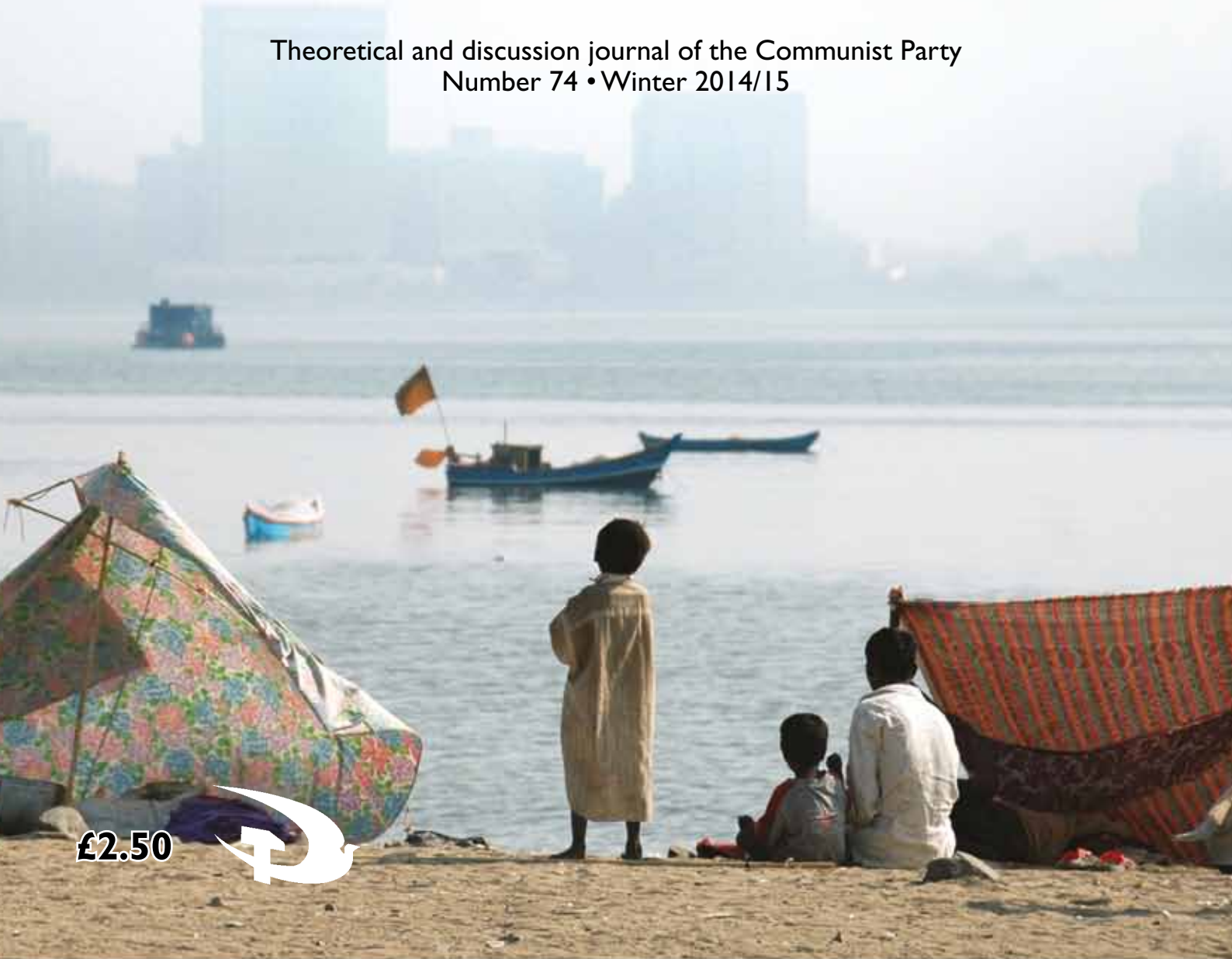


- **Prabhat Patnaik** Capitalism, Inequality and Globalisation
- **Fernando Arribas García** The Struggle Against Opportunism
- **Hans Heinz Holz** Turning Hegel onto his Feet
- **CPB 53rd Congress** On Constitutional Reform
- plus reviews and Soul Food



CAPITALISM, INEQUALITY AND GLOBALISATION

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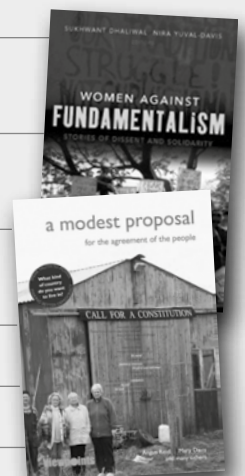
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editorial



By Martin Levy

FRENCH ECONOMIST Thomas Piketty has become something of a media star with his *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. The book reached No 1 on the Amazon US best-seller list, and No 5 in Britain. As John Palmer wrote in *Red Pepper*:

“To read the tidal wave of reviews by economics professors and others across the world is to get a sense of the impact that Piketty’s conclusions are having: that inequality is even more extreme than most experts thought, is worse than at any time since the 19th century and is set to reach nightmare proportions in the years ahead.”¹

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey has said that “Piketty solidifies and gives an intellectual edge to the view that something is wrong” with our economic system, and that “something new and bold and radical has got to be done.”²

However, Piketty is no Marxist, and one should ‘beware of Greeks bringing gifts’. In fact, David Harvey³ has already provided a short but succinct Marxist assessment of Piketty’s work; but to our mind the most detailed and damning Marxist critique is given by Indian economist Prabhat Patnaik, in an article which we present as the main feature in this issue of *CR*. Some readers may find Prabhat’s technical arguments challenging; but the article will repay the effort of re-reading, for the insights it gives into the contradictions of the modern capitalist economy, and the reasons why a revolutionary approach, rather than a reformist one, is necessary.

Prabhat does not dispute Piketty’s conclusions about rising inequalities, nor does he disagree with his call for world-wide heavier taxation on wealth – at least as a transitional demand. But he does identify two distinct problems with the book: firstly, Piketty’s basic theoretical paradigm – the neoclassical model – is a largely discredited one; and secondly, even within that paradigm, Piketty makes untenable assumptions. In particular, imperialism plays no role in Piketty’s analysis; he assumes away all problems

of lack of aggregate demand, and the existence of a reserve army of labour; and, despite his concern with inequality, he has actually adopted a theory that provides sustenance to the corporate agenda that unemployment results from wages being ‘too high’.

Inequality, says Prabhat, will certainly increase in the future but not for the reason put forward by Piketty, that labour markets will become tight due to slowing in world population growth. In fact, quite the opposite: capital migration from the metropolis to the third world will be unable to use up the latter’s labour reserves, hence there will be pressure on wages all-round. Increasing inequality is intimately linked to capitalist – and hence imperialist – globalisation. The solution to inequality is not to impose a wealth tax, but to abolish the capitalist system altogether.

Now to philosophy. Winter days are short, so it’s a good time for in-depth Marxist reading. In *CR*71 yours truly⁴ reviewed Zhang Yibing’s *Lenin Revisited*, a book devoted to situating Lenin’s thought-processes in his *Conspectus of Hegel’s ‘Science of Logic’*, to the point where he was able to understand Hegel’s dialectics, and apply it materialistically. In that review I referred to and quoted a few passages from an article by the late German Marxist philosopher Hans Heinz Holz. The full translation of that article is now available in English, and is presented in this issue of *CR*. In contrast to Zhang’s book, Holz’s piece is by no means “like a readers guide to the *Philosophical Notebooks*”,⁴ but Holz does quote a number of Lenin’s extracts from Hegel, in order to show how Lenin incisively draws back the veil of idealist mysticism and inverts Hegel’s approach. It should again be an encouragement to us to deepen our understanding of materialist dialectics.

This *CR* is, however not entirely heavy-going. In between economics and philosophy we have history and politics – albeit of the Venezuelan variety. The article by Fernando Arribas García charts *The Struggle of Venezuelan Communists against Opportunism* – of both the ‘left’ and the ‘right’ types. He explains, along with Lenin, that opportunism in revolutionary parties arises from the existence of petty-bourgeois strata, and he

underscores the importance of a working class majority in the party leadership. The article also provides insights into the class composition of the Chavista party, the PSUV, the class essence of the Venezuelan state apparatus and the “overly optimistic use of the term ‘revolution’”.

*CR*73 was published shortly after the Scottish referendum result. Just now, we have had the Smith Commission report, with its unambitious recommendations which include only small changes to Scotland’s limiting fund-raising powers. The Communist Party of Britain opposed the independence campaign but calls instead for a radical federalism for all of Britain. This issue was debated in an emergency resolution to the 53rd Congress of the Party on November 15-16, 2014, and we publish the final agreed text of the resolution in this issue of *CR*.

Last time we managed only one book review. This time, like buses, 5 have come together. And the topics provide plenty of opportunity for seasonal presents, if you are reading the journal in time – Che Guevara on pedagogy; Women Against Fundamentalism; what a people’s constitution might look like; unemployed struggles; and the history of Gaza. And then, if poetry is your delight, Mike Quille’s *Soul Food* continues his column on Smokestack Books from last time, with some cracking poems about conditions in the USA, Nicaragua and Palestine and from Hungarian Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. As Mike says, those last poems “are a timely reminder not only of the horrors of fascism and Nazism, but of the importance of memory, imagination and creativity in fighting those evils.”

Notes and References

- 1 J Palmer, *Red Pepper*, April 2014; online at <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/book-review-capital-in-the-twenty-first-century-by-thomas-piketty/>.
- 2 L McCluskey, in *The Guardian*, 28 April 2014; online at <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/apr/28/len-mccluskey-capital-21st-century-manna-from-heaven>.
- 3 D Harvey, *Afterthoughts on Piketty’s Capital*, online at <http://davidharvey.org/2014/05/afterthoughts-piketys-capital/>.
- 4 M Levy, *Lenin’s Philosophical Notebooks*, in *CR*71, Spring 2014, pp 30-33.

Capitalism, Inequality and Globalisation

Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*



By Prabhat Patnaik

I The Piketty Argument

Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* embodies an immense amount of empirical research into the distribution of wealth and income across the population for a number of advanced capitalist countries going back for over two centuries. In particular Piketty has made extensive use of tax data for the first time to arrive at several important conclusions in his *magnum opus*, which has deservedly attracted much international attention, both in academic circles and among the public at large.

The conclusions themselves are quite striking. Central to them is the finding of a U-shaped curve relating to a number of key variables, *viz.*:

- wealth distribution defined as the share of the top 10% (or the top 1%) in total wealth in each of the countries studied;
- income distribution defined in a similar manner; and
- the wealth-income ratio.

Each of these variables, quite high (or rising) until the First World War, undergoes a

sharp drop during the war and remains more or less low until 1945, after which it begins to increase, and in the more recent decades particularly sharply.

The period between 1914 and 1945 in short represents a remarkable break, which, not surprisingly, created an impression that capitalism had become more egalitarian, that inherited wealth had ceased to matter as much as before, that the individual's 'ability' rather than patrimony determined in the new situation his or her position in the socio-economic hierarchy, and so on. To be sure, the bottom 50% of the population in most capitalist countries hardly owned much wealth at any time, and hence hardly earned any income from wealth; but the period 1914-1945 threw up a middle class which raised its share of wealth and income at the expense of the rich, of the very top decile¹ for instance.

What the more recent period has been seeing is the top decile increasing its share in income and wealth once more. In the case of income, for instance, the top decile in the USA (where the increase in inequality has proceeded much further than in Europe,

reversing the pre-1914 ranking), claims as much as 90% of the total income, which was the figure for several countries in Europe on the eve of the First World War.

Piketty expects the march of inequality to continue into the future. The period 1914-1945, according to him, saw capitalism being exposed to a series of shocks: the war-time destruction of wealth in physical terms; the loss of foreign assets through expropriations following the Bolshevik Revolution and decolonisation (whose effects of course were in the 1950s); high rates of inflation in consumer prices, not matched by the rate of inflation in asset prices; and the introduction of taxation of income and wealth (though in France wealth taxation had come with the French Revolution).

He sees movements in the wealth-income ratio, in wealth inequalities and in income inequalities as proceeding in the same direction, and as being determined, barring this period of shocks, by the excess of the rate of return on capital over the rate of growth of the economy ($r-g$). When r exceeds g , wealth grows faster than the national income,

wealth inequalities increase, and so do inequalities in income from wealth, which also push up overall income inequalities. Piketty expects that, in the twenty-first century, the rate of growth in the advanced countries will slow down, *inter alia* because of a slowing down of population growth, while the reduction in the rate of return on capital will be much less. This is because, in a situation where capital can easily substitute labour (what economists call a situation of high elasticity of substitution between capital and labour), high rates of capital accumulation are perfectly compatible with slow demographic and economic growth: more capital is simply used per unit of labour without much lowering the rate of return on capital. The difference ($r-g$) therefore will increase in the decades to come, which will make wealth and income inequalities even worse; and this would be further accentuated by the tendency, already discernible at present, towards a lowering of the tax burden on the rich, which characterises contemporary globalisation. Piketty is concerned

Thomas Piketty photo Universitat Pompeu Fabra



about the effects of such an increase in inequality, which he argues is fundamentally incompatible with democracy. His suggestion is for heavier wealth taxation; but since any single country doing so will simply drive capital away from itself, such wealth taxation will have to be coordinated, at least among the rich countries.

Piketty is invariably cautious in stating his conclusions. Nonetheless, what emerges clearly from his analysis is that, in the absence of shocks of the kind witnessed during 1914-1945, or of deliberate fiscal intervention to the contrary, there is a tendency under contemporary capitalism for wealth inequalities to increase.

This arises for two reasons: first, through the maintenance of a *level* of $(r-g)$, whose associated degree of wealth inequality is greater than the initial level. In other words, even though, for any given $(r-g)$, the degree of wealth inequality may eventually stabilise, this level of

inequality is likely to be higher than the initial state, so that in the transition to it wealth inequality increases. Besides, this level at which wealth inequality may stabilise, may itself also be unacceptable *per se*. For instance, with $r=5\%$ and $g=1\%$, stability according to Piketty's simulations may be achieved at a level where the top decile owns 90% of all wealth, which is clearly extraordinarily high and unacceptable in a democracy.

Secondly, an *increase* in $(r-g)$ would accentuate inequality, and this is what he expects to happen in the coming decades. This difference $(r-g)$, which had been high in pre-1914 capitalism and then had come down somewhat, is once more set to increase in the twenty-first century, both in advanced countries and even globally (since population growth will be slowing down), which would only mean a worsening of wealth inequality, and hence income inequality.

The conclusion that wealth inequality has a tendency to increase under capitalism is also drawn by Marxists, but for independent reasons, having to do with the tendency towards centralisation of capital immanent in capitalism. Marxists therefore should normally not have much difficulty in agreeing with Piketty's prognostications about the twenty-first century, and even his suggestion for a global wealth tax, *as a transitional demand* (which would never of course get realised under capitalism). But the problem that any Marxist would have with Piketty's book is that, while his empirical work is impressive, the theory he advances for his argument cannot stand scrutiny.

But before discussing his theory I want to enter a caveat. While his empirical work is impressive, indeed immensely impressive, we simply do not know how seriously to take his figures;

and even forming an opinion on the theory requires substantial research. I would like to cite one example here. There is a massive drop in the capital-income ratio, especially in Europe, in a very short span of time, between 1914 and 1920, which the various factors cited by Piketty do not appear to me to explain adequately. This low level of capital-income ratio moreover continues through the Depression years, when we should be expecting an increase in the ratio (since a depression entails reduced capacity utilisation). But these are issues which will be sorted out in due course and need not detain us here.

II The Neoclassical Paradigm

There are in fact two quite distinct problems with Piketty's theory: first, the basic theoretical paradigm (the neoclassical paradigm), within which his argument is set, is a largely discredited one; and second, even within this



paradigm his specific position is based on assumptions which are highly untenable. Let me discuss these problems *seriatim*.

The basic theoretical paradigm which he uses is one where:

- there is always full employment of all 'factors of production';
- the rate of remuneration of each 'factor' is determined by its 'marginal productivity' at the point of full employment, *ie* by how much an additional unit of it would contribute to total output if we visualised a *hypothetical situation* in which the amounts of all other 'factors' are kept constant;
- all savings are invested in each period (which is required anyway for the 'marginal productivity' theory to hold); and
- where the economy, with full employment in every period, moves over time towards a uniform 'steady state' growth rate, which is equal to the sum of the exogenously given² rate of growth of the labour force and an exogenously given rate of growth of labour productivity, caused by what economists call 'labour-augmenting' technological progress. (*This long-term growth rate in short is completely exogenous and does not depend on the rate of capital accumulation; the latter on the contrary adjusts to this exogenous long-term growth rate*).

This paradigm today has few takers even among mainstream economists, let alone economists in general. It assumes away all problems of the deficiency of aggregate demand, and hence the entire Keynesian-Kaleckian³ 'revolution' in economic theory (though, long before Keynes and Kalecki, Marx had emphasised the possibility of over-production

crises under capitalism). It assumes away the existence of a reserve army of labour, without which a capitalist system, as Marx had shown, simply cannot function.

It assumes that capital accumulation meekly adjusts to the rate of growth of the labour force in each country, instead of acquiring the requisite labour for itself, which capitalism, shifting millions of people across the globe to suit its requirements, has historically done.

Besides, it treats capital, which is a value-sum, as if it were measurable in physical units, like any other 'factor of production'. Taking capital, correctly, as a value-sum creates insurmountable logical problems for this theory, which were pointed out by Piero Sraffa⁴ (and whose discovery is sometimes referred to as the 'Sraffa revolution'). These logical problems arise from the fact that, to measure capital as a value-sum, and hence find out the 'marginal product' of capital, which is supposed to determine the rate of profit, we already need to know the equilibrium prices of production; but these cannot be known unless we already postulate a rate of profit. Hence, to determine the rate of profit, we already need to know the rate of profit. (And it is not even the case that at lower and lower rates of profit the value-sum of capital per unit of labour is higher and higher, as required by the marginal-productivity theory, with its assumption that the 'marginal productivity' of a factor declines as more and more of it used.)

And finally, it is open to the subtle methodological criticism of Piero Sraffa that the marginal-productivity theory explains the existing reality via the consequences of a hypothetical change which are *in principle* non-observable, non-ascertainable and non-verifiable. Whatever exists in reality, in short, is explained by the proposition, *for which there is no*

independent evidence, that if it did not exist then there would be forces at work that would make it exist.

Piketty is thus reviving a discredited theoretical paradigm which has been rejected even by modern-day 'mainstream' growth theory (called 'endogenous growth theory'), with its assertion that capital accumulation causes the economy's growth rate to be liberated from the constraint imposed by its population growth. (Piketty does not seem aware of these theoretical debates, since he erroneously imagines the controversy following Sraffa's work, about the problem posed by capital's being a value-sum, to have been a controversy about the relevance of aggregate demand (pp 230-1)⁵).

