



COMMUNIST REVIEW

- **Mary Davis** Women, Class and the Commodification of Sex
- **Roger Fletcher** Twenty-First Century Vision, Part 3
- **Peter Latham** Crisis and the Intermediate Strata
- **Venezuelan CP**  
The Construction of Socialism in Venezuela



# The Commodification of Sex



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## contents

# Women, Class and the Commodification of Sex

by Mary Davis

page 3

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- 8 **Twenty-First Century Vision, Part 3**  
by Roger Fletcher
- 16 **Crisis and the Intermediate Strata**  
by Peter Latham
- 30 **The PCV and the Construction of Socialism in Venezuela** by Department of International Politics, Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV)

### Discussion:

- 24 **Draft Britain's Road to Socialism**  
by Robert Wilkinson
- 25 **Letter to the Editor**

### Book Reviews:

- 26 **Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or starting it?)** Review by Liz Payne
- 28 **A Rose Loupt Oot: Poetry and Song Celebrating the UCS Work-in**  
Review by Margaret Levy
- 2 **Soul Food** by Mike Quille  
with Bookmarx on pp 5/6, 17/18, 27/28 and 33/34



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# editorial



By Martin Levy

THIS EDITION'S FRONT COVER!? – No, *CR* is not aiming to plug the gap left by the demise of the *News of the World*. We have definitely not gone down-market, and it is not an invitation to pages inside designed to titillate, or worse. On the contrary, as Mary Davis argues in our feature article, the commodification of sex is a serious issue for the left and the labour movement to address, because of the growth of the sex 'industry' in recent years, including the trafficking of women and the normalisation of pornography. She takes issue with those who claim that sex work is a legitimate choice for women, arguing that "it is essential ... to expose the social causes of prostitution, including women's poverty and women's oppression and super-exploitation in class society" and that "the commodification of sex, and the objectification of women's bodies, is ... a contributory factor to violence against women."

As the new edition of the Communist Party's programme, *Britain's Road to Socialism (BRS)* points out, "Capitalism's drive to maximise profit leads it to turn every area of human need – food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education, sex, leisure – into a market for the production and sale of commodities for profit."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, "Capitalism increasingly produces 'culture' as it does other commodities – for sale and at a profit or not at all – regardless of social need or the social good. 'Popular culture' is thereby turned into a commercial, conservative force that promotes ideas of selfishness, greed and individualism."<sup>2</sup>

The News International empire of Rupert Murdoch, caught out over the phone-hacking scandal, has been more complicit than most of the capitalist media in selling such a 'popular culture'. That would not be news to many on the left, although only now has the real extent of links between the Murdoch press, the Metropolitan Police and leading politicians been brought to light. It is a racing cert that similar links exist with other major sections of the capitalist media. Neither the previous New Labour administrations, nor the ConDem government, have had the courage to take on the press barons –

not surprisingly, since in many ways they share the same objectives. In addition, this 'popular culture' is a convenient diversion from the reality of government policies – indeed the furore over the phone-hacking scandal has given the ConDems plenty of opportunity 'to bury bad news', namely further attacks on public services.

How to break through this media barrage, and open up the road for alternative, socialist policies? In this issue of *CR*, Roger Fletcher uses part 3 of his *Twenty-First Century Vision* to argue for the principle of "comparing and synthesising two different views ... to obtain a more accurate and deeper estimate of reality than is possible from one viewpoint alone, whichever one that may be." And, as the new *BRS* points out, there has to be a fight on three fronts which interact dialectically: *economically*, to defend and improve living standards; *politically*, to embrace the relation between workers and the state; and *ideologically and culturally*, to engage consistently in the battle of ideas with the ruling class. The *Morning Star* exists to campaign in all those areas, and its increased circulation is vital.

The key issue today is to lift the level of struggle against ConDem policies. The trade union movement has, by and large, been extremely lethargic, with no real follow-up to the magnificent demonstration on March 26. The combined one-day strike by PCS, NUT, ATL and UCU on June 30, over the attack on pensions, shows the potential for building united action, but it would have been better if major unions had been involved as well. Too many union leaderships have been hiding behind the claim that 'negotiations with the government are continuing' – when it is as plain as a pikestaff that those 'negotiations' will not go anywhere without militant mass pressure. The delay in balloting by the big unions, and in further strike action by the teacher unions until November, risks dissipation and disillusionment.

The labour movement also needs to decide where it wants to be and what strategy it needs in order to get there. It is not enough just to wait 4 years in the hope of another Labour government.

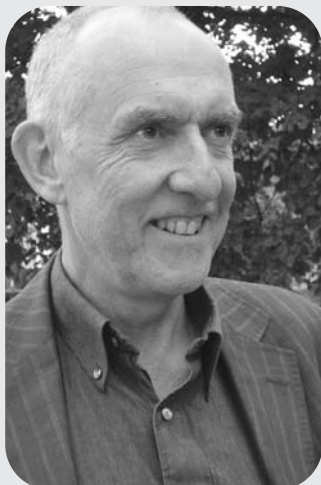
It is appropriate, therefore, that the new version of the *BRS* is being published at such a time of struggle. The document argues the need for an Alternative Economic and Political Strategy, based on a comprehensive Left-Wing Programme of policies and a popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance mobilised to fight for it.

This issue of *CR* carries forward our previous discussion of the *BRS* draft in a number of ways – Peter Latham's article, *Crisis and the Intermediate Strata*, which demolishes the idea of the 'squeezed middle', and demonstrates that "the present crisis affects all except the super-rich and rich"; the discussion section on pp 24-5; and the various 'bookmarx' (a sort of popular counter-culture?) scattered at appropriate points throughout the journal, and which Mike Quille picks up in his *Soul Food* article.

The two book reviews, on women's participation in the making of the working class, and on songs and poetry celebrating the UCS work-in of 40 years ago, nicely complement the spread of articles and features in this issue. Our final piece, from the Communist Party of Venezuela, echoes the lead article in *CR60, On Transitional Governments*, by Sitaram Yechury.<sup>3</sup> Since that edition was published, two of those transitional governments, the Left Front administrations in the Indian states of Kerala and West Bengal, have suffered electoral defeat, though only narrowly in Kerala. The objective and subjective reasons for this setback have been analysed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist).<sup>4</sup> We are sure that our comrades there will be able to regroup and regain the people's confidence in future. Sitaram's watchword of "keeping politics in command" remains to the point.

## Notes and References

- 1 *Britain's Road to Socialism*, 8th Edn, Communist Party of Britain, 2011, Ch 3 (in print at time of going to press).
- 2 *Ibid*, Ch 1.
- 3 S Yechury, *CR60*, Spring/Summer 2011, pp 2-7.
- 4 CPI(M) Central Committee, Review Report of the Assembly Elections, 11-12 June 2011, <http://www.cpim.org/documents/2011-June-election%20review.pdf>



# SOUL FOOD

## A regular literary selection

Selected by Mike Quille

AS POINTED OUT in the editorial to this issue of *CR*, the Communist Party gives ideological and cultural struggle a high priority – much higher than do the main political parties in this country, who tend to regard culture as just another business opportunity.

*“The Communist Party seeks ... to organise itself in every major area of economic, social, cultural and political struggle.”*

- *BRS* 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011, Chapter 4

Writing political poetry is a form of cultural struggle. Here is an example, one of two poems in this issue taken from *A Rose Loupt Oot*, an excellent new book of poetry and song – reviewed on p 28 – about the political and economic struggle over Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971-2. As you read the poem, you might also think also about the current campaigns against the immiserating policies of the ConDem coalition.

### **Struggle**

by Jim Aitken

Not to certainly means  
worsening conditions  
inevitable defeat.

To engage in action  
even if you lose  
means dignity at least.

It also means  
just could mean  
that you actually win.

But it's more than that  
for in the process  
people change.

They awaken and grow  
like desert seeds  
receiving rain.

And give to others  
a sense of vision  
and possible dreams.

There is a tradition in political poetry, going back to Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, of using changeable weather to convey the idea of revolutionary political change. Interestingly, both of the poems here about the UCS work-in use the image of thunder, lightning and/or rain to evoke a heightened political consciousness. Our Glaswegian readers will be well aware of the practical force of this metaphor of course, given the high levels of rainfall there. But let us hope that this summer's changeable weather is associated with a similar increase of militancy across the whole country!

### **'Bookmarx'**

Regular readers will no doubt have noticed that the *Soul Food* column has been promoted to a much earlier slot in this issue. That is because I need to explain the different layout. This time we have placed the poems alongside some of the articles, in the format of cut-out-and-keep 'bookmarx'. Each has a quotation from the new edition of *Britain's Road to Socialism* (*BRS*) on one side, and a poem on the other. Whether or not you actually decide to cut them out and use them as

bookmarks, we hope that this lay-out increases your enjoyment and understanding, so that the articles, the quotes and the poems work to illustrate each other, directly and indirectly. It is, if you like, a kind of visual metaphor for the interlinked, mutually reinforcing nature of the political, ideological and cultural struggles.

There is, however, one exception to the 'bookmarx' theme, and that is the poem *The Soviet Union* by John Berryman - because it is too long. But it resonates so well with Roger Fletcher's article, both because of the echoing references to the Soviet Union and the theme of 'double-sidedness', that we have included it anyway, boxed-in to the article. The poem also links clearly to the contributions by Robert Wilkinson and David Grove in this issue.

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### **Sources and Acknowledgements**

The sources for the poems are as follows:

*Struggle*, by Jim Aitken, and *He Wouldn't Want An Elegy*, by Chrys Salt: from *A Rose Loupt Oot: Poetry and Song Celebrating the UCS Work-in*, Smokestack Books, 2011.

*Profit*, by Attila József: from *Edwin Morgan: Collected Translations*, Carcanet 1996.

*A Short History Of The Bourgeoisie*, by Hans Magnus Enzensberger: from his *Selected Poems*, Bloodaxe Books, 1994.

*The Soviet Union*, by John Berryman: from *Love and Fame*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 1972.

*The United Fruit Co*, by Pablo Neruda: from *The Faber Book of Political Verse*, Tom Paulin ed, Faber, 1986.

Thanks are due for permissions received, and grateful acknowledgements are also due to all these poets and publishers.

# Women, Class and the Commodification of Sex



By Mary Davis

In the last two decades, legalisation has been promoted as the solution to the problems that accompany prostitution in many countries.

Governments in South East Asia are encouraged, in an important International Labour Organisation report,<sup>1</sup> officially to recognise the “sex sector” and the contribution it makes to gross national income.

The growth of this ‘industry’ is undeniable. As Richard Poulin, Professor of Sociology at the University of Ottawa, writes:<sup>2</sup>

“Capitalist globalisation today involves an unprecedented ‘commodification’ of human beings. In the last 30 years, the rapidly growing sex trade has been massively ‘industrialised’ worldwide. This process of industrialisation, in both its legal and its illegal forms, generates profits amounting to billions of dollars. It has created a market of sexual exchanges in which millions of women and children have been converted into sexual

commodities. This sex market has been generated through the massive deployment of prostitution (one of the effects of the presence of military forces engaged in wars and/or territorial occupation) in particular in the emerging economies, the unprecedented expansion of the tourist industry, the growth and normalisation of pornography, and the internationalisation of arranged marriages.

“The sex industry, previously considered marginal, has come to occupy a strategic and central position in the development of international capitalism. For this reason it is increasingly taking on the guise of an ordinary sector of the economy. This particular aspect of globalisation involves an entire range of issues crucial to understanding the world we live in. These include such processes as economic exploitation, sexual oppression, capital accumulation, international migration, and

unequal development and such related conditions as racism and poverty.”

In Britain the debate continues over ‘decriminalisation’, with some women claiming that legally regulated brothels are the only way to protect trafficked women and street prostitutes. Although this article does not set out to oppose legalisation, it recognises that the experience of legalisation in other countries has solved very few problems and has led to many more, including an expansion of an industry in which men who would once have been classified as procurers and pimps are now seen as a newly respectable class of sex ‘businessmen’. Thus I argue here that it is essential:

- i to expose the social causes of prostitution, including women’s poverty and women’s oppression and super-exploitation in class society;
- ii to review the residency status of trafficked women;
- iii to criminalise men’s purchase of sex rather than its sale; and
- iv to ensure that the commodification of sex, and the objectification of women’s bodies, is shown to be a contributory factor in violence against women.

## The Debate within the Trade Union Movement

Within the trade union movement the debate has surfaced at two TUC Women’s Conferences. The first, in Liverpool in 2003, adopted a motion proposed by the GMB which argued that “the stigma attached to many aspects of sex work is responsible for the lack of employment rights and casualisation, widespread violence, exploitation and abuse in the global and profitable, for some, sex industry.” A successful amendment from NAPO called for the consideration of the decriminalisation of prostitution. There was no counter-proposal and very little discussion on the amended motion. However, in 2009, after a stormy debate, a motion from UCU reversed the Liverpool decision.

It should be noted that the ‘debate’, such as it is, is informed by the ideological position of the International Union of Sex Workers – IUSW (with which the GMB Sex Workers’ branch is affiliated) and the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP). These organisations assert that sex work is a legitimate choice for women, that it should be treated like any other job and hence that it should be legalised or decriminalised. The GMB has



thus been seduced by the 'workers' rights' aspect of this argument, as have some academics. Gregor Gall has written *Sex Worker Union Organising*<sup>3</sup> which claims to be "the first study of the emerging phenomenon of sex workers – prostitutes, exotic dancers such as lap dancers, porn models and actresses, and sex chatline workers". It asserts that "their economic activities are work and as such, they are entitled to workers' rights".

On first consideration this would appear to be an entirely appropriate position for the trade union movement to adopt. However, I wish to argue the contrary view – a view which is **not** based on moral considerations. The debate among the protagonists within the women's movement has always been presented as a pro- or anti-decriminalisation one. This is a false debate because it misses a number of crucial points which Marxists and socialist feminists should appreciate.

### Commodification of Human Beings

Firstly, it is incorrect to present sex work as 'work' in the sense in which Marxists understand the meaning of 'work'. Work is the monetary expression of the value of labour power. Within capitalist society labour power is a commodity – the only commodity a worker has to sell. Can the same argument be made for sex? There is a great danger here because we are conflating the commodification argument if we say that women selling their bodies for sex is the same as workers selling their labour power.

A commodity has a use-value and an exchange-value. Workers themselves are not commodities – only their labour power is. However this is not true for sex workers: sex itself and hence women's bodies in total become commodities – which presents a great problem because it raises a second fundamental

point, namely the issue of ownership and control.

The counter-argument to this articulated by Gregor Gall<sup>11</sup> is that:

"This would be tantamount to voluntary slavery if such a thing could exist. The only situation in which selling of bodies – people – takes place is between traffickers, but that concerns forced and bonded labour.

"What sex workers sell is their willingness to perform sexual acts and it is in this sense that they sell their labour – their ability to perform erotic, emotional, mental and physical labour involved in the array of activities that constitute sex work, not just prostitution."

This is a specious argument which somehow by sleight of hand separates sex work from women's bodies!

Gall has written in a journal article<sup>4</sup> the following theoretical justification:

"The conceptual fulcrum for organising sex workers is the discourse or perspective of viewing sex workers as workers whose labour, whether emotional or erotic, is deemed to have three qualities. The first is of 'sex work' being of a sufficient level of moral legitimacy to be deemed worthy of and acceptable to organise. The second is that sex work has a social worth as a form of employment that is seen to be comparable to other forms of labour and paid employment. The third is that sex work is characterised by conventional forms

of work organisation. The perspective is also that sex workers sell sexual services and not their bodies and persons *per se*.

Distinctions are not made between acts which involve the selling of sex and acts of selling sexual stimulation, but between those acts which involve entering a body, acting on another body or entering personal body spaces (such as intimate closeness) and those that involve the production of imagery. Sex work is viewed as comprising of work that *can be* socially useful and *can* provide job satisfaction, personal fulfilment, empowerment and self-actualisation, where becoming a sex worker *can be* a genuine life choice. The conditions of this potentiality are acknowledged to be existent in the present and to be potentially further enhanced in the future under different conditions. However, it is recognised that alongside these potential benefits, there are downsides in terms of violence, stigmatisation, poor pay and conditions of employment, and job insecurity, but these can be ameliorated through regulation and interest representation."

Compare this to Poulin's analysis:<sup>2</sup>

"The increasing size and centrality of the global sex industry helps explain why so many groups and agencies are adopting normalising regulatory



approaches in their attempts to address its harms. However, this strategy is deeply flawed. The rapidly expanding international sex market exploits above all women and children, especially members of marginal and minority groups in the Third World and in the former 'socialist' countries. This 'leisure industry' is based on the systematic violation of human rights, for it requires a market in commodified human beings and the complicity of pimps and clients who are prepared to buy and sell women and children."

In other words, the Gall approach and that of the IUSW *et al* is to normalise the sex industry and even allow those who control it to be advocates for greater legal controls. Thus the IUSW even goes as far as to have the bosses of those 'good providers' of the sex trade as leading spokespeople of the



trade union. Douglas Fox, owner of the Christony Companions Escort Agency, one of the largest escort agencies in Britain, is also a leading figure in IUSW and the GMB!

