writing.

Certainly Tieta, a former goatherd, puts into practice an unlimited paganism. She loves to fornicate, she initiates Ricardo, her seminarist nephew, into the ways of the world, she also loves to eat to the full. However, like Gabriela, she acts in all innocence, without after-thought, in contrast to her sister Perpétua, a sort of Holy Joe, who covets the inheritance. If Amado loves Rabelais, his humour is also somewhat reminiscent of

Cervantes. Through frequent intrusions into the narrative he strives to excite the reader's curiosity, gives his judgement on the characters and the development of the action, refutes criticisms of which he is the object and introduces with the greatest apparent seriousness (and the greatest ease) reservations, restrictions and disturbing silences. There is no lack of characters and scenes in the vein of burlesque parody. Make-believe fertilised by desire: Amado, more than in his other novels, stresses the erotic nature of his characters, making them give it free rein, like Tieta, or repress it, like her sister Perpétua, at whom he pokes fun. Tieta is benefactor of both her family and her native town. Thanks to her connections in São Paulo, she succeeds in introducing electricity to the miserable market town of Agreste, of modernising it by drawing in investment – and then the complications begin. ★

Jorge Amado a literary and political timeline

1912: Birth of Jorge Amado on 10 August, near Ilhéus, in the State of Bahia. His father João owns a small cacao plantation or *fazenda*, while his mother Eulalia is of native American origin.

In this period the lucrative cacao is replacing traditional sugar and coffee cultivation, and a violent struggle is taking place for control of the land. At the forefront and most brutal in these struggles are the “colonels”, feudal-type members of the landed gentry whose titles originated under the Brazilian Empire but which had no military significance. A number of Amado's works are either set in this period, or make reference to it.

1922-9: Jorge attends boarding school in Salvador, where he reads widely, starts to develop his literary abilities, and gets to know the poor people of both the city and the countryside. This human contact provides a rich source of material for his subsequent literary work.

On the political front the pro-imperialist policies of Brazilian President Bernardes provoke increasing protests. In July 1924 the garrison in São Paulo rises up in arms, and in the autumn there is revolutionary unrest in the navy. The São Paulo insurgents are supported by a revolt in the south, led by Captain Luis Carlos Prestes. As the revolt and naval unrest are suppressed, Prestes begins a war of manoeuvre against government forces, making

extensive raids, freeing political prisoners and burning records of debts.

Eventually, in 1927, Prestes and his supporters are forced to cross into Bolivia, where they are interned. Although they are defeated, their exploits inspire Brazilian democrats and Prestes becomes a legendary symbol of resistance. Subsequently Prestes joins the Communist Party, becoming one of its distinguished leaders.

1930: Amado moves to Rio de Janeiro, where he enters the Faculty of Law at the University, and becomes active in left-wing politics. This is a time of growing public discontent in Brazil, as the Great Depression hits coffee exports and increases foreign indebtedness. The political élite splits over the presidential election, and a revolt breaks out in support of the defeated candidate, Getulio Vargas. After a month of fighting, Vargas is victorious.

1931-3: Following the publication of his book *O País do Carnaval (Carnival)*, Amado returns to Ilhéus where he writes his first great novel, *Cacão*, published in 1933. Critics applaud it but its social content does not go down well with the bourgeoisie.

1934: Publication of Amado's second novel *Suor (Sweat)*, in the same vein as *Cacão* but set in the colonial centre of Salvador, with the poor proletariat of the old city as protagonist.

1935: Amado publishes *Jubiabá* (see main article), which becomes one of the bestsellers of the year in Brazil. The first translations of his works appear, in Argentina (*Cacão*) and the Soviet Union (*Cacão* and *Suor*). He participates in the National Liberty Alliance, an anti-fascist and anti-imperialist popular front movement initiated by the Communist Party and headed by Luis Carlos Prestes. The Alliance's activities and mass support alarm both the ruling oligarchy and the imperialist powers, so the Vargas government outlaws it in July. Protests, including strikes and armed revolts, are suppressed by force.