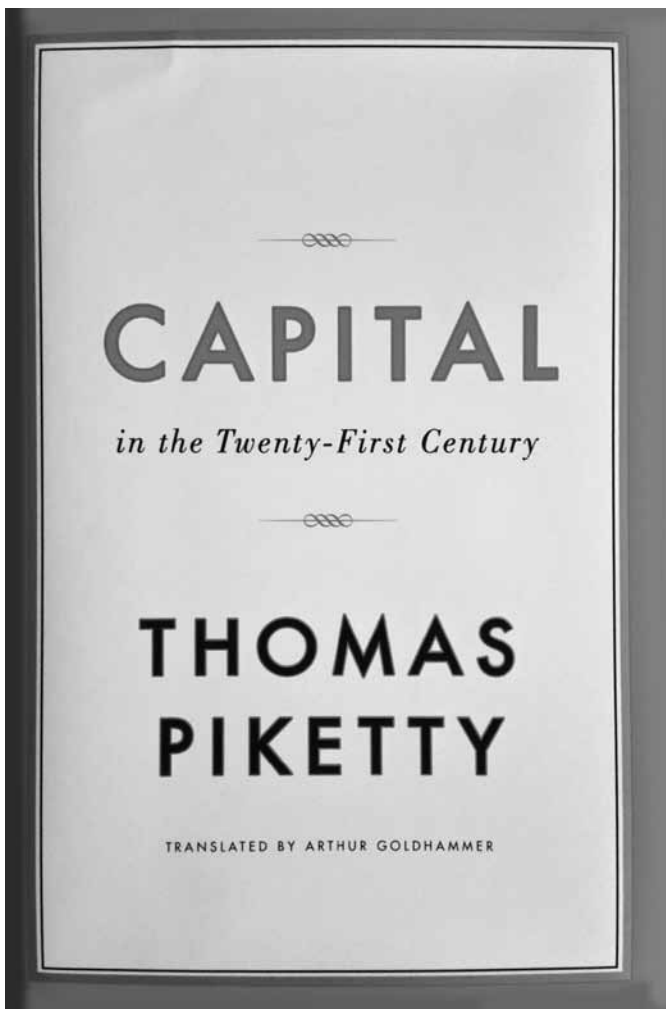
He justifies his acceptance of this (neoclassical) growth paradigm, and his not treating capitalism as a 'demand-constrained' system, by claiming that demand problems, *as empirical evidence shows*, arise only in the short run but disappear over time, so that any long-run analysis of capitalism should ignore them.

This raises a basic methodological point: the 'long run' is nothing else but a sequence of 'short runs' strung together; hence, unless we can show that the problem of deficiency of aggregate demand that afflicts capitalism in the short run, *spontaneously reverses itself through the working of the system*, we cannot, on the basis of empirical evidence alone (to the effect that demand problems over a long period of time are not always *visibly* severe), ignore them in our dynamic analysis.

For instance Rosa Luxemburg, acutely aware of the demand problem, argued that it disappeared *because of capitalism's incursions into the pre-capitalist sector*, and not because either Say's Law (that 'supply created its own demand') was valid, or the system's internal mechanisms

made it disappear.⁶ *From the observed lack of importance of the demand problem therefore we cannot conclude, as Piketty does, that the system's own mechanisms make it disappear over time*. On the contrary, imperialism, or more generally what Kalecki called exogenous stimuli (which include state expenditure and 'innovations', apart from incursions into pre-capitalist markets), plays a role in the demand problem's not being obtrusively present; in which case the 'long-run' dynamics of the system should be analysed, not as if it observed Say's Law, but rather as a sequence of short-term states, in each of which the fact of its being demand-constrained was countered by the operation of some exogenous stimuli, such as pre-capitalist markets.

It is significant that imperialism plays no role in Piketty's analysis, neither in explaining the growth of wealth and wealth inequalities, nor even in the analysis of past growth, or prognostications of future growth. On the contrary the book is informed by a perception according to which capitalist growth in one region is generally beneficial for all within that region, is never at the expense of the people of another region, and tends to spread from one region to another, bringing about a general improvement in the human condition. What this perception misses is that capitalist growth in the metropolis was associated not just with the perpetuation of the pre-existing state of affairs in the periphery but with a very specific kind of development, which we call 'underdevelopment', which squeezed the people in an entirely new way. For instance, over the period spanning the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth (until independence), not only was there a decline in per capita real income in 'British India', but also the death of millions of people owing to famines.⁷



Let me return to Piketty's theoretical paradigm (the neoclassical paradigm). According to this, all persistent unemployment must be explained as the result of wages being 'too high', *ie* as the product of trade union action. It is not accidental that Robert Solow, whose 'neoclassical' growth model Piketty invokes, is a votary of 'labour market flexibility', *ie* smashing trade unions through 'free hire and fire', which Rajasthan's BJP⁸ government is trying to introduce at present, and which the current central government [of India –*Ed*] would dearly love to do. Smashing trade unions on the plea that this would raise employment is currently on the agenda of corporate capital everywhere in the world, including India. It is a pity that Piketty, despite his concern with wealth inequality, adopts a theory that provides sustenance to this corporate agenda.

In fact he is not unaware of the limitations of the marginal-productivity theory. His explanation for the burgeoning inequality in income from work in the US in the recent period is that the corporate managers determine their own salaries and pitch them too high, *ie* their salaries are not linked to their 'marginal productivity'. He seems to think that while the marginal-productivity explanation can be jettisoned for this segment, it can nonetheless be applicable for the segment consisting of the mass of ordinary workers.

This however is fallacious. Even within its own paradigm, once marginal-productivity theory is given up for one segment, it just breaks down; it ceases to be applicable *at all*. The corporate managers who give themselves high salaries are filching it either from profits or from wages. But once we accept that there is this element of compressibility in any income

share, then it follows that the workers too, through trade union action, can demand and get higher wages at the expense of the managers or of profits, without causing unemployment. The proposition advanced by the marginal-productivity theory, that wages cannot rise above marginal productivity without causing unemployment, breaks down, undermining the theory as a whole.

III Income Distribution and the Savings Ratio

Let me now move to Piketty's untenable assumptions *within* this theoretical paradigm. The first assumption is that *the savings ratio in the economy is independent of income distribution*. Piketty obviously does not believe this, but once we drop this assumption his argument becomes logically untenable. Clearly the rich save more than the poor; in fact the poor hardly save at all since their share of wealth, as Piketty's figures show, is negligible.

There has been a long tradition in economics of assuming that all wages are consumed and all profits saved. (David Ricardo assumed that all wages are consumed and all profits above some basic consumption of the capitalists are saved.) Let us, for generality, assume that both workers and capitalists save certain ratios of their total incomes, the former's ratio being lower than that of the latter. The workers saving at all however means that they also get some income from wealth, so that their savings ratio, lower than that of the capitalists, applies to their *total income*, both what they get from work and what they get from wealth (while the capitalists' ratio applies only to what they get from wealth since they do not have any labour income). Such a universe has been much explored in economic theory and yielded well-known conclusions.

The first thing to note is that, if we postulate such savings behaviour, then a steady-state growth trajectory of the sort Piketty assumes, where the growth rate equals the sum of the rate of growth of the workforce and the rate of growth of labour productivity, both exogenously given (or what is sometimes referred to synthetically as the rate of growth of the work force in *efficiency units*), may not exist at all for a whole range of neoclassical 'production functions'⁹ (*ie* production functions which are smooth, twice-continuously differentiable and along which the marginal productivity of each factor is positive, but declining as more of it is used). Certain additional conditions must be satisfied for the existence of a steady state,¹⁰ which not all neoclassical production functions satisfy, especially if there are no restrictions on the elasticity of substitution.¹¹

Let us however assume that these conditions are satisfied; *ie* that the steady-state growth path, in terms of which Piketty conducts his analysis, exists, for the case where the savings ratio depends upon income distribution and for a production function along which the elasticity of substitution exceeds 1.0.

Along such a steady-state path only two wealth distributions are logically possible: one where the workers own all the wealth and the capitalists own none;¹² and the other where there is a stable distribution of wealth between the workers and the capitalists. The first of these cases is obviously unrealistic and can be ignored. In the second case, which was explored by the Italian economist Luigi Pasinetti¹³, the rate of profit on capital r must equal g/s_c , where s_c is the savings ratio of capitalists.¹⁴

Now, Piketty takes r and g to be completely independent of one another. But this is impossible along the steady-



state growth path that he himself is focusing on. For given s_c , if g comes down, as he visualises for the twenty-first century, then r must also come down; indeed in such a case $(r-g)$ itself must come down. His entire argument about widening wealth inequalities in the twenty-first century is based on the presumption that, while g would come down, r would not, so that $(r-g)$ would increase, which according to him is the cause of widening inequality. But g cannot come down without r and $(r-g)$ also coming down, so that his basic theoretical argument becomes untenable. Besides, as this case clearly demonstrates, with s_c less than 1, r is greater than g along the steady-state growth trajectory *and yet there is no increase in wealth inequalities over time*. The respective shares of wealth owned by the workers and the capitalists remain unchanged.

Let me give a numerical example to illustrate this steady state picture:

- The wage share is 60%, the profit share is 40%.
- The rate of growth of output is 2%, consisting of 1% increase in workforce and 1% increase in labour productivity along the growth path.
- The distribution of the capital stock between the capitalists and the workers is in the ratio of 50:50.
- The workers' savings ratio on their total income, consisting of wages and profits, is 5%.
- The capitalists' savings ratio on their total income, consisting of profits alone, is 20%.
- The capital-output ratio is 4 (and is constant).

In this picture, if the capital stock in any period is 400, then output is 100, of which the profits are 40 and wages 60. Since workers own half the capital stock, their total income is 80 (= 60 plus half of 40) and capitalists' total income is 20 (= half of 40). Workers' savings are 5%

of 80, *ie* 4, while capitalists' savings are 20% of 20, *ie* 4. Since their savings are equal, their respective capital stocks, which are in the ratio of 50:50, grow at the same rate and continue to remain in the ratio of 50:50. The economy's growth rate is 2% (= $(8/400) \times 100\%$).

Now even though the capital stock between the workers and the capitalists is 50:50, there may be 90 workers and only 10 pure capitalists, in which case the ratio in per capita capital stock between workers and capitalists is 1:9; a worker's family owns one-ninth the wealth of a capitalist family.

Piketty places much emphasis on the relative weights of inheritance and savings. But the fact of savings does not negate the importance of inheritance. Let us assume that all wealth is passed on to children, both by workers and by capitalists and they save the same ratios of their incomes year after year; then assuming that their populations grow at the same rate, the same wealth inequalities will continue into the future. Savings add to what is inherited, and what they add is in turn bequeathed to children. So placing them on different footings does not appear justified. In fact children, even before they formally inherit, will have some user rights over their parents' wealth, in which case we do not have to discuss *formal* inheritance at all. We could even imagine each family, whether of workers or of capitalists, living for ever, its size growing at 2% per annum, and its total income, no matter from what source, being divided between consumption and savings in the stated proportions.

Put differently, the suggestion that, if savings are larger relative to inheritance, then wealth inequality gets reduced, does not stand scrutiny. In fact, in conditions of steady state growth, where the growth rate is exogenously

given, 2% in the above example, the ratio of savings to inheritance, *ie* of (net) savings to capital stock, must also necessarily be 2%, neither more nor less.

Let us see what would happen if, when the economy is in a steady state, the ratio of savings to income and hence to the capital stock in that steady state suddenly increases. The economy will, let us assume, converge to another steady state where the ratio of savings to income will be higher, but the ratio of savings to capital stock (ignoring depreciation for simplicity) will again be 2%. Hence, as long as the growth rate is given, the ratio of savings to capital stock in steady state will be equal to this growth rate, *ie* the question of savings being larger than inheritance does not arise.

In the case just mentioned, where the savings ratio suddenly rises, what will happen to wealth and income inequalities? Let us consider this using the above numerical example. Suppose, in that example, there is a 25% increase in the savings ratio across the board, *ie* capitalists save 25% of their income instead of the 20% they were saving earlier, and workers save 6.25% of their income instead of the 5% they were saving earlier. In the new steady state, with the same 2% growth rate being maintained, the rate of profit will fall from the earlier 10% to 8%. In this case, $(r-g)$ would have *fallen*; but, under the Piketty assumption that the elasticity of substitution is greater than 1.0, the profit share will be higher in the new steady state, which means that both income and wealth inequality will also be higher. In other words, a *fall* in $(r-g)$ would have been accompanied by an *increase* in wealth inequality and income inequality; and a rise in savings relative to inheritance in the initial situation would have caused an increase in wealth and income inequality.

IV The Mobility of Capital

This brings me to the second basic problem with the Piketty logic, even within its own theoretical paradigm. It is based on the assumption that each country's capital is invested in that country itself, that American capital is invested in America, French capital is invested in France, British capital is invested in Britain, and so on. The conclusion that a country's growth rate is determined exclusively by the growth rate of that very country's population in 'efficiency units' (or that the income growth rate of a group of countries is determined by the growth rate of that group's population in 'efficiency units'), *ie* that labour shortages cannot be overcome through immigration of labour or emigration of capital, is patently unrealistic. Applying its conclusions to a real world where migration possibilities clearly exist *is logically flawed*.

Piketty may argue that historically such migration, at least between the first and the third world, has been meagre: third-world labour has not migrated freely to the first world, and first-world capital has not migrated freely to the third. But then the question must be raised: why has this *not* happened? Theoretical analysis must then begin, like in the case of "the dog that did not bark",¹⁵ with this particular question.

In the era of globalisation, capital is far more mobile internationally than it has ever been in its entire history. In fact, the colonial period was characterised by a segmentation of the world economy where capital from the north did not move freely to the south, despite being juridically free to do so, except to certain limited spheres like plantations and mines; and labour from the south was not *allowed* to move freely to the north. While labour is still not allowed to move freely from the south

to the north, capital is more mobile from the north to the south, including to areas like manufacturing, than it has ever been in the past. But then the fact that, the growth rate of population in the twenty-first century in the advanced capitalist countries will slow down, ceases to be a matter of any great consequence *for the capital of these countries themselves*.

Capital of these countries can go on accumulating, unconstrained by any labour scarcity, despite the slowing down of their *domestic* population growth (in 'efficiency units'), simply by migrating to the third-world economies which are saddled with massive labour reserves. (These reserves themselves were created by the encroachment of advanced-country manufactured goods into their markets, which displaced pre-capitalist producers through a process often referred to as 'deindustrialisation'.)

I am not saying that this would necessarily happen, but it is a possibility which needs to be considered in the context of the Piketty argument. The question then arises: is such a diffusion of capitalism likely to absorb the massive third world labour reserves? Piketty does not consider this question because for him there is always full employment everywhere. But the moment we move away from that fairy-tale, we have to recognise the fact that, even in countries like India, the high growth rates of recent years have been accompanied by a non-diminution of labour reserves. (The former socialist countries were the only examples in history to my mind where growth *did* absorb labour reserves, to a point where labour scarcity became a serious problem. The fact that capitalism *in the metropolis* substantially used up its labour reserves without of course fully eliminating them, which it never can, was to a large extent the result of massive

emigration from Europe to the temperate regions of white settlement, like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.¹⁶)

Now, any substantial emigration of capital from the advanced capitalist countries to the third world would keep the rate of return on capital of these countries above their domestic growth rates, *but for reasons very different from what Piketty suggests*. These reasons would have to do with globalisation of capital rather than any greater-than-1.0 elasticity of substitution between labour and capital along some 'production function'.

If this phenomenon, of capital migration from the metropolis to the third world, is considered together with the possibility that the latter's labour reserves still do not get exhausted, then the implications of such a *denouement* for wealth and income inequalities are quite profound.

V Globalisation and Wealth Inequality

The possibility of migration of capital from the advanced to the underdeveloped countries, which breaks the segmentation that existed in the world economy in the colonial period, implies that the wage rates of workers in the advanced countries now get influenced by third-world labour reserves. Even if they do not actually decline to compete with third-world wages, they certainly do not increase. As long as third-world labour reserves are not exhausted, we get a non-increasing vector of real wage rates around the world, even as labour productivity increases, which means that the share of wages in world output comes down while the share of surplus increases.

Since the savings ratio out of surplus incomes is higher than out of wage incomes, this redistribution produces a tendency towards 'under-consumption', and

hence a stagnationist effect on the world economy. But let us assume, for argument's sake, that there is no actual stagnation, because with technological change there is a tendency towards 'capital deepening', *ie* for the capital-output ratio to increase over time, as Lenin and Tugan-Baranovsky¹⁷ had visualised, which counteracts this stagnationist tendency.

We assume in other words that these two forces, acting in opposite directions, balance one another exactly. This need not of course happen in real life, but its non-happening, while it does not vitiate the argument presented below, only makes the emerging scenario more complex to visualise. We eschew such complexity and assume that the growth rate of the world economy remains unchanged at some level *g* which is determined by the pace of accumulation, *and has nothing to do with the rate of growth of the work-force of the world in 'efficiency units'*. Let us see what such a world would look like.

At this growth rate the world labour reserves will not necessarily diminish in relative terms. If the rate of growth of labour productivity *p* happens to be such that (*g-p*), which is the rate of growth of labour demand, is less than the rate of growth of labour supply, then the world labour reserves will never get exhausted; on the contrary they will grow in relative size. The experience of third-world countries like India with high but 'jobless' growth suggests that this is a very real possibility. And even a slowing down of the world population growth may not cause an exhaustion of world labour reserves.

This non-exhaustion of world labour reserves would of course mean not only that income inequalities would increase (since the share of surplus will increase over time at the expense of wages), but also that wealth inequalities will increase, *which in turn*

will further exacerbate the growth in income inequalities.

The reason for the increase in wealth inequalities in such a situation is quite simple. Since workers' incomes grow more slowly than those of the capitalists (even though the workers also own some wealth), the workers' savings also grow more slowly than those of the capitalists. And since savings that are realised constitute additions to wealth, this means that capitalists' wealth grows faster than that of the workers. We thus get a picture different from the one drawn by Pasinetti, where the wealth shares of the workers and the capitalists remained constant over time; we get instead a picture of increasing wealth inequality. This increase in wealth inequality incidentally will be visible not just at the world level but within each country as well, since the rise in the share of surplus will be manifest *everywhere*.

When we add to the wealth inequality arising from *this source*, the inequality that additionally arises owing to the dispossession of peasants and traditional petty producers through what Marx had called the process of "primitive accumulation" of capital¹⁸ (which is very much underway in the world economy in the era of globalisation), and also the inequality that arises owing to centralisation of capital, the prospective increase in wealth inequality in the years to come appears immense indeed.

Marx had analysed centralisation of capital in terms (apart from the 'pooling' of capital through banks and stock exchanges) of the fact that big capital drives out small capital, owing to its superior capacity to introduce new technology. No matter what the empirical significance is of this particular channel, two additional channels are of great importance. One is big capital's capacity to sniff out prospective investment projects with higher rates of



return; and it can do so in the global arena since its capacity to 'go global' is greater than that of small capital. The other is the fact that the *variability* of the rate of return on big capital is less than on small capital, which also means that it is less affected by crises in particular sectors and has greater 'staying power'.

From the foregoing discussion, I would draw two conclusions: first, that world wealth and income inequalities are all set to rise sharply in the coming years, exactly as Piketty hypothesises. And second, that the reason for this lies not in what Piketty believes, namely that the slowing down of world population growth will create tightness in world labour markets (and hence a slowing down of world output growth) *but for precisely the opposite reason*, namely that there will be no tightness in world labour markets, no diminution in world labour reserves, and hence no tendency for an increase in the vector of world real wages even as world

labour productivity increases. The rising world wealth and income inequalities in short are intimately linked to the process of globalisation we are witnessing.

VI Concluding Observations

Piketty's suggestion for wealth taxation, *as a transitional demand*, is unexceptionable. I say "transitional demand" because it cannot possibly be realised without a significant mobilisation, not just of world public opinion, but of the forces of *class* resistance against growing wealth inequality, for which it is useful as a consciousness-raising demand; but precisely when such mobilisation has occurred on a scale large enough to make a difference on the terrain of wealth taxation, this very mobilisation would have shifted people's demand to a terrain beyond wealth taxation, to the abolition of the capitalist system altogether.