To whom do women sell sex work? The sanitised libertarian ECP and IUSW view is that women are, or can be, in control of the transaction especially if they aren't harassed by the police and are instead protected by the law. These organisations see the decision to enter the sex industry as a logical extension of the feminist 'women's right to choose' slogan. Why shouldn't women be permitted to use their bodies in any way they want and get paid for it into the bargain? This conveniently overlooks the fact that the sex industry is big business controlled by men who make vast profits from it. Although men are sometimes exploited in the sex trade, we should not forget, as Sven-Axel Månsson argues,<sup>5</sup> that

"Prostitution is about men's sexuality, not women's. Without men's demand for prostitute women, there would be no such women."

The 'freedom of choice' argument breaks down when we consider the undeniable links between trafficking of women and children and prostitution, which has shown a marked increase in countries like the Netherlands where the 'industry' is legal. A study undertaken by London Metropolitan University in 2004, for the Routes Out Social Inclusion Partnership in Scotland, demonstrated that the sex industry had augmented, as had violence against prostituted people, and this had increased markedly in all the countries that have liberalised their prostitution laws and turned pimps into respectable businessmen.<sup>6</sup> In addition, in Britain, the 'free choice' argument is further dispelled when we note that three out of four women in prostitution became involved when aged 21 or younger, and one in two when aged 18 or younger. A study of women in Hull, Manchester, Kirklees and London showed that 88% of those in street-based prostitution use heroin.<sup>7</sup>

### Exploitation and Oppression

Furthermore we have to place the argument within a wider context of an understanding of women, class, oppression and exploitation. Oppression, although it may take the form of discriminating against the oppressed, stands in a unique relationship to class society. It is the most important means of maintaining the class relations which support class exploitation and as such it is a function of class society as well as being a product of it. This is because oppression, unlike discrimination, is linked *materially* to the process of class exploitation as well as operating at

'superstructural' level through oppressive ideologies which serve to maintain class rule by dividing the exploited. (This is particularly clear in the case of capitalism which will henceforth be used as the 'exemplar' of class society.) Such ideologies are not simply explained by 'false consciousness' operating as an invented infecting agent. They are themselves so rooted in the material world of production that they have become integral to it.

Seen in this way, it is evident that the oppressed are a very explicit category. Let us now look at the way in which oppression operates at the material and ideological levels. Materially, the fact of oppression is responsible for the super-exploitation of the oppressed at the point of production. Historically, an inbuilt inequality within the labour force, expressing itself through low wages and job segregation, has reproduced itself as the normal process when workers sell their labour power. Its victims are the most easily identifiable workers – black people and women. At the level of sociological observation this fact – super-exploitation and job segregation based on gender and race – is not in doubt. All indices of wage rates nationally and internationally show that the wages of women<sup>8</sup> and black people are lower than those of white males. This fact operates to the material advantage of the owners of the means of production – the capitalists – for whom any increase in profit is dependent on an increase in the rate of exploitation. It is hence no accident that, despite conventional morality about the sanctity of family life and the key role of women within it, the labour of women is often preferred to that of men because it 'attracts' lower wages.<sup>9</sup>

Hence there is a material basis historically and at present for our suggestion that

## BOOKMARK ONE

*"The most fundamental, insoluble contradiction of capitalism is that between the social character of production - how society's goods and services are produced and distributed in a vast network across society - and the private character of its ownership and control."*

BRS 8th edition, 2011, Chapter 1



CUT AND KEEP



## BOOKMARK ONE

### Profit

Pound your dough by the  
gas-flame,  
or bake your red bricks with  
their cavities;  
get the hoe to shatter  
your palm;  
sell yourself as your skirt twists;  
floor a mine-shaft, crawl the pits;  
shoulder a sack through  
the markets;  
learn a trade or don't learn it –  
here you stand, there profit sits.

Rinse your silks in a  
petrol-stream;  
pick onions, squatting  
in the grit;  
kill the goat that that bleats  
your name;  
cut trouser-cloth to tailor's fit;  
stick with it! Why should  
you stop it?  
You'll get the sack, for what  
good that is!  
Then beg? Or burgle?  
But laws hit –  
Here you stand, there  
profit sits.

Wring out verse in a  
lovelorn dream;  
cure Prague ham for festivities;  
cull herbs; sweat at the  
coal-seam;  
keep ledgers, cover up  
their secrets;  
wear caps with gold braid  
on the skip;  
live in Paris or in Claypitts -  
even with wages in your pocket  
here you stand, there profit sits.

Attila, I could go on, and  
bore you;  
you know you don't live on  
salmon cuts –  
you can hang about or  
they can employ you  
but here you stand,  
there profit sits.

ATTILA JÓSZEF

women and black people have, for different reasons, been used and are used as a source of cheap labour; and that this fact has been integral to the operation of class exploitation. Women in particular are historic victims of job segregation and have continuously performed undervalued and sometimes unnoticed jobs outside the home. It is simply not the case that they have been used as a 'reserve army' of labour, as their presence within the labour force has been constant. In fact the labour of women is often so cheap that, especially in cases where she is the sole breadwinner, her poverty forces her into prostitution. Thus it is that the role of women within capitalist relations of production as super-exploited workers is woven into the very fabric of these relations and is not a chance or transitory phenomenon. It is here that we must extend the analysis founded on historical materialism in order to understand it more fully.

### Ideologies of Oppression

The fact of class exploitation (and super-exploitation) as the central pillar of the capitalist mode of production does not in itself explain *how* the relations of production are maintained and reproduced. This can only be understood by examining factors which exist outside the economic relations of production through the operations of ideologies, whose function it is to maintain (whether consciously or not) class relations in a more general sense. There is a huge range of literature on the meaning of ideology attempting to interpret the already voluminous writings of Marx and Engels on the subject.<sup>10</sup> The interesting point about the theoretical discussion of ideology is just that, it is entirely theoretical with only rare references to a specific ideology and the way that it

functions. What concerns us here though is something specific, namely the identification of ideologies which maintain the historic subservience of women and black people – in other words, the ideologies of oppression.

Marxist theoreticians have been strangely silent about specific oppressive ideologies. We have already noted the particular and super-exploited place of women and black workers within class society. It seems that the specific ideologies supporting this – racism and sexism – have operated so insidiously and so successfully in the concealment of contradictions over centuries that they have passed unnamed and unnoticed until the twentieth century. Indeed a gender-blind and colour-blind approach to class politics has, until relatively recently, permeated even the most class conscious sections of the labour movement.

As ideologies, racism and sexism can be seen to have a direct material connection to the maintenance of capitalist relations of production in two important ways: firstly because they are related to the very real need of capital to maintain profit by pushing the value of labour power to its lowest possible limit; and secondly, because the ideologies of

racism and sexism are the chief non-coercive means of preventing the unity of the working class and thereby facilitating the perpetuation of the domination of the minority class over the majority. Hence these ideologies, unlike for example liberalism or nationalism, appear as an almost pure reflection of the material needs of the exploiting class. They perform a very obvious function in the maintenance of the existing relations of production.

This may seem to be a very crude and deterministic interpretation of ideology, failing to do justice to the sophistication of its lived form. Other ideologies like religion are much harder to analyse from a historical materialist standpoint. They seem to have a life and history of their own unrelated to the mode of production, and this has given rise to a major debate among western Marxists who get round this problem by one of two means. Either they suggest either that ideology is in itself a material force, giving rise to its separate study as a means of representation which interacts with the economic base; or, in an attempt to avoid economic determinism, they suggest that ideology has





## 'Sex Object Culture' Statistics<sup>11</sup>

- Over half (54%) of all women around the world say they first became aware of the need to be physically attractive between 6 and 17 years of age.
- Eating disorders are as common as autism amongst women.
- 66% of teenage girls would consider plastic surgery and 20% would do it right now.
- Polls suggest that 63% of young women aspire to be glamour models or lap dancers.
- At every consultation event of the End Violence Against Women (EVAW) Coalition,<sup>12</sup> members have raised the sexualisation of women in the media as a factor in violence against women and girls.
- One in three people believe a woman is responsible for violence committed against her if she is wearing 'revealing clothing'.
- 66% of young people learn about sex and relationships through the media.

a 'relative autonomy' within the superstructure but is connected to the economic base by being determined by it 'in the last instance'.

We do not appear to need the 'relative autonomy' waiver clause when analysing racism and sexism. That is not to say that as ideologies they do not have their own histories or that their form is at all times strictly determined by the economic base. It is however clear that their form and function as ideologies have a very direct relationship with the economic base, more so than most other ideologies

(other than economic ideologies themselves, especially that of the 'free' market and the 'free' sale of labour). It is perhaps for this very reason that the ideological form of oppression has remained hidden.

The subjugation of women and black people has been historically connected with class society for so long that it has become the accepted natural order of things. The oppressive ideologies sustaining subservience are so culturally rooted that they have passed beyond naked statements of

class rule and entered into the very fabric of our lives including language itself. As such these ideologies have become universalised and hence disembodied from their class origins. They have thus fulfilled the ultimate goal of ideology – namely to represent the interests of the dominant class as the interests of society as a whole. How else are we to explain the permeation of racist and sexist ideas within the working class and even within the socialist movement? Perhaps the same could be said of all ideologies, but this misses the very direct function of oppressive ideologies, the force of which in the capitalist epoch is dependent on their ability to disunite the working class.

## Oppression and Sex Work

Thus oppression is not separate from and external to sex work. It is part of the explanation for sex work. The sex industry further reinforces sexism in wider society, helping to shape how men and women view themselves and each other. This is recognised by OBJECT, a human rights organisation which challenges 'sex object culture' – a culture in which women are

increasingly sexualised as sex objects in our media and every day lives. The accompanying box lists some statistics which they quote.<sup>11</sup>

In 1979, the United Nations Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>13</sup> recognised that stereotypes and prejudices based on gender play a role in maintaining inequality between women and men; and called on states to take decisive action to tackle this. The CEDAW Committee has on many occasions identified the links between the portrayal of women as sex objects in the media and the sex industry with attitudes that underpin violence and discrimination against women.

In terms of ideology, women have been subject to the male gaze for centuries, rendering their bodies an object of male desire. This is especially true of the sex industry, but it also has wider repercussions. Just look at the issue of the sexualisation of girls, the explosion of lads' mags and the ubiquitous nude in red top newspapers. This is why we cannot simply see the sex trade as separate from the wider issue of women's oppression and exploitation.

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7 M Hester and N Westmarland, *Tackling Street Prostitution: Towards an Holistic Approach*, Home Office Research Study 279, July 2004; online at [http://www.popcenter.org/problems/street\\_prostitution/PDFs/Hester&Westmarland\\_2004.pdf](http://www.popcenter.org/problems/street_prostitution/PDFs/Hester&Westmarland_2004.pdf).

8 See, for example, the Equal Opportunities Commission report on *The Gender Pay Gap*, 2001, which shows that the gap between men's and women's earning in Britain is the widest of all member states of the European Union.

9 See K Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, for useful insights from early 19th century mill-owners on why they preferred to use the labour of married women with dependent children.

10 The following is a selection of some of the most useful (and comprehensible!) contributions

which have informed my analysis: K Marx & F Engels, *The German Ideology*; L Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New Left Books, 1971) and *For Marx* (Allen Lane, 1965); M Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today* (Verso, 1986); Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (Verso, 1991); K Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, (New Left Books, 1970); J Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, (MacMillan, 1983); J McCarney, *The Real World of Ideology* (Gregg Revivals, 1980); B Parekh, *Marx's Theory of Ideology*, (Croom Helm, 1982).

11 <http://www.object.org.uk/the-facts>.

12 <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk>.

13 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article5>.

# Twenty-First Century Vision

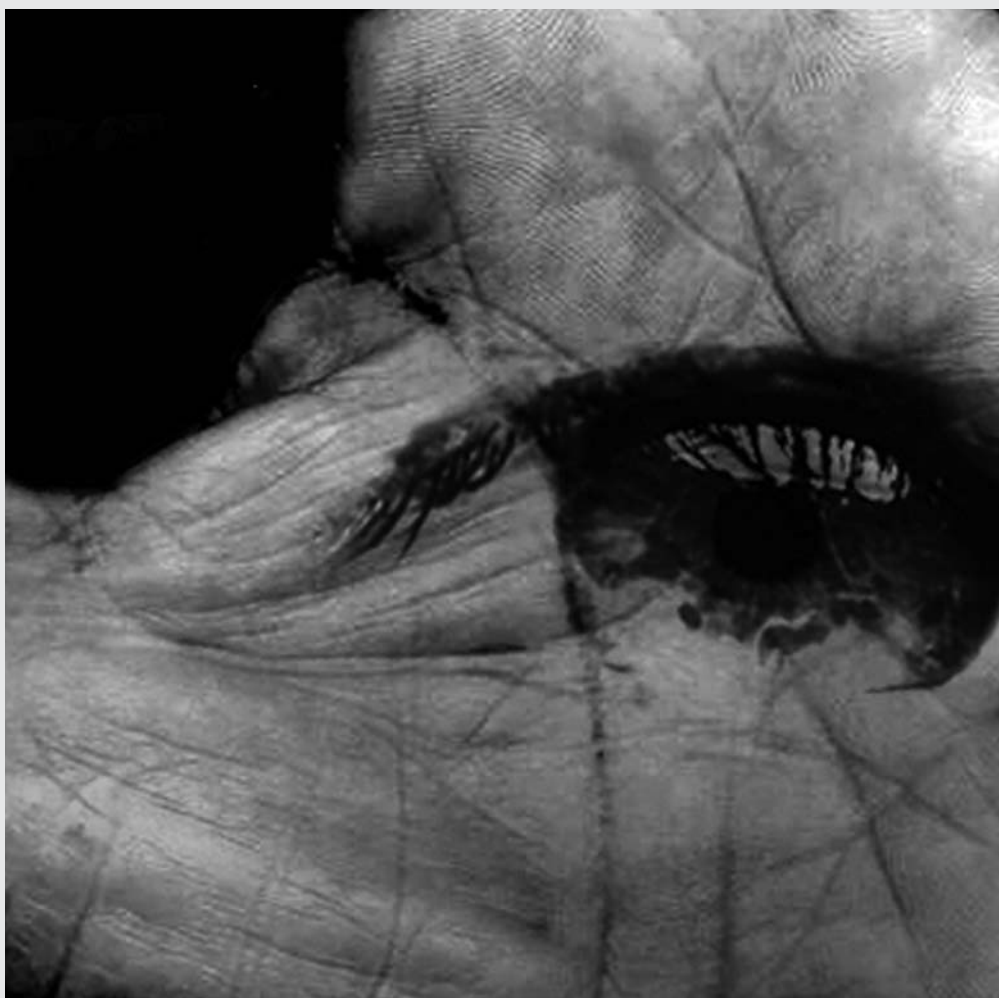


## Part III: Ways of Seeing

By Roger Fletcher

### Introduction

*Part 1 of this article (CR59, pp 10-15) showed us a world that is, notably in three major areas, conceptually 'upside down'. In Part 2 (CR60, pp 8-13) we have seen, perhaps with some surprise, how that inversion is fully consistent with our initial visual images of the external world. However, there remains an enormous substrate of distortion to this world, where combinations of parallax, reversal and inversion have been important but subliminal factors in producing a convincing and superficially consistent image for us. Four or five examples, and a brief look around the world from the background of Parts 1 and 2, may help to reinforce this overall concept. In concluding, we'll look at some inadvertent perceptual errors by icons of our movement, and finish with one technical advance that reiterates a fundamental lesson for us.*



## Is the (Financial) Times a-Changing?

In light of what we've learned so far, we need to recall that the works of our "three guys named Charles" have come down to us through filtration layers of a distorted and distorting ideology; that is, the still-accurate implication of the Marx/Engels opening salvo in their *Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles".<sup>1</sup> So we must look with care for distortions that still hazard us and – with a little humility – for some that have *crept into our own ideas*. As we do this, we may also note that, like Isaac Newton, we shall be able to see further if we continue to stand on the shoulders of at least three of our own giants.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, we can look to Armando Hart's 2005 collection entitled *Manifesto*,<sup>3</sup> and to his concise distillate of the Cuban revolutionary experience. As our struggle intensifies for a more equitable society than capitalism can ever provide, there are a few pressing lessons for us revolutionaries – but far too many for defenders of the status quo to have an adequate response.<sup>4</sup>

For example, at the beginning of



2009, as celebrations of the original publication of Darwin's revolutionary work began, a *Financial Times* (FT) editorial<sup>5</sup> gave a closely reasoned defence of evolutionary law, and of rational thinking, that would be difficult to better by any thoughtful person.<sup>6</sup> But perhaps the most notable thing about this brief article was that, if Darwin's name had been replaced with that of Marx, almost every phrase would remain true. To do this would obviously run counter to the purpose and function of the FT, but that does not alter the fact that here was just one instance of ideological conflict, *eg* a need for scientific and technical progress versus a denial of inconvenient research,<sup>7</sup> that now demands resolution, either in this present crisis-ridden society or, more plausibly, within an improved form of socio-economic organisation.