1936: publication of *Mar Morto* (*Sea of Death*, see main article), which wins Amado the Graça Aranha literary prize. Arrested for his political activities, he serves time in prison.

1937: Amado undertakes a long journey across Latin America and up the Pacific coast as far as Mexico and the USA. During this trip he writes *Capitães da Areia* (*Captains of the Sands*, see main article) and makes friends with Mexican and North American intellectuals such as Orozco, Siqueiros and Waldo Franck. Meanwhile in Brazil Vargas forestalls elections with a military coup, and sets about establishing the *Estado Novo*, a regime with fascist tendencies. On returning to Brazil in October, Amado is jailed for two months, and his books are banned.

1938-40: Amado works in publishing and literary translation, and writes a book of poems, *A Estrada do Mar*, and a biography, *ABC de Castro Alvez*.

1941-2: Finding the *Estado Novo* régime more and more difficult, Amado goes into exile in Buenos Aires. There he starts the publication in several parts of *O Cavaleiro da Esperança* (*The Knight of Hope*), on the life of Luis Carlos Prestes. In September 1942, as Brazil enters the war on the side of the Allies, Amado returns to Bahia where he writes a daily column for the newspaper *O Imparcial*. He contributes to the re-establishment of democratic life in Brazil and campaigns for the sending of a Brazilian expeditionary force to Italy to fight on the side of the Allies.

1943-4: Publication of Amado's novels *Terras do Sem Fim* (*The Violent Land*) and *São Jorge dos Ilhéus* (*The Golden Harvest*), concerning firstly the battles of the cacao "colonels" in the Ilhéus region for control of the land, and then the later power struggles between the "colonels" and the cacao exporters. In the second book the "colonels" are outmanoeuvred in the cacao boom, but when the bust comes, it is clear that the poor have become poorer, and that the rain forest has been destroyed to provide more acreage for cacao planting.

1945: Amado leads the delegation from Bahia at the first Congress of Brazilian Writers, becoming its Vice-President. Following the overthrow of Vargas's regime in October, he is elected to the Constituent Assembly as Communist federal deputy for São Paulo. In the same year he publishes *Bahia de Todos os Santos* (*Bay of All the Saints*), a street guide to Salvador, and remarries his former wife, Zelia Gattay, with whom he later has two children.

1946: Amado publishes *Seará Vermelha* (*The Paths of Hunger*), which deals with the problems of *latifúndia* and with the long journey for work by the poor people of north-eastern Brazil, many of them driven from their homes by the recurrent drought.

1947-9: Following the banning of the Communist Party, Amado is removed as a federal deputy and obliged to go into exile again. He settles in Paris, but spends several months in the Soviet Union. He participates in many international cultural events, makes links with literary and artistic figures, and – at this high point of the Cold War – joins with Picasso, Aragon, Joliot-Curie, Fernand Léger, Pablo Neruda, and many others in founding the World Movement of Partisans for Peace.

1950-3: As Vargas returns to the Brazilian Presidency in 1950, Amado moves to Czechoslovakia, where he writes *O Mundo da Paz* (*The World of Peace*), a personal vision of the

socialist countries. In this period he visits Soviet Central Asia, People's China and Mongolia, and receives the Lenin Prize for Literature. After a six-month stay in Brazil in 1952, he returns to Europe, and then in 1953 is one of the Presidents of the First Continental Congress of Culture at Santiago de Chile, becoming a friend of Pablo Neruda.

1954: Amado assists at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers and participates in the First National Congress of Brazilian Intellectuals. His book *Os Subtêrneos da Liberdade* (*The Vaults of Liberty*), a vast fresco of Brazilian life in the *Estado Novo* era, is published in Brazil in three volumes. Meanwhile, in Brazil itself, Vargas's turn to urban workers as a base for support has caused alarm among business interests, multinational corporations, and foreign governments. Following an ultimatum from the army to resign or be overthrown, Vargas commits suicide.