The tragedy of all such demands, like that for a

progressive wealth taxation, is that they make sense (as *non-transitional* demands) only if they can be easily accomplished, *ie* without any need for a massive mobilisation; but they are not in fact easily accomplished, which is why, when the massive mobilisation does occur because of which they could be accomplished, this very mobilisation pushes the demand beyond mere wealth taxation.

Michał Kalecki, who showed as early as in 1937 that capital taxation, which served to reduce inequality in society, was also the best way to finance government expenditure for raising employment in the economy, ended his essay by saying: "It is difficult to believe however that capital taxation will ever be applied for this purpose on a large scale; for it may seem to undermine the principle of private property."¹⁹ He went on to quote a part of Joan Robinson's remarkably

insightful comment: "Any government which had the power and the will to remedy the major defects of the capitalist system would have the will and power to abolish it altogether, while governments which have the power to retain the system lack the will to remedy its defects."²⁰ While reading Piketty we should not forget this basic insight of Joan Robinson.

■ *This is a revised version of the article of the same name, first published in the Communist Party of India (Marxist) theoretical journal, The Marxist, Vol XXX, No 2 (April-June), 2014, online at <http://cpim.org/sites/default/files/marxist/201402-marxist-prabhat.pdf>. Additional explanatory endnotes here are from the Editor. Thomas Piketty's Capital in the Twenty-First Century was published by Harvard University Press in March 2014 (hbk, 696 pp, ISBN 978-0674430006).*

Notes and References

1 The top 10% –Ed.

2 Primarily determined by external rather than internal factors –Ed.

3 John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) is known as the architect of the concept that aggregate demand determines the level of economic activity; Polish economist Michał Kalecki (1899-1970) developed similar ideas, attempting to integrate Marxist analysis with new literature on oligopoly theory –Ed.

4 Piero Sraffa (1898-1983) was an Italian economist who taught at Cambridge University and is regarded as the founder of the neo-Ricardian school of economics. He was also a friend of Antonio Gramsci and is said to have provided the pens and paper for the latter's *Prison Notebooks*, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piero_Sraffa –Ed.

5 Likewise Piketty's interpretation of Marx's proposition on the falling tendency of the rate of profit shows a lack of familiarity with Marx's own work and with the enormous literature that exists on the subject –PP.

6 See R Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, Section 3, 'The Historical Conditions of Accumulation', extracted in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, P Hudis and K B Anderson, eds, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2004, p 61 –Ed.

7 The decline in per capita real income emerges if we put together the estimates of F J Atkinson and S Sivasubramaniam. The figures can be found in I Habib, *A People's History of India*, Vol 28, Tulika Books, Delhi, 2006; and in S Sivasubramaniam, *The National Income of India in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2000 –PP.

8 BJP = Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party), a right-wing Hindu nationalist Party in India, currently the ruling party in the federal government and in 7 Indian states –Ed.

9 In economics, a mathematical expression which relates output to input or factors of production, *eg* capital, labour, land, raw materials; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Production_function –Ed.

10 The sufficient conditions for such existence are the 'Inada conditions' named after the Japanese economist Ken-Ichi Inada who first formulated them –PP.

11 Even when the savings ratio does not depend upon income distribution, a steady-state growth path may not exist if no restrictions are placed on the elasticity of substitution along the production function. On Piketty's own

assumptions in other words, a steady-state growth path of the sort he visualises may not exist –PP.

12 This case was originally visualized by Paul Samuelson and Franco Modigliani, in *The Review of Economic Studies*, Vol 33, No 4, October 1966, pp 269-301 –PP.

13 L L Pasinetti, *Rate of Profit and Income Distribution in Relation to the Rate of Economic Growth*, in *Review of Economic Studies*, Vol 29, October 1962, pp 267-279 –PP.

14 In a review of Piketty, Lance Taylor visualises a third, non-Pasinetti, equilibrium, where wealth-shares between the workers and the capitalists nonetheless remain stable over time. But he assumes not only an independently determined rate of accumulation (as I also do later in this paper) with no full employment, *but also an increase in wage share as capacity utilisation increases in the economy*. Since his model differs from both Pasinetti's (who did not make this assumption), and the neoclassical one which assumes full employment, I confine myself in the present discussion only to the two equilibria mentioned in the text –PP.

15 A reference to the Sherlock Holmes story, *Silver Blaze*, by Arthur Conan Doyle, and to "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time" –Ed.

16 For a discussion of this emigration see Utsa Patnaik, *Capitalism and the Production of Poverty*, T G Narayanan Lecture, in *Social Scientist*, Vol 40 Nos. 1-2, Jan-Feb 2012, pp 3-20 –PP.

17 Mikhail Tugan-Baranovsky (1865-1919) was a Russian-Ukrainian economist and politician, and the author of numerous works on the theory of value and the distribution of social revenue, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Tugan-Baranovsky –Ed.

18 K Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, Part VIII, in K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 35, p 704ff.

19 M Kalecki, *A Theory of Commodity, Income and Capital Taxation*, in *Selected Essays on the Dynamics of the Capitalist Economy 1933-1970*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971.

20 Joan Robinson's remark is contained in her review of R F Harrod's book *The Trade Cycle* which appeared in *The Economic Journal*, December 1936 –PP.

The Struggle of Venezuelan Communists against Opportunism

By Fernando Arribas García

This article was written in early 2012, as a submission from the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) to the online journal International Communist Review, but was not published until November 2013. Existing circumstances in early 2012 must therefore be taken into account: President Chávez was still alive, apparently recovering his health and preparing for his re-election campaign; and the PPT party (Patria Para Todos, see below) was in practice part of the opposition, until a judicial decision a few months later over a fractional dispute returned the use of the acronym to the progressive sectors. Out of respect to the original text, no passages of the article concerning such facts have been modified.

I Introduction

In its 80 years of existence, the PCV, like many other communist and workers' parties of the world, has on more than one occasion faced both right opportunism and left opportunism. The holding of our 1st National Conference¹ in August 1937 was already marked by this struggle, which was expressed on that occasion as the conflict between those who defended the need to give the Party its own organisational structure and show themselves to the country as a proletarian organisation with an independent programme and action, and those who unsuccessfully proposed, from a right-wing opportunist position, to abort the formation of the Party and dissolve it within the liberal-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political organisations of the time.²

From 1941 to 1945, the Venezuelan communists suffered a new right-wing opportunist deviation which promoted class collaboration and was strengthened in 1943 with the adoption of the liquidationist doctrine internationally known as 'Browderism'. The influence and spread of this doctrine, which had very serious repercussions in several Latin American countries, was particularly favoured in Venezuela by the closeness to the Isaías Medina government (which from 1942 had diverse progressive and revolutionary sectors) and by the division that existed then in the communist ranks. This scenario was essentially resolved by the holding, in December

1946, of our 1st Congress, known as the "Unity" congress, which managed to unite most of the communist groups of the time under the name that our party has always had, and issued a stern censure of 'Browderism' and class collaboration.³

Opportunism, in its most general sense, can be defined as any alteration of the policy, programme or theoretical conceptions of revolutionary parties or labour movements, arising from the influence of events and circumstances at the time, that objectively moves them away from the historical interests and strategic needs of the working class, and instead leads them to line up with the interests and needs of non-proletarian strata and classes of society (particularly the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie). As has already been pointed out by several authors, the different varieties of opportunism differ from each other mainly as a result of the different layers and sectors of the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie from which opportunism comes and behind which they aim to drag the workers' and revolutionary movement.⁴

In Venezuela, this precept has been fulfilled with remarkable regularity, and since over the years various petty-bourgeois, intellectual and professional sectors have had very strong presence within the ranks of our Party, we have unsurprisingly experienced repeated outbreaks of opportunism, both right-wing and left-wing. The most severe and damaging episode of left opportunism

occurred throughout the 1960s and resulted in the split in our Party that gave rise to the so-called Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), to which we devote a few paragraphs below.

But right-wing opportunism has also appeared in our organisation and in its periphery, not only, as we saw, at the conference of 1937 and in the 1940s, but also on other occasions. Most recently, in 2006-7, we confronted and defeated a new liquidationist outbreak that aimed once more, as in that historic conference, to dissolve the Party and add it to another multi-class organisation with a petty-bourgeois orientation; however, it managed only to cause us a relatively minor loss of members. We shall also devote special attention below to this recent episode, not so much for its quantitative importance, but for its importance in the interpretation and analysis of the current national political situation.

We shall also discuss, albeit briefly, some other manifestations of opportunism that we have fought, and continue to fight against, in other supposedly 'revolutionary' or 'progressive' organisations, and whose denunciation and unmasking are necessary to avoid ideological confusion and political disorientation of the working class and the people in general.

II From Armed Struggle to Reorientation to the Labour Movement

In our country the 1960s began in an atmosphere full of opportunities and threats. The military dictatorship had been overthrown in January 1958, as a result of the successful and courageous PCV alliance policy that led to a genuine popular uprising. But by the early 60s the political situation was rapidly deteriorating. The hopes aroused by the popular triumph over the dictatorship were almost immediately betrayed by the so-called 'landmark pact', by which the right-wing parties (the social-democrat AD and christian-democrat COPEI, with complicity of the Democratic Republican Union, URD, as junior partner) agreed on the exclusion of communists and other progressive and popular forces from the new government. This pact later resulted in the formation of a two-party system for the preservation of the interests of imperialism and the local bourgeoisie associated with it.

Between 1962 and 1967, the PCV developed the tactics of armed struggle in response to unpatriotic and unpopular governments that emerged from that

covenant. Leaving aside the mistakes made by the Party in the series of political decisions that led to the armed struggle, and committed during those war years both in the military direction of the actions and especially in their political leadership, it was quite clear by 1965 that there were no conditions in the country for the successful development of such tactics, and our Central Committee was well aware of that. At that time the possibilities for a military withdrawal and an organised reintegration of our Party in the national political life were debated.⁵

But this debate was hampered by the rise in our ranks of a factional outbreak that sought autonomy of the military wing and the supremacy of the latter over the collective political leadership. The personal ambitions of some of the military commanders (especially Douglas Bravo), fed by the left-adventurist positions of some others who insisted on the viability of a military victory (Teodoro Petkoff, Freddy Muñoz), created a very complex situation in our Party, which took over two years to reach the final decision on military withdrawal.

From left petty-bourgeois positions, typical of a radicalised intelligentsia, the opportunists of the time promoted in our ranks the cult of the Cuban guerrilla experience as an example to follow, but in the abstract, without taking into account the specific conditions prevailing in Venezuela, and more importantly, without organic connection with the wide sections of the people and especially the working class. It is symptomatic that, simultaneously with the militarist deviation, there also developed a process of almost complete abandonment of Party work on the labour front and a contempt for the work of peasant organisation in everything that did not have to do directly with military activity:

"... the leadership of the Party was seized by a disdain for trade union work and it came to the conclusion that, in practice, it was not worth devoting material or human resources to trade union organisations or, in general, to any non-armed mass oriented work. In some years during the 1960s the trade union leaders in the PCV were considered like pariahs, unnecessary elements for the revolutionary victory that was expected to be obtained exclusively by the armed struggle."⁶

The worst of the military diversion

was settled with the expulsion of Bravo and others, who then founded the Venezuelan Revolutionary Party (PRV), which has already disappeared. However, other elements in our ranks continued promoting leftist adventurism and attacking the unity of our organisation. The extension of that state of affairs created the conditions, the 'breeding ground', for the development of new factionalism that would emerge at the end of the decade.

The decision on military withdrawal was finally taken by the 8th (Emergency) Plenum of the Central Committee in April 1967, which set the PCV general guidelines on armed struggle, subsequently ratified over and again, incorporated from 1980 into the Party programme and valid up to the present day. We claim and honour the heroic sacrifice of the hundreds of activists who gave their lives in those years and the thousands more who suffered prison, torture and persecution, and recognise the legitimacy of the use of armed tactics by people when conditions demand it, but we will always endeavour to promote the development of our strategic objectives in the least traumatic way possible and winning the broadest popular support for that goal:

"The PCV will devote its efforts so that the anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly, anti-oligarchic, democratic and popular transformations, and the passage of Venezuela to socialism, take place with as few sacrifices as possible. Therefore we will be sustained by the workers' organisation, adding all possible forces in order to express our people's will, making the enemy impotent and avoiding provocations, but we will not hesitate in using the highest forms of struggle in order to obtain the workers' and people's victory, to defend the social and political conquests if the dominant classes use fraud or counter-revolutionary and fascist violence in their selfish interests to distort the people's will."⁷

Throughout 1969, as the process of preparation and discussion for the 4th National Congress of the Party began, those who had more strongly encouraged opportunistic positions in the previous years finally announced their break with the PCV. Rather than explain and defend their views in the different Party



organs during the discussions that were beginning, the ‘dissidents’ just launched a public campaign of attacks against the Party, against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, against Leninism.⁸⁻¹⁰

Several weeks before the holding of the 4th National Congress in January 1971, Pompey Marquez, Teodoro Petkoff, Eloy Torres, Freddy Muñoz and Alfredo Maneiro, among others, left our ranks and initiated the organisation of a new party, the MAS, which was initially presented as a defender of the genuine communist positions, and even claimed the name of “Venezuelan Communist Force”. Due to the prestige that these leaders had achieved, especially among our younger or less experienced members, the damage caused by this desertion was very substantial, particularly in the ranks of the Communist Youth of Venezuela (JCV), which lost significant numbers, and among the intellectual and professional sectors.¹¹ The 4th National Congress of the PCV, and the Central Committee which it elected, immediately engaged in a counter-offensive that sought to expose the true character of the new organisation, whose ideological vacillation, composition, structure and

internal dynamics inexorably condemned it to drift further and further away from its intended left positions:

“There is nothing new nor original in all formulations made [by the dissidents]. And all that discourse, that alleged ‘new way of being socialist’ is nothing else but a smokescreen to hide what is actually a right-wing exodus. Their practice since 1970 shows that this is the path they have chosen. And that path only leads to a fatal precipice.”¹²

The subsequent development of events has vindicated our Party: Throughout the years, the alleged ‘new communists’ first decried real socialism, almost immediately renounced Leninism (and the nickname “Communist Force”), then what they termed as ‘orthodox Marxism’, later all Marxism, and finally any form of genuine socialism. Today, the old MAS is just a name, increasingly incongruous with an actual political practice that has even led it into an alliance with the fascist right-wing in their efforts to derail the process of

national liberation in progress in our country since 1999.

During the rest of the 1970s and the first half of 1980s, our Party had to face several other outbreaks of opportunism, but none as serious and damaging as those already mentioned. Between 1971 and 1974, the remnants of factional groups that had remained in our ranks, and other elements that in practice agreed with them, encountered an internal environment of greater discipline, a stronger organic life and a Party really determined to mend its ways and re proletarianise itself, in compliance with the decisions of the 4th Congress:

“... the latest crisis proves the need to proletarianise our leadership more and more, so it is indispensable to promote a greater number of workers and peasants to the category of PCV leaders [...], as the best guarantee of this Party remaining vigilant and rejecting the ideological and organisational contrabanding by those who, originating from other social classes, usually come to the leadership of the PCV not in



order to help the working class, but to modify its course”¹³

Under such internal conditions, which made it difficult to disrupt the life of the organisation, the remaining opportunists left individually or in small groups, with relatively minor consequences for the Party. Other smaller groups also left our Party and Youth in the mid-1980s (just before and just after our 7th National Congress, 1985), with even more minor consequences.

III From the Collapse of the Socialist Bloc to the Early Chávez Period

The weakening and decline of the PCV from 1988 to 1998 was caused mainly by factors external to our party and our country. These were the years of the crisis and subsequent collapse of the socialist bloc in Central Europe and Eurasia, and particularly the Soviet Union, the main reference point for our Party from the very moment of its foundation in 1931.

However, the PCV maintained its activity and held high the banner of Marxism-Leninism, even in the darkest moments of the crisis, when there was great pressure from national and international opportunist forces to transform our Party into a ‘post-communist’ organisation similar to those which actually appeared in other countries in those years. Although we lost members and were forced into a corner, at our 9th National Congress in 1992 we launched, with great courage and conviction, the slogan “Socialism is still the hope of the people!” This was the time when the theoreticians of global capitalism were celebrating the ‘end of history’ and the alleged final victory of the system of exploitation.

The bankruptcy of the two-party system, and the neoliberal economic model in our country, enabled us to escape from the decline. The evolution of our national history showed that, after all, the Party’s warnings against neoliberalism and its strong opposition to the two-party system over four decades had been correct. The process of national liberation led by Hugo Chávez began in 1999, on a par with the gradual recovery of our Party. But at the same time a new round of fighting began, both inside and outside our ranks, against left-wing and right-wing deviations.

The PCV was, by decision of our 10th National Conference in 1998, the first party officially to endorse the

presidential candidacy of Chávez, and is now the only component of the original alliance that continues to support him (among other original participants were the MAS and other former communist individuals and organisations which had split from our Party during the aforementioned episodes). But this support has not been uncritical or mechanical. From the beginning of the Chávez government, our Party has exposed, with care and warmth but firmly, political and ideological deviations of the president himself and those around him.

The president, initially the proponent of a generic and vague nationalism, has fluctuated over the years between an alleged ‘third way’, an ambiguous Bolivarianism, some elements of social Christianity, left social-democracy and diverse other varieties of reformism, until in 2005 (and subsequently) he agreed with our Party that socialism is the only way for the future of humanity. However, there are still conceptual and political confusions that hinder effective progress in that direction.

In this sense, the 14th National Congress of the PCV in August 2011 confirmed the diagnosis already made by our Central Committee on several occasions, at least since 2007, about the nature and content of the process headed by President Chávez:

“... among the personalities and government members who seem interested in advancing towards socialism there is a predominant and heterogeneous mixture of idealist and petty-bourgeois conceptions about the new society and the ways to advance towards its construction. As there is no scientific conception of socialism, consistent and firmly based on the principles of historical materialism, in the highest ranks of the political leadership, the process of changes has no clarity over the key definition in order to leverage its advance in the right direction.”¹⁴

At the same time, our Party also identified the concrete historical cause of such deviations:

“... on the one hand, the social subject that has led the process until now corresponds to the middle sectors and the petty bourgeoisie, not the working class, which is the true social

subject that is historically called upon to build socialism; on the other hand, the working class itself and the working people from town and country in general have not yet in our country reached the necessary level of consciousness, organisation, clarity of programme and mobilisation that allows them to impose their class hegemony and modify the course of events in the right direction”.¹⁵

IV The PSUV and the Revolutionary Party

The friendly but firm ideological confrontation which we had over the years, with President Chávez and his entourage, reached a climax in 2006-7, when the president, unilaterally and without consultation, gave all parties and organisations that supported him at that time the instruction to dissolve and join the new political organisation he was building, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).

This situation worsened some tensions that had been developing within our Party between a majority proposing to deepen and strengthen the PCV’s own independent profile as a class organisation which was an ally of, but not subordinate to, the president; and a minority who had been showing deviations which were inappropriate in a proletarian party, both in language and ideas, as in political practice and working methods. The Central Committee took the wise decision to convene a National Congress in extraordinary session, just five months after the conclusion of our previous Congress, so it was this highest body of our organisation which debated and decided on the situation posed by the presidential order.