Such conflicts are daily becoming more difficult to conceal within the capitalist system, except by the high-volume assertions of certain journalists and politicians. In contrast to the resultant pulp-fiction that characterises most major newspapers today, popular science magazines primarily need to deal in facts. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, USA, writes of "the world's inability to face up to ... the growing environmental crisis ... [with] every major goal ... postponed, ignored or defeated".<sup>8</sup> Of more immediate social relevance, Mairi Macleod<sup>9</sup> writes of "delinquent behaviour ... [as being a] *sensible* response [my italics –RF] ... to a life constrained by poverty". She suggests that "many of the problems in modern societies ... [are] evolved strategies to deal with dire circumstances"; and any concerned reader (whether of CR or otherwise) might see that article as a damning indictment of "modern societies".

More precisely, terms such as "modern societies" and "the world's inability" must mean, though unstated by those writers, capitalism in what we deem to be its crisis phase.

### Returning to Darwin ...

Macleod's suggestion above of "evolved strategies" naturally refers us to Darwin's foundational work, but the affinity between Darwin's mode of *socio-economic* life and the modern FT becomes evident from Lewontin's and Ryan's points cited in Part 1 (Notes 3 and 5). Although these in no way call into question Darwin's 'big idea', it is to another current writer that we are indebted for a more fundamental examination of the

first Charles's importance. The US philosopher Daniel Dennett has referred to "Darwin's dangerous idea";<sup>10</sup> and, in an extract in *Modern Science Writing*, the editor, Richard Dawkins, calls Dennett "the scientist's philosopher". Dennett likens Darwin's big idea to a "universal acid so corrosive that it will eat through anything. The problem is: what do you keep it in?"<sup>11</sup>

This dilemma causes Dennett to conclude that Darwin's idea is so dangerous that it must be kept, by contemporary (*ie* capitalist) society out of every field of human enquiry and struggle, to keep "his idea within some acceptably 'safe' and *merely partial* revolution" [my italics –RF]. Thus Dennett is pointing to a wider dimension of the FT's unarticulated conflict mentioned above. It is reasonable to suggest that we have here an underlying, and so far unstated, reason why Darwin's conclusions (to say nothing of Marx's!) are still so hotly contested, especially in that heartland of hyper-mature capitalism (defined more concisely by Lenin as imperialism), the USA.

In short, Dennett's modern view of Darwin's evolutionary idea as a "universal acid" reinforces a connection with Marx's revolution, and parallels Macleod's observation of "evolved strategies" for coping with societal stress. Both strands taken together imply a current vindication – and practical example – of the concept of quantitative into qualitative change, a foundational element in Marxist theory. And, although a connection is only implied by Dennett, the mechanism of this important change is elucidated in another recent work, by Danish physicist Per Bak. Again featured by Dawkins,<sup>12</sup> Bak shows "how nature works" through self-organising complex systems, and that "quality, in some way, emerges from quantity". Unfortunately, this perceptive modern physicist seems to be unaware of Engels' polemical work *Anti-Dühring*<sup>13</sup> from the 1870s, including Chapter 12 on 'Dialectics, Quantity and Quality'.

For the modern reader, this fascinating and important aspect of Engels' work is dealt with in a more accessible yet abbreviated form by Politzer.<sup>14</sup> We are, however, led inexorably to the conclusion that the current capitalist system is being prolonged more now with the aid of baton- and mounted police-charges and draconian laws, than was ever necessary in its heyday, as is evidenced almost daily by routine newspaper headlines.



### ... and to Marx

Here we are encouraged by one of the leading figures of the most recent and successful revolutionary process, Armando Hart of Cuba. In *Manifesto*, Hart re-introduces us to three classic texts, the Marx/Engels *Communist Manifesto*, Rosa Luxemburg's *Reform or Revolution* and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's *Socialism and Man in Cuba*. In a forthright Introduction, Hart writes of our opportunity to "discover increasingly profound answers to the real causes of the failure of the left in the 20<sup>th</sup> century" and that "following Lenin's death, the essential principles of Marx and Lenin have been whittled away. Humanity cannot advance toward a new type of thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century if the essence of the works of these geniuses is not clarified."<sup>15</sup>

"Whittled away" may read to European eyes like a reproof; but reference to the illogic of Gorbachev, of Eurocommunists, and even of some well-read and well-intentioned but doctrinaire leftists today will add credence to Hart's observation. As he puts it, "we [Cubans] have 45 years of practice in confrontation and struggle against the most powerful empire in the world." If we take into account the developing anti-colonial struggle in Cuba, which Ricardo Alarcón dates from 10 October 1868,<sup>16</sup> that long practical experience – of 143 years – of imperialism both challenges and complements the history of the Soviet

Union. Compare, for instance, Saney<sup>17</sup> and Gott,<sup>18,19</sup> or even a current postcard published to aid the American Indian Movement, apparently based on a T-shirt design (see below), where the Native American perspective on 'Homeland Security' and 'terrorism' is given.<sup>20</sup>

### The Uses of OPP ...

The causes of almost all revolutions are similar, as Fidel Castro has frequently pointed out,<sup>21</sup> but the origins of the Bolshevik and Cuban ones, *and the differences in their subsequent development*, become a practical starting point for us to apply the principle of opto-political parallax (OPP) that was introduced in Part 2.

With hindsight, the neuroticism and hysteria of the early Cold War<sup>22,23</sup> have occluded the brutalising realities that characterised tsarist Russia, and we have no space to go over these.<sup>24,25</sup> But gross tsarist denials of what are today loosely labelled 'fundamental human rights' were ample justification for the October 1917 Revolution; much the same may be said for the Bolshevik closure of tsarist newspapers, that had for so long denied and distorted the obscene realities of tsarist Russia.

In a comparable situation however, on the other side of the globe and 40-odd years later, the victorious 26<sup>th</sup> July Movement of Cuba, having ended the corrupt Batista dictatorship *and* the

preceding 5 centuries of colonialism, allowed US-oriented newspapers to continue functioning after the initial popular triumph in 1959. There was, however, one big difference – in the euphoria of that year, the trades unions petitioned the *ad hoc* government for the 'right of reply' to anti-union propaganda in the capitalist papers. The result was a decree/law giving the right of all mass organisations (*eg* trade unions, Federation of Cuban Women, etc) to put their side of any disputation that involved the specific organisation, to be printed as addenda to the paper's version. This became known colloquially as the law of the *coletillas* (tail-pieces or postscripts) and is barely mentioned by most Cuba-watchers, although it was dealt with in fair detail by Scheer and Zeitlin.<sup>26</sup> A recent article in the journal of the Union of Cuban Journalists refers to that period,<sup>27</sup> commenting acidly (in Spanish) that "behind every 'gorilla' [meaning 'hoodlum', 'fascist' or 'gangster' –*RF*] there will always be paid informers". That writer suggests that there are other societies today – the Dominican Republic, Chile, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia, Honduras and Ecuador – that might profitably use this early Cuban technique of neutralising a toxic output.

Thus there was, in 1959-60, a very different situation from that of the tsarist press in the chaos of the Russian revolution, and it may have resulted from mere chance! Whereas the 'losing' side in the developing Russian revolution could plausibly point to 'suppression of free speech' (*sic*) by the Bolsheviks, Cubans were provided with two opposing viewpoints, probably the very essence of free speech, and could draw their own conclusions as to the accuracy of the newspaper reports. Scheer and Zeitlin quote several former owners/editors from Cuba (interviewed in Miami!), stating that precisely this, rather than some over-zealous 'Castroite' action, was the reason for the rapid commercial failure, and closure, of counter-revolutionary 'news'-papers in Cuba. The respected US journalist A J Liebling once pointed out, in a wholly different context but with deliberate irony, that "freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one", and that people "confuse what they read in the newspapers with news."<sup>28</sup>

To Lenin's injunction of 'trust the people' perhaps, in light of the above, we should now insert the qualification 'informed'; undoubtedly the example of the tailpieces so early in Cuba's revolutionary process goes some way towards explaining the phenomenal progress of that

## Homeland Security



## Fighting Terrorism Since 1492

T-shirt design © <http://www.westwindworld.com>

revolution. It also helps to explain why dissenting individuals, desperately struggling to turn the clock back on that valiant island, still need continuous vitamin injections of ideology – and greenbacks – from across the Miami Straits.

### ... with Four More Examples

Carefully skirting the tempting scholastic/bourgeois trap of Occam's Razor ('the simplest solution is the best'), we can now consciously emulate our visual system by comparing and synthesising two different views – as do our two eyes, and as Cubans were able to do in 1959 – to obtain a more accurate and deeper estimate of reality than is possible from one viewpoint alone, whichever one that may be. It must be emphasised here that we are not looking at simple bias, whether to right or left. In OPP we are looking at a more objective principle that may have impacted negatively – due to its absence – on the Bolshevik revolution but, conversely – due to its deployment – greatly aided Cuba's revolutionary development.

Let us take a brief look at four more paired examples of international events in which OPP has been followed up by pernicious osmosis; that is to say, four high-profile cases of international terrorism that have been simplified to the point of farce by a concentration and insistence on one narrow viewpoint. That this latter has in every instance been the right-wing one follows from the class-oriented bias which dominates all of our information channels.

Contrary to general perceptions, which have been carefully tailored by the mass media, there have in the latter 50 years actually been:

- two '9/11s', as in Santiago de Chile and Manhattan;
- two bombed airliners, as in Barbados and Lockerbie;
- two missile crises, as in Turkey and Cuba;
- two shoot-downs, as in Sakhalin and the Persian Gulf.

Within these pairings, there is a degree of similarity in the two halves. Yet one half has been covered extensively in US and British newspapers, whilst the other remains unmentioned, excused or justified. A resort to most available internet search engines provides far more information, and here we only need to look at the briefest details for a more-balanced view.

Firstly, in the two '9/11s', the earlier

instance was a US-inspired coup against Chile's democratically elected Popular Unity government, led by Salvador Allende. The coup commenced on 11 September 1973 (*ie* '9/11' in US notation) and involved the torture and death of thousands. It is glossed over in British/US publications, including then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's infamous remark that "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people."<sup>29</sup>

Whilst almost everyone today will recall the traumatic destruction of the twin towers on Manhattan, many now struggle to recall the first '9/11'.

In the second case, of two bombed airliners, we may recall the high-profile US efforts to capitalise on the tragic mid-air destruction of a US airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988. The arrangement of a Netherlands court trying two Libyan nationals, according to Scottish law and with US prosecution witnesses, struck some as distinctly strange; and, even as this is being written, evidence of British/US corruption in this case is still oozing out.

As with the two 9/11s, the mid-air destruction of a Cuban airliner over Barbados in 1976 is hardly known about, despite one of the perpetrators having been found guilty by a (pre-Chavez) Venezuelan court ... and having simply walked out of jail! This man remains today a free citizen within the USA, and all efforts by Venezuela and Cuba to have him surrendered to due legal process have been ignored by the US 'justice' system.

In the third pairing, we come to the most perilous situation that our planet has so far faced, the US/Soviet Caribbean confrontation of 1962. NATO countries had, since 1948, considered it normal to have nuclear missile bases surrounding and hazarding the Soviet Union. However, with the development of revolutionary Cuba, and the clear and self-evident intent of the US to restore a neo-colonialist dictatorship on the island, deployment of Soviet ICBMs on Cuba, barely a year after the US-inspired invasion at the Bay of Pigs debacle, placed the US in an analogous position to that endured by the Soviet Union. Spurious assertions about 'right' and 'wrong' hardly obscured the fact that the US was now in a mirror-image situation to what had for too long been 'normal'.

An invaluable and fully updated account of this critical period, by Cuban journalist Gabriel Molina, has recently become available.<sup>30</sup> The recitation of those facts, most of which have had to be wrung

out against an intense propaganda barrage led by the USA, may have been slightly tedious for some older readers, but younger ones will hopefully have been introduced to a different view, truly a mirror-image, of a historically tense time.<sup>31</sup>

In the last pairing, we look briefly at another two incidents that have several similarities. In 1983 an airliner of Korean Airlines was shot down by Soviet fighter planes in the region of Sakhalin, in the Soviet Far East, killing 269 passengers and crew.<sup>32</sup> Five years later, an Iranian airliner full of religious pilgrims was shot down by the USS Vincennes over the Persian Gulf, killing the 290 people on board.<sup>33</sup> The Soviet fighter pilots in the Sakhalin incident seem to have been quietly forgotten, and at least one later appears to have sought sanctuary outside of the Soviet Union. The captain of the USS Vincennes, however, was awarded the Legion of Merit from George H Bush in 1990, for 'exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of an outstanding service', and the crew all received decorations or commendations. Any reasonable person might well see that citation as a calculated insult to the bereaved relatives, and to the state of Iran.

### An Overarching Reality

There is a growing, but low-key, awareness that all of the above incidents were inevitable consequences of the 'Cold War neurosis' that is commonly dated from Winston Churchill's speech at Atlantic College, Fulton, Missouri, in March 1948. But the Cold War actually began when the armies of 17 imperialist countries tried to retain 'tsarism without the tsar' in Russia, as the revolution of October 1917 became almost inevitable. Thus it is from 1917, not 1948, that the Cold War should be seen more coherently, as "a continuation of foreign policy by other means", to quote Clausewitz. It takes us to a more consistent global view than can any biased idea of the rest of the world as some sort of Reagan-Bush-Thatcher-Blair induced 'axis-of evil' fantasy. In fact, understanding the true longevity of the unfinished Cold War connects us more strongly with that famous Marx/Engels opening recalled earlier, about "The history of all hitherto existing society ...".

### Some More Errors, of Fact ...

Most of us, especially younger readers, will have become used to the last century's primary example of 'socialism' being shown as a 'failure' ... and compared negatively with the 'success' of



## The Soviet Union

There was that business in Siberia, in '19.  
That was disgusting.  
My God if John Adams had foreseen that  
he would have renounced his immortality.

It was despicable. My friends, forgive us.  
It was done by our fearful invasive fathers.  
I have a Russian image: in the Crimea, a train is stalled:  
She's in labour, lanterns are swinging,

they couldn't help her.  
She haemorrhaged, among the peasants,  
grimaced; and went away.  
And Nikolay struck down in the advance  
seeing the others going on

thought Am I wounded? Maybe I will die!  
ME, Nikolay Rostov, whom everybody loved so?

You murdered Babel,  
we murdered Martin Luther King; redskins, blacks.  
You have given a bitter time to Jews.  
Maybe one of our Negroes was a Babel.

Trotsky struggled: over the railway system  
and which troops were when to be where.  
When he addressed the Petrograd Soviet  
their vascular systems ran vodka.

Lenin wrote: Stalin is a boor;  
& should not continue as Secretary.  
Lenin, that great man, dying off there,  
with only her (that great woman) to talk to.

Stalin was mad at midnight: &  
criminal. But that Georgian  
had high even heroic qualities,  
He stayed you through the  
horrible advance  
of the German divisions. He had faith.  
Smolensk; & then in the South.

An Odessa Jew, a bespectacled  
intellectual small man,  
who rode with the revolutionary Cossacks,  
was murdered in one of your  
prisons or your camps.  
Man is vicious. We forgive you.

**JOHN BERRYMAN**

capitalism. These are pervasive images, so some more facts are relevant, especially since both socio-economic systems underwent dramatic changes within that century.

Infamously, the US Declaration of 1776 claimed that "All men are created equal", and that phrase is often quoted as evidence of the rights of man. This it certainly was, by excluding at least 50% of the US population, who had the misfortune to be created women (as domestic slaves) or to be plantation slaves.

The subsequent growth of this economic giant can be studied in many more-or-less- reputable histories, but a low point occurred in the decade from 1920. Most 'reputable histories' become highly unreliable from this point on, a fact that is intimated by Lewontin,<sup>34</sup> who writes of "tenants, small-holders, and miners [who] shared the perception that their lives were controlled by rich bankers, merchants and distant absentee corporations who were their creditors and their employers. The same regions of America that were strongest in fundamentalist Christianity were strongest in socialism . . . . Farmers rode to summer socialist camp meetings in buckboards with red flags flying." Now forgotten is the fact that in those times farmers were setting up *cooperative* grain storage facilities (silos), to cope with the highly productive US prairies.

This ferment of socialist ideas, the developing crisis of US capitalism, and the dramatic advances of early Soviet socialism encouraged US workers to look eastwards for their salvation. As the inherent conflicts of capitalism were reaching a head in the US, there were 100,000 US citizens who applied to work in the young USSR in the autumn of one year.<sup>35</sup> But the response of US capital after the Second World War was draconian, and the drive to war with the USSR was paralleled by the rise of right-wing organisations and the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee led by the neurotic Senator Joe McCarthy.