1955-6: Amado leaves the PCB (see main article), then returns permanently to Brazil. Henceforth the political content of his novels is less direct, though still implicit, readers being allowed to draw their own conclusions. At the same time his work is arguably more approachable, being filled with humour, eroticism and rounded character descriptions.

This is a period of economic expansion, the 1955 Presidential election being won by the Social Democratic Party candidate, Juscelino Kubitschek. However, much of the expansion is funded by printing money, which leads to disastrous inflation in later years.

1958: Publication of Amado's *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (*Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*, see main article), which is a tremendous success, both domestically and internationally, and wins him five Brazilian literary prizes.

1961: Amado publishes *Os Velhos Marinheiros* (*Home is the Sailor*), comprising two novels, *The Two Deaths of Quincas Waterlyell* and *The Old Sailor*. These works centre on picturesque characters in the port district of Salvador de Bahia. In this year he is also admitted to the Brazilian Academy of Letters and is appointed by President Janio Quadros to the recently-created National Council of Culture. Quadros later resigns unexpectedly as President, and is replaced by Vice President João Goulart from the Brazilian Workers' Party. Goulart is opposed by powerful US-trained military figures who see Brazil at the frontline in the struggle with communism.

1963: Amado finally realises his dream of returning to Salvador to live in an old colonial house, to be 'nothing more than an *obá* of Bahia, a dignitary at the *candomblés*, to become, as he describes himself, "the anti-doctor par excellence, the anti-erudite, scribbler of gossip columns, gatecrasher in the city of letters, a foreigner in the circles of the intelligentsia."

1964: Publication of *Os Pastores da Noite* (*Shepherds of the Night*), a set of humorous short stories about the nightlife and music of the people on the Bahian waterfront.

In the same year, President Goulart refuses to solve the mounting inflation at the expense of workers' wages, and stages huge rallies in several of Brazil's major cities. He signs decrees setting low-rent controls, nationalising petroleum refineries, seizing unused lands, and limiting profits that can be taken out of Brazil by foreign investors. On March 31, the army takes control. Perceived opponents are arrested or barred from office, and



thousands of civil servants are dismissed.

1966: Publication of Amado's *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (*Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*), an exhilarating critique of Bahian bourgeois society. When Dona Flor's husband dies suddenly, she forgets all his defects and remembers only his passion. After she remarries, Senhor Flor materialises naked at the foot of her bed, eager to reclaim his conjugal rights. Dona Flor is racked by desire but reluctant to betray her upright second husband.

1968: Growing popular opposition to the Brazilian régime provokes a hardline military coup, unleashing widespread torture and repression. From now up to 1974, thousands suffer and hundreds die. The Congress is closed down, trade unions are taken over, and universities purged. Many prominent Brazilian academics and artists go into exile. Amado's prestige perhaps protects him.

1969: Amado publishes *Tenda dos Milagres* (*Tent of Miracles*), about Pedro Archanjo, a mulatto man who spent his whole life fighting prejudice. The book describes Archanjo's roguish lifestyle, his growth, maturity, death – and subsequent commercialisation, as newspapers lie about his life to sell advertisements.

1972: Publication of *Tereza Batista, Cansada de Guerra* (*Tereza Batista: Home From the Wars*), one of Brazil's most popular novels, the story of a woman whose eventful life and extraordinary destiny seem to embody the history of the whole country.

1974: Amado publishes *O Gato Malhado e a Andorinha Sinhá* (*The Swallow and the Tom Cat: a Love Story*). The political situation in Brazil improves a little as moderate forces take over in the military.

1977: Publication of *Tieta do Agreste* (see main article).

1979: Appearance of *Farda, Fardão, Camisola de Dormir* (*Pen, Sword, Camisole: A Fable to Kindle Hope*), a satirical portrait of the *Estado Novo* era.

1980: Interview in *Le Monde* in which Amado explains his refusal to write his memoirs. "The things I have done, I do not disown. If I wrote my memoirs, I would lose friends from my whole life. I have very close friends who do not think the way I do ... I can admire a friend even if I don't agree with him."