The 13th National Congress (Extraordinary), held between January and March 2007, approved the *Thesis on the Party of the Revolution*, which accurately expounds the conception of the party held by revolutionaries all over the world: a party with clearly defined class orientation, with the ideology and program of the working class, internationalist-minded, with a collective leadership and an inner life emanating from the principles of democratic centralism and absolute independence from the bourgeoisie and its instrument, the bourgeois state.¹⁵

This definition of the revolutionary party was and is incompatible with the proposals that had been made for the

construction of the PSUV, which was prefigured from the beginning as a multi-class organisation, with strong influence from the petty bourgeoisie and state officials, and with no defined ideological profile. Thus the vast majority of the PCV rejected the instructions issued by President Chávez. The 13th Congress, consistently, also adopted the *Political Resolution*, which distinguished between the need to move together with President Chávez and his new party and other forces, in building a broad front to develop the anti-imperialist struggle currently underway in our country, and the parallel need to strengthen and develop a strong and genuinely class Party as an instrument for the future task of socialist construction:

“The widest unity of the political and social forces is needed at national, continental and world level in order to achieve victory in the anti-imperialist struggle. At the same time, the advance towards socialism demands the construction of a revolutionary party that gathers together the cadres who express the most consistent positions of the classes and social layers which have been historically committed to revolution and socialism; a party that constitutes itself in the ideological, political and organisational vanguard, which organisationally, collectively and in a united way leads the creative effort of the masses in order to destroy the capitalist state and assume the tasks of constructing Popular Power; a party that promotes values, principles and conduct directed towards overcoming the still-dominant bourgeois cultural hegemony. This political organisation must express, in its theory and social practice, our people’s historical and struggle traditions, which have deep Bolivarian roots, as well as Marxism-Leninism applied to the concrete conditions of our homeland.”¹⁶

Thus, the outbreak of liquidationism was quickly and decisively defeated. However, just over one third of the members of our Central Committee, as well as important but isolated groups of regional leaders, local and grassroots activists in Caracas and several other regions of the country, disagreed with the decisions of the 13th Congress and

‘migrated’ to the president’s new party.

In some cases this ‘migration’ was the result of unfair pressure exerted by the government on communist militants who were state employees and who were virtually forced to give up their ranks or their jobs. In other cases, young or inexperienced militants gave up, confused by the undisputed leadership of the president and the affection that his figure awakened in our Party and in broad sectors of the Venezuelan people. In others, it was the result of personal ambitions of command and leadership that were not welcome in our organisation, which sought other spaces for their realisation; and finally, in some key cases, it was the result of right-wing opportunist temptations born from the closeness that had been growing between the positions of certain leaders of our Party and the petty-bourgeois sectors that dominate the process of change currently underway in Venezuela.

In the latter sense, it is very significant that, several years before the aforementioned episode, some of our leaders had been adopting, in their analysis and speeches, certain categories and formulae alien to Marxism-Leninism and very characteristic of the confusing amalgam of ideas of the petty-bourgeois sectors in government. Notable examples of this include: the use of the misleading and unscientific category of ‘empire’ in place of ‘imperialism’, mystifying the nature of the highest stage of capitalism and hindering its proper understanding and analysis; the adoption of the phrases ‘Fourth Republic’ and ‘Fifth Republic’ to refer to the governments before and after 1999, ignoring the fact that the class essence (bourgeois) of the Venezuelan state apparatus has not been altered, and therefore from the standpoint of historical materialism there has been continuity in substance; or the overly optimistic use of the term ‘revolution’ and ‘revolutionary government’ to refer to the process of change led by President Chávez, whose genuinely revolutionary character is still subject to consideration. We must admit self-critically that traces of this style of language and analysis even managed to leak into some of the documents that we adopted at our 12th National Congress in 2006, revealing the depth and seriousness that this deviation had reached.

Just 6 months after the completion of the 13th Congress (Extraordinary), we held our 11th National Conference, in order to complete the restoration of our leading bodies and overcome definitively the aftermath of the crisis that had begun

the previous year. This Conference established the principles that would govern (and still govern) relations between our Party and the PSUV as allies in building a broad anti-imperialist front, in a framework of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal life of each organisation. It also established some guidelines for relations of the PCV with our former militants who had ‘migrated’ (this was the term used then) to the ally party:

“Despite the fact that their behaviour was distant from the internal rules of PCV, [the ‘migrants’] should not be considered as defectors or traitors, for they have decided to join an organisation that is not counter-revolutionary; on the contrary [...] this new party is objectively our ally in the tasks towards the revolution of national liberation.”¹⁷

Although somewhat numerically weakened by such ‘migrations’ our Party emerged from this episode refined and reinvigorated at the ideological level. Since then we have tried to exercise greater care in the scientific rigour of our analysis and in the correct and precise use of Marxist-Leninist categories.

At the same time, we have seen how former communists, who began their ideological degeneration in the years 2005-7, have outside our Party continued their slide down the path of opportunism towards positions increasingly distant from revolutionary science, to the point in recent times of distorting the fundamental postulates of Marxist political economy or of challenging the character of the working class as a key driver of the future socialist revolution. We repeat now what we said in the 1970s about those who founded the MAS: that road only leads to “a fatal precipice”.

V. The Degeneration of ‘Left’ Opportunists

Special attention needs to be given to the case of parties and organisations which insist on calling themselves ‘progressive’ or ‘left’ although they are currently objectively collaborating with the efforts of national and transnational right-wing forces to restore the pre-1999 status quo. We refer in particular to the degenerate remnants of old organisations that achieved their peak in previous decades with progressive and even revolutionary speeches and style, but have been unmasked by history as the product of



opportunistic outbreaks without real revolutionary substance.

The most tragic of these, but probably not the most important in terms of numbers or influence, is Red Flag (Bandera Roja, BR). This is a group with roots in the movements that persisted in the tactic of armed struggle after the military withdrawal of the PCV in 1967, and is the result of successive splits and recombinations of the defunct Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR, the result in turn of a split in the social-democratic AD), plus various adventurous groups of heterogeneous origin which joined up with it over the years. In its ideological composition we could identify elements of Maoism and Guevarism (the doctrine known as ‘focalism’).

Isolated from a working-class background and virtually unconnected with any important mass movement, BR’s main arena of political action from the mid-1970s was the student movement, where it had a certain influence and where it recruited most of its cadres. Our Party and our youth repeatedly criticised the opportunist and adventurist actions of BR, and sought wherever possible to engage in political debate with their leaders.

During the 1980s, BR and its supporters became increasingly isolated, hemmed in and infiltrated by state security forces, and suffered severe blows and heavy casualties at the hands of the police and the military repression, particularly in the ‘massacres of Cantaura and Yumare’, which were denounced at the time by our Party as state crimes against humanity. After that, having dismantled its military wing, BR retreated exclusively to university student scenarios, where it took part in provocative actions of great courage but without constructive political content, which were rejected almost unanimously by the population.

From far-left opportunism, BR went to the far right in the late 1990s, when the election victory of President Chávez was imminent. Some of its cadres then broke with the organisation and joined the president’s political project (and now occupy important positions in the PSUV and the government), while others declared themselves in opposition to the new government and became, in practice, shock troops at the service of those who had persecuted them and killed their comrades in previous decades.

We must also consider the case of the Radical Cause organisation (La Causa-R or LCR). Founded around 1972 as a

result of disagreements and conflicts between the renegade leadership expelled from our ranks in 1971 (especially Maneiro on the one hand, and Petkoff, Marquez and Muñoz on the other), LCR was during its early years in the shadow of the much larger MAS.

Taking advantage of the void left in the labour movement by the communists during the armed-struggle period (an error from which we have not yet managed to recover completely), LCR grew rapidly in the trade unions during the 1970s and 1980s, and managed to achieve significant influence, especially among the workers of the large-scale metallurgical industries in the Guayana region. There the opportunistic nature of LCR was noted, and what was to be their political destiny remained in evidence: their concrete practical work at the forefront of the union movement became increasingly workerist and making demands, and increasingly remote from genuine working-class trade unionism.

The degeneration of the LCR-controlled unions even led them into openly corrupt practices and the progressive deterioration of their influence. In the early 1990s, LCR had a brief heyday as a national political party, on their own or supporting individual right-wing figures, but their lack of ideological and political coherence prevented them from growing further and led to their almost immediate decline. It was part of the alliance that supported the presidential candidacy of Hugo Chávez in 1998, but in the early years of the new government LCR broke with the president and joined the opposition, where it remains today.

An important group of LCR leaders did choose to stay with President Chávez and formed a new organisation, the party Patria Para Todos (PPT); but, after at least two splits, this too has finally joined LCR in the ranks of the opposition. Some of those who were part of the PPT decided in 2007 to join the PSUV and today remain associated with the president.

The MAS and its products, along with BR, LCR and their descendants, now trade on their remote left-wing past to hoist allegedly ‘progressive’ flags and pose as the ‘left wing’ of the opposition to President Chávez. This manoeuvre, another demonstration of the opportunistic nature and classless nature of such elements, tries to confuse some sectors of the working class and the broad population, and therefore should be denounced and unmasked.

VI Conclusions

It is time to close this article with some conclusions and lessons to be learned from our history of struggle against opportunism. The first and foremost is the confirmation, in our own experience, of Lenin’s statement about the origin and nature of opportunism as an expression of the inescapable presence in the ranks of the revolutionary parties of petty-bourgeois layers, with their own conceptions and trends:

“... in every capitalist country, side by side with the proletariat, there are always broad strata of the petty bourgeoisie, of small proprietors. [...] It is quite natural that the petty-bourgeois world-outlook should again and again crop up in the ranks of the broad workers’ parties.”¹⁸

Each petty-bourgeois layer present with sufficient strength in our Party will automatically tend, unless stopped in time, to develop its own variety of opportunism, in accordance with its characteristics, interests and profiles. Radicalised university intellectuals tend towards left opportunism, while officials, professionals and other relatively well-established and prosperous sectors will tend to the right-wing variety.

From this diagnosis the prophylaxis and medicine for the disease are clear without too much effort: comprehensive proletarianisation of our Party. We refer not only to the deep assimilation of the proletarian points of view and proletarian ideology by Party members not originally coming from the working class, but especially to the effective and dominant presence of worker cadres in the Party leadership bodies in as high a proportion as circumstances permit. The latter is what Comrade Alvaro Cunhal called the “golden rule”:

“An important guarantee for the class policy of the Party is the decisive participation of working class militants in the leadership, *ie* a Party leadership with a working class majority. [...] More often than not (and as a general rule), bourgeois ideology has more influence on the intellectuals than the workers and therefore the decisive participation of workers in the leadership guarantees more solidity in principles than does the decisive participation of comrades from a different social origin.”¹⁹

And such a rule, as we have seen, was precisely the medicine that the PCV prescribed for itself at the 4th National Congress in 1971. In this sense, in recent years, our 13th and 14th Congresses, and our 11th Conference, have insisted on the need to increase the proletarian presence in the ranks of our Party, and have prioritised work in and with the working class as the first task of the PCV. But we must recognise that, although we have recently had some major successes in this regard, our Party today is still not able to comply fully with that golden principle.

The second major lesson from our experience is that the implacable dialectics of history, sooner or later, will be imposed on all opportunists, even against their wishes, and will eventually push them into the camp of the bourgeoisie; *ie* all opportunism always ends up being right-wing, regardless of the forms and slogans initially adopted. And this is because there is a common central element: the rejection or ignorance of the class point of view of the proletariat, leaving the opportunists unable to appreciate the historical perspective of the overall development of societies.³

Indeed, as Lenin himself said, all opportunism, one way or another, with more or less theorising emphasis, with more or less subtlety, always falsifies Marxism “by trimming it of everything unacceptable to the bourgeoisie.”²⁰ And, of course, the first aspect of our doctrine to be mutilated, in order to win the acceptance of the bourgeoisie, is precisely the class analysis, the centre and cornerstone of all Marxism.

It is therefore imperative to exercise the utmost vigilance in terms of theoretical and conceptual rigour in our analysis, and in the use of the accurate scientific categories of Marxism-Leninism. Experience shows that outbreaks of opportunism usually advertise themselves with deviations or ‘innovations’ at the level of discourse and analysis, even before they become visible in the field of practical action.

This does not mean in any way that we dogmatically resist the legitimate and necessary development of revolutionary science, or that we should close ourselves to the natural healthy debate and exchange of ideas both inside and outside our ranks. On the contrary, it means that we address all debate and all potential doctrinal development with the utmost seriousness and rigour. Science can and must grow and develop, but it is our obligation to exercise critical vigilance so that, among the legitimate innovations, there is no infiltration of ideological contraband that denatures the tested foundations of Marxism-Leninism, especially in what has to do with class analysis.

Finally, we note that our battles against liquidationism have reaffirmed in us the importance of maintaining the independence and the organisational and programmatic autonomy of the political party of the working class. As demonstrated by the development of events, giving in to liquidationist pressure, however powerful and seductive it might have been at the time, would have been a catastrophic failure, which would have left the working class politically disarmed, and

in an even greater level of helplessness and disarray with respect to petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces and positions.

In this sense, we make the words of Comrade José Carlos Mariátegui our own:

“... the vanguard of the proletariat and the conscious workers, faithful to their action in the field of the class struggle, reject every tendency which signifies fusion with the forces and political organisations of other classes. We condemn as opportunist every political line that promotes the momentary abdication by the proletariat of its independence of programme and activity, which must be safeguarded in its entirety at all times.”²¹

Today, the positions that sought to liquidate our Party have been defeated, and the influences that aspired to dilute or distort our class profile and take us away from Marxist-Leninist ideology have been defeated. The PCV is growing and strengthening itself with new energy, and with the compass needle pointing firmly towards the perspective of socialist revolution and a communist future.

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Turning Hegel from his Head onto his Feet

Lenin's Critique of Hegel's Science of Logic

by Hans-Heinz Holz



The Programme of Materialist Reading of Hegel

Lenin's famous dictum, that it is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, appears as a marginal note in his *Conspectus* of that work.¹ The remark could easily be taken as an ingenious sketch, but it is certainly much more than that. Far from indulging in a piece of intellectual history, Lenin is seeking, in reading Hegel, insights for a philosophy which regards itself as practice – meaning primarily political practice. In other words, Lenin has no historical motive in reading Hegel; and he defines with methodical neatness the position from which he unlocks Hegel's sense as "materialist":

"I am in general trying to read Hegel materialistically: Hegel is materialism which has been stood on its head (according to Engels)."²

In his studies on Lenin, Louis Althusser³ subjected Lenin's Hegel reading programme (which in fact concerns essentially the relationship of Marxist philosophy to the history of philosophy) to methodological reflection. However, Althusser's attempt amounts to denying the precise sense of setting Hegel "from his head onto his feet" and to interpreting it unspecifically as a simple "cleansing" from idealistic disguises, trimmings and defilings of a "rational kernel", which Lenin could "extract". For this interpretation, Althusser refers to a remark of Lenin's on the section on 'Logic of Essence', in which he describes "movement and self-movement ... the opposite of 'dead being'" as the "core of Hegelianism" and adds:

"This core has to be discovered, understood, *hinüberretten* [rescued], laid bare, refined, which is precisely what Marx and Engels did."⁴

Althusser thereby draws the conclusion:

"What are we to understand by this metaphor of 'laying bare, 'refining' or 'extraction' (a term used elsewhere), if not the image that there is in Hegel something like a 'rational' kernel, which must be rid of its skin, or better no doubt, of its superimposed skins, in short of a certain crust which is more or less thick"⁵

For Althusser, this methodological direction takes precedence over every other place in Lenin's text which uses *inversion* with terminological precision (and not metaphorically). However, it is a fact that Lenin stakes the claim of inversion at the beginning as well as at the end of his *Hegel-Conspectus*, as it were framing it:

"Characteristic! The movement of consciousness, 'like the development of all natural and intellectual life', rests on 'the nature of the pure essentialities which make up the content of Logic'.

Turn it round: Logic and theory of knowledge must 'be derived from 'the development of all natural and intellectual life.'"⁶

"Engels was right when he said that Hegel's system was materialism turned upside down."⁷

The methodological

challenge of *inversion*, raised with relevant frequency, is taken up in the manner in which Lenin deals with Hegel's *Logic*. Of course, he makes excerpts, thereby extracting the core from the total text. However, this is not a "rational core" that he is appropriating by leaving aside the remainder; rather he takes the core of Hegel's *argument structure*, and then inverts it materialistically. For example, Lenin notes Hegel's text:

"The World in and for itself is identical with the World of Appearances, but at the same time it is opposite to it"⁸

and he makes the excerpt:

"The Appearing and The Essential World are each ... the independent whole of existence. One was to have been only reflected Existence, and the other only immediate Existence; but each continues itself in the other, and consequently in itself is the identity of these two moments. ... Both in the first instance are independent, but they are independent only as totalities, and they are this insofar as each essentially has in itself the moment of the other"⁸

Finally he comments:

"The essence is here that both the world of appearances and the world in itself are moments of man's knowledge of nature, stages, *alterations* or deepening (of knowledge)."⁸

In a commentary on the following section, 'Actuality', Lenin explains what this cognition of the

relationship of substantiality and phenomenality, gained at the level of appearance, signifies in materialist reading (thus inverting logic into real philosophy):

"On the one hand knowledge of matter must be deepened to knowledge (of the concept) of Substance, in order to find the causes of phenomena. On the other hand the actual cognition of the cause is the deepening of knowledge from the externality of phenomena to the Substance. Two types of examples should explain this: 1) from the history of natural science, and 2) from the history of philosophy. More exactly: it is not 'examples' that should be here – *comparaison n'est pas raison* [comparison is not proof] – but the *quintessence* of both the one and the other + the history of technique."⁹

Hegel's dialectics of 'Essence' and 'Appearance' in the form of logical categories is understood as an *element of the reflection process* and is related to human practice (in the unity of knowing and producing: natural science – philosophy – technology).

While Lenin "extracts" and materialistically "inverts" the principle of construction of Hegel's logic, he is always concerned with the structure of the *total*. Consequently he also does not contradict Engels, when he writes:

"But Marx did not stop at eighteenth-century materialism: he developed philosophy to a higher level. He enriched it through the achievements of German classical philosophy, especially of Hegel's system,



which in its turn had led to the materialism of Feuerbach. The main achievement was *dialectics*¹⁰

Lenin wrote that in connection with his description of German classical philosophy (alongside English political economy and French socialism) as a “source and at the same time component part of Marxism.”^{11,12} That is: he views dialectics as “the main achievement” of classical bourgeois German philosophy “and especially of Hegel’s system”; thus he places dialectics within Hegel’s system in such a way that it cannot subsequently be brought out from it as a separate part, but rather – discovered in the particulars of the presentation and understood in its movement – can be extracted and purified as the structure of the system as a whole. The way in which the inversion event appears can be read in one of Lenin’s fundamental remarks:

“When Hegel endeavours ... to bring man’s purposive activity under the categories of logic ... **THEN THAT IS NOT MERELY STRETCHING A POINT, A MERE GAME. THIS HAS A VERY PROFOUND, PURELY MATERIALISTIC CONTENT.** It has to be inverted: the practical activity of man had to lead his consciousness to the repetition of the various logical figures thousands of millions of times in order that these figures could obtain the significance of axioms. This *nota bene*.”¹³

However, this could not be a case of importing an idealist system – even as a

skeleton – into Marxism. If, as Lenin correctly sees, Hegel’s dialectics must not be detached from his system, then something must be done with the system in total, in order that it can be a component of Marxism. This is plainly the inversion which Marx and Engels executed, when they were “pretty well the only people to rescue conscious dialectics from German idealist philosophy and apply it in the materialist conception of nature and history”.¹⁴ Lenin’s philosophical achievement is to have made this occurrence clear in his notes on Hegel.