### ... and of Perception

Perhaps understanding how we see optically will help us to explain how we see politically; the process of *becoming* a communist is paralleled by gradually becoming aware of the interlocking web of distortions, as mentioned above. A reader's letter to the *Morning Star*<sup>36</sup> encapsulates the process nicely, the writer pointing out that the paper "is the only newspaper to put forward a real

alternative based on a Marxist economic perspective .... When I learned about this over 50 years ago, it was a revelation – like seeing for the first time” [emphasis RF], a conclusion supported by a letter recently printed in *New Scientist*,<sup>37</sup> where the author writes of the process of “learning to see”.

But in the struggle for a more logical and just reality, errors have crept into our side of the equation as well. A notable one of our own is contained in the massive work *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*.<sup>38</sup> In the Introductory Remarks, by the veteran communist editor Otto Kuusinen, we find a quotation from Lenin, “Marx’s teaching is all-powerful because it is true.”<sup>39</sup> Despite Lenin’s utterly unique contribution to economic and social justice, and peace – and the undoubted veracity of Kuusinen – we should now regard this statement as an empty tautology. Today we should be able to recognise, at least with the benefit of hindsight, that what makes Marx’s teaching “all-powerful” is that his rubric is *falsifiable*, as with any sound science; the evidence is accessible and stated, the conclusions are both logical and examinable. The enormous durability, and current viability, of Marxism is due not to some mantra-like repetition, but to its factual and demonstrable analysis of a crisis-ridden system that, with a vengeance, is still with us.

Just how factual and demonstrable that Marxist analysis is, has been shown by the ecologist Barry Commoner, writing in 1976. Summing up the US economy at that time, this radical critic showed that “the US economic system has ... experienced a falling rate of profit ... obscured by ‘public relations book-keeping’ ... closely related to the

displacement of labour by capital .... *These are...precisely the diagnostic faults that Marx attributed to capitalism*”<sup>40</sup> [my italics –RF]. It will not have escaped the reader of this article that, despite the current crisis – one in a continuum that started with the birth of the capitalist system – establishment commentators still insist that capitalism is a ‘default system’ to which all other economic systems must sooner or later revert.

Only nine years after Commoner’s book, in a volume entitled *The Dialectical Biologist*,<sup>41</sup> two Harvard University professors dedicated their work “to Frederick Engels, who got it wrong a lot of the time but got it right where it mattered.” This whole work is a valuable modern contribution to Marxist theory, so where did Engels ‘get it wrong’? To answer such a question, perhaps a thorough analysis of his *Origin of the Family*<sup>42</sup> from a modern anthropologist is called for ... but doubtful.

What is certainly an error on Engels’ part, but of a trivial nature that does not negate his main thesis, occurs in a little pamphlet entitled *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*. This was unfinished in 1876, but was published posthumously 20 years later, and Engels broadly shows how the transition took place, in ways that are supported by subsequent comparative skeletal studies.<sup>43</sup> (Recall if you will the fact that Engels was writing in the same times as Darwin!) Extrapolating from the fact that domesticated animals can follow simple verbal commands from humans, Engels falls into the understandable trap – common in his times – of anthropomorphism, assuming that the opportunistic mimicry by parrots, for example, implies a cultural understanding of verbal invective “as

correctly as a Berlin costermonger”, as he puts it.<sup>44</sup> What Engels would have made of a modern phenomenon, whereby starlings mimic car-theft alarms, is barely imaginable. But from what we now know of the evolutionary differences between the avian syrinx and human larynx and vocal cords, and their comparative neurology, we can see that Engels’ conclusion about mimicry was both wrong and irrelevant to his principal contributions.

In another comparable error the brilliant Marxist Politzer repeats the folkloric idea that death is a far longer process than is actually so. In *Elementary Principles of Philosophy*<sup>45</sup> and his chapter on ‘Contradiction, the Third Law of Dialectics’, Politzer writes that “the beard of a dead man continues to grow. The same is true for his nails and hair. These are clear-cut phenomena which prove that life continues after death.” We now know that in death the shrinkage of skin, due to cessation of the blood supply, gives the appearance of hair and nail growth. Actual growth ceases at death, which is certainly not an instantaneous event, but nor is it as prolonged as Politzer suggests. (In just one bodily structure, the lens of the mammalian eye, growth has ceased even before birth, and the lens is actually dying because it has no blood supply – a contributory factor in the development of cataract.)

A more recent error in our confrontation with a distorted society is the concept of ‘unipolarity’ that has crept into common usage since the implosion of the Soviet Union. Assuredly it is a term that we can emotionally understand in the wake of that upheaval, as we can well sympathise with the use of it by Fidel Castro and others. However, it remains

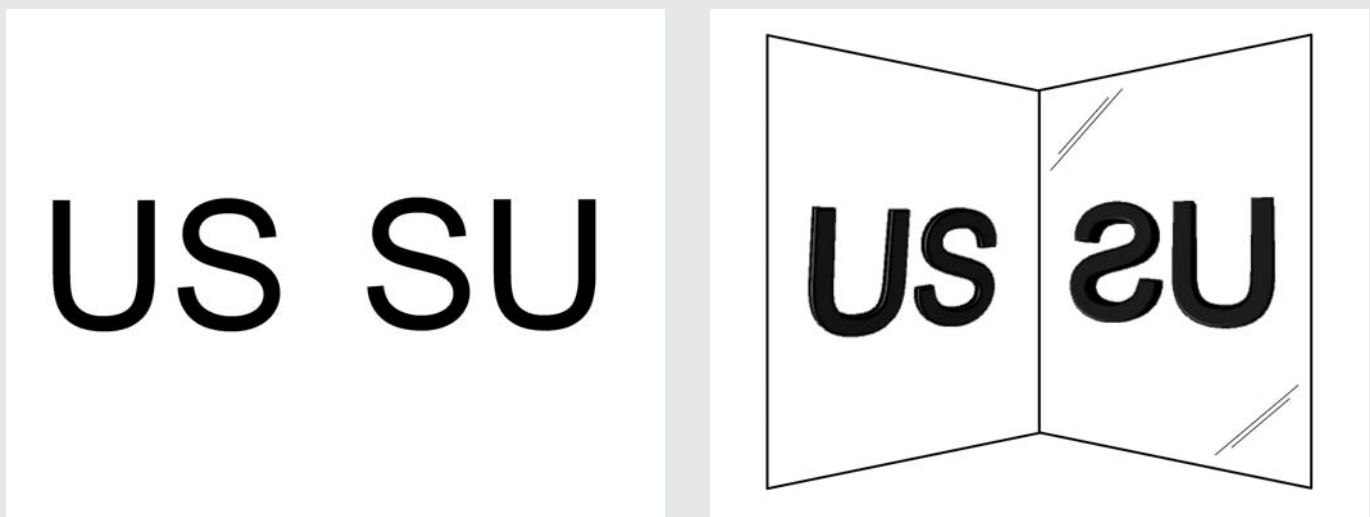


Fig 1. (left) US and SU as supposed mirror images; (right) US with correct mirror image.





Fig.2 Havana wall poster, 1977.

scientifically and technically illiterate. Any physicist, or domestic electrician, can tell us that unipolarity cannot exist: 'positive' cannot exist without 'negative'; the North pole has to have its South; and 'up' needs its 'down'. In the same way, the few 'rich' cannot exist without millions of 'poor', the one being always conditional on the other. So just when one US academic, Francis Fukuyama, declares "the end of history"<sup>46</sup> and others herald 'full-spectrum dominance' by the USA, popular resistance to this phantom of unipolarity begins to assert itself, in its simplest form merely as a scientific fact. And as the Soviet Union has imploded, so there is rising a diffuse – and as yet poorly co-ordinated – opposition to the drive of imperialism, whether that domination be as subtle ideology or as direct military action.<sup>47</sup>

### We Began...

... Part 1 with a poet who mused about illusion and reality, and we then met two enquiring minds who sought to untangle some of our perceptual confusions regarding evolution and revolution. But we also met the lesser-known Dodgson with his 'looking-glass' world. Now, in Fig 1a, we can see one contemporary relevance for his observations. In the figure, the initials US and SU are seen as direct opposites, and this is how the Soviet Union and United States were seen by many [myself included -RF] for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These opposed initials were a useful polemical device during that time, but were also highly misleading. The actual mirror image shown in Fig 1b displays a true reversal of the 'S'. So too, in that ground-breaking experiment following the destruction of tsarism, the 'soviets' – councils of workers and peasants that were a vital part of the early Bolshevik overthrow of tsarism – became distorted in the heat of a socialist crucible. Today it is fashionable to see only the failures of that first socio-economic experiment, and to forget its many achievements, like the first-ever successful challenge to the 'divine right of kings and tsars', universal suffrage at age 18, and the traumatic defeat of 20<sup>th</sup> century fascism.

Younger readers will have been acclimatised to the degenerative changes within what had begun as the world's first attempt at a scientific socialist system, and these were due to a combination of internal and external factors, of errors and pressures. So it is important to recall that deep changes have also been taking place within the US which, in contrast, resulted almost solely from the internal dynamics of the US system. To give just one overall example: although the recurrent capitalist crises stem initially from the classical conflict of overproduction/underconsumption, a large part has also been played more recently by the semi-mystical belief that money somehow reproduces itself, in an exponential cascade.

Unfortunately for the vast majority of the world's population, Marxist-Leninist principles were increasingly ignored in the arena of established 'socialism', culminating in the implosion of what had been, in its early phase, a social system that brought to a focus some of the finest aspirations and achievements of humanity. That collapse has left us a legacy that is highly complex, with more than enough negative points.

More positively, however, this three-part article has introduced several scientists and philosophers who, despite being steeped in a "dying culture" – as Christopher Caudwell<sup>48</sup> presciently called it – have managed to discard the prejudices of that society, and from their specialised knowledge are able to give us small glimpses of a more rational, and factual, world. So, since this article has given a lot of space to images in their various orientations, we'll end with an image of a wall-poster picked up on an invigorating personal visit to revolutionary Cuba in 1977. In Fig 2 the delightfully flowing image of a *machetero*, or sugar-cane cutter, is complemented with the slogan "Keep your guard up", and readers will surely comprehend that *double entendre* because, 34 years later, Cuba clearly remains true to that command.



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- 47 A scientific-technical note: the June 2011 issue of *Scientific American*, p 74, mentions 1981 Nobel Physics Prize winner Arthur Schawlow. Pioneer of the now-ubiquitous 'laser', Schawlow explained (*Scientific American*, September, 1968) how beams of light could be made so powerful. "It is as if tiny mechanical men, all wound up to a certain energy ... were successively set in motion by other marchers, and fell into step until they became an immense army marching in unison ...." This light is called 'coherent', and the implications for us all in our struggle for a better world are fairly obvious ... whatever Arthur Schawlow intended.
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**Illustrations: Orbit of Chesham, Bucks; Phillip Pennington; and from author's files. 'Neural optic pathways' as credited in Part 2, re-drawn by Orbit.**

Junk food: an irregular cartoon strip



# Crisis and the Intermediate Strata



By Peter Latham

*The main purpose of this article is to provide a holistic Marxist approach to class – with particular reference to the intermediate strata – in the context of the debate on the May 2011 Draft of Britain’s Road to Socialism and the Communist Party’s rejection of New Labour’s concept of the so-called ‘squeezed middle’. Section 1 discusses why categorisation of the intermediate strata has been one of the most controversial aspects of Marxist class theory; section 2 attempts to re-classify ‘official’ data using Marxist categories; and section 3 argues that the present crisis affects all except the super-rich and rich.*

## I. Categorisation of the Intermediate Strata

Historically, as Gawain Little points out, the categorisation of those groups not “classified either as members of the capitalist class or the working class ... has proved one of the most controversial aspects of Marxist class theory”.<sup>1</sup> For, though the concept of class is central in Marxist theory, neither Marx nor Engels expounded it in a systematic form. Engels, in the preface to *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, wrote that he had

“used the word *Mittelklasse* all along in the sense of the English word middle-class (or middle-classes, as is said almost always). Like the French word *bourgeoisie* it means the possessing class, specifically that possessing class which is differentiated from the so-called aristocracy ...”<sup>2</sup>

and he repeated this usage in *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.<sup>3</sup>

*The Manifesto of the Communist Party* refers to an increasing polarisation of bourgeois society into two great classes – the bourgeoisie or capitalists and the proletariat or working class. Conversely, in the fragment on “the three great classes of modern society” which Engels published as the final chapter of *Capital* Volume 3, Marx – using the term more in the sense of ‘petty bourgeoisie’ to designate the class or strata between the bourgeoisie and the working class – observes that:

“The owners merely of labour-power, owners of capital, and land-owners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent, in other words, wage-labourers, capitalists and land-owners, constitute then three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production.

In England, modern society is indisputably most highly and classically

developed in economic structure. Nevertheless, even here the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere (although incomparably less in rural districts than in the cities). However, this is immaterial for our analysis. We have seen that the continual tendency and law of development of the capitalist mode of production is more and more to divorce the means of production from labour, and more and more to concentrate the scattered means of production into large groups, thereby transforming labour into wage-labour and the means of production into capital. And to this tendency, on the other hand, corresponds the independent separation

of landed property from capital and labour, or the transformation of all landed property into the form of landed property corresponding to the capitalist mode of production.

The first question to be answered is this: What constitutes a class? – and the reply to this follows naturally from the reply to another question, namely: What makes wage-labourers, capitalists and landlords constitute the three great social classes?

At first glance – the identity of revenues and sources of revenue. There are three great social groups whose members, the individuals forming them, live on wages, profit and ground-rent respectively, on the realisation of their labour-power, their capital, and their landed property.



## BOOKMARK TWO

*“In Britain today, the richest 10 per cent of the population own around half of all declared personal wealth, while the poorer 50 per cent of the population own less than one-tenth of it.”*

BRS 8th edition, 2011,  
Chapter 2



Illustration from  
Hugo Gellert:  
Karl Marx 'Capital' in Lithographs

However, from this standpoint, physicians and officials, *eg*, would also constitute two classes, for they belong to two distinct social groups, the members of each of these groups receiving their revenue from one and the same source. The same would also be true of the infinite fragmentation of interest and rank into which the division of social labour splits labourers as well as capitalists and landlords – the latter, *eg*, into owners of vineyards, farm owners, owners of forests, mine owners and owners of fisheries”.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, in *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx refers explicitly to the growth of the middle class as a phenomenon of the development of capitalism:

“What [Ricardo] forgets to emphasise is the constantly growing number of the middle

classes, those who stand between the workman on the one hand and the capitalist and landlord on the other. The middle classes maintain themselves to an ever increasing extent directly out of revenue, they are a burden weighing heavily on the working base and increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand”.<sup>5</sup>

Hence such observations do not fit easily with the idea of an increasing polarisation between two great classes. And, in particular, Marx and Engels did not make a systematic distinction between the ‘old middle class’ (*ie* small producers, artisans, independent professionals, farmers and peasants) and the ‘new middle class’ (*ie* clerks, supervisors, technicians, teachers, civil servants etc).

Later Marxists have focused on two main aspects of the intermediate strata – its political orientation and numerical growth. Politically,

Marx and Engels regarded the petty bourgeoisie as conservative; and, together with the labour aristocracy, as a reformist element in workers’ movements. And Marxists in the 1920s and 1930s saw the petty bourgeoisie as the main social basis of the fascist movements – though, as Andrew Grant subsequently concluded:

“Fascism ... draws its support from demoralised working-class elements and from middle sections of the population, but it is financed and directed – ‘owned and controlled’, as it were – by monopoly capitalism. Whatever its slogans and propaganda may proclaim, fascism is directed towards smashing the trade unions and all working-class organisations .... Fascism is not a thing of the past ... it is the form which monopoly capitalism takes under particular historical conditions”.<sup>6</sup>



## BOOKMARK TWO

### Short History Of the Bourgeoisie

That was the moment when,  
without  
noticing it, for five minutes  
we were vastly rich,  
magnificent  
and electric, air-conditioned  
in July,  
or, in case it was November,  
the flown-in Finnish  
wood blazed  
in Tudor fireplaces. Funny,  
it was all there, just flew in  
by itself, as it were. Elegant  
we were, no one could  
bear us.  
We threw solo concerts  
around,  
chips, orchids in cellophane.  
Clouds  
that said, I. Unique!

Flights everywhere.  
Even our sighs  
went on credit cards.  
Like sailors  
we banded curses. Each one  
had his own misfortune under  
the seat,  
ready to grab at it.  
A waste, really.  
It was so practical. Water  
flowed out of taps just  
like that.  
Remember? Simply stunned  
by our tiny emotions,  
we ate little. If only we'd  
guessed  
that all this would pass  
in five minutes, the roast beef  
Wellington  
would have tasted different,  
quite different.