1982: Publication of *O Menino Grapiuna* (*The Child of Cacao*), a set of reminiscences.

1984: As the Brazilian economy falters, millions of demonstrators take to the streets, and democracy is restored. In this year Amado publishes *Tocaia Grande* (*Showdown or The Great Ambush*), an erotic, action-filled but human tale of the early days of a Brazilian town, and is an invited speaker at the *Fête de l'Humanité* in Paris.

1986: Publication of *A Bola e O Goleiro* (*The Ball and the Footballer*), a children's story.

1988: Amado writes *O Sumiço da Santa* (*The War of the Saints*), returning to the theme of several earlier works. The image of Saint Barbara of the Thunder is being shipped to Bahia for an exhibition of holy art. As the boat docks, the Saint comes to life to save Manela, a flirtatious young Bahian girl who has been locked up by her pious family. This miracle announces the start of the *candomblé*.

1991: Publication of *A Descoberta de Amêrica pelos Turcos* (*The Discovery of America by the Turks*).

1992: Occasion of Amado's 80th birthday, accompanied by mass homage in the streets of Salvador. "I do not want to rest in peace," he says. "I'm not taking leave, I say 'See you later', my friends. The hour has not yet come for me to rest under the flowers and the orations. I am going out into the bustling street and Boris the Red is accompanying me, to go onward and to enjoy life."

In this year he also publishes his *Navegação de Cabotagem* (*Smuggler's Journey: Notes for Memoirs I Shall Never Write*). Here are affectionate portraits of some of his many friends, including Neruda, Ehrenburg, Anna Seghers and Sartre. "I have struggled for the good cause, for that of people and greatness, of bread and liberty. I have fought against prejudices, I have dared to do condemned practices, I have run along forbidden paths, I have been the opponent, the 'no'. I have worn myself out, I have cried and I have laughed, I have suffered, I have loved, I have entertained myself."

2001: Death of Jorge Amado in Salvador de Bahia, at the age of 89. Tributes pour in from around the world.

Where to buy books by Jorge Amado

At present, only the following English translations of Jorge Amado's books appear to be in print:

Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon:

Avon (USA), 0-380-01205-7

Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands

Serpent's Tail, 1-85242-710-8

The War of the Saints, Serpent's Tail, 1-85242-372-2

Showdown, Bantam (USA), 0-553-34666-0

If local booksellers are unable to get these, then you can buy them from Amazon ([,](#) or), providing you have internet access and a credit card. Shipping charges from the US Amazon site are significant.

The following titles were published in English in the USA from 1962 onwards:

Cacau (Trade Paperbacks, Editora Record)

Suor (Mass Market)

Jubiabá (Bard/Avon)

Sea of Death (Avon)

Captains of the Sands (Avon)

The Violent Land (Knopf, Bard/Avon)

The Golden Harvest (Avon)

Home is the Sailor (Knopf)

The Two Deaths of Quincas Wateryell (Knopf)

Pen, Sword, Camisole: A Fable to Kindle Hope (Avon)

The Tent of Miracles (Knopf)

Tereza Batista: Home from the Wars (Knopf)

Tieta (Bard/Avon)

Shepherds of the Night (Bard/Avon)

The Swallow and the Tom-Cat (Delacorte)

Many of these are available in good second-hand edition from Alibris. If not, Amazon's US website also offers some through its list of associated second-hand suppliers. Alibris's prices may be a little higher, but its shipping charges are lower.



Useful websites

Communist Party of Britain and Young Communist League

<http://www.communist-party.org.uk>

Morning Star socialist daily newspaper

<http://www.poptel.org.uk/morning-star>

Searchlight anti-fascist magazine

<http://www.searchlightmagazine.com>

Trades Union Congress

<http://www.tuc.org.uk>

International Centre for Trade Union Rights

<http://www.ictur.labournet.org>

Cuba Solidarity Campaign

<http://www.poptel.org.uk/cuba-solidarity>

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