I shall try to show that the process of inversion is certainly an exceptionally particular process and one which can only take place where it is a matter of the materialist application of an idealist system in its system-structure (and not only of certain parts of its content). Here, in contrast to all other philosophies, the extraction of a rational kernel and its determination in its historical particularity is the appropriate and admissible method of what is known as productive reception¹⁵. In connecting with Hegel Lenin characterised this form of integrating philosophical history into the then existing philosophising:

“[T]he refutation of a philosophic system does not mean discarding it, but developing it further, not replacing it by another, one-sided opposed system, but incorporating it into something more advanced.”¹⁶

It is obvious that ‘superseding’ is substantially distinct from ‘inverting’, that sources of every sort can flow into a new philosophy, without it being specifically differentiated [*unterschieden*] from them (although distinct [*verschieden*], only a variant

[*ετερον*] and not different [*διαφορον*]); what it means will be illustrated later.

Examples of Inversion

In a few exceptional parts of his conspectus of the *Logic*, Lenin expressly executes the inversion most clearly. Here, on vertically divided pages, he places the Hegel excerpt on one side and the materialist reflection on the other. We find this explicit inversion only in the following places: the marginal notes to Book 3 (Volume 2) of the *Logic* (*ie* to ‘The Doctrine of the Notion’); the section on ‘Objectivity’; the introductory part of the section on ‘The Idea’; and the chapter on ‘The Idea of Cognition’.¹⁷ In numerous other places the inversion appears in the form of a commentary or simply as an exclamation or interjection-type symbols.¹⁸ Mostly Lenin only indicates the inversion in the form of a headline, so to speak as a preliminary notice of a systematic realisation, which – had it been explicitly done – would have illuminated the relationship of philosophy and reality, of theory and practice, of thinking and being.

There are two possible interpretations for this fact that Lenin only takes up reflective inversion in the last third of his excerpts and comments on the *Logic*. One is that it was only when he reached this point in his reading that Lenin arrived at an insight into the *rigorous correlation* of Hegelian and Marxist philosophy, *ie* he advanced through his own commentaries to the precision of the inversion process. His stressing of the place where Hegel counterposes the physical to the spiritual (“then it must be said that Logic is rather something supernatural”¹⁹), and the marginal note to that, “nature and ‘*das Geistige*’ (the mental)”²⁰, would then appear as first presentiments of what a materialist reading would amount to. Alternatively,

it could be surmised that exact inversion can only occur systematically and be grounded on the last third of Hegel’s *Logic*, because, according to the construction of the book, the idealist illustration of reality as totality is only worked out in ‘The Doctrine of the Notion’, thus enabling a materialist reconstruction of the ideal *totum*²¹ (larger whole) in the dialectics of the real.

However one may view Lenin’s cognition process in reading Hegel, I adopt the second interpretation, from arguments which lie in the structure of the inversion and thus in the nature of philosophy itself. The stated relationship of Hegel’s *Logic* and the dialectics of Marx, Engels and Lenin demands understanding in rigorously logical terms – but not, for instance, in such a way that Hegel’s *Logic* could include Marxist application as one of its types. Much more, there exists between both *thoroughly different* systems of thought a structural agreement or isomorphy, which allows us to say that they correspond to one other in a mirror-image inversion. Marx had precisely this relationship in mind when he explained that his dialectical method was not only different from Hegel’s in its basis, but was its “direct opposite”.²²

Once again, we must take this remark as exactly as possible – *ie* that, with Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, it is not a matter of just any other, but rather of two ways of theoretical reconstruction of reality, which are related to each other as different in a very precisely defined way. The difference is determined as “the direct opposite”, and is expressed elsewhere, and rather more sloppily, that Marx set Hegel’s dialectics from its head onto its feet.

However, the direct opposite of something is not everything remaining (as, in a misunderstood way, in the

formulation of the Aristotelian axioms, the duality of *A* and Not-*A*²³), but rather its inversion or, one could say, its mirror-image version.²⁴ Here the term “mirror image” (or “reflected image”) should be understood metaphorically, insofar as one philosophy, dialectical materialism, relates itself in a mirror-image way to another, the idealism of the Absolute Idea. Whether we can use the metaphor exactly, cannot be shown until later.²⁵

Lenin develops the first specific mirror construction in connection with Hegel’s category of *end*. According to Hegel, the *end* is the truth of mechanism and chemism, and hence that subject area in which the external objectivity of the inorganic object goes over into its being “for itself”. As soon as it is related to endless progress, this pure “in itself” being of inorganic material turns into teleology; and it can be said that this teleology brings to expression a self-reference of the material world in the era. Hegel grasps the first stage of this self-reference as “chemism”:

“The chemical object is distinguished from the mechanical by the fact that the latter is a totality indifferent to *determinateness*, and consequently the *relation to other* and the kind and manner of this relation, belong to its nature. ... Examined more closely the chemical object, as a *self-subsistent* totality in general, is in the first instance an object that is reflected into itself Chemism itself is *the first negation of indifferent objectivity and of the externality of determinateness*; it is therefore still infected with the immediate self-subsistence of the object and with externality. Consequently it is not yet for itself

that totality of self-determination that proceeds from it and in which rather it is sublated.”²⁶

In chemism the disparity of the physical thing has been sublated (*ie* assimilated and transcended –*Ed*), appearing not just as an aggregate, but as a compound. Since this is the result of a process, chemism shows nature to be historical, and thus can be understood as a pathway for producing ever more procured forms of reflection, right up to man.²⁷ For Hegel this progress certainly remains of this type in the self-determination of the Notion:

“Where *purposiveness* is discerned, an *intelligence [Verstand]* is assumed as its author, and for this end we therefore demand the Notion’s own free Existence. ... End therefore is the subjective Notion as an essential effort and urge to posit itself externally.”²⁸

Lenin correctly discerned that Hegel starts from man as the ‘highest’ form of nature, as an entity given to himself, existing for himself and reflected in himself. This entity experiences his own practical relationship to the world as purposeful activity. Therefore the world appears to him as the ‘object’ (of his labour and perception, which becomes real in the Notion), and he subsumes nature under himself:

“Two forms of the *objective* process; nature (mechanical and chemical) and the *purposive* activity of man. The mutual relation of these forms. At the beginning, man’s ends appear foreign (‘other’) in relation to nature. Human consciousness,

science (*‘der Begriff’*), reflects the essence, the substance of nature, but at the same time this consciousness is something external in relation to nature (not immediately, not simply, coinciding with it).”²⁹

Because man experiences nature as something opposed to him, he sees the purposive relationship as directed towards something external, expressing himself in practical activities. However, it is evident that the determinative relationship here is actually inverted: nature is not something foreign, subordinated to purposively acting man; rather man is an element of nature, on which he depends:

“The laws of the external world, of nature, which are divided into *mechanical* and *chemical* (this is very important) are the bases of man’s *purposive* activity.

In his practical activity, man is confronted with the objective world, is dependent on it, and determines his activity by it.”³⁰

The turning-point, at which idealistic dialectics can be transformed into real dialectics, is the category of ‘externality’. The end, as external to the subject, even though set by him, lets the material world of mechanical and chemical nature appear as subsumed into the activities of the subject; but, with regard to contents, the end is precisely determined by the external world (thereby indeed remaining external to the subject) and hence is essentially the indication of the antecedence of material nature over the end-setting subject. Both aspects correlate with each other in purposive activity (Lenin says “mutual

relation”³⁰). Lenin constructs this mutual relation as a structure of inversion, and in connection with this comments again on the construction:

“In actual fact, men’s ends are engendered by the objective world and presuppose it – they find it as something given, present. But it *seems* to man as if his ends are taken from outside the world, and are independent of the world (‘freedom’).”³¹

Since Lenin understands the subject not as the creator of the world-process, but as an essential element of natural history, he is able at the next step to divest the Idea of its mystical character – with Hegel “the objectively true, or the *true as such*”³² – and translate it as “man’s knowledge” and “*reflection of nature*”.³³ Hegel says:

“The Idea being the unity of Notion and reality, *being* has attained the significance of *truth*; therefore what now *is* is only what is Idea. ... However, the Idea has not merely the more general meaning of *true being*, of the unity of *Notion* and *reality*, but the more specific one of the unity of *subjective Notion* and *objectivity*.”³⁴

On the other hand, for Lenin the Idea is, first of all, the “coincidence (conformity) of notion and objectivity”, secondly “the **relation** of the subjectivity (= man) which is for itself (= independent, as it were) to the objectivity which is *distinct* (from this Idea)” and thirdly “the *process* of the submersion (of the mind) in an inorganic nature for the sake of subordinating it to the power of the subject and for the sake of generalisation (cognition of the universal



in its phenomena).³⁵ These three aspects can however only be grasped if they are considered not only in conjunction with the respective individual subject matter, but with the totality of all existence:

“Individual Being (an object, a phenomenon, etc) is (only) one **side** of the Idea (of truth). Truth requires still other sides of **reality**, which likewise appear only as independent and individual *Only in their totality ... and in their relation ... is truth realised.*”³⁶

Precisely because this totality is only constructed in the Idea, but can never be comprehended in the direct subject-relations, does the Idea (as philosophical cognition) have *theoretical reality* – and that is the reality of the theory, along with its transforming power; but it is only in reality that the objective activity of man enters, in which the (ideally constructed) unity of the world is always intended. Hegel draws this result in the change from the theoretical (contemplated) to the practical Idea:

“The Idea, insofar as the Notion is now *for itself* the Notion determinate in and for itself, is the *Practical Idea*, or *Action*.”³⁷

Here Lenin sees in Hegel himself the sudden change into materialism. He comments:

“Theoretical cognition ought to give the object in its necessity, in its all-sided relations, in its contradictory movement, *an- und für-sich* [in and for itself – *Ed*]. But the human notion ‘definitely’ catches this objective truth of

cognition, seizes and masters it, only when the notion becomes ‘being-for-itself’ in the sense of practice. That is, the practice of man and of mankind is the test, the criterion of the objectivity of cognition. Is that Hegel’s idea? It is necessary to return to this.”³⁸

And with repeated careful reasoning, he goes yet one step further:

“Marx, consequently, clearly sides with Hegel, in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge: see the *Theses on Feuerbach*.”³⁹

Here the inversion is no longer effected *in opposition to* Hegel, rather Hegel himself becomes the vehicle of the inverting insight. To the extent that I perceive the complete picture of Hegel’s speculative idealism, I grant that it concerns only the *picture* of reality, which is reflected in the form of the speculative Idea. This flash of a sudden change certainly appears first at the end of the pathway of the *Logic* – and hence Lenin first effects the mirror-construction of inversion with regard to the Idea.

In the following sections Lenin develops the dialectical-materialist relationship of theory and practice totally on the ground of Hegelian philosophy (or, to remain in the picture: in the reflection of Hegelian philosophy). And, in continuing adoption of the Hegelian mirror-notion – now already turned from its head onto its feet – Lenin unfolds the fundamentals of a dialectics which, in accordance with Engels’ programme, unites logic, the theory of knowledge and ontology (*ie* the dialectics of being or of nature).

Reflection Character of Hegel’s Logic

In a few essential places Lenin interrupts his excerpting and commenting, in order to take stock of the position reached in his materialist reading of Hegel. The comment, “NB Concerning the question of the true significance of Hegel’s *Logic*”,⁴⁰ gives a key to Lenin’s understanding of Hegel: the provisions and developments of the *Logic* must be grasped as “reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions”. The notions are not mere abstractions, which draw out a common thread from the abundance of sense data, nor are they ‘generic abstractions’ which would be gained through arbitrary divisions on principle and expressed in classification schemes. Rather they are ‘determinate abstractions’ which perceive the individual (the datum) as the particular form of existence or appearance of the universal existing in connection of each with all in the world.⁴¹

Here, for Lenin, logic totally within Hegel’s sense is not a formalism of thinking but the process of philosophical cognition, presuming a (non-empirical, non-positivist) ontology, namely the principles of “objective connection of the world”⁴². These principles precede the notions, they are already included in their formation process – without them we generally could not think. Thinking itself is nothing more than seeing and interpreting the sense-given data, from the perspective of their universal connectedness. Since we hold onto the perceived object as a notion of this given object, we are already conscious of the *world*. We consider the object as identical to its notion and therefore as distinct from other objects with which it is not identical; we contemplate the relationship of the one and the other, the relativity etc. The world of notions is

the equivalent of the world of objective existence:

“The formation of (abstract) notions and operations with them *already* includes idea, conviction, *consciousness* of the law-governed character of the objective connection of the world. To distinguish causality from this connection is stupid. To deny the objectivity of notions, the objectivity of the universal in the individual and in the particular, is impossible. Consequently, Hegel is much more profound than Kant, and others, in tracing the reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions ... so the simplest *generalisation*, the first and simplest formation of *notions* (judgments, syllogisms, etc) already denotes man’s ever deeper cognition of the objective connection of the world.”⁴²

Here the decisive categories “objective connection of the world” and “reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions” are clearly formulated and grounded in the conviction (evidence) of the totality = unity of diversity. Lenin is fully clear that he is describing the *ontological structure* of the relation of being and consciousness; this structure is readable at the dialectical (that also means logical) make-up of knowledge, and that is Hegel’s insight:

“Nature, this immediate totality, unfolds itself in the Logical Idea and Mind.’ Logic is the science of cognition. It is the

theory of knowledge. Knowledge is the reflection of nature by man. But this is not a simple, not an immediate, not a complete reflection, but the process of a series of abstractions, the formation and development of concepts, laws, etc, and these concepts, laws, etc (thought, science = 'the logical Idea') embrace conditionally, approximately, the universal law-governed character of eternally moving and developing nature. Here there are *actually*, objectively, **three** members: 1) nature; 2) human cognition = the human **brain** (as the highest product of this same nature), and 3) the form of reflection of nature in human cognition, and this form consists precisely of concepts, laws, categories, etc. Man cannot comprehend = reflect = mirror nature *as a whole*, in its completeness, its 'immediate totality', he can only *eternally* come closer to this, creating abstractions, concepts, laws, a scientific picture of the world, etc, etc."⁴³

Thus the reflection relation is constituted: nature is what is reflected; the brain, itself a piece of nature, is the mirror (the mirror, which reflects the living being, is itself a living being); the image which appears in the mirror and portrays nature (but not completely, as every mirror only partially portrays the being) is the content of knowledge – and potentially the whole world can appear in the mirror, although actually only a portion does.

However, since this mirror is a "*miroir vivant*"⁴⁴, it is able, once activated, to

approach the whole in ever repeated reflections. We may conclude that Lenin takes the mirror metaphor seriously since he not only designates the reflection process as the relation of being and consciousness (thus in the sense of a predialectical, mechanical materialist, theory of portrayal), but also contemplates the relation itself, the third element, *with regard to form*.⁴⁵ Reflection is a relation of form and as such is distinct from every other relation of being.

Evidently, Lenin strongly presumed that Hegel provoked this materialist grasping of the problem, indeed that he probably intended it and thus, so to say, suggested the 'translation' of the *Science of Logic* into reality (nature). Lenin's compressed presentation of the reflection theorem (see above) begins with a Hegel quotation and ends with the reprising of this quotation. Previously Lenin had already remarked:

"Hegel actually *proved* that logical forms and laws are not an empty shell, but the *reflection* of the objective world. More correctly, he did not prove, but *made a brilliant guess*."⁴⁶

The repetition of this claim at a later point shows that it is a matter not of an aphorism, but of a thought to grasp firmly:

"Hegel brilliantly *divined* the dialectics of things (phenomena, the world, *nature*) in the dialectics of concepts."⁴⁷

Here I would like to take Lenin as closely as possible at his word. What does "guess" or "divine" mean? Let us consider the objects in a picture-puzzle (rebus). When we 'read' them, we guess their sense, *ie* the puzzle reveals itself to us. The pictures of the rebus turn into their

contraries, proving themselves as elements of a concept, but only in context. The concept which is gained from the movement of the pictures indicates what is meant, the reality which is locked up in the rebus. There is a correspondence in Lenin with this process of solving a puzzle when, in connection with the above-cited commentary on Hegel, he writes:

"The *totality of all sides* of the phenomenon, of reality and their (reciprocal) *relations* – that is what truth is composed of. The relations (= transitions = contradictions) of notions = the main content of logic, **by which** these concepts (and their relations, transitions, contradictions) are shown as reflections of the objective world. The dialectics of *things* produces the dialectics of ideas, and not vice versa."⁴⁸

Thus (considers Lenin) Hegel derived the cosmos of the world from the cosmos of notions – but in such a way that the guesser solves the puzzle. Knowing, instead of guessing, would mean seeing through the construction of the puzzle and also the principle of its solution. Transferred to philosophy, this means that the principle of the inversion would have to be specified – something which Hegel does not do, but which Marx certainly does.

Notions are abstract pictures of things; their universal connection and their universal movement, which can only be constructed from contemplating the notions, must be sought in the reality of things. However, if philosophy is always able, from the perspective of unity and totality, to present the relations of things only as relations of ideas, then at the same time

it can always be translated back from the language of ideas into the language of things. Accordingly, Lenin remarks on the occasion of the identification of the real meaning of Hegel's *Logic*:

"*Umkehren* [Inversion]: Marx *applied* Hegel's dialectics in its rational form to political economy."⁴⁸

Hegel's *Logic* was applied: that means that it is applicable – but only in inversion. It must be displaced back from the form of mirror-images (knowledge, notions, the Idea) into reality (material relations, social practice). This is possible because mirror images are nothing other than the real subject materials, circumstances, lying at their base – only as virtual representations and in the perspective of the mirror relation; but this perspective distortion is just a distorted representation of something real and not a product of thinking, a creation of the brain. For all that, just as idealistic comprehension of knowledge as a *product of the subject* falls victim to ideological pretence, which is generated by the self-reflection of the '*cogito*'⁴⁹, naïve realistic comprehension, a matter of a simple *reproduction of the object*, is ideologically illusory. The reality of cognition lies, as Lenin says, in the form of reflection; the correct relationship of the content of knowledge to reality must also express the form of the reflection – therefore discern, extract, 'sublate' the true universality of a philosophy with and in its ideological particularity. That is the method of critical adoption of a philosophy.

Every piece of knowledge is the basis for a relation, a guide to activity. Theory – however imparted – is related to practice. The translation of philosophy into reality indicates the application of practice, and here the



inverting movement takes place, because philosophy first arose from the reflection of practice. From the outset, theory and practice form a unity which has the form of reflection: if a mirror (the brain as the highest product of nature) is available, then the subject material and the mirror image are *simultaneously* and in one moment, in one instant, present. This unity of subject and object is primordially that of practice, of 'concrete activity', for which Hegel's objection to Kant is valid:

"Also, the remark against the *Critical Philosophy*. It conceives the relation between 'three terms' (We, Thought, Things) so that thoughts stand 'in the middle' between things and us, and so that the middle term 'separates' (*abschließt*) 'rather than ... connects' (*zusammenschließen*) us. ... In my opinion, the essence of the argument is: ... in Kant, cognition demarcates (divides) nature and man; actually, it unites them.