**HANS MAGNUS  
ENZENSBERGER**

In advanced capitalist countries, moreover, there is also the well known phenomenon of 'middle-class radicalism'.<sup>7</sup>

The growth in numbers of the intermediate strata has attracted the most attention. Eduard Bernstein (1899) advanced as one of the principal grounds for a revision of Marxist theory the fact that the intermediate strata do not disappear;<sup>8</sup> and the reformist Karl Renner argued that the substantial growth of the 'service class' had fundamentally changed the class structure of capitalist societies.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, according to the Marxist Harry Braverman, the intermediate strata were being proletarianised due to mechanisation of office work and "deskilling".<sup>10</sup> Around the same time, Nicos Poulantzas defined the working class as those performing productive labour (*ie* those producing surplus value) and argued that *all* white-collar employees, and *all* non-productive manual workers (*eg* dustmen and hospital porters) are part, not of the working class, but of the "new petty bourgeoisie".<sup>11</sup> On such a view, the proletariat in the United States formed less than 20% of the workforce, the "new petty bourgeoisie" some 70%. Hence, as Erik Olin Wright pointed out:

"In the end, the procedure Poulantzas adopts makes ideology itself the decisive criterion of class".<sup>12</sup>

Class is thus detached from its anchorage in the relations of production.

What is also striking is the similarity between Poulantzas' concept of class and that employed by non-Marxist sociologists. David Lockwood, for example, used Max Weber's concept of 'status', the position in the social hierarchy which individuals are perceived to occupy, in his study of clerks; and he argued that clerical

**Table 1: Occupied Population by Social Class in England, Wales and Scotland<sup>20</sup>**

	1911	1991
I Professional	1%	5%
II Managerial and Technical	13%	32%
III Skilled	37%	34%
IV Partly Skilled	39%	22%
V Unskilled	10%	6%

workers cannot be regarded as part of the proletariat because of their residually middle-class 'status situation'.<sup>13</sup> And Anthony Giddens – who subsequently coined the term 'Third Way'<sup>14</sup> – used another Weberian concept, market-capacity, to distinguish white-collar employees from the working class. White-collar employees' market capacity – the possession of educational qualifications – distinguishes their class position from both the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production, and workers, who own manual labour power.<sup>15</sup> But, as Alex Callinicos noted:

"If we accept productive labour thus conceived as defining the working class, then only wage-labourers in extractive, manufacturing, and freight industries would form the proletariat. On such a view, the working class would apparently be narrowed down to its nineteenth-century stereotype of male manual workers".<sup>16</sup>

Conversely, as Erik Olin Wright emphasised in 1978:

"Both productive and unproductive workers are exploited; both have unpaid labour extorted from them. The only difference is that in the case of productive labour, unpaid labour-time is appropriated as surplus-value; whereas in the case of

unproductive labour, unpaid labour merely reduces the costs to the capitalist of appropriating part of the surplus-value produced elsewhere. In both cases, the capitalist will try to keep the wage-bill as low as possible; in both cases the capitalist will try to increase productivity by getting workers to work harder; in both cases, workers will be dispossessed of control over their labour-process. In both cases, socialism is a prerequisite for ending exploitation. It is hard to see where a fundamental divergence of economic interests emerges from the position of unproductive and productive labour in capitalist relations of production."<sup>17</sup>

If we accept this reasoning, then we must also reject the 'narrow' definition of the proletariat as comprised only of productive workers.

However, in 1985 Olin Wright repudiated his earlier position,<sup>18</sup> basing himself on John Roemer's 1982 book which sought to detach Marx's concept of exploitation from the labour theory of value.<sup>19</sup>

### 2. Reclassification of 'Official' Data using Marxist Categories

Table 1<sup>20</sup> – based on the Registrar General's classification, which was first used in the 1911 Census and



then replaced by National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC)<sup>21</sup> in 2001 – shows that, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: professional, managerial and technical jobs (Classes I and II) increased; the proportion of skilled jobs (Class III) was largely constant; and partly skilled (Class IV) and unskilled (Class V) jobs declined, particularly in the most recent decades. And, although the changes identified are for occupations, these in turn reflected changes in industry and the sorts of job available. The most significant occupational changes have gone hand in hand with declines in traditional industries and growth in new areas, especially services and women's employment.

However, problems associated with the use of occupation as a measure of class include the following:

- Whatever occupational scale is used, the effect is to exclude members of the bourgeoisie who derive their incomes from the investment of their wealth, not from their occupation. Indeed, in some cases, these people may have no occupation.
- Although the scales may help to describe the overall class structure, sociologists aim to analyse the concept of class and the relationships among classes. Occupational scales have nothing to say about the extent to which relationships among classes are based upon conflict or upon consensus or about the importance of class consciousness.
- In some cases, occupations may be assigned to a relatively high occupational group

although income earned in the occupation may be relatively low, eg clergy and social workers.

- The schemes cannot distinguish effectively between single income and double income families. If a couple are both in paid employment, they and their children may enjoy a relatively high standard of living even if they are both in a relatively 'low class' occupation.

In Table 2, therefore, I have reclassified the 2009 official data<sup>22</sup> based on the NS-SEC, using basic Marxist categories and what in my view is still consistent with the labour theory of value in Olin Wright's approach. That is, the three basic class positions are: bourgeoisie/capitalists; petty bourgeoisie/intermediate

strata; and proletariat/working class (including the reserve army of labour). Senior managers and officials are located around the margins of the bourgeoisie. However they are denied full membership of the bourgeoisie by the limited extent of their property ownership – although some chief executives of major companies tend to form an alliance with the ruling class, due to the rewards of their position and their ownership of stock options. Small employers, self-employed professional and 'own account' workers are also intermediate strata with contradictory class locations. For, as the new edition of the Communist Party of Britain's (CPB) programme *Britain's Road to Socialism (BRS)* states:

"Self-employed workers who own their own means of production, alongside small business owners – including small farmers – who employ little or no labour, are part of the intermediate strata. They are neither in the capitalist class nor working class. While they are not exploited as workers, neither do they profit primarily from the labour of others".<sup>23</sup>

Within the working class higher professional workers, lower managerial and professional workers and lower supervisory and technical workers are all semi-autonomous wage earners with varying degrees of control over the direction of their work and control of others.

### 3. Crisis for All except the Super-rich and Rich

According to Philip Beresford's *Sunday Times* Rich List 2011:

"Britain's super-rich are making light of the age of austerity, achieving an 18 per cent rise in

**Table 2: Reclassification of 2009 Official Data<sup>21,i</sup> using Marxist Categories**

<b>Bourgeoisie/capitalists</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Petty bourgeoisie/intermediate strata with contradictory class locations</b>	<b>15%</b>
<i>Senior managers and officials<sup>ii</sup></i>	7%
<i>Small employers,<sup>iii</sup> self-employed professional and 'own account' workers<sup>iv</sup></i>	8%
<b>Proletariat/working class</b>	<b>84%</b>
<i>Higher professional workers<sup>v</sup>(SA<sup>vi</sup>)</i>	6%
<i>Lower managerial and professional workers<sup>vii</sup>(SA<sup>vi</sup>)</i>	22%
<i>Lower supervisory and technical workers<sup>viii</sup>(SA<sup>vi</sup>)</i>	8%
<i>Intermediate workers<sup>ix</sup></i>	9%
<i>Semi-routine workers<sup>x</sup></i>	12%
<i>Routine workers<sup>xi</sup></i>	9%
<i>Reserve army of labour<sup>xii</sup></i>	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

i Population living in private households. Excludes those who did not state their current or last occupation and those who had not worked in the last eight years. Men aged 16-64 and women age 16-59.

ii Eg directors and chief executives of major companies and senior officials in local government.

iii People – other than higher or lower professionals with fewer than 25 employees – most of whom have only one or two, or at most ten employees, eg self-employed builders, hairdressers and shopkeepers.

iv 'Traditional' self-employed professionals, 'new' self-employed professionals and 'own account workers' (ie self-employed positions in which people are engaged in any non-professional trade, personal service, or semi-routine, routine or other occupation but have no employees other than family workers).

v Eg doctors, dentists, professors, professional engineers, clergy, and social workers.

vi Semi-autonomous wage earners.

vii Eg school teachers and nurses.

viii Eg employed plumbers or electricians and supervisors who have formal and immediate supervision over semi-routine and routine workers.

ix Eg airline cabin crew, secretaries, fire fighters and auxiliary nurses.

x Eg shop assistants, call centre workers and care assistants.

xi Eg cleaners and refuse collectors.

xii Never worked, unemployed and not classified elsewhere. People unemployed for less than one year are classified according to their previous occupation.



**Table 3: Low-to-Middle Earner Employees by Occupational Category: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland 2008/09<sup>34</sup>**

	Number (1000s)	% of all employees in occupation	% of all low-earner employees
Elementary occupations	1,370	54%	17%
Skilled trades occupations	1,230	41%	15%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	1,010	34%	12%
Personal service occupations	980	45%	12%
Process, plant and machinery operatives	910	48%	11%
Sales and customer service occupations	880	51%	11%
Associate professional and technical occupations	830	21%	10%
Managers and senior officials	690	17%	8%
Professional occupations	410	11%	5%
<b>Total employees</b>	<b>8,300</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>100%</b>

their collective wealth over the past year. Together the 1,000 multimillionaires ... are £60.2 billion better off than they were in 2010. They are now worth a total of £395.8 billion – within striking distance of their all-time pre-recession high of £413 billion, set in 2008 .... On the other hand, nobody can deny that the rest of the ... population ... are experiencing real hardship. Those on the left of the political spectrum may argue that this ... rise in the fortunes of the super-rich is just what is needed to fill some of the ... gaps in public spending<sup>24</sup>.

Half of the six richest high street bankers are with Barclays – Roger Jenkins, £150m; Bob Diamond, £102m; and Rich Ricci £54m.<sup>25</sup> This year, there is also a record haul of hedge fund managers, commodity traders and the like: 55 in all, or 5.5 per cent of the total Rich List, led by Nat Rothschild whose fortune has shot up to £1 bn – a 203% increase from £330m in 2010.<sup>26</sup> Yet, taking all the collective wealth of these 55 – £12.6 bn – would cover just over a month of the Treasury's

borrowing requirement of £139.4 bn for 2010/11.<sup>27</sup> Hence the need, as the Communist Party of Britain argues, for:

- a 2% wealth tax on the richest 10% of the population who own 44% of Britain's wealth, including private pension wealth, estimated to be £9 trillion (revenue £78 bn a year);
- a 20% windfall tax on the super-profits of banking, energy, retail, arms and drug monopolies (revenue £16 bn);
- a 'Robin Hood' tax on City transactions (revenue £20 bn a year);
- ending tax dodging by the super-rich and big business (revenue £70 bn a year);
- repayment of money owed by bailed-out banks (£131 bn).<sup>28</sup>

Such measures, if implemented, would not only close the deficit within five years: but also enable expenditure on public services to be increased – not slashed.

The 2011 *BRS* also proposes to "Replace the council tax by local income, wealth, land and property taxes based clearly on the ability to pay".<sup>29</sup> Thus in Britain – where 0.3% of the adult population own 69% of the land, worth an estimated £5 trillion – a land value tax (LVT) levied at 1%, instead of

the regressive council tax, stamp duty land tax and national non-domestic rates, could raise £50 bn a year (*ie* twice the estimated amount raised by the council tax in 2009/10). Only freeholders and landlords, moreover, would pay LVT; and the owners of large estates would pay more because their acreage is greater than that of a semi-detached house, and they often own valuable sites in town and city centres.<sup>30</sup> In addition, as Jerry Jones has shown, LVT would avoid the main shortcomings of a local income tax (LIT), which would be more complex and costly to collect – especially if it included unearned income not covered by PAYE, due to so many people living in a local jurisdiction different from where they work; and LIT would also be inequitable because of the large difference between mean or average income in more affluent areas and in poor areas.<sup>31</sup>

The CPB's Campaign Plan adopted by the Executive Committee on 9 January 2011 emphasised the need to combat "false-consciousness notions of 'Middle England'" and "the so-called 'squeezed middle'".<sup>32</sup> The Resolution Foundation – whose Commission on Living Standards includes the great and the good of state monopoly capitalism and finance capital<sup>33</sup> – in November 2010 defined the

'squeezed middle' as the 11m low-to-middle earners (LMEs) in households with incomes in the range £12,000-£30,000, usually in work and with relatively little income sourced from the state; and they excluded households that receive more than one fifth of their income from means-tested benefits, and the retired.

Table 3 – based on the Resolution Foundation's analysis<sup>34</sup> of the Department for Work and Pensions' *Family Resources Survey 2008-09* – sets out the distribution of LME employees in 2008-09 by occupation level. Of the 8.3m employees identified, 1.4m were categorised as working in elementary occupations, 1.2m in skilled trades and 1.0m in administrative and secretarial occupations. LMEs were over-represented in elementary, sales and customer service, and process, plant and machinery occupations. They were under-represented in professional occupations, managers and senior officials, and associate professional and technical occupations. Furthermore, the Resolution Foundation concluded that average LME household earnings will in real terms be £720 lower in 2012 than in 2009 (when their average gross earnings were £19,500), due to:

- an *earnings crunch* – driven by unemployment and cuts in working hours in the public sector and by weak labour market recovery in the private sector;
- a *cost of living crunch* – driven by permanent global pressures on the cost of essential items such as food and fuel, by the VAT increase, by increases in the costs of public transport, by the continued shortage of suitable housing supply and by the likely introduction of higher user-charges for a number of public services;
- a *tax-benefit crunch* – driven by withdrawal

of various forms of financial support for working families, particularly tax credits; and

- pressures on access to services – driven by permanent reductions in state funding for social goods.<sup>35</sup>

Following the Budget Gavin Kelly – Resolution’s Chief Executive – showed the staggering impact on a few hypothetical but fairly typical working-age families due to falling real wages, last year’s Budget, the Spending Review and this year’s Budget: see Table 4.<sup>36</sup>

The severity of the living standards crunch, as Table 5

shows,<sup>37</sup> will vary not just according to household-type; it will also play out differently across localities and regions – though the exact nature of this variation represents an important gap in our knowledge. But analysis of the trends in regional disposable income that existed prior to the recession – based on Office of National Statistics data – reveals that disposable incomes fell from 2003 to 2008 in every English region outside London (and we should bear in mind that these grisly data provide an overly optimistic picture, particularly in London, as they are based on mean rather than median income).<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, median wages stagnated in advanced capitalist countries before

**Table 4: Reduction in Household Incomes<sup>36</sup>**

Family unit	2011 household earnings	Tax Year	Real wage impact	Pre-announced tax and benefit impact	Budget 2011 impact	Balance
Couple with 1 earner and 3 children	£45,000	2011/12	-£992	-£652	nil	-£1,644
		2012/13	-£1,035	-£1,443	+£1	-£2,477
Couple with 2 earners and 2 children	£39,000	2011/12	-£860	-£2,323	nil	-£3,183
		2012/13	-£897	-£2,204	+£75	-£3,026
Working single parent with 2 children	£28,000	2011/12	-£617	-£1,452	nil	-£2,069
		2012/13	-£644	£1,373	+£38	-£1,979
Couple with 2 earners and no children	£19,500	2011/12	-£430	+£298	nil	-£132
		2012/13	-£449	+£367	+£38	-£44

**Table 5: Percent Changes in Real Disposable Income by ‘Region’ 2003/08<sup>37</sup>**

East	-4.1
Yorkshire and Humberside	-3.5
West Midlands	-3.2
South East	-2.7
South West	-2.2
East Midlands	-2.2
North West	-2.0
North East	-1.8
London	+3.9
England	-1.5
Wales	-0.8
Scotland	2.1
Northern Ireland	3.9
<b>UK average</b>	<b>-1.1</b>

Boote also rejects the term 'squeezed middle' – which the Labour Party defines as anyone on an annual income of between £16,000 and £50,000 – because: (a) it includes nearly all households except those in “the bottom two and top two income deciles”; and (b) “it is not clear that the ‘squeezed middle’ is in fact any more squeezed than other groups of households”.<sup>45</sup> However, both the Resolution Foundation and Boote analyses fail to acknowledge that the poorest 10% will be hit 15 times harder than the richest 10% due to the service cuts announced in last year's Budget and the Comprehensive Spending Review.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore Ed Miliband – instead of focusing on the so-called 'squeezed middle', the need for a 'better capitalism'<sup>47</sup> and on avoiding the 'politics of protest' (as urged by Olaf Cramme, director of the Policy Network founded by Peter Mandelson<sup>48</sup>) – needs to recognise that it was working-class solidarity that won the reinstatement of RMT activist Eamonn Lynch, a 10% pay rise from Network Rail and the Unite cabin crew victory.<sup>49</sup> For, as Guy Standing argues, “the mainstream left in Britain and Europe” now has “no progressive agenda”; and “should dispense with notions of the ‘squeezed middle’”, which “is another refusal by the lukewarm left to confront structures of inequality ...”<sup>50</sup> Moreover, as the 2011 *BRS* argues, there needs to be a strategy based on building an alliance of all those sections which can be won to oppose the interests of monopoly capital. The programme further envisages that this “popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance”, based on the organised working class and fighting for a Left Wing Programme, will seek to unite a range of progressive movements and sections of society opposed to specific aspects of state monopoly capitalism – such as the 17%

of senior managers and officials who are low-to-middle earners, small employers, self-employed professional and 'own account' workers, upon whom the impact of the crisis is similar to that for the working class itself.