...
How is this to be understood? Man is confronted with a *web* of natural phenomena. Instinctive man, the savage, does not distinguish himself from nature. Conscious man does distinguish, categories are stages of distinguishing, *ie* of cognising the world, focal points in the web, which assist in cognising and mastering it."⁵⁰

In engaging in practice we are actively part of the external world and at the same time thinking (planning, wishing) in opposition to it. Thus theoretical reflection arises

from practice and is a part of it, distinguishing itself from practice and rendering itself autonomous:

"The categories of logic are *Abbreuiaturen* [abbreviations] ... for the 'endless multitude' of 'particulars of external existence and of action ...' In turn, these categories *diene[n]* [serve] people in practice."⁵¹

Hence practice is over and again the test of theory, and life is the movement of practice via theory to practice as the self-regulating unity of the reflection and the correction of its distortions through practice:

"The idea of including *Life* in logic is comprehensible – and brilliant – from the standpoint of the *process* of the reflection of the objective world in the (at first individual) consciousness of man and of the testing of this consciousness (reflection) through practice."⁵²

Here Lenin localises the attachment of Marx to Hegel, thus (as we shall shortly see) the boundary of the inversion, when he remarks:

"In Hegel practice serves as a link in the analysis of the process of cognition, and indeed as the transition to the objective ('absolute', according to Hegel) truth. Marx, consequently, clearly sides with Hegel in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge."⁵³

This inversion is already prepared by Hegel, when he lets the process of cognition end where (as Lenin expresses

it) "the notion becomes 'being-for-itself' in the sense of practice."⁵⁴ Here is one of the places where Lenin, on a vertically divided page, exhibits the reflective inversion:

Hegel excerpt:
"This Idea (of the *Good* –*HHH*) is **higher than the Idea of Cognition which has already been considered**, for it has not only the dignity of the universal but also of the **simply actual**"

Inversion:
"**Practice is higher than (theoretical) knowledge**, for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality."⁵⁵

Earlier, we have the corresponding *Hegel excerpt*:

"The Idea is ... the Idea of the *True* and of the *Good*, as *Cognition* and *Volition* The process of this finite cognition and (NB) **action** (NB) makes the universality, which at first is abstract, into a totality, whence it becomes *perfected objectivity*."

and the *inversion*:

"The Idea is *Cognition* and aspiration (volition) [of man] The process of (transitory, finite, limited) cognition and **action** converts

Notes and References

- 1 V I Lenin, *Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic*, in *Collected Works*, Vol 38, p 180.
- 2 *Ibid*, p 104.
- 3 L Althusser, '*Lenin and Philosophy*' and *Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1971.
- 4 Lenin, *op cit*, p 141.
- 5 L Althusser, *Lenin Before Hegel*, in Althusser *op cit*, p 115.
- 6 Lenin, *op cit*, p 88.
- 7 *Ibid*, p 234. Materialist inversion in Lenin's *Conspectus*, corresponding to the remarks of Marx and Engels, is found in two terminological expressions: "inversion" ("turn it round") and "turn upside down". Whenever Lenin uses these expressions, he draws on the theoretical structure in total or the "basic ideas", the "true meaning, significance and role of Hegel's *Logic*", the relation of logic and human practice, the subject-object relationship (*cf Ibid* pp 146-7, 179, 190). Indeed, he says clearly that with Hegel one is at "the 'eve' of the transformation of objective idealism into materialism" (*Ibid*, p 169) – and this turn will take place at the level of philosophy through materialist reading of Hegel.
- 8 *Ibid*, p 153.
- 9 *Ibid*, p 159. In this connection Lenin has indicated that Hegel's individual formulations "arouse the fury of *naïve* philosophers" – and that indeed with "a *certain, limited* correctness. (*Ibid*, p 154). "One must first of all *extract* the materialist findings from it." It is precisely this sentence which shows that "extraction" relates to the dialectical composition of Hegel's philosophy as of persisting distinction of form in

- all its particulars, which then must be applied materialistically.
- 10 Lenin, *The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism*, in *Collected Works*, Vol 19, p 24.
 - 11 In this context *cf* my remarks in *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft und theoretische Revolution (Bourgeois Society and Theoretical Revolution)*, M Hahn and H J Sandkühler, eds, Köln, Pahl-Rugenstein, 1978, p 242 ff.
 - 12 Lenin, Vol 19, *op cit*, pp 23-8.
 - 13 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, p 190.
 - 14 F Engels, Second Preface to *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Philosophy (Anti-Dühring)*, in K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 25, p 11; "Marx applied Hegel's dialectics in its rational form to political economy" (Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, p 178).
 - 15 *Productive reception: cf* H Schulz, *Germany and Austria: A Modest Head Start: The German Reception of Kierkegaard, in Kierkegaard's International Reception, Tome 1: Northern and Western Europe*, J Stewart, ed, Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, 2009, p 309: "A genuinely *productive reception* is characterised by the central role that author A's work takes on in author B's work vis-à-vis type, content and genesis ... author B's referring to author A by means of explicitly and directly addressing the latter's work, if only to a limited extent." –*Ed.*
 - 16 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, pp 167-8.
 - 17 *Ibid*, pp 187-8, 194-6, 212-4.
 - 18 In order to understand Lenin's Hegel-reading it is essential to take the epigraphical findings into consideration. The semantic function of a graphical emphasis (for example, marginal lines, boxes, explorations) has to be investigated in every

abstract concepts into perfected objectivity.”⁵⁶

Here we recognise the form of the reflection and can make its construction clear. As a movement of connection, constructed in and through human thought, the plurality of things in the Idea becomes a unity which can be discerned and formed by people. Unity of diversity is however precisely not present in individual experience, in individual activity, and also not in the individual (abstract) notion. Infinite objective connection must be reconstructed in consciousness in a finite model. Philosophy provides this reconstruction. It produces the speculative unity of diversity in the Idea. It hence constitutes

1. the ‘imparting’ of abstract notions to “perfected objectivity”;
2. the cognition of things from the connection of the total instead of from their mere observation;
3. the orientation towards aims and planned activity for their realisation (the turn back to practice).

For Hegel, production of the Idea is the process of history, in which individual cognition and activity are elements. The Idea is therefore the *telos*⁵⁷ of history, but precisely only as an idea, that means not as the actual connection, rather as its reflected image. Philosophies

are the anticipation of the Idea in model, which again must be carried over in practice into reality and be changed by and through practice.

Hegel alone put into effect the philosophical system as the reflection of the whole process of history up to the construction of the absolute Idea, which is supposed to include all possible philosophies within it. To that extent his philosophy is in fact the highest form (until then), and generally the end, of philosophical systems – the world (standing on its head) as Idea. The programme of inversion now signifies taking the Idea of philosophy, or simply the theory, as what it can be according to its own construction: as a reflected image of the

relation of man to the world, or to practice; and each individual philosophy as one manifestation of this Idea, representing the total from one standpoint. Lenin’s *Hegel-Conspectus* provides this materialist determination of philosophy from the principle of the relation of being and consciousness as a mirror relation.

■ *First published in German in Vom Mute des Erkennens: Beiträge zur Philosophie G W F Hegel’s (From the Courage of Cognition: contributions on G W F Hegel’s philosophy), M Buhr and T I Oiserman, eds, Verlag Marxistische Blätter, Frankfurt am Main, 1981, pp 46-61. Translation and additional footnotes by the Editor.*

individual case. Such an analysis must be connected with analysis of the principles by which the excerpts are selected. (Althusser saw the second aspect, but only in a quite superficial and insufficiently treated way.) The relationship of weighting and classification of the problem with Hegel and Lenin is illuminating for the relationship of idealist philosophy and the materialist reading of it.

19 G W F Hegel, Preface to the 2nd edition of *Science of Logic*, A V Miller, trans, Humanity Books, Amherst, NY, 1998, p 32.

20 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, p 90.

21 Appears to be a term developed by the Belgian existentialist philosopher Wilfrid Desan (1908-2001), see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilfrid_Desan –Ed.

22 Lenin had already cited this expression twenty years before the *Hegel-Conspectus*, on the occasion of the presentation of the method of Marx and Engels in his article *What the Friends of the People Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* (Collected Works, Vol 1, p 167). He warded off the reproach of Hegelianism, with the specific political objective of understanding history not as the automatism of the (self-)unfolding Idea, but rather as the outcome of the activities of people under given conditions.

23 Only in utmost formalising, having an eye to all determinate contents, can Not-A count as the contrary of A. In pure logic, every determinate negation dissolves into an indeterminate one; and this is then the determinate negation of the indeterminate position which arises,

if in formalising it is seen apart from the substantive determinations of what is posited, and if this alone is contemplated as posited. This effect of formalising originates, with all clarity, in the writings of Bruno von Freytag-Löhninghoff, *Logik*, Stuttgart, 1955, p 15 ff. The non-formal contrary of a determinate position (its determinate negation) is on the contrary only to be gained from the concrete situation from which the determinate position itself is determined.

24 If Hegelian and Marxist dialectics thus stand in a mirror-image inversion relationship to each other, then it is indeed useful to have studied and grasped the one, in order to be able to grasp the other. Its indispensability (as Lenin requires in his famous aphorism) certainly includes a still continuing interpretation of the status of philosophy and thought in its position towards reality.

25 With regard to the exact use of the mirror-image metaphor, cf H H Holz, *Die Selbstinterpretation des Seins (The Self-interpretation of Being)*, in *Hegel-Jahrbuch (Hegel Year-Book)*, 1961, 2nd half-volume, p 61 ff.

26 Hegel, *op cit*, Vol 2, Sect 2, Ch 2, pp 727, 728, 731-2.

27 Nature as historical is dialectical. cf P Ruben, *Problem und Begriff der Naturdialektik (Problem and Concept of Dialectics of Nature)*, in *Dialektik und Arbeit der Philosophie (Dialectics and Task of Philosophy)*, Köln, 1978, p 146ff. (The same essay had already been published earlier in *Weltanschauung und Methode (Worldview and Methods)*, A Griese

and H Laitko, eds, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1969, p 51 ff.) The self-development of nature was studied by the philosopher and anthropologist Helmut Plessner in his *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch (The Stages of Organic Material and the Human Being)*, Berlin 1928. He affirmed without hesitation that he came thereby to the dialectics of nature: H H Holz and H Plessner, conversation on the Norddeutschen Rundfunk, 1975.

28 Hegel, *op cit*, Vol 2, Sect 2, Ch 3, pp 734, 740.

29 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, p 188.

30 *Ibid*, pp 187-8.

31 *Ibid*, p 189.

32 Hegel, *op cit*, Vol 2, Sect 3, p 755.

33 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, pp 194-5.

34 Hegel, *op cit*, pp 757-8.

35 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, p 194.

36 *Ibid*, pp 195-6.

37 Hegel, *op cit*, Vol 2, Sect 3, Ch 2, A(b) 3, p 818, as cited in Lenin, *op cit*, Vol 38, p 211.

38 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, p 211.

39 *Ibid*, p 213.

40 *Ibid*, p 178.

41 G della Volpe, *Logic as a Positive Science*, Verso, 1980, lights upon and investigates the distinction of ‘generic’ and ‘determinate’.

42 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, pp 178-9.

43 *Ibid*, p 182.

44 *miroir vivant* = living mirror; see N Rescher, *G W Leibniz’s ‘Monadology’: An Edition for Students*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991, pp 56, 63 –Ed.

45 We may recall Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, see <http://philosophical.open.ac.uk/tractatus/tabs.html>:

“2.1513 According to this view the representing relation which makes it a picture, also belongs to the picture.”

“2.161 There must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts, to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all.”

“2.22 What a picture represents, it represents independently of its truth or falsity, by means of its pictorial form.”

Charging Wittgenstein with logical positivism appears to me to hide many of the possibilities laid out in his own thoughts. It could thereupon be productive to study Wittgenstein, where he borders on (and takes offence at) dialectical relations. (cf J Schickel, *Spiegelbilder (Reflected Images)*, Klett, Stuttgart, 1975, p 47ff.)

46 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, p 180.

47 *Ibid*, p 196.

48 *Ibid*, p 178.

49 “I think”: term used by Descartes to argue that he exists, cf M Lacey, *Descartes, the cogito and clear and distinct ideas*, online at <http://documents.routledge-interactive.s3.amazonaws.com/9781138793934/A2/Descartes/DescartesCogito.pdf> –Ed.

50 Lenin, Vol 38, *op cit*, pp 91, 93.

51 *Ibid*, p 90.

52 *Ibid*, p 202.

53 *Ibid*, p 212.

54 *Ibid*, p 211.

55 *Ibid*, p 213.

56 *Ibid*, p 195.

57 *Telos*: from the Greek ΤΕΛΟΣ, meaning ‘end’, or ‘purpose’, as used by Aristotle, and in the same sense as in *teleology* –Ed.

On the National Question and Constitutional Reform

Emergency Resolution agreed at the 53rd Congress of the Communist Party of Britain, 15-16 November 2014

THE COMMUNIST PARTY calls for national parliaments, regional assemblies and a federal parliament, all elected by STV in multi-member constituencies.

This call recognises the integral link between constitutional change and the overall struggle for economic and social democracy against monopoly capital. It understands that any struggle for democratisation requires a mobilisation of the working class and its allies in the context of the growing concentration of monopoly and its increasingly uneven impact on economic and social development across the nations and regions of Britain. It also recognises that nations and national identities are not static but emerge and evolve historically in the contests of classes to develop new forms of statehood.

In general national identities will reflect the values of the dominant class. But in our era they will always also reflect the level of democratic and class struggles of the exploited and the oppressed. Within the nations of Britain, still a world imperialist power, there is a complex history of capitalist amalgamation between the ruling classes of its component nations, of migration by colonial and ex-colonial peoples and also of struggle by organised labour uniting working people across all these nations and nationalities. This struggle won formal democracy. It also won major economic and social advances. These struggles continue and have significantly modified the way people understand their national

identity – even though the dominant values remain those of the dominant capitalist order.

Today, in face of an intensifying capitalist offensive against organised labour and its class values, there exist grave dangers that national identities, especially at British and English levels, take on an increasingly chauvinist character and become defined against other nations and nationalities, inside and outside Britain and thereby marginalise the progressive identity associated with united class struggles. This danger also exists, in different forms, at Scottish and Welsh levels and within other nationalities within Britain.

Our Party's approach seeks to enhance all progressive trends within national identities by clearly and explicitly linking the demand for greater democratic self determination at national and regional level to the anti-democratic concentration of state monopoly capitalist power at British level.

Our Party upholds the absolute right of nations to self-determination. Yet it also argues that this right has to be exercised not abstractly but in the concrete circumstances created by the deployment of state power by finance capital.

Within Britain currently the Communist Party argues that such national self-determination is best advanced by the creation of home rule parliaments at Scottish and Welsh levels, of regional assemblies with comparable powers in England, an English parliament

and a federal parliament. Such institutions cannot, however, be viewed simply in static constitutional terms but have to be understood in relation to the capitalist system as it exists in Britain.

A federal parliament is required to secure a united focus for democratic struggle against the concentrated power of finance capital which is primarily deployed through the institutions of the capitalist state at British level. This parliament requires powers over currency, interest rates, banking, trade, foreign policy, defence and substantial taxation powers. Economically a primary role should be redistribution – both overall from rich to poor and across the nations and regions of Britain in light of social need. However, as always, its ability to adopt progressive anti-monopoly policies will depend on levels of mobilisation of the working class and its allies.

Hence, national parliaments and regional assemblies also require powers of social and economic intervention that can advance the interests of working people and demand working class mobilisation to do so. These powers include those to develop public ownership and to intervene economically to prevent industrial closure, reduce unemployment and provide strategic aid to industry. For this reason national parliaments and regional assemblies should have their own powers to raise tax and to borrow on the basis of these powers. Again, the progressive use

of such powers will depend on the level of working class mobilisation and the strength of anti-monopoly alliances developed with other strata.

Our Party reiterates its call for home rule parliaments in Wales and Scotland and an English parliament with commensurate powers. Immediately, however, it believes that within England priority should be given to the creation of regional assemblies with substantial powers for economic intervention elected on a fully democratic basis by STV within multi-member constituencies matched as far as possible against existing community identities. These regional assemblies should be mapped on economic regions (North East & Cumbria, North West, Yorkshire, East Midlands, West Midlands, East, London, South, South West and with special status given to a national assembly in Cornwall). These regions would provide the arena for the mobilisation of class alliances dedicated to the elimination of poverty, dereliction and economic stagnation and the provision of adequate economic and social infrastructures.

Once these regional assemblies have gained popular credibility, consideration should be given to the character of an English parliament – whether it should be a chamber dedicated to issues of economic and social coordination across the regions of England or whether it should have powers commensurate with those of Scottish and Welsh parliaments. In the meantime the House of

Commons should function, where appropriate, as an English Chamber through the withdrawal of Scottish and Welsh MPs. The House of Commons should in turn become the federal parliament, directly elected by STV, again using multi-member constituencies matched as far as possible against community identities, with the national interests of each country safeguarded in the formation of federal policy.

These constitutional proposals immediately raise issues of popular sovereignty at British level and the loss of

key powers over economic and social development to the European Union where they are exercised on behalf of finance capital, including British finance capital. Pressure for devolved home rule powers will therefore have to be combined with an enhanced campaign to retrieve these powers. In the meantime appropriate safeguards will be needed to ensure that the specific national interests of Scotland, Wales and the English regions are protected within federal negotiations with the EU and on issues of trade and foreign policy and

that specific representations by national parliaments, within the scope of reserved powers, are enabled.

As far England goes, the Communist Party believes that an extension of democracy is already long overdue. It maintains its opposition to mayoral elections, believing that local government should be controlled by locally-elected councillors. We also support a move back to a committee system in local authorities, away from cabinets. Local government should include representatives from local communities, both

employers and the organised workforce, as well as civil society in consultative working structures.

To ensure that such a system has the necessary funding, Communists reaffirm what we believe would be the view of the majority in the context of an honest and responsive localised democracy: that taxation for central services is entirely proper; and that they would not object to an increase in direct taxation for such services, especially if combined with a decrease in indirect taxation.

BOOK REVIEW

Replacing Alienated Labour by Liberated Labour

Review by Nick Wright

AT THE CORE of Che Guevara's pedagogy lie two key elements. Firstly, the role of labour in the formation of the human personality and the transformation of society, and secondly, its social content: an integrative process in which the human subject – with the sum of her or his inherited and acquired characteristics and knowledge – is both an agent of social transformation and is thus transformed.

Che was, of course, more than a social pedagogue. But what is striking about this account of his thought by the Cuban educator, Lidia Turner Martí, is the consistency in which he applied revolutionary ideas across a huge range of human activity, from science and technology, military tactics, the formation of the socialist personality and the alienation of the worker from the production process.

His insight that the

development of the productive forces would be an insufficient condition for the advance to a higher form of society if the Revolution were to produce only raw materials and not new human beings has a special relevance for Cuba today where the urgent necessity to grow the economy has compelled an economic reform that, inevitably, will have consequences in the sphere of ideas.

The drama of Che's life, his engaging personality and direct connection with people, the simplicity with which he projected his ideas, and the wide range of his interests, can obscure the foundation of his thought and actions in the core propositions of Marxism-Leninism.

Critically, he warned that the abolition of private property and the elision of socioeconomic differences

Notes on Ernesto Che Guevara's ideas on pedagogy

By LIDIA TURNER MARTÍ (Fernwood Publishing, Black Point, Nova Scotia, 2014, 178 pp, pbk, £10.95. ISBN: 978-155266-652-4)

between people could not alone shape a humanist conscience.

For Che, the replacement of alienated labour by liberated labour was the essential feature of a socialist society that, of necessity, entails the replacement of the notion that work is necessary to make a living with the idea that work is an essential human need.

"Labour must be felt as a moral necessity; it should be something we do every morning, afternoon or evening with a renewed interest. We must learn to appreciate everything interesting and

creative in labour, to know every secret of the machinery or the process we work with."

On being awarded an honorary doctorate of pedagogy, Che (himself a physician) told his Oriente University audience that if the university did not rid itself of its elitism, if it was not opened to workers, to the black and disenfranchised population, then the people would assail the universities and tear down the walls of prejudice and discrimination.

Professor Lidia Turner Martí is a former director of the Central Institute of Pedagogical Science in Cuba.



BOOK REVIEW

An Ideological and Campaigning Vision Which Needs to be Reignited

Review by Mary Davis

WOMEN AGAINST FUNDAMENTALISM (WAF) was a remarkable organisation. Founded in 1989, when the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*, WAF brought together women from a wide range of national, ethnic and religious backgrounds, to oppose fundamentalism in all religions. Fundamentalism is, however, distinguished from religious observance, which is seen as a matter of personal choice. Such religious fundamentalism, wherever it manifests itself, is always profoundly anti-women, and hence WAF was founded as a feminist, secular and anti-racist organisation.

The book is not a chronological account of the organisation, neither is it an analysis (more is the pity) of WAF's demise. Rather, 19 women, erstwhile activists, recount their stories, albeit in a somewhat formulaic fashion. Each chapter starts with a brief biographical sketch of the author, followed by an account of her transition to radicalism and ultimately to WAF. Much, although not all, of this is interesting, depending on each author's personal trajectory. However, it is noteworthy that the majority of the contributors can trace their radicalisation to their time spent in higher education.

The opening chapter by the book's editors outlines a three-fold rationale for the volume. Firstly, it aims to explore how the secular and feminist ideology of WAF has confronted the growing identity politics among many minorities. Secondly, the book is motivated by a desire to understand how WAF activists have been drawn into this particular struggle. Thirdly, there was a pressing need – particularly given the recent deaths of Helen Lowe and Cassandra

Balchin, two of the central members of WAF – to document the history of the members of the organisation before it became too late.

For women (and men) who know little or nothing of WAF's campaigning work, several examples will illustrate its essential, albeit sometimes contested, nature. WAF was opposed to 'multiculturalism' because in its view it was a means of ignoring racism. WAF also attacked 'multifaithism' as advocated by Tariq Modood and New Labour. Pragna Patel (Southall Black Sisters and WAF) has said:¹

"The increasing use of religion (euphemistically referred to as 'faith') by the state as the basis for identifying minorities began in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the Rushdie Affair but gathered momentum post 9/11 and the London bombings.

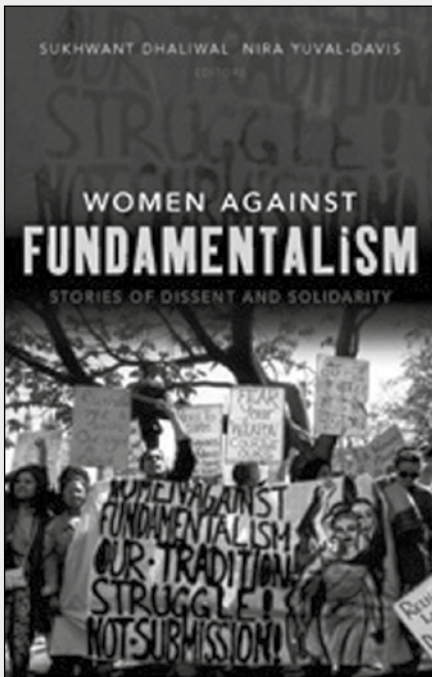
Successive governments then have vigorously promoted a religious or faith-based agenda. So the 'Cohesion and Integration', 'Big Society' and 'Localism' agendas have all given a further fillip to fundamentalist and religious right forces who are in the process of consolidating their power and control over communities and resources.

The state is happily promoting and funding multi-faith forums and projects at central and local levels to tackle all sorts of social problems, even where those involved have no historical record or current interest in gender equality or social justice and human rights issues. Most are only concerned to ensure that the demand for equality is substituted for the demand for more 'religious

literacy' in all public institutions. That is, the demand for the state to recognise the supposedly 'authentic' theological values and traditions of minorities, but not the diverse, syncretic, liberal, cultural, political and secular traditions, including feminist traditions, within a community. It is a demand which elements of the progressive left are all too willing to accommodate.

The pursuit of the faith-based agenda is partly to do with a perceived need to appease conservative religious leaderships within minority communities so that they are de-linked from the extreme radical elements, and partly in the belief that the right to manifest religion signifies equal treatment of minorities – a belief shared by many equality and human rights institutions across Europe and amongst considerable sections of the so-called progressive left movements."

WAF was one of the first organisations in this country which was unafraid to tackle the violence meted out to Asian women – in this case Krishna Sharma, whose husband and in-laws had subjected her to such horrifying abuse that she committed suicide. Members of WAF highlighted this atrocity by entering a conference organised by white socialist feminists and arguing for a race/class alliance as the most productive way to combat domestic violence. WAF marched through the streets of Southall with this message. Probably the bravest and arguably the most controversial initiative was that taken by a WAF founder member, Gita Saghal, who, at the time, worked for



Women Against Fundamentalism: Stories of Dissent and Solidarity

Edited by SUKHWANT DHALIWAL and NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS (Lawrence & Wishart, 2014, 320 pp, pb, £17.99. ISBN 978-1-909831-025)

Amnesty International, but was forced to leave because she did not support their campaign to free Moazzem Begg from Guantanamo Bay. Begg and his organisation, Cage Prisoners, had attracted much support among liberal-minded Britons; but Gita Saghal and others exposed his sympathies for the Taliban. The WAF board did not support her so she campaigned alone. In addition both she and WAF were critical of the Stop the War coalition when it allied itself with the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is clear to me that the original motivation for establishing WAF still exists, probably more so now than ever

given the rise of ISIS and the situation in Kurdistan, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. This is not just a 'Middle Eastern' problem, but resonates throughout the globe, and of course, particularly affects women. It is to be hoped that the ideological and campaigning vision which inspired WAF will be reignited.

Notes and References

1 P Patel, speech on Religious Fundamentalism, Multi-faithism and the Gender Question, at 'Taking Soundings' meeting, Leeds, 13 November 2013; online at <http://www.takingsoundings.org.uk/pragna-patel-on-religious-fundamentalism-multi-faithism-and-the-gender-question/>.

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BOOK REVIEW

Call for a Constitution – A Modest Proposal

Review by Margaret Levy

THE RECENT period has seen quite an upheaval in Scottish politics and society. No matter that the decision can be characterised as to retain the status quo; Scottish people participated in unprecedented numbers and things can't be the same again.

This book, published just before the recent referendum, is a contribution to the discussions that will follow. Its creation was part of the discussions that went before in Scotland where people had a decision to make.

As the brief biography in the book says, Angus Reid is an independent artist living and working in Edinburgh. He's a poet, writer and filmmaker. The process leading to the publication of this book suggests more: he's also an enthusiast, keen to share his enthusiasms. We are told that he is politically unaligned but this is no passive sitting on the sidelines. Democracy is important to him, real democracy where people are engaged in the process and can feel able to hold their governments to account. This is the driving force behind the poem, *Call for a Constitution*.

As he describes, the poem arose from discussions over many years and was then installed in 22 locations around Scotland. This was done in a very public way, inviting comment and participation. The book gives us accounts of those installations, written by interested parties, librarian, arts

director, teacher etc. They tell us how things began in their location and how local people reacted to the strangeness of a poem on the wall and the opportunity to comment.

The poem went up in a number of schools, whose head teachers were anxious about giving their students the means for graffiti and permission to scribble, so to speak. No problems were reported, though; school students engaged constructively in the process along with other members of the community.

One place where the poem took off only very slowly was the Scottish Parliament. It seemed that MSPs were 'too busy' to help the process along. Well, they should be busy, of course, but too busy to discuss the fundamental democracy involved in creating a constitution? I don't think so.

In the middle part of the book, Mary Davis gives us an account of efforts in the past to make rulers more accountable to the people. This section is written with her usual force and rigour and provides historical context for current struggles. The period usually called the English Civil War should be called the English Revolution, she asserts and goes on to justify. She also includes, as might be expected, reference to women's role in these struggles, often ignored by mainstream historians.

The final section includes

a range of views of what a constitution is for and how it should be arrived at: a socialist view from John Hendy; a view from a former government insider; a view from Iceland; a view from the Red Paper Collective; and a view from a member of Unlock Democracy.

The view from Iceland is interesting, as that country was particularly badly affected by the worldwide banking debacle. Attempts were made to create a new constitution in a democratic manner but they were largely thwarted by politicians and others who saw the new constitution, or the democratic manner of its formation, as a threat. Perhaps that's a warning – if people-power looks like becoming too successful there will be someone whose interests are threatened and they will do what they can to interfere.

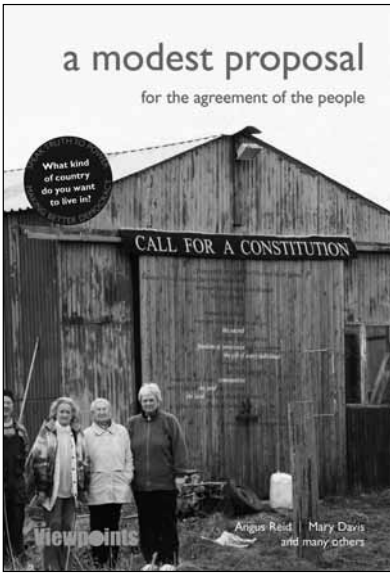
There's an Epilogue giving a critique of aspects of the Scottish referendum White Paper. A brief story from the Introduction to this book shows how keen Scottish parliamentarians were to encourage the kind of democracy this book is about. Angus was told that the poem could be used as the Preamble to the new Scottish constitution when it came to be written – by politicians of course. They had completely failed to understand that a constitution must be created by the people in order to hold government to account. He

was horrified, feeling that they had relegated the poem to a position of unimportance.

I liked the variety in this book. It's fairly easy to read but rewards rereading and thinking about. Of course the variety also means that the quality is patchy but maybe that's a metaphor: in a democratic process no one should expect to agree with everyone or always to agree with the solution. The process is the important thing and the poem itself is at least partly about how we manage that process – with respect and care.

A great deal has been written and said about the Scottish Parliament building and how much it cost. Angus gives us insight into the architect's thinking and draws on his metaphor for the poem. The hand, open to itemise the principles, closed as a fist to enforce them.

I'm sorry to say that the book would have benefited greatly from proofreading. There were a great many typographical errors, spelling mistakes and random apostrophes to trip the reader up and distract attention from what really matters – the content. That said, I'd still strongly recommend this book. At a time when we're all going to be offered constitutional change, much of it without the democracy, we need to be thinking about how it should be and how we can hold the politicians to account.



A Modest Proposal for the agreement of the people

By ANGUS REID, MARY DAVIS and many others (Luath Press, Edinburgh, 2014, 190 pp, pbk, £9.99. ISBN: 978-1-910021-05-7)

Call for a Constitution

if I as a writer of poetry
were called upon to give a form of words
to model the nation's behaviour
it would be this

ownership obliges everyone to respect and
the sacred
to respect and
freedom of conscience

the gift of
to respect it
care for it
nourish it

to care for and protect *communities*
and
to care for *the land*
and wherever
the land has been abused to
restore it
life

five principles five fingers on the hand

Letter to the Editor

from Dave Stavris

HAVING READ Roger Fletcher's review (CR73) of Hans Modrow's *Perestroika and Germany*, I feel that Roger has misinterpreted Modrow's views on the political events under Gorbachev.

After describing young Modrow's experience in Nazi Germany, Roger comments: "Given his background ... it is not surprising that dubious clichés crop up For example, ... we read that '35,000 Polish officers had been murdered in ... Katyn by Stalin's NKVD'".

In fact, Modrow writes: "**Suddenly, we were told, 35,000 Polish officers had been murdered in the forest of Katyn by Stalin's NKVD**" (My emphasis)

Similarly, Roger's quote "a filmic despot is described as a 'cross between Stalin and Hitler'" paraphrases Modrow's "In Abuladze's film *Repentance* a despot was **caricatured** whose physiognomy and character represented a cross between Stalin and Hitler".

Further, in citing Modrow for "raising" the legality of the Russo-Finish war, Roger fails to convey Modrow's actual words "**there was an open discussion** about whether the Soviet-Finnish war had not been a blatant violation of international law after all".

Also, I cannot understand Roger's assertion that "Modrow seems unaware of other positive international developments", given the description (p 159) of China, Cuba, Venezuela and North Korea as exceptions to global unbridled capitalism, adopting their own ways of development, fighting for survival, and deserving our solidarity.

I would urge all communists to get and read Comrade Modrow's book for the unique insights it contains. We can of course disagree with his understanding of "democratic socialism", but surely our criticisms must be based on his real statements, not on misleading partial selections of his words.

Junk food: an irregular cartoon strip



BOOK REVIEW

A Slogan Which Will Never Lose Its Importance

Review by Martin Levy

MUCH HAS BEEN written about the unemployed struggles of the inter-war years, in particular by leading activists such as Wal Hannington¹ and historians like Richard Croucher² and Peter Kingsford³. Furthermore, as Don Watson admits, the by National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), like the Communist Party, was smaller in the North East than in other areas of consistently high unemployment, such as Scotland, Wales, Manchester and Liverpool. So, he poses the question (p 12), "What is the point of a local study of this, and why of the North East in particular?"

For those of us living in, or with connections to, the area, and privileged (as well as old enough) to have known some of the campaigners and organisers whose activities are revealed in this book, there is the sense of a fitting tribute at last being paid to their heroic contributions to the class struggle. For younger comrades, this is a history as much about the Communist Party as the NUWM in the region, and one which they should know. For active trade unionists and anti-austerity campaigners in the North East today, there is inspiration to be gained from the mass struggles which actually happened in their own communities.

But this study has much wider relevance. As the author himself states, local accounts can provide a better understanding of the dynamics of working-class politics than national ones, giving information on the sociology of unemployed movements, in particular the tension between 'political' and 'non-political' approaches, and the degree to which women were involved in the activities. Furthermore, he notes, the perception of unemployed struggles in the North East is inextricably linked with the 'non-political' Jarrow March

of 1936; but, as he shows, the decision to organise it, and the opposition of the Labour and trade union leaderships towards it, cannot be explained without an understanding of the NUWM up to that time.

Don Watson also examines the North East regional organisation of the various National Hunger Marches, their sources of support and opposition, and indeed the local demonstrations, rallies and lobbies – and painstaking individual casework – which made a significant contribution to securing benefits and successfully opposing cuts. Finally, the role played by the NUWM in opposing organised fascism, and in providing volunteers for the International Brigades in Spain, is given special attention; at least 22 went and, sadly, 12 made the ultimate sacrifice (p 194).

This is an extremely well-researched study. The author has had practical support from fellow-members of the North East Labour History Society, allowing access to recorded oral records, going back 35 years in some cases, including by leading communists of the day Charlie Woods (Tyneside), George Short (Teesside), Phyllis Short (Teesside) and Nick Rowell (Sunderland). He has made thorough searches of the local press and national working class journals (including *The Communist* and the *Daily Worker*), local record offices and the National Archives; and documents in the Marx Memorial Library, the Working Class Movement Library and the Labour History Archive, including Wal Hannington's papers and Communist Party Central Committee Minutes from 1930 to 1939. There is also a very extensive bibliography.

As might be expected, the book takes a largely chronological approach, though some of the later chapters are

more thematic, focusing in one case on the fight against fascism, and in another on the NUWM in local government – during the 1930s the Communist Party had 6 local councillors elected in the region, and each was a well-known activist in the NUWM (p 13). Most famous of those was Felling ex-miner Jim Ancrum (1898-1946), a noted orator, whose photograph is on the front cover of the book. The Felling NUWM banner, in front of which he is pictured, was recently discovered in the Newcastle upon Tyne Trades Union Council building.

Considering the close connections between the Communist Party and the NUWM (by December 1930, in fact, 40% of the Party's members were out of work, compared to 6% in 1926⁴), it is not surprising that the consequences of the 'class against class' period do get a few mentions. However, I think that Don Watson's approach to that policy could be more balanced. His statement (p 84) that "the Executive of the Comintern, influenced of course by the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, increasingly adopted a more aggressive line towards the British labour and trades union movements", reduces the issue to the wilful actions of a personality.

In fact, as Matthew Worley has shown,⁵ the debate over the 'New Line' was much more complex: certainly, given that Bukharin was general secretary of the Comintern from 1926 to 1929, the disagreements within the Soviet leadership did play a role, but more in the way that others in the Comintern saw an opportunity to push their own agenda. In fact the 'New Line' started under Bukharin and was vociferously promoted by several parties outside the Soviet Union, notably the German party, and by several leading figures within the British Party itself and its

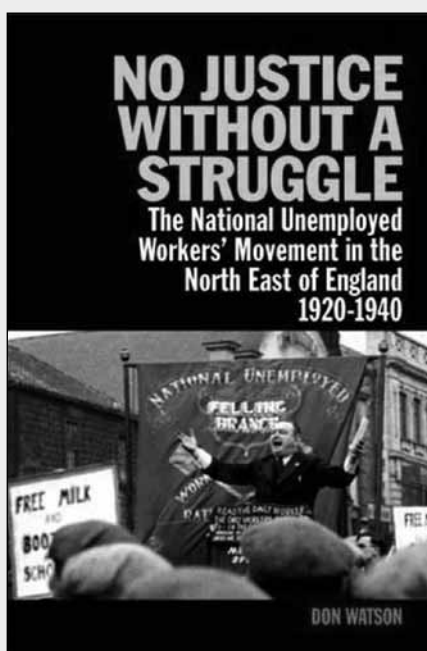
No Justice Without A Struggle: The National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the North East of England, 1920-1940

By DON WATSON
(Merlin Press, London, 2014, 281 pp,
pbk, £15.95. ISBN 978-0-85036-618-1)

Young Communist League. It struck a resonance within much of the Party membership in Britain (Tyneside in particular!), faced with the betrayal of 1926, the bans against communists by the Labour Party and many trade unions, and the open class collaborationist approach of the TUC general council.

I suspect that the overall negative impact of 'class against class' was also rather less than Don indicates. Certainly, Hannington, as leader of the NUWM, was able to resist the more inane sectarian demands from the Red International of Labour Unions and the Communist Party leadership, and the movement grew, by combining mass struggle with the systematic day-to-day approach to its members.⁶ Arguably it was the more disciplined Party and the establishment of the *Daily Worker* in 1930, both outcomes of the 'New Line', that contributed significantly to this success. The early 1930s was also the period when 10 NUWM activists from the North East, including Jim Ancrum, Charlie Woods, George Short and Wilf Jobling (later to die in Spain), attended the International Lenin School in Moscow (p 194) – clearly they all made a positive impact on the work of the NUWM in the region.

This however is a minor quibble of mine about a book which is rich in accounts of struggle. My personal favourite, because I heard it many years ago 'from the horse's mouth', so to speak, is about the 'Battle of Stockton Cross' in April 1933 (pp 117-8), where George Short, Teesside district secretary of the Party, was arrested along with his wife Phyllis. The Town Cross was a traditional place for public meetings in Stockton but the police had banned gatherings by the Communist Party and the NUWM. George recalled the attempt to assert 'the freedom of the Cross' as follows:



"I was arrested at the protest demonstration, handcuffed and frog-marched down the High Street. She [Phyllis] raced through the cordon and grabbed my wrist, so they took her in as well. I was charged with obstructing the police and disturbing the peace. She was charged with assaulting the police, she, seven stone then and a TB case, she was supposed to have assaulted this bloody big fella about eighteen stone."

And Phyllis added:

"Mind, I did bite his fingers They dropped the charges against me, that was usual then if there were bairns in the house, otherwise they'd have to put them into care if I was in gaol."

The outcome, as Don records, was that George was convicted and sent to Durham Prison for 4 months. I can add that George used to say that while there he took up singing in the chapel services. When challenged about why he, a non-believer, did this, he asserted that, as a public speaker, it was necessary to keep his voice in trim!