Finally, as the Indian Marxist Prabhat Patnaik notes, the nature of the crisis in the advanced capitalist countries “is primarily a crisis of insufficiency of aggregate demand”, whereas in low income countries such as India “impoverishment of the peasants and petty producers ... takes centre stage”.<sup>51</sup> Hence “class alliances behind the struggle” are “different in the two theatres”: in advanced capitalist countries “the working class, the immigrants, the so-called ‘under-class’, together with the white-collar employees and the urban middle class, will combine to provide resistance, as is happening in Greece, France, Ireland and Britain – though ... there is a parallel growth of fascism promoted by finance capital that seeks to thwart and disrupt this resistance”. Whereas in India, it is the peasants, petty producers, agricultural labourers, marginalised sections (like the tribal people and dalits), and the working class “that combine to provide the resistance, while segments of the urban middle class ... who benefit from the high growth ushered in by globalisation ... for the time being become followers of the big bourgeoisie and financial interests”.

■ *A revised version of a paper given at the seminar on 'Aspects of Capitalist Crisis', convened by the Communist Party of Britain's Economic Committee at the Marx Memorial Library on 14 May 2011. The revisions take into account comments made during and after the seminar plus relevant subsequently published research, articles and reports.*<sup>52</sup>

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35 *Ibid*, p 9.

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38 For example, if five people earn £10,000, £15,000, £30,000, £40,000 and £2,000,000 annually, their average or mean earnings (*ie* their total earnings [£2,095,000] divided by the number of earners [5]) are £419,000. In a median measurement, the data are arranged from lowest to highest; and the middle number in the data set is the median. In this example, the median earnings are £30,000. Hence the mean is affected by data that are far removed from the median.

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56.6% in the public sector (see Latham, *op cit*, p 391).

43 Plunkett, *op cit*, p 22. These trends, according to Plunkett, are also reinforced in the advanced capitalist countries because "many of the lowest skilled jobs are highly *difficult* to automate, for example roles in personal service, such as cleaning and hospitality. In contrast with earlier periods, the most routine, 'automatable' jobs now appear to be clustered around the middle of the skill distribution, in administrative white-collar work and skilled manufacturing. With high-skilled jobs, in knowledge-intensive industries, also proving relatively immune to automation, middle-skill jobs are the most exposed." (p 24, his emphasis.)

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## Discussion: Draft Britain's Road to Socialism

# The Roadblocks to Scaling the Heights of Monopoly Capitalism

By Robert Wilkinson



COMRADE TOM BURR'S response<sup>1</sup> to Gawain Little's article<sup>2</sup> on the new draft of *Britain's Road to Socialism* fails to recognise the changes that have taken place in British society during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is dangerously misleading in pointing to a direction of travel for the Communist Party in the 21<sup>st</sup>.

His advocacy of a strategy that limits us to the 'industrial working class' (apparently defined in the same way as it might have been when Marx and Engels wrote the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in 1848) is a recipe for continual decline and marginalisation of communism in Britain. This is not just a matter of appreciating the arguments contained in the Volume 3 of *Capital* but also of there needing to be a wider recognition of how far Marx (and especially Engels after Marx's death) understood that the composition and essential nature of the proletariat was changing as capitalism developed into its monopoly (and eventually imperialist) period.

Above all we have to appreciate how capitalism's necessary transformation into state-monopoly capitalism has changed the economic and hence political nature of our task in achieving social revolution. As Marx wrote:<sup>3</sup>

"The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers – a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity – which

reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state". [my emphasis –RW]

### Another Flight From Reality

Comrade Burr's analysis is reminiscent of Lin Biao's *Long Live the Victory of People's War!*<sup>4</sup> in its exhortation of the struggle of the masses in the Third World in bringing about the downfall of capitalist imperialism. Necessary as these struggles are in achieving the possibility of liberating social transformations in those countries and weakening imperialism in the process, they cannot be sufficient by themselves alone to destroy the capitalist world system. Only in conjunction with mass struggles in the capitalist heartlands will the threat of imperialist intervention be removed (even if temporarily).

It is in our own interests to give support to the anti-imperialist struggle and not something that would have the effect of reducing the living standards of the workers in the 'metropolitan' countries as Comrade Burr implies. Of course it is in monopoly capitalism's interest to increase "competition from the Third World and from immigrant workers"<sup>1</sup> but it is precisely because of this that we need to fight as communists alongside those social forces that are the victims of such a policy. Our participation in the No2EU campaign and the struggle against the implications of the Mode 4 agreements<sup>5</sup> is vital in constructing an anti-monopoly alliance with those sections of the bourgeoisie, intermediate strata and the sectors of the working class who might otherwise turn to extreme right-wing parties for their salvation.

Basing the existence of the Communist Party in Britain solely upon the *industrial* working class carries a similar danger of handing whole sections of society over to the bourgeois parties. If we fail to accept that "probably 90% of

the population, including public sector workers, students, lecturers, city workers etc"<sup>1</sup> are component sectors of the working class, then we are failing to recognise reality as well as the potential strength of a united working class.

The existence of the unionisation of these sectors, and the need to spread union organisation even further into these newly emerging 'industries', is a source of strength for the road to socialism and not something that "leads to confusion and lack of clarity on day-today issues". It is likely that it is precisely these sections of the union movement that will have made the initial challenge to the destructive policies of the coalition government.

The most dangerous assertion contained in comrade Burr's article is that "vast numbers of wage-earners [are] now employed assisting in one way or another, the capitalist class in the plunder of the Third World". It is totally disarming the working class struggle for socialism to argue as he does that "in the event of a socialist revolution they would lose their jobs and suffer horribly – and they therefore have a vested interest in maintaining the capitalist system".

This kind of argument is a gift to the conservative and reactionary political parties and needs to be countered in the strongest possible terms if we are to have any prospect of moving along a road to socialism rather than waiting "till the end of a world-wide revolutionary process before we get our socialism" as Comrade Burr predicts, "because of the class make-up in Britain".

### Not Just Hewers of Wood and Bearers of Water

There needs to be recognition of the essential impact that the development of skill within the working class has had on increasing the productivity of labour power. In addition, it is essential that we appreciate that labour power is itself a commodity whose value is increased by the application of the labour power of others, who are themselves producing surplus value in the

process. The value of any product (including labour power) is according to the socially necessary labour time expended upon it. Therefore the acquisition of skills will make the labour power more valuable and hence require a higher wage in return.

“Other distinctions, for instance those in the wage-scale, rest largely on the difference between simple and complicated labour ... and have nothing to do with the intensity of exploitation in the different spheres of production, although they render the lot of the labourer in those spheres very unequal. For instance, if the labour of a goldsmith is better paid than that of a day labourer, the former’s surplus labour also produces a proportionately more surplus value than the latter’s.”<sup>6</sup>

The capitalist does not employ skilled workers, who require a higher wage, out of a sense of altruism but from recognition that skilled labour power is more productive of surplus value. This may well have the result that the highly skilled worker is more exploited than those with a lower level of skill. The development of public health and education systems are not only to the benefit of the proletariat but are recognised by the capitalists as being beneficial for the increased exploitation of labour power, especially if the workers can be obliged to finance their own mental and physical improvement, either individually or collectively through taxation.

The development of the Welfare State is not something that has been financed by the super-profits of imperialism but is financed from the vastly increased productivity of the highly skilled and educated proletariat. But this increased productivity leads to its own downfall as capitalism enters yet another crisis of overproduction. It is evident that these crises of capitalism have become increasingly ones of the overproduction of labour power, especially in terms of the education and health of that labour power. Both the quantity and quality of that labour power have become surplus to their requirements. Yet living human capital cannot be so easily destroyed as it has the capacity of thought and political organisation.

### **(Unless We Adapt to Changes in our Environment) Ask Not For Whom The Bell Tolls**

Not only do we need to recognise that those sectors of the proletariat who refine labour power to make it more productive

are genuine members of the working class with just as much interest in the overthrow of capitalism. We also have to appreciate that those sectors of the working class who deal with the effective organisation, distribution and management of commodities (including yet again labour power itself) are themselves productive of surplus value in terms of the difference between the (relatively high) cost of their production and the exchange value of the work that they perform. Badly organised productive processes are wasteful both of accumulated and living labour time.

This makes these sectors of the working class extremely valuable for the capitalists as they have learned to appreciate that these highly trained and competent managers are better able to operate the capitalist enterprises than they are themselves. Their performance is however carefully scrutinised in the form of share prices, market dominance and yields on investments.

Nonetheless it is essential to recognise that these sectors also have a necessary role in the construction of socialism (especially in its earliest stages). Both Molotov in the USSR and Zhou En-lai in China appreciated the necessity of effective organisation and management of the productive process. However much the ultra-Left denounce this as the growth of ‘bureaucracy’ strangling the revolution, it is as necessary as the existence of professional armed forces – and just as necessary to ensure that it is kept under political direction.

It is the recognition of the role of these sectors of the working class that will enable us to ensure an effective transition to socialism and not drive them into the arms of our opponents. Comrade Burr is not just stuck in the past but would confine us to a ghetto of increasing irrelevance.

The stakes are too high for us to simply repeat the old shibboleths. That is the road to destruction despite the good intentions of its proponents.

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### **Notes and References**

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- 5 See <http://no2eu.com/hp-article2.html> –Ed.
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## Letter to the Editor

**From David Grove**

In *CR60*, pp 28-9, Martin Levy rightly listed some of the errors in Marxist theory that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. He presents these as additional factors to the structural weaknesses. But surely the structural weaknesses made theoretical errors more likely. I’m thinking in particular of the identification of Party and state, which made it difficult for the Party leadership to analyse independently the problems of building socialism, and to develop policies that the Party and the working class could promote within the state organs. This seems to have been associated with a decline in collective leadership. I was struck by the way that Keeran and Kenny<sup>1</sup> attributed the theoretical mistakes largely to Krushchev, and made much of what Andropov (pictured below) might have achieved had he lived. Cult of the individual?



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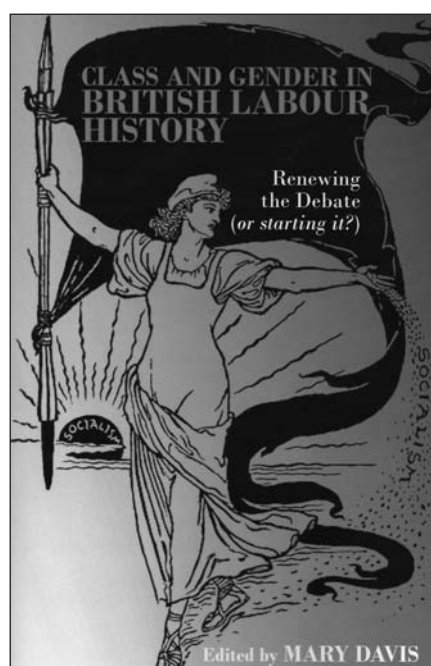
BOOK REVIEW

# Rediscovering working women's participation in the making of the British working class

Review by Liz Payne

THE CONTRIBUTION of women, collectively and individually, to the shaping and development of both the labour movement and the working class as a whole is rarely reflected quantitatively or qualitatively in the pages of history. Working class women have been variously written out of history, air-brushed from specific narratives, attributed only marginal roles, shown as passive recipients of a 'lot' that is dealt to them, portrayed as dependent on the support and leadership of 'middle class' women and men of all classes, and cast as powerless victims. *Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or starting it?)*, a collection of essays introduced and edited by Mary Davis, seeks to challenge this portrayal and rediscover working women actively shaping, developing, organising and participating fully "in the making and re-making of the working class" (p 26).

Twelve women academics have contributed to this volume. Their work portrays the experience, activity and achievements of working women in a variety of workplace and campaigning settings from 1820 onwards. Through its pages we encounter young female match-workers in east London, women worsted workers in Bradford, clothing workers in Leeds, black women employed as domestic servants and female building workers in a heavily male-dominated industry. We meet women who, in the



face of exploitation, poverty and oppression, articulated their needs and demands, challenged employers, engaged in protests and strikes, formed trade unions and political organisations and influenced their workplaces and wider communities.

In introducing the collection, Mary Davis makes it clear that "within the field of labour history, we *have* to write about class because we are concerned with workers". It follows that the issue of women must therefore be "theorised in the context of class". Then, when labour history is reclaimed for women, as in this work, it is done so for the working class as a whole. In her own essay, *The Making of the English Working Class Revisited: Labour History and Marxist Theory*, Davis provides a theoretical framework, rooted in Marxist class analysis, in which questions of gender, class and their interconnectivity can be considered, developed and understood.

## Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or starting it?)

Edited by MARY DAVIS  
(Merlin Press, Pontypool, 2011, 240 pp, pbk, £16.95. ISBN 978-0850-36668-6)

Contributions are then grouped into three sections. In the first, 'Women and Work', Sian Moore considers gender and class consciousness in industrialisation in the first half of the nineteenth century; Katrina Honeyman and Sheila Blackburn each contribute a fresh look at women in sweated trades; Linda Clarke and Christine Wall write jointly on the exclusion of women from the construction industry; and Caroline Bressey uses new evidence to examine the experience of black women at work. Each brings a fresh insight into the lives and conditions of the women concerned and is interesting in its own right. However, these chapters also provide an excellent background against which to view the trade union and political activities of working women examined in the rest of the book.

The second section, 'Women and Trade Unions', is opened by Gerry Holloway, who looks at class issues in the early British trade union movement, skilfully relating lessons learned to the needs and experiences of women in the trade unions at the present time. Louise Raw revisits the Bryant and May strike of 1888: she challenges the erstwhile propounded myth that Annie Besant, not a factory worker but a Fabian journalist, organised and led the action, and provides for the first time a well-documented chronology testifying to the determination, actions and influence of

## BOOKMARK THREE

the factory women themselves and the inspiration they provided for workers initiating subsequent industrial action, including the soon-to-follow London dock strike. In the final contribution to this section, Cathy Hunt reflects on the work of the National Federation of Women Workers from its foundation in 1906 to 1914, as it sought to “strengthen women’s organisation”; and she suggests that researchers move beyond appraisal of its key figures and consider more deeply the role of its local and national organisers and the women who joined and became active within it.

The last section contains two essays under the heading ‘Women and Politics’. Sheila Rowbotham revisits the case of Derby anti-war activist, Alice Wheeldon, accused of conspiring to murder Lloyd George, and imprisoned. Rowbotham demonstrates how effectively fresh perspectives on radical movements can be gained when the focus is not directed solely on the history of organisations but on the networks and relationships of those involved. Annmarie Hughes chooses a hitherto largely under-researched area, the involvement of Scottish women in the labour movement in the inter-war years. She demonstrates clearly that women’s political activity contributed not only to securing better health, housing and welfare provision at the time, but also to the future development of the broader labour movement and, through persistent challenging of the sexual division of labour, the feminism movement also.

This book is not only of interest to researchers and activists for its historical content and for the stimulus it provides to reconsider both the gender and class experience of working women and the inextricable interrelationship of the two. It also demonstrates how researchers are using new evidence, reflecting on ‘old’ sources in new ways and finding new angles to explore. In short, it reminds us afresh of the vibrancy of history and methodology and how much we can learn when we challenge and reappraise ‘received’ history, especially women’s history.

If there is one criticism to be made, it is that we do not see working women in

their homes, families and communities and there is no deep sense of their double exploitation through paid work and as the unpaid labourers on whom capitalism depends. This would have been useful background but, equally importantly, would have drawn attention to the potential of women to socialise and influence working people of both sexes and develop and promote gender and class understanding and activity in settings other than work.

It is a pity that the work contains frequent errors and inconsistencies that are unnecessarily distracting for the reader and could have been avoided through more careful proof-reading. Examples include a missing section heading (‘Women and Trade Unions’ in the ‘Contents’ section), inconsistent capitalisation between the headings on the ‘Contents’ pages and the headings in the main text, the misspelling of Emma Paterson’s surname (p 139) and inconsistency of dates in the headings of two essays, those of Moore (pp 5 and 30) and Honeyman (pp 5 and 55). A journal is referred to variously as ‘*The Link*’, ‘the *Link*’, ‘the Link’ and ‘the link’ (pp 151-170).

It is also to be regretted that the chosen font is Times New Roman, one of the less accessible options. Section headings in the main body of the book, rather than in the Contents section only, would have provided greater clarity for the reader and an index would have been a very useful addition for readers wishing to revisit particular texts or themes.

These matters aside, this is a highly recommended read. Its publication is timely. Women are being drawn into labour movement activity in growing numbers, and many for the first time, as they experience the full force of cuts to jobs, benefits, pensions and the services on which they depend. It is important for the labour movement and the working class as a whole to understand the full potential of working women to challenge present conditions and shape the future. If this is to happen, reclamation of the past has a large part to play and this book makes an important contribution. It is to be hoped that much similar research will be undertaken and disseminated.