Is there anything to learn in this book which would have contemporary relevance? We again face high levels of structural unemployment, but the opportunities for building a mass

movement of the unemployed are much more limited. In the 1920s and 30s, provision of benefits was first at the discretion of elected Boards of Guardians who were then superseded by Public Assistance Committees. Likewise, county councils could (and some did) implement the Feeding of Necessitous Children Act, particularly during such times as the 1926 Lock-Out. Locally based, such bodies could be more easily influenced by mass pressure than could the national government; and involvement in such local mass pressure helped to build the movement. Nowadays, rules on benefit are nationally determined, and can only be changed by national mass mobilisation, which is difficult, predominantly because the ruling class has managed to foster the ideology that benefits are too high and job losses in public services are essential.

Today, however, there are trade unions which are willing to retain unemployed members in membership, and to seek to involve them both in public campaigning and in advice work – notably Unite with its 'community' membership. A network of TUC unemployed centres also remains, albeit much smaller than at its height during the 1980s and 90s. There is within the trade union movement a much greater understanding of the role of unemployment as an instrument of policy in forcing down wages, pensions and working conditions even if the fight for an alternative strategy of jobs and growth has not yet been pursued vigorously.

In any event, as Don Watson says, "the NUWM slogan of 'No justice without a struggle' will never lose its importance and force." This book is highly recommended.

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- 1 W Hannington, *Never on Our Knees*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1967; *Unemployed Struggles, 1919-1936*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1977.
- 2 R Croucher, *We Refuse to Starve in Silence: A history of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1920-1946*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1987.
- 3 P Kingsford, *The Hunger Marches in Britain, 1920-1940*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1982.
- 4 M Worley, *Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars*, I B Tauris, London, p 178.
- 5 *Ibid*, Chs 3 and 4.
- 6 *Ibid*, p 178.

BOOK REVIEW

An Age-old Cycle of Destruction Which Must be Broken

Review by Liz Payne

IT IS MORE than five years since an international cultural event, to mark the launch of the second edition of Gerald Butt's *Life at the Crossroads: History of Gaza*, was hosted by the mayor of Nicosia, Eleni Mavrou. She spoke of the empathy of the Cypriot people for the Palestinian people, due to their own experience of war and occupation, and applauded the book for drawing the attention of the world to the plight of the Palestinians. It is not therefore because the work is new, but because it is newly relevant following the devastating Israeli military attack on the Gaza Strip this summer, that the book is being reviewed in this issue of *CR*.

At the launch, the author reflected on his initial work for the first edition of 1995. He had not thought that a place that looked so destitute could have "so long and rich a history"; but, he told his audience, the research he conducted had made him change his mind completely. The outcome of his investigations took the form of a 'biography' of a city resisting foreign occupation and struggling for a life of its own. Writing it, Butt said, had made him an ardent supporter of its people and an admirer of their steadfast determination.

This is not and does not purport to be an academic work. The author was born

and raised in the Middle East and has lived in Beirut, Nicosia and Jerusalem. A former BBC Middle East Correspondent and now the Middle East Correspondent for the *Church Times*, he uses his experience and journalistic skill to provide an empathetic narrative full of local and human interest, avoiding the superficiality to which a relatively short work on a very long period might be prone.

The account begins with the earliest settlers on the Gaza Strip over 5000 years ago – communities of hunters and farmers occupying the mounds south of the present city from 3300 BCE – and moves chronologically through the history of the city itself, continuously inhabited for more than 3000 years and hence one of the oldest cities on earth.

Butt takes as a starting point the remarks of a certain Reverend Father Waggett, who in 1918 was in the city, at that point reduced to ruins following the ejection of Ottoman forces by the British under Allenby. "Gaza has a long experience of war", wrote the British priest, referring to the coming of invaders and occupiers from ancient times down to the present. The author chronicles this 'long experience', scanning the archaeological and documentary evidence to produce an accessible and

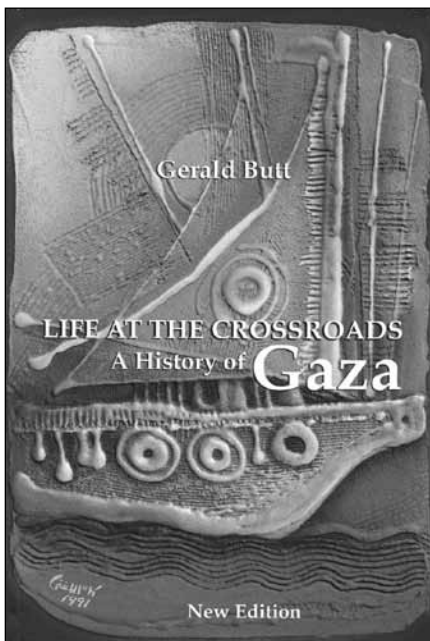
insightful account of the violent and destructive dealings of the conquerors and occupiers of this tiny piece of land throughout its history – Egyptian pharaohs, Canaanites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, the empires of Greece and Rome, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Ottomans, British, Egyptians and now, for 47 years, the State of Israel.

Central to the work is the notion that Gaza's violent history has been very largely determined by its strategic position on the great road, the so-called 'Way of the Sea', stretching from the Nile delta into the lands of the eastern Mediterranean. No army in ancient or modern times could pass along this route without taking Gaza. It was the first city encountered on the route up from Egypt and the last bastion of defence for whoever headed in the opposite direction. Gaza was thus, according to Butt, a gateway that must be possessed, the physical 'crossroads' referred to in the title, and this shaped its history. It was not until the very recent past, with the coming of modern methods of warfare and communications, that control of Gaza, and with it the land bridge between Africa and the Levant, became less of an imperative. But by then a multitude of other factors had come into play.

The narrative also has

a positive side. As well as telling of a city frequently laid waste, Butt also speaks of the resilience of its people and their capacity to recover again and again from devastation. The city had huge potential. There were periods of calm, peace and prosperity when the great Way of the Sea brought traders with merchandise and new ideas from far-off places, and the city flourished, economically, socially and culturally.

It was at a time when there was considerable hope that such an era was beginning again that the first edition of the work was published in 1995. Butt shared that optimism and tentatively named his final chapter 'The End of the Wilderness Years?' According to Butt, "Despite obstacles delaying the implementation of the agreements between the Palestinian leadership and Israel, momentum seemed to be in the right direction – towards the ending of the Israeli occupation and eventually, perhaps, the creation of an independent Palestinian state consisting of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank." As it turned out, the grounds for such optimism were not founded, the 'Wilderness Years' were not at an end and Butt concluded his second edition with the December 2008-January 2009 Israeli attack on Gaza,



Life at the Crossroads: History of Gaza (2nd revised edition)

By GERALD BUTT
(Rimal Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus,
2009, 264 pp, pbk, £11.95.
ISBN 978-996361-0396)

which was, in his words at the time, “one of the most brutal wars the Middle East has experienced”. He remarked that, in all their three millennia of history, there was hardly a time when the people of Gaza were in a more desperate state than after the 2008-9 war.

That conclusion has now, of course, become tragically dated. The so-called “war” that concludes Butt’s second edition is now recognised as the first of three vicious and one-sided attacks by the Israeli regime against the 1,700,000 Palestinians of the Gaza Strip (2008-9, 2012 and 2014).

Janet Symes, the Head of Christian Aid in the Middle East, has described the scale of destruction in summer 2014 as “unprecedented”. In less than 60 days, over 2100 were killed, many of them women and children, and over 11,000 injured. A third of the population of Gaza were displaced. Homes, schools, hospitals, clinics, mosques, cemeteries, public buildings, factories, farms and farmland, fisheries, electricity, water and sewage systems, roads and harbours have all been

deliberately targeted and destroyed. The Secretary General of the United Nations has described “mile after mile of wholesale destruction”.¹

Many of the sites to which Butt refers in his work have now also been deliberately attacked in an attempt to erase the history and culture that his book documents. Archaeological sites, museums, historic monuments and religious buildings from the Bronze Age onwards all became military targets and have been severely damaged, some irreparably.

In his forward to the second edition, Gerald Butt says that “it would be good to look forward to a day when a third edition of this book was required to chronicle a happier era in Gaza’s very long and distinguished history”. This must be a sentiment shared by all peace-loving people throughout the world, as was unequivocally shown by the millions who demonstrated again and again against the Israeli onslaught and for an immediate ceasefire earlier this year. For this to become a reality, we must take heed of the words of Ms

Feda Abdelhady-Nasser, the Palestinian Ambassador to the UN on 6 November 2014:²

“The value of humanitarian assistance and recovery efforts will be fleeting if the root causes of the conflict remain unaddressed We reiterate the urgency of lifting the Israeli blockade of Gaza, consolidating the fragile ceasefire and ensuring a political horizon for justly, finally and peacefully resolving the core issues of the conflict without delay.”

The “core issues” are longstanding. They hinge on Palestinian statehood. Prevention of the formation of a sovereign Palestinian state based on 1967 boundaries with east Jerusalem as its capital and the forging of divisions between Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were the prime motivators of the deliberate infliction of humanitarian disaster by the Israeli occupiers earlier

this year. The international community must do everything possible to ensure that the Israeli government is held to account for the war crimes it has committed and to hasten the establishment of a Palestinian state and the right of all Palestinians to build a peaceful, just and democratic future. Only then will Gerald Butt be able to write his third edition in which the age-old cycle of the destruction of Gaza is forever broken.

Notes and References

1 UN News Centre, 21 October 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49131#VHTUUMnvZ-w>.

2 F Abdelhady-Nasser, Ambassador, *Statement 6 November 2014 before the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (4th Committee) of the United Nations: Agenda Item 51: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories*; online at <http://palestineun.org/6-november-2014-statement-by-ms-feda-abdelhady-nasser-ambassador-before-the-special-political-and-decolonization-committee-4th-committee-agenda-item-51-report-of-the-special-committee-to-inve/>.



SOURCEBOOK

A regular literary selection

Selected by Mike Quille

I Work for Nothing and for Everything

Recent poetry from Smokestack Books, Part 2



A COUPLE of apologies to start with. Firstly, my last column was headed 'Bellow Out Your Pain'. Sharp-eyed readers hunting for that line in the poems I presented would have been disappointed, as it is in fact a quote from one of the poems below. And we have a new heading for this column, which I guarantee you will also find below.

Secondly, I said that there would be some poems in this column from the Teesside International Poetry Biennale, held in October. But pressure on space means I have to defer your gratification in that respect until the next issue.

On with the parade of poems from Smokestack Books!

The Meaning of the Shovel is by the American poet Martin Espada, who has got quite a CV. He has worked as a bouncer, a primate caretaker, a refuse operative, an encyclopaedia salesman, a petrol pump attendant and a tenant lawyer. I assume the primates he was looking after were chimps, not bishops – but who knows, he's a multi-talented guy so could probably handle both.

As both the title and his CV suggest, the book is a celebration of work and of workers, of the many emotional, practical and political aspects of labour. That's much more unusual than it should be, isn't it, given the importance of work

– or the lack of it – for all of us?

Here's a short poem which, like Ely's poems in Part 1, uses religious iconography to strengthen the radical meaning:

The Right Hand of a Mexican Farmworker in Somerset County, Maryland

A rosary tattoo
between thumb
and forefinger
means that
every handful
of crops and dirt
is a prayer,
means that Christ
had hard hands
too

And here's another one with some religious content, but which I've chosen because of how the subject has become so dreadfully familiar in this country:

The Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry Stomp

Madison, Wisconsin, 1980

Waiting for the carton of food
 given with Christian suspicion
 even to agency-certified charity cases
 like me,
 thin and brittle
 as uncooked linguini,
 anticipating the factory-damaged cans
 of tomato soup, beets, three-bean salad
 in a welfare cornucopia,
 I spotted a squashed dollar bill
 on the floor, and with
 a Saint Vincent de Paul food pantry stomp
 pinned it under my sneaker,
 tied my laces meticulously,
 and stuffed the bill in my sock
 like a smuggler of diamonds,
 all beneath the plaster statue wingspan
 of Saint Vinnie,
 who was unaware
 of the dance
 named in his honour
 by a maraca player
 in the salsa band
 of the unemployed.

Here's the title poem from the collection, combining down
 to earth imagery with a revolutionary vision:

The Meaning of the Shovel

Barrio Rene Cisneros, Managua, Nicaragua, June-July 1982

This was the dictator's land
 before the revolution.
 Now the dictator is exiled to necropolis,
 his army brooding in camps by the border,
 and the congregation of the landless
 stipples the earth with a thousand shacks,
 every weather-beaten carpenter
 planting a fistful of nails.

Here I dig latrines. I dig because last week
 I saw a funeral in the streets of Managua,
 the coffin swaddled in a red and black flag,
 hoisted by a procession so silent
 that even their feet seemed
 to leave no sound on the gravel.
 He was eighteen, with the border patrol,
 when a sharpshooter from the dictator's army
 took aim at the back of his head.

I dig because yesterday
 I saw four walls of photographs:
 the faces of volunteers
 in high school uniforms
 who taught campesinos to read,
 bringing an alphabet
 sandwiched in notebooks
 to places where the mist never rises
 from the trees. All dead,
 by malaria or the greedy river
 or the dictator's army
 swarming the illiterate villages

like a sky full of corn-plundering birds.

I dig because today, in this barrio
 without plumbing, I saw a woman
 wearing a yellow dress
 climb into a barrel of water
 to wash herself and the dress
 at the same time,
 her cupped hands spilling.

I dig because today I stopped digging
 to drink an orange soda. In a country
 with no glass, the boy kept the treasured bottle
 and poured the liquid into a plastic bag
 full of ice, then poked a hole with a straw.

I dig because today my shovel
 struck a clay bowl centuries old,
 the art of ancient fingers
 moist with this same earth,
 perfect but for one crack in the lip.

I dig because I have hauled garbage
 and pumped gas and cut paper
 and sold encyclopaedias door to door.
 I dig, digging until the passport
 in my back pocket saturates with dirt,
 because here I work for nothing
 and for everything.

Do you, like me, hear Espada talking about his writing
 in this poem, using the image of digging both literally and
 metaphorically?

And here is a short and punchy final poem from Espada:

**The Florida Citrus Growers Association
 responds to a proposed law requiring hand
 washing facilities in fields**

An orange,
 squeezed on the hands,
 is an adequate substitute
 for soap and water

Sister Invention is a collection of poems by Judith Kazantzis.
 The poems are indeed inventive, very imaginative lyrics,
 frequently using Greek myth as a backdrop to personal, political
 and often feminist stories of war, grief, and relationships.

Kazantzis has that great poet's gift of summing up situations
 with succinctness and creative simplicity, so the images she
 creates expand and live on for a long time in our imaginations.
 I presented one of the poems, about a rocket-firing 'terrorist', in
CR70. Here is another set in Palestine.

Child in Gaza

Gaza, 2008-9

I was a little child
 born in the Gaza ruins.
 My name was Palestinian
 and my heart was strong.

On the Israeli green
 the little children played,



I asked to share the play
and they sent back fire.

Why did they send white fire
that melted away my flesh?
They said it was the gift
my jealousy required.

Why did they burn me so?
In white bandages I die
in a hospital like a ruin.
Remember, what I know.

And finally from this collection, a poem about protest:

Every march I make

Julia, I swear I take your number
every march we meet.
Palestine, Peace, Aghanistan, Iraq.

Everything in my pocket
ends up shredded. Why's
my memory at war?

I heard your voice. Will I
shout out then: I know your face,
the day before this street is closed?

Survivors is a collection of poems by Hungarian Jewish poets of the Holocaust, edited by Thomas Orszag-Land. At a time when many European countries are witnessing renewed support for far-right politics, the poems are a timely reminder not only of the horrors of fascism and Nazism, but of the importance of memory, imagination and creativity in fighting those evils.

The first poem is about the role of poets in fighting injustice.

Ars Poetica

by Jenő Heltai

Do not wait till you're invited.
Poet, claim your place
on the rostrum. Warn the neighbours
of the threat they face.

Share your heart with their cold world.
Share each fear, each scar.
Shed your armour, shed your clothes:
show all that you are.

Do not wait until you're silenced
never to sing again.
Never, ever, hold your tongue.
Bellow out your pain.

Watch the racist rabble-rousers.
Mark the lies they spawn –
The night is long and dark and deadly,
but expect the dawn.

Slanders hurt ... but your song is true.
It will outlive any lie.
Drink up your poison if you must,
but sing until you die.

The next poem I've chosen continues the focus on religious themes, in Part 1. Here, the poet uses the idea of resurrection to express themes of memory, the guilt felt by survivors, liberation and progress. Tomorrow will certainly not be the same, for this poet.

Resurrection

by Judit Toth

I'm not surrounded by wire fencing
charged with deadly current.
And if I tried to flee, the guard would
not dream of opening fire.

Each night, the chimneys foul the air:
each night, I burn to ashes.
each morning reassembles me
broken and astounded.

The final choice from this collection also echoes Biblical themes: the italicised sentences are verses from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, the 'ancient teacher'.

From *The Wound of Manhattan: A Prayer for Peace. 'V: The Advice'*

by Andras Mezei

This is how an ancient teacher and trusted
business consultant put it: *If in your greed
you add house to house and field to field,
then you will be left to dwell alone in the land.*

*And he went on demanding: How dare you crush
and grind the faces of the poor into dust?*

The faces, the eyes, the mouths, the dreams of the poor
are all your markets, Manhattan, you must protect them!
Leave the poor something worth saving. Return to them
a third of your profits. Dampen the embers of rage.
And learn to respect humanity's loss in the sacred
dust of even the slayers as well as the slain.

That's all for this issue. I hope these poems have given you a sense of the range and quality of Smokestack's poetry list. And I hope they have illustrated Brecht's answer to the question he posed in one of the Svendborg poems (see Part 1):

In the dark times
Will there also be singing?

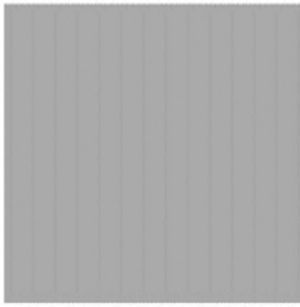
Yes, there will also be singing
About the dark times.

Acknowledgements

Thanks again to Andy Croft at Smokestack Books for permission to publish these poems. The website is <http://smokestack-books.co.uk>.

Details on the books

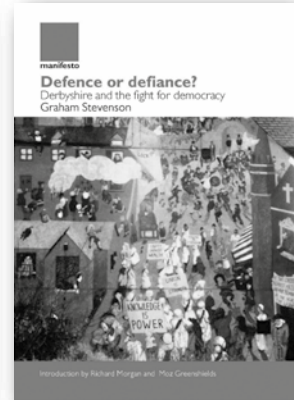
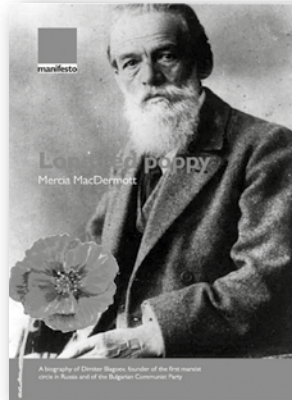
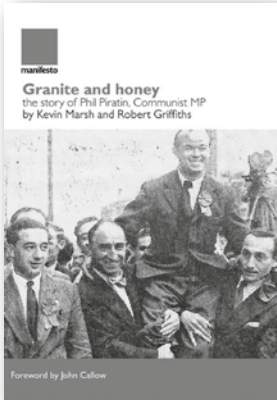
The Meaning of the Shovel, poems by Martin Espada, £8.95, Smokestack 2014.
Sister Invention, poems by Judith Kazantzis, £8.95, Smokestack 2014.
Survivors, Hungarian Jewish Poets of the Holocaust, edited by Thomas Orszag-Land, £8.95, Smokestack 2014.



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