*“The Party  
also seeks  
to organise  
itself in every  
major area  
of economic,  
social, cultural  
and political  
struggle”*

BRS 8th edition, 2011,  
Chapter 4



Illustration from  
Hugo Gellert:  
Karl Marx ‘Capital’ in Lithographs



## BOOKMARK THREE

### He Wouldn't Want An Elegy

and as for poetry  
he'd want it plain

he'd want it plain and simple  
and outspoken as the rain

he wouldn't want it dressed up  
in a party frock of words  
with lots of frilly metaphors  
he'd want it to be heard

he'd want it writing slogans  
of solidarity  
with men who honour labour  
and fight for Unity

he'd want it kicking arses  
of the mob who make the rules  
who starve and maim and plunder,  
put power in hands of fools  
he'd want it bold as thunder  
and outspoken as the rain

he'd want it  
marching, marching  
on the citadels of power  
he'd want to hear it roar  
against greed and its profanity  
ROAR until all humanity  
joins hands in solidarity  
with eyes as sharp as lightning  
with voices bold as thunder  
and dancing in the rain

**CHRYS SALT**

CUT AND KEEP



## BOOK REVIEW

# A Celebration: 40 Years on

Review by Margaret Levy

## A Rose Loupt Oot: Poetry and Song Celebrating the UCS Work-in

Edited by DAVID BETTERIDGE  
(Smokestack Books, 2011, 140 pp, pbk,  
£8.95. ISBN: 978-0-9564175-0-3)

### A Rose Loupt Oot



Poetry and Song Celebrating the UCS Work-in

FORTY YEARS AGO a Tory government decided to seriously undermine shipbuilding on the Clyde. A previous Labour government had created Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, combining four yards into one enterprise. The Tory move was almost certainly ideological – they did not like the fact that UCS had received help from the government. No doubt they were also aware that union organisation was strong and thought they could break it. Just how strong they would soon find out. The workers decided to fight the threatened closure with a work-in, a struggle which ended successfully some 15 months later.

Since then much has been written about the UCS work-in. Indeed this little book gives comprehensive directions to further reading. There is a difference here, though. As the sub-title says, this is a collection of poetry and song and a celebration. In fact it is more than that because there are cartoons and photographs too and some personal accounts showing the wit and humour of

the people involved in the work-in and their supporters.

Initial support came from the local communities who depended on the yards for a living. The news soon spread, though, and support began to come in from the rest of the country and internationally. On holiday in the GDR in September 1971, I reported to the local police station to show my passport, issued in Glasgow, and the young policeman immediately mentioned UCS.

Often culture is forgotten in the grind of the daily struggle or in analysing the political lessons to be learned from it. However, culture is important both for its ability to give warmth and heart to that daily grind and for its concrete contribution to the struggle. The songs come from a wide range of people, mainly working in the folk tradition: Danny Kyle, Arthur Johnstone, Dick Gaughan, Matt McGinn, Jimmy Macgregor, Geordie McIntyre, Iain Ingram, Jim McLean, Leo Coyle, Danny Couper, Tony McCarthy and that old stalwart Anon. Some were

# from the UCS Work-In

current at the time and some have been written specially for this volume.

Some of the songs will be familiar to readers, even 40 years on, but the poems are less likely to be so. This is partly because poetry is often regarded by working class people, even political activists, as not being for them. This material rewards study. By and large it is engaged, not “dressed up/in a party frock of words/with lots of frilly metaphors”. Two examples are printed in this issue that give a flavour of the material. As with the songs some were written at the time (and the poets are no longer with us) and some were written for this volume by poets still working today. Poets are Jackie Kay, Chrys Salt, Donna Franceschild, Jim Aitken, Freddie Anderson, Gerda Stevenson, Bill Sutherland, Aonghas MacNeacail (whose poem is printed in the original Gaelic with an English translation alongside), Tessa Ransford, Edwin Morgan, David Betteridge, Brian Whittingham, Alistair

Findlay, Danny McCafferty, Peter Scrimgeour, George McEwan.

The book is well researched although the editor acknowledges that there may be more stories to tell. It was a labour of love and the researchers ran out of time and money to try to find more recollections. And of course after 40 years many of the participants are no longer with us, highlighting the need to keep records and take down stories while we still can. Working class history is not usually recorded in the history books. Working class people and organisations need to gather the accounts themselves and keep them safe. The existence of special collections of material in university libraries relating to the work-in was clearly helpful.

The quality of the poems and songs varies as is to be expected. Many of them were written in the heat of the struggle for a particular purpose – say a demonstration or a benefit concert. Their passion is never in doubt. Others

are more reflective, especially those written recently. They tell parts of this story and other working class stories before and since. The UCS work-in was not an isolated struggle.

The two sections introducing the songs and poems respectively give some necessary context and background. They are well written and knowledgeable.

Some minor criticisms or quibbles: for non-Scots readers a glossary would be useful (perhaps even for some Scots readers). There is at least one name spelled incorrectly (Willie McInnes – not McGinnes). The words of the Chartist hymn called *God Save the People* written by Ebenezer Elliott were used in *Godspell*. The original tune was by Josiah Booth and may have been used for *God Save the Shipyards*. The Glasgow YCL Choir had sung the song to its original tune before the advent of *Godspell*.

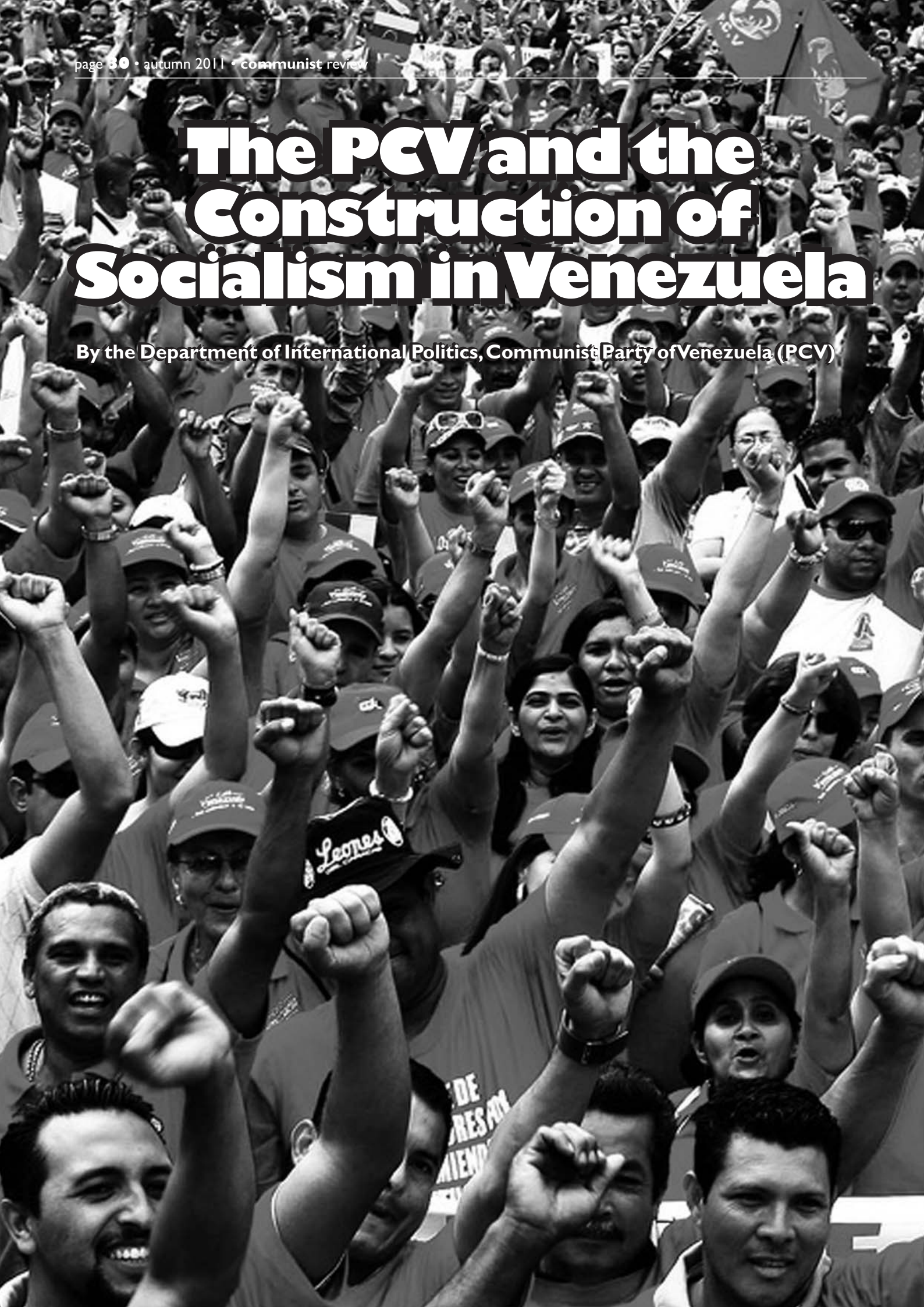
I strongly recommend this work. It is a partisan account, and none the worse for that.



UCS joint shop stewards' leader Jimmy Reid addressing shipyard workers

# The PCV and the Construction of Socialism in Venezuela

By the Department of International Politics, Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV)





CURRENTLY, in Bolivarian Venezuela, there is an intense debate about the theory and practice of socialism, which the Communist Party of Venezuela welcomes and to which it is seeking to contribute. Throughout the twentieth century, the oligarchy in power and their real masters, the US monopolies, strove in vain to divert our people from the socialist road.

On 5 March 1931 the first communist cell in the country was founded in Caracas, marking the birth of the Communist Party of Venezuela. This event took place during one of the fiercest dictatorships known in Latin America, that of Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935). At that time, being a communist was considered treason under the constitution, and the crime of 'communism' was punishable with 20 years' imprisonment. There is no doubting the courage, conviction and commitment to the revolution of those comrades who decided to found the PCV.

The PCV has now undergone 80 years of hard struggle – during which time its members have suffered unjust imprisonment, torture chambers, secrecy and illegality – while applying the teachings of Marxism-Leninism in our national life, in order to transform it into a society of full freedom and rights for the oppressed and exploited working people. In the collective building of socialist ideas, the following ideological issues have been and are important in Venezuelan society.

## 1. The Concept of National Liberation

Lenin showed<sup>1</sup> that “diverse forms of dependent countries which, politically, are formally independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence” are typical of the epoch of imperialism. At the same time, he stated that imperialism is, in the political field, “a striving for annexations ... towards violence and reaction”.<sup>2</sup> And the leader of the world proletariat warned that the savagery in the search for sources of raw materials and the export of capital leads capitalism to the “conquest of colonies”.<sup>3</sup>

The Venezuelan people have suffered directly from imperialist oppression, the plundering of their resources and the imposition of tyrannical regimes that were at the service of foreign monopolies. In the 1930s and 40s thousands of workers, employed by the Lago Petroleum Company (LPC) of the Rockefellers and

the Venezuelan Oil Concession (VOC) of Morgan and Mellon, experienced low pay, humiliation, cramped living conditions, summary dismissal, torture by Gomez's police, and even death by malaria or industrial accidents. Indians were dispossessed of their lands, thousands of women were forced into prostitution in the oil fields, agricultural plantations were destroyed by the imposition of the oil economy, and thousands of farmers were driven into poverty, while Lake Maracaibo became an ecological disaster zone.

As Professor Federico Brito Figueroa<sup>4</sup> has explained, the fabulous enrichment of the imperialist monopolies increased “the general pauperism in the country and the opulence of the US financial oligarchy”.<sup>5</sup> Oil imperialism in the twentieth century imposed three reactionary regimes: the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez; Perez Jimenez's administration (1948-1958); and the neo-colonial false democracy (1959-1999). No wonder, therefore, that the PCV accepted the resolutions of the Communist International (CI) and the classics of Marxism-Leninism in favour of the rights to self-determination and full sovereignty of the peoples.

“At the end of 1936,” remarked comrade Fernando Key Sánchez,<sup>6</sup> “the First Congress of Workers of Venezuela met in Caracas, with 219 delegates from all over the country, many of them communists, with great participation of veteran comrades in the organisation of the Congress and in the preparation of the theses. The Congress ended with the creation of the Venezuelan Confederation of Labor, CTV.”

The PCV organised the first strike by oil workers – essentially a struggle against imperialism – from December 1936 to January 1937. As comrade Jesús Faria<sup>7</sup> noted,

“The final assessment of that first year of political and social activity so far in this century was highly positive, and not only for the number of men and women who joined the class struggle. ... Beyond the results, one important aspect of this strike, the most important event in the struggle against imperialism in recorded history to date, was the powerful united activity of the working class with all other democratic, patriotic and anti-Gómez sectors of Venezuela.”

On 8 August 1937, seven months

after the oil strike ended, the First Conference of the Communist Party of Venezuela was held, where the Party decided to ‘face the music’ and become the party of the working class, independent and with profound internationalist principles. From there, the activism of the PCV towards the workers developed, putting the perspective of a socialist Venezuela during the democratic transition period of 1952, which ended when a new military coup took place.

On 23 January 1958, the PCV, with the support of the working class and the popular democratic movement, led the overthrow of the dictatorship of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez. However, the US managed, through repression of the trade union movement and the banning of leftist parties, including the PCV, to restore the bourgeois representative democratic system that was to remain in power until 1999.

In 1958, the PCV promoted a class and popular militant mobilisation to reject the visit by US Vice-President Nixon – who, in response to the attacks on his motorcade, was on the point of calling in marines from their bases in Puerto Rico to rescue him. To widen the various forms of class struggle, the PCV with other anti-imperialist bodies created the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) and the National Liberation Forces (FLN) to confront the regime designed by the US government.

The demand for national liberation is the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the Venezuelan situation, the core axis of the political agenda since 1935 and the central struggle of tens of thousands of Venezuelan communists and anti-imperialists since 1931. It is the continuation of the struggle for independence and freedom of the indigenous peoples against the Spanish conquerors from the sixteenth century, and of the slaves and all our people under the leadership of the Liberator Simón Bolívar in the nineteenth century.

## 2. The Domination of Imperialism

The contradiction between capital and labour that characterises the period of transition from capitalism to socialism is also manifested in the contradiction between the peoples, on the one hand and the monopolies, imperialism – which is the highest stage of capitalism, as Lenin brilliantly defined it in 1916 – on the other. This perspective leads us to the necessity of forming a broad Anti-Imperialist Front that brings together





PCV press conference on 28 April 2008, with general secretary Oscar Figueroa (second right) calling for a massive workers' mobilisation on 1 May. Photo from flickr by ¡Que comunismo!

social forces and popular sectors who struggle, or have an interest in struggling, to defeat imperialism – which, amid deep economic crisis, is becoming far more dangerous and aggressive than ever.

On 23 November 2009 PCV Politburo member Pedro Eusse explained some features of this Front:

“It goes beyond, far beyond the Marxist parties ... we are aware that the struggle against imperialism is not only a task for Marxist-Leninists, but for the vast democratic, popular and progressive, social and political movement and needs to have greater strength in the struggle against imperialist domination.”<sup>8</sup>

The threat of aggression suffered today by our country and by the progressive governments of the continent, with the seven US military bases in Colombia, a fascist regime directed from the Pentagon, with the activation of the Fourth Fleet deployed in the Atlantic Ocean and with the rest of military bases in the Caribbean and South America, demonstrates that Marxism-Leninism is the main theoretical tool to understand and deal with imperialism. As we said at our 13th Congress in 2007:

“The final resolution of the principal contradiction of the moment, between the Bolivarian revolution and US imperialism, demands the broader national, continental and global unity of popular forces and progressive governments.”<sup>9</sup>

### 3. The Phases of Socialist Construction

We communists in Venezuela have learned to adapt our struggle to the necessity of combining the workers' and popular forces, of promoting the socio-political alliance against the monopolies and imperialism, taking advantage of the opportunities arising from the developments in our country in relation to the Bolivarian process with the goal of socialism. The establishment of such a socio-economic system requires the fulfilling of some basic characteristics:

- a state of new type, which our 6<sup>th</sup> Congress called a “democratic and popular state”;
- a popular economy with socialisation of the basic and concentrated means of production;
- a well-organised working class;
- a cohesive revolutionary political leadership; and
- a high level of revolutionary consciousness in society.

Frederick Engels said in *Anti-Dühring* that taking possession of all means of production by society can only become a reality “when the actual conditions for its realisation were there.”<sup>10</sup> Venezuela exhibits a transition process that we characterised at our 12<sup>th</sup> Congress as a

“national liberation revolution, clearly anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly, democratic and popular, which opens perspectives for socialism, insofar as the class struggle is resolved in favour of the most consistent ideological and political forces of the Revolution”.<sup>11</sup>

The national ideological workshop, *Contribution to the Debate on Socialism in Venezuela*, that we held in 2008, stated that “in Venezuela, the transition to socialism is just beginning”.<sup>12</sup> For this transition to be actually oriented toward socialism, the PCV believes that some preconditions must be fulfilled:

1. Development of the political vanguard of the working class.
2. Conquest of the political power of the state.
3. Development of the productive forces.
4. Strengthening state ownership under workers' control.

5. Weakening and subsequently suppressing imperialist domination mechanisms.
6. Establishment of economic planning.
7. Development of people's education, and other measures.<sup>13</sup>

The Central Committee of the PCV has concluded that the Bolivarian process of national liberation is making progress in the recovery of sovereignty, but

“still there are no conditions, either of subjective consciousness or social organisation, nor transformation of the productive base and relations of production, *ie* we do not have a strategic plan for the construction of the social and economic base of a socialist society.”<sup>14</sup>

One of the most serious problems faced by the revolutionary forces is the bourgeois state that has not been dismantled and that permanently hampers the revolution. The ideological workshop concluded that

“the leadership of the state is in the hands of the petty bourgeoisie, and this alone, as demonstrated historically, is not interested in developing the tasks of the transition period.”<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. The Social Driving Forces of the Bolivarian Process

Lenin warned that, out of the super-profits of monopolies, “it is *possible to bribe* the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy.”<sup>15</sup> The task which the US monopolies entrusted to their lackeys of the AD and COPEI<sup>16</sup> governments between 1958 and 1998 was the dividing of the Venezuelan working class by corrupting their leaders and creating a privileged workers’ sector. They achieved this to the point that the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (CTV) was one of the actors in the 2002 fascist coup against President Hugo Chávez.

The PCV fully recognises that the working class has the most interest in, and is best able to carry to the end, the Venezuelan revolutionary process and to make socialism a reality. That is why it has always striven to organise the oil workers, agricultural workers, industrial workers, seafarers and port employees, professionals and other sectors. Imperialism partially achieved the goal of destroying the organisation of the working class as the main revolutionary

agent, and that is why the task of emancipation was led by patriotic military officers and other sectors led by Commander Chávez. This is nothing new or exceptional. A Soviet scientist noted that the democratic intelligentsia has a “significant role – and sometimes a leading one – in the national liberation revolution” in countries “where the working class has not become an independent force, while the national bourgeoisie is weak or pro-imperialist”.<sup>17</sup>

The priority is to strengthen the ‘Cruz Villegas’ class current,<sup>18</sup> to support the raising of workers’ awareness, to organise the Socialist Workers’ Councils,<sup>19</sup> to boost implementation of the Organic Labour Act,<sup>20</sup> to promote the unity of the class and revolutionary trade union forces and to isolate the traitors and corrupt trade unionists that still exert some influence. We stand for a “broad alliance of democratic, nationalist and anti-imperialist forces”<sup>21</sup> in which the conscious working class is closely allied with all “the driving forces of the revolution in its current stage of transition”: “large sections of workers, peasants, the progressive middle class and intelligentsia, wide swathes of the petty and middle bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie that is not associated with transnational capital”.<sup>22</sup> In Venezuela there are no patriotic sectors within the monopoly bourgeoisie, which has refused to become a national bourgeoisie and for decades has been a buyer and an agent of US imperialism.

#### 5. Proletarian Internationalism

The Communist Party of Venezuela is a direct descendant of the international effort of the working class led by the first successful socialist revolution, the Soviet Revolution, to overthrow capitalism and build a superior civilisation. Both the Venezuelan people and the PCV have resisted and succeeded in many battles against the class enemy, thanks to the wide international solidarity we have received – such as the generous support given to us by Caribbean Bureau of the Communist International, the fraternal assistance of the Communist Party of Colombia in safeguarding our comrades in-hiding, the international campaign to free PCV president Comrade Gustavo Machado<sup>23</sup> in 1968, and the world-wide support for our people in the defeat of the criminal fascist coup of 2002. Therefore, the PCV holds equally high the two banners of national liberation and proletarian internationalism, to both of which we have sought to contribute.

Gustavo Machado founded, with

## BOOKMARK FOUR

*“While capitalism grew rapidly in the newly industrialised countries of the Far East, for example, large parts of Africa and South America fell further behind in economic and social development. Western imperialism ruthlessly plundered their natural resources, exploited their labour and plunged them into debt bondage.”*

BRS 8th edition, 2011,  
Chapter I



Illustration from  
Hugo Gellert:  
Karl Marx 'Capital' in Lithographs



## BOOKMARK FOUR

### The United Fruit Co.

When the trumpet sounded, it was  
all prepared on the earth,  
and Jehovah parcelled  
out the earth  
to Coca-Cola, Inc, Anaconda,  
Ford Motors, and other entities.  
The Fruit Company, Inc  
reserved for itself the most  
succulent,  
the central coast of my own land,  
the delicate waist of America.  
It rechristened its territories  
as the 'Banana Republics'  
and over the sleeping dead,  
over the restless heroes  
who brought about the greatness,  
the liberty and the flags,  
it established the comic opera:  
abolished the independencies,  
presented crowns of Caesar,  
unsheathed envy, attracted  
the dictatorship of the flies,  
Trujillo flies, Tacho flies,  
Carias flies, Martinez flies,  
Ubico flies, damp flies  
of modest blood and marmalade,  
drunken flies who zoom  
over the ordinary graves,  
circus flies, wise flies  
well trained in tyranny.  
Among the bloodthirsty flies  
the Fruit Company lands its ships,  
taking off the coffee and the fruit;  
the treasure of our submerged  
territories flows as though  
on plates into the ships.

Meanwhile Indians are falling  
into the sugared chasms  
of the harbours, wrapped  
for burial in the mist of the dawn:  
a body rolls, a thing  
that has no name, a fallen cipher,  
a cluster of dead fruit  
thrown down on the dump.

PABLO NERUDA

CUT AND KEEP



Julio Antonio Mella<sup>24</sup> in 1925, the Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas, which became the basis for the creation of the Communist Party of Cuba; he fought with Sandino in Nicaragua in 1928; and he helped Fidel Castro in the 1950s to prepare the Granma expedition. Venezuelan comrades fell martyrs in the expedition of 1959 to overthrow the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic; and in 1964 a detachment of the Venezuelan Communist Youth arrested US Colonel Michael Smolen, in an attempt to force the US imperialists to release Vietnamese patriot Nguyen Van Troi<sup>25</sup> (an action that sealed the unbreakable friendship between the peoples of Venezuela and Vietnam).

The PCV supports President Chávez's position of solidarity with the struggles of the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples, with the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, whose independence he has recognised diplomatically, with the Honduran people resisting the reactionary regime, and other expressions of solidarity that correspond to our historical line.

#### 6. The PCV and the Bolivarian Revolution

We consider that the programme advanced by President Chavez's government is basically that proposed by the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PCV in 1980. We recognise and support the

leadership of President Hugo Chávez in the struggle against imperialism, for national liberation, continental unity and socialism.<sup>22</sup> We recognise that his leadership is not just national but continental and global and that it is "a reference point for peoples and rulers".<sup>26</sup> We note that the broad Anti-Imperialist Front needed by our country "requires for its development" the leadership of Commander Chávez.<sup>27</sup> We supported Chávez's presidential candidacy in 1998 and we have actively supported the anti-imperialist direction of his government and the vast majority of progressive and revolutionary proposals made by the President. At this moment the PCV is participating with the allied party, the PSUV,<sup>28</sup> and with other social and political movements, in the construction of a political and electoral Patriotic Alliance. We "naturally" support and promote the Bolivarian Revolution since we consider it the "continuity" of our own history.<sup>29</sup> The PCV exerts autonomy in the process of our country to raise our own policy, which has some characteristic points:

- The call for formation of a collective leadership including President Chávez. In January 2010 our central committee noted that "the decision to proceed to the creation of a collective leadership of the revolutionary process has not yet been taken".<sup>30</sup>



- The struggle to build the political vanguard role of the working class.
- Constructive criticism of the mistakes made by the government and self-criticism of our own mistakes.
- The struggle to “dismantle the old bourgeois, bureaucratic, corrupt and corrupting state”.<sup>31</sup> We have denounced the way in which a new bourgeoisie appears from the old state, accumulating privileges and engaging in anti-worker and corrupt practices.<sup>32</sup>
- A determination not only to maintain our Party, but to strengthen it to the utmost, not for the sake of defending personal interests, or as a whim – as some opponents accuse us – but in order not to squander the 80 years’ heritage of struggle, and to defend the strategic interests of the working class.
- A firm policy of proletarian internationalism which supports the government’s foreign policy but is independent, in order to support just causes and struggles without being subject to ‘reasons of state’, which are sometimes reasons of the bourgeois state.
- Basing our policy on Marxism-Leninism and the legacy of Bolívar.
- Vindicating, in the face of inconsiderate criticism and anti-communist assertions, the “enormous importance that the existence of ‘real socialism’ had for humanity”.<sup>33</sup>

## 7. The PCV and So-called ‘Socialism of the 21st Century’

Since 1999 the Bolivarian process has gone through successive ideological definitions. First it was ‘anti-neoliberal’; next came the proposal of the ‘Third Way’, inspired by the right-wing British Labour PM Tony Blair; then the firm Bolivarian assertion; thereafter ‘endogenous development’. At one point, the writer Heinz Dieterich Steffan<sup>34</sup> succeeded in proposing the never very clear definition of “socialism of the 21st century”. It was something allegedly ‘new’ and opposed, on one hand, to the socialist construction of the 20th century that continues in the 21st century in several countries (Cuba, China, Korea, Vietnam and Laos) and, on the other, to scientific socialism considered as ‘dogmatism’ by the petty bourgeois.

In 1848 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels denounced several false socialisms, like feudal socialism, petty bourgeois socialism, German or ‘true’ socialism and bourgeois or conservative socialism.<sup>35</sup> Several petty bourgeois currents have attempted to appropriate the concept of socialism to render it meaningless. Against this, the PCV has been clear: our Extraordinary Congress of 2007 agreed on the need for development of Marxist-Leninist consciousness. On 19 June 2009 general secretary Óscar Figuera argued strongly before the National Assembly that “the only existing socialism is scientific socialism”.<sup>36</sup>

In our national ideological workshop we offered a complete definition of socialism that began: “Socialism is a socioeconomic structure where social ownership of the basic means of production of goods and services predominates.”<sup>37</sup>

We welcome the fact that, on the basis of class struggle, President Hugo Chávez and the PSUV are heading ever more decisively in favour of scientific socialism. The extraordinary congress of the PSUV defined, among its principles, scientific socialism and anti-imperialism,<sup>38</sup> which is equivalent to the official burial of “socialism of the 21st century”. This corresponds to a growing maturation of the popular and workers’ forces engaged in the anti-imperialist process, and an increased marginalisation of the petty bourgeois and bourgeois groups which, as we pointed out in early 2010, “somehow conduct the process today without the socialist goal”.

## 8. On the Call for a 5th International

The Communist Party of Venezuela took a position on the call made by President Hugo Chávez to form a “5th Socialist International”, arguing that what the world needs is to unite progressive, revolutionary and left political parties along with movements and social organisations in a broad international front to articulate efforts and coordinate the struggle against imperialism. As Pedro Eusse has said:

“We emphasise that our proposal, made at the International Meeting of Left Parties in 2009, is to unite the greatest number of progressive, left and revolutionary political parties along with the vast range of social movements, unions, indigenous peoples and workers of culture, whether they are for socialism or not, but whose actions and common purpose are to advance the struggle against the main enemy of the peoples, which is global imperialism, not only American imperialism.”<sup>39</sup>

For Venezuelan communists, progress in organic bodies via (1) the International Workers Association (IWA) or First International, founded in London in 1864, (2) the Social-Democratic International or Second International, founded in 1889, and (3) the Communist International, founded in 1919 on the initiative of Lenin and



the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), gathering the communist parties of various countries and known as the Third International, was due to a process of political construction, ideological unity and common goals.

In the scope of the international communist movement, where the PCV is active, we have been working for several years to build spaces for anti-imperialist articulation, linking the efforts of the communist and workers' parties in the struggle against a common enemy – such as at the International Communist Seminar organised by the Workers' Party of Belgium since 1992, or the International Meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties started over a decade ago by the Communist Party of Greece. This is where we made our proposal to work for a broad Anti-Imperialist Front at global, continental and national levels that unites the struggle of all those who objectively are affected by imperialist domination.<sup>39</sup>

In September 2009, communist and workers' parties met in Damascus, where the main debate was around linking the struggles against imperialism. The same happened at the 11<sup>th</sup> International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties held in New Delhi later that year. The parties have a common denominator in Marxist-Leninist ideology whose space must be maintained and deepened, but the Anti-Imperialist Front we are proposing goes beyond, far beyond, the Marxist parties.<sup>39</sup>

The PCV defends the position that:

“We are aware that the struggle against imperialism is the task not only of Marxist-Leninists, but of the vast democratic, popular and progressive social and political movement which needs greater strength in the struggle against imperialist domination.”<sup>39</sup>

The PCV proposes setting up a collective working group for debate and

joint elaboration, that evaluates the various proposals and aims to advance towards a broad coordination body in the common struggle of political parties and social movements participating in its formation:

“This cannot be part of an imposed solution where we repeat past mistakes as centres of leadership, which damage the struggle of these international organisations mentioned above, but one where the development, maturation and autonomy that political parties have gained over more than one hundred years must also be treated and respected.”<sup>39</sup>

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## Notes and References

1 V I Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Collected Works*, Vol 22, p 263.

2 *Ibid*, p 268.

3 *Ibid*, p 261.

4 Federico Brito Figueroa (02.11.1921-28.04.2000), renowned Venezuelan communist historian and anthropologist, whose ideas and writings have played an important role in the ideological formation of Hugo Chávez; see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federico\\_Brito\\_Figueroa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federico_Brito_Figueroa) –Ed.

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6 Fernando Salvador Key Sánchez (16.11.1909-22.09.1989), Venezuelan engineer, politician and University professor, member of the PCV from 1937; see [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fernando\\_Salvador\\_Key\\_Sánchez](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fernando_Salvador_Key_Sánchez) –Ed.

7 Jesús Faria (27.06.1910-24.01.1995), Venezuelan oil worker, politician and communist leader, general secretary of the PCV from 1951, imprisoned 1950-8 and 1963-6; see <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Jesus+Faria> and <http://pcvmiranda.blogspot.com/2011/06/jesus-faria-un-espiritu-que-no-se.html> –Ed.

8 *Tribuna Popular*, 23 November, 2009, [http://www.pcv-venezuela.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=6045&Itemid=1](http://www.pcv-venezuela.org/index.php?option=com_content&id=6045&Itemid=1).

9 *3rd Thesis of the 13th (Extraordinary) Congress of the PCV*, March 2007.

10 F Engels, in K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 25, p 268.

11 Paragraph 103 of the *Programmatic Thesis* approved by the 12th National Congress of the PCV, Caracas, 21-24 July 2006.

12 National Ideological Workshop of the PCV, *Contribution to the Debate on Socialism in Venezuela*, Institute Bolívar Marx, Caracas, 2008, p 33.

13 Paragraph 117 of the *PCV Programmatic Thesis* cited above.

14 *Resolutions of the 32nd Plenary Session of the CC of the PCV*, January 2010, in *Tribuna Popular* No 173, February 2010.

15 Lenin, *op cit*, pp 193-4.

16 AD = Acción Democrática (Democratic Action), and COPEI = Independent Electoral Committee, bourgeois political parties alternating in government before the election of President Hugo Chávez –Ed.

17 V G Afanasyev, *Fundamentals of Scientific Communism*, Progress, Moscow, 1977, p 103 (Spanish edition –Ed).

18 CCT-CV, a class struggle current within the new pro-Chávez trade union federation, the UNT, and named after Cruz Villegas, a veteran communist union leader in Venezuela, who was tortured and imprisoned during the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. For further background, see *The Labour Movement and Socialism in Venezuela: An Interview with Pedro Eusse*, in *Global Research*, 23.07.2010, at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/PrintArticle.php?articleId=20228>, and *Venezuela: Push to Relaunch Union Federation*, in *Green Left Weekly*, 01.05.2010, at <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/43907> –Ed.

19 One of the officially recognised popular power organisations in Venezuela, intended to “strengthen the struggle for productive independence through worker control”, see <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6216> –Ed.

20 Legislation governing collective bargaining in Venezuela –Ed.

21 Paragraph 107 of the *PCV Programmatic Thesis* cited above.

22 Second paragraph of the *Political Resolution of the 13th Congress of the PCV*, 2007.

23 Gustavo Machado Morales (19.07.1898-17.07.1983), lawyer and political activist, and one of the founders of both the Communist Party of Cuba and the PCV, see [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustavo\\_Machado](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustavo_Machado) –Ed.

24 Julio Antonio Mella (25.03.1903-10.01.1929), Cuban revolutionary, assassinated in exile in Mexico.

25 Nguyen Van Troi (1947-15.10.1964), Vietnamese National Liberation Front member, captured by the South Vietnamese puppet government when attempting to assassinate US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara and future ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr, visiting South Vietnam in May 1963. He was executed by firing squad in the infamous Chi Hoa prison. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nguyen\\_Van\\_Troi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nguyen_Van_Troi) –Ed.

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37 PCV National Ideological Workshop,

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38 See information in